

GRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL

# GRJ

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Volume 9

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DISCLAIMER**

Welcome to the ninth volume of the Indiana University Southeast's Graduate Research Journal. This journal's mission is to provide a public platform for the best and most original research papers produced in the Business, Education, and Interdisciplinary Studies graduate programs. The editors of the GRJ would like to thank everyone who submitted work for consideration for this edition, with a special thank you to those whose contributions were selected to appear in this edition. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to Rebecca West and the IUS Design Center for the cover design and layout. We express our appreciation to our faculty advisors, Dr. Faye Camahalan, Dr. Saeed Tajdini, Dr. Sara Walsh. We would like to thank the university for its support of the work of graduate students and extend a special thank you to all university students whose activity fees help to make this journal possible.

The viewpoints expressed in these research papers belong solely to their authors and should not be constructed to represent the viewpoints of the editors of the GRJ, its faculty advisors, or the University as a whole.

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The IUS Graduate Research Journal is an interdisciplinary forum for the publication of original graduate work. We strongly encourage all IU Southeast graduate students to submit their work to the next volume, scheduled for publication in the spring of 2020. All types of papers will be considered, including research projects, literature reviews, and case studies. In addition to building your resume or curriculum vitae, the journal offers an opportunity for reaching a broader audience with your message about problems which matter to you. Maximum length is 5,000 words including references. Please send submissions as a Microsoft Word attachment in an email addressed to [webmis@ius.edu](mailto:webmis@ius.edu). Be sure to include in the body of your email your contact information, the title of your paper, and the name of the relevant course and its instructor. The submission deadline will correspond with the beginning of winter recess 2019.

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# Predicting the “Best Picture” Oscar Award Winner

Ables, Paul

## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

Paul Ables is a graduate student in the Master of Science in Strategic Finance program at Indiana University Southeast. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Bellarmine University in 2011, after graduating high school in Bardstown, KY.

Paul works for Humana on a data analytics team, after having previously worked for AmerisourceBergen and Ernst & Young in finance and audit roles.

Writing and editing have always been academic interests for this author, whether it was serving as Sports Editor for Bellarmine’s “The Concord” or winning a creative writing award in elementary school.

Regarding this research paper, Paul has had a lifetime adoration for movies and the Oscar award races. An attempt was made to more accurately predict the winner of each year’s “Best Picture” race, which fortunately proved to be successful. Writing this paper was a labor of love, as researching and writing about a passion makes the hours of research fly by!

Regression-based models are an important technique in helping society understand the cause-and-effect nature of so many things around them.

## INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Academy Awards generate global discussion over which films should be honored at “the Oscars”. This awards show has sustained its’ cultural impact by serving as an important “time stamp”; it honors the year’s best movies so that they can be remembered and embraced by future generations. Growing up with film-loving parents, I remember watching the Oscars and discussing old and new contenders for those golden trophies. As the year’s new winners were announced, our family was either a room united or a room divided through it all.

Never were we more divided than during the “Best Picture” announcement. The 2017 Oscar awards race was a year that we debated more than most. *La La Land* showcased many of the typical “Oscar winner” traits – a searing romance between stars, a nostalgic Hollywood setting, impeccable critic reception and impressive box office receipts. My parents rooted for the film as if they directed it themselves. As for *Moonlight*, I appreciated how it shined in direct contrast to prior nominees. Its’ cast was a collection of largely unknown actors. The story told of a poor, homosexual and minority male. The limited theatrical run failed to resonate with the public. *La La Land* led 2017 in total Oscar nominations. *Moonlight* was a difficult-to-appreciate underdog tale, albeit with stellar critical support.

These contrasting variables led to the crowning of *Moonlight* as “Best Picture” winner. The ensuing discussion of its’ merits was added to the infinite conversations enjoyed over the years with my parents. It is these memories, of discussion and disagreement and laughter over the “Best Picture” award, which motivated the research presented in this article.

The purpose of my research is to study the determinants of which Oscar-nominated film will win the annual “Best Picture”

honor. Efforts to collect data will focus on Oscar recognition and film classification. These can be further defined by four broad categories: genre, source, content, and recognition. Note that I am excluding award nominations from other voting bodies, such as the Golden Globes or Director's Guild of America. I uncovered other literature that incorporates those elements into their model. I am focusing strictly on the 7,258 voting members (Sheehan, 2017) of the Academy.

This article is organized as follows. Section 2 contains a review of academic literature related to the film industry. Section 3 defines the model, population and variables. Section 4 presents the results of the model. Section 5 concludes the discussion with insights and future research ideas.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Upon reviewing the literature, one article provided relevant insights to my specific research. In his study of Academy Awards trends, Iain Pardoe attempted to predict the "Best Picture" Oscar award winner and other major categories (Pardoe & Simonton, 2008). His approach differs because of the inclusion of other award show variables, including the Golden Globes.

Pardoe's model correctly estimated 70% of the "Best Picture" winners from 1938-2006. This is very impressive, but there is a crucial consideration warranting mention. The Academy agreed to increase the number of "Best Picture" nominees from five to a maximum of ten films, beginning in 2010. This format change increases the difficulty of predicting the winner, as more films are up for the honor. My model forges ahead into this new reality, whereas the other model stops before this rule change.

Worthy of consideration were some Oscar nominee statistics

relevant to my topic. When estimating the “Best Director” award winner, 17% of nominees for that award had no prior directing nominations; 24% of nominees did have prior nominations. As for the “Best Actor” Oscar, 20% of nominees had no prior lead acting nominations; 22% of nominees did have prior nominations. I considered this later when testing variables correlating a “Best Picture” win with a prior nomination for either “Best Director” or “Best Actor”. As you will see in Section 4, the above trends do not replicate across all award races.

Another journal article reviewed for this study was N.A. Pangarker’s model for predicting box office receipts. This was initially relevant to my collection of box office data. I hoped to use worldwide adjusted receipts but found it difficult to properly adjust global revenues with time period data. The challenge comes from converting numerous foreign currencies into one adjusted figure. In Pangarker’s literature review, they cite research by Terry et al. that studied a sample of films from 2001 – 2003 (Pangarker & Smit, 2013). One conclusion was that future research should help make strides to more accurately measure international movie box office receipts. Pangarker’s approach was to use the OpusData film database. As I will elaborate more on in Section 3, this database is not freely open to the public.

## **DEFINING THE MODEL**

### *Population*

The general population of this model is all films nominated for the “Best Picture” Oscar award for a given time period. However, defining that time period with logical theory was a challenge. Time played a factor, as manual data collection was a slow process. Also, this class only lasted for one semester. Therefore, data collection on every Oscar-nominated “Best Picture” film was not feasible.

A minimum of 30 observations were needed, with one observation representing one year of “Best Picture” nominated films. Initially, 40 years of data were to be collected. This would consist of all 240 “Best Picture” nominees from 1978-2017. The year 1978 was chosen as a reasonable dividing line between modern film-making and those that came prior, due to the theatrical release of “Star Wars”. This film pioneered modern visual effects and re-defined the now popular summer blockbuster season.

The 2018 Oscar awards occurred before the conclusion of this research. Therefore, 2018’s data was added to the population. This finalized 1978-2018 as the defined movie era presented by this research.

### *Variables*

The dependent variable used for this model was a binary option of “1 or 0”. If a film nominated for “Best Picture” actually won the award, then it earned a “1”. If the film lost the award, it earned a “0”. Therefore, the model’s functional form would be a binary logistic regression.

As for independent variables, they were initially grouped into the following sub-categories:

- Classification (genre, source, release date, time length)
- Content (MPAA rating and type of content: violence, sexuality, language, substance abuse)
- Financial (worldwide gross, domestic gross, film budget)
- Lead Actor Demographics (gender, age, race)
- Prior Oscar Recognition for Crew (director, lead actor, cinematographer, composer)

Current Oscar Recognition for Film (total nominations, individual Oscar award nomination)

Film source data was collected from 'The-Numbers' website. Adjusted domestic gross box office data was collected from 'Box Office Mojo'. All other variables were collected from 'The Internet movie database'. All data was collected manually, due to limited movie database options.

In total, 54 variables were considered when running the initial model. Based on prior research mentioned in Section 2, a strong correlation was expected between the "Best Picture" winner and Oscar nominations. As for the remaining independent variables, limited prior research was available regarding their impact on the dependent variable. This warranted testing for each variable.

*Model*

The final equation used for this model is shown next. Positive signs were expected for each coefficient, as an occurrence of these variables should increase the film's chance of winning "Best Picture".

$$\text{Best Picture Winner} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{FS\_Factual} + \beta_2\text{FS\_Play} + \beta_3\text{Comedy} + \beta_4\text{Drama} + \beta_5\text{Romance} + \beta_6\text{MPAA\_Violence} + \beta_7\text{Oscar\_Noms\_Leader} + \beta_8\text{Best\_Director} + \beta_9\text{Supporting\_Actor} + \beta_{10}\text{Film\_Editing} + \beta_{11}\text{Sound\_Mixing} + \beta_{12}\text{Director\_AND\_Lead\_No\_Noms}$$

This chart explains each of the 12 independent variables in more depth:

Coefficient Variable Name		Variable Description
$\beta_1$	FS_Factual	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if the film's source is based on a factual book/article, 0 if not
$\beta_2$	FS_Play	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if the film's source is based on a play, 0 if not

Coefficient Variable Name		Variable Description
$\beta_3$	Comedy	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if genre is a comedy, 0 if not
$\beta_4$	Drama	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if genre is a drama, 0 if not
$\beta_5$	Romance	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if genre is a romance, 0 if not
$\beta_6$	MPAA_Violence	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if the MPAA warns viewers for inclusion of violence, 0 if not
$\beta_7$	Oscar_Noms_Leader	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if the film is either leading/tied for the most total Oscar nominations that year, 0 if not
$\beta_8$	Best_Director	Film's number of nominations for the "Best Director" Oscar award
$\beta_9$	Supporting_Actor	Film's number of nominations for the "Best Supporting Actor" Oscar award
$\beta_{10}$	Film_Editing	Film's number of nominations for the "Film Editing" Oscar award
$\beta_{11}$	Sound_Mixing	Film's number of nominations for the "Sound Mixing" Oscar award
$\beta_{12}$	Director_AND_Lead_NoNoms	Binary 1 or 0; 1 if the film's director and lead actor/actress have 0 combined prior Oscar nominations, 0 if not

To better understand these variables and their data, a table of sample means is shown below:

### Report

	FS_Factual	FS_Play	Comedy	Drama	Romance	MPAA_Violence
Mean	.06	.05	.10	.24	.08	.52
N	241	241	241	241	241	241
Std. Deviation	.242	.228	.300	.428	.276	.501

	Best_Director	Supp_Actor	Film_Editing	Sound_Mixing	Director_AND_Lead_NoNoms
Mean	.69	.45	.59	.34	.32
N	241	241	241	241	241
Std. Deviation	.462	.546	.494	.476	.469

With the motivation in place, functional form chosen, variables selected and population set, the regression is ready to be tested. The next section will showcase the regression results.

**RESULTS**

By using the binary logistic regression, the results appear differently than they would using the standard Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). There is an initial classification table, known as the “null model”, which estimates the percent correct using no predictors and only the intercepts (Introduction to SAS, 2018). The null model appears as follows:

Observed			Predicted		
			BP_Winner		Percentage Correct
			0	1	
Step 0	BP_Winner 0	0	200	0	100.0
		1	41	0	.0
	Overall Percentage				83.0

The null model assumes that 100% of the losing films and 0% of the winning films will be correctly predicted. The overall “hurdle rate” for our model to surpass is the 83% blended success rate, shown above. If the model equation fails to predict better than this rate, more work is likely needed.

Fortunately, the actual regression equation performs admirably. The next table shows the actual predictive results, known as the “Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients”:

Observed			Predicted		
			BP_Winner		Percentage Correct
			0	1	
Step 1	BP_Winner 0	0	190	10	95.0
		1	14	27	65.9
	Overall Percentage				90.0

Of the 41 “Best Picture” award winners in this population, the model accurately predicted 27 of them (65.9% success rate). Of the 200 award losers, the model accurately predicted 190 of them (95.0% success rate). In total, this model yields a blended success rate of 90.0%. Given that 90% exceeds the null model’s “hurdle rate” of 83%, this model appears to be worthy of further analysis.

This success rate is in line with the aforementioned predictive model from Pardoe and Simonton. Considering their model didn’t face the difficulty of 2010’s increase to ten film nominees, and these results appear even better.

The next step is to observe the coefficient and significance results of the independent variables. Analyzing these results will illustrate why this model is relatively successful at choosing the winner of the Oscar’s most heralded prize. See below for the “Variables in the Equation” table and results:

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step	FS_Factual	2.598	.989	6.896	1	.009	13.434
1 <sup>a</sup>	FS_Play	2.271	1.026	4.896	1	.027	9.687
	Drama	1.031	.612	2.833	1	.092	2.804
	Best_Director	2.442	1.017	5.760	1	.016	11.494
	Supp_Actor	.836	.438	3.641	1	.056	2.306
	Film_Editing	2.060	.779	6.987	1	.008	7.849
	Sound_Mixing	1.028	.575	3.191	1	.074	2.794
	Oscar_Noms_Leader	2.290	.632	13.132	1	.000	9.879
	MPAA_Violence	.846	.524	2.603	1	.107	2.330
	Romance	1.855	1.093	2.882	1	.090	6.390
	Comedy	2.033	.883	5.305	1	.021	7.638
	Director_AND_Lead_No_Noms	2.176	.599	13.174	1	.000	8.809
	Constant	-9.291	1.619	32.929	1	.000	.000

With the slight exception of MPAA\_Violence, 11 of the 12 variables are significant at the 90% confidence interval. 7 of the 12 variables are significant at the 95% confidence interval. As for the coefficient values, all make a positive impact on determining the “Best Picture” award winner. Each independent variable contributes strongly to the model’s 90.0% prediction success rate.

The upcoming sub-sections will investigate and summarize the findings of each independent variable sub-category: genre, source, content, and awards recognition.

### *Genre*

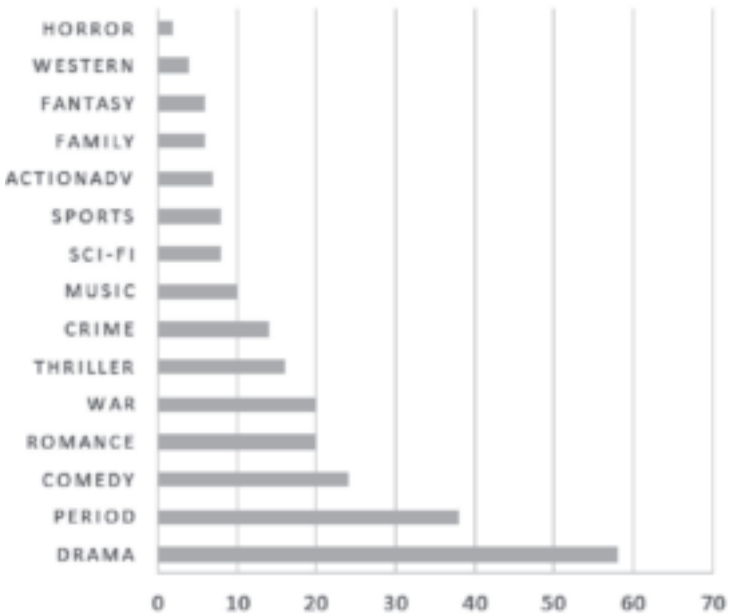
This was one of the most challenging variables to measure, as genre is not a black-or-white determination. Most films are a blend of many genres, such as a war drama or a sci-fi fantasy. However, I was determined to measure this based on the belief that certain genre classifications are more likely than others to win the Oscar for “Best Picture”.

The ‘Box Office Mojo’ website categorizes each film in their database with one genre description. This was manually recorded for the population, then summarized into 15 broad categories.

I expected to see “Drama” at the top, given that 24% of all films within the population are classified as such. Meanwhile, “Period” and “Comedy” movies make up 16% and 10% of the population, respectively. However, you don’t see “Period” on the final model’s list of coefficients. In its’ place is “Romance”, despite only appearing in 8% of the population. This was surprising, as I expected to see “Period” films as one of the most frequent winners.

The following chart lists each of these 15 genres, in descending frequency order:

## "BEST PICTURE" NOMINEES, BY GENRE (1978-2018)



	Drama	Period	Comedy	Romance	War	Thriller	Crime	Music
Genre	58	38	24	20	20	16	14	10

	Sci-Fi	Sports	ActionAdv	Family	Fantasy	Western	Horror
Genre	8	8	7	6	6	4	2

Refer to the following table to see the four leading genres and how they fare in "Best Picture":

Genre	Winners	Losers	% of Winners	% of Losers
Drama	9	49	22%	25%
Period	8	30	20%	15%
Comedy	4	20	10%	10%
Romance	4	16	10%	8%

“Period” movies were the most significant genre to be excluded from the final model. However, it neither held the predictive value or the statistical significance of the three other genres: “Drama”, “Romance” and “Comedy”. All other genres lagged behind in these areas, and thus were also excluded.

On a final genre-related note, there are four categories which have never won the “Best Picture” Oscar. They are as follows:

Genre	Winners	Losers	% of Winners	% of Losers
ActionAdv	0	7	0%	4%
Family	0	6	0%	3%
Horror	0	2	0%	1%
Sci-Fi	0	8	0%	4%

Because they have never won the award, I wondered if they warranted inclusion in the final model as a negative indicator. For example, a film was far less likely to win the “Best Picture” trophy if it was a “Horror” film. This was attempted for each of the four variables listed above. None tested statistically significant, and they negatively hindered the predictive value. They were excluded from the final model.

