Film and Emotional Contagion: Audiencing, Witnessing, and Performing the *Lingua Franca* of Compassion

by

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing visual semiotics and performance theories as a backdrop to inform a discussion regarding entertainment education and community dialogue, this study explores a unique case of compassionate communication being enacted at the most crucial moment – facing a school shooter at the height of a critical juncture. Through narrative film techniques and dramatism, a recreation of the real-life event was re-framed and distilled into a documentary-style film to showcase to general audiences for the purpose of dialogue catalyzation and elicitation. The film acts as a *provocative statement* for the process of conducting a Civil Dialogue® with the viewing audience. Qualitative analysis of 12 dialogue groups and 15 individual interviews (primarily college students) explores the impact film has on viewers' perceptions, their participation in dialogue, and the role of affect when it comes to communicating with others. Findings suggest a positive correlation between film, emotional engagement, and dialogue participation, with significant impact on viewer's perceptions and indications of influencing anticipated future behavior. Additional findings and analysis reveal a cultural master narrative of "fight or flight" syndrome, and a tendency toward spectacle or doing things "for show." Novel concepts such as *visual capital* and *performative cognition* emerge to inform a new arts-based method and the development of a theory referred to as the Tuff-Hill Phenomenon.

To Mom and Dad

For being the ones who have always supported me,

helped lug all sorts of items and set up countless art installations,

always being there to talk to, bounce ideas off of, receive feedback from, and most importantly to offer a listening ear. You're the ones who first taught me the power of listening, and to always have an inquiring and open mind.

I'm thankful for you every day.

To Steve

For cracking the whip every so often,

encouraging me to keep working,

and inspiring me with your own persistence.

I'm lucky to have you and your optimism in my life.

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Affect marks a body's belonging *to a world of encounters or; a world's belonging to a body of encounters but also, in non-belonging, through all those far sadder (de)compositions of mutual in-compossibilities.* -Gregg & Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 2010

Chapter 1

Introduction

As a visual artist, the need for creating is two-fold. On the one hand, it is through the act of creating something that the processing, grappling with, and actual *knowing* of a subject takes place. This processing can be a means of understanding a complex issue, a means to explore one's feelings and emotions about a topic, or even a mechanism that gives shape to the unexplainable elements of the human experience – from love and loss, to trauma and transcendence of the spirit (Pollock, 2013). The creative process itself can be a way of working through and coping with all of the emotions and experiences that are part and parcel of what it is to be human. On the other hand, it is in the *displaying* of the piece and receiving of responses, reactions, questions, and discussions from a viewing audience that the meaning is even more fully realized. This is when it becomes evident that the piece is a cultural artifact that *communicates* something and holds meaning for others. It is this unavoidable co-creation of meaning through the process of audiencing that showcases the symbiotic and synergistic experience of humanity. For me, it is this synergy – a combined effect that is greater than the sum of its parts (Beebe & Masterson, 2017) – that is the drug that becomes addictive as a creator.

Overview and Position Statement

Through the process of creating, I have been compelled to analyze people's inclination toward the visual, and the impact of visual means of communication. The power of images was highlighted for me when the events of September 11, 2001 took place. I spent many years studying the visual language that was utilized to mobilize a political agenda, and I infused this into an art installation for my capstone project in college. For a decade after 9/11, I continued to collect newspaper clippings and other key imagery that surrounded the War on Terror. For my Masters' thesis I researched and interviewed people as they related to the imagery, exploring both the *internalized* images people held in regards to 9/11, as well as the ongoing visual narratives proliferating the media. I compiled these findings, along with the years of images I had been collecting since 2001, into another art installation and corresponding written thesis in an attempt to track the impact, opinions, emotions, memories and behaviors nearly eleven years after the events of 9/11. It is through this extensive (perhaps obsessive) analysis of the visual impact of messages that led me to conceptualize the "visual" as a certain type of vocabulary by which we communicate and construct knowledge – consciously and subconsciously.

My research interests eventually led me to the field of Communication, where this type of scholarship is best conceptualized as visual rhetoric (Olson, Finnegan, & Hope, 2008). Throughout the course of my doctoral program, I explored online behavior in a media ecology of post-9/11 rhetoric, such as the controversy surrounding Miss America 2014, Nina Davuluri, who was condemned for looking too "Arab" to be an icon of

America (Martin, 2013). Davuluri's subsequent behavior, posting pictures on social media of herself leaving flowers at the 9/11 memorial, led me to explore the visual and performative elements we do in everyday life that contribute to visual discourses. Media studies, memorials, public-memory, trauma, and performance all began converging for me as I began moving from 9/11-based cultural traumas to other issues that I saw proliferating American culture. For example, the pervasive visual presence of cancer and cancer treatment in American visual discourse, and its juxtaposition with cancer-causing elements that are equally pervasive yet visually under-demarcated.

Then, my focus eventually turned to an increasingly ever-present issue in current events – mass shootings. This is a site where memory and memorialization is curiously absent. Every new occurrence seems to be happening in a vacuum of a conversation that isn't being had. The discursive framing seems to blame rogue individuals who somehow had unique circumstances of mental illness that led to a singular spontaneous event (Berger, 2011; Hennessy-Fiske, Pearce, & Jarvie, 2018; "Las Vegas shooting," 2017; McMahon, Alanez, & Huriash, 2018; Ortiz, 2018; Pearson, 2012; Salvatore, 1999; Serna, 2015; Tikkanen, 2017), rather than exploring the larger cultural context and ongoing visual narratives that promote such behavior. This is a unique topic that diverges from my previous path which was heavily embedded in public memory, and in fact highlights a cultural *dis-association* with past pains, traumas, memories and emotional responses that were provoked by the original school shooting, Columbine High School in 1999 – an event I very much remember.

I was in High School when the Columbine shooting occurred. I remember the day vividly, along with the follow-up conversations had in each of my classes about what we might do in such a situation. It coincided with the early years of the internet, and the beginning of personal websites and chat forums being used as the precursor to social media, although my family did not yet have the internet in the house. When Columbine happened, and there were diaries/manifestos, home video footage, and website content from the shooters explaining their reasoning for the mass-murderous act, that's when I became intrigued with how people use visual means of performance to exercise power – although I didn't yet have the language or intellectual schema to articulate this line of thinking in such a way. When Dr. Sarah Tracy, a professor in my doctoral program, mentioned the article she wrote with Timothy Huffman called "Compassion in the Face of Terror: A Case Study of Recognizing Suffering, Co-creating Hope, and Developing Trust in a Would-be School Shooting" (2016), which analyzed a noteworthy event when a school shooter was persuaded to stand down, that's when I dove into reading more about compassion and empathy as a communication tool during critical moments.

Statement of the Problem

This research endeavor was initially driven by a presentation by Paul Ekman, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of California in San Francisco, called "Heroic Compassion and Altruism" sponsored by the Greater Good Science Center. Ekman was discussing the concept of *heroic compassion,* which he defined as "altruism with a risk" (Svoboda, 2013). He discussed various events in which someone behaved selflessly and acted on behalf of someone else. Through studying people who have

committed altruistic deeds such as these, he found that they share the same general outlook – that it wasn't a question to be discerned in the moment, but the fact that a fellow human being needed help was reason enough to act without hesitation. Ekman's presentation emphasized a repeated question, asking if altruism could be taught. He said "What we do know is the ones who have it didn't get taught. It was there." The emphasis was that this perspective seems to occur naturally, "it" being *altruism*. Expressing an urgent need for this type of compassionate behavior on a global scale, Ekman suggested we attempt to learn from these people who have this ability without training, because their perspective or "world view" can help shed light on this phenomenon for us, so that we can cultivate compassion on a grand scale (Svoboda, 2013).

This was an interesting question, and I began thinking about the particular case of Antoinette Tuff and Michael Hill. Michael Hill was a twenty-year-old man who, in 2013, came to an elementary school armed with an AK-47 assault rifle and ready to conduct a school shooting. The first person he came into contact with was Antoinette Tuff, a bookkeeper, whom he asked to notify the media, the police, and everyone else that "we are all going to die today" (Tuff & Tresniowski, 2014, pp. 11-12). Through the course of an hour, a significant portion of which was recorded on a 911 phone call, Antoinette managed to calm Michael Hill and convince him to give himself up to the police. Antoinette relays the full experience in her book, "Prepared for a Purpose," suggesting that it was the communication process of showing compassion which led to this successful outcome (pp. 99-100). Communication scholars Sarah Tracy and Timothy Huffman (2016) conducted a discourse analysis of the 911 phone call to determine the

key elements that contributed to this compassionate approach in their article, "Compassion in the Face of Terror: A Case Study of Recognizing Suffering, Co-creating Hope, and Developing Trust in a Would-be School Shooting." If this type of behavior is something that occurs naturally, how can we teach what isn't *learned*? When it comes to the rare cases when people do behave in selfless ways, it begs the question: As researchers, educators, trainers, practitioners, or even citizens of the human race in general, how can we learn from this?

The literature about compassion shows that indeed, compassion *can* be taught to some degree. After someone has taken a training course in compassion, studies show there is a measurable difference in someone's ability to behave compassionately because the level of stress hormones in their blood have diminished, which shifts the brain's focus away from self-preservation mode to being more aware of one's surroundings (Muraco & Raison, 2012). Research reveals people benefit from learning the skills to behave in compassionate ways – they actually experience increased pleasure (Zaki, 2019). In fact, "brain imaging data shows that being kind to others registers in the brain as more like eating chocolate than like fulfilling an obligation to do what's right" (Simon-Thomas, 2012). Compassionate behavior increased activity in the frontal lobe, where mindful brain activity takes place which induces a calming effect, and decreased activity in the posterior cortex where high reactionary responses are triggered, ultimately reducing stress (Brewer, Sinha, Chen, Michalsen, Babuscio, Nich, Grier, Bergquist, Reis, Potenza, Carroll, & Rounsaville, 2011; Brewer, Worhunsky, Gray, Tang, Weber, & Kober, 2011) and increasing the likelihood of behaving compassionately in the future (Weng, Lapate,

Stodola, Rogers, & Davidson, 2018; Muraco & Raison, 2012). One key finding from these studies is that being mindful and aware of one's surroundings, particularly being mentally present in the moment when someone exhibits suffering, creates the conditions for someone to behave compassionately (Weng et al., 2018; Muraco & Raison, 2012). Perhaps most importantly, compassion literature shows, "extending compassion toward others biases the brain to glean more positive information from the world, something called the 'carryover effect'" (Simon-Thomas, 2012). In essence, the more someone behaves compassionately and is mindful of others, the more likely they are to respond in compassionate ways rather than stand still and weigh their options.

