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A look back at Leff and McGee: Close textual analysis and the link between theory and rhetorical artifact

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Abstract
The essay explores a new method of close textual analysis—one that neither applies common theoretical frameworks to a rhetorical artifact nor abandons theory entirely. It compares and contrasts the ideas of Michael Leff and Michael McGee and supports a method that merges the two camps. The essay argues that a solely deductive approach to rhetorical criticism, which merely imposes theory on a textual object, is not a practical approach for extracting valuable insights from a text. Conversely, Leff's essentially atheoretical approach to the close reading of texts is overly systematic and somewhat monotonous. The essay supports the idea that textual analysis should examine the implicit micro-features of discourse and therefore uses the Unabomber Manifesto as an abbreviated case study for illustrating a process of close reading that utilizes theory in a more inductive manner.

Key words: Leff, McGee, theory, object, rhetorical criticism, close reading, Unabomber.

There are numerous points of contention that divide rhetorical critics into various methodological camps. However, two tensions seem to exist at the forefront of current debate on rhetorical practices. One such tension is the rift between those critics who rely heavily on theory to guide their analyses of rhetorical objects and those critics who promote a more atheoretical approach to the study of texts. The latter group is clearly in the minority, as many prominent examples of good criticism utilize abstract theoretical frameworks to gain insight into particular artifacts. One example of this type of framework is Kenneth Burke's Theory of Dramatism. Although Burkean methods of criticism can uncover interesting details regarding the motives underlying human action, it is often projected on to the text before the appropriateness of the fit is even determined. People will often say that a square peg cannot fit inside a round hole. While it may be true the square will not fit perfect1y, it certainly can be made to fit with some effort. The same force is often applied in order to make rhetorical theory "fit' particular objects. Perhaps another overused cliché related to criticism is that critics attempting to apply a tired theoretical structure to a text are accused of conducting "cookie-cutter" criticism. This implies in some way that the critic is taking the text and reshaping it into the object that best justifies the use of the chosen theory. The merit of this claim depends on how someone views the act of interpretation. The critic does not alter or manipulate the text to make it appear as though it is physically something that it is not.
The text never changes, but the lens for viewing it does. A more appropriate analogy might be the way people extract images from cloud formations. Suppose that when two people are looking up at the same cloud, one sees a giant rabbit and the other a squid. In a similar way, rhetorical critics examine texts that contain the same explicit features, but they often disagree about the implicit features. They disagree about the image that the final criticism should take.

One may see a text as calling for Boorman's fantasy theme analysis, while another critic believes that the application of Toulmin's model of argument structure will offer the best insights. Either approach would dramatically change the interpretations offered by the critic, which is always substantially different from the original text.

Michael Leff and Michael McGee, though advocating very different philosophical approaches to textual criticism, are the biggest proponents of methods that rely less on theory and more on the textual object. Leff (1986) argued that the critic becomes like a "circuit rider, forever circling the herd, but never getting to its center" (p. 377). He believes that theory deters attention away from the text and celebrates it for its extrinsic features such as context and social consequences. McGee argues that there should be a "divorce between theory and practice" (Gaonkar, 1990, p. 304). He believes that if theory is to emerge at all, it should be the result of the initial practice of observation. Both scholars provide very specific methods for examining texts independent of theory. They promote a "close reading" of texts that generates insights inherently present in the object and not extracted through the use of preexisting theoretical approaches.

The purpose of this essay is to determine if there a method that merges theoretical approaches to criticism and close textual analysis without falling victim to the pitfalls identified by Leff and McGee. I would argue that there may be and I will attempt to illustrate this process using a short textual excerpt from a rhetorical object that is historically significant, but probably less praiseworthy than other well-known discourses: the Unabomber Manifesto. However, before I can articulate my own position in greater detail, it is important that I provide a clear discussion of the current methods of close textual analysis. I will first begin by defining the method. Second, I will explain the points of agreement and disagreement between Leff and McGee. Third, I will identify strengths and weaknesses in these positions and offer an alternative method of analysis that incorporates theory into the practice. And last, I will conduct a close reading or micro-analysis of the introduction of the Unabomber Manifesto to illustrate the method.

Just How Close is a "Close Reading?"

A micro-level approach to textual analysis was first suggested by Michael Leff (1992), who argued that a "close reading" of the text was necessary to "concentrate on the fundamental operations of rhetorical language." He makes a distinction between two types of criticism: ideological criticism and textual criticism. Ideological criticism focuses on the "extensional, social, and political force of discursive practice." Textual criticism centers on "the effort to interpret the intentional dynamics of a text" (p. 223). The textual, or intentional, approach works from a finished product and looks at the processes that created it. The ideological, or extensional, approach breaks down the product in order to see how it contributes to these broader social and political processes. Though Leff (1992) argues that the two types of criticism can work in conjunction with each other, he also argues that a focus on the larger unit of a text or its effects "absorbs the unique features of a particular work" (p. 229). A more illuminating method for examining a text is to look at particulars, or what Leff (1992) identifies as textual fragments.

The implicit meanings present within the features of a text are ripe for extraction if the critic is willing to abandon his or her focus on the broader theoretical structures that dictate what is to be found. Leff and Sachs (1990) explained this process in greater precision when they wrote:

Rhetorical criticism finds its end in interpretative understanding; such understanding locates itself in the full complexity of a particular transaction rather than in the discovery of abstract regularities or disembodied theoretical principles. While the critic must frame the discourse within its context, the focus of attention centers on the text itself and the rhetorical features embedded within it. Working from the evidence within the text, the critic proceeds to make inferences about what the work is designed to do, how it is designed to do it, and how well that design functions to structure and transmit meanings within the realm of public experience. (p. 256)

The difference between Leff's method of analysis and contemporary approaches to rhetorical criticism is that judgments regarding the semantic functions of a text are expected to emerge from the examination of features rather than the analysis being used as a tool for confirming what is expected to be uncovered.

Edwin Black (1980) also supported an intentional approach to the study of texts, though he did not use the same language to describe the process. Black argued:

These corresponding perspectives on criticism are, respectively, the theoretic or etic viewpoint, which approaches a rhetorical transaction from the outside of that transaction and interprets the transaction in terms of pre-existing theory; and the non-theoretic or nominalistic or emic viewpoint, which approaches the rhetorical *transaction in what is hoped to be its own terms, without conscious expectations drawn from any sources other than the rhetorical transaction itself. (p.331)*

Black seems to support a form of rhetorical analysis that does not draw heavily on extrinsic theoretical principles. But unlike Leff, he does not suggest an alternative method that utilizes the emic approach.

The above definitions inform the aspiring critic that the more effective analysis begins with an examination of the internal workings of a textual object, but reveals a fairly ambiguous procedure for exploring these features. Perhaps this is because each discourse is unique from other discourses even in the same genre. It would be inappropriate to assume that a tool appropriate for one analysis would work equally well in another analysis. Close reading celebrates the unique identity of each text and attempts to engage the rhetorical object with zero expectations, an essentially atheoretical approach. Theoretical approaches to criticism simply reduce a text to abstract regularities, implying that the smaller features can best be explained by relegating them to broad categories. McGee (1990) argued:

Foreign policy expert Henry Kissinger may have chosen 8,000 words to express in Foreign Affairs his opinion of U.S. policy in the Middle East. The debater, the public speaker, the journalist, the legislator, or the essayist, however, will represent that discourse in 250 words, reducing and condensing Kissinger's apparently finished text into a fragment that seems more important than the whole from which it came. (p. 280)

The critic might assume that a summary of the patterns of a particular text is useful to the passive reader who might otherwise not recognize these implicit features. However, reducing the text in this way alleviates all of the alternative possibilities for interpretation. The critic is likely to ignore important features in favor of those that can be more easily clustered together.

Leff vs. McGee

To this point, I have emphasized the areas of agreement between Leff and McGee. Both scholars support a more intrinsic approach to the analysis of textual objects. Both reject the use of theory as a means of reducing texts to simple categories and abstract principles. There are several issues, however, that divide them. One is the relative boundary of the rhetorical text. McGee (1990) wrote that "if by 'text' we mean the sort of finished discourse anticipated in consequence of an essentially homogenous culture, no texts exist today. We have instead fragments of 'information' that constitute our context" (p. 287). McGee views rhetoric as a social process that generates a wide range of structures, namely beliefs, attitudes, actions, and even communities (Gaonkar,1990). Leff, on the other hand, views rhetoric as locally stable and very much contained (Campbell, 1990). His analyses of famous oratorical masterpieces such as Lincoln's "House Divided" speech and Edmund Burke's "Speech at Bristol, Previous to the Election" are indicative of his attitude that a speech-act contains discourse that has physical boundaries that can be apprehended by the rhetorical critic. Leff sees the discursive object as "a field of action unified into a functional and locally stable product" (Gaonkar, 1990, p. 291). The way each critic views the stability of the rhetorical object should influence his or her approach to the analysis. Because Leff believes the discourse is contained, he feels justified in ignoring important extrinsic features of the text such as context and effects.

Leff and McGee represent very different positions regarding the importance of context in rhetorical criticism. Leff seems to group context with other "extensional" elements of a text's construction. Biographical information about the rhetor, historical events preceding the rhetorical act, and social consequences of the discourse all represent fringe areas beyond the primacy of the text itself. Theoretical structures are simply distractions that move the critic away from the "intentional" elements. Leff does not dismiss that a context does exist, but argues rather that the analysis can yield fruitful insights independent of a contextual focus. It may be true that the oratorical masterpieces that are central to Leff's research contain important rhetorical features removed from their context, but many contemporary texts might lose their flavor if not for the interesting circumstances that gave rise to the discourse. McGee (1990) also believes that the text should be the primary focus, but argues that any belief that rhetoric can be constructed as sufficient unto itself is sheer fantasy." He argues that "the elements of context are so important to the text that one cannot discover or even discuss the meaning of text without reference to them" (p. 283).

These attitudes regarding the boundaries of discourse and the importance of rhetorical context help to explain the specific approaches offered by Leff and McGee. Leff wants to understand how rhetoric functions to create meaning. McGee wants to examine the product in order to understand the specific social and historical processes that constituted it. This process/product distinction is at the heart of the chasm that separates Leff from McGee.

Strengths and Limitations of Current "Close Reading" Conceptions

Hopefully, in outlining the individual positions of Leff and McGee, I have provided a sense of the advantages that this type of method brings to rhetorical criticism. An examination of the rhetorical text itself is probably one of the few areas of communication not shared with other disciplines. Perhaps the closest area to rhetorical criticism is literary criticism, which still differs greatly because of its focus on the aesthetic features of a text in lieu of the persuasive features. A movement toward extrinsic or ideological criticism moves us ever closer to other disciplines such sociology, anthropology, political science, and philosophy. This blurring of disciplinary boundaries continues to thwart the aims of current scholars who are trying to establish the field of communication as its own domain.