### *Film Source*

Film source data was collected to uncover the types of stories that movie viewers were most drawn to. Original and adapted screenplays are the two broad categories of a film source. Hollywood is often inspired by previously-written works from other mediums, such as books and non-fiction events. Fortunately, the website ‘The-Numbers’ collects this data for each movie in its’ database. This resulted in 8 separate film source types being used in the population. Three sources (“Television”, “Musical”, “Remake”) registered as less than 1% of the population, so they were excluded from further study.

The two film sources included in the final model, “Factual” and “Play”, appear less frequently than the other categories. However, breaking down the sources by their respective percent of winners and losers perhaps highlights the answer to our question:

Source	Winners	Losers	% of Winners	% of Losers
Original	16	77	39%	39%
Fiction	12	72	29%	36%
Factual	3	12	7%	6%
Play	3	10	7%	5%

When trying to predict a winner unique from predicting the loser, the variable may produce a higher percentage in the winner column than in the loser column. If so, that variable may assist the model in predicting a winner. This appears to be the case for “Factual” and “Play”, as both film sources had relatively few nominees in total, but a higher percentage of those won the Oscar. If a film is a rare nominee based on either factual writing or a play, its’ chances of winning are higher than that of other film sources with a historically high percentage of losing.

### *Content*

The logic explained above about film sources also appears here in film content. This category consists of the four major types of content warnings that the MPAA will comment on: sexuality, violence, language and substance abuse. Of the four, substance abuse occurred far more infrequently than the other three and thus was eliminated from further analysis.

As you can derive from the model results, violence was the sole warning type appearing in the final model. Sexuality occasionally flashed as significant within perhaps a 70-80% confidence interval, but never increased the equation’s predictive value. Language was less significant than either of these.

The margin between violence and sexuality appears slim, but enough to warrant the inclusion of one and the exclusion of the other. Violence has a higher percentage of winners and a lower percentage of losers, comparing to the other warning types. Refer to the table below:

<b>MPAA Warning</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Losers</b>	<b>% of Winners</b>	<b>% of Losers</b>
Violence	28	97	68%	49%
Sexuality	27	105	66%	53%
Language	28	145	68%	73%

### *Award Recognition*

Initially, the variable “Total Oscar nominations” for the current film was heavily tested for inclusion in the model. It was somewhat significant, but the equation’s predictive value was not able to surpass 60% success with that variable. By analyzing common traits of the losing “Best Picture” nominees, it was apparent that the majority had up to double-digit total Oscar nominations. They just happened to face a film with even more nominations, indicating an elite “Best Picture” contender. Therefore, this variable was replaced with a binary “1 or 0” question. Which film led or was tied for the lead in overall Oscar nominations in their respective year? Once this variable replaced the old version, the model’s predictive value increased to over 60% and was more statistically significant than prior.

As for individual Oscar awards, the intent was to identify award nominations that indicated a “Best Picture” win better than others. As is illustrated below, that is exactly what occurred:

<b>MPAA Warning</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Losers</b>	<b>% of Winners</b>	<b>% of Losers</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Film Editing*	38	103	93%	52%	41%
Sound Mixing*	26	57	63%	29%	35%
Supporting Actor*	29	79	71%	40%	31%

<b>MPAA Warning</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Losers</b>	<b>% of Winners</b>	<b>% of Losers</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Best Director*	39	128	95%	64%	31%
Cinematography	27	75	66%	38%	28%
Score	24	76	59%	38%	21%
Makeup	11	13	27%	7%	20%
Lead Actor	23	85	56%	43%	14%

\* = included in final model

This table is sorted by the final column, "Difference". It shows which award nominations result in a high percentage of winners and a low percentage of losers. The four awards scoring highest in this measure warranted inclusion in the final model, as they were both statistically significant and added predictive value. For comparisons sake, you can see the next-highest scoring awards in this measure. However, they were excluded due to not adding enough predictive value to warrant inclusion.

Note that 95% of the "Best Picture" winners in the population were also nominated for the "Best Director" Oscar. That is somewhat expected, as the two awards tend to correlate closely. What was most surprising is that 93% of "Best Picture" winners were also nominated for the "Film Editing" Oscar. The key takeaway is to focus on these four awards in the upcoming Oscar race. If a film is nominated in any or all of these categories, it has a historically high chance of winning.

Lastly, there is a unique variable warranting explanation. The count of pre-film Oscar nominations for the director and lead actor/actress were measured. This relates to the Pardoe article referenced in Section 2. Reasonable expectations would be that a director or actor with numerous prior Oscar nominations would be more likely to win "Best Picture" than a peer with no prior

nominations. Shockingly, the exact opposite proved to be true. See the table below:

<b>Pre-Film Noms</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Losers</b>	<b>% of Winners</b>	<b>% of Losers</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Director >= 1 nom	11	87	27%	44%	-17%
Director = 0 noms	30	108	73%	54%	19%
Lead >= 1 nom	17	109	41%	55%	-13%
Lead = 0 noms	24	91	59%	46%	13%

Directors of “Best Picture” nominated films win much more often if they have zero prior Oscar nominations, as compared to a more renowned director. In addition, directors having prior nominations decrease the predictive value of the model as they’re more correlated with losing films. This same trend occurred with acting leads. The best explanation is that more Hollywood members have zero nominations than have one or more nominations. Yet for the purposes of this model, it helps a film’s chances to have a fresh face in the directing and lead acting chairs. Combining these two conditions into one binary “1 or 0” choice proved to be more beneficial to the model than by stating them separately.

## **CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The predictive results of this study exceeded expectations. By relying solely on Oscar nominations and general film characteristics, there was a high chance of omitting other important variables. Instead, a forecasting model emerged that has predicted 66% of “Best Picture” winners and 95% of losers over the previous 40 years. Even when there were only five annual nominees, each film had a 20% mathematical chance at taking home the award. Now that up to ten films can be nominated, each nominee’s chances fall to as little as 10%. Considering the high prediction rate and statistical significance of its’ variables, this model hopefully adds

value to the economic film industry discussion.

However, there are more practical uses of these results hidden in the residuals. Predictive values are generated for each film in the population. This value can be used to determine which films were favored to win in their respective “Best Picture” awards race. This finding produces exciting results, such as identifying which films were the mathematical “runner-ups” or “last-place” finishers in their year.

Taking the next step, the predictive values can also be compared across the entire population, not just specific years. Therefore, films from across Oscar history can be ranked versus one another as the “heaviest favorite” or “biggest underdog” to win the award. Combined with the identified “runner-ups” and “last-place” films, true insights can be ascertained from using these values.

For example, history remembers Oscar races that surprised the general public. Previously mentioned in the introduction, the 2017 “Best Picture” race seemed to be La La Land’s to lose. Yet according to the predictive values from this model, more people should have predicted a Moonlight victory:

	1980	2017	1985
<b>Winner</b>	Kramer vs. Kramer	Moonlight	Amadeus
<b>Predicted Value</b>	54.0%	75.9%	58.8%
<b>Runner-Up</b>	Apocalypse Now	La La Land	The Killing Fields
<b>Predicted Value</b>	14.7%	39.0%	23.2%
<b>Win Margin</b>	39.3%	36.9%	35.6%
<b>Predicted?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes

Moonlight’s 2017 “Best Picture” victory was the opposite of an underdog story. Its’ predicted chance to win of 76% far exceeded La La Land’s 39% chance. This “win margin percentage” is equivalent to Amadeus’ 1985 victory in the category over its’ nearest competitor.

In contrast, my parents were devastated in 2009 when *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* lost the “Best Picture” race to *Slumdog Millionaire*. The model’s predictive values agree with them:

	1981	2009	1978
<b>Winner</b>	Ordinary People	Slumdog Millionaire	Annie Hall
<b>Predicted Value</b>	24.0%	60.4%	28.9%
<b>Runner-Up</b>	Raging Bull	Curious Case of Benjamin Button	The Turning Point
<b>Predicted Value</b>	35.6%	71.4%	36.3%
<b>Win Margin</b>	-11.6%	-11.0%	-7.4%
<b>Predicted?</b>	No	No	No

The Brad Pitt-helmed contender was favored to win by an 11% margin. Yet there was an immeasurable factor that influenced the outcome. Or perhaps, there are omitted variables that could improve the predictive results of this model and others.

That is one of the challenges I present to future researchers on this topic. There are infinite possible variables to measure when predicting Oscar or box office success. Continued efforts should be made to not only identify new variables, but to also make the data more accessible than it currently is. By doing so, more efficient progress could be made on film industry research.

In addition, this population was limited to 40 years of data. If over 60 years of data were collected, that opens the door for an exciting opportunity: creating two separate regression models with 30 or more observations in each. These models would represent starkly contrasting periods of Oscar history. So many interesting insights could be uncovered by comparing the significant variables of one equation to another. For example, the gender and age of a lead actor failed to register significantly in this model. Perhaps those may re-appear as important if measuring from the 1940s-1960s?

Perhaps the genres and film sources would differ in each model, or the Oscar award nominations would change across eras. This approach is an exciting one to consider.

As for this current research, there are some interesting questions to ponder. Why does film editing matter more in a “Best Picture” winner than a well-written original screenplay? Is the recent increase in minority acting and directing nominees confusing or refining new predictive models? Is there a better way to adjust box office receipts to account for a movie’s global impact? These questions and more will hopefully be some of the takeaways that are applied to future research on the film industry.

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# We Are Your Citizens, Too

Aponte, Jose

## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

Jose Aponte was born in Caguas, Puerto Rico. He and his mother migrated to the U.S. mainland, specifically Brooklyn, N.Y., when Aponte was a young child. He was the oldest out of five children.

From a young age, Aponte's family instilled a strong sense of pride about being Puerto Rican. He was taught by his family all about their culture, their food, and their music. It was a traditional oral history.

Aponte was taught that all Puerto Ricans are, in varying degrees, part Spanish from the soldiers that came to conquer the island, part African from the slave trade those soldiers created, and part indigenous Taino Indian. These facts were not widely taught in the New York City public school system.

Puerto Ricans all have a fire for who they are. It is why they felt a visceral pain for their families and friends after Hurricane Maria ravaged the island and Puerto Rico was not treated as an equal part of the United States in regards to the recovery efforts. This is a pain they still feel today.

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Jennifer Ortiz, assistant professor of criminal justice, was not able to reach her grandfather for three months after Hurricane Maria hit the island of Puerto Rico. He was without power, water or food. The people from the town of Naguabo did what all Puerto Ricans do in times like these, they took care of each other. Ortiz's grandfather was alive, and Ortiz said she was relieved.

Ortiz was able to finally get a flight to Puerto Rico in April 2018. "The island looks like it was set on fire. It's not the same luscious green," she said.

Everywhere she drove, she said there was no power. She saw barbers cutting hair outside, and signs that read, "Without power since Maria, PLEASE HELP:"

## **TWEETING TRUMP**

On Thursday, Sept. 13, the nation awoke to the common flurry of early morning tweets from President Donald Trump. But on this day, there was one tweet that was so controversial that members of the GOP, like Florida Gov. Rick Scott, are distancing themselves from the president.

Trump tweeted his refusal to acknowledge the deaths of nearly 3,000 U.S. citizens from Hurricanes Irma and Maria that hit the island of my birth, Puerto Rico. In the president's tweet he said that when he visited the island there were only six to 18 deaths at the time, and the death toll did not grow until later that year.

Trump also took the opportunity to blame Democrats for trying to make him “look as bad as possible.”

Being on the eastern tip of the Leeward Islands, the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and its over 3.3 million residents are no strangers to hurricanes. But on Sept. 20, 2017, during the height of the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season, the island experienced a category 4 hurricane that changed the lives of thousands of Puerto Ricans: Hurricane Maria.

Hurricane Maria was the second storm to hit the island in a 10-day period. The first hurricane, Irma, was a Category 5 storm that gave Puerto Rico a glancing blow. Even though Irma was not a direct hit, the island still experienced rains driven by 100 mph winds. There was an island-wide power loss, and a loss of access to fresh water. Irma claimed four lives.

In the days before Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, its strength fluctuated between Category 4 and 5. When it finally hit, it was a Category 4 hurricane with sustained winds of 155 mph. While not the strongest category of storms, Hurricane Maria was still powerful enough to completely collapse the Puerto Rican power grid, which was already weakened from Hurricane Irma and cut off all drinkable water to the islands’ residents.

In the days and weeks that followed, the relief and recovery efforts were sluggish at best. There were several hurdles that needed navigation. One hurdle was the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, or the Jones Act. This act basically requires that any shipments to Puerto Rico must be off-loaded on the mainland United States and placed on a different ship for the last leg to the Port of San Juan. The Jones Act adds time and cost to any product being sent.

According to an online article by The Atlantic from Oct. 4, 2017, the Jones act was not waived until Sept 28, 2017 eight days after Hurricane Maria hit. Trump waived the act for only 10 days.

Relief supplies arrived, but they sat on the docks waiting to be distributed. A report by NPR from, Sept 28, 2017, "Diesel is short. Drivers are scarce. And authorities say some roads are still impassable."

In the same article by The Atlantic, on Sept. 28 of that year, the U.S. Army assigned Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan to lead the military response in Puerto Rico. The military response consisted of soldiers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the hospital ship USNS Comfort.

CNN published an article on Aug. 14, 2018 that read that PREPA, the power authority in Puerto Rico, had restored the power grid 11 months after its collapse, but that is not entirely true.

The grid is back up and running, but according to some members of my family in Puerto Rico, they still do not have full restoration of power because they lack the essential final connection from the grid to the structure. The time frame for this final repair is unknown but my family is working with PREPA to get the work completed.

## **MI FAMILIA**

After being born in my grandmother's house in Caguas, Puerto Rico, my mother and I came to the "States" in 1969 when I was an infant. We already had family in New York, so my mom went to join them. Through the years, my family grew to include my mom, stepdad, and three brothers and a sister. The kids grew up and left the nest, and my mom moved back to Puerto Rico.

The vast majority of my family -11, aunts and uncles, as well as an unknown number of cousins and extended family members are, still on Puerto Rico. I have one uncle in Florida and some cousins in the greater New York area. Nearly everyone else is still in the same town I was born in.

I have a large family, which made the worry so much greater once Hurricane Maria hit. All normal means of communication were nonexistent. We couldn't call in, and they couldn't call out. My family members in the United States and I were beside ourselves. My sister went to the airport in Orlando everyday for about a week trying to get a flight to Puerto Rico to check on our relatives, but all flights were reserved for relief personnel. We did not hear from my mother until 12 days after the storm.

My mom got a ride from her brother, a police officer in San Juan, to a cell tower near the San Juan airport to call us. The call was only long enough to hear her say, "I'm okay and the house is still up." It would be approximately two months before we heard from my mom again. She currently resides in Florida with my sister because her home is still without power.

## **DEATH TOLL CONTROVERSY**

It stands to reason that the death toll grew so large because of the collateral deaths. These deaths include people that died due to lack of reliable power or fresh water.

I feel the president only counted those that died from direct hurricane-related incidents, like a tree falling on a house and killing the occupants. What he and many others fail to realize is that without power and fresh water, normal life cannot be supported.

Multiple news outlets - from the New York Times to the Associated Press - all document the lack of basic utilities, including the two most basic ones: power and water. Medicines went bad, air conditioning did not operate, and according to an article (by CNN) from, Dec. 20, 2017, morgues were so overwhelmed with the dead that some morgues just buried the bodies.

Independent studies have been conducted by Harvard and the Puerto Rican government, and both came to the same conclusion: there were many more victims of Hurricane Maria than six to 18.

President Trump has consistently insulted our Puerto Rican citizens, first by throwing paper towels at them, then by saying that the Puerto Rican relief efforts are "breaking the budget." The non-acknowledgment of the deaths of our citizens is just another slap in the face in a long line of slaps.

The Encyclopedia Britannica website states that Puerto Rico has been a colony of some nation, first for nearly 400 years by Spain and now by the United States since 1898.

The suffering was and still is great. The repercussions of Hurricane Maria will be felt for generations.

I was frantic until I heard from my mother and relieved when she left our ancestral home. But we Puerto Ricans have a saying: Puerto Rico se levanta. This saying has become our purpose: it means Puerto Rico will rise.

I do not claim to have a solution, but something has to change. Regardless of your political affiliation, deaths are deaths and they should be acknowledged and mourned.





# The Interdisciplinary Approach to Addressing Poverty

Fellmeth, Jennifer

## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

Jennifer Fellmeth is a graduate student in the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies program concentrating on Organizational Leadership and Communication. After receiving a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy in 1996 and practicing as an occupational therapist at Southern Indiana Rehab Hospital (SIRH) for 21 years, she decided to return to the role of student at IUS in the graduate program.

Currently, she is the program coordinator of the NeuroRehab Program at SIRH, an outpatient specialty program that assists those individuals who have experienced an acquired brain injury return to their previous held roles in their home and community and transition back to school, work, and community engagement.

It is Jennifer's hope that with her newly acquired skills, she will continue to improve rehabilitation services through program development and enable more individuals to gain access to healthcare resources along their journey to recovery.

## INTRODUCTION

In reviewing the Common Experience theme, the main underlying problem is poverty. In history, many developed countries have determined that a third world country would best be served by establishing industries, like the garment factories, without a careful study of culture, available infrastructure, and stable governments—hence a framework that provides regulation and overall support to the population working in the industries. Multiple problems have arisen as a result: namely substandard working conditions, low levels of education, use of child labor, lack of a living wage, lack of basic health care needs, and the unfavorable treatment of the laborers (which includes incidences of abuse).