This body of research indicates that the issue seems to be that people do not place much *value* in learning to be compassionate. Are people aware that this brain shift has happened after a mindfulness course? Do people have any motivation to behave compassionately? Could we make them more conscious of the positive effects of exercising compassion?

In an age when we are flooded with information, spectacle, and sensationalization of violence and drama, people are becoming numb to the daily dose of real-life dramas that may actually affect them. People are feeling a sense of low-efficacy (Bandura, 1982; Tahmassien & Moghadam, 2011; Condon & Holleque, 2013) and seem almost complacent or apathetic when we hear about another school shooting on a weekly basis (Dalton & Crosby, 2008). How do we get people to *care* about things enough to start forming opinions, discussing them in the public sphere, and perhaps even feel like

participating in the political sphere by taking action? This created some driving questions for me – questions that were the scaffolding of a study in the making.

Driving Questions

Driving Question #1 (DQ1): How do we get people to care about the impact compassion can have on violence? Sure, the research is being done, and papers such as the Tracy & Huffman (2016) article about the Antoinette Tuff situation have been written. But how do we get people on a large scale to read those articles or learn about it? DQ2: How do we get people to behave in compassionate ways? Research suggests it would necessitate a mass-media campaign of some sort, because that is the realm where much of society forms opinions and behaves accordingly (Shaw, 1979; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997; Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang, & Bae, 2014). DQ3: How can we turn compassion into a mass media campaign? In other words, how do we insert successful examples of compassion-as-solution into pop culture in an easily consumable form? How do we showcase the research and academic literature which supports compassion work to reach people outside of academia – to reach the common person who moves through the world and interacts with others on a daily basis? Those are the people who may be faced with a school or workplace shooting one day. Those are the people (i.e. all of us) who may in fact be perpetuating the culture that gives rise to this growing phenomenon of mass acts of violence (Figueroa, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

My scholarly background consists of studying media effects and visual forms of communication. As an interdisciplinary artist, I have created and been moved by film,

performances, and works of art. For decades, I have been shocked by my own emotional capacity to feel the pain and heartbreak of characters in a movie set during the time of the Civil War for example, or when I truly seem to feel the pain of others whose lived experiences are nothing like my own. I have been intrigued with the power of film and other visual/performative modes to reach deeper levels of our emotions and psyche, and I am particularly interested in how these modes of communication, from the propaganda movements of the Weimar Republic to mass media ad campaigns like “Milk Does a Body Good,” do indeed impact human behavior.

Social Learning theory. Conceptually, this study is situated within social learning theory (Bandura, 1972; Grusec, 1992; Bandura, 2002; Wang & Wu, 2008; Whiten, McGuigan, Marshall-Pescini, Hopper, 2009;). Originally proposed in the early 1940’s by researchers who studied stimulus-response behaviors, this groundbreaking conceptualization of the social ways we learn from one another contributed to psychoanalytic theory – the landmark book being “Social Learning Theory” presented by Miller and Dollard in 1941. As more scholars began studying the impact of propaganda messages in the years following World War II, a new branch of social learning theory began to take shape – studying the processes by which we learn via mediated messages. This gave rise to areas of scholarship such as entertainment education (Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993), and media studies which includes the impact of television and other forms of mediated communication on people’s perception and behavior (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Chomsky, 2002; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014). Now, scholars

are researching the impact of *new media* on social cognition, particularly with the advent of the internet (Paik & Comstock, 1994; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Bandura, 2002; Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004).

People learn from one another through observing, imitating, and modeling behaviors. As social beings, people can influence and be influenced by their environment (Bandura, 2002). This is what led me to select a creative nonfiction format in a brief, stand-alone, self-contained unit of time (20 minutes – the average adult's attention span (Rehn, 2016)), that would be easily transportable to a variety of audiences and contexts; what is often referred to as *documentary film.* Film was the immediate format that came to mind as the starting point for sharing educational information about compassion, at the same time as being capable of stimulating an emotional response. The medium offers a message in a language that most people in western society are accustomed to (visual), in a *current* and *relevant* format by which people often consume information (research data intermittently intertwined with narrative storytelling), and most importantly, it broadens the audience beyond academia. The rhythm, content, tone and pace allows for this to be shown to a variety of ages and demographics not only in the community, but nationally and potentially internationally.

Research Tradition

This work derives from a research tradition of photo elicitation, which came out of the field of anthropology, and later sociology (Harper, 2002). The first use of images in ethnographic research was evident in a 1957 publication by John Collier called "Photography in Anthropology: A Report on Two Experiments." Collier was an

anthropologist and photographer, and the initial reason for using photographs in his study was to help clarify the descriptive elements denoting the different variables in the study – various ranges of living conditions. The researchers decided to use photographs to streamline and delineate the operational definitions of the living conditions they were communicating about, since their interviews and surveys seemed to fall short when it came to extrapolating on those elements. Ultimately, they found that the photographs garnered more thorough and nuanced reflection from interviewees compared to those respondents who did not view the photographs (Collier, 1957).

As research progressed in visual anthropology and other areas such as evolutionary biology, it has been discovered that the brain's activity is quite unique when viewing images; "The parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus, images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words" (Harper, 2017, p. 13). When comparing what the brain does during conversation compared to the level of activity that can be provoked by viewing images – which includes memories and emotional recall (Bennett, 2005; Berger, 1992; Pollock, 2013) – this highlights a shortcoming of purely verbal (linguistic) methods of doing research and collecting data.

Working from this methodological-richness perspective, various fields have incorporated and applied visual methods throughout the research process. Visual anthropology has primarily used photographs in the process of cataloguing and interviewing as part of the mechanistic purpose they serve, but it is visual sociology that utilized photographs to conduct, record, and display research (Harper, 1987; Wagner,

1978) as well as to elicit and explore participant responses (Harper, 1988; Sampson-Cordle, 2001; Smith & Woodward, 1999). In Douglas Harper's article (2002), "Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation," he explains the history of image elicitation as a continuum. On one end of the spectrum is the visual accounting or inventorying of the object of study. In the middle of the spectrum are the images associated with a past history of some kind, which may inspire a reaction, memory, or connection to the image through a shared cultural heritage. These images are meant to ignite and enhance interview conversations (Banks, 2001; Emmison & Smith, 2001). On the other end of the spectrum are the images that directly and intimately relate to the person, their family and culture in a biographical sense. These images may even be captured by the subjects themselves, in their intimate lives and the spaces they inhabit (Harper, 2002, p. 13). This may be used to enhance the interview process and may also be an element in displaying the findings (Banks, 2001; Harper, 2002; Kenney, 1993).

Conversely, *film* has seldomly been used as an elicitation device, and in fact has generally been dismissed due to its non-static nature and difficulty transporting, setting up, and displaying to viewers/respondents (Banks, 2001; Harper, 2002). There have only been a handful of studies that utilize film for ethnographic purposes, and in most of these cases the interview subjects were filmed in a clinical observation style and the film was then used for the purpose of analysis (Connor, Asch, & Asch, 1986; Krebs, 1975). When film has been used as an elicitation device to stimulate interview responses, it was in conjunction with the act of video recording participants' reactions to a film. The process of being filmed during an interview situation seemed to make participants less interactive

with the researchers, and more concerned with how they were being showcased in the film (Banks, 2001). Some took the opportunity while being filmed to dispel misconceptions or manage their impression for a potential viewing audience (Asch & Connor, 1994).

A current debate in the world of visual studies is the definition of “documentary” film – whether this term should only refer to the raw, unedited footage gathered by an ethnographer, or whether it is considered to be documentary even if it is edited, spliced, and framed by the researcher. Eric Margolis and Renu Zunjarwad (2017) suggest the term “documentary” becomes a catch-all phrase for any creative nonfiction film or television program. This becomes particularly problematic when film is perceived as a positivistic voice of science and truth (pp. 610-611). According to Margolis & Zunjarwad:

> “Another possibility plays on the term *ethnography* itself. On one hand, ethnography refers to a set of methods for gathering information; on the other hand, it is the name for one’s discussion/analysis in written or other media. If researchers are to present their ethnography visually, then alongside the skills of photographer or videographer, they need skills in visual communication, media literacy, and editing, as Jay Ruby noted four decades ago (Ruby, 1975). (Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2017, p. 609)

Increasingly, documentary films are breaking into mainstream culture and take a variety of forms - most often as highly edited dramatic narratives. Louis Althusser suggests:

> Ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals, or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace every day police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (Rivkin & Ryan, 2004, p. 699)

This concept relates to research in the same way that it can refer to filmmaking or even advertising; the content matter "hails" a viewer/reader/recipient to look at a specific topic and gather specific insights or information from it. In other words, "*interpellation* refers to the manner in which representations and messages in culture – particularly media, art forms, advertising, commercials, and so forth – coerce, seduce, or call us forth to accept the ideologies and value that these forms project" (Madison, 2005, p. 53). In a way, placing ethnographic and social scientific research in any form could be considered a type of interpellation, or framing of an issue. The visual format of film allows for this to be more easily discernable. Susan Sontag (2001) suggests, "Photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are" (p. 6-7).

In the types of documentary films which are raw, unedited footage of ethnographic research, such as the films *Titticut Follies, Nanook of the North, The Hunters,* or *The Axe Fight,* an argument could be made that wherever the camera is pointed is the area that the researcher (or camera person) wants the viewer's gaze to be directed. The subject matter itself indicates a certain interest or axiological underpinning, assessing what is worthy of being studied. It follows that elements which exist outside the frame (or study) are not included in the film, and consequently are excluded from our

consciousness. A critical ethnographer acknowledges these limitations and the culturally contingent aspects of conducting research (Madison, 2005).

