



Off Topic

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How YouTube Makes Us Not Care

By Clarissa Dauphin

This is not an article to tell you that the Government is trying to take over your brain through the news; you can Google search “NDAA Amendment” for information about that. This article’s aim is to show what type of effect media has on Americans reaction to news stories, especially through the medium of YouTube videos.

According to an “American Time Use” survey done by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics¹, using the computer occupies an average time of 1.2 hours a day for nearly everyone in the United States ages fifteen to nineteen. If you are not surprised by that number then you are probably part of that percentage and so this article is speaking directly to you. If you have ever laughed at a YouTube video and then felt bad about it you can claim that you have been a victim of the media, especially online and television media.

As a society, the United States has become desensitized towards news that would otherwise be felt as alarming, disastrous, or an indignity to the honor of the United States. This happens through songs made out of news events, and the repetition of altered images across media lines and the endorsement of those alterations by different mediums. Once desensitized, people do not aim to find out about the aftermath of those events which should be the main focus of those reporting on an event. Journalists and reporters should want people to care or have an interest in the topic they are reporting, especially if it concerns something that affects us as a society.

As an example, think of the following three persons made famous by YouTube videos: Antoine Dodson, Sweet Brown, and Artis Hughes. Listed in the order of occurrence, YouTube videos can be found about these subjects including the actual incident and people’s “remakes” of the events. These “remakes” include YouTube users making music videos out of the events and otherwise

downgrading their occurrence. These videos are easy to make and go viral even easier. Instead of just being a place to watch how-to videos or family bloopers, YouTube has become a popular site to watch live news. According to an article by Lev Grossman titled “The Beast with a Thousand Eyes”², “For every minute that passes in real time, 60 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube”. For persons who are affluent users of Facebook, Twitter or MySpace, these videos are shared quickly between friends.

In the case of Antoine Dodson, his sister was a victim of attempted rape. Luckily, she was able to scare the perpetrator away as he left through the window he came through. Antoine, like any brother, was upset and declared that the perpetrator would be brought to justice. Then came the YouTube videos and mix tapes of the occurrence coining the phrase “we gon find you.” People laughed, T-shirts were made, along with more videos, the song was played and remade at various radio stations nationwide, and Antoine was brought on television—including the Today Show, and the auto tuned version of the song was sold on iTunes —topping the charts. Who should be held responsible for the attention placed on Dodson and the lack of attention given to his sister, Kelly Dodson the victim? Society should blame Television Newscasters for not making it a priority while reporting about Antoine’s fame to also highlight his sister. Because TV news is in competition with YouTube³, people are more likely to hear about topics that held a high rating on YouTube then to see TV anchors objectify the people watching the video or try to change the way the video is responded to.



Antoine Dodson Image from Blog.al.com



Ms. Sweet Brown Image from pryncepality.com



Image from Gamespot.com

What the media doesn't show is just as important as what it does show. For instance, with Sweet Brown we are given a woman originally shown on local Oklahoma City news whose apartment caught on fire. The fire started in the home of a wheel chair bound resident. six units were damaged in the fire and the Red Cross came in to help the displaced victims. The report was aired in April 2012 and just like that, the YouTube videos began emulating the phenomenon with Antoine. In this case, the News Channel blatantly named the video with Sweet Brown in the headlines even though she is not the only victim of the story.⁴ Why were no other victims shown? What happened to information on the displaced victims and their options for housing at that point? Those questions are all legitimate questions to be answered about the story but instead the news chooses to leave that out. It has been proven that our society is all about instant gratification. We want to feel fulfilled right now and one of the most fulfilling things for people is to laugh. It's also well known that when given the option people will choose to be happy over being sad, when the option is presented. The media chooses to encourage this mentality instead of going against it.

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The most recent example is the video of Artis Hughes, a Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Bus driver, who uppercut 25-year old Shidea Lane during a bus route. He was allegedly spit on, cussed at, threatened and hit by Shidea before he retaliated against her. Thankfully, more people have stepped up and put a focus on the incident itself, rather than on the comical YouTube videos made about it. Does this show that there has been a shift in the way News reporters respond to YouTube video sensations? No it does not. The argument that has arisen here is whether or not it is okay for a male to hit a female in certain situations and if this situation called for self-defense no thanks to media coverage of the subject.

I encourage people to view all of the videos referred to in this article by searching them on YouTube in order to come up with their own opinions. Trying to find news coverage of the events on T.V. is fairly easy as well, but not as numerous and the coverage almost always mimics the comments on YouTube. Art mediums should imitate real life, but YouTube sensations blur the lines of law, justice, and civility for our society.

Clarissa Dauphin is of Haitian decent, and very interested in topics related to Haiti and Sudan. She has been married for two years now and currently works full-time as a Financial Aid Advisor for Texas Woman's University while going to school part-time to study English and Legal Studies. During her leisure time, she enjoys exercising and hosting bible studies for kindergarten to middle school aged children.