Symptoms of poverty can be described within the established disciplines of the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences which can assist us in concretely defining the symptoms in an universal context. But to adequately explore these symptoms and potentially consider the daunting task of generating solutions that would ultimately produce the universal treatment and value of all human beings in society, one must consider the influence of multiple disciplines.

An interdisciplinary approach is necessary when generating potential solutions but also when engaged in general discussions of the symptoms of poverty, to define the intricate features with the ultimate result being an accepted and enforced universal treatment of all human beings across all cultures and communities in society.

It is the “social responsibility” of each individual to incorporate pieces of each discipline or approaches when addressing these issues versus placing blame on one set of knowledge or ideas or using a single approach. In the following paragraphs, each discipline is utilized in order to examine different symptoms of poverty and the multi-dimensional aspects of the conditions.

## **NATURAL SCIENCES**

When considering the natural science perspective, as a result of poverty, the focus is on the substandard working conditions and their negative impact on the physical and mental health of the working population. According to a study by Ahmed and Raihan (2014), for the financial year of 2010-2011, 78.5% of the total income of Bangladesh is from the garment sector and 80% of those workers who support the income are female.

The working environment contains occupational hazards that include long working hours, congested and overcrowded work spaces, absence of health facilities and safety procedures (i.e. ergonomic work patterns), lack of safe drinking water, unavailable psychological counseling, and the absence of rudimentary first aid supplies such as a first aid box (Ahmed & Raihan, 2014, p. 55). These working conditions manifest themselves in the following physical complaints: headaches, eye strains, musculoskeletal issues, malnutrition, fainting, respiratory complaints, gastrointestinal issues, hepatitis, fungal infections, skin problems like dermatitis, and chest pain (Ahmed & Raihan, 2014, p. 44).

The job pressure many of these women experience in order to fulfill their daily work target or be at risk for being penalized, also places this working group under mental stress and anguish (Ahmed & Raihan, 2014, p. 45). If the impact of the inhumane treatment of these individuals is taken into consideration, namely women, a second concern involving economics can be addressed. This involves the focus of another discipline, the social sciences.

The negative effect of multiple health consequences as a result of poor working conditions and lack of resources is reflected in the individual worker's speed and efficiency during the production of goods. While the immediate focus of the substandard working conditions is on the health status of the workers, the byproduct of

allowing substandard working environments has a negative effect on the growth of business and industry, the area of economics.

A second symptom of poverty when considering the natural science perspective includes child labor. Hodes and Sturrock (2016) explore the impact of child labor itself on the overall mental health of children; not surprisingly, it is found to be strongly associated with reduced mental health outcomes in two out of the seven studies reviewed during a systematic literature review (p. 1271). Certain risk factors are identified that include: "involvement in domestic labour, younger age, and greater intensity of work which could be attributed to the potential of child labour to cause isolation, low self-esteem, and perception of an eternal locus of control" (Hodes & Sturrock, 2016, p. 1271).

Similar to the symptoms of poverty previously mentioned, different fields of study must be considered when determining potential resolutions to the child labor and the negative mental health issues. Areas in both the social sciences and humanities need to be considered when addressing this issue such as political science, economics, ethics, culture, and history. Alternative ideas to be considered include: the impact on families' financial situations if child labor bans go into effect, the development of government policies that reduce overall poverty versus directly targeting child labor, or regulations that focus on eliminating specific types of labor, such as eradicating harmful forms of domestic work which encourage isolation and abuse (Hodes & Sturrock, 2016). The individual child worker, by himself or herself, does not have the power and influence to make changes on this level.

Lastly, in regards to the mental health of female garment workers, a study by Akhter, Rutherford, Kumkum, Bromwich, Anwar, Rahman, and Chu (2017), found that women report stress, anxiety, restlessness, and experience thoughts of suicide due to the burden

of both the inadequate work conditions and being separated from their families. Many of these women actively choose to relocate to urban areas in order to obtain employment in the factories but are forced to leave their children with family members due to the risky conditions and lack of child care (Akhter, et. al. pp. 571-579). Interestingly enough, in taking an interdisciplinary approach, while making great sacrifices to their mental health and maintaining societal positions mandated by their culture, these women support and uphold the national economy of Bangladesh with literally no support from governmental entities.

## **HUMANITIES**

The next perspective, the humanities, can be used to explore the following symptoms: lack of educational opportunities and codes of conduct which lead to worker exploitation. The use of media to pursue the concept of social responsibility is also explored.

In the introduction, a lack of educational opportunities, notably for children in developing countries, is identified as one of the symptoms of poverty. Early childhood education (ECE) policy, as a recent initiative in Bangladesh, recognizes play as an important element of early learning and development (Chowdhury and Rivalland, 2012, p. 115). ECE is a novel concept in Bangladesh, as children in those cultures are involved in daily activities that generate income for their families versus going to school. The schools that are available are over-crowded and have limited resources (Chowdhury & Rivalland, 2012).

In western culture where play serves as a function of learning life skills and as a contribution to child development, the study by Chowdhury & Rivalland (2012) explores the contrasting views and perceptions of parents and teachers in Bangladesh. As a result of the differences, the experiences between the two groups

are quite different. Many parents in developing countries put a clear distinction between academics and the physical act of play but they also recognize that as parents with limited resources such as money and time, they cannot provide those same opportunities (Chowdhury & Rivalland, 2012). A concept as seemingly simple to the western world as children's play has significant implications in other developing countries in terms of economics and human development.

To put all points of view of this problem in perspective, the disciplines of both the natural and social sciences and their unique positions must be considered. Next, a philosophical and ethical approach is utilized, as discussed in the article by Esbenshade (2004), that explores the use of codes of conduct and monitoring in order to encourage more companies to have some level of accountability for the conditions of their manufacturing factories. An example of an ethical approach includes companies who send their own employees to inspect working environments versus contracting these services from the outside (Esbenshade, 2004, p. 42).

Monitoring organizations, like the Worker's Rights Consortium (WRC), in the year 2000, was comprised of college students whose mission was to help universities implement their license codes for products that were symbolized with the school's logo (Esbenshade, 2004, p. 42). At that time, it was the hope of the monitoring organizations to promote ethical treatment of workers in developing countries where the university logo products were being produced by enforcing codes of behavior that those factories were expected to adhere to.

Lastly, techniques of communication such as art, in the form of media are utilized to enforce policies on business entities; policies that represent values of respect for others and human life, in attempts to improve the working conditions of millions of women

in factories and their overall general health. The use of art, or print media, namely a daily Bengali newspaper called the Protham-Alo, is used as an example of increasing awareness and promoting social responsibility in developing countries.

By taking a humanities approach through the use of different modes of communication, specifically in the use of newspapers, inadequate conditions in developing countries can be brought to the forefront and raise awareness of the issue. The article by Hossain and Jaehnig (2011), discusses how The Prothom-Alo has fulfilled a role of social responsibility by publishing news and views on social problems such as acid violence and drug abuse (pps. 237-238).

The paper also engages in several pro-social activities such as movements creating awareness of HIV/AIDS, supporting flood victims, and obtaining treatment for injured journalists (Hossain & Jaehnig, 2011). Simply, tools found in the discipline of the humanities can illuminate human atrocities such as poor working conditions in environments, inhumane treatment of workers, and other symptoms of poverty as well as taking an active role as serving as a model for contributing to positive actions in society and the community.

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES**

When considering the social science approach and examining additional symptoms of poverty, the focus is on taking the perspective of viewing human society and the social relationships that exist in it: how waged work economically empowers women in developing countries while incidences of abuse due to gender inequalities continue to exist. This particular symptom of poverty, has both economic, anthropological, sociological, and societal roots.

There is literature that argues that women's income, despite the low pay, actually motivates women to remain in factory jobs (Anwary, 2017). This highlights that there are many reasons why women are working outside of the home such as improvement of autonomy and it references specific themes that are revealed during interviews of female factory workers in Bangladesh (Anwary, 2017). These themes include: resistance to domestic violence, resistance to sexual exploitation of women and girls, autonomy in family decisions, and autonomy to be members of labor unions and political empowerment (Anwary, 2017, p. 1398).

By having the ability to make their own money, women appear to have more decision making skills regarding themselves and their children; while some women who are in severely abusive relationships are educated about community resources in the working environment. They are exposed to a variety of solutions like leaving their husbands and locating to alternative safe living environments (Anwary, 2017, p. 4000).

Sadly though, due to cultural limitations, women are still not respected by their male partners nor are seen as an equal in these relationships due to the cultural hierarchies present in societies. These research findings reveal the complicated relationship between the areas of economics and the psychological concepts of self-esteem and self-worth. Despite these advances in autonomy, the fact remains that these same seemingly empowered women, being the breadwinners in the family, continue to be victims of multiple forms of abuse, both at home and in the workplace.

In the home, purdah, which is described as strict gender and age hierarchies, is reinforced through violence by both men and the mothers-in-law (Naved, Rahman, Willan, Jewkes, & Gibbs, 2017, p. 155). Within the workplace, the act of violence is used to control the female workers in order to ensure production quotas and is

carried out by men who hold supervisory positions; reinforcing that society's patriarchal structure (Naved et al., 2017).

To truly explore the multiple dimensions of the economic impact on the status and treatment of women in developing countries, along with alternatives for making real change, one must draw from multiple disciplines, or interdisciplinary thought. For example, determining whether raising the minimum wage to what is considered a living wage will make a significant impact along with simultaneously addressing the mental health issues requires a consideration of perspectives within both the natural and social sciences.

Equal emphasis must also be given to topics that involve cultural considerations such as the role of *purdah*, which is housed under the humanities umbrella. The process requires a blending of all these areas in order to attempt to understand and ultimately redefine women's roles in a developing society. The desired outcome of this process is a progressive movement that has decreased incidences of violence while promoting economic empowerment of women.

In examining the challenging and multi-dimensional problems that have developed as a result of poverty in developing countries, it seems beneficial that we use ideas from previously studied intellectuals like Mills and Frye. Their ideas can aid us during the journey of exploration to use as a framework for discussion and exploration. The sociologist C.W. Mills (1959) and his ideas on the "sociological imagination" "enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals" (p. 5).

It would be negligent to not consider the cultural and historical context of the society in the developing countries that many of these individuals are living in along with their attempts to carve

out an existence. The impact of the cultural and historical context on the atrocities is also significant. These atrocities include poor working conditions, multiple forms of abuse, child labor, and overall gender inequalities.

Mills continues to reinforce the concept of interdisciplinarity, or the process of drawing from knowledge across multiple fields or disciplines as described in this paper when he says, "for that imagination if the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world..." (p. 7). N. Frye, a literary critic and theorist produces arguments that parallel these thoughts, "in our imagination our own beliefs are also only possibilities, but we can also see the possibilities in the beliefs of others" (1964, p. 77).

If we remove ourselves from a situation or step outside of a box, perhaps we can find solutions or rather appropriate interventions to some of the problems in developing countries. Our western view is not all encompassing and it is not the solution or magic key to open doors to wealth and prosperity for all countries around the world. An example of this erroneous thinking is when Kelsey Timmerman, in his book, *Where Am I Wearing*, takes 19 children to the Saver's Fantasy Kingdom, a Bangladesh amusement park, where \$67.00 admits 20 people for one day in contrast to one child for a day at Disney World (2012, p. 37). Timmerman reasoned, in his western mind, that having a day of play would help this group of child laborers "have fun". Unfortunately, he did not employ alternative perspectives, such as the society's culture, where the established role of children in the Bangladesh's developing country is one of family financial supporter.

In conclusion, there are many factors that have contributed to the expansion of industries, such as the garment factories

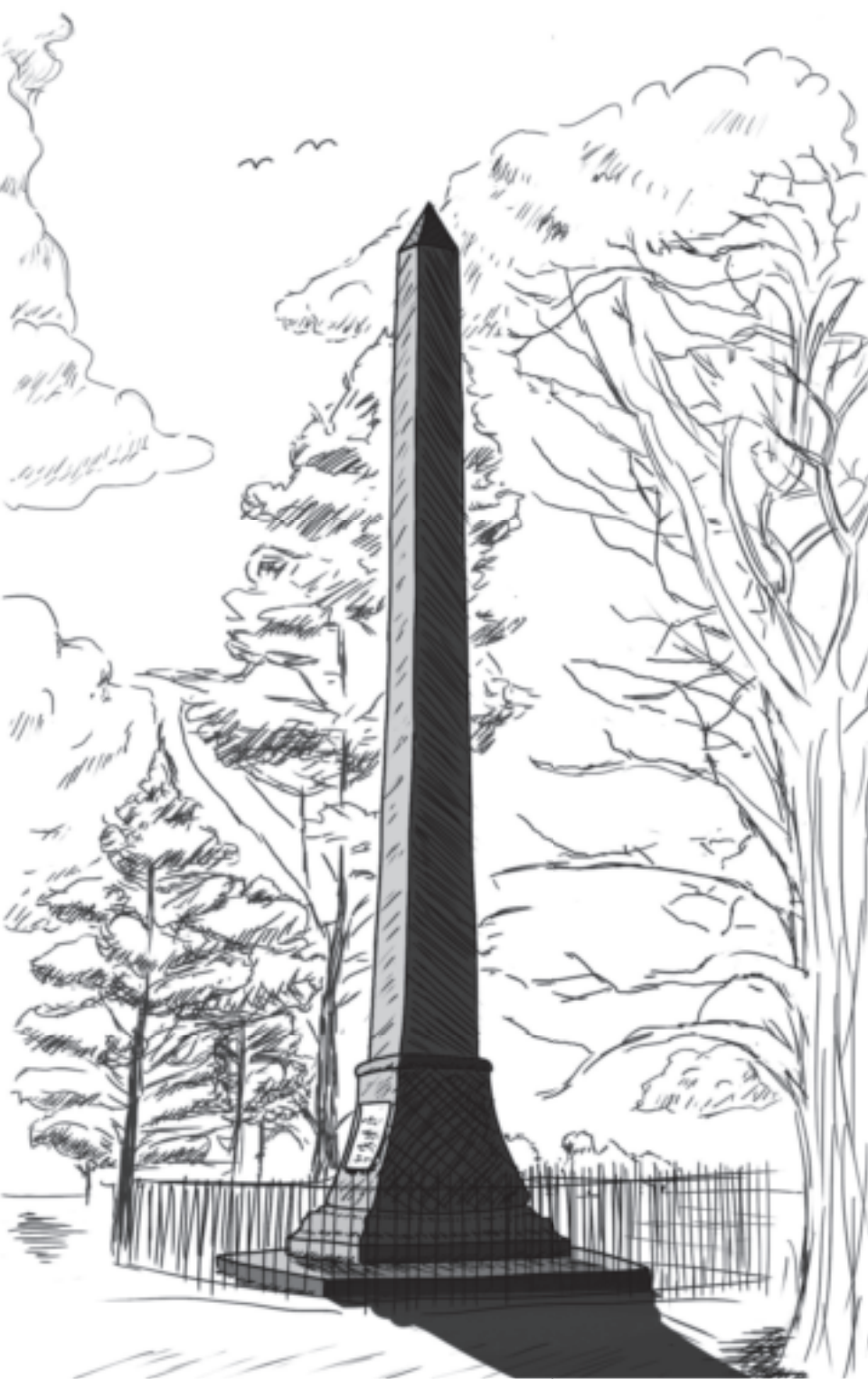
in developing countries as described in the Timmerman book, *Where Am I Wearing*, where individuals continue to be in a daily battle with the adversary of poverty. Developed countries, such as the United States have played a facilitatory role in this condition through the demand for material goods. Many of the developing countries do not have the framework of a stable democratic government, physical infrastructure, and a culture that promotes gender equality in society to support the economic growth that has occurred as a result of economies set in motion by the garment factories and the demand by consumers.

It is my belief that there is not one singular solution to remedy the underlying problem of poverty and the associated atrocities which negate the value of human life and the human condition. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary when generating possible solutions but also when engaging in general discussions of the symptoms of poverty in order to define the intricate features that exist. The ultimate result of this process is the universal acceptance and enforced humane treatment of human beings across all cultures and communities and increased attempts by multiple individuals to exercise social responsibility in their daily decisions and discussions.

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# Deciphering the Disciplines

Kearschner, Kimberly

## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

Kim Kearschner is a graduate student in the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies program at IU Southeast, concentrating on Health Humanities.

She has worked in the Health care field for over thirty years, beginning as a Medic in the US Army Reserves, with the last 25 years working in the Medical Laboratory as a Clinical Laboratory Technologist. She currently works in the Operating Room Laboratory at Jewish Hospital Rudd Heart and Lung.

Originally from Louisville, KY, Kim, currently resides in Salem, IN, where she, and her husband, Cale, have raised their three children: Taylor, Kaitlyn and Colton. Kim loves travel, philosophy, yoga, time with family, and animals (especially her dog, Coco).

She plans to write her thesis on the social and psychological effects of Type 1 Diabetes.

In interdisciplinary studies, two or more academic disciplines are combined by thinking across boundaries to create something new. Interdisciplinary studies seek to synthesize broad perspectives, interconnections, and skills. Before this can be accomplished, however, we must look at the epistemology of the disciplines such as the natural sciences, humanities, and the social sciences to see how they frame their own culture. Entering the dialog of existing authors reveals that the division of disciplines by academic cultures, as well as the synthesis of these cultures through interdisciplinary study, are both inevitable and imperative. The disciplines lie on a continuum and the farther part the disciplines lie, the higher level of intellectual maturity it takes to integrate and synthesize. This higher level of intellect can be achieved through the academic discipline known as "Interdisciplinary Studies".

In the 1959 Rede Lecture, C.P. Snow develops the idea of the 'two contrasting cultures' - literary intellectuals and natural scientists (Snow 4). Snow views the scientist as being more optimistic than the literary intellectuals (Snow 7). He believes that because literature changes slower than science, it endures longer periods of misguided information.