To add further editorializing by integrating narrative structure, animation, sound, music, rising action, and other rhetorical devices or story-telling techniques in documentary films such as the more recent *Bowling for Columbine, Blackfish,* or *Generation Wealth,* is a turn toward appealing to wider audiences, and even getting exposure to theatre box office sales and distribution deals ("50 Best Documentaries," 2019). From a communication standpoint, if the intention is to reach a wider audience and engage people both within and outside of academia, the logical step is to use the techniques which appeal to wider audiences.

However, films such as *Obama's America, Hillary's America, The Clinton Chronicles,* or *The Hunting of the President* are underpinned by political and ideological interests, and highlight the need to distinguish between the different types of "documentary" film, and moreover, just how readily we use the term to apply to an ever-expanding spectrum of what is considered "official" research. A film consisting of a narrative structure working in tandem with actual real-life audio and imagery to convey true events, educate a viewing audience about some of the research that informs the topic, and "hailing" or inviting them to take interest in the topic by utilizing rhetorical techniques could indeed be misleading or even push the boundary of ethical scholarly rigor and impartiality if it was called "documentary," as Margolis and Zunjarward (2017) would suggest. For that reason, I will be referring to this format as a "documentary-style" film.

Marcus Banks, professor of Visual Anthropology at the University of Oxford suggests "even more so than still photography, the moving image – film, video, or television broadcast – is a wayward medium, difficult for the researcher to control" (Banks, 2001, p.99). For example, Worth and Adair (1972) attempted to utilize film as an information-gathering device by giving members of the Navajo nation video cameras to record their daily activity, however members of the culture were "cinematographically illiterate" and therefore had no conceptualization of the medium (Banks, p. 122). To have no experience with that mode of communicating, and moreover, for those individuals to have no schematic conceptual scaffolding to place any value in what/how the footage is gathered or what it is used for, creates a chasmic disconnect between the researcher, researchee, and the information that is gathered, received, and interpreted.

Banks' (2001) reference to the "wayward" aspects of film indicates the logistics of filming – lighting, audio, and microphone equipment which may be part of the in-the-moment process of creating a film – suggesting that these elements infringe upon the more 'naturally-occurring' behaviors that are allowed by simple scholarly observations. The unwieldy aspects of film also include the *ethics* of video recording others (Banks, 2001; Harper, 2002). Banks suggests that while some critics of video recording techniques may pose the question, "What right do we have to make *any* representations of others?" he says that that same line of reasoning could essentially be used for all studies pertaining to human behavior, not just the use of video recording (p. 129). Banks proposes that human behavior in general is composed of creating and disseminating representations of one another – whether oral, written, or visual. To do this is to be

human, to try to understand one another. While it is not possible to be completely free of value, ideology, or framing, it does not mean that it is not still a worthy endeavor. However, Banks fails to consider the alternative: What if the researcher *did* control every aspect of the film, and used it to elicit responses or guide focus group discussions?

Extending Scholarship

Photo elicitation has been treated as "a waif on the margins rather than as a robust actor in a developing research tradition" (Harper, 2002, p. 15). Now, more than ever, people are behaving as filmmakers and content-creators, with video capabilities on their phones and computers, and scholars have the option of utilizing more creative means of elicitation. More than just acknowledging film and visual methods as a worthy scholarly tool, the importance lies within its *cultural significance* and the role it plays in people's understanding and engagement with the world; "The key element is not the form of the visual representation, but its relationship with the culture under study" (Harper, 2002, p. 19). We are in the height of visual consumption in our culture, where many Americans walk around looking at screens, and spend the majority of their days consuming visual information. So much so that it is quickly becoming the way individuals *make sense* of the world.

More and more, we are seeing social science research and behavioral change campaigns integrating with popular culture. Television programs such as *East Los High,* for example, are utilizing the platform as a way to have a social impact – they integrate pop-up bubbles with statistics about teen pregnancy, resource links to Planned Parenthood, and information about birth control methods – which have had a measurable

impact on the viewing demographic in terms of dramatically increasing the use of birth control, and decreasing the rates of pregnancy and STD's (Wang & Singhal, 2016). Why would we not be utilizing this medium as an elicitation device and dialogue stimulant in social science research? As many visual scholars would remind us (Banks, 2001; Harper, 2002; Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2017), it is important to note that film is a culturally bound method, as many methods are, and therefore could only be utilized to elicit responses from audiences found within the cultures that are familiar with the medium. Moreover, this particular culture in which I am conducting the study, on an American college campus and the surrounding community, is very much bound up in the visual realm and is therefore a fitting population to utilize this medium.

Preview of Chapters

The upcoming chapters first review the interdisciplinary origins that contribute to this mixed methods study, then explains the study in more detail, and finally the results, analysis, and take-aways.

Chapter 2 reviews the different bodies of literature that have contributed to the study's design – from communication theories and performance theories, to a process born out of a combination of the two fields called Civil Dialogue®. These are the grounding theoretical arenas that synthesize my entry point to this topic. These areas explore connections throughout the literature relating to the connection between mind and body, the impact narrative frameworks have on emotion, and the relationship between compassion, empathy and mirroring behavior.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of the research design, and the process of creating the film which acts as a provocative statement to catalyze dialogue. I provide an overview of the participants and recruiting process, along with the data-gathering processes which include screening the film, facilitating a Civil Dialogue, and one-on-one interviews.

Chapter 4 dives into the process of analyzing the data, which includes evaluating and selecting specific coding methods which support a grounded theory approach. A review of first cycle and second cycle coding methods reveal four prominent themes that emerge from the data.

Theme 1 - Spectacle: Doing Things for Show

Theme 2 - Changed Perspectives After Viewing the Film

Theme 3 - People are “Naturally” Good or Bad

Theme 4 - Fight or Flight: Our Only Two Options of Behavior

These themes derive from interview responses, the Civil Dialogue process which is a form of “focus group” discussion, field note observations and analytic memos which were gathered throughout the course of the dialogue and film screening events.

Chapter 5 broadens the analysis to extend upon pre-existing concepts such as cognitive linguistics, emotional capital, and social cognition to offer novel contributions regarding the power and influence associated with visual and performative modes of communicating. The data, guided by a grounded theoretical approach, leads to an analysis that reflects an intersectional theory I am calling the Tuff-Hill Phenomenon. It suggests a novel occurrence at the juncture of gender, performance, co-culturalism, and

narrative, with the potential to impact social change and communication training programs.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the scholarly contributions to the literature from a variety of interdisciplinary fields ranging from communication and psychology, to linguistics and education. Not only is the Tuff-Hill Phenomenon a novel contribution to theoretical conceptualizations, but it was born out of a methodology that is a unique approach to studying, responding to, and engaging with current visual modes of human communication. Through this process of creating a film to stimulate dialogue, a new method was born – the art spark. This chapter wraps up with reviewing the limitations of the study, future directions for further research, and some parting take-aways.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the key studies and the bodies of literature which informed the development of this study. Primarily grounded within the socio-cultural tradition, "based on the premise that as people talk, they produce and reproduce culture" (Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, 2019), an interdisciplinary tack is called for in this case, because it is a multi-tiered project with underpinnings in a variety of fields. This review synthesizes the literature into a topical organization of three overarching themes: Visual Communication, Performance, and Dialogue.

Visual Communication

The critical paradigm was born out of the tremendous power of propaganda in World War II. The Frankfurt School was a group of artists and philosophers who studied the impact of media, mass communication, propaganda, persuasion, and performance (Morrow and Brown, 1994), in other words, visual communication. Significant research has been conducted since then, in the name of critiquing the dominant powers which oppress individuals. The Frankfurt School gave rise to numerous theories and scholarship which explores complex concepts, all with a basis in the visual, such as Michele Foucault's *Panopticon* – permanent surveillance which encourages self-restricting behavior (Foucault, 1995); Erving Goffman's *Presentation of Self* – analyzing our actions using dramaturgical methods (Goffman, 1956; Goffman, 1974); Judith Butler's *Performativity* – exploring gender and identify as a performance (Butler, 1990); and Augusto Boal's *Legislative Theatre* – engaging citizens to take part in civic action

through performance (Boal, 1979; Boal, 1998; Freire, 1970). Each of these concepts or theories explore the notion that all of our decisions and actions are in fact value-laden, whether it occurs consciously or unconsciously, and take place in the realm of the visual.

Images, memory, and emotion. Roland Barthes (1980) introduced the concepts *studium* and *punctum* into the discourse of visual analysis**.** He drew attention to the distinction between that which is explicitly portrayed in an image (*studium),* and that which "pricks" or pokes at one's emotions, the implicit and unexplainable level of emotional experience evoked by an image (*punctum)*. Barthes suggests, "The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see" (p. 59). It is this liminal space that has intrigued visual scholars, artists, art historians, gender scholars, and scientists ever since (Pollock, 2013).

In more recent years, the effect of images has been examined at the neurobiological level. Joseph LeDoux (1996), for example found "the sensory signals from the eye travel first to the thalamus and then, in a kind of short circuit, to the amygdala before a second signal is sent to the neocortex," where rational thought is created (Hope, 2006, p. 34). In other words, the visual is first engaging the emotions before it engages rational thought. Visual communication is being examined not only as a communicative process, but at a biological and physiological level. Furthermore, through measuring brain activity, neuroscience research reiterates, supports, and extends what Roland Barthes and other visual theorists have claimed for decades, that the visual realm is highly linked to emotion and memory. In fact, these elements are so integrated that the brain does not distinguish between lived experience and that which has been perceived

visually (LeDoux, 1999); “When the memory stimulus comes from vicarious media experience, the senses still respond as if to actual experience, further confusing media experience with actual experience” (Barry, 2006, p. 58). Moreover, scholars have found that “information introduced after an event can alter the memory of that event” (p. 62). At the cognitive level, brain activity shows individuals can remember a *suggested* event in the same way they remember events that actually occurred, which highlights an internalizing element in which individuals create *mental* images in their minds (when something is suggested to them) which activates the same part of the brain where actual lived experience is perceived visually (Loftus & Palmer, 1974; Ross, Reid, & Toglia, 1994; Weingardt, Toland, & Loftus, 1994).