One explanation for this shift to extensional issues is that theory provides readers an explanation of what is happening in the text. By reducing it to a set of categories, the critic tells readers inside and outside of our discipline that the text "essentially" functions in one particular way. We might summarize a legal discourse as containing five key arguments, a political speech as utilizing a metaphor for change, or an interpersonal dispute as consisting of a few unique conflict styles. Perhaps critics feel inadequate in using these types of findings to justify the existence of our field of study. We add more heft to our argument by situating it in a significant rhetorical situation or in identifying a broad range of social consequences of the discourse. We might even magnify the importance of our interpretations by grouping a single text with similar texts and imply that the consequences of the collective are the same as the individual. Leff and McGee offer relatively systematic approaches to close textual analysis. Their efforts to move criticism away from broad summations of discourse to a microscopic focus of textual particulars are admirable and serve the discipline well if we can more effectively justify the importance of the "intrinsic effects."

Unfortunately, current conceptions of close readings are not as developed as they could be. Leff argues that context is both relevant and irrelevant. He implies that a text has its own unique context that is more immediate than the more distant historical processes that give rise to a text. Obviously, when a text is produced, any number of factors contribute to its construction. However, the critic determines which contextual elements are critical to the examination of the text. In some ways, the critic binds the broad contextual issues into a form that is more manageable. Suppose I wanted to do a close reading of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. It would be difficult to ignore every facet of the discursive context and simply focus on the text in a vacuum. On the other hand, there are certainly a plethora of contextual issues that cannot, and perhaps should not, be included in the discussion of the object. Does the critic need to address the full history of the African-American struggle for equality extending back to the days of slavery or synthesize biographical information about the entire King family in order to apprehend the text's features? The boundaries of a textual artifact's context can never truly be identified, yet the skillful critic is still able to make judgments about which contextual issues are relevant to the analysis.

Also vague are conceptions of what a textual "effect" involves. Many scholars would probably not identify the effective merging of form and content in a speech as being an effect, especially if the effect is not explained in terms of the number of people influenced by the discourse or the number of oppressive ideologies reinforced through it. When critics use language such as "the text functions to create," they are implying a textual effect, but often do not identify it as such because ideological critics sometimes claim ownership over the language of rhetorical impact. This hesitancy to justify textual criticism by its inherent effects limits the recognition given to this type of criticism and further establishes the intentional and ideological critics as representing two very distinct modes of thought.

Another limitation of close reading is the systematic and often overly descriptive method of moving through the text. Leffs (1988) close reading of the temporal dimensions in Lincoln's "Second Inaugural" address illustrates this style of criticism:

> *The opening paragraph contains no striking ideas or stylistic flourishes; in fact, it has a somewhat awkward appearance. Yet, it seems carefully constructed to achieve Lincoln's purposes and to establish the framework and tone for the speech as a whole. Most obviously, Lincoln introduces the temporary markers that define his perspective. The first sentence contrasts the present occasion with his previous inaugural. The second sentence refers to the past, the third and fourth to the present, and the final sentence looks forward to the future. (p. 27)*

Leff moves systematically through the features of the text paragraph by paragraph and line by line. Apart from a brief introduction that justifies the use of a close reading and identifies temporality as a theme that emerged from the close reading, the above excerpt indicates how Leff begins his discussion of the speech. He includes no contextual information other than the names of the speaker and the speech. Though he identifies a common theme of the text, he does attempt to use the theme as a signifier of the whole discourse. Leff also does not imply that the text carries a specific "effect" beyond its mere "symbolic action" (p. 31).

An Alternative Approach to Close Reading

Based on these inherent limitations in previous efforts at close reading, I would like to offer an alternative to the close textual methods introduced by Leff and McGee, though admittedly this approach is not wholly original. Other scholars have suggested that an effective merger can exist between theory, context, and close analysis of textual artifacts. For example, Wayne Brockreide (1974) suggested that critics should look for the specific elements of a text and then compare what is found against existing theory. If no theory currently exists to explain the findings, a new theory should be developed. This approach is similar to grounded theory, but there are a couple of key differences. One is that Brockreide's method does not reduce a text to its essential features. It measures individual features against the broader theoretical perspectives. A second important difference is that once a new theory is created, it is viewed as an end unto itself. The developed theory is not used again to explain other texts that have not yet undergone a close textual reading.

Black (1980) agrees with Brockreide in terms of where the interpretation should begin. He said: "I don't believe that a critic should evaluate an object emically, but an emic interpretation may be an avenue into a fair and full etic evaluation" (p. 334). Both scholars offer perspectives that run counter to Leff and McGee. A close textual analysis should begin with the text and end with theory. However, it is difficult for critics to resist the temptation to use the new theory on a textual object. When a fisherman finally catches a fish, does he throw the fish back and take satisfaction in learning that worms are the best bait, morning is the best time of the day to fish, and that shore fishing is as effective as boat fishing? Most likely, he will use what he has learned in subsequent fishing expeditions. But when a new theory emerges from close textual reading, the critic should be satisfied with having an isolated glimpse into what persuasive effect a rhetorical object can produce.

Micro-features of the Unabomber Manifesto

I will now attempt to utilize a method of close reading that incorporates the strengths of existing notions of close reading, while minimizing the limitations inherent in this type of method. Let me first summarize what this method entails. First, I recognize that context is artificially bound and can be referenced in a close textual reading without jeopardizing the "closeness" of my focus on textual features. Second, I side with Leff's argument that a discourse is relatively stable and contained. Though the boundaries are not concrete, as asserted by McGee, the process of rhetorical criticism would become obsolete without some sense of these discursive boundaries. Third, and perhaps most importantly, rhetorical criticism cannot be done independent of theory. A critic might be able to do a close reading without attaching a theoretical framework to the text, which dictates how it is to be categorized, but no one can read a text without bringing a single theoretical assumption to the table. Just as qualitative researchers attempt to bracket their assumptions going into a communication event, rhetorical critics should do the same at the onset of each observation. The critic should be aware of what philosophical paradigms might influence the analysis and attempt to reconcile these preconceived ideas with the insights generated from the observation.

Several assumptions guided me in my selection of the Unabomber Manifesto as an important text worthy of study. This sentence alone illustrates a bias by asserting that the text is both "important" and "worthy of study." All researchers, including rhetorical critics, select their objects of study based on which questions interest them. If they randomly selected research questions in order to avoid these biases, there would be no such thing as a program of study and there would be a great many bored scholars. Apart from my assumption regarding the text's worthiness, I also assume that the context is significant, that the text will yield something interesting, and that a close systematic examination of the features is the appropriate method of analysis.

The contextual issues surrounding the creation of the Unabomber Manifesto are complex. However, just as this is a micro-analysis of textual features, it will also be an abbreviation of other elements of rhetorical criticism that would typically be included in such an analysis. Therefore, let me simply summarize what this brief analysis entails. Ted Kaczynski, also known as the Unabomber, was terrorizing airports and universities nationwide by sending explosive devices through the mail system. His plan was to use the fear generated from this violence to blackmail a prominent national newspaper into publishing his lengthy treatise expressing criticism of technological advancement in society. His plan worked. The manuscript was published in its entirety and the violence ceased. Kaczynski was apprehended by the F.B.I. when his brother recognized the manuscript in the Washington Post and alerted the officials.

The text itself is rhetorically interesting. First, Kaczynski espoused the doctrines in the manifesto so passionately that he was willing to kill people and to blackmail a major newspaper. Second, there was a rather apparent contradiction between Kaczynski's hatred of all things technological and his modus operandi of using technology to construct state of the art bombs to achieve his end goal. The method of close textual analysis calls for a broader focus on the surface features of the text, followed by a close analysis of the implicit features, and finally a reexamination of the broad features in light of what was found in the close reading.

After examining just one paragraph of the introduction of the manifesto, I soon realized why critics have chosen not to engage in this method of analysis. One paragraph yielded enough interesting insights to warrant a full rhetorical study. I will share just a few insights of each stage of my three-stage analytic process. As I began inductively to look for what Leff would call "transparent" features, I noticed several things, some of them very obvious. First, the manifesto is a treatise on the ills of technology and industry. Second, the organizational structure of the piece is important to the author because paragraphs are numbered. Perhaps he believes this essay will receive great attention and needs paragraphs to be numbered for easy reference. This might elevate the aesthetic value of his work to that of poetry, which also often contains numbered lines. Third, Kaczynski is not seeking a physical change, but an attitudinal one. Fourth, Kaczynski does not provide his own individual voice to the text, but relies on a collective voice through his frequent use of "we" phrases. Fifth, the paragraphs are poorly developed and seem to represent random thoughts. This might be an indication that the manifesto was not very well planned out. And sixth, there appears to be little or no evidence of outside material used to support the claims made in the text.

Now I will move to more implicit or micro" features, though I concede that what is deemed implicit or explicit is a matter of judgment. First, Kaczynski uses a couple of metaphors to illustrate his overall complaint. He argues that people are like "engineered products" and "cogs in the machine." He also personifies the technological system as being able to experience a "physical or psychological adjustment" and that this adjustment will cause the system "pain." This juxtaposition of metaphors reveals an inherent contradiction in his choice of images. How can the system be simultaneously alive and dead, humanistic and machine-like? Second, Kaczynski argues that the process of change, if even possible, will be very long and painful. The form/style of the text seems to parallel the argument that Kaczynski makes. The flow of his words, like the road to technological revolution, is also long and painful. Third, Kaczynski uses a hypothetical syllogism to illustrate the two divergent paths that face civilization. He argues that "if the present system survives, the consequences will be inevitable: There is no way of reforming or modifying the system so as to prevent it from depriving people of dignity and autonomy." However, Kaczynski does not provide a scenario for the other path. If the system were to break down entirely on its own, there would be no need for reform. Whether Kaczynski was aware of this omission cannot be known, but the absence of this logical step in his argument may be textual evidence of his underlying intent.

After examining just a few of the extrinsic and intrinsic features of a single paragraph of the Unabomber manifesto, I believe that some distance can be created between the critic's "bracketed" assumptions about what is likely to be yielded from a textual exploration and the analysis itself. Some may dispute the possibility, but I did not begin my analysis looking for syllogisms, metaphors, and periodic sentences. These were not theoretical structures that I used to guide my analysis of the text. "Touchstones are not models for copying, but referents which can inform our expectations of what rhetorical discourse ought to do and of what it is capable of doing (Leff, 1990, p. 269). Rhetoricians should not be trained in broad theoretical structures that can be used to analyze texts. They should become masters of rhetorical processes. An extensive knowledge of rhetorical possibilities will allow the critic to examine textual objects freely and without expectations because they will allow the text to communicate its most important features. In a way, rhetorical functions serve as theoretical principles that can inform our reading of a text, but we should always go into the analysis with what Leff (1980) calls "informed innocence." We possess knowledge of what rhetoric can do based on what its functions have previously been, but we are always open to new possibilities that may emerge based on the unique nature of each text. Clearly, rhetorical criticism can be conducted without a broad theoretical framework guiding the method. The abbreviated close reading of the Unabomber text indicates that close features can be examined in light of common rhetorical principles (theory), but should not be analyzed with preconceived expectations. Gaonkar (1990) wrote: "In the last twenty-five years rhetorical criticism has moved in the wrong direction. The focus has shifted from substance (object) to methods to such an extent that criticism has become an object of study rather than a vehicle of study" (p. 308). "Cookie Cutter" critical theories only reinforce this attitude by objectifying criticism as pentadic, fantasy-theme analysis, metaphor, cluster, narrative, and many others.