Snow argues that literary intellectuals are natural Luddites in that they are opposed to new technology or ways of working with it (Snow 22). He explains that scientists are inclined to be impatient to see if something can be done to help the social condition, and are more inclined to think that something can be done until it is proven otherwise (Snow 7).

Snow claimed to find a mutual suspicion and incomprehension between the work of the two cultures. In his eyes, this self-impoverished both cultures and left a lingering damaging effect on technology and its chances of alleviating the world's problems (Snow 14). Snow was also conscious of the difference in social class

between the two cultures and was convinced that science could overcome social disadvantage through sheer ability, regardless of social class (Snow xxiii).

While Snow suggests that there are two competing academic cultures, I challenge that these divisions may appear real only because he is focusing too intently on the extreme polar ends. In Collini's critique of Snow, he argues against Snow's original polarity of two disciplines to suggest a concept of multiple disciplines being on a continuous spectrum (Snow 1v). I, however, present the case for having multiple disciplines on *one* continuum: a continuous sequence in which adjacent disciplines are not perceptibly different from each other, yet are quite distinct at the extremes.

Frye counters my argument in his book, *The Educated Imagination*. He explains that literature speaks the language of imagination. Therefore, the study of literature trains and improves our imagination (Frye 134). He asserts that we find knowledge and information from studying philosophy, science, religion, and law by a power in the mind that constructs and builds. This power, Frye argues, is imagination, and the studies are its products (Frye 154). Essentially, Frye believes that literature is the foundation of our education and is the basis for creating ideal social and cultural environments.

Frye contends, like Snow, that literature does not improve or show progress. In contrast, science learns more about the living world as it evolves (Frye 24). I question whether this stagnation of literature lends effectively to Frye's argument, because our culture and social environments are, in fact, constantly changing. While I do concede that literature is of value in improving our imagination, I do not support the claim that literature is the only way to improve the imagination. Frye argues that literature is the foundation of our

education. I reject this notion, instead arguing that literature is but one discipline on the continuum - just one part of the whole.

Support for my argument is found in Bronowski's book *Science and Human Values*, where he explains that parts of civilization make a whole and shows how science fits (Bronowski 6.) He claims that the creative minds of artist and scientist are alike (Bronowski 7). Bronowski defines science as, "the organization of our knowledge in such a way that it commands more of the potential in nature" (Bronowski 7).

Knowledge and usefulness go hand and hand. What a scientist does is compounded of two interests: the interest of his time era and self-interest (Bronowski 8). The work of the poet, artist, and scientist are all useful and creative. Human kind does not create by following either use or tradition, but through following his passion and the love of knowledge. "Man, masters nature not by force but by understanding" (Bronowski 10).

While Frye argues that power is the imagination, Bronowski explains that power is the byproduct of understanding. Society must work within the laws of nature; our only control is understanding those laws (Bronowski 10). I agree with Bronowski in viewing science as being both imaginative and creative. It is not just a series of facts, but also draws upon art, music and imaginative thought and metaphors to draw its conclusions. The act of fusion of facts is the creating part. It is the search for unity of hidden likeness.

The scientist looks for and creates order by exploring such likeness (Bronowski 13). Science finds order and meaning in our experiences and it grows from a comparison (Bronowski 15). Science and art each look for unity and likeness under the variety of human experience, and these discoveries exist in two moments: the moment of creation and the moment of

appreciation (Bronowski 19). To state succinctly, science is more than just a series of facts because it also draws upon art, music and imaginative thought. Science then finds order and meaning in the facts, forming comparisons through human experience.

In the second chapter of his book, *The Habit of Truth*, Bronowski succinctly explains the scientific method. The scientific view is that concepts are built up from experience and must be constantly tested and corrected in experience. Meanwhile, the classical view's concepts are not accessible to empirical testing (Bronowski 37). I agree with Bronowski in that concepts such as justice, honor, dignity, tolerance and humanity have not remained fixed. They do not have an inwardness which is inaccessible to experience, nor are they self-evident.

These concepts are also tested empirically, and history gives us these answers through social and cultural change. Bronowski explains, "All this is plain once it is seen that science also is a system of concepts: the place of experience is to test and correct the concept. The test is, will the concept work? Does it give an unforced unity to the experience of men? Does the concept make life orderly, not by edict but in fact?" (Bronowski 41) We find out if the concepts work by becoming mindful of social and cultural change.

In C.W. Mills' book, *The Sociological Imagination*, he defines the sociological imagination as a quality of mind that helps one use information and develop reason to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world (Mills 5). He explains this as the ability to understand the larger historical picture, the biography and the relation between these two within society (Mills 7).

Unlike Snow, Mills claims that science – because of technological advancements such as the Hydrogen bomb – has raised more intellectual and moral problems than it has solved in social affairs

(Mills 15). He also claims that the social and historical reality in which men want to know, they are not able to find in contemporary literature (Mills 17). Although Snow, disagrees with the idea of specialization, I agree with Mills. He suggests that we steer away from specialization in terms of accidentally-built disciplines and, instead, build disciplines on the problems the solution of which, requires intellectual equipment, which belongs to several disciplines (Mills 140). In fact, this is something that has already occurred in our educational system, as disciplines are formed in response to societal problems.

Unlike Bronowski, Mills rightly emphasized that we should think in terms of problems and subject matters and less in terms of concepts and methods. He suggests studying a smaller scale milieu and applying this approach to larger-scale historical structure, to avoid the arbitrary specialization of academic departments and to gain a conception of society as a whole (Mills 134).

It is now the social scientist's foremost political and intellectual task-for here the two coincide-to make clear the elements of contemporary uneasiness and indifference. It is the central demand made upon him by other cultural workman-by physical scientist and artist, by the intellectual community in general. It is because of this task and these demands, I believe, that the social sciences are becoming the common denominator of our cultural period, and the sociological imagination our most needed quality of mind (Mills 13).

Mills argues that social science is becoming the major intellectual common denominator, but I maintain that social science another discipline on the continuum – again, just another part of the whole.

Mills does, however, make some very good arguments to bolster his claims. The first is that the social sciences are already interdisciplinary. They study both biography and

history, along with the problems of their intersection within humanity's social structure. The second reason is where the social sciences fit on the continuum.

If we accept Snow in that science and literature are at polar ends of the continuum, then social sciences would find themselves squarely in the middle, which is adventitious. I do agree that a sociological imagination can create empathy, the basis for understanding. As Bronowski explains, there is power in understanding. However, Frye argues that literature can achieve this same impact as well. "In imagination our own beliefs are also only possibilities, but we can also see the possibilities in the beliefs of others. Bigots and fanatics seldom have any use for the arts, because they're so preoccupied with their beliefs and actions that they can't see them as also possibilities" (Frye 77). Conviction creates convicts. As we define our beliefs (convictions), we began to close ourselves off to other possibilities, imprisoning ourselves.

Mills' main argument against science was the invention of the Hydrogen-bomb, but as Bronowski explains no discipline can wash their hands of such a thing, as inaction is also to blame. He explains the *reductio ad absurdum* of this argument when he gives an example of his mathematics teacher justifying his life work in that it never harmed anyone. In fact, most scientists learned mathematics from his books (Bronowski 5).

Unlike Snow, Bronowski explains that it is important to not think of science as a modern-day Prometheus that will solve all problems of humanity (Bronowski 2). Science is, yet still, just another point on the *continuum*. Each of the disciplines carry responsibility for the direction of mankind through their action and inaction.

Bronowski states science provides a habit of truth. Frye argues that literature provides perspective and dimension. Mills claims that the social sciences develop the quality of mind to understand society.

Although some may argue they are using different language to say the same thing, I contend that they are saying the same thing from a different perspective. By studying these different languages and different perspectives, we begin the process of synthesis and integration. The disciplines are all equally important; they are all points on the continuum. "You can't distinguish the arts from the sciences by the mental processes the people in them use: they both operate on a mixture of hunch and common sense" (Frye 24).

As Collini points out we do not have just one identity. The discipline or profession we choose are not the only things that defines us as people. "We inhabit overlapping identities –social, racial, sexual, religious, intellectual, political- and no one of them alone is always dominant or consistently determines our responses" (Snow xxxii). This is what each one of us brings to the table. We are the common denominator, the people that constitute the different disciplines. We are the points on the continuum.

Leavis, Snow's harshest critics, called him a "technologico-Benthamite" for wanting the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, and for believing that science had all the answers. He argued that Snow's argument reduced the human experience to the quantifiable (Snow xxxiii). How do you put a number on happiness? Yet because this kind of question takes such an advanced stage of intellectual development, it is exactly the kind of question that would need an interdisciplinary approach. Snow later reflected that he wished he had stuck to his original lecture title, 'The Rich and the Poor'. (Snow 1xvii) This tells us that he was trying to answer a much larger question:

But more important still will be the nurturing within the ethos of the various academic specialisms not only of some understanding of how their activities fit into a larger cultural whole, but also of a recognition that attending to these larger

questions is not some kind of off-duty voluntary work but is an integral and properly rewarded part of professional achievement in the given field” (Snow 1viii).

These big questions are the responsibility of every discipline, as they often require a higher level of intellectual maturity typically gained through interdisciplinary study.

The truth is that we live in a constantly evolving world. Change is inevitable and is, ironically, one of the few things we can consistently rely upon. This has been the case since the dawn of our history, but even more so since the internet revolution that is changing our world faster than ever. As new problems arise, new problem-oriented disciplines will respond and be added to the continuum.

Certain questions urge humanity to transcend these disciplinary boundaries, making interdisciplinary study inevitable. The closer these two disciplines are on the continuum the easier it is to cross these boundaries, and when they are further apart it requires a higher level of intellectual maturity to integrate and synthesize disparate disciplinary insights into a coherent whole.

I assert that the different perspectives of each discipline are what makes interdisciplinary studies so important. “The ability to embrace tentatively the use of one disciplinary world view and then switch to using another, possibly opposing, world view, and take that equally seriously requires some of the most advanced stages of intellectual development” (Newell 113). This is the imagination needed in interdisciplinary studies. The ability to see from all varying perspectives and to be able to interconnect and synthesize ideas, even creating new disciplines in the process and in doing so closing the gap between the rich and the poor, which was what Snow was really trying to do.

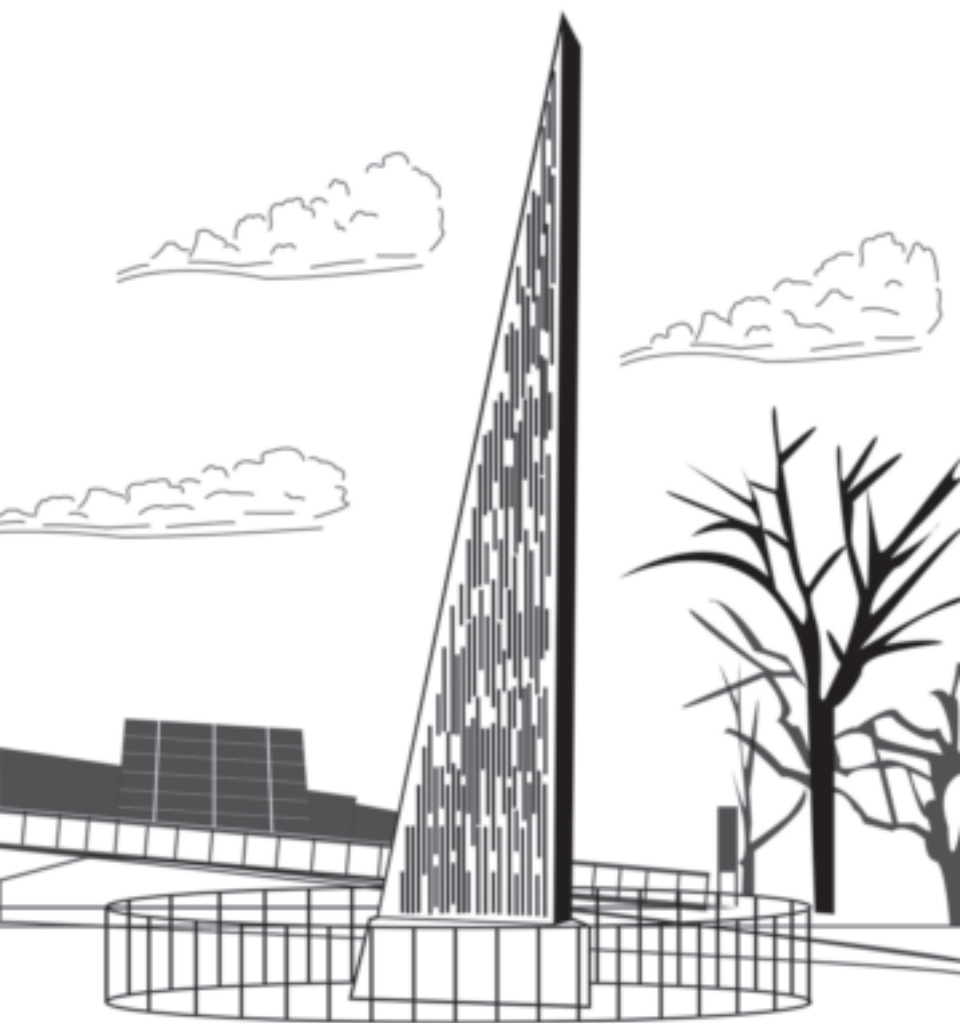
Snow raised a mirror to his world at the time to show a division. If we performed that same action today, we could effectively perceive and address a frightening divide occurring in our country. However, once we think outside ourselves – with compassion and understanding – divisions disappear. The best way to achieve this is through an education in interdisciplinary studies.

I conclude that there is not a superior academic discipline, nor one that serves as a common denominator. We, the people, are the common denominator. The disciplines are equal; I advocate thinking of them as being on a continuum. As these disciplines converge closer on the continuum, they become easier to synthesize; the further that they diverge, the higher the level of intellect needed to cross these boundaries. This heightened level of intellect can be achieved by submerging oneself into an education in interdisciplinary studies.

The division of disciplines by academic cultures as well as the synthesis of the cultures through interdisciplinary study are both inevitable and imperative. The direction of humanity is the responsibility of every academic discipline. They divide naturally through cultural change and integrate through compassion and understanding.

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# Remembering the Rana Plaza

Kearschner, Kimberly

The deadliest disaster in the history of the garment industry happened on April 24, 2013 when an eight-story commercial building, Rana Plaza, collapsed, ultimately killing 1,136 people and injuring over 2,000 (Ferdous, 2014). The building owner had built three additional floors when he only had a permit for five and ignored warnings about the structural integrity of the building after several cracks were found (Ferdous, 2014). The day before the tragedy workers said that they would not return until the building was safe, but they were pressured to return to work through threats of losing their whole month's salary (Ferdous, 2014). Eighty percent of the victims were women between the ages of eighteen and twenty, who worked thirteen-hour days for just twelve to twenty-four cents an hour, often facing harassment, in the hopes of lifting themselves and their families out of poverty (Berik, 2017). Photo I in the Appendix shows the aftermath of the horrific collapse.

The Readymade Garment (RMG) Sector has played a crucial role in creating employment opportunity for the rural marginal people of Bangladesh for the past twenty plus years. It is currently the second largest RMG manufacturer after China, with 5,100 garment factories and 3.6 million workers (80 percent of them female) (Ahmed, 2016).

Through a specific investigation of the Rana Plaza collapse, this paper will look at the disaster through the lens of the different

disciplines, illustrating that an interdisciplinary approach to complex issues—such as the problems associated with the globalization of the garment industry—is essential. Through the principle “Think Global, Act Local”, different economic, social, and health issues of the garment industry in Bangladesh will be examined to establish that the best paradigm to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again includes three important aspects: awareness, activism and policy change.

This paper will analyze the role each of the different disciplines—humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences—play in these three aspects, and, most importantly, express the importance of consumerism, as seen through social responsibility, and how we, as consumers, can make a difference.

In his article, “Photography as Activism”, Ismail Ferdous, who is a Bangladesh-based photojournalist and freelancer, describes the aftermath of Rana Plaza. He describes being led to the sight of two dead bodies under the rubble. Shown as Photo II in the Appendix, the woman’s face was covered with a black cloth, and she was clinging to the body of the man, as if they were hugging, huddled together to survive (Ferdous, 2014). “Though I had been struggling with wanting to both photograph and physically help, the sight of these two individuals who had been caught in their last moments of life embracing each other convinced me to keep shooting. In that moment I realized that it was my responsibility to bring the voices of these people to the rest of the world through photographs” (Ferdous, 2014, p. 23).

The experience had such a profound effect on Ferdous that he did not want the photographs to be buried by the news, and their stories forgotten. Therefore, he worked on creating a documentary not only to spread his photographs, but to shed light on the unjust working conditions of the garment worker. Ferdous began work on

a multimedia piece with filmmaker Nathan Fitch and created the documentary, "The Deadly Cost of Fashion." He then (along with various other groups) arranged a protest on the first night of New York Fashion Week, where the images of the Rana Plaza Tragedy were projected on the buildings of the Lincoln Center and several of the stores who had failed to compensate the victims, such as The Children's Place (Ferdous, 2014). The documentary has since been viewed over 400,000 times (Ferdous, 2014).