Entertainment education. Expanding the scope of visual communication to mass-media campaigns which aim to ignite social change, entertainment education (E-E) is a requisite area to explore. The key element of this area of study is particularly on the “entertainment” aspect, which indicates a focus on viewers’ emotional responses to the material, or the affective aspects of visual messages (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004). While some studies explore individual behavior change, other research in E-E literature looks at the community level of impact (Papa et al., 2000). For example, Airhihenbuwa (1999) suggests “witnessing the death from AIDS of a favorite soap opera character, and seeing the grief of his parents, infected widow, and child, may serve as a more powerful trigger for adopting a prevention behavior than rationally-structured media messages promoting condom use and other safe sex behaviors” (Singhal et al., 2004, p. 13). Moreover, Singhal (2006) suggests that the future of E-E is likely to move

further down the path toward participatory communication approaches in combination with entertainment-education mediated messages (p.18). Singhal and Rogers (1999) suggests a "methodological pluralism" in combining research techniques such as participant observation, surveys, and in-depth interviews to further measure the impact of visual methods (Singhal, 2006, p. 16). This is where my study enters into the conversation, by proposing a combination of visual mediated messages (documentary-style film) along with embodied engagement and participant observation in the form of post-film dialogue.

Approaching visual studies from a mass-communication standpoint, cultivation theory explores the way that television and media cultivate particular ways of thinking and behaving in society. Working from Marshall McLuhan's theory based in technological determinism (McLuhan, 1964), George Gerbner studied how television acts as society's story-teller, displaying "a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli, 1994, p.18).

Cultivation theory. Cultivation Theory suggests that the violence people see on television "can cultivate a social paranoia that counters notions of trustworthy people or safe surroundings" (Griffin et al., 2019, p. 356). George Gerbner coined the term, "mean world syndrome" which is a perception held by heavy viewers of television, who fear being victimized by criminals, think the world is full of untrustworthy law-breakers who often have to be stopped by the police, and have a general distrust and fear of others (pp. 363-364). Gerbner, among several other scholars now, linked this perspective directly to

the amount of television consumed by the individuals and found that it is because of the extensive use of violence portrayed in the media (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978; Griffin et al., 2019; Hestroni, 2007). In fact, "today, over 2,000 studies link media violence to violent behavior" (Barry, p. 67). Violence, according to Gerbner and other media scholars, seems to be the most easily transferable language that people all over the world understand regardless of what country they reside in, which means those movies, television programs, and video games are able to be marketed and sold all over the world (Murray, 1997). In other words, violence is the *lingua franca* of visual communication.

Performance

Next, I shift to performance theories which engage elements of narrative, dramatism, and embodied communication. Walter Fisher (1987) first proposed the narrative paradigm, which suggests that humans are *homo narrans,* or communicate through narratives and stories, in which identity is deeply embedded. However, a general basis of understanding human behavior through dramatic structures was not a new concept. Theorists such as Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (1959) suggested the collective unconscious is influenced by archetypes, universal symbols (such as the Great Mother, the Wise Old Man, the Tree of Life, etc.) and that human behavior can be understood in terms of these character types or master narratives which guide behavior. These concepts not only were a response to Freudian psychoanalysis but also derive from ancient belief systems connecting to religious studies, history, art, and beyond (McLeod, 2018).

Kenneth Burke (1969) took this a step further in terms of analyzing action and gesture as symbolic mechanisms. Utilizing the framework of drama and story to understand human behavior, Burke shifted away from archetypes to analyze actions in terms of motivations and genres of storyline. He suggested human behavior was driven by motivations, particularly the role of guilt, and actions are in fact symbolic. He is considered the father of *dramatism*.

The psycho-physical connection. Conversely, Silvan Tomkins (1962) explored physical actions from a different perspective – the unintentional or uncontrollable aspects. He conceptualized *affect* as the biological element of emotion. One key concept he proposes is affective resonance, which is the human tendency to reflect the same outward (physiological) display as someone else – this can occur when viewing the same thing or viewing the emotions of someone else (for example a baby crying when another baby cries). This ties to the notion of emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). Tomkins (1978; 1987) eventually created script theory, which examined the behavioral scripts that individuals enact in daily life, which other scholars continue to extend and respond to (Demos, 1995), primarily in the way that scripts operate within professions such as teaching, and how language constructs knowledge (Schank, 2010). This work starts veering to the physical embodied elements which impact individual's perceptions and emotions.

Working from Charles Darwin's initial experiments doing a similar study, Paul Ekman's study, "Universal Facial Expressions of Emotion" (1970) explored whether human emotion was perceived the same way across cultures. Ekman's team showed

pictures of faces expressing an emotion to people from different cultures. They were asked to describe the emotion that was being expressed, in order to determine whether the same facial behavior would indicate the same emotion cross-culturally. It turned out that 29 out of 30 facial expressions were evaluated to be the same across cultures. Participants were from Brazil, Argentina, the United States, Chile, and Japan.

Izard (1969) conducted the same study with seven different language-culture groups. A key weakness that was determined was that these cultures could be exposed to the same mass media messages, and popular culture icons. For this reason, a follow-up study was conducted in Papua New Guinea, with 189 adults and 130 children. Stories were told which conveyed a particular emotion, and participants were asked to select a picture of a face which portrayed that emotion. All answers were in line with the western conceptualization of emotions.

Jospe, Floel, & Lavador (2018) found that people recognize emotions in others by subconsciously mimicking the other person's facial expressions, even at a micro-expressive level. This is linked to identifying emotions in others and therefore being able to experience empathy for others. In this study, individuals had their facial muscles restricted from movement, to test whether they would still be able to identify emotions in others without the capability of moving their own facial muscles. This was indeed the case. The surprising element, however, was that individuals with low empathy prior to the test experienced increased empathy levels when their facial muscles were stimulated. This shows how much information is transmitted at a physiological level, outside of our own awareness or conscious attempts. This study indicates that the way we are able to

process information or be aware of the emotions of others is because our own face muscles are moving to mirror the physiological cues that we observe. In other words, it is an example of visual communication operating at a subconscious level. As illustrated by John Updike, “I watched my grandmother’s choking fits at the kitchen table, and my own throat would feel narrow” (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, p. 81).

Narrative as a conduit and catalyst of emotion. Paul Zak’s (2015) team created a series of short commercials which were in narrative form – some that were more emotionally compelling than others. They tested the oxytocin levels in the blood of participants who watched these commercials. They found that the more emotionally engaged they were with the message, the more their brain produced oxytocin, which opens you up to *feeling* more, identifying with the characters more, and empathizing more. A series of several tests examined the physical impact on the viewers, so that when they were more emotionally engaged and higher levels of oxytocin was released into their bloodstream, the more directly they were feeling the emotions of that which was portrayed on the screen (i.e. nervousness in a character caused nervousness in the viewer. Love caused viewers to feel loving feelings, etc.).

Lawrence Kincaid (2002) researched the way viewers are more emotionally engaged when characters go through changes as well as conflict. “Confrontation leads to emotional response, cognitive reorientation, and character change within a drama, both fictional and real” (p. 136). Kincaid’s study suggests there is a convergence of perception when a viewer identifies with the character they are watching, in which the viewer will be influenced to change their behavior in the same way.

Similarly, the medium of film is constructed in such a way to maximize engagement of emotions. In Medhurst and Benson's (1991) structural analysis of documentary films, they find "the meaning of an image in the film is constructed by the viewer not only from the 'content' of the shot but also from the situation, the structural relation of shots to one another and to other dimensions of the film, and from the rhythm of the cutting" (p. 449). Additional studies suggest "frames, sequence, and arrangement of visual images are ways that producers present themes and structure arguments with film and video" (Hope, 2006, p. 18). Benson and Anderson (1989) offer a rhetorical analysis of several documentary-style films, suggesting "Films are social constructions and as such invite shared experiences" (p.3). Other scholars find that variations in directly addressing the viewer and indirectly addressing them through allegories and other story-telling modes act as rhetorical devices (Nichols, 1981). These devices are created to "exert influence on the viewer's experience of and reaction to the film regardless of its specific subject matter" (Hope, 2006, p. 199). Julianne Burton (1990) created a typology of patterns for how documentary style films are organized, and Nichols (1991) later expanded the typology for further rhetorical analysis.

Compassion, empathy, and mirroring. Ann Marie Barry (2009) examines the neuroscience research on mirror neurons, brain patterns which mirror one another, and discusses the impact of this research on communication approaches to persuasive communication, advertising, and video gaming, "and ultimately, how we become what we see" (p. 79). Extending this position, studies such as "The Contours and Consequences of Compassion at Work" (Lilius et al., 2008) builds upon similar notions

by explaining that "employees who receive, witness, or participate in the delivery of compassion reshape understandings of their co-workers, themselves, and their organizations" (p. 193). In other words, witnessing or observing behavior restructures our perception of the world.

On the other hand, research shows there is a dispositional shift among American college students, who are exercising less perspective-taking and therefore are measurably low in empathy (Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011). This suggests that observing negative behavior can also lead to convergence of that behavior; it examines the "sharply dropping" rates of perspective-taking and empathic concern from the year 2000 to 2011, which indicates a cultural trend (p. 180). If enacting behavior encourages more of that particular behavior, this brings us to exploring systems of behavioral conditioning – one of which is a shift toward dialogue.

Dialogue

A thorough review of dialogue typically begins with Martin Buber's (1958) concepts of I-It (which suggests a monologic mindset, primarily based in persuasion and self-interest) and I-Thou (which presupposes a dialogic mindset, open to exchange and hearing different perspectives). Johannesen (1971) extends this by inviting researchers to explore communication as being constituted by dialogue. He expresses a need for complicating the I-It/I-Thou dichotomy, and offers concerns with the difficulty of being able to "measure" or study dialogue: "Might not the very process and techniques of empirical research and objective observation destroy the dialogue atmosphere and

relation?" (p. 378). Johannesen then turns to a question of how we might foster an atmosphere of dialogue (p. 380).