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Careers, demographics, and internet availability: Predictors of social media addiction

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Abstract
Obsessive social media use has become a prevalent addictive behavior. The purpose of this study was to take a deeper look at what specific variables are leading to social media addiction. Specifically, we wanted to see if variables such as unlimited data and Wi-Fi availability, social media job requirements, and other demographics including education, age, gender, and marital status, predict increased addiction behaviors such as withdrawal and mood modification. As social media becomes increasingly prevalent, and the mental health issues that are connected become clearer, it is imperative that both predictors and solutions to social media addiction are identified. In the current study, a sample of 347 participants, recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk, responded to a survey using a version of the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale that was modified to represent all social media platforms. The scale measured social media salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Results revealed that being younger, more educated, married, male, having better access to internet, and having a job that required social media usage, all lead to a higher likelihood of social media addiction behaviors.

Key words: Social Media Addiction, Salience, Mood Modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Relapse.

To many citizens of the United States, the idea of the two main political parties working together to address an issue seems unlikely at best. So, when the two parties actually work together to solve problems, it speaks to the concern and the consensus of the issue. This happened in February of 2022 when Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar and Republican Senator Cynthia Lummis introduced a bipartisan bill to fund research addressing social media addiction prevention (Goldsberry, 2022). Obsessive internet use has become so prevalent that it is often listed among behavioral addictions such as pornography, gambling, shopping, video games, binge eating, and plastic surgery (Iliades, 2016). Perhaps it is time to start addressing social media addiction the same way that these other behavioral addictions are addressed, and treating the victims with care and respect.

One possible factor driving social media addiction is the increase in internet availability. Just two decades ago, the smartphone wasn't yet in existence. In the early days of social media, when Myspace commanded the market share, people who wanted to spend time on social media had to find a desktop computer and access the platforms through traditional web browsers. Now, with 4.28 billion unique mobile internet users worldwide (Lin, 2021), many people are accessing the internet literally everywhere they go. In addition, unlimited data plans have become the norm rather than the exception for those with more disposable income. In 2012, most major carriers were offering limited data plan as their main option for users, and throttling data for anyone lucky enough to be grandfathered into an unlimited plan (Kovach, 2012). Fast-forward to 2022, and practically every carrier is pushing their unlimited data plans (Michaels, 2022). The geographical and financial barriers to constant internet access are gone.

Some people don't have the choice to avoid social media, as their jobs demand it. 27% of Americans are required to use social media as part of their job duties (Dean, 2021). Indeed, a search engine for employment opportunities, has identified 14 common job titles that are based solely on social media, including content curator, social media coordinator, social media specialist, social media manager, social media community manager, digital strategist, brand manager, content strategist, etc. (Indeed editorial team, 2021). This doesn't include people who have social media as just one responsibility among many others, such as a marketing director. It's not uncommon in the 2020's for the average person to be required by their employer to use social media. The purpose of this study was to take a deeper look at what specific variables are leading to social media addiction. Specifically, we wanted to see if variables such as unlimited data, job requirements, and other demographics led to increased addiction behaviors such as withdrawal and mood modification. The following literature review outlines the framework of this study.

Social Media Additiction

The Addiction Center (n. d.), defines social media addiction as, "a behavioral addiction that is characterized as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas" (para. 1). One study that exemplifies this behavior measured social media addiction among 700 high school students and found that approximately 85% of the students were using social media for at least two hours-per-day (Simsek, Elciyar, & Kizilhan, 2019). As social media has evolved, it has become more addictive to its audience because of its ability to provide satisfaction through recognition, and has been identified as a significant predictor in life satisfaction (Sahin, 2017). Haynes (2018) explains that the average American spends approximately two to four hours on their smartphone per day. This has led to a correlation between addiction and negative mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and poor sleep quality (Woods & Scott, 2016).

A study by Hou, Xiong, Jiang, Song, and Wang (2019) shows how social media addiction can affect mental health and academic performance (with self-esteem being a mediating variable). Those who have a higher level of social media addiction have worse mental health. Also, academic performance and self-esteem are negatively correlated with social media addiction. With evidence that social media addiction is a growing problem, a study from Van Den Eijnden, et al. (2016) revealed that social media disorder is heavily correlated with depression and attention deficit.

Brevers and Turel (2019) conducted a two-part study to observe self-controlling strategies with social media use. In the first study, participants were asked to write one sentence to elaborate on their action/thinking and context for how they control their social media use. Results showed that self-control takes two forms: 1) reactive "in the moment" acts, and 2) being proactive by reinforcing or challenging current behavior. The second part of the study evaluated four themes of self-control strategies: (1) Trait self-control, (2) social networking site use habit, (3) social networking site self-control strategies, and (4) social networking site addiction symptoms. Results showed that individuals with a prominent trait of self-control scored lower in use habits and addiction symptoms. Self-control then can be looked at as the first step to breaking social media addiction.

There is not one concrete method when it comes to attempting to quit an addiction to social media. Schoenebeck (2014) conducted a study on social media breaks using participants in Lent as her sample. The average person who has quit social media resists the temptation for approximately 25 days. The main reasons participants wanted to give up social media were privacy, productivity, misuse, and data. Results showed that 64% gave up social media in the 40-day Lenten Period, while 36% only posted on social media two times or less. 31% of individuals who lasted the entire duration of Lent followed up on social media by announcing that they were back.

An article by Bullinger and Vie (2017) broke down the influences on social media abstainers, non-users, and those who try to quit. The study looked at conversations about abstainers and why they have yet to adopt social media in their day-to-day lives. From the perspective of social media users, these abstainers seemed to be out of the loop. Non-users found that benefits of not using social media outweighed the benefits of using, such as being overwhelmed and addiction concerns. Though social media abstainers may have a negative perception amongst social media users, studies show that there are significant benefits to not using these outlets (Turel, Cavagnaro, & Meshi, 2018). In regards to social media quitters, Bullinger and Vie (2017), found that those who stopped using social media experienced fatigue and celebratory reflections about quitting. Lastly, those who have quit and started using social media again tend to have been influenced by their peers and/or the individual not permanently deleting the social media account.

The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale

Developed in 2012, the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (Andreassen, et al., 2012) is used to measure salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Salience is defined as situation where "the activity dominates thinking and behavior" (Andreassen, et al., 2012, p. 503). The scale measures how much time is spent thinking about and planning to use Facebook, freeing up time for Facebook, and pondering about recent happenings on Facebook. Tolerance is high when "increasing amounts of the activity are required to achieve previous effects" (Andreassen, et al., 2012, p. 503). The Bergen scale for tolerance measures time spent on Facebook, urge to use Facebook, and a feeling that one needs to increase use to get the same pleasure from Facebook. Mood Modification is when "the activity modified/improves mood" (Andreassen, et al., 2012, p. 503). The Bergen scale measures the perception that one uses Facebook to forget about personal problems, reduce negative emotions, and reduce restlessness. Withdrawal is "the occurrence of unpleasant feelings when the activity is discounted or suddenly reduced" (Andreassen, et al., 2012, p. 503). The Bergen scale measures restlessness, irritability, and negative feelings when prohibited from using Facebook. Conflict occurs when "the activity causes conflicts in relationships, in work/education, and other activities" (Andreassen, et al., 2012, p. 503). The Bergen scale measures the degree to which one perceives Facebook to have a negative impact on job/studies, other hobbies or leisure activities, and partners, family members or friends. Relapse is "a tendency to revert to earlier patterns of the activity after abstinence or control" (Andreassen, et al., p. 503). The Bergen scale measures experiences that include being told by others to reduce use of Facebook, trying to cut down time spent on Facebook without success, and deciding to use Facebook less frequently and failing.

Recent studies using the Bergen scale show that it is valuable and useful for measuring problematic Facebook use (Chen, et al., 2021; Primi, et al., 2021). The scale has also been used to link social networking sites to depression and anxiety symptoms (Jovanovic, Visnjic, & Gmijovic, 2021). Based on this literature review and on a version of the Bergen Facebook Addiction scale that we modified to measure overall social media addiction (further elaborated on in the following method section), the following research questions guided this research.

RQ1: Which of seven variables including gender, age, education, marital status, data plan, WIFI access, and social media job requirement predict social media salience.
RQ2: Which of seven variables including gender, age, education, marital status, data plan, WIFI access, and social media job requirement predict social media tolerance.
RQ3: Which of seven variables including gender, age, education, marital status, data plan, WIFI access, and social media job requirement predict social media mood modification.
RQ4: Which of seven variables including gender, age, education, marital status, data plan, WIFI access, and social media job requirement predict social media relapse.
RQ5: Which of seven variables including gender, age, education, marital status, data plan, WIFI access, and social media job requirement predict social media withdrawal.
RQ6: Which of seven variables including gender, age, education, marital status, data plan, WIFI access, and social media job requirement predict social media conflict.

Method
Participants and Procedures

Individuals were recruited to participate in this project through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) on January 26th, 2022. Once an MTurk worker agreed to participate in the project (IRB approved), they were led to a Qualtrics survey. At the end of the survey, they were asked to leave a unique personal code that they could re-enter into the MTurk assignment page. Once the codes were matched, respondents were given a $0.10 incentive. 474 responses were initially recorded. Of those, six were removed because of identical IP addresses, which were possibly duplicate responses. Two responses were incomplete and removed from the data. There were four easy-to-answer attention check questions given in the survey. Only participants that got all four questions correct were kept in the data set. This prevented lazy responses from being included. 122 respondents missed one or more attention check. This left a final sample of 347 participants. The demographics of the population sample are available in table 1.

Table 1. *Sample Demographics*

Demographic	*N (%)*			
Male	174 (50.1%)	-	-	
Female	168 (48.4%)	-	-	
Other or N/A	5 (1.3%)	-	-	
18-24 years	-	20 (5.8%)	-	
25-34 years	-	138 (39.8%)	-	
35-44 years	-	95 (27.4%)	-	
45-54 years	-	48 (13.8%)	-	
55-64 years	-	32 (9.2%)	-	
65-74 years	-	12 (3.5%)	-	
75 years +	-	2 (0.6%)	-	
No college degree	-	-	90 (25.9%)	
2-year degree	-	-	24 (6.9%)	
4-year degree	-	-	188 (54.2%)	
Graduate degree	-	-	45 (12.9%)	
Married	-	-	-	171 (49.4%)
Not Married	-	-	-	175 (46.8%)

Instrument

The survey used in this study included three different item types, including conditions, measures, and demographics. The order of all items was randomized in Qualtrics for each participant. Four separate items were used to establish group conditions. The first asked participants what best described their data plan. They could respond with unlimited data, personal limited data, shared limited data, or no data. The second item asked participants if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I have a job that requires me to use social media." The third item asked participants if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I usually have access to Wi-Fi." The fourth item asked participants if they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I usually have a good internet connection on my phone."