Made in Bangladesh, another response to the Rana Plaza tragedy from the humanities perspective, is a seventy-minute dance-theatre production directed by Helena Waldmann and a group of thirteen Bangladeshi dancers. The north Indian Kathak dance is performed with the kicking of the dancers' feet in competition with the stitching of the clattering of sewing machines, their pirouettes with the yarn bobbins (Ahmed, 2016). The dancers' feet hammer the floor to a rhythm so quick that the exhaustion is physically palpable (Ahmed, 2016). A moment of surprise came to the metonymic space, when, after ten minutes of repetitive music and dancing, a blackout occurs:

"The lights faded in to reveal dancers' faces and an offstage voice read a contract for work at an RMG factory. Fragments torn from daily life were inserted as media clips, such as the implosion of Rana Plaza, statistical figures quantifying targets (one thousand pieces per day per head) and actual outputs, quotes from worker in RMG factories, and more. Made in Bangladesh made the RMG's inhumane working conditions transparent." (Ahmed, 2016, p. 500)

Near the end of the first half came the implosion of the Rana Plaza. Photo two in the Appendix shows the dancers performing against a black and white video projection of the explosion and its frantic, chaotic aftermath.

The performing arts and theatre are very powerful ways to create

awareness. Through literature, photography, film documentaries, and music, the humanities gives us outlets not only to see life through a different perspective, but also to grieve and attempt to make sense of tragedy. Performances, music, and pictures do more than just create awareness, they add to our collective memory as a people. Similar to the songs, books and films that were produced after tragedies such as 9/11 and the Vietnam War, the humanities gives us a venue to record our history so that we never forget, hopefully providing us with a collective consciousness to learn from our past and create a better future.

One thing that stood out in the performance of *Made in Bangladesh* was inconsistent statements of the different seamstresses. At different intervals statements on a backdrop were made such as "I'm not physically strong enough for this work. I go through exploitation and abuse", but then dancers will proclaim into a microphone, "I am proud to be a part of the fashion industry, proud to be independent" (Ferdous, 2014). This is exactly the debate we will encounter as we look at the different economic, social, and health issues through the lens of the natural and social sciences. What for one worker represents exploitation, another is a step to financial independence.

As aforementioned, 80 percent of garment workers are women. They are preferred because of traditional expectations of female propriety (Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018). They are perceived as being more compliant, docile, and controllable compared to men, as well as less likely to join trade unions (Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018). On the other hand, managers in RMG factories are almost exclusively men, which reflects the gender hierarchy of society in Bangladesh (Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018). Female garment workers experience verbal, physical, and sexual violence in the work place Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018 ((Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018).

Most physical violence and emotional abuse are driven by garment workers failure to meet unrealistic production targets (Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018). Furthermore, managers who refuse to use such methods are labeled as weak and ineffective, and those who shout and hit are promoted (Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018). "Male supervisors and management were quite explicit at times about why they felt able to sexually abuse and threaten female garment workers, placing the responsibility squarely on the women for 'inviting the abuse'" (Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018, p. 8). Women also experience economic violence from managers through the withholding of pay at the end of contracts, arbitrary pay reductions, and mandatory overtime without pay (Naved, Rahman, Willan, & Gibbs, 2018,).

The average monthly wage of a garment worker is less than 25 Euro, which is less than half of the minimum wage in Bangladesh (Ahmed, Raihan, 2014). As a result, they often cannot afford necessities such as healthy food. These workers sometimes must eat rotten food to avoid starvation, which leads to malnutrition, gastric pain, diarrhea, dysentery or food poisoning (Ahmed, Raihan, 2014). They often work in a confined environment without proper ventilation and inhale the dust from fabrics and toxic chemicals from dye, causing a variety of ailments such as asthma, respiratory problems and conjunctivitis (Ahmed, Raihan, 2014). They often develop hepatitis from the drinking water that is provided at the factories, hearing loss from unsafe noise levels, musculoskeletal disorders from not being allowed sufficient breaks, and sexually transmitted diseases from sexual assaults (Ahmed, Raihan, 2014). This is not to mention the decline in their mental health due to stress and emotional abuse.

Such abuse can lead to other physical problems, including headache, fatigue, hypertension as well as heart and gastric diseases (Ahmed, Raihan, 2014). Clearly, even though many

workers are only in their twenties, the health status of the female garment workers is not well enough to do their work properly.

The other reality of the situation is that for many of these women sweatshop employment has improved their lives or kept them from a life that had the potential to be even worse. The women of Bangladesh come from a society that has traditionally excluded them any kind of employment outside of the home (Anwary, 2017). Because of these social constraints, even the low-wages of garment work provides them with relative autonomy. Bangladesh has a very high crime rate for the trafficking of women, and young girls in dire poverty constitute a group at high risk of becoming victims of sexual exploitation traffickers (Anwary, 2017).

Had it not been for their employment in sweatshops, many of them would have been sold by their parents to sex traffickers (Anwary, 2017). In summary, looking through the lens of the natural and social sciences, the sweatshop industry had afforded these women the opportunity to escape a horrendous life in order to live a relatively less horrendous life.

The Rana Plaza tragedy was a turning point that demonstrated to the world what can happen when market regulation of labor standards are left to their own devices. When governments fail to enforce their own laws, it is then left to the private sector, civil organizations, companies, and consumers to respond to the need for greater social responsibility (Berik, 2017).

This response, because it addresses questions that transcend disciplinary boundaries, requires an interdisciplinary approach. This approach does not depend on well-defined boundaries between disciplines, only on clarity in their insights and in the world-view underlying them (Klein, Newell, & Newell, 1998). As we look at the different economic, corporate, and consumer challenges, this response entails we do so knowing that although

we might not find a complete answer, we will at least have a greater appreciation of the nature and complexity of the problem (Klein, Newell, & Newell, 1998).

Since some garment workers' living conditions could be considered improved because of their employment in sweatshops, some would argue that it would be best to leave well enough alone. However, I disagree with this assessment. One thing to come out of globalization is the fact that we are all connected. The people in Bangladesh and elsewhere make our clothes, and as consumers of these products, we share in the responsibility of their working conditions. Meaning, we should be concerned that their income is so low that their work can be considered slave labor.

Some economist argue that the low-wage labor employed by multinational companies in developing countries is beneficial and to boycott their products or raise their wages would cause many workers to lose their jobs (CITATION?). While I am not in favor of closing all garment shops, I do believe a middle way approach, in which an agreement can be found to improve wages and working conditions without losing jobs.

Several economists examined the effect a 100 percent increase in the pay of garment workers in Mexico and the United States would have on the retail prices in the United States, and what they found was that it would add just 50 cents to the production cost of a men's casual shirts sold for \$32 in the United States, or just 1.6 percent to the retail price. Even if these wage increases were passed on to consumers, the increase in price is well within the amount that recent surveys suggest U.S consumers are willing to pay for clothing produced under good working conditions (Miller, 2003).

"The 2015 Cone Communications Millennial Corporate Social Responsibility Study" reveals that more than nine out of ten

millennials would switch brands to one associated with a cause (91% vs. 85% US average), and two-thirds use social media to engage around CSR (66% vs. 53% US average)" (Golodner, 2016, p. 502). Millennials are more passionate in their support of corporate, social, and environmental efforts, and more willing to speak out and purchase products with a social or environmental benefit. They are more socially aware and may even volunteer for a cause supported by a company they trust. "This is the generation that is willing to take a pay cut to work for a responsible company, most likely to use social media to engage around CSR efforts, and most likely to believe their purchases make a significant impact" (Golodner, 2016, p.506).

Consumers want to make a difference, but they must be willing to make sacrifices in order to do so. Consumers in the United States often want more, want it faster, easier and often cheaper, without regards to quality. As consumers, we must demand accountability and transparency from corporations and the factories they employ. We should buy better, buy less, and buy from companies that are making reasonable efforts in global social responsibility (Ferdous, 2014).

One way consumers can find help is through the Buycott mobile phone application. You can use this app to scan a product and find out the brand, company, and who owns them. It will then cross-check against the companies and brands included in the campaigns you have joined. One of the campaigns on the app is The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. Hundreds of apparel brands have signed this agreement, however many companies did not.

An initiative led by Wal-Mart and the Gap, created an alternative, corporate-led agreement. Unlike the original accord, it relies on corporate inspections rather than independent

inspections and does not include public disclosure of all factories, inspection reports, and corrective action plans (Eli, Dolan, Schneider, & Ulijaszek, 2016). This campaign seeks to boycott all companies that have opted to join the corporate-led 'Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety' until they agree to sign onto the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (Eli, Dolan, Schneider, & Ulijaszek, 2016).

Corporate social responsibility is the attempt by retailers to reconcile social and economic objectives. In other words, it is the idea that business should assume social responsibilities beyond any economic, technical and legal obligations, with the purpose of reconciling economic, social and environmental objectives, and these actions must go further than the immediate interest of the firm and just obeying the law or other regulation. (Perry, 2015)

In the absence of national regulation, it is a form of privatized governance. Consumers, however, should also be mindful of companies who spin limited policy change into a cloak of respectability for their brands. "In a series of PR moves that are now paradigmatic for the burgeoning 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) movement, firms like Nike, the Gap, and Reebok strove to redeem their tarnished images, emerging from the gray as born-again paragons of social justice" (Ross, 2008, pg. 771). This deceptive move is also known as greenwashing. It is a marketing move to promote the perception that an organization is environmentally friendly.

Numerous studies and empirical evidence imply that the positive correlation between CSR endeavors and consumer behavior is mostly derived from the understanding that CSR activities have a direct impact on the firm's image, distinguishing it in the industry and leading to value creation in the perception of consumer. Firms pursuing prolonged CSR activities are considered wiser, since

this establishes an image of benevolence and is thereby effective while short-term, high paced CSR campaigns are often deemed as opportunistic (Rahman, 2016 pg. 137).

In order to not be taken advantage of, consumers need to be conscious of this form of deception and take their business to companies that are serious about making positive change and are in it for the long haul.

A study by Patsy Perry, Steve Wood, and John Fernie, concentrated on the factory management perspective of CSR in Sri Lanka (2015). The study shows there is supplier value in ethical treatment of workers. With both product quality improving as well as productivity increasing, Sri Lanka seems to be a leading example of the competitive advantage gained when safeguarding workers' rights.

However, factory managers often feel that companies do not always reward the ethical initiatives that they encourage. They often pay them less by recalculating the target price based on the new factory efficiency rate. There remains tension between the factories and the companies as CSR is concerned. "In the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster, it was alleged that retail buyers requested price reductions from Bangladeshi suppliers on the basis that the disaster had brought the company into disrepute" (Perry, Wood, & Fernie, 2015, p. 749).

As companies attempt to please consumers with CSR and receive respectability and business for doing so, they should reward factories that implement the policy change. It is imperative for consumers and international groups to diligently keep the spotlight on the implementation of corrective action plans to ensure that companies pick up the costs of delivering worker safety (Berik, 2017).

The Rana Plaza collapse is an image that factory workers, managers, companies, and consumers should never forget. Due to work in

the humanities, it has become a part of our collective memory as a people. The humanities and natural and social sciences provide awareness, and the need and platforms for activism.

However, because of the complexities that transcend disciplinary boundaries, an interdisciplinary approach is inherent in the development of policy change. As consumers, we should not only patronize the companies that promote CSR, but make sure that the companies are following through on their promises to not only promote safe, complaint working standards and fair compensation, but reward factories that implement this policy change.

The consumer should also be leery of companies that manipulate CSR for only personal gain. In remembering the Rana Plaza tragedy as socially responsible consumers who are striving to 'Think Global, Act Local', we should be mindful of the quantity and quality that we buy, as well as how those purchases affect others. We would all do well to remember the interconnectedness and the circular effect of all things.

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APPENDIX

*Photo I*

Rana Plaza Building Collapse (Ahad, 2013).



*Photo II*

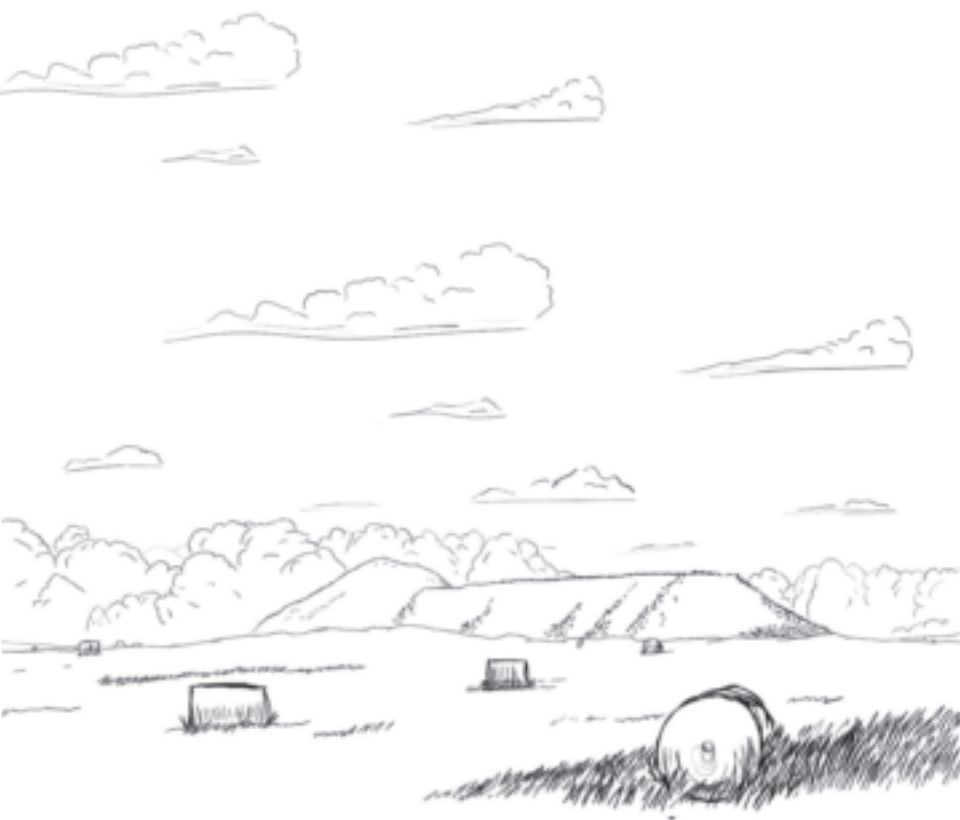
(Ferdous, 2017)



*Photo III*

(Ahmed, S. J., 2016)





*Handwritten scribbles*

*Handwritten scribbles*

# Design Rationales: Uses and Frameworks

Kennedy, Kristin

## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

Kristin Kennedy is a part-time student in the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies program at IU Southeast, pursuing the Digital Media and the Organizational Leadership & Communications concentrations. Before beginning work on her master's degree, Kristin graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from IU Southeast in 2016.

She wrote "Design Rationales: Uses and Frameworks" for a Directed Readings class that was the equivalent of INFO-I 441: Interaction Design Practice. Kristin chose to write about design rationales for her assignment because she feels it is interesting how rationales communicate the reasoning behind decisions made for design projects, as well as how rationales are used in several disciplines. The research required Kristin to sift through an abundance of information about design rationales to pick the most relevant information for her paper.

Kristin lives in Laconia, Indiana, and she is the Communications Associate at the Harrison County Community Foundation in Corydon. She enjoys photography, collaborating with others, running, writing, research, worship, and spending time with family, friends, and her boyfriend, Corey.

## INTRODUCTION

If a person unfamiliar with human-computer interaction (HCI) and interaction design looks through a design rationale, that person may think it is just 20-plus pages of overly descriptive jargon that includes diagrams and screenshots. In actuality, design rationales are much more than that.

Design rationales allow their readers to understand the purpose of a product (website, mobile application, etc.) being designed, the research conducted to help design the product, and the product's characteristics and design. Design rationales for HCI and interaction design incorporate terminology appropriate to the field so that descriptions in the rationales are accurately explained. The Design Rationale Group (DRG) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology claims that numerous designers feel that creating a design rationale document is a mundane task; they would rather list specific actions taken in a design process document. However, the DRG asserts that design rationales are important:

“Even with advanced design tools, the design process typically produces a description of the desired artifact, but leaves little or no indication of the design rationale. We end up knowing what was designed, but often have no idea why it is the way it is, what motivated the particular design, what alternatives were considered and rejected, etc.” (Design Rationale Group).

This means that design rationales allow readers to get into the designers' heads, as well as acquire a better picture of the design and reasons behind specific aspects of it.

This project examines literature describing what a design rationale is and the disciplines where they are used. It also explains, in detail, how design rationales are used in HCI and interaction design. Additionally, the project highlights existing frameworks for design rationales and other relevant literature about them.

## WHAT IS A DESIGN RATIONALE?

In a research report called “Design Rationale Types and Tools,” Janet E. Burge and David C. Brown list that a design rationale includes the reasons behind and justifications for design choices, as well as alternative designs that were thought of, evaluations, and arguments resulting in the chosen design decisions. Burge and Brown assert that design rationales can be used to verify, evaluate, perform maintenance on, reuse, teach, communicate information about, help designers view results of, and document designs. The authors further explain that by conveying information about the design intent and design decisions, as well as how the design is actually presented, design rationales help viewers see how each design decision affects the remainder of the design (Burge and Brown).

Additionally, Carol Aitken, Co-Coordinator of the IDEA Program at Capilano University in North Vancouver notes that design rationales that are written well can satisfy the designers’ clients:

“Choices that you have made, even those not immediately obvious to the client, can be explained, helping to show the clarity of your thinking, the benefits of your solution, and ultimately to help sell your idea” (Aitken).

Aitken observes that design rationales should have details and explain why decisions were made, and if a designer claims a design decision was made because he or she liked the color, for example, that is not satisfactory enough. Aitken also points out that designers should not judge their work in their rationales (i.e. “This solution is amazing”), which should be easy to understand. This can be done by aiming to make the design rationales clear and easy to read by using headings, subheadings, and paragraphs (Aitken).