Through the process of dialogue, elements of community building and co-imagining hope exists. J. Kevin Barge (2003) examines the process of co-creating discourses through positive communication and community-building practices. Barge describes the concept of *hope* as the process of generating "new images of possibility" (p. 63). As the visual communication literature above suggests, even creating *mental* images has the power to be perceived as (and therefore perhaps has the power to *transform*) reality. This displays a convergence between the visual and the dialogic. Hirvenkari et al. (2013) draw this connection to the visual as well when they examined the effect of turn-taking on someone who witnesses a dialogue, specifically calling attention to measuring the impact on "the gaze of the viewer." This indicates how the process of seeing is in itself a communicative process that warrants further exploration. Seeing also correlates to relating, and the ability to empathize with others.

Empathy and empathic listening. Carl Rogers defined empathy as a "laying aside" yourself, to take on and understand the experiences of someone else – stepping into someone else's shoes (Goodman, 1991). Overall, empathic listening has been characterized by the idea that you disregard your own feelings and bring your focus to that of others' in an attempt to associate yourself with them, and potentially even replicate those feelings within yourself. Gordon Allport (1961) suggests it is "the imaginative transposing of oneself into the thinking, feeling, and acting of another" (p. 536).

Techniques for exercising empathic listening include asking clarifying questions and reiterating what someone has said, in order to gain as much understanding about their feelings and perceptions as possible. Some scholars suggest that this phenomenon is not likely to occur in a public discursive space where opposing ideas are being shared. Often, time is limited, and when strong opinions are being shared, rephrasing or mirroring may be interpreted as patronizing or facetious. It is also rather difficult to put yourself in someone else's shoes if you are in complete disagreement with their position. Empathic listening implies a setting aside of your own perspective in order to take on the perspective of someone else. While there is definitely a need for this at times, it is not what Civil Dialogue® invites us to do.

Civil Dialogue *encourages* those differences of opinions. The more varied the perspectives and personal experiences that can be discussed openly, the better, according to Genette, Olson, and Linde (2018). That is how voices are heard, insights are gained, minds are expanded, and democracy is achieved. For this process, dialogic listening is the goal.

Dialogic Listening. In much of communication theory, the goals of dialogue are transformative, or to change people in some way. Dialogue as a technique was originally established as a tool to use in organizations to increase productivity (Golding, 2013) and co-create meaning (Randolph, & Kormanik, 2007). It implies a consensus, or eventual meeting of minds, to move forward with shared goals and ideals (Innes, 2004). It also was analyzed as a process in which we "tune in" to each other in order to have a give and take, focusing on turn-taking (Hirvenkari, Ruusuvuori, Saarinen, Kivioja, Peräkylä, &

Hari, 2013). Genette, Olson, and Linde (2018) suggest these methods imply that disagreement is not the goal, and potentially even that dissidence would not be voiced. Essentially, these perspectives are grounded in a "politeness" framework, which is a necessary component of communication, but if taken too far then difference or dissidence becomes something to avoid – potentially giving rise to an echo chamber effect, according to Genette et al.

Civil Dialogue®. The process of Civil Dialogue was developed at Arizona State University and as the trademark would indicate, it offers a very specific format for conducting a dialogue (Genette, Olson, Linde, 2018). One key element offered by Genette et al. is the concept of the *civil listener,* which is distinctly different from a dialogic or empathic listener.

Genette, Olson, and Linde (2018) contend that much of the literature concerning dialogue focuses on speaking and listening but does not highlight the aspect of *remaining* on different sides of a position. Many scholars suggest dialogue moves individuals toward consensus, while Civil Dialogue does not have a particular agenda beyond mutual understanding. With Civil Dialogue the goal is to offer a space or forum which allows individuals to simply articulate their understanding of the world and how they arrived at their viewpoint. It requires someone to take a seat at every range of perspectives, ranging from Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral or Undecided, to Somewhat Disagree, or Strongly Disagree, in response to a provocative statement, which allows for a wide spectrum of viewpoints to be expressed. Once individuals are more aware of how others have arrived at the position they find themselves, it promotes understanding. This is what

makes for a productive democracy, which is the goal that undergirds this process. Similar to what Mark Orbe (2004) suggests, it is a confluence of co-cultural theory and the "spirit of dialogue" in which a variety of voices are invited to participate, to reflect the experiences and perspectives of the community, transcending race, economic disparity, and other factors which often contribute to counter-publics who often go unheard.

For that reason, this particular Civil Dialogue process begins with an overview of the general "ground rules" of behavior for civilly communicating. Genette et al. offer 7 characteristics of a civil communicator: 1. Honesty, 2. Conscious of Language Choice, 3. Being Multi-Present, 4. Conscious of Change, 5. Conscious of Style, 6. Owning Responsibility, 7. Willingness to live with Disagreement. This includes one noteworthy area which seems to greatly impact the dialogic process: Conscious of Language Choice – Being aware of outside influences which might trigger us to employ slogans and catch phrases. Using one's own language to put words to thoughts helps to articulate one's perspective in a more meaningful way. A civil communicator, according to these scholars, is aware of the words they choose to use, and how they might impact those around them. Being mindful about respecting others and maintaining people's dignity helps everyone be put at ease and embrace a communicative demeanor. They suggest that language can often be used to demonize, scapegoat or over-simplify issues which are all dangerous tendencies that run counter to democracy and are therefore first laid out as "ground rules" to avoid.

Similar to Broome' s (1991) suggestion that "relational empathy de-emphasizes similarity, concentrating instead on the development of a 'third-culture' between the communicators" (p. 235), the process of Civil Dialogue lends itself to establishing a third-culture in promoting participants to feel comfortable having a different perspective, while simultaneously being open to listening and understanding other perspectives. I suggest that this third-culture effect manifests as participants feel united with one another to some degree at a *visual* level, as a function of participating in the dialogue in front of an audience.

This review of the literature leads us to a final comment that summarizes my entry point for this study. Visual scholar Rick Williams (2006) suggests, "The power of visual images to communicate directly and instantaneously to the whole mind and to produce significant effects on perceptions of reality and on behavior has resisted theorizing and standardized methodologies" (p. 32). He claims this is due to the ambiguous nature of that which is unexplainable, or the *punctum* of this phenomenon, which is that it is connected to unconscious emotional responses rather than the realm of the "rational," which is easier to observe and measure. This study is an attempt to measure it.

Chapter 3

Methods

In light of the research and literature which has shed light on many of the elements concerning the areas of compassion, visual elicitation, and emotional engagement, and given the contextual background that gave rise to this particular study (the unique exchange between Antoinette Hill and Michael Tuff), four essential research questions are the starting point of this study:

RQ1: How does the medium of film engage people's thinking and/or emotional engagement with the subject matter?

RQ2: How does the medium of film affect people's participation in a dialogue?

RQ3: Can film get people more emotionally invested in the content matter than using dialogue and discussion on its own?

RQ4: How might film affect attitudes and in turn affect behavior?

Research Design

For this study, a documentary-style film was created as a means to stimulate dialogue and participant responses. Conclusions were ultimately drawn from the various themes and patterns exhibited in people's behaviors and responses gleaned through a variety of methods. The combination of methods, utilizing focused dialogue groups and in-depth individual interviews, offers a wide array of data points from which to gather insights and discover themes leading to generalizable findings.

Creating the Film

Utilizing a narrative story-telling process, I interwove theory, research, and story in a process often referred to as creative nonfiction (Gutkind, 1997). Drawing upon the concept of emotional contagion, the film works at a macro and micro level being that it implements the very techniques it reviews in the content of the film itself. The film reviews concepts such as emotional contagion and mirror neurons, even as it incorporates music, tone, and imagery to evoke emotions in viewers. The composition of the film itself vacillates between evidence or research and storyline, maximizing ethos, pathos, and logos. These vacillations are planned in incremental time segments, with the intentional purpose of maintaining the audience's attention and engagement. Shifting from somber and serious, to upbeat and hopeful, still images to moving images, close-ups to medium and long shots, all to be visually and emotionally dynamic so to engage viewers (Lewis, 2011).

The film incorporates elements from communication scholars who have conducted a discourse analysis of the real-life audio recording of the event and is tempered by an analysis drawing upon Karl Jung's work about archetypes, along with neuro-science research regarding mirror neurons and emotional contagion. As Marshall McLuhan would suggest, "The medium is the message," in that the message of the film in fact plays out through the intentional structuring of the post-screening dialogue as it unfolds.

The process of creating the film began with reading the article by Sarah Tracy and Timothy Huffman (Tracy & Huffman, 2016) and led me to reading Antoinette Tuff's

book several times which recounted the details of that day (Tuff & Tresniowski, 2014). After reading and re-reading the book and selecting pertinent elements to include, I began the process of hiring and casting actors, creating storyboards and shotsheets which detailed the various camera shots I intended to include in the film, finding images and news coverage to incorporate into the visual storyline, creating props, purchasing audio recording equipment, and securing camera and lighting equipment. I had to gain access to a school to create the re-enactment scenes, provide food and drinks for the actors and crew, and spend a full day filming. Lastly, about 100 hours went into the editing of the film, along with writing and narrating the script. The film is available here: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4vrFYT37UEBd0NldHhkbTFZcVU.

According to Tracy and Huffman (2016), "Past research suggests that the core component of compassion, setting it apart from empathy, is action" (p. 15). Ekman (2014) offers a definition of compassion which suggests it is the actions that attempt to relieve physical or emotional pain. For this study, I've operationalized the terms *empathy* and *compassion,* and began each dialogue and interview by providing these definitions, for clarity and consistency in the discussions that followed. I've defined them as such:

- Empathy: perspective-taking; the feelings or emotions relating to "in someone else's shoes" thinking.
- Compassion: actions or behaviors which display concern for someone.

Overview of Participants

Participants primarily consisted of college students, and at 2 of the dialogue events community members were invited to participate. A total of 9 Civil Dialogue

events were conducted in tandem with screening the film. These events contained a total of 510 participants.