For the measures, 18 items were used from the Bergen Facebook Addiction scale (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2012), and modified to reflect social media addiction in lieu of just Facebook addiction. The 18 items made up six scales measuring salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, and conflict. Each scale was comprised of three items. Each scale had acceptable reliability (salience (α=.889), tolerance (α=.852), mood (α=.878), relapse (α=.905), withdrawal (α=.929), and conflict (α=.872)). Finally, participants were asked several demographic questions inquiring about biological sex, age, race, education, and marital status.

Data Analysis

Multivariate linear regression analysis was used for each of the six dependent variables in order to address the research questions of this study. Predictors in the models included female (because only a small number of participants (N=5) identified as a biological sex other than male or female, female was used as the dummy variable in the analysis with male participants included in the constant), age, education (participants with college degrees were included as the dummy variable "educated" with all other participants in the constant), married (with all other marital statuses in the constant), unlimited data plan, social media job requirement, and WiFi availability.

Results

Regression analysis was used to address the research questions. The results below are organized by each of the six measures of the Bergen scale. For each dependent measure, analysis was conducted with all four factors.

Salience

The model for salience was significant (R^2=.399, F(7, 331)=31.446, p<.001). The results of the model are shown in table 2. Sex (Female) and age were both negative significant predictors of salience among participants. Specifically, females reported significantly less salience than men, and there was a decrease in salience with age. This essentially means that women and older participants spend less time thinking about social media. Education, marriage, and social media job requirement were all positive significant predictors of salience. Specifically, participants with college degrees reported higher salience scores than those without. Married participants reported significantly higher salience scores than those who were not married. And those who have jobs that require them to use social media reported higher salience scores than those that don't have the same requirements. Therefore, participants in these categories were more consumed with social media.

Table 2. *Regression Results for Salience*

Variable	*β*	*t*	*p*
Female	-.092	-2.12	.035*
Age	-.228	-5.169	<.001*
Educated	.089	2.041	.042*
Married	.162	3.668	<.001*
Unlimited Data Plan	-.087	-1.958	.051
Soc. Media Job Duties	.441	9.696	<.001*
WIFI Access	-.048	-1.083	.280

Tolerance

The model for tolerance was significant ($R2=.397$, $F(7, 331)=31.090$, $p<.001$). The results of the model are shown in table 3. Age was the only negative significant predictors of tolerance among participants. Specifically, there was a decrease in tolerance with age. This essentially means that younger participants needed more social media in order to feel satisfied. Education, marriage, and social media job requirement were all positive significant predictors of tolerance. Specifically, participants with college degrees reported higher tolerance scores than those without. Married participants reported significantly higher tolerance scores than those who were not married. And those who have jobs that require them to use social media reported higher tolerance scores than those that don't have the same requirements. Therefore, people in these categories need more social media in order to feel satisfied.

Table 3. *Regression Results for Tolerance*

Variable	*β*	*t*	*p*
Female	-.077	-1.773	.077
Age	-.226	-5.100	<.001*
Educated	.124	2.842	.005*
Married	.148	3.334	<.001*
Unlimited Data Plan	-.016	-0.362	.717
Soc. Media Job Duties	.453	9.920	<.001*
WIFI Access	-.025	-0.574	.556

Mood Modification

The model for mood modification was significant ($R2=.316$, $F(7, 334)=22.020$, $p<.001$). The results of the model are shown in table 4. Age was the only negative significant predictors of mood modification among participants. Specifically, there was a decrease in mood modification with age. This means that social media significantly impacted the mood of younger participants. Education and social media job requirement were both positive significant predictors of mood modification. Specifically, participants with college degrees reported higher mood modification scores than those without. And those who have jobs that require them to use social media reported higher mood modification scores than those that don't have the same requirements. For these participants, their mood was more likely to be altered by social media.

Table 4. *Regression Results for Mood Modification*

Variable	*β*	*t*	*p*
Female	-.010	-0.211	.833
Age	-.260	-5.535	<.001*
Educated	.129	2.781	.006*
Married	.062	1.313	.190
Unlimited Data Plan	-.051	-1.075	.283
Soc. Media Job Duties	.388	8.011	<.001*
WIFI Access	-.006	-0.122	.903

Relapse

The model for relapse was significant (R^2=.349, F(7, 333)=25.498, p<.001). The results of the model are shown in table 5. Sex (Female), age, and WIFI access were negative significant predictors of relapse among participants. Specifically, females had a significantly lower relapse score than males. There was also a decrease in relapse scores with age. Finally, better WIFI access led to lower relapse scores. Education, marriage, and social media job requirement were all positive significant predictors of relapse. Specifically, participants with college degrees reported higher relapse scores than those without. Those who were married reported higher relapse scores than those who were unmarried. And those who have jobs that require them to use social media reported higher relapse scores than those that don't have the same requirements.

Table 5. *Regression Results for Relapse*

Variable	*β*	*t*	*p*
Female	-.109	-2.414	.016*
Age	-.209	-4.574	<.001*
Educated	.109	2.399	.017*
Married	.168	3.652	<.001*
Unlimited Data Plan	-.059	-1.290	.198
Soc. Media Job Duties	.370	7.845	<.001*
WIFI Access	-.105	-2.303	.022*

Withdrawal

The model for withdrawal was significant (R2=.380, F(7, 334)=29.300, p<.001). The results of the model are shown in table 6. Age, unlimited data plan, and WIFI access were negative significant predictors of relapse among participants. Specifically, there was a decrease in withdrawal scores with age. Also, those with unlimited data plans reported a lower withdrawal score than those who had limited data. Finally, better WIFI access led to lower withdrawal scores. Education, marriage, and social media job requirement were all positive significant predictors of withdrawal. Specifically, participants with college degrees reported higher withdrawal scores than those without. Those who were married reported higher withdrawal scores than those who were unmarried. And those who have jobs that require them to use social media reported higher withdrawal scores than those that don't have the same requirements.

Table 6. *Regression Results for Withdrawal*

Variable	*β*	*t*	*p*
Female	-.053	-1.213	.226
Age	-.236	-5.288	<.001*
Educated	.120	2.707	.007*
Married	.173	3.877	<.001*
Unlimited Data Plan	-.092	-2.057	.040*
Soc. Media Job Duties	.379	8.230	<.001*
WIFI Access	-.103	-2.317	.021*

Conflict

The model for conflict was significant (R^2=.309, F(7, 330)=21.119, p<.001). The results of the model are shown in table 7. Age was the only negative significant predictors of conflict among participants. Specifically, there was a decrease in conflict scores with age. Marriage and social media job requirement were both positive significant predictors of conflict. Specifically, those who were married reported higher conflict scores than those who were unmarried. And those who have jobs that require them to use social media reported higher conflict scores than those that don't have the same requirements.

Table 7. *Regression Results for Conflict*

Variable	*β*	*t*	*p*
Female	-.029	-0.629	.530
Age	-.200	-4.219	<.001*
Educated	.078	1.668	.096
Married	.155	3.259	<.001*
Unlimited Data Plan	-.041	-0.853	.394
Soc. Media Job Duties	.389	7.986	<.001*
WIFI Access	-.075	-1.596	.111

Table 8. Measures Predicted by Each Factor

	Salience	Tolerance	Mood	Relapse	Withdrawal	Conflict
Female	Less Time	-	-	Control	-	-
Younger	More Time	Need More	Alters Mood	No Control	Withdrawal	Conflict
Educated	More Time	Need More	Alters Mood	No Control	Withdrawal	Conflict
Married	More Time	Need More	-	No Control	Withdrawal	Conflict
Unlimited Data	-	-	-	-	No Withdrawal	-
Soc. Media Job	More Time	Need More	Alters Mood	No Control	Withdrawal	Conflict
WIFI Access	-	-	-	Control	No Withdrawal	-

Discussion

The following discussion section is organized by independent variable, with each subsection covering the implications for each.

Sex

Two main findings were revealed in regard to sex. Specifically, both of these findings showed females to be more resilient than males. There were not enough participants in other sex categories to draw any significant findings. The first finding was that male participants spent more time thinking about social media (salience). Second, male participants also experienced more situations in which they could not control the amount of social media in which they consumed (relapse). This alignes with a study from Jaradat and Atyeh (2017) that also found that men spent more time on certain social media apps such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Google+, and LinkedIn.

These are both interesting findings in that they seem to work against current narratives that social media is more problematic for females. For instance, recent whistleblower reports from inside Facebook uncovered internal data that revealed Instagram (a product of Facebook) is especially harmful to young women (Elsesser, 2021). These two seemingly contradictory findings don't have to be reconciled however. It is the opinion of the researchers here that instead, both male and female social media issues are relevant and important, but different. For female social media users, it's the culture of comparison and shaming that is most harmful (Crouse, 2021). For male social media users, it's addiction to the platforms and an inability to control the amount of time dedicated to using the apps. Perhaps for these two genders, different types of interventions are needed.

Age

All across the board there was a noticeable and significant trend among participants. Younger people are far more likely to show signs of social media addiction. In all six categories, younger people were significantly worse off regardless of the measure. This shouldn't be surprising to anyone familiar with the literature, as other studies (Ferris, Hollenbaugh, & Sommer, 2021) including those by the author of the Bergen Facebook scale (Andreassen, et al., 2017) have already shed light on this trend. Therefore, while this specific finding doesn't add anything novel to the literature, it does strengthen existing hypotheses.

Education

A perhaps surprising finding of this study was a very strong indication that social media addiction is a bigger problem for those with more education. This appears to run contrary to most the available literature. Tunc-Aksan and Akbay (2019), for example, found that perceived academic competence actually decreased smartphone addiction levels. However, their sample came from a population of high school students. In the current study, the participants referred to as 'educated' were those with college degrees. We could not find any literature that supports this finding, or any that lead to possible explanations for why this is the case. Further research should be done in order to validate this finding. Also, qualitative methods should be used in further research to better understand why this may be the case.

Marriage

Social media usage has been identified as a negative predictor of marriage quality and happiness, and a positive predictor of troubled relationships and thinking about divorce (Valenzuela, Halpern, & Katz, 2014). This makes the findings of the current study even more troubling. We found the five of the six social media addiction variables were predicted by being married. Mood modification was the only exception. One possible cause for this is the likelihood that married couples experience an initial decline in leisure (Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008). As couples spend less time out of the house participating in leisure activities, it gives them more time to spend in the house on social media. We believe that this is contributing to social media addiction. Therefore, we recommend awareness campaigns that would open the eyes of married couples to this potential issue.