Tiffany Eaton agrees that details – the more, the better – should be included in design rationales. She also provides a simple definition of what a design rationale is: “A design rationale is about how x (design) enables y (your audience) to achieve z (success outcome)” (Eaton, “If you don’t know how to explain your product design, develop a design rationale.”). Eaton writes that it is important for engineers to clearly understand design rationales so they can implement the design decisions in the final product, and if design decisions are not clearly and completely explained in design rationales, that can result in lost money and pain. Eaton also asserts that it is helpful to talk to stakeholders, such as possible users, when designing a product and creating a design rationale so design choices can be focused on the users’ experiences. She comments that the ultimate goal should be for the designed product to generate a good user experience, so the designs presented in their rationales should not be redundant or confusing (Eaton, “If you don’t know to how to explain your product design, develop a design rationale.”).

Also, in Andrew Dillon’s review of a book titled *Design Rationale: Concepts, Techniques, and Use*, Dillon implies that design rationales should focus on users, and they can help users create new information technology systems and teach people how to design. Dillon also claims that a design rationale is “a formal account of a project that may end in failure,” and he would have liked that idea to be emphasized throughout the book (Dillon).

Meanwhile, design rationales have other advantages as well. For example, they allow design teams to communicate vital choices, their alternatives, and the reasons behind them. In addition, design rationales transfer design information between like rationales and consider alternatives (Dix, Finlay, Abowd, and Beale). In an article called “DOES DESIGN RATIONALE ENHANCE CREATIVITY?”, Jing Wang, Umer Farooq, and John M. Carroll describe that the

development and use of design rationales can help designers and users be creative by fostering new ideas, persuasive arguments, and insights (Wang, Farooq, and Carroll 129).

## **DISCIPLINES WHERE DESIGN RATIONALES ARE USED**

Literature asserts that design rationales are used in HCI and interaction design practice, which can be used interchangeably (Stolterman). Erik Stolterman, from the School of Informatics at Indiana University, wrote a journal article called "The Nature of Design Practice and Implications for Interaction Design Research." Stolterman reasons that interaction design can be based on "a well-grounded and rich set of rigorous and disciplined design methods and techniques, appropriate to the needs and desires of practicing designers" (Stolterman). Stolterman reports that interaction design practice is rooted in multiple fields, such as fields like engineering, art and design, the humanities, and social sciences. He also writes that design methods incorporated in projects can include components such as guidelines, experiments, use cases, interviews and focus groups, field studies, prototypes, storyboards, scenarios and others.

Stolterman also acknowledges that rational designers consider and reflect on different possibilities with discipline, and designers should be rational. Designers should create several alternative designs and analyze them all, incorporating knowledge from existing research (Stolterman). This corresponds with how a design rationale should be, since they are meant to evaluate designs and their alternatives in a reflective way. Interestingly, Stolterman contends that design rationales should not give prescriptions for what should be done in designs. Instead, he claims they should incorporate "high-level theoretical and/or philosophical ideas and approaches that expand design thinking" (Stolterman). This makes sense, as the design process document is meant to provide

more detail about specific aspects of the design, while the rationale is meant to communicate concepts, methods, and reasons behind the final output.

Meanwhile, Dillon also illustrates that design rationales are used in the HCI world. He notes that HCI involves understanding and influencing designs while focusing them on users. In his review of *Design Rationale: Concepts, Techniques, and Use*, Dillon observes that Carroll and Rosson, who wrote a chapter of the book, believe that the concept of a design rationale can create a complex, scientific foundation for HCI, and that can sway practical design procedures. Dillon claims that, "...other HCI researchers have been concerned with linking science to design in a way that tries to avoid stereotypical distinctions between craft and science, rigor and relevance, the laboratory and the field etc." (Dillon). In simpler terms, design rationales should blend scientific and creative concepts to avoid HCI being typecast in stereotypes.

Dillon adds that HCI professionals have debated for a lengthy amount of time about the relevance of designs and how they should be represented. Meanwhile, Dillon implies that HCI professionals are training others how to create design rationales to make excellent designs. It is important for these professionals to know of the many perspectives about the benefits, uses, and natures of design rationales (Dillon).

Meanwhile, when considering engineers' use of design rationales, John Dalton from Newcastle University comments that engineers have created numerous definitions of a design rationale over the years. For engineers, design rationales mainly illustrate the methods – the available choices and the reasons behind using or not using them – that designers evaluate to accomplish their project goals (Dalton).

## **USES IN HCI/INTERACTION DESIGN**

Burge and Brown observe that there are numerous uses for design rationales, including the following aspects of design: verification, evaluation, maintenance, reuse, teaching, communication, assistance, and documentation. In design verification, the rationale helps verify that the design satisfies its requirements and the intentions of its creator. Burge and Brown describe how design evaluation involves using the rationale to assess designs and related decisions. Meanwhile, designers can use rationales for design maintenance by figuring out the decisions that were made to determine how issues developed, or to determine what changes can fix the design. When considering design reuse, rationales can aid designers in figuring out the reusable design aspects, along with any changes necessary in those cases. Design rationales can teach others about the output by informing how the design works and why key decisions were made.

This aids with design communication as well, because rationales can give insight to stakeholders and grant them the chance to communicate their opinions and ask questions. Rationales can also indicate where multiple designers' work conflicts and help make editing time faster. Overall, design rationales can assist designers while designing by allowing them to see the outcomes of their design choices. Additionally, design rationale helps document overall designs, their history, and the reasoning behind design decisions. Design rationales stored on computers make it easier for viewers to comment on the designs and ask questions (Burge and Brown).

## **EXISTING FRAMEWORKS FOR DESIGN RATIONALES**

In addition to design rationales having many uses, there are also multiple existing frameworks for them. One such commonly-used

framework in web design is called "The Five Planes". According to Jesse James Garrett, author of *The Elements of User Experience*, these planes are the following: the surface plane, the skeleton frame, the structure frame, the scope plane, and the strategy plane. Garrett asserts that the planes should be considered from the bottom to the top, so the correct ordering should be: the strategy plane, the scope plane, the structure frame, the skeleton frame, and then the surface plane.

The strategy plane lays out the designers' and users' goals and intentions of the project. The scope plane is where designers determine the project functions, features, and requirements. The structure plane typically illustrates concepts such as the navigation, the information architecture, and where interface components are located within the project. The skeleton plane is where designers determine the layout for each part of the project, i.e. where the buttons, images, text, and other elements are placed. Finally, the surface plane is where designers work out specific details about how images, text, and other elements are visually conveyed in the project (Garrett 22-24).

Characteristics of all five planes can be explained in design rationales. Garrett points out: "Each plane is dependent on the planes below it. So, the surface depends on the skeleton, which depends on the structure, which depends on the scope, which depends on the strategy" (Garrett 25). When design decisions made in planes do not align with one another, problems can arise (Garrett 25).

Another framework that can be used in design rationales is the "PRInCiPleS" design framework, named by Eli Blevis from the Human-Computer Interaction Design program in the School of Informatics and Computing at Indiana University. According to Blevis, the parts of the PRInCiPleS framework

are called Predispositions, Research, Insights, Concepts and Concept Systems, Prototypes, and Strategies. He describes that predispositions are what the designer feels are correct when starting a design project. Research can consist of observations (primary research), a review of the existing literature (secondary research), and collections (facts regarding the culture related to the project). Insights are the design problems resulting from the research that was conducted. Concepts and related systems are the services, communicative tools, or plans that designers conceive from insights. Prototypes can be low-fidelity ones that show the design's behaviors, ones that focus on how the design looks, or high-fidelity ones that focus on usability. Strategies can focus on whether the design will be socially desirable for users, whether the technology will be feasible, or whether it will be economically sound (Blevins 1-2).

Besides the "Five Planes" and the PRInCiPlE S frameworks, many others exist. For instance, John Marvin Chachere and John Riker Haymaker explain a framework called the Rationale Clarity Framework (RCF) that is designed to objectively assess design choices. Chachere and Haymaker note that the framework can be used for architecture, engineering, and construction design projects (Chachere and Haymaker 1). In the RCF, the project manager starts the design project, picks the stakeholders that generate goals for the analyses, figures out the designers that can generate design alternatives that can be evaluated, and picks the gatekeepers that can give constraints for the analyses. Then the goals, constraints, and alternatives are created, while analyses are conducted to choose the most effective design for the project. The RCF is also designed to determine if all parts of the project are coherent, connected, concrete, consistent, certain, credible, and correct (Chachere and Haymaker 8-9).

## **OTHER RELEVANT LITERATURE ABOUT DESIGN RATIONALES**

In Eaton's article, titled "UX is Grounded in Rationale, Not Design," she provides more tips about how to create effective design rationales. For example, she declares that "writing isn't the same as understanding" (Eaton, "UX is Grounded in Rationale, Not Design"). This means designers can write all they want regarding their research, but they need to rationalize what they are writing in order to have strong design rationales. They also need to be able to explain their design choices and the reasons behind them to their audience. Otherwise, their decisions will not be supported by an effective framework. Designers also cannot begin a project without being aware of the broad scope of the project.

Additionally, Eaton emphasizes that creators need to engage in issues they are trying to solve by getting thoughts from consumers and data from research. This helps designers figure out the central concept for the project, the design's information architecture, and the actions that projects should or should not make possible (Eaton, "UX is Grounded in Rationale, Not Design").

Also concerning design rationales, D. Scott McCrickard, Steve Harrison, Shahtab Wahid, and Stacy Branham from the Department of Computer Science and Center for HCI at Virginia Tech endorse that image-based rationales result in more creativity among designers. This helps build high-quality solutions for design problems and, in turn, satisfies users and other stakeholders. The authors claim that sketches and storyboards can be integrated with design rationales to leverage creativity (McCrickard et al. 1). The images can also help more of the design rationale be reused. This helps designers viewing the rationale better understand the information presented. The authors call the integration of design rationales with sketches and storyboards

the PIC-UP (Picture and Image Collocation Usability Process) (McCrickard et al. 3).

Additionally, in their report, "Design Rationale as Theory," John M. Carroll and Mary Beth Rosson observe that design rationales blend heuristic usability approaches and those based on scientific theories. The incorporated theories can be balanced by descriptions of design choices and tradeoffs (Carroll and Rosson 3). The design rationale concept is grounded in the scientific foundations of ecological science, which examines that natural and societal systems that have evolved to take advantage of the environment; action science, which applies science to practical issues; and synthetic or technical science, which groups components into categories (Carroll and Rosson 6-9). These scientific foundations that relate to design rationales are linked to scope, applicability, and context (Carroll and Rosson 6). They also enable design rationales to appeal to various forms of knowledge, which broadens their scope and results in frequent analysis of the designs (Carroll and Rosson 5). Additionally, Carroll and Rosson believe that it is important to identify and use normal and vital user experience scenarios in design rationales. They should contain scenarios describing normal functions users can engage in through the project, scenarios describing creative or uncommon functions, scenarios where users are successful, and scenarios where users have to recover from errors (Carroll and Rosson 10).

## **CONCLUSION**

Designers who are considering not creating design rationales for their projects should think again. They are extremely important for communicating the reasoning behind design choices. These rationales generate understanding for stakeholders and designers who view and/or have roles in creating them. Design rationales are also where details of design projects – such as the look, information

architecture, requirements, goals, scenarios, functions, features, etc. – can be determined through research, stakeholders' and designers' perspectives, and prototypes. Design rationales can also be used in several disciplines in conjunction with several useful and versatile frameworks. Design rationales can boost creativity by blending usability approaches and theories.

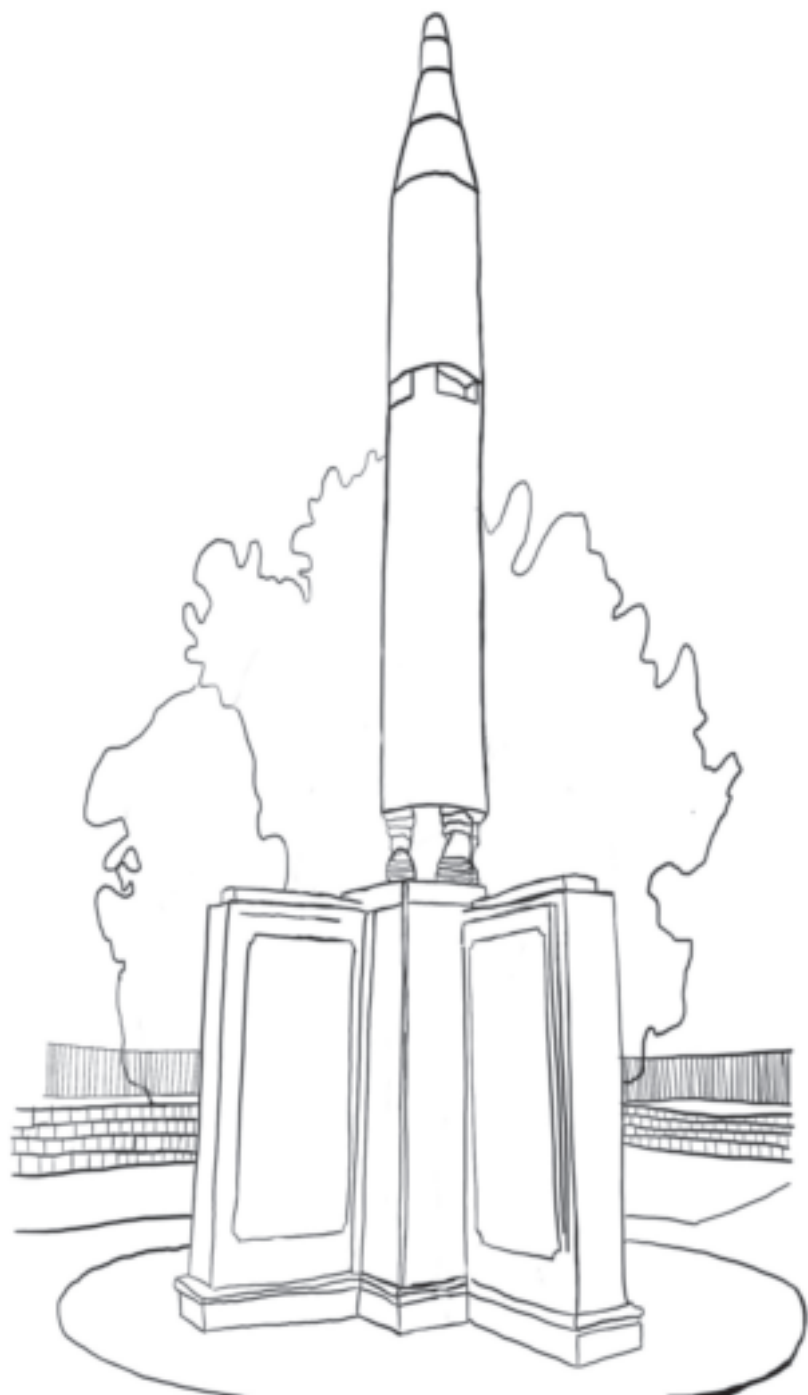
This project's aim was to provide a descriptive overall picture of what design rationales are and how they can be used with frameworks, through the lens of relevant and topical literature. Design rationales are exciting because of the improvements and possibilities they afford, so designers should make every effort to learn more about them and how they can be used in their work.

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# Lebensborn

Rhoads, Yvette

## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

Yvette Rhoads is a life-long resident of Southern Indiana. She has an Associate's degree in Business Administration and Supervision (Ivy Tech State College, Sellersburg, IN), a Bachelor's Degree in Global Business Development (University of Phoenix –Louisville, KY campus) and is currently in the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies Program with a concentration in Organizational Development and Leadership at Indiana University Southeast.

Rhoads is a member of Who's Who of American High School Students, Who's Who of American Collegiate Students, Dean's List, Phi Theta Kappa, National Dean's List, Delta Mu Delta, International Honors Society and currently pending approval into the Pinnacle Honors Society.

In her free time, Rhoads volunteers extensively in her local community through translating, helping people learn to read and write, serving on various committees and is a former Board of Directors Member for the Dream Factory of Louisville, KY.

Rhoads is passionate about learning and helping others to learn and grow in their own lives. In early 2016, Rhoads was temporarily disabled in a wheelchair, which changed her view of the world and she is now a committed advocate in bringing awareness to the disabled community, particularly in the secular professional arena and in traveling accommodations.

## **THESIS/ARGUMENT**

The Lebensborn project was a secret population breeding program conceived by the German leader, Adolf Hitler. This project was a deliberately-planned national atrocity from World War II that the Germans were forced to acknowledge and cannot deny. This national atrocity affected men, women and children and forced them to carry a Nazi stigmatism of shame. Even though World War II is over, Germany's citizenry must still acknowledge and live with this enduring war memory etched into everyday society.

The Lebensborn children grew up, "enveloped in public and private silence," and are still alive today (Ericsson, p. 1). Meanwhile, the country's general public was not aware of neither the secret Lebensborn program nor its purpose. That is because this ill-conceived program was a secret; Hitler planned to breed the population that he was having ordered to be killed in the concentration camps.

The Lebensborn project abruptly ended as Germany lost the war. Many of the program's children were abandoned and displaced. Others were relocated throughout Europe, never to know where they came from, nor their parents or origin history. The Lebensborn project and children remained a hidden secret for many years after World War II, as the truth about them slowly emerged. Because this was undoubtedly a national atrocity, reparations have slowly been given to the children and families who remain affected by this war program.

Although this program was shrouded in secrecy during its time, it has finally been realized in present day and is a critical addition to worldwide remembrance of World War II. However, the Lebensborn children remain victims of the war because their existence and post-war experience is completely unique from any other affected social group from that period.