Control groups were implemented to observe the differences in dialogue and attempt to measure the impact the film had on the dialogue. There were 3 Civil Dialogue events that were conducted without a film screening. These were considered the control groups and consisted of approximately 200 participants. The reason there was not an equal number of control groups to film-dialogue groups was because a large focus of the study was to primarily observe the effects of the film itself.

I reached out to colleagues on my college campus, to see if anyone might like to introduce their classes to this concept of Civil Dialogue and invited them to participate in my study which corresponded with showing the film. In total, I visited 10 classes on campus, ranging from a size of 25 students to nearly 300 students, to conduct all of the dialogue events after the original two film-dialogue events which were held in the Empty Space, a community theatre space open to the public but also part of the college.

At the beginning of all Civil Dialogue events (with and without the film) a general questionnaire was handed out, or provided digitally, for participants to provide some general information on positionality. On the top of the form was the two operationalized terms, *compassion* and *empathy* with their corresponding definitions. At the end of the questionnaire, in addition to the informed consent form, was a space for individuals to volunteer their contact information if they were interested in contributing to the research by participating in a one-on-one interview which would remain anonymous. I always

announced these items at the beginning of the event and reminded them about the volunteer portion at the end of the event.

The Interview Process

The one-on-one interviews were guided by 7 primary questions that were open-ended. These questions (See Appendix C) acted as anchor points to invite participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and any stories they might like to share in relation to the topic. Additionally, the interviews began with 3 basic demographic questions, and ended with asking if participants cared to volunteer information about their political preferences. The guiding questions were meant to elicit responses that would help answer some of the primary research questions driving this study.

A total of 15 respondents were interviewed, and one surprising element is that every one of the interviewees were from the groups who viewed the film. No one volunteered from the control groups. All of the interview respondents were college students from the classes I visited on campus, which primarily consists of millennial aged participants. Please see Appendix A for the Institutional Review Board's approval letter for this study.

The Screening Process

The initial screening event was advertised and held at The Empty Space, which is a black box theater community space. While the invitation only went out to the university students, all members of the community were invited to attend, so there were additional people present in the audience that were family or friends of students and staff. There were two screenings at this space, with approximately 15 audience members in the

first night, and 35 members the second night, for a total of 50 community members, college students, staff, and faculty. I began with a simple greeting to the audience, explaining what they can expect for our time together: a 20-minute film screening, followed by a 45-minute dialogue process. I find it helpful to explain the process, so that viewers do not get antsy wondering how long everything will last. Then I started the film.

The Civil Dialogue Process

The focused dialogue groups always consisted of 5 primary participants for approximately 20 minutes, which then opened up to audience participation for 5-10 minutes, then wrapping up with final comments from the original 5 primary participants, for a total of approximately 45 minutes from beginning to end. This provided a wide range of perspectives, and commentary from a large pool of observers (with sizes up to 300 audience members).

As a certified Civil Dialogue facilitator, I decided to be the primary facilitator of these dialogue groups, because in that way I could be a participant-observer in the process. I could loosely guide a discussion, as if it was a focus group interview, yet remain as the observer who primarily records and takes in the information. As a facilitator, it is part of the process to take notes and guide the open-ended discussion, but for the most part the facilitator stands to the side and observes. This is when I gathered in-depth field notes, with direct quotes from participants in the dialogue. I also continued to write and reflect on the process immediately following the dialogue.

The dialogues begin by revealing a provocative statement in the form of a sentence written on large flip-chart paper, or in the case of larger audiences it was

revealed on a large screen so that everyone in the room could see the statement, after the initial "ground rules" were explained. The ground rules of Civil Dialogue include having a willingness to listen, and to not think or plan what you want to say in rebuttal to someone else as if it were a debate. Instead, it encourages a focus on creating an atmosphere centered on listening, expressing individuals' lived experiences, and providing one's reasoning for why they hold a particular position. Participants are asked to not fall back on slogans or catch phrases that are prevalent in the media but are encouraged to use their own words to express themselves. Although the film itself acted as a provocative statement of sorts, in that it was a catalyst for dialogue, I still maintained the structure of the Civil Dialogue format by starting with one provocative sentence for participants to respond to and choose their initial positions. There are five chairs at the front of the room, each labeled with a sign that reads either "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral" or "Undecided," "Slightly Agree," and "Strongly Agree" positioned in a semi-circle facing one another. After the statement is revealed, participants are asked to consider what position they might take in relation to the statement. The statements varied slightly with each dialogue, to garner a range of responses, but the general concept did not change dramatically from one statement to the next. Every statement was always arranged in the same way so that "Agree" meant that the person generally agreed with the film's message, that compassionate behavior leads to more compassionate behavior. This was a way to maintain consistency and organize the data in a cohesive manner. The provocative statements used across the different dialogues included:

1. *Compassionate communication can stop mass killings.*

2. *The more people are exposed to this Mother Archetype approach to conflict negotiation, the more they will mimic that approach in their own communication.*
3. *Being exposed to the Mother Archetype approach to conflict negotiation will cause people to mimic that approach in their own communication.*
4. *Using compassionate communication on a daily basis will help people be more likely to use it in an emergency situation.*
5. *Using compassionate communication on a daily basis will help people be more empathetic.*
6. *Observing compassionate communication will make people more likely to use it in their own lives.*

The first statement was used in the first film-dialogue event, and the broadness of the word choice "mass killings" led to a variety of responses that encapsulated many different interpretations. For this reason, it was necessary to reassess and aim for a bit more specific word choice in the provocative statements. This is one element of Civil Dialogue which takes considerable thought and planning, is creating the statements. Statements 2 and 3 in the list were utilized only for audiences who viewed the film and understood what was meant by the term "Mother Archetype." Three audiences were shown those statements. Statements 4, 5, and 6 were used for the control groups (one for each group) and the sixth statement was the most prevalently used (in five dialogues) as it seemed to get at the crux of the conversation and seemed to be the most concrete to understand. The dialogues do not begin until all 5 positions are filled, which may have meant that in a few cases someone might have volunteered to speak from a "Disagree" perspective even though they would not have normally chosen that side. This is something that the facilitator may offer as a suggestion to audience members, to practice

sitting in a certain chair and speak from that perspective. It is one element that makes Civil Dialogue unique, because it emphasizes a need to hear from a full spectrum of perspectives. In a few cases, it was the "Disagree" and "Somewhat Disagree" seats that took longest to fill, so this invitation was offered to the audience. This could be a strength, in that it allowed for that perspective to be expressed, but at the same time it can also be a weakness in the data, being that someone may be speaking from a perspective that isn't necessarily their own. However, the format of the dialogue process allows for individuals to express their true positions if they feel inclined and are especially encouraged to do so in their final closing statements, so this is hopefully somewhat mitigated.

Grounded theory. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* was a book introduced in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, which conceptualized a method of theory-building that is grounded firmly in the data, "not the speculations and imaginations of researchers, theorists, and ideologists" (Simmons, 2011, p. 16). Remaining true to discovering "what is actually happening in the data" (Glaser, 1978, p. 57) and "what is really going on" (Glaser, 1998, p. 12) is what leads to "designing action for change" (Simmons, 2011, p. 18). Charmaz (2000; 2006) extends this and shifts away from the positivist perspective offered by Glaser and Strauss by suggesting that meaning is derived from examining the data, and the grounded theorist then *interactively* constructs theory from this inductive logic. Charmaz takes an interpretive approach, suggesting "mutual construction of the data takes place through interaction between the researcher and the participant, which ensures that the individual's voice is at the for-front of data collection and analysis"

(Martin & Gynnild, 2011, p. 75). This derives from a relativistic ontological approach, in which multiple realities also have multiple interpretations (Bury, 1986). It is this constructivist approach that I undertake in this study.

What makes Grounded Theory an appealing and apropos method for this particular study is its practical focus, with an action-oriented goal. It is a method born out of innovation, and with the ever-changing landscape of visual and mediated communication, this is particularly fitting territory for implementing such a method. According to McCallin, Nathaniel, and Andrews (2011), in Grounded Theory "the unit of analysis is individual behavior although the research purpose is to generate a theory that explains group patterns of behavior" (p. 74). Analyzing patterns of behavior is the starting point for being able to address some of the driving questions that gave rise to this study.

In total, there were 9 Civil Dialogue events with the corresponding film screening, and 3 "control" groups which were Civil Dialogue events held *without* the film screening. The 15 interviews were transcribed and coded, utilizing a grounded theory approach and organized into themes. Corresponding fieldnotes were created alongside each interview and Civil Dialogue event. According to Kristin Esterberg at the University of Massachusetts, she recommends "writing detailed field notes immediately after an interview," to record any impressions or details that help further illuminate an interview (2002, p. 107). Esterberg suggests the ethnographer record and transcribe as many details as possible, including pauses, repetitions, vocalic emphases, laughing, awkwardness, or other nonverbals (p. 108). For that reason, these field notes also include my own

questions and responses, which resulted in certain answers or comments from participants. The notes were not only taken during the interview, but also expanded upon *after* the interviews and group dialogues, to gather as many details as possible and provide a full picture of the conversation. These field notes were then coded, to triangulate with the other modalities (the interviews and "focus groups" in the form of Civil Dialogue conversations).

Esterberg suggests, "One of the advantages of small-group interviews is that they allow for the collection of a fairly large amount of data in a relatively short period of time. With group interviews, you can typically sample a larger variety of opinions in a shorter period than in individual interviews" (p. 109). The Civil Dialogue conversations were similar to small group interviews, in the sense that a wide range of perspectives and voices were offered in a relatively condensed amount of time. The additional element was the audience and their input which was also included in the conversation and my field notes. This expansive array of input and opinions led to extensive field notes gathered during the Civil Dialogue process, and as a result, more time spent on the post-dialogue reflection in the form of analytic memos.

Analytic memo writing. The last component that weighed in on this coding, categorizing, and thematizing process was analytic memo writing. Anthropologists George and Louise Spindler (1992) suggest, "only the human observer can be alert to divergences and subtleties that may prove to be more important than the data produced by any predetermined categories of observation or any instrument. The categories of happenings repeat themselves endlessly in human affairs, yet each event is unique" (pp.