Job Requirement as the Strongest Predictor of Social Media Addiction

As it turns out, job requirement was the strongest and most consistent predictor of all six social media addiction measures. In every model that we ran, job requirement reliably predicted each social media addiction characteristic. This should not be surprising as an individual's job often consumes a large amount of time throughout his or her week. For some, a workplace can be the one atmosphere where the option to use social media is not available. This can provide them with a meaningful and routine break from social media almost every day. If that break is taken away, then it is more likely that the individual will experience negative consequences of social media saturation. The question then arises, is it the duty of the employer to prevent overexposure to social media, especially when it is a required function of the job? While that question is difficult to answer, it appears that it would improve the mental health of employees if social media requirements were regulated.

Internet Availability

Unlimited data plans were only a predictor of one social media addiction variable: withdrawal. The withdrawal items asked participants about restlessness, irritability, and negative feelings when prohibited from using social media. According to our data, having unlimited data increases these feelings. This makes sense as it is easy to draw a logical line from unlimited data to time using social media. If someone has zero constraints on the amount of time they can spend using social media without any additional financial costs, then using platforms for long stretches of time would come naturally. Then, attempts to withdraw would be more difficult. Consequently, it is our recommendation, based on this data, that individuals experience withdrawal due to social media consumption should consider enrolling in a limited data plan. This could serve as a stopping queue that will free up time for other important lifestyle necessities.

Having reliable Wi-Fi access was a significant predictor of both withdrawal and relapse. The same arguments made above in regard to unlimited data and withdrawal apply here. In addition, people with reliable Wi-Fi also experience stronger feelings of relapse. These feelings are brought on by attempts to quit or limit social media that are unsuccessful. Reliable Wi-Fi access, like unlimited data, eliminates financial and time barriers that put in natural stopping queues. It is difficult to come up with solutions that would be both effective and practical. Making internet less available and more expensive will cause more problems than it would fix. Therefore, future research should aim to identify other ways that could solve the problem of social media addiction.

As social media becomes increasingly prevalent, and the mental health issues that are connected become clearer, it is imperative that both predictors and solutions to social media addiction are identified. This study will hopefully serve the former. We have identified several predictors of social media addiction including jobs that require social media as a duty and internet availability.

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Walking in Between: The Messaging in Jeffrey R. Holland's Speech "The Second Half of the Second Century of Brigham Young University"

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Abstract
This research paper seeks to discover insights into the messaging found in Jeffrey R. Holland's August 23, 2021, speech given at Brigham Young University during University Conference.Holland is a leader and apostle of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although this speech was directed towards faculty and staff of the university, it was soon after disseminated to the public. Holland's remarks were perceived as shocking and inconsistent to many members, nonmembers, and ex-members in relation to the inclusive statement by Brigham Young University (Swenson, 2021, para. 2). The explosion on social media resulted in public protests and verbal confrontations in the town of Provo, Utah, and the University issuing a statement condemning hateful speeches and behaviors (Pugmire, 2021, para. 11). Symbolic Convergence Theory will be used to examine the messaging of this speech that might be perceived as inconsistent to the principle of inclusivity—specifically towards sexual minority students. This study does not evaluate the truth claims of the church.

Keywords: Fantasy themes, Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), Jeffrey R. Holland, inclusivity, LDS church, Mormon church, LGBTQIA+, sexual minority

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called the Mormon church, was founded on April 6, 1830, in the state of New York (Badertscher, 2020). Today, Latter-day Saints (as members often refer to themselves) have become part of a religious organization of over sixteen million (Noyce, 2020). Brigham Young University, sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has not followed the early twentieth century path of secularization trodden by many other research universities (Daines, 2018). Secularization in this case is defined as when religious faith is not the center of research and education (Daines, 2018, pg. 3). Founded in 1875, the university not only maintained its religious affiliation as a faith-centered institution throughout the mid-1930s and 40s, but also has continued to champion its foundational values (Wilkins & Whetten, 2012).

Jeffrey R. Holland, a leader and apostle of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, gave a speech at Brigham Young University on August 23, 2021, during University Conference. On the same day, the university announced the formation of a new "Office of Belonging" (Jenkins, 2021). Although the speech by Holland was directed towards faculty and staff of the university, it was soon after disseminated to the public. Holland's remarks were perceived as shocking to many members, nonmembers, and ex-members (Swenson, 2021, para. 2). The explosion on social media resulted in public protests and verbal confrontation in the town of Provo, Utah, and the University issuing a statement condemning hateful speeches and behaviors (Pugmire, 2021, para. 11).

The Office of Belonging was created to address the needs of marginalized individuals on campus (Jenkins, 2021). The university president, Kevin J. Worthen, stated, "The office is created to root out racism and combat prejudice of any kind, including that based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief and sexual orientation" (Jenkins, 2021). However, Holland seemed to have created messaging that is perceived as inconsistent to many believers of the church as well as students of Brigham Young University (Monson, 2021, para. 6). Some active members of the church, who have revered Holland all their lives, described their experience as "disappointed" (Riess, 2021, para. 4). This type of messaging results in cognitive dissonance in members—the theory that describes how people tend to act and believe to minimize the divergence between action and belief (Harmer-Dionne, 1998).

Research has continually shown the decline of religious belief and practices in Americans (Twenge et al. 2016). Scholars have also studied Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) in the context of religious messaging; however, few scholars have studied symbolic convergence within messaging used by prominent LDS church leaders such as Holland—fourth-ranking senior apostle of the church (Heath, 1987) and former president of BYU. Holland's talk The Second Half of the Second Century of Brigham Young University will be examined using SCT to understand the messaging embedded in the speech and how members of the church create symbolic consciousness that is constitutive of reality through fantasy and bond with each other. SCT will also be used to show how various aspects of the speech might be perceived as inconsistent to the topic of belonging and inclusion and even harmful (Kaplan, 2021). This paper could be used to understand the perceived non-inclusive messaging and how one might minimize similar types of messaging moving forward by using a different messaging approach.

Literature Review

This literature review consists of important areas of research explaining the Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), how the theory is applied in religious communication (Underation, 2012), potential challenges of fantasy themes, and contextual information about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in relation to cognitive dissonance experienced by sexual minorities.

The Symbolic Convergence Theory

The Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) provides a universal explanation for human communication (Bormann, 1982). It describes creation, maintenance and possible interpretations of empathic communication. It uses the human tendency to interpret signs and symbols to form meaningful social bonds. Convergence refers to when two or more symbolic worlds encounter each other. People experience symbolic convergence through having their symbolic worlds overlap and by sharing their common experiences through communication. Symbolic Convergence also describes how people develop an emotional investment in and commitment to the symbols they live by. These emotions allow people to sympathize and identify with one another, thus creating a community (Bormann, 1982). Bormann (1982) describes the communicative process by which people experience symbolic convergence as the sharing of fantasies. Fantasy chains are when people are harmoniously participating in a common drama. Group or organization members describe their experience in terms of analogies, metaphors, and narrative accounts. Fantasy themes and fantasy types could be found in written messages of group fantasies.

Bormann refuted criticisms on the theory that it is Freudian-based and applies only to small group communication (Bormann et al., 2003). The theory helps explain aspects in interpersonal, small group, organizational, public, mass, corporate, and intercultural communication (Bormann et al., 2001). SCT is useful because of its heuristic value. Through stories and practices, people share a common understanding of what it means to be a member of the same group. SCT is used to create, raise, and maintain group consciousness. Humans are able to create symbolic consciousness that is constitutive of reality through fantasy and bond with each other in creating a cohesive, strong community (Bormann et al., 1994).

Fantasy Theme and Symbolic Cues

According to Cragan and Shields (1992), SCT helps understand the meaning, emotion, and motive within the content of a message. Fantasy theme is the basic unit of analysis for the SCT (Cragan & Shields, 1992). It presents a common experience for a group of people and shapes that experience into symbolic knowledge. Fantasy themes are imaginative ideas that a group of people develop to help understand reality since reality is constructed symbolically. Fantasy theme analysis is often used as the research method to capture different symbolic realities. A symbolic cue is a word, phrase, slogan, or nonverbal behavior. Symbolic cues act as triggers to remind members of the same group of their previously shared fantasies and emotions (Cragan & Shields 1992). Symbolic cues can act as a heuristic to connect people with whom they share similar constructed realities.

Group Fantasies

SCT also stems from the human tendency to try to understand events, life decisions, and actions that happen (Bormann, 1996). Interpreting events allows us to assign different responsibilities and emotions to the situation (e.g. praise, blame, hate, love, etc.). When a group of people share a fantasy together, they make sense of prior confusion. They come to symbolic convergence on one specific matter and end up envisioning their world in similar ways by creating shared interpretation, symbols, and common ground (Bormann, 1996). Bormann (1996) found that group fantasies often include dramatized messages. Dramatized messages may contain wordplay, puns, figures of speech, analogies, anecdotes, allegories, fables, or narratives. Fantasy chains spark interest and attention in the listener and help them respond to the narrative. A group of people can soon be talking and grow emotional when the imaginative enactment happens, whereas before then there might be little in which the audience can connect with each other.

Rhetorical Visions

Rhetorical visions are when composite dramas are being shared within large groups of people in a symbolic reality (Bormann, 1972). Rhetorical visions are constructed from fantasy themes and are then shared in groups, speaker-audience transactions, TV broadcasts, and many different large-group public settings. Any theme tied to the rhetorical vision can spark an emotional response. Rhetorical visions and fantasy themes demonstrate together that in order for messages to be persuasive, it is important to repeat what the audience already knows. Speakers often create messages that listeners already know and accept.

The Mormon rhetorical vision has been examined using SCT and Fisher's narrative theory. Challis (1992) discussed the recurring appeals of the rhetorical visions of the Mormon church and how those who embrace the narratives have increased in numbers dramatically in recent years. Some reasons the researcher included are how the rhetorical vision of the Mormon church appeals to the American value system. Church members all over the world—and in large in the United States—connect with the values taught in the church and then continue to share these rhetorical visions with others.

SCT in Religious Communication

Ever since its founding, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has focused on missionary work, attempting to persuade others around the world to accept its doctrines and practices (Challis, 1992). Scholars have also examined different narratives within different churches. A Missouri Baptist Church was found to have three prevalent fantasy themes: identifying with the church's successes and traditions, the members' link with the Southern Baptist denomination, and the organization's perceived success of their leader linked to the success of the church (Mathews, 2005). Mathews (2005) also found that younger members often interpret the fantasy themes differently than older members of the church.

Kwanzaa Community Church is the only African-American Presbyterian church in Minnesota (Madlock, 2009). It has been a place of refuge from oppression for African Americans, and some of its fantasy themes include consciousness creating, consciousness raising, and consciousness sustaining (Madlock, 2009). They place value on morals, ethical teaching, creating and appreciating natural and man-made aesthetics and caring for others. Jesus is part of their rhetorical vision of the church, but not the center of the cultural holiday message.