## **SOURCES/EVIDENCE**

Primary and secondary sources were researched to provide evidence for this paper. Primary sources included first-hand accounts of Lebensborn children's discovery of their identity, discussion about their lives within the Lebensborn homes during the war and outside of the Lebensborn homes after the war were consulted. Secondary sources included documentaries, articles and interviews of Lebensborn survivors.

## **LEBENSBOERN PROGRAM**

"Lebensborn" is a German term that means "fountain of life." This project was carried out by Hitler's second in command of the Third Reich, Heinrich Himmler. Both Hitler and Himmler were obsessed with Nordic "pure-blooded warriors." The purpose of this project was to increase the German birthrate and to create a "racially pure" population of children to make up Hitler's "super Aryan master race." This master race was to lead the Nazi-Aryan nation during the "thousand-year rule" (Oelhafen, p. 89). The Lebensborn project was a German population policy which distinguished the "worthless and the valuable" (Ericsson, p. 4). For Hitler, the war took lives and therefore created the need for new German lives. The Nazi slogan during this time was "the victory in the battlefield must be succeeded by the victory of the Aryan cradle" (Ericsson, p. 5).

## **PROGRAM**

Hitler's grand project commenced in 1935 and persisted until 1945, the end of the war. To understand the magnitude and importance of the Lebensborn project, it is necessary to understand Hitler's military criteria of all of the participants in this program. The Lebensborn project operated on different levels to provide 'Aryan' children for Hitler's plan of eugenics. The Führer's goal was to "strengthen the population in numbers and quality" (Ericcson, p. 2).

The fathers of the Lebensborn children were members of Schutzstaffel Protection Squadrons (“SS”) SS Officers in the Nazi regime (Collins, 2017). The mothers were Nordic Aryan women. Since the SS Officers were impregnating women, they were evaluated and divided into one of five categories (Collins, 2017). These categories consisted of 1) Pure Nordic; 2) Predominately Nordic; 3) Light Alpine with Dinaric or Mediterranean Additions; 4) Predominately Eastern; and 5) Mongrels of Non-European Origin. Only the SS Officers in the first three categories were allowed to participate in the Lebensborn project and impregnate the Nordic Aryan women with “racially pure” children. The SS Officers in the last two categories were rejected from participating in the Lebensborn project (Oelhafen, p. 123).

Further requirements for SS Officers included committing to four years of service in the basic ranks, twelve years of service as a non-commissioned Officer, and twenty-five years of service as an Officer. Hitler and Himmler required that the SS Officers be committed to their service to the Third Reich, and part of their service was participating in the Lebensborn project (Oelhafen, p. 123).

Admittance to the exclusive Lebensborn homes was only granted if the Nordic Aryan women volunteered to be indoctrinated into the German Culture and if they took the Nazi ways seriously (Heineman, p. 36). The women showed this by agreeing to the following while they were pregnant and in the Lebensborn program: 1) undergo a Nazi education through propaganda films; 2) read Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*; 3) regularly listen to radio lectures; and 4) sing Nazi anthems to their babies while in the womb and after birth, if needed (Oelhafen, p. 146).

All of the SS Officers and the Nordic Aryan women were required to submit pictures of themselves in bathing suits so even their figures and any physical deformities and imperfections could be examined

and addressed before procreation began. Such physical abnormalities included their nose shapes, their personalities and general dispositions.

The participants were ranked on a scale from one to nine, and only those from six through nine on the scale were “acceptable” to participate in the Lebensborn program (Oelhafen, p. 126, 146). In addition, the women were required to be tall, have high foreheads, bright eyes and skin. Any hereditary diseases would exclude them from participating in this exclusive breeding program (Popa, p. 3)

## **CRITERIA**

The parents of these children had to meet Hitler’s high and intricate criteria of “racially pure” guidelines. Special breeding charts were created, and only those with four German grandparents were determined to be of “pure blood” and were considered “citizens.” Those with 1-2 Jewish grandparents in their lineage were determined to be “mixed” and were considered “state subjects.” Those with 3-4 Jewish grandparents were determined to be “full Jews” and were considered “outlawed” (Oelhafen, p. 110).

The participants of the Lebensborn project had to submit further documentation to prove their ancestry. If pure racial ancestry could be proven going back to the 1800’s, a “Greater Aryan Certificate” was given. In order to obtain a “Lesser Aryan Certificate,” the participants had to produce up to seven birth certificates including themselves, their parents, grandparents, plus up to three of their parents’ and grandparents’ marriage certificates.

Other documents required to participate in the Lebensborn project were “Ahnenpass” certificates, church records, and an “ancestor’s passport,” which described the racial characteristics of ancestors. Finally, an “Ahnentafel,” (family tree) was to be submitted for the Third Reich to keep on file for the Lebensborn children that were to be procreated (Oelhafen, p. 110-111).

## **PARTICIPANT DUTY**

The SS Officers were encouraged to have as many children as possible with Nordic Aryan women. Contraceptives and abortions were banned (Oelhafen, p. 88). When the Lebensborn program began in 1935, fifty-seven percent of the Lebensborn mothers were not married. By the end of the Lebensborn project in 1945, seventy percent of the Lebensborn mothers were not married. (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27).

Even Himmler himself participated in this program and fathered two illegitimate children. To help secure the secrecy of the Lebensborn program, the identities of the Lebensborn mothers and SS Officer fathers were recorded in secretly guarded files, separate from the municipal birth records (Hammer, p. 1).

Himmler “genuinely wished to encourage the racial elite to throw off traditional restraints and reproduce outside of marriage” (Heineman, p. 32). The SS Officers were expected to impregnate a minimum of four women. Any childless SS Officer had to adopt a Lebensborn child. SS Officers had to pay “subscriptions” based on the number of children they had. The more children an SS Officer had, the fewer subscriptions he had to pay. If an SS Officer did not have any children or had fewer children, they were forced to pay more subscriptions. Hitler did this to essentially “force” the SS Officers to procreate as much as possible, and it was their “duty” to do this (Oelhafen, p. 127).

## **PROPERTY OF THIRD REICH**

Because of their political importance, the Lebensborn children were seen as national assets, and therefore considered national property. These children were property of the Third Reich and their parents knew and understood that they had no claim on these children.

The Third Reich compensated the parents of these children to keep breeding procreating as much as possible (Oelhafen, p. 152). Mothers giving birth to three or more children were rewarded by being given “honorary cards” which aided in shopping and loan discounts (Crossland, p. 2).

Lebensborn children were raised in one of twenty-five special Lebensborn homes and facilities spread out over Germany, Austria, Norway, Belgium, France and Luxembourg. Since Lebensborn children were considered “riches of the German nation,” these special facilities were materially funded directly by the Third Reich (Ericsson, p. 2). The Lebensborn children were indoctrinated into the “national and political attitudes,” philosophy and belief system of the German Third Reich from birth onward (Ericsson, p. 8) (Oelhafen, p. 145).

These special facilities also served as “meeting places” and housing for the “racially pure” German women to meet with the SS Officers to conceive and give birth to the Lebensborn babies (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2017).

The privacy and safety of the Lebensborn mothers and SS Officers was assured in these facilities. The expectant mothers were given financial support by the Third Reich, wed or unwed, and housing was provided for the expectant mothers as long as they kept producing children (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27).

## **HOMES/FACILITIES**

The Lebensborn babies were born into a life of privilege and power. This was accomplished by the Lebensborn children being given the best food, living quarters, clothing, education and medical care possible. Special attention was given to the décor of the

furnishings of the Lebensborn homes and facilities to ensure that the Lebensborn children had the very best in their upbringing and surroundings. The furnishings for these extravagant homes was supplied from the war loot of the homes of Jewish people who had been sent to the concentration camps. Hitler and Himmler were directly involved in selecting décor and furnishings when they would regularly visit these homes and facilities (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27).

The Lebensborn children experienced a “pampered and luxurious” life, filled with “immense playgrounds and formal gardens” to play in as they grew up (Sarkar, p. 116). The Third Reich directly funded all of this, as these children were considered “Hitler’s children.” Having the best of everything solidified the Lebensborn children’s superior standing in the Third Reich. While children were dying of malnourishment and starvation in the concentration camps, Hitler’s children, the Lebensborn babies, were “so fat and healthy that they completely filled their over-sized carriages” (Sarkar, p. 116). The Lebensborn children lived privileged, idyllic lives, and had total immersion in the Nazi thoughts, beliefs and education system.

## **WEWELSBURG CASTLE**

As part of the Lebensborn program, Himmler took over the Wewelsburg Castle in North Rhine-Westphalia. Himmler was convinced that this area was the heartland of the Aryan “supermen” and thus would be the location to be used for the Nordic mystical rituals involving these special children. The purpose of this castle was to serve as a training school and headquarters for the Lebensborn children once they grew older and would make up the “glorified brotherhood” (Oelhafen, p. 121).

## **“NATIONAL ASSETS”**

Since the Lebensborn children were held as “national assets”, they were to be protected at all costs in order to preserve the Aryan lineage and carry out Hitler’s purposes. As soon as they were born, they were baptized in special SS baptism ritual, marking them as “national assets.” The altar was draped with a swastika flag, and there was a prominent photo of Hitler. SS Officers would hold the Lebensborn babies and intone a Nazi blessing on the children with symbolic daggers and make an oath on the children’s behalf, pledging lifelong allegiance to Nazi ideology. This special military baptism sealed their worthiness as members of Hitler’s “super Aryan master race” (Oelhafen, p. 148).

Once these children reached a certain age, they were then adopted by German families, who would raise them until the war ended victoriously for the Germans, at which time these “precious” children would be handed back over to Hitler at his bidding to be used for his purposes (Oelhafen, p. 152).

## **EDUCATION**

The Lebensborn boys were sent to elite schools where they received a special political education and in which physical education was highly important. The Lebensborn girls were sent to female Hitler Youth camps, where physical education was a high priority, and where they were groomed to embrace their roles as mothers and obedient Nazi wives (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2016). Detailed records of the children’s progress was regularly sent to Himmler to review and help determine how each individual child would fit into serving his purposes (Oelhafen, p. 146).

## **LEBENSBOHN POPULATION**

Hitler's goal was for over "600 regiments" of Lebensborn babies to be born. Since a regiment consisted of anywhere from 500-700 humans, the goal of the Lebensborn project was to procreate 300,000 – 420,000 babies as fast as possible (Oelhafen, p. 129). It is estimated that between eight thousand and twelve thousand women gave birth to Lebensborn babies at the Lebensborn homes between 1935 and 1945 (Heineman, p. 265).

## **CHILD ABDUCTION**

As the war progressed, Hitler and Himmler ascertained that not enough children were being procreated. Hitler then ordered his troops to begin looking for children in occupied lands who racially resembled the master race that he intended to produce. These children were sent for racial examinations under the guise of "medical examinations" (Oelhafen, p. 157).

The "medical examinations" were actually racial examinations that put the children into one of four categories. The first category was what Hitler felt German children should look like. The second category was children with potential useful additions to the Reich. The third category was children with any Slavic features. The fourth category was Jewish children. Children in the first two categories of the racial examinations were deemed "racially valuable" and were to undergo "Germanization" (Hitler, p. 388). These were the children with blond hair and blue or green eyes (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27). Many of these children were orphans. Others were kidnapped from their families so they could Germanized. Germanization included being immersed in the German culture through their upbringing, thoughts, beliefs and education. These children joined the other Lebensborn children to be indoctrinated into the German culture. Children in the last two

categories were deemed as “worthless” to the Nazis and were sent to the concentration camps to work in slave labor (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27). It is estimated that as many as 100,000 children may have been stolen or kidnapped from occupied lands under the guise of these “medical examinations.” Many times, the kidnapped children had no idea that they were even kidnapped. The kidnapped children were told by the SS nurses that their parents “abandoned” them after dropping them off for the “medical examinations.” However, it is also well documented that at many times, children were forcibly ripped from their parent’s arms and stolen from them (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27).

Since the orphaned, kidnapped or stolen children had not been indoctrinated into the German culture since birth, every effort was made to force these children to reject and forget their birth parents, and to renounce their original heritage. This was accomplished through regular beatings. If the children complied, their “Germanization” was continued. If they did not comply and refused the Nazi education, they were transferred to the concentration camps to be exterminated (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27).

## **END OF LEBENSBORN PROGRAM**

The Lebensborn project abruptly ended as Germany lost the war in 1945. As World War II advanced, the Allied troops advanced more and more into the German front. Many of the Lebensborn staff and mothers had fled, abandoning the Lebensborn children. Hitler’s plan of having a centralized “pure” race was no more. Upon the collapse of Germany, the elite Lebensborn children became unwanted reminders of Hitler’s breeding program and his extermination of the Jews, gypsies, and undesirable people.

## **FATE OF THE LEBENSBORN CHILDREN**

The Lebensborn children were dispersed throughout Europe. A large number of these children were put up for adoption. Others were sent back to live with their birth families, if known. Some of the kidnapped children were able to be sent back to their native countries. Others were relocated throughout Europe, never to know where they came from, their history or their parents. Most tragic is that some of the Lebensborn children refused to go back to their original families because the Nazi indoctrination was so strong in them, and they identified themselves as Germans (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27).

Although it is impossible to know exactly how many children were affected by the Lebensborn program, it is estimated that more than 250,000 child abductions took place as a German national atrocity. After World War II, some of the German families refused to divulge or give up the children they had received from the Lebensborn centers to raise. As a result, many of the Lebensborn children were completely abandoned, hidden or displaced.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

Murmurings, hints and innuendo of these SS “stud farms” existed in wartime Germany, but the general public regarded it as rumors, fantasy, and madness. However, traveling soldiers, politicians and clergy witnessed the existence of these establishments. As these people traveled throughout Europe during the war, the existence of the Lebensborn program slowly leaked (Sarkar, p. 121). Once the war ended, thousands of the Lebensborn children were discovered and the truth slowly emerged about the grand scale of this hidden wartime atrocity. The Lebensborn project could not be denied because all of these children had the same physical characteristics (blond hair, blue

or green eyes), they had no parents, and they had to come from somewhere. In addition, the Lebensborn children were highly indoctrinated into the German culture and Nazi propaganda. The public was forced to take note of the true nature of Hitler's deliberate wartime atrocity.

## **NUREMBURG TRIALS**

Four of the most senior Lebensborn officials were prosecuted in the Nuremburg Trials of 1947 for racial cleansing. These included Max Sollmann, Guenther Tesch, Inge Viermetz, and Gregor Ebner. These Lebensborn officials were charged with the counts of: 1) crimes against humanity; 2) war crimes; and 3) membership in the SS. War crimes included "violations of existing laws concerning mistreatment of enemy combatants and prisoners of war; deliberately causing death or injury to civilian populations outside of military necessity." Crimes against humanity consisted of: "the "murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation ... or persecution of an individual on political, racial, or religious grounds" (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2016).

Max Sollmann served as head of the Lebensborn society and was sentenced to prison from July 6, 1945 until his release on March 10, 1948. Guenther Tesch was head of the legal department of Lebensborn. He served his time from May 13, 1945 until his release on March 10, 1948. Inge Viermetz served as the deputy to Max Sollmann, and was acquitted of her involvement in the Lebensborn program. Gregor Ebner was head of the health department of Lebensborn. He served his time from July 5, 1945 until his release on March 10, 1948 (Phillips Nuremberg Trials Collection: Trial 8 - RuSHA Case, 2016).

## **LEBENSBOBORN STIGMA**

Once the truth of the Lebensborn program was fully revealed to the public, the formerly elite Lebensborn children were classified as “rats” and “Nazi whore children.” Many of these formerly secret “precious” children were sent to slave labor camps or asylums. The Lebensborn children were viewed by the public as “dangerous,” “threats” and “bearers of a foreign national essence” (Ericsson, p. 8).

For this reason, public hate and resentment toward these war children continue in present times. The children who were once going to lead the next “thousand-year rule” were not being hidden from public view (Dvorson, p. 30). Many of the Lebensborn children were despised because their physical looks were reminiscent of the Nazi Germany occupation. As a result, vast numbers of the Lebensborn children were shipped to other countries after World War II so the public would not have to see them (Oelhafen, p. 221).

Many of the Lebensborn children have a deep, social shame of who they are, and where they fit into Hitler’s purposes. Lebensborn children are twenty more times likely to commit suicide than the normal population. Drug abuse and alcoholism are prevalent in Lebensborn children, as they try to “forget” who they are or where they come from (Ericsson, p. 11).

The majority of the Lebensborn children were ostracized, abused, neglected and rejected throughout their lives (Ericsson, p. 11). It is customary for the Lebensborn children to start finding out about their truth late in their life, upon the death(s) of their adoptive parents (Ericsson, p. 11). Other Lebensborn children hide their history because of fear of violent repercussions. Lebensborn children have a higher rate of rape, harassment, beatings, being institutionalized, and sterilized from reproducing because of deep seated fear of their high Nazi indoctrination and inborn beliefs (Hammer, p. 2).

## **SUPPORT GROUPS**

Since there is a highly negative stigma of being a Lebensborn child, the majority of Lebensborn children are not forthcoming with their past. However, many are slowly coming forward and forming support groups to connect with other Lebensborn children, as they are the only ones who can understand the stigma attached with being one of "Hitler's children." The support groups allow the Lebensborn survivors release their deep emotional hurt and they are able to discuss their childhood trauma and low self-esteem. The Lebensborn children are able to discuss their shared living experiences in a safe, understanding environment.

One such support group called "Lebensspuren" (traces of life) was founded in 2005. Because of the survivor's deep shame and emotional trauma, this group would meet in secret once a year in different locations throughout Europe (Oelhafen, p. 209). It was not until many years later that this support group went public and received attention in the German press, International Press and the British Broadcasting System (BBC).