66-67). Johnny Saldaña (2013) claims, “Memo writing before, during, and after you code becomes a critical analytic heuristic” (p. 59). Analytic memo writing was implemented throughout the process, after interviews, after the Civil Dialogue events, and throughout the process of coding and categorizing. These memos helped shed light on and further organize the themes which arose.

One of my committee members Clark Olson, president of the Institute for Civil Dialogue, had asked me to consider not being the dialogue facilitator for the dialogues, so that I may be in a better position to take notes. However, after having one of the larger Civil Dialogue events facilitated by a colleague, I chose to be the primary facilitator for all other components of the project because it struck me as being akin to having someone else conduct participant interviews. The comments offered, and the directions taken did not reflect my own choices that would have been made in that moment, so then seemed to impact the responses given. It was a helpful step to have someone else facilitate one of the dialogue events insofar as it ultimately showed me that for the purposes of preserving the integrity of this study, it was necessary for me to be the facilitator as I am the sole researcher on this project and am in fact utilizing Civil Dialogue in lieu of focus groups. The group that was facilitated by my colleague was one of the control groups who did not view the film, and the fieldnotes gathered from the experience still offered some helpful insights that reflected the themes found in the other Civil Dialogue conversations, as will be discussed later.

The Coding Process

Saldaña (2013) discusses the cyclical nature of coding and recommends that a qualitative researcher, particularly those who are implementing Grounded Theory, go through a series of cycles, experimenting with different coding methods, finding themes, then returning back to the data to explore other methods of coding for further elaboration, cultivation, and theory-building (p. 250). Interview transcriptions were first coded using open coding, or what more recently is referred to as Initial Coding (Charmaz, 2006). "Initial coding is breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Charmaz (2006) suggests that the goal of Initial Coding is "to remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by your readings of the data," which is the basis of Grounded Theory (p. 46). Saldaña (2013) claims, "It is a First Cycle, open-ended approach to coding the data with some recommended general guidelines" (p. 100). This first round of coding highlights utterances that may indicate developing categories, and "all proposed codes during this cycle are tentative and provisional" (p. 101).

Along with Initial Coding, I also employed Process Coding during this cycle. These codes focus on observable actions, motivations, and emotions that are responses to situations. This can include "psychological concepts such as prejudice, identity, memory [and] trust" (Willig, 2008, p. 164). This is a helpful framework for coding the data, as the project primarily concerns individual's *reactions* to a provocative statement, whether it is the film itself or the statement revealed in the Civil Dialogue. The topic itself also pertains to behavior, actions, and reactions. Utilizing these two types of coding processes

allowed for a level of freedom and openness to generate themes in the grounded theory tradition, which meant a large quantity of process codes were created. In total, 354 codes were created, creating 24 categories, with 48 sub-categories (see Appendix B).

This led to the Second Cycle coding process. According to Saldaña (2013), this process requires "such analytic skills as classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and theory building" (p. 58). It is a process of analyzing the codes that were created during the First Cycle and organizing them into themes and connections. During this process, "our ultimate analytic goal is not just to transform data, but to transcend them – to find something else, something more" (p. 208). With each cycle of coding, the themes continue to consolidate, conglomerate, and a hierarchy of prominent themes versus secondary themes emerge. Through the Second Cycle coding process, themes reduce in number and become more salient; "Codes and subcodes are eventually transformed into categories (and subcategories, if needed), which then progress toward major themes or concepts, and then into assertions or possibly a new theory" (p. 208).

One important element to consider during this process is that the number of times a code is employed may *not* indicate the salience or prominence of a unique theme that contributes to understanding a particular phenomenon. It is important to not solely rely on the quantity or frequency of a code, but to consider each interview as a whole in relation to the entire data set, which includes field notes and analytic memos (Saldaña, 2013). This is why Second Cycle coding is imperative, to not only re-examine the data

with a fresh perspective, but also to re-examine the codes and themes that were created during the First Cycle.

For the Second Cycle of coding I employed Pattern Coding. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), Pattern Coding is "the search for rules, causes, and explanations in the data… examining social networks and patterns of human relationships," lending to theorizing about the processes of behavior (p. 69). This type of coding tends to look at the data from a holistic "meta-code" viewpoint (Saldana, 2013, p. 210), to discover general patterns in people's behavior, assumptions, and reactions. First Cycle codes such as the recurring phrase "fight or flight," spoken by numerous interviewees and dialogue participants, was a prominent theme. During the Second Cycle coding, various other comments and codes exhibited an association with this general theme, which highlighted a recurring *pattern* in the data that the majority of respondents believed these were truly the only two ways humans behave in intense situations.

Saldaña (2013) explains, "The stage at which I seem to find a theory emerging in my mind is when I create *categories of categories…* It is at this point that a level of abstraction occurs which transcends the particulars of a study, enabling generalizable transfer to other comparable contexts" (p. 250). From the initial codebook created during the First Cycle coding, with 354 codes composing 24 categories and 48 sub-categories, the Second Cycle coding revealed further association between the categories and broader themes in the pattern of responses (for a total of 10 pattern codes), highlighting four prominent through-lines that ran through the entire data set.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Results

During First Cycle coding, a total of 354 codes were generated by reviewing the data, with 24 initial categories and 48 sub-categories. The Second Cycle coding revealed 10 pattern codes which synthesized the 24 initial categories that were created during the First Cycle process. For the full list of code categories and subcategories, see Appendix B. The pattern codes encapsulated several of the original focused code categories, to streamline responses in terms of behavior, actions, attitudes, and perspectives. This allowed for synthesizing the data by looking for general themes and patterns in participants' responses. While the majority of the First Cycle codes pertained to both the interviews and Civil Dialogue conversations, certain codes (such as the *in vivo* code "If you're a violent person, you're a violent person") only were prevalent in the Civil Dialogues and not in the interviews due to the different paths that conversations took throughout the process of the dialogue. During the Second Cycle coding, however, the data was re-examined in terms of patterns of behavior, and so this code was lumped into an overall pattern of "natural inclinations or behaviors" which then included information gathered from both the interviews and the dialogues. The final theoretical themes derived from the most prolific elements that were observed in the interviews *and* Civil Dialogue events combined, which also showed up prolifically in the analytic memos. For more details on the various First and Second Cycle codes that informed each analytical theme, refer to Appendix B.

Throughout the process of clumping the coded data into larger meta-categories, it allowed for salient themes to develop. Not only did answers to the original research questions emerge, but several additional and unexpected findings arose from the data. Figure 1, below, shows a snapshot of the First and Second Cycle coding categories, and displays the transition into the final analytical themes which emerged from the data. These themes were a result of categorizing the data into the general patterns which arose in the responses, both expected and unexpected, from the individual interviews and the dialogue events. The interpretive summary is a glimpse into the analysis process which will be explored further, later in the chapter.

Focused Code	Pattern Code	Analytical Theme	Datum Supporting the Category	Researcher's Interpretive Summary
Your actions impact others	*Displaying* different types of behavior	Spectacle: Doing things "for show"	"In our society today, people are doing things for 'Likes' and social media attention... In *13 Reasons Why* it kind of shows the glamorization and attention of committing suicide."	This highlights a SHOWING not TELLING theme in society, particularly with the millennial generation. Even in fictional TV dramas it also highlights the power of visual INFLUENCE.
Emotionally affected by watching this film	Displaying empathy (perspective-taking) in participant responses.	Changed perspectives after viewing the film and dialogue.	"I literally cry at everything I watch. I did feel bad for the shooter, he wasn't getting attention or the things he needs, and it puts you in someone else's shoes, and that's what documentary does, it makes you realize the importance of that.	Film, particularly in dramatic narrative form, allows viewers to get emotionally involved, and experience PERSPECTIVE-TAKING.
If you're a violent person, you're a violent person.	If someone has their mind made up, there's no stopping them.	People are "Naturally" Good or Bad	"If someone is violent, and has their mind made up to do something violent, then they're gonna do it no matter what. No one can stop them."	Once this was said in a Civil Dialogue, others would echo this sentiment, which occurred in a number of dialogues. This showcases not only group behavior, but a propensity for not seeking alternative modes that run counter to what is often portrayed in the media – a larger cultural narrative outweighing short-term narratives like this film.
Humans are naturally selfish	"Natural" inclinations and behaviors	Fight or Flight: Our only two options of behavior	"We don't know how we're going to respond in an emergency situation until it happens. Fight or flight."	An assumption that we do not have the ability to control ourselves in an emergency situation, but just have to wait and see once our survival instinct kicks in (we only have 1 of 2 options).

Figure 1. Coding Process. First and Second Cycle codes with analytical theme, supporting datum, and interpretive summary.

Results

To begin, the original four research questions will be addressed – in a quest not to prove but to disprove the original assumptions and hypotheses inherent in the questions themselves. See Figure 2, below, for a condensed list of the research questions and a snapshot of pertinent findings. Next, I will review the data in terms of the four analytical themes that emerged, which also includes six additional and surprising insights that arose from the data. Salient interview excerpts which encapsulate the most prominent findings are offered throughout the following discussion, utilizing pseudonyms to preserve participants' anonymity. These excerpts are representative samples of the type of answers which arose most frequently and prominently.

RQ1: How does the medium of film engage people's thinking and/or emotional engagement with the subject matter?

The data suggests that participants who viewed the film became more interested in the subject matter, displaying concern for Michael Hill and for the potential of being put in a similar position as Antoinette Tuff. All fifteen participants who were interviewed revealed that their perceptions were impacted by the film. Responses highlight a general tone that individuals' emotions were activated by watching the film. One student named Tori, whose major is Global Studies with an emphasis on education and gender, expressed:

> I definitely became very compassionate and emotional while watching the film you showed. That film was more *raw,* rather than the T.V. shows I watch.

Rosalie: Can you explain what you mean by ‘raw’?

Tori: When I say ‘raw’ I mean real, like why aren’t we talking about this? Why don’t we care about this more?