Mesaros-Winckles (2009) classified the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) in Topeka, Kansas, more as a hate group disguised as a church. The church protests and promotes an anti-homosexual agenda on websites, podcasts, and press releases. Since WBC members believe that America as a nation is acting against the will of God, their religious rhetoric stirs up a cauldron of emotions that resists reason (Mesaros-Winckles, 2009). A prominent theme found in the WBC was religious manipulation. They often include rhetoric that exempts the religious groups' leader from criticism and that manipulates the will of others. WBC interprets tragedies, such as Hurricane Katrina and deaths of soldiers in Iraq, as signs of God's disapproval in America supporting homosexuality (Mesaros-Winckles, 2009, pg. 6). Fantasy themes portrayed by the church's propaganda videos include gay individuals wearing pig masks and comments that gays and Americans are going to hell (all except for the members of WBC). Simmons (2014) examined the messaging found within fantasy themes of ex-Christians' deconversion narratives. Ex-believers would often search for others who have experienced similar feelings to share stories with each other concerning their former religious faith. Recurring words or symbolic cues are often found in their narratives and stories as well. Just like believers bond with each other with their own symbolic cues, ex-believers also have symbolic cues that create fantasy themes that help them relate to one another.

Historical Overview of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The new American religion was founded on April 6, 1830, in the state of New York during a time of religious uprising. The prophet Joseph Smith claimed to have received divine authority to establish the church as a restoration of a church founded anciently by Jesus Christ. Mormons proved by their early achievements to be a group of industrious, frugal, and skilled mechanics and farmers, capable of trade and commerce (Roberts, 1912). After Smith's death in 1844, Brigham Young led thousands of pioneers to Utah in 1847, seeking a refuge from religious persecution. They settled by the Great Salt Lake (Badertscher, 2020). What began with six people in 1830 had endured and flourished. Today, Latter-day Saints (as members often refer to themselves) have become part of a religious organization of over sixteen million (Noyce,2020).

Potential Challenges of Fantasy Themes Relating to Marginalized Groups

A dangerous phenomenon of the fantasy themes found in the SCT occurs when people become too dogmatic. Persuaders may also employ fantasy themes to turn listeners from traditional messaging to a defensive strategy as a political-rhetorical weapon to harm others, namely marginalized groups of people (Mueller, 2004). These could include women, racial minorities, and sexual minorites.

The Role of Women in the Mormon Church

Religious institutions are extremely influential in how gender identities are constructed in families, private spaces, workplaces, and the community (Halford et al., 2021). Halford et al. (2021) also described how in traditional Christian communities, women are often subject to greater gender inequality due to patriarchal organizational structures and religious dogma. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints find it difficult to express diverse forms of gender expression and roles because of the messaging taught at general conferences—a semiannual global conference of the church (Bradley-Evans, 2005). Women are often asked to focus on practical tasks without ever gaining a thorough understanding of feminism (Bradley-Evans, 2005).

According to Chen (2014), the multi-million-dollar "I'm a Mormon" campaign was a tremendous effort from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on influencing public perceptions about members of the church. These ads sent a clear message about Mormon family values and especially the ideal of womanhood and motherhood. Mormon women reaffirm the traditional gender roles for women as they emphasize stay-at-home motherhood as the most important identity above all others. Women are considered the most divine and holy as they bear and rear children. The idealization of motherhood also leads to the disapproval of wage-earning mothers within the church.

Mormonism promotes distinctive and complementary gender roles as found in The Family: A Proclamation to the World (Hinkley, 1995):

> *By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children (Hinckley, 1995, para. 7).*

The church is categorized by some as a highly structured, but rigidly patriarchal religious organization (Hinderaker, 2017). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints allows all worthy male members to hold priesthood authority (Hinderaker, 2017). Mormon priesthood is believed by members of the church to be God's authority on earth. Many Mormons believe that the restoration of the priesthood gives members of the church the authority to baptize, give blessings, and participate in other holy ordinances; however, women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not receive the same priesthood and are to support the priesthood holders and defer to husbands, brothers, and sons (Hinderaker, 2017).

Although women are not explicitly stated in the Bible to be an inferior sex, most scholarly research characterizes the underlying society of the Bible as patriarchal (Crawford, 2015, pg. 3). Women's freedom is especially limited in public spaces and female authority continues to be suppressed when the Bible is being treated as normative reading in modern times (Crawford, 2015). Mormonism does recognize a Heavenly Mother; however, this theology is not frequently taught within church discourse. Members are cautioned to not pray to Heavenly Mother and how speculations on the subject can lead to deception (Renlund, 2022, para. 7).

Women can experience reduced freedom within conservative religious organizations (Feller, 2016). Egyptian Muslim women follow social limitations that authorities deem to be moral conduct (Feller, 2016, p. 157). In Mormonism, leaders often encourage women to stay home with their children; and stigmatize the pursuit of a career. Mormon women often turn to personal revelation when negotiating challenges found within the institution, thus using their individual agency and personal experience to self-interpret the limits. Many would describe how they prayed about the situation and felt good about their decisions (Feller, 2016, p. 158).

A Church for All of God's Children?

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints heavily focuses on missionary work, sharing its doctrines and practices with people around the world (Challis, 1992). Today, the church averages around 700 converts a day and has temples in over 66 countries (Coppins,

2021). However, the church has been accused by many of being a predominantly white religion, and both members and non-members have criticized it for being prejudiced against Black people (Trank, 1971).

> *For much of its [the church's] history—from the mid-1800s until 1978—the Church did not ordain men of black African descent to its priesthood or allow black men or women to participate in temple endowment or sealing ordinances ("Race and the priesthood," n.d., para. 3).*

Since the church's president reveals God's word and is the only instrument who can decide a theological change, this created intellectual dissonance and internal conflict for members of the church (Trank, 1971). The ban was later lifted at the 148th general conference of the church in 1978 through a document that is currently listed as the church's Official Declaration 2 (Kimball et al., 1978).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been trying to globalize its faith base; however, there are challenges that come with merging cultures and worldviews (Chen, 2020). The church sent missionaries to the Mauritian landscape in the early 1980s (Chintaram, 2021), and Mauritius celebrates multiculturalism. It has been challenging for Mauritian church members to navigate cultural heritage and find their place within an American-born religion and its fantasy theme narratives.

The Church has been building its relationship with the Chinese government for over four decades (Chen, 2020). However, due to the church's precarious political position in China, it has not released any information regarding its development in the country, and the branding effects of the church remain uncertain. The church also faces negative information online, stereotypes of being a cult-like faith, and warnings from Christian pastors that impede its message from being accepted in the country (Chen, 2020). Chen (2020) described that the church's "Americanness" can attract curiosity; however, the American characteristics can also generate distrust towards the church due to the recent trade war between China and the US, as well as accusations regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Last, political complications might ask for the church to adapt its teachings to "Mormonism with Chinese characteristics" instead of its original form (p. 76).

Religious Cognitive Dissonance for Sexual Minorities

Adolescents who identify with the LGBTQ+ community in religious contexts may have higher risks for mental health issues (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2021). Research has shown that sexual minority youths are at risk to experience negative mental health outcomes. They're more likely to experience depression. Religious messages that contain anti-homosexual rhetoric often create dissonance among sexual minority adolescents (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2021).

When religious beliefs are tightly connected to someone's moral domain, uncertainty creates cognitive dissonance in the minds of believers (Forstmann & Sagioglou, 2020, p. 76). This especially occurs when a person holds contradictory beliefs and values or encounters experiences inconsistent with his or her beliefs. Cognitive dissonance causes cognitive and emotional distress (Forstmann & Sagioglou, 2020, p. 77). This is contrary to the role of religion.

Often, by thinking about religion people feel increased certainty and control, but this is not always the case for LGBTQ+ members in religious narratives.

According to Mental Health America, the adult ranking for mental illness in the year of 2020 has Utah listed as number fifty out of fifty-one states—the lower the ranking, the higher the number of mental illnesses in a particular area and the lower the rates of access to care ("Ranking the States," 2022). The measurements include several metrics: adults with any mental illness (AMI), adults with substance use disorder, adults who had serious thoughts of suicide, AMI who are uninsured, AMI who did not receive treatment and have unmet needs, and those with disability who don't have access to doctors due to high costs ("Ranking the States," 2022). Although youth ranking is not as low as the adult rankings in 2020, it is still ranked number forty-one ("Ranking the States," 2022). Similarly with adult rankings, states ranked between 39-51 show that the youth have lower rates of access to care and higher rates of mental illnesses in the area. The metrics for youth rankings include several considerations as well: youth with one or more major depressive episodes in the past year, substance use of disorder, severe major depressive episode (MDE), youth with MDE who did not receive mental health services, youth with MDE who received some mental health services, children with insurance that did not cover mental health issues, and students with emotional disturbance (Ranking the States, 2022).

Miet (2014) described that the LDS policies for members of the LGBTQ+ community may contribute to this statistic. Deanna Rosen, a 61-year-old social worker and therapist describes how one third of her patients in Salt Lake City are sexual minority youths who grew up in the LDS church. Unfortunately, many of them live in cognitively challenging environments that could contribute to their poor mental health, and some were kicked out of their homes because of religious narratives (Miet,2014).

Limitations & Justification

The purpose of this research is to investigate the strategic messaging found in the major fantasy themes of Holland's speech in relation to marginalized individuals found on BYU campus—specifically sexual minorities. A study surveying students at Brigham Young University found that 13% of the students surveyed did not identify with being exclusively heterosexual (Klundt et al., 2021). Sexual minority students on campus experience a lower quality of life than their heterosexual peers and encounter higher levels of psychological distress (Klundt et al., 2021). This study will provide insights into the rhetorical visions' implications, as well as build on aspects of the SCT and other previous studies of the theory.

SCT should be the most effective in answering the research questions because messaging can be categorized into character, setting, and action. This study aims to review sources from an academic viewpoint and will provide insight regarding the speech messaging that might be useful to both the leadership of the church as well as scholars in other fields. This study will not be evaluating the truth claims of the church but is more interested in how those claims are perceived by audiences.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the SCT within Holland's talk. This paper will examine major fantasy themes found in the speech "The Second Half of the Second Century of Brigham Young University." There will be insights on topics that might be difficult for some members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, this study aims to review sources from an academic viewpoint.

Research Question

RQ: What are the major fantasy themes found within Holland's messaging in relation to sexual minorities?

Method

Ernest Bormann's (1972) Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) along with the fantasy theme analysis found within the theory were employed as the method for this research. Bormann (1982) described fantasy theme analysis as a tool that provides universal explanation for rhetorical messages. Dramatizing communication uses imaginative language such as puns, figures of speech, wordplay, analogies, anecdotes, allegories, parables, jokes, stories, talks, legends, narratives, etc. Fantasy chains emerge from such communication (Bormann, 1972).

The Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) is used as a lens through which the speech by Holland is examined. The speech transcript was obtained from the BYU Speeches website (speeches.byu.edu). Jeffrey R. Holland's speech, "The Second Half of the Second Century of Brigham Young University," is the main text for this research. The supplemental text includes the university's Statement on Belonging (Jenkins, 2021). They will be analyzed and examined using SCT through a qualitative approach.