Another avenue of uniting Lebensborn children with one another to give them a voice as war children was through high profile Norwegian radio and television documentaries. Between the years of 1986 through 1996, these Norwegian media platforms also helped bring public awareness to help these Lebensborn children find their parents and families (Sarkar, p. 117).

## **GOVERNMENT RECORDS**

The Germans were meticulous, thorough record keepers, and there is an extensive record collection of more than 30 million people at the Red Cross Tracing Center in Bad Arolsen, Germany. Another source of painstaking records is through the "International

Tracing Service” (also known as “Central Tracing Bureau; “CTB”). These detailed records entail microfilm, birth certificates, photos, immunization cards, dental records, identification cards, travel visas and passports. However, the Bonn Agreement of 1955 had a clause that prohibited the publication of any data that could harm former Nazi victims or their families.

This made it even harder and more frustrating for Lebensborn children to research their identity because the sealing of these documents protected the Nazi perpetrators who put them in this position of lost identity. Although these records have slowly been released to the public, it has been found that as World War II neared its end, and as Germany was losing the war, the S.S. tried to hide the Lebensborn program by falsifying existing documents by removing the father’s names and changing the birth places.

The Nazi officials attempted to cover up the identity of the abducted children that they put into the Lebensborn program (Oelhafen, p. 103-106, 159). However, it is of note that with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the gradual reunification of Germany, many of the once heavily guarded German historical records, including many of the Lebensborn documentation, was made available to the public (Sarkar, p. 128).

The Lebensborn survivors who have tried to get answers are often prevented from the post-World War II German society’s reluctance to acknowledge their Nazi past, including access to government documents. Their natural and foster parents often stay silent about the Lebensborn program and refuse to discuss the children’s heritage. These actions only deepened the mysteries of the Lebensborn survivors even more. However, more than 1,000 Lebensborn government archives have been opened in Berlin, and two of the former Lebensborn organizations are now trying to help many of these Lebensborn war children trace their roots (Hammer, p. 1).

## **GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The German government has been slow to acknowledge the existence of the Lebensborn program, and a “conspiracy of silence” still remains (Ericsson, p. 10). Although the German government has gradually begun to reveal the depth and magnitude of the Lebensborn program, an understood “policy of invisibility” remains (Ericsson, p. 10). However, on December 31, 1999, the Norwegian Prime Minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik, publicly apologized to the Lebensborn children “for the harassment and injustice” done to the Lebensborn children (Hammer, p. 5).

In 2006, German authorities offered double nationality to French people with German soldier fathers, if proven. The German consulate also started to process applications for German naturalization of the “stateless” Lebensborn children. Although being recognized by German authorities allows the Lebensborn children to be able to apply for German pensions and other benefits, the Lebensborn children who take advantage of this recent provision do so with the main purpose of having recognition of their identity (Roberts, p. 1).

## **REPARATIONS**

It is hard for Lebensborn children to ask for reparations because “actions that had been legal at the time they had been committed were not prosecutable” (Berger, p. 52). In 2000, the Norwegian Association for War Children (Norges Krigsbarnforbund) filed a class action against the Norwegian government, seeking reparations for the “hardships they had endured in the years after the war.” Although there was no statute of limitations for reparations, the Norwegian legal court system ruled that the case was “time-barred.” The Norwegian Association of War Children

appealed this case to the highest levels of the Norwegian court system and was finally heard before the European Court of Human Rights in January 2008 (Sarkar, p. 132).

These children sought compensation from the Norwegian government of between £50,000 and £200,000 (\$60,000 - \$243,000 in United States dollars). The case was dismissed, and they were offered £2,000 (\$2,500 in United States dollars) as a “token” (The Forgotten Camps. Air Date 2000, April 27). Reparations have been made to war families, but since the Lebensborn children are still considered “illegitimate” by the German government, they have no share in any of the war reparations (Hammer, p. 5).

## **CONCLUSION**

The Lebensborn project was a national atrocity and remains a living memory of World War II. The Lebensborn children are the recipients of war crimes in the sense that they remain psychological prisoners of war. The Lebensborn children were bred for the sole purpose of replacing the population that Hitler was having exterminated in the German concentration camps. After World War II ended, the Lebensborn children were deported to other countries and to other families, on political grounds not their own.

The Lebensborn survivors are still alive and are forced to live with the Nazi stigmatism of shame, guilt and secrecy. Although the Lebensborn program has slowly been exposed decades after World War II, the German government is still reluctant to admit its part in this secret program. Countries such as Norway have gradually come forward to admit their part in this wartime atrocity.

The perpetrators of the Lebensborn program abandoned their

children, who remain without any concrete knowledge of where they came from to this day. Since the true origin of many of the Lebensborn children are not known, they are considered "stateless," thus adding to the total human abandonment that they have experienced throughout their lives (Ericsson, p. 6). To date, minimal wartime reparations have been made to the Lebensborn children and their families. These people are still considered illegitimate in German society and have no claim on any family inheritances if their real families are known or can be proven.

The Lebensborn children had no say in their upbringing, nor the purposes for which they were being raised and groomed for. After the war, these children went from having an elite status as national assets to being utterly and totally abandoned. They did not know who their real parents were. Government documents were falsified and shrouded in secrecy. Because the Lebensborn children had a very distinct physical look about them with blond hair and blue eyes, they immediately had a shame attached to them because Germany not only wanted to conceal their identity but wanted to completely forget their existence. Although the Lebensborn children exist, they do not have a substantial part of the collective memory of World War II. The Lebensborn program is not often commemorated in war ceremonies, government apologies, or monuments.

Lebensborn has been commemorated through support groups and survivor stories in written and electronic form. Lebensborn is a living war memory that is tied to the political, social and cultural facets of World War II and is part of Germany's historical context of World War II. Certain measurements of war victimhood can be defined in such terms as death counts, violence, starvation, displacement, etc.

However, the Lebensborn children's victimhood is much harder

to define because they are a special group that others cannot identify with in terms of their war and post-war experience of not knowing who they are and being rejected by society. The majority of Lebensborn children do not even know that they are Lebensborn children because there is so much secrecy and shame associated with the breeding program that Hitler conceived.

While many of the Lebensborn children may suspect that they may be adopted or displaced from their real families, the families that they are currently with are, for the most part, unforthcoming in the information that they provide to this formerly elite group of children. They are victims because they continue to have no closure. There is a sense of despair and shame among them, and they have deep emotional scars of not knowing their sense of identity.

The Lebensborn children's lives are like life puzzles with permanently missing pieces. Although an idea of who they are can be grasped, the missing pieces of their identity will never truly reveal who they really are. Their peers are a small group who share a unique past that most of society is not even aware of their pasts. Many of the Lebensborn children are not psychologically ready to come forward with their testimonies of mistreatment and abuse they have suffered. Most of them have chosen to accept their current status in life and move on the best way they can, not knowing their heritage or where they came from.

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# Sexual Harassment in Virtual Reality

Rhoads, Yvette

## INTRODUCTION

The second presidential town hall debate took place between candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on October 9, 2016. These were fierce opponents, at different ends of the political scale. Video footage shows Donald Trump looming behind Hillary Clinton on the stage and following her very closely wherever she walked.

When candidate Clinton was standing still and talking, candidate Trump can be seen standing very close behind her, invading her personal space (The Telegraph. 2016). In a post-debate spin room, Clinton accused Trump of “breathing down my neck,” making her “skin crawl,” and being “menacingly stalking” (Wooston, Jr. & Wang, 2017).

Trump’s actions were viewed as “bullying” by the general public, especially in light of the fact that the debate took place two days after Trump was heard bragging to an Access Hollywood reporter, Billy Bush, on a 2005 hot mic about “groping,” “kissing,” and “trying to have sex with women” (Wooston, Jr. & Wang, 2017).

The animalistic, stalking manner that Donald Trump exhibited on stage reminded me of a scene out of the 1994 movie *Disclosure*. In this movie, actor Michael Douglas plays the character of Tom Sanders, who was sexually harassed by his boss, Meredith Johnson,

played by actress Demi Moore (Wikipedia, 2018). There is a scene in the movie where each one of them are inside a virtual reality filing system to access company databases and have avatars to represent them as users. In the system interface, Meredith can be seen walking provocatively in front Tom with no clothes on with her voluptuous 2-D avatar, standing toe-to-toe with him in frontal position, and twisting and turning in front of him so he can see her breasts and body outline (Anderson, 1995).

We live in a modern, scientific and technological world in which avatars are commonly and routinely used to portray people in an authentic manner in virtual reality, consisting of video games, fantasy online gaming, online communications, web forums and science fiction technology. If a sexual act or function is done in virtual reality, it is the same as performing the sexual act or function in real life.

## **VIRTUAL REALITY AVATARS**

To understand why this is so, we must first understand what an avatar in virtual reality is defined as being. An avatar is the “embodiment of a person or idea” and represents the online user (Tech Terms, 2018). Online users custom-create their avatars to create a unique appearance for each player.

Many interfaces give the online user the option of selecting an avatar image that represents the real-life user’s persona. This is done through such means as hairstyles, body tint, accessories, clothing, voice and text. Avatars then become part of the online community, representing the real person behind the avatar, in order to interact with other avatars, or people.

These custom-designed avatars now represent the real-life person in virtual reality and are considered their “alter egos” (Tech Terms,

2018). It is no wonder that people identify very highly, authentically, emotionally and mentally with their virtual reality avatars.

## **PERSONAL SPACE**

Personal space is observed in our real world, but seldom observed in virtual reality. Personal space is defined as the social norm of “a person’s personal boundary of how close they stand to our colleagues, our friends and to strangers” (Erickson, 2017). It is important to note that personal space varies from country to country and culture to culture. For the purposes of this essay, personal space will be discussed in the context of the American culture in the United States. In the United States, the average [reality] personal space is 1.6 feet for “close relationships” consisting of spouses, significant others, family and children (Erickson, 2017). The average personal space for “personal acquaintances” made up of friends and colleagues is 2.3 feet apart (Erickson, 2017). The average personal space for a “stranger,” or someone we do not know or have never met is 3.1 feet (Erickson, 2017). Rhetorically asking how often are these boundaries of personal space kept in virtual reality? Not very often. In fact, virtual reality avatars have not only the capability to stand very close to one another, sometimes having the capability to “morph” multiple avatars into one “super” avatar, they also have the ability to touch and interact with each other.

## **PEACOCKING**

The term “peacocking” is derived from an animal’s version of “courtship display” to one another in order to attract a sexual act with another animal (Mangay, 2018). The peacock is commonly used as an example and the term is named after them because the male peacocks will “flaunt” themselves and their decorative

feathers whenever a female peacock is around or in their immediate vicinity in order to attract a mate (Mangay, 2018). Humans are also known to “peacock” by puffing their chests out, coyly looking at one another, standing very close, and physical touching one another in a manner to suggest something more, usually a sexual act or function (Mangay, 2018). Peacocking can and is routinely displayed in virtual reality from both men and women toward one another.

## **GROPING**

“Groping” is defined as “touching or fondling one another in a sexual way using the hands” and is considered “molestation” in most societies (Definitions, 2018). It is true that consensual touching of a body is not considered groping. For the purpose of this essay, however, we will assume that the touching in virtual reality is not consensual, even unwelcome. This begs the question: How many times have avatars in virtual reality inappropriately rubbed up against another avatar, possibly touching sexual parts of another avatar such as the buttocks, breasts, thighs, penis and testicles? Although these are the most common body parts to grope, groping can also occur by invading another avatar’s personal virtual space and simply by pressing up against another avatar. This can be for as little as five to ten seconds.

## **MOLESTATION**

“Molestation” is defined as making “annoying sexual advances to, especially: to force physical and usually sexual contact” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Virtual reality avatars can pinch or slap one another, especially in video games and fantasy games. Virtual reality avatars can also repeatedly touch another avatar, follow them around and be annoying to another virtual reality user/ virtual reality avatar.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

“Sexual harassment” is defined as “the act of tormenting by continued, persistent attacks” (Definitions, 2018). Sexual harassment is also defined as “uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). If virtual reality avatars are on certain virtual reality platforms such as video games and fantasy online games, it is entirely possible that these avatars can receive continued unwelcome verbal or physical interaction from another virtual avatar within the same platform. It is possible for avatars to even be stalked on these forums by other avatars.

On November 16, 2017, Leeann Tweeden, a radio commentator and model, publicly came forward and disclosed that Minnesota Senator, Al Franken, made unwanted sexual advances on a 2006 USO tour. Such unwanted sexual advances occurred when they were practicing a skit and Al Franken “put his hand on the back of my head, mashed his lips into mine and aggressively stuck his tongue in my mouth” (Weinstein, 2017). Tweeden rebuffed Franken and told him never to do that again. Tweeden made it much known to Franken that his actions were unwelcome and unwanted. Photos that have been produced show that Senator Franken groped her breasts later during the same USO holiday tour, without her consent, while she was sleeping. Senator Franken admitted to the public through the media that he did, in fact, do this, but that it “was intended to be funny” (Weinstein, 2017).

Although virtual reality avatars cannot, at this time, put their tongues into another avatar’s mouth, these avatars do have the ability to stick their virtual reality tongues out and imitate the act of licking. Virtual avatars most certainly do have the current ability to grope the private virtual reality parts of another avatar. This definitely constitutes groping and molestation. This can constitute sexual harassment if such continued and persistent acts are uninvited and unwelcome.

If a person touched another person's private parts and fondled them while they were asleep in real life, they could be put in jail for assault. Why is it any different in virtual reality? If a sexual act or function is done in virtual reality, is it really considered sexual harassment? Or is there a different set of rules for real life versus virtual reality?

Most virtual reality avatars do not set out to sexually harass another virtual reality avatar. However, it is possible for the real person to be bolder in many ways, including sexually, with their virtual reality alter-ego avatar than they normally would be in real life. The real person may reason that even though they are controlling their virtual reality avatar, it is not really them doing the actions personally on the virtual reality platform that are using.

So what are some possible solutions to help avoid the temptation of encountering some of these circumstances? Some possible solutions may include having it written into the virtual reality interfaces to limit the proximity or personal space of each avatar to a minimum requirement. Androgynous avatars are another possibility. Limiting the clothing of avatars, or at least making the option of avatars not being able to be portrayed as naked, may help.

Having reporting systems in place for possible virtual reality abuse is another option. Creating more public awareness of what different people, countries and cultures expect from one another can help open the dialog and public awareness of what is acceptable and not acceptable regarding sexual harassment in virtual reality.

Respecting the personal space boundaries of other avatars is paramount and necessary. Limiting the amount of peacocking, groping, and molesting will reduce the sexual harassment possibility in virtual reality. And when in doubt, asking our real selves "What would I do in this circumstance?" will help determine if a virtual reality act or function could be perceived, intended or interpreted as sexual harassment.

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## MEET THE EDITORS

### Paul Ables

My name is Paul Ables, and I am a full-time student in the Master of Science in Strategic Finance program at IU Southeast. Although my current residence is in Louisville, I was raised in Southern and Central Indiana. Green Acres Elementary truly was “the place to be” in Clarksville, IN.

I ended up attending schools from Jeffersonville to Indianapolis while growing up, even though my family-at-large was based in Kentucky. This likely explains my mixed college sports fandom – I cheer on the UK Wildcats, Indiana Pacers and Indianapolis Colts! We’re all mixed up in this Hoosier/Bluegrass country of ours.

Southern Indiana is a special place, which drew me to take up the GRJ editor position. I wanted to help produce a volume of great writing, one that our local community could be proud of. In addition to selecting and editing papers, I spearheaded the graphic design of our 9<sup>th</sup> journal edition.

Our mission for the GRJ cover was to extend our reach from campus to the entire Southern Indiana region. With the help of artist Rebecca West, we produced a cover design that embraces the past, present and future of this community.

To continue this theme, IUS’ Design Center team stepped up and did something completely unique from any previous GRJ edition – create inner title page designs. Each of these showcases a regional landmark, which effectively stretches our design mission from cover to cover.

As for the writing process, it was a privilege reading each author’s submission. These are graduate-level works and the talent on display was invigorating. We received a deep pool of submissions, so selecting the papers to publish was an arduous process. This school is filled with talented writers, all of whom need a voice and a platform from which to be heard.

For the selections in this journal, hopefully the GRJ serves as an effective platform for the messages desired to be communicated. I believe we chose an impressive variety of paper topics, writing styles and author backgrounds.

Hopefully you, the reader, receives some level of enjoyment from picking up this graduate journal. To future student editors and authors, I hope you have as much fun with your GRJ experience as I had in mine!

### **Michelle Clements**

Michelle Clements is completing her final semester in the Master of Science in Education program concentrating on Technology. With this new credential, she hopes to become a Technology Integration Specialist with a local school district. To celebrate earning a Master Degree, Michelle is planning a Disney Cruise with her husband later this year. Next year, she plans to continue her education by becoming a Master Gardener through the Purdue University Floyd County Extension Office.

### **Kristin Kennedy**

Kristin Kennedy is a part-time student in the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies program at IU Southeast, and this is her first year as a Graduate Research Journal editor. Kristin helped select the papers included in this GRJ, considering the quality of the writing, the papers' relevance and diversity, and the likelihood that the papers will interest readers. She edited Jose Aponte's paper called "We Are Your Citizens, Too," Anita Kraft's paper called "Autism and Games: Using Minecraft for Children with ASD," and Yvette Rhoads's paper called "Sexual Harassment in Virtual Reality." In addition to helping select and edit papers, Kristin worked with Merrick Printing, located in Louisville, to get the GRJ printed. While being a GRJ editor comes with challenges, Kristin feels working on the journal was rewarding overall.