This statement was a message that reverberated through several interviews as well as several dialogue conversations from those groups who viewed the film. It highlighted an emphasis on caring more about this topic after having viewed the film and conveyed a tone of getting riled up or feeling a sense of urgency in terms of how we as a culture address this topic.

RQ2: How does the medium of film affect people’s participation in a dialogue?

There were 9 dialogue groups which viewed the film (with an approximate total of 515 audience members), and 3 dialogues that did not view the film (with an approximate total of 200 audience members). As emotions and opinions seemed to be activated at a higher level after viewing the film, it led to audience members immediately taking a seat in the Civil Dialogue session rather quickly. In the non-film dialogues, there was a lower energy level in general, and they often required a bit more explanation and cajoling to fill the seats.

During the dialogue, participants who viewed the film seemed to have several talking points to discuss, while the control groups who did not view the film often veered into several directions, with participants not quite as passionate on a stance. Groups who

viewed the film had much to say. It is also significant to note that all 15 interview participants who volunteered to take part in an interview came from the groups who viewed the film, even though all audiences were invited to participate in a one-on-one interview. When asked how he felt about the Civil Dialogue portion of the event, Alex, an interspace engineering major responded:

> I was a participant. I was one of the extremes, on the Strongly Agree side. It was *really* helpful. Sometimes things make you sick to think, 'How could you support something like that?' But this lets you understand where people are coming from. It got people to open up and see different perspectives. I heard people speak that I had never heard speak in that class the whole entire semester, so it was really cool."

This comment exemplifies the enthusiastic tone of the dialogue conversations, which saw a high level of participation from the groups who viewed the film. The observations made of the control groups revealed that audience members were not as active in contributing to the conversation when they had not viewed the film.

The following is an example of a student who was asked about their experience participating in the dialogue process, and the response integrated the dialogue with the film content itself. In this response is a convergence of both the process of Civil Dialogue and the content of the film. Eliza, a business sports media major, explained how the Civil Dialogue process impacted her:

> It definitely affected my listening skills. Have you ever been in a situation when you're in a big group and someone starts telling a story, and then everyone starts talking on top of them and cuts them off? I always think about trying to be sure to listen to them and keep them on track, because you want to show respect, and those types of films definitely get me thinking more about how important that is, to just *listen.*

This displays the way the film was not only a catalyst in the dialogue process, but also potentially impacted or modified behavior during the dialogue process. The film itself actually ends with the line, "I would listen. That's what no one did," to those individuals who conducted the Columbine school shooting. Eliza's response highlights the phenomenon which was mentioned in the visual communication literature (Hope, 2006; Pollock, 2013; Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004), the way that visual modes can trigger memories, emotional recall, and other past experiences to reactivate emotions and connect to the content that one is viewing or the behaviors one is enacting – a convergence of past and present, or emotional (affect) and physical (cognition).

RQ3: Can film get people more emotionally invested in the content matter than using dialogue and discussion on its own?

Responses from participants during and after the film-dialogue events suggest an increase in emotional connection, empathy, and passion for the topic. While only a small number of students stayed after to express gratitude after the non-film dialogues, there

was a fervor of passion and excitement after the film-dialogues, often with a line of students who wanted to chat more at the end. One student claimed: "This experience just made me decide to change my major to Communication."

Rosalie: Just now?

Student: Just now.

Three of the fifteen interview respondents had a neutral to slightly negative outlook on the dialogue experience, in which they suggested that it was not likely to work in other contexts. This could potentially be a function of the subject matter of the film, and therefore the dialogue, which was a relatively positive message focused on the need for compassionate behavior. However, it also could suggest people's general distrust or discomfort with dialogue as a process which they perceive as something of which to be fearful. When asked about her thoughts about the Civil Dialogue process, Oriana, a freshman from Arizona majoring in computer science replied:

> I guess it was a nice way to put everything out there. I think it is helpful, but it does rely a lot on people being open about their opinions and feeling safe to do so. It'd be tough in larger groups. It'd have to be smaller groups. For me personally, that feeling of judgement is always there, but it's easier in smaller groups where the risk is a little bit less. As long as the environment is safe or feels safe.

This bears further exploration, to examine whether participants maintain this perception even when more controversial topics are discussed in the dialogue groups. It

could also indicate how the film may act as a guide, in a way, to keep participants on track or on topic throughout a dialogue, which might mitigate a tendency to digress, and lends to feeling "safe." Oriana was part of a class of approximately 25 people during this film-dialogue process, and it is unclear just what she means by smaller or larger groups. From my experience as a Civil Dialogue facilitator, the Civil Dialogue format itself lends to a calm tone throughout the process and tends to encourage people to have a generally positive outlook about participating in dialogue by the end of the process.

RQ4: How might film affect attitudes and in turn affect behavior?

All 15 interviews displayed a shift in perception, and 12 of 15 interview respondents said they will consider exercising compassionate behavior in their daily practice and in critical moments of crisis now after seeing the film compared to how they would have behaved prior to seeing the film. Eliza's comment encapsulates many of the respondents' feedback when she answered the question, "Does being aware of this event and seeing the film about Antoinette Tuff alter your perception of what you see on the news, or what events are covered or publicized?"

> Oh, definitely! My perspective was definitely altered. You always only hear about the hero for beating down a guy. Not talking people out of things, or doing it in a nice, compassionate way. There's definitely more focus on action heroes.

Similarly, Alex responded:

> I think it did push me to consider using compassion more. I think, before that, I'd be more of the aggressive type in that kind of situation. Like, I'd strike first and ask questions later. But after the film, I do think it's a pretty good idea to talk things out first. I would definitely use that approach.

Six of the interview respondents spoke about compassionate behavior as now being a new "option" to choose from after seeing the film, in terms of the way to behave in an emergency situation such as a school shooting. This was an unexpected finding that ultimately became quite significant in the analysis and has far-reaching implications. This is exemplified by the following comment from Jacqueline, a sophomore majoring in Business Management, when asked, "Do you think this film and dialogue experience may affect your actions in the future?"

> Yeah, probably. It gives us other options in terms of what to do. We're not really ever presented with options of what to do, other than like a lockdown, where you just sit there. So, this is good, to have another option.

Additionally, nearly half of all respondents were moved to the extent of displaying empathy for someone else in their response. Most often it was the shooter whom respondents displayed empathy for, exercising perspective-taking. However, Oriana actually reflected back upon an emergency situation that she experienced in recent years, and displayed empathy for the perpetrator who put her family in danger. This was

a significant piece of evidence that illustrates the power of this film-dialogue event on perception and potential future behavior because it actually was manifested in individuals' behavioral response. When asked, "Do you think this film and dialogue experience may affect your actions in the future?" Oriana responded:

> Yeah, definitely. I guess I'd try to understand the person a bit more. I'd like to think I'd at least try to find out why they're doing it and try to get to know them more. I mean, it'd be hard, but I think now I'd at least *consider* it, instead of right away judging, or labeling someone as bad… I did have an experience where a guy came into our home, but I never thought to wonder why he was doing it. Now, after the video, it makes me want to talk to him and ask why, even though it won't make it any easier to understand, but I never thought about that til now. It's a person we'd seen before; I didn't know him very well, but he was looking for my dad specifically. It was Mother's Day and my mom and I came from a movie. He had a metal screwdriver, pipe thing. He came in [to the house] looking into all the rooms. He was trying to stab him [Dad]. We all ganged up on him and he just ran away.

Similarly, Max, a senior from China majoring in interior design responded:

> Yeah, sometimes it would change my actions. Before I saw the movie you showed us, I didn't think she should stay and waste time talking to the shooter.

> But actually she did very well and tried to feel what he felt and gave him an opportunity to change his mind. We often don't give people the time to change their mind. If that shooter was my brother, I would wish or hope that someone would give him the time to calm down and come out of it.

These responses indicate significant shifts in perspective, and also imply a newly emergent schema or *plan* for future behavior. From First Cycle codes such as "Having a new awareness" to Second Cycle codes which indicate patterns of behavior and altered perceptions, the above interview segments indicate a strong connection between awareness, or being informed about a topic, and a person's perception of a situation and ultimate ability to implement an altered course of action should the occasion arise. While this may not necessarily be surprising, it is an unexpected outcome of the data which informs a deeper discussion that is further enhanced by the additional findings explored later in the chapter.

Condensed Summary of Research Questions and Findings

RQ #	Question	Findings	Example of Supporting Datum
Research Question 1:	How does the medium of film engage people's thinking and/or emotional engagement with the subject matter?	The data suggests that participants who viewed the film were more interested in the subject matter, and felt their perceptions were impacted. Emotions were activated.	"I definitely became very compassionate and emotional while watching the film you showed. That film was more *raw*, rather than the T.V. shows I watch… When I say 'raw' I mean real, like why aren't we talking about this? Why don't we care about this more?"
Research Question 2:	How does the medium of film affect people's participation in a dialogue?	Film offered several talking points to discuss, while the control groups who did not view the film often veered into several unrelated directions, with participants not quite as passionate on a stance. Groups who viewed the film had much to say.	From a film+dialogue respondent: "I was a participant. I was one of the extremes, on the Strongly Agree side. It was *really* helpful. Sometimes things make you sick to think, 'How could you support something like that?' But this lets you understand where people are coming from. It got people to open up and see different perspectives. I heard people speak that I had never heard speak in that class the whole entire semester, so it was really cool."
Research Question 3:	Can film get people more emotionally invested in the content matter than using dialogue and discussion on its own?	Responses from participants during and after the dialogue events which included the film suggest an increase in emotional connection, empathy, and passion for the topic.	While only a small few stayed after to express gratitude after the non-film dialogues, there was a fervor of passion and excitement after the film+dialogues, often with a line of students who wanted to chat more. One student claimed, "This experience just made me decide to change my major to Communication." (Rosalie: Just now?) "Just now." (Post-dialogue Fieldnotes)
Research Question 4:	How might film affect attitudes and in turn affect behavior?	All 15 interviews displayed a shift in perception, and 12 of 15 interview respondents said they will consider exercising compassionate behavior in