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Norse Mythology: Ancient but not Obsolete

By Sara Taboada

Norse mythology, a concept that appears out-of-place in modern American society is by no means out-of-date, not now and seemingly not ever. "Old" is always "in", even in this fast-paced world of iPhones, Androids, instant coffee, instant messaging, and pretty much instant everything. Though it would appear on the surface that American society has leapt at the speed of light away from the past, this is not the case. An exemplary representation of this is mythology.

Time may have elapsed but mythology has not expired, nor interest in it. At first glance, there appears to be little resemblance between people today and people from the previous decade, and even less resemblance to those of centuries or millennia ago. Nonetheless, ancient relics have yet to relinquish their hold on modern American society. The evidence of their transcendence is replete throughout popular culture. Mythological references abound, undeniable and undying: Gods, heroes, and mythical beings, though past their prime, are still prevalent in American vernacular. References to mythology, not just Greek and Roman but Norse, are so intrinsic to popular culture that they have become, to an extent, unrecognizable, even though they are used, unknown to society at large, in daily dialogue.

From specific words like the days of the week to phrases, to the undercurrent of literature, film, video games, music, and comics, Norse mythology has a paramount presence in popular culture. Though not something American society is directly aware of, Norse Mythology is referenced frequently. The connection between the Norse god Thor and the word Thursday is as well-known as Zeus's association to the planet Jupiter. Though the relationship is *not* well known, the history behind it is even less so. According to John Lindow in his book *Norse Mythology: A guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*¹, before the Middle Ages began, the Germanic people adopted the Roman calendar and renamed the days of the week, relating each day to the name of one of their own deities. The Roman weekdays were named after the planets, but, in renaming them, the Germanic people looked at the God with which each planet was connected. In the case of Sunday and Monday, Sun and Moon, the

transition was distinct. The remaining days of the week were more difficult.

In *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*, Arthur Cotterell and Rachel Storm² explain that "when the Anglo-Saxons...adopted the Roman calendar they named the fifth day 'Thursday' after Thor. Originally the fifth day of the week, as a result of the International Organization of Standardization's³ decree "that Monday shall be the first day of the week", instead of Sunday, Thursday has henceforth been demoted to the fourth day of the week. As stated by Cotterell and Storm, Friday, the current fifth day of the week, derives its name from the Norse goddess of fertility, Frigga. Frigga was the mother of Tyr, also known as Tiv or Tiw, the Norse god of war

"A plethora of other words are derived not only from the Norse pantheon but from Old Norse vernacular."

whose name the Anglo-Saxon's gave to Tuesday. Odin, the Chief god, and father to both Thor and Tyr, lends his name to Wednesday. Odin's name is equivalent to "fury" or "madness" and he "alone had the power to inspire men in battle to a state of berserk rage in which they feared nothing and felt" nothing. The implicit meaning of Odin's name and his role as the Chief god in Norse mythology reveals the high level of importance in which warfare was held in "Germanic tradition".

The phrase "go berserk" as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary* derives from the Old Norse word "berserker" and denotes a furious "warrior who fought with frenzy". Another word obtained from Norse mythology is burial. The word relates back to Buri or Bor, the ancestor of the gods. According to Cotterell and Storm, Buri was unearthed, from the icy confines in which he had been buried, by the primeval cow Audhumla. Closely related to burial is the word "hell". Cotterell and Storm state that, in Norse mythology Hel was ruler of the "netherworld."



is derived from “beit” meaning “pasture” or “food” or “beita” meaning “to hunt or chase”; Even the word ‘both’ has been taken from Old Norse “báthir”. All these words and many more are derived from Old Norse and are used daily in the dialogue of English speakers. Even when referencing a popular character from literature or film, the character is liable to be a reference to Norse Mythology. Professor Trelawney anyone? Gandalf?



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Image from goodwallpapers.com¹

Is your two-year-old going to go on a shooting spree from watching “Finding Nemo”?

By Dean Berke

Violence in media and literature has been around so long that you see it even in cave paintings. Does it really have an effect on children? Well that’s what “Media violence and children: a complete guide for parents and professionals” says. There are plenty of studies that show violence associated with TV/Media and literature but they all state that this is not the only factor.

A study done by Neisworth, Bagnato, Salvia, & Hunt in 1999, states that “Watching media violence is associated with aggressive behavior in preschool children. A review of the children’s interactions showed that the most common type of aggression was the use of physical force. For example, if a child had an object that a second child wanted, the second child would hit or shove the first child and then take the object. A remarkable observation was of a boy who was identified as having low self-regulation. This child wanted to ride a tricycle that another child was riding. Rather than waiting for his turn, as the teacher had asked, he took the tricycle, waiting until the teacher had turned her back and then intentionally pushing the other child off the tricycle and onto the ground. He then rode off, leaving the other child on the ground protesting.”

This behavior was also seen to be more associated with certain factors. Young single Mothers had children that were more often found that poor self-regulation and male gender were strong predictors of overall aggressive behavior, independent of watching media violence” according to Horn. Children who watched television alone were more verbally aggressive; children were also more

aggressive when they had no father figure who lived in the home, independent of television co-viewing. Substantial evidence indicates that a father’s absence is particularly predictive of poor outcomes for children “

So should we eliminate violence in their lives altogether? Moustakis suggests that sheltering children from violence for the sake of keeping them from being frightened is a poor tactic. She writes, “Those who trust that the elimination of tales of ogres and monsters will make bedtime easier ... will be dismayed when, in the absence of a literary culprit, [the monsters] nevertheless take shape in their children’s perfervid imaginations”. According to Williams “There is the story of the boys whose parents scrupulously avoided buying them toy guns only to look out the kitchen window and see the boys pointing sticks at each other while making appropriately explosive sounds”. It is clear that books are not the culprit in the case of children displaying violent preferences when playing or creating stories.

Even Whitehead, a very well-known advocate and a woman committed to non-violent literature for

children, is quoted in Nimon's article in 1993 as saying, "There is a need for books which help young people face reality, however distasteful that reality may be." Whitehead's assertion shows violence does have its place in children's literature because it truthfully reflects aspects of the world that children should be aware of, no matter how much adults wish to protect children from it.

Even testing on media viewing showed inconsistencies. The data showed that the boys more often watched Batman, Superman, Spiderman, and Power Rangers and the girls more often viewed Little Mermaid 1, Little Mermaid 2, Cinderella, and Beauty and the Beast. Both genders viewed Shrek, Lion King, Finding Nemo, and Aladdin. It is interesting that the gender preferences were not associated with violent content. For example, based on a study by Fabes & Eisenberg where violence was rated by points, Superman had 69 points compared to Little Mermaid 1, which had 134 points; Spiderman had 178 points compared

"The National Television Violence Study found that nearly 2 out of 3 TV programs contained some violence, averaging about 6 violent acts per hour."

to Beauty and the Beast, which had 135 points; and Power Rangers had 90 points compared to Little Mermaid 2, which had 101 points. The boys and girls equally viewed Sponge Bob Square Pants, which

had relatively low violent content. More than 72 percent of the children viewed Dora the Explorer, which had no violent content.

Statistical data compiled by Brown, Brett, and Bzostek, Sharon, show that nearly three out four eighth graders watch 2+ hours of TV each weekday.

The Kaiser Family Foundation found that 60% percent of American households have three or more televisions.



Image from fanpop.com²

The Kaiser Family Foundation also found that a third of all 0-6 year-olds have a TV in their bedroom, more than one in four have a VCR or DVD, one in ten have a video game player, and 7% have a computer. Thirty percent of 0-3 year-olds have a TV in their room, and forty three percent of 4-6 year-olds do.

Young children (ages two through seven) are less exposed to media violence than older children, but data collected in 1999 show that they still spend more than three hours each day watching television and videos

The National Television Violence Study found that nearly 2 out of 3 TV programs contained some violence, averaging about 6 violent acts per hour.

Almost all professionals that have looked into violence in children have found that there is no single identifying factor that causes aggression in children but many contributing factors in our society. From single parent families, genes and gender to the age of the mother and the child's ability to self-regulate. Media and Literature and minor factors in a child's aggressive upbringing all have a contributing factor. So to answer my own question, "Finding Nemo" will not affect your child's aggression level any "007" movie.



Working full-time student, documentarian and single father to an active two-year-old boy, Dean Berke still finds time to continue writing and keep up to date on issues important to him.

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Image by Charles Crouch

What are the Calories Really Telling you?

By Charles Crouch

Many people rely on the calorie trackers on treadmills, stair masters, pedometers, heart rate monitors or stationary bikes to judge the success of their workout was. But just how accurate are these calorie trackers? To accurately calculate how many calories someone is burning requires a lot more information than theses machines are asking for. In which case, people may be burning more or less than the machines are telling them in reality.

Calories

To properly understand the body's calorie burning, or consumption, during exercise, it's important to understand what exactly calories are. Calories in science are defined as the amount of energy it takes to heat water one degree Celsius¹. When calories are mentioned in everyday life, what is really being talked about is kCals.

kCals are easier to understand than the scientific definition of calories is. kCals are simply the energy produced when food is broken down in the digestive system. Whenever carbohydrates, fats, or proteins are broken down in the body kCals are released.

Factors in Calorie consumption

Calorie consumption is affected by many factors. Age, weight, gender, and fitness level all go into how many calories are burned. As one ages, the ability to burn calories declines. The metabolism slows down with age, and physical endurance is reduced.

When one can no longer work out at a certain speed or for an extended period of time, it will be impossible to achieve the desired level of high calorie consumption. Weight affects how many calories are consumed. It requires more energy to simply move a heavier body than a lighter one, thus being heavier will burn calories more

quickly. However fitness level can also influence calorie burning. For example, if the heavier person weighs more due to being over-fat, their endurance and calorie burning will not be as great as a lighter, fitter person. Whereas, a person who is heavier due to muscle, will burn calories quickly and have sufficient endurance to complete the work out. Thus, having sufficient endurance for a workout and weight due to muscle is the ideal scenario. Gender, being male versus female, can also affect how many calories one burns. Men physiologically are bigger than women, and thus burn more calories.²

Issues with Calorie Counting Machines

Many treadmills, stationary bikes, or pedometers do not take all these very important factors, age, weight, gender, and fitness level, into account. They display a calorie counter without one having to enter any information, specifically entering in how much one weighs.

John Porcari, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, said that machines which do not require

weight entry, “can be right on, or as much as 25% or 30% high or low.” Unless it does ask otherwise, these machines assume that the person using the machine is a 160 to 180 lb male. Of course, a fit 110 lb woman would in reality burn less calories than the machine tells. For the majority of the world’s population, these machines are telling the exerciser a completely wrong number.²

Calorie counting formula

In 1919, James Arthur Harris and Francis Gano Benedict published, “A Biometric Study of Basal Metabolism in Man”. From this study, Harris and Benedict discovered a way to mathematically determine how many calories a person’s body is burning. According to the Harris-Benedict experiment, to calculate how many calories are burned all one has to do is a simple math calculation:

For women the calculation is $655 + (4.35 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (4.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$

For men the calculation is $66 + (6.23 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (12.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years})$

These equations figure up a person’s Basal Metabolic Rate. An individual’s BMR is essentially the base metabolic rate, or how many calories are burned with involuntary activities such as: breathing, heart beating, and activities like that. After finding the BMR, in order to find calories

burned during exercise, a person must multiply the BMR result by a number representing physical activity.

For a sedentary life style, those who do not exercise at all, the physical activity number is 1.2

For moderate activity, exercising one to three times a week, the physical activity number is 1.375

For a highly active lifestyle, working out up to five days a week for an hour at each session, the physical activity number is 1.55

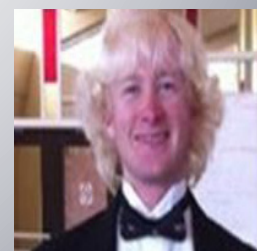
For a physically fit male the equation would be: $[66 + (6.23 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (12.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years})] \times 1.55$. This male would find their BMR and then multiply it by 1.55, the physical activity number. The exercise machines that actually do ask for your weight are using the Harris-Benedict equation to determine how many calories burned while on the machine.⁴

Summary

Using the Basal Metabolic Rate equation, it is easy to calculate how many calories a body typically burns. Many exercise machines or pedometers use a simplified version of this equation to determine how many calories have been burned while using the machine. However, if a machine does not ask for a weight to be entered, it is important to remember that it is using a 160-180 lb male. Using the exercise machine will definitely be burning calories. However, without accounting for a person’s personal weight, the calorie consumption will be very inaccurate.



Charles Crouch is a Cooper Clinic-Certified Personal Trainer, and is Cooper-Certified in Health Conditions and Exercise. He works as a personal trainer, group exercise instructor, and boot camp instructor at TWU Fit and Rec. Charles has been weight lifting since 2006, practices tai chi, is a certified sailor, and plays tennis.



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Image from www.selkiecomic.com/

Comics Hit the Internet

By William Tyler Murphy

I want you to imagine a sharp toothed horror from the depths of the ocean. Imagine huge pitch black eyes and clammy periwinkle skin. Imagine a voracious appetite for flesh and venom tinted blood. Something straight out of a Lovecraftian parade of unmentionable aquatic monstrosities. Now, picture that, only adorable.

Selkie is an online comic starring a young orphan of the same name. Selkie resembles a blend between fish and humans and speaks with a lisp. She is adopted by an architect by the name of Todd Smith, who sees a lot of himself in this amphibious outcast. Selkie faces hardship and animosity from a world that seemingly has no place for her. However with the help of her friends and newly acquired family she is able to face all of these challenges with a sharp toothed smile.

Dave Warren, a visual arts major from Springfield, Illinois; is the creator of *Selkie*. "Selkie started from a doodle I made while working a telemarketing job." Warren says on his website "I drew this picture of a little girl with giant flippers for feet and a shark mouth. Something about her stuck in my head." Warren belongs to a growing community of web cartoonists. These artists (and in some cases writer-artist teams) upload their work onto a website, earning revenue from advertising, merchandising and the occasional donation. Some artists, such as Randy Milholland and Jeph Jacques, make enough from their websites to support themselves completely. *Selkie* updates twice a week, new strips come up on the site every Monday and Thursday.

Recently I spoke with Mr. Warren about his comic, I asked him some questions about the strip and the process behind it and he was gracious enough to answer:

Who/what are your biggest influences?

My influences come from all over the place. I'm an avid consumer of graphic novels, television, movies, and of course webcomics. Over time I've cherry-picked elements I like and dislike of my favorite pieces to come up with my own preferences on storytelling and plotting and visuals.

What first drew you to webcomics?

I'd wanted to start up my own webcomic for years after having read my own roster regularly and faithfully for a long time, and hashed through a few ideas but never had one that really 'bit me'. The first time I drew Selkie, though, I knew I was on to something and I just never stopped.

What advice do you have for artists/writers/creators who would follow in your footsteps?

Don't be afraid to let a story or [sic] it's characters develop organically. Planning and organizing a story or any other creative work is important, but sometimes the plan goes askew, and it can work in your favor to explore that instead of trying to stifle a captivating idea.

From beginning to end, could you summarize the process behind making each strip?

Each strip starts as a sketch in my sketchbook, which I always have with me. After that I scan the page in and work outlines and colors and dialogue in Adobe Photoshop.

If you could do anything other than art, what would it be?

There are other things? ;) (My serious answer is writing, probably script-writing or fiction novels).

What have you learned since starting Selkie? What surprised you?

I am always a little surprised (and awed and humbled) at the positive feedback I receive from readers. Especially on strips where I was really nervous about the reception (such as the ones oriented on bullying issues). It's amazing to me that a doodle of a young mer-girl I drew between phone calls at a help desk job continues to evolve and grow as it has.

What is your favorite part of making this comic?

My favorite part of the PROCESS is the conceptual stage, the hashing out of what gets drawn today and how, how is it composed, who goes where doing what. But my guilty pleasure is checking for comments on update days. I have email routed to my phone, so I check what feels like every five minutes like a kid waiting for Santa.

What is the most challenging thing about making this comic?

Working through distractions. The same computer I use to draw Selkie also contains my video games, favorite websites, etc. It's easy to break away "just for a minute" and realize I spent an hour reading through TVTropes.

How do you deal with challenges/difficulties?

I use the Viking Method: head-butt them.

Do you write the code for your site?

Nope. I use the Comicpress and Wordpress systems

for everything on the website. I've tried running a website with nothing but my HTML knowledge and it's a pain to manually update everything.

What specific skills would you say are most important in creating webcomics? (i.e. creating dramatic tension, layout etc.)

Organization and time-management is very important. Art and writing will grow as you practice, but you have to be willing to make time to work on the comic or it won't get anywhere.

Have you ever appeared at any conventions? Do you plan to?

I have yet to involve myself in the convention circuit, but I definitely want to get on that road some day.

What was your most heartwarming moment involving readers?

A local teacher who found my comic asked me to come to her classroom and talk to her students about creating the comic. It was an amazing thing to be asked in to their classroom. We sat and drew together and talked about their lives and ambitions for almost two hours. It was a great experience to meet and interact with them.

If you could start Selkie over would you do anything differently?

I have a bit of a bad habit of foreshadowing upcoming events a touch too early. If I had the time and ability to start all over again, I'd shuffle around when certain events are referenced/hinted at/foreshadowed.

It was a great privilege to get to talk to Mr. Warren and not just because of his talents or his pleasant conversation. *Selkie* and comics like it herald a new golden age for an art form that has faced decades of stagnation in the past. It is a promise of a new generation of creators and characters who will revolutionize the way comic creators mesmerize their readers. It will be a groundbreaking movement and this generation is lucky enough to witness its genesis.



William Tyler Murphy grew up in a marsh surrounded town in south-east Texas and moved to the DFW area as a teenager. He is majoring in English at Texas Woman's University and hopes to work in publishing or write professionally.

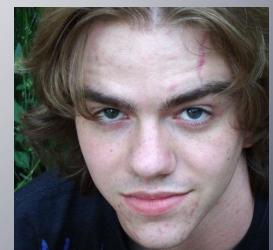
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Higher Education: The Fast Track to Poverty?

By Ginger Renee Hughes

When many people think of those who live in poverty, it often conjures images from television: shoeless children in a rural setting, grateful for a bowl of mush intended to provide nutrition, but not necessarily taste; or, families huddled on a sidewalk with all their belongings packed in black trash bags piled around them; or maybe even, an elderly person pushing a grocery cart piled with clothes, aluminum cans, and blankets.

Many mistakenly believe those that live in poverty and receive aid, such as welfare, food stamps, and health care assistance can simply better themselves by going to work, or better yet, getting a college degree that enables them to get a job that pays more than minimum wage. Education has long been honored in our American society as the route to financial security.

However, poverty has many faces. Sure, it can have a dirty face, unclean clothes, or disheveled hair, but it can also be the clean-cut man or woman sitting next to you on a bus, in church, or in a class. They work – sometimes full-time, often several jobs. They take some of the same college courses as you. They come to class prepared, stay engaged in class discussions and group projects. Or, believe it or not, they could be the person teaching your class.

You would never know by outward appearance that he or she did not eat that day, or the day before. You would never know by his or her optimistic attitude that he or she does not have electricity at home. You would never know they have lived in low-income or other government housing because they cannot afford to rent anything else on their meager wages.

They don't *look* poor.

In understanding poverty, it is important to understand exactly what poverty is and how it is determined. There are two slightly different versions of what defines poverty, and they are used for different purposes.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' website, the Census Bureau first established poverty thresholds in 1963-64.¹ These thresholds are the original version of poverty measured and used mainly for statistical purposes, such as determining how many Americans live in poverty each year. The most current data for Federal poverty thresholds was published in 2011. A person under the age of 65 is considered to be

within the poverty level with an income of \$11,702 and those over 65 years of age at \$10,788, and a family of four lives at the threshold with an income under \$23,021.²

The other version of federal measure is the poverty guidelines issued in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services each year. The poverty guidelines are used mainly for administrative purposes, such as determining financial eligibility for government assistance programs like HUD or other section 8 housing, food stamps, or financial aid for college. The 2012 poverty guideline for a single person household is \$11,170 and for a family of four it is \$23,050, with those in Alaska and Hawaii only slightly higher.³

According to the most recent Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey issued by the Bureau of Labor, the national unemployment rate decreased from 8.1 percent in August to 7.8 percent in September.⁴ However, the percentage rate for those still unemployed and holding a Bachelor's degree or above has actually risen from 3.9 percent in May to the current 4.1 percent for September.⁵ It must be noted that these figures are for the month of September and will differ from the national annual average at the end of the year. Additionally, these numbers do not factor in the 802,000 people in September that were discouraged from looking for work and are no longer in the work force; nor does it include the 1.7 million people that are no longer in the work force for reasons other than discouragement.⁶

A Consumer Report issued by ABC News, indicates an 8 percent surge in the cost of public college.⁷ The

“The only guarantee in holding a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degree is not employment, but that any loans used to achieve the degree(s) must be repaid.”

most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that in 2008-09 the net price of attendance was \$9,654 for non-doctorate degrees and \$12,419 for doctorate degrees at a public four-year institution. These figures increase to \$15,659 for non-doctorate and \$21,293 for doctorate at a private not-for-profit institution. The net price of attendance is the price students pay after financial aid has been taken into account.⁸ It really does not take an accounting degree to understand the out-of-pocket cost for a degree from a public institution can easily exceed the income of a single person living at or below either of the poverty measures.

Why are out-of-pocket costs so much? The Washington Post reported in College Inc. that “total state and local funding dwindled to \$83.7 billion in 2010 from \$88.9 billion in 2008. Federal stimulus funds raised the total to \$88.5 billion. But college enrollments rose to a record high of 11.6 million at public institutions. Universities are bridging the gap by raising tuition.”⁹

Another way of looking at those figures would be to say that “total tuition revenue has risen 200 percent in 25 years,” while “state and local funding has [only] risen 32 percent in that span.”⁹

So the question arises, ‘Is higher education the route out of poverty, or further into it?’ There is no easy answer. Logic says that an education allows a better opportunity to obtain employment. Let’s look at the poverty levels again – they can be confusing.

The most recent yearly data for national poverty rates is the 2010 Census Bureau American Community Survey¹⁰. According to the ACS, “46.2 million people or about 15.3 percent of the U.S. population had income below their respective poverty threshold during the

year.” What is even more alarming is “the percent of people with income below 125 percent of their poverty threshold increased from 18.9 percent in 2009 to 20.1 percent in 2010.” This means that 20.1 percent of the 46.2 million people classified at poverty level, have to apply themselves harder in order to work their way up to the poverty threshold before they can even begin to work their way out of poverty.

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Again, logic says that a degree that allows for better pay would help these households obtain employment that pays enough to move above the poverty thresholds. However, the cost of the degree and probability of employment are grim in today’s economy.

The only guarantee in holding a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctorate degree is not employment, but that any loans used to achieve the degree(s) must be repaid. Making oneself marketable is a must: take leadership opportunities; be a team player; volunteer when you can’t work for pay; prove that when the time comes for businesses to hire, they will want to hire you.

Everything about it is a gamble: it is possible that you will not get a job before the first loan repayments are due; it is possible that you may not get a job in the field you invested so much time into learning; it possible even if you do get a job, it will be an entry-level position that will barely above the poverty thresholds.

Current and future students bear the responsibility of obtaining the education, having the marketable skills, and are held accountable for the debt. Is it time for the federal government to be held accountable and make it possible for its public colleges to close the gap between aid and the actual cost of attendance without passing the costs on to students?



Ginger Renee Hughes graduates from Texas Woman’s University with her Bachelor of Arts in English in December 2012 and will continue her educational pursuits through the Master of Arts in English program. She has worked in publications for the campus newspaper for three years and the Honors Scholar Program for four years.

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Verbiage is Garbage in Politics

By Shannon Quick

The world of politics is one of vile verbiage and literary garbage that breeds rats. In this highly contested Presidential race, there has been enough rhetorical see-saw to make you sick. When will it stop? The answer is simple, the day after the election, but the time out will not last long. President Barak Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Governor Mitt Romney and Congressman Paul Ryan are only one link to a long chain, and this chain is gearing up only to wind down.

When most ponder the great presidents of the past many think about Washington, Lincoln, Kennedy, Reagan and Clinton; many of us do not associate the improper use of language, interruptions or the use of the vernacular to win over their constituency. They were men who represented the position of commander-in-chief with dignity and grace.

The presidential debates this year will go down in history without such honor. Unfortunately, the debates this political season have been full of angry rhetoric, rude interruptions and language that is unbecoming of a presidential candidate.

These debates, unlike the ones in the past, were full of buzz words heard on any nightly news broadcast and were designed to stir the emotions of the audience. Edward A. and Shelly S. Hinck stated in their article "Politeness Strategies in the 1992 Vice Presidential and Presidential Debates," "politeness offers a way of studying essentialized impressions of candidate performance¹," which means that the candidates will be judged on character as well as ideology.

Hinck speaks specifically about language in their article and believes that "audience members are carefully scrutinizing each language choice for clues concerning presidential ability, candidates must calculate what constitutes an appropriate strategy in the attack and defense of competing political images."²

Tocqueville once said about language, "it is the strongest and most lasting bond that can unite men."³ Tocqueville has part of the answer right. The strong bond that brings men together can also be the one that tears them apart. We see this with the decisive line drawn in the sand this election season.

and one vice presidential debate, from the 2012 debate season, and analyzed the language and interruptions of each of the candidates. What I hope to show you from this detailed analysis is that each candidate will do whatever it takes to win your vote from a linguistic standpoint. If we buy into the ideas of Hinck then we should also be able to determine who the best candidate for the job is in each of our humble opinions.

These debates, unlike the ones in the past, were full of buzz words heard on any nightly news broadcast and were designed to stir the emotions of the audience.

In both debates there was a lot of "crosstalk," talking over the other person and interrupting the moderator and each other. The second presidential debate was by far the "friendliest," with only 22 issues of crosstalk happening; the first debate was slightly higher with 26; and the last debate was by far the most hostile between the presidential candidates with 35 incidents of crosstalk. Sadly enough, the vice presidential debate was more like two children vying for attention with 53 incidents of cross talk occurring.

If the interruptions were not enough to drive the audience insane, the long pauses and stuttering may have been. Vice President Biden had the entire list of candidates beat for the most pauses in a debate with 152, and Governor Romney followed at a close second with 138 in the third debate. President Obama only had 30 pauses in the final debate, making that the least amount in any of the four debates.

What does this information tell us? It can mean several things. If a candidate has many pauses they can be frustrated, as shown when the amount of pauses increase during times of crosstalk. If a candidate has only a few pauses it can mean they are comfortable with the arena and are not easily flustered. Both of these examples are positive, but there is a deeper, darker possibility as well. The pauses could mean the candidate needs the time to think up a lie, or is trying to form an opinion on the spot.

I have taken the transcripts of the three presidential



Image by Tagxedo.com

What is obvious to the audience is that the pauses call character, education and ability into play. Why the pauses happen is just as important as when and how often the pauses occur. If the candidate wants to win over the audience, the less he pauses one has, the better.

The pauses are not the only grinding issue. The Candidates have used a lot of vernacular this debate season as well. One of the most popular is “folk(s).” A word that would suggest a friendliness and knowledge of the individuals the candidates are speaking to. I call the use of this word into question. I wonder if the word is being used to place the user in the same “class” as the audience or if the user is using it to place themselves above the audience. The term can be endearing or disdainful.

Speaking of terms; buzz, buzz, buzz, the sound gets your attention; so do the purposefully placed words used by the candidates entice you to vote for

them. If you are the gung-ho American type, you may be offended with Obama’s lack of the use America; used 76 times compared to Romney’s 133 declarations. If you are one of the unfortunately unemployed Americans looking for a job Romney mentioned that word 108 times to Obama’s 76 times. Taxes was one of Obama’s favorite buzz words, which he used 80 times, compared to Romney’s 102.

If you are concerned with the direction of education in America, Obama is with you 32 times, and Romney only 14. If numbers are your game, then Romney probably held your attention with 101 mentions of million, billion or trillion and President Obama used the terms only 81 times.

With the election around the corner and many more to come, it will be interesting to see how linguistics plays a role in the decision making process of Americans as they show up to the polls.



Shannon Quick is a student, wife and avid reader. She has a passion for politics and the news. As a current student at Texas Woman’s University she works on the student run newspaper *The Lasso* and is editor of *Off the Quill*.

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IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

NUTRITIONAL FACTS

Red Bull
ENERGY DRINK
CALORIES-110
SUGAR-27G
SODIUM-200MG
CARBS-28G

MONSTER
ENERGY
CALORIES-100
SUGAR-27G
SODIUM-180 MG
CARBS-27G

Verve!
CALORIES-70
SUGAR-18G
SODIUM-18G
CARBS-18G

-www.redbull.com-www.monsterenergy.com-www.verve.com

Image by Bailey Vonnahme

Energy Drinks, How are They Effecting Your Body?

By Bailey Vonnahme

Shakes, sugar crashes, and heart attacks, what causes these three harsh side effects? Energy drinks. Energy drinks have become more and more popular for teenagers and college students. Originally advertised as a sports drink to keep your game going, now they are advertised to keep your mind sharp and focused while getting rid of that “two-thirty feeling”.

People do not realize the health risks that come with drinking too many energy drinks or drinking them at the wrong time. Energy drinks not only dehydrate your body but also cause strain on your heart. The main ingredient, which should be taken seriously, is caffeine. Low amounts of caffeine are not harmful, however the amounts of caffeine in energy drinks can be lethal to certain

individuals. The three energy drinks to be discussed are Red Bull, Monster, and Verve. Red Bull and Monster are two of the most popular of their kind; Verve however, is a nonmainstream energy drink that offers “insane health”. While focusing on the amount of caffeine, the ingredients, tastes, and physical/mental effects for each drink will be reviewed.

Red Bull¹:

Caffeine: 83 mg per 8.3oz

Main Ingredients: Glucuronolacton, Caffeine, Tuarine, Sucrose and Grucose

Vitamins: Niacin, Pantothenic Acid, Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12

Taste: Red Bull has the best taste out of the three in my opinion. it does not have a strong “energy drink” taste, although it is there, it is more subtle than most. Its main flavor is rather fruity. Also, the smell of red bull does not overwhelm the room when opened or your breath after drinking.

Physical/Mental Effects: When I drink Red Bull the effects start off with a happy, energetic vibe. I am no longer sleepy and can actually focus. However, this effect does not last long, approximately thirty minutes. Depending if my stomach is full, empty or if I have mixed the Red Bull with anything sweet the effects differ. When my stomach is full, the effects are not as harsh because my body has something to work with. When I have not eaten the effects are extreme. When I have mixed sugary foods with my Red Bull the effects are far more extreme. The effects are as follows: jitters, uncontrollable shakes, hyperactivity, and racing heart beat. After these effects have worn off, my body goes into a sugar crash. I am suddenly more tired than I was before I drank the Red Bull.

Monster²:

Caffeine: 166mg per 16oz

Main Ingredients: Sucrose, Glucose, Taurine, L-carnitine and Caffeine

Vitamins: Vitamin B2, Vitamin B3, Vitamin B6, and Vitamin B12

Taste: The taste of Monster is really strong. To me it is a taste you have to acquire to enjoy. I don't like the taste that well and the smell is so overwhelming that the moment you open up the can, everyone around you knows what you are drinking. Not to mention it leaves your breath with that strong smell. The taste is very much like your typical energy drink and has a sort of citrus taste in my opinion. Not my favorite.

Physical/Mental Effects: Monster's effects are very similar to Red Bulls'. In order to get the appropriate buzz and not overload on sugar and caffeine you have to drink it in portions. People do not realize that a can of Monster is actually two servings and therefore should be drunk in moderation throughout the day and not in just one setting. When I drink a full 16oz Monster in one sitting the effects are so extreme that I become sick to my stomach. The sugar high is so intense that you forget how to focus and can only concentrate on your hands shaking, which ultimately defeats the purpose. After drinking only one serving the effects were mostly positive. I had the ability to wake up and focus. The crash afterwards was not so severe and manageable.

Verve³:

Caffeine: 80mg per 8.3oz

Main Ingredients: Taurine, Guarana Seed Extract (standardized extract yielding 80mg of caffeine), D-Ribose, Inositol, Niacin, and Folate

Vitamins: B Vitamins, Antioxidants (A,C,E,) and Vitamin D

Taste: Verve is my least favorite in taste. Verve is essentially focused on the ingredients to make it healthy and kind of forgot about the taste. The only way I can describe it is, it is gross at first and worse in the end, leaving the after taste of lipstick. Most girls know what that tastes like and guys if you have ever kissed a girl with lipstick, then you know as well, it isn't pleasant.

Physical/Mental Effects: Physically and mentally I feel great. It wakes me up and I am able to keep going without jitters and without a crash in the end. I am more focused and don't ever have the feeling of fatigue. This energy drink recommends including it as a part of your daily diet to help improve health. When I continued drinking this energy drink throughout the next week or so I began to feel my body changing and becoming healthier. Naturally I had more energy than usual and wasn't getting tired so easily. The idea that I am actually putting nutritious ingredients into my body while also gaining the energy needed to complete my day really has an impact for me. I like to know that I am not damaging my body and don't have to fear the unknown.

Overall Verve was the best fit for me. It not only contains a lot more nutrients and vitamins compared to Red Bull and Monster, but it also lead to a more positive experience. Everyone is different— tastes, diet, body and all; so don't just take my word for it. Go out and try these three energy drinks for yourself, and with the information provided, decide which is best for you. Energy drinks should be taken seriously, especially when it comes to your health. Over consumption of energy drinks can lead to health problems and possibly even death. Consult your doctor prior to drinking energy drinks to diagnose any possible heart conditions or health defects.



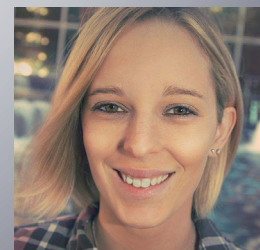
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