SCT is useful in providing a broad view of the speech; however, it is not detailed and specific enough for my examination of the text. Therefore, both deductive and inductive research approaches will be used working within the SCT framework. I will code the characters, settings, and action messaging based on if it focuses on belonging and inclusivity. Ernest G. Bormann created SCT to understand small groups and mass communication. Dramatized messages, such as fantasy themes, create social reality for groups of people. Those messages are a way to examine the group's cohesion, culture, and motivation (Bormann, 1972). Group fantasies are when group members respond to the fantasy themes and show commitment to the narrative (Bormann, 1972, p. 397).

Fantasy themes provide insights into the shared worldview of groups (Bormann, 1972). SCT is largely based on two assumptions: 1) communication creates reality and 2) symbols not only create reality for individuals, but they also provide meanings that can converge to create a community of people sharing the same reality (Foss, 2008, p. 97). Convergence refers to the state between several people when their individual symbolic worlds overlap. They then share a common consciousness or fantasy. Fantasy theme is the basic unit of analysis. "Fantasy" in the SCT framework is not defined as something fictitious; instead, it is referring to the artistic interpretation of events (Foss, 2008, p. 98). It is designed to describe the constructed reality a group of people experience. Actions that do not make sense to an outsider make perfect sense when seen within the context of the group and its rhetorical vision (Foss, 2008, p. 101).

The faculty and staff of Brigham Young University share fantasy themes and a rhetorical vision, largely taught and influenced by the teachings and values of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Foss (2008) describes the fantasy theme particularly well—"a story that accounts for the group's experience and that is the reality of the participants." I will be analyzing the speech by Holland using the fantasy theme analysis. The fantasy theme analysis is composed of two steps (Foss, 2008, p.101): 1) coding the setting, character, and action themes of the speech and 2) constructing and framing the rhetorical visions from the fantasy themes.

The core principle of the SCT is that humans interpret signs and symbols that explain reality and create fantasies that transform individuals into cohesive groups (Bormann, 1996). BYU's inclusive statement provides the meaning, emotion, and motive for action that is perceived by some as inconsistent with the rhetorical themes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The speech was examined sentence by sentence and read multiple times for a more accurate examination.

Foss created three main elements to categorize fantasy themes: setting, character, and action (Foss, 2008, p. 99). I will provide a brief explanation of each of these three elements and demonstrate how coding is to be done within this framework. The setting theme is the place where the action or event is happening. Character themes portray the actors and characters in the messaging. Character themes also include me, we, people, I, etc. Nonhuman entities with human action should be coded as characters (Foss, 2008, p. 102). These include earth, music, institutions, and more. Action themes are plotlines in which the characters engage in the messaging (Foss, 2008). They are linked to characters and thus should be coded with them. There can be more themes in one category and fewer in another. Anything in the text that was not a setting, character, or action theme was not coded (Foss, 2008).
If a word or phrase belonged in more than one category, I coded it in both categories and waited until the end of coding to see which of the rhetorical visions were formed. Then I decided which category the word or phrase best belongs. To illustrate this coding, the following passage from the university's Statement of Belonging was found and examined:

We are united by our common primary identity as children of God (Acts 17:29; Psalm 82:6) and our commitment to the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ (BYU Mission Statement). We strive to create a community of belonging composed of students, faculty, and staff whose hearts are knit together in love (Mosiah 18:21) where:

> *All relationships reflect devout love of God and a loving, genuine concern for the welfare of our neighbor (BYU Mission Statement); We value and embrace the variety of individual characteristics, life experiences and circumstances, perspectives, talents, and gifts of each member of the community and the richness and strength they bring to our community (1 Corinthians 12:12–27); Our interactions create and support an environment of belonging (Ephesians 2:19); and the full realization of each student's divine potential is our central focus (BYU Mission Statement, Jenkins, 2021).*

In this passage, the settings include "community of belonging," "restored gospel of Jesus Christ," and "environment of belonging." The characters are "we," "our," "children," "God," "Jesus Christ," "they," "students," "faculty," "staff," "relationships," "hearts," "each member of the community," and "neighbor." The action themes utilized are "united" (we/members of the university), "commitment" (we), "strive to create" (we), "knit together in love" (hearts), "reflect devout love of God" (all relationships), "value and embrace" (we), "bring" (each member of the community), "full realization of each student's divine potential" (our central focus), and "create and support" (our interactions).

Using the fantasy theme analysis, I coded and categorized the inclusive and exclusive characters, settings, and action languages found within Holland's speech pertaining to sexual minorities. The major and minor themes

were identified. Themes that appear the most frequently are coded as major themes. I then identified the settings, characters, and actions that construct a fantasy theme.
According to Cragan and Shields (1992), SCT includes understanding that meaning, emotion, and motive are often manifested in the content of a message. Members of a group interpret meanings of fantasy themes the same way, and they also have similar emotional responses and attitudes towards the same fantasy. Foss describes that fantasy themes involve a creative interpretation of personal experiences and events (Foss, 2008). SCT turns what seems to be confusing into something organized (Foss, 2008, p.99).

Analysis

The speech by Holland was intended to instruct faculty and staff of Brigham Young University to unite in their beliefs and follow the leaders of the church (board of trustees of the university). It also included mentions and perceptions of sexual minorities. Through my analysis of Holland's speech, I found three major fantasy themes regarding sexual minorities. These include defending the faith, loyalty to church leadership and church teachings, and the perception that public awareness of sexual minorities creates divisiveness. The word and phrase "believers" and "members of the church" are often used interchangeably, referring to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Defending the Faith

The most prevalent fantasy theme was reflected in one of the subtitles of Holland's speech: "A trowel in one hand and a musket in the other." This major theme includes the recurring use of symbolic cues such as defend (5 uses), and the action is accompanied by "the kingdom," "the faith," and "marriage as the union of a man and a woman." It was also used as a noun—"defender," and "defender of the faith."
Since this fantasy theme uses the action word "defend," messaging that accompanies the action word incorporates a war-like parallel. Holland described how members should defend the faith by using an analogical musket. The word "musket" was mentioned seven times throughout the speech. Holland quoted Neal A. Maxwell, who created the metaphor between teachers at BYU and pioneer temple builders in Nauvoo:

> *In a way [Church of Jesus Christ] scholars at BYU and elsewhere are a little bit like the builders of the temple in Nauvoo, who worked with a trowel in one hand and a musket in the other. Today scholars building the temple of learning must also pause on occasion to defend the kingdom. I personally think this is one of the reasons the Lord established and maintains this university. The dual role of builder and defender is unique and ongoing. I am grateful we have scholars today who can handle, as it were, both trowels and muskets (Holland, 2021, para. 24).*

Holland also quoted another statement by Dallin H. Oaks—an apostle and leader of the church—given at a previous university leadership meeting at BYU: "I would like to hear a little more musket fire from this temple of learning " (Holland, 2021, para. 25). This sentence was addressed specifically to the audience in regards to the doctrine of the family and in defending the traditional marriage as the union of a man and a woman (Holland, 2021, para. 25).

Holland then continued to say that even though some faculties have fired their "muskets," after Oaks' address, they were aimed at the wrong audience: "Some others fired their muskets all right, but unfortunately they didn't always aim at those hostile to the Church. We thought a couple of stray rounds even went north of the Point of the Mountain!" (para. 25). "North of the Point of the Mountain" could be interpreted as Salt Lake City, which is home to the Mormon church headquarters. In paragraph 30, Holland again mentioned the phrase musket fire:

> *Musket fire? Yes, we will always need defenders of the faith, but "friendly fire" is a tragedy—and from time to time the Church, its leaders, and some of our colleagues within the university community have taken such fire on this campus. And sometimes it isn't friendly, wounding students and the parents of students... (Holland, 2021, para. 30).*

He then went on and endorsed, once again, the metaphor made by Neal A. Maxwell:

> My Brethren have made the case for the metaphor of musket fire, which I have endorsed yet again today. There will continue to be those who oppose our teachings—and with that will continue the need to define, document, and defend the faith (Holland, 2021, para. 31).

These examples illustrated how early members of the church had to protect and defend their land and faith by literally carrying both trowels and muskets while they worked. Holland urged members today to continue to do the same to defend the faith—specifically the topic of marriage between a man and a woman—although “musket fire” in this case is represented metaphorically.

Loyalty to Church Leadership and Church Teachings

Another fantasy theme addressed within the messaging of Holland’s speech is loyalty to church leadership and church teachings. The words “prophet” and “prophetic” were mentioned four times. Characters that were a part of church leadership also included “the Lord’s anointed,” “Neal A. Maxwell,” “Dallin H. Oaks,” “Russell M. Nelson,” “David A. Bednar,” and “President Kimball.” Because BYU is a private university and an extension of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the board of trustees consists of church leadership:

> *I said then and I say now that if we are an extension of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, taking a significant amount of sacred tithes and other precious human resources, all of which might well be expended in other worthy causes, surely our integrity demands that our lives “be absolutely consistent with and characteristic of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.” At a university there will always be healthy debate regarding a whole syllabus full of issues. But until “we all come [to] the unity of the faith, and . . . [have grown to] the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” our next best achievement will be to stay in harmony with the Lord’s anointed, those whom He has designated to declare Church doctrine and to guide Brigham Young University as its trustees.*

Holland described adhering to church leadership as “the next best achievement” for the faculty and staff of the university. This passage clearly demonstrates the relationship the university has with the church, and the values it holds—which are aligned with the characteristics of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Holland used 16 paragraphs to recount concerns conveyed to him by other members and their perception of sexual minorities. He expressed his love towards sexual minority students and parents; however, he then always emphasized the importance of following the leadership and church doctrine after he shares his love: “There are better ways to move toward crucially important goals in these very difficult matters—ways that show empathy and understanding for everyone while maintaining loyalty to prophetic leadership and devotion to revealed doctrine” (Holland, 2021, para. 30). He described that he had wept and prayed about the questions members have asked him: “Like many of you, we have spent hours with them, and we have wept and prayed and wept again in an effort to offer love and hope while keeping the gospel strong and the obedience to commandments evident in every individual life” (para. 28). Holland described that he and other leaders of the church are hearing the concerns members have brought up, but he pleaded with the university to stay true to the church that funds and supports it:

> *I will go to my grave pleading that this institution not only stands but stands unquestionably committed to its unique academic mission and to the Church that sponsors it. We hope it isn’t a surprise to you that your trustees are not deaf or blind to the feelings that swirl around marriage and the whole same-sex topic on campus—and a lot of other topics. I and many of my Brethren have spent more time and shed more tears on this subject than we could ever adequately convey to you this morning or any morning. We have spent hours discussing what the doctrine of the Church can and cannot provide the individuals and families struggling over this difficult issue (para. 26).*

Holland continues to emphasize loyalty to church teachings and principles in relations to sexual minorities in the church and shared his interpretation of Christ and the commandments:

> *For example, we have to be careful that love and empathy do not get interpreted as condoning and advocacy or that orthodoxy and loyalty to principle not be interpreted as unkindness or disloyalty to people. As near as I can tell, Christ never once withheld His love from anyone, but He also never once said to anyone, “Because I love you, you are exempt from keeping my commandments.” We are tasked with trying to strike that same sensitive, demanding balance in our lives. (Holland, 2021, para. 29)*

From this messaging, we can see that Holland encourages his audience to show love to sexual minorities while still being loyal to church principles. He described sexual minorities as “struggling” with a “difficult issue.” Even though Holland expressed his love for sexual minorities, he is firm on his stance with the gospel principles and doctrines of the church. He emphasized the importance of gospel principles and keeping the commandments. Maintaining loyalty to church leadership and principles is a prevalent theme in these passages.

Sexual Minority Awareness is Divisive

The knowledge and awareness of sexual minorities is deemed to be divisive in one of the fantasy themes found within the speech. Holland commented that his audience should refrain from participating in actions that will divide members more than unite them. Members of the church experience confusion, as Holland had described, to sexual minority parades and representation on campus: "…students and the parents of students—so many who are confused about what so much recent flag-waving and parade-holding on this issue means. My beloved friends, this kind of confusion and conflict ought not to be. Not here" (para. 30). He described the sexual minority parades as "confusion and conflicts" and how it must not be represented on campus. This theme also discusses and mentions the idea that sexual minorities experience a "challenge" and the topic is a complex "issue."

A BYU valedictorian came out in a convocation speech in 2019 (Haller, 2019). Holland addressed the experience:

> *If a student commandeers a graduation podium intended to represent everyone getting diplomas that day in order to announce his personal sexual orientation, what might another speaker feel free to announce the next year, until eventually anything goes? What might commencement come to mean—or not mean—if we push individual license over institutional dignity for very long? Do we simply end up with more divisiveness in our culture than we already have? And we already have far too much everywhere.*

He used wordings such as "commandeers" and "more divisiveness" in his messaging describing that individual license should not override institutional dignity. He felt that the valedictorian brought more divisiveness to the culture and community.

Even though Holland addressed sexual minority students in his speech and declared his love to them, he used the wording same-sex challenge (Holland, 2021, para. 28), struggling over this difficult issue (para. 26), and same-sex topic (para. 26). He did not mention sexual minority, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, allies, LGBTQIA+ commnuity, or other respective terms. Holland mentioned "same-sex" three times throughout the speech and was referring to the term generically and vaguely. He also addressed sexual minority students as "them," which could be interpreted or misinterpreted by some as an othering language: "…let me go no farther before declaring unequivocally my love and that of my Brethren for those who live with this same-sex challenge and so much complexity that goes with it. Too often the world has been unkind—in many instances crushingly cruel—to these, our brothers and sisters. Like many of you, we have spent hours with them…" (para. 28). This passage also shows and reiterates how "the world" is complex, contemporary, unkind, and unrighteous (para. 31) while the church is trying to help. He then described to his audience that things need to be kept in proportion: "But it will assist all of us—it will assist everyone—trying to provide help in this matter if things can be kept in some proportion and balance in the process" (para. 29).

Last, Holland urged the audience to avoid language and symbols that represent the LGBTQ+ community:

> *So it is with a little scar tissue of our own that we are trying to avoid—and hope all will try to avoid—language, symbols, and situations that are more divisive than unifying at the very time we want to show love for all of God's children (para. 26)*

In this passage, he stated that these "language, symbols, and situations" representing sexual minorities divide instead of unify. He used the word "avoid" to indicate that his audience should refrain from showing such support or condoning actions that represent sexual minorities.

Discussion

The fantasy themes present in Holland's speech messaging demonstrate the lens in which members and leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints view sexual minorities and members of the LGBTQ+ community. The fantasy themes also give insights into how members and leaders of the church view other topics that are inconsistent with church teachings. The findings shed light into how sexual minorities are perceived by the church culturally and especially at Brigham Young University.

The three dominant fantasy themes found in Holland's speech are to defend the faith, stay loyal to church leadership and its teachings, and to avoid LGBTQ+ language, acts, support, and symbols since they are perceived as divisive by church leadership. Holland urged his audience repeatedly to unite in their goals to help BYU students reach their divine potential (according to church doctrines) and to unite in following teachings revealed to church leaders.

In order for believers to defend themselves and their faith, they have to realize what they are defending themselves against. In this case, Holland presented LGBTQ+ protests (e.g. flag-waving and parading) as a factor that is confusing and inconsistent with gospel teachings (para. 30). He also described "some professors" and "some faculty" as characters in his speech who are shooting their muskets "north of the Point of the Mountain" (para. 25) when they support such protests.

Because BYU stands uniquely as a private institution operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the majority of the students (98%) are members of the church (Klundt et al., 2021). The university community and parents of students feel "betrayed" and "abandoned" by BYU (para. 16) if faculty or other students support the LGBTQ+ community since the official revealed doctrine of the family only teaches the traditional heterosexual romantic relationship between a man and a woman (Holland, 2021, para. 25). The university is committed to becoming a more inclusive place by establishing its new Office of Belonging, and President Worthen shared that the office will not only combat racism, but also strive to root out "prejudice of any kind, including that based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief and sexual orientation" (Jenkins, 2021). However, the statement is in some ways contrary to the university's own Honor Code—a document in which all students, faculty, and staff have committed to live their lives while a member of the university. The Honor Code asks that university students, faculty, and staff "live a chaste and virtuous life, including abstaining from any sexual relations outside a marriage between a man and a woman" ("Church educational system", n.d.). Furthermore, sexual minority students are not allowed to date on campus since "Same-sex romantic behavior cannot lead to eternal marriage and is therefore not compatible with the principles in the honor code" (Walch, 2020). Any same-sex romantic relationship is banned in or outside of marriage.

The church that sponsors the university still holds firmly to its stance on the doctrine of the family and marriage between a man and a woman, thus creating a complex environment in which sexual minorities might feel confused, lonely, and often have self-blaming thoughts about their own sexual orientation (Klundt et al., 2021). One unexpected positive note in this context is that Klundt (2021) found that sexual minority students who associate with religiosity turn out to have fewer negative outcomes in relation to suicidality rates. More religious sexual minority students are less likely to endorse suicidal intent and participate in the attempts thereof (Klundt et al., 2021, pg. 8). However, it should also be noted that this conflicted with a previous study that examined 250 Christian sexual minority youth who had significantly higher levels of self-harm behaviors than those who were not encountering Christian rituals and promptings from day to day (pg. 8).

This finding could also be interpreted to say that being more religious in this context (on BYU campus) could act as a protective layer through which the students could find both spiritual and social support (Klundt et al., 2021). The study also shows that religiosity is lower for sexual minorities, which might stem from the cognitive dissonance students experience and the difficulty to maintain high levels of religiosity in a context that does not permit LGBTQ+ romantic relationships (Klundt et al., 2021). Sexual minority students on BYU campus experience a high level of cognitive distress and dissonance, which may result in their lower levels of religiosity and quality of life.

Holland also described in his speech that conflicts arise due to the awareness of LGBTQ+ topics and he asks his audience to not subscribe to flag-waving and parade-holding activities. However, the act of increasing awareness of sexual minority students would not increase divisiveness but a sense of acceptance among the university community (Klundt et al., 2021). Researchers have found that the increased exposure of diverse thought and experiences relating to sexual minorities often lead to increased positive feelings toward sexual minority individuals (Klundt et al., 2021). People who know or have interacted with sexual minority students often have a more pleasant feeling associated with the LGBTQ+ community than those who have not been in contact with members of the community (pg. 9).

Holland seems to describe that conflicts and frictions arise from differing opinions—which is natural. However, instead of encouraging healthy discussions and creating space in which diverse opinions can thrive, Holland seemed to ask his audience to cease the conversation. He described flag-waving and parade-holding as confusion and conflicts when the flag-waving and parade-holding are ways students on campus try to show LGBTQ+ students that they are noticed and loved—since there are approximately 13% of BYU students who don't identify as strictly heterosexual (Klundt et al., 2021).

Conclusion

The three major fantasy themes—defend the faith, be loyal to church leaders and teachings, sexual minority awareness is divisive—seem to weave into one core ideal that the church doctrine and current teachings don't seem to create much room for sexual minority acceptance and relationships. Also in the process of uniting members of the community and the university, the needs of the marginalized are often overlooked.

If all students on BYU campus have the same opinions, the university is going to lack many important conversations. If awareness is not allowed on campus, students will find other ways to protest and show love to the LGBTQ+ community. Instead of assimilating students, the Office of Belonging was meant to portray inclusivity for people who are not "the same'' as everyone else. It is meant to combat "prejudice of any kind" (Jenkins, 2021). The university could be defining prejudice in a way that doesn't affect the way church doctrine is treating sexual minorities and does not apply to what the Honor Code is enforcing; however, the word "prejudice" includes a definition of unjust treatment of individuals ("Merriam-Webster," n.d.). Therefore, BYU's policies that treat sexual minority students differently would seem incompatible with the office's mission. The Office of Belonging was established to create space within the university for diversity to exist and hopefully thrive, but instead of "come as you are," the belonging statement seems to be accompanied with an invisible asterisk of "unless."

Sexual minority students at BYU all have different individual experiences on campus, some better than others. This complex topic requires sympathy and nuanced understanding from members of the BYU community, church members, and leadership of both the university and the church. Although people on the political spectrum have very different opinions on the topic, researchers have concluded that by raising awareness and affirming sexual minority students, it would not only likely have a direct impact on these students' quality of life, but it would also affect their suicidality, depression, anxiety, social life, and academic success (Klundt et al., 2021).

Increasing awareness, increasing exposure, and increasing interactions with sexual minorities will increase a sense of acceptance among sexual minority students (Klundt et al., 2021). The act of allowing differences to exist and thrive will not only create more understanding from the members of the campus community—it will create strength and power when students are able to learn in a diverse environment. Only then will BYU campus truly become a place where people feel loved and belonged.

Limitation and Future Research

This study did not seek to account for all aspects of the SCT nor does it have a comprehensive coverage of all the fantasy themes and rhetorical narratives of the Mormon church. It is focused on the major fantasy themes discovered in relation to Holland's speech given at the 2021 university conference and portrayal and mentions of sexual minorities.

Future research and recommendations include examining a larger sample size of church discourse concerning LGBTQ+ messaging throughout the history of the church, as well as surveying LGBTQ+ students regarding their experiences with harmful messaging on BYU campus or in religious settings. Other research disciplines could also use this study to examine other aspects and performances of sexual minority students, including mental health. This research shows that the experience of sexual minority students on BYU campus could be greatly improved by public awareness and support. As BYU continues to create a safe space for all students—including sexual minority students—–awareness will not only impact sexual minority students' academic success, but also their overall quality of life and lower their suicidality rate. Other students on campus will also come to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community and help to make BYU campus a safer and more welcoming place.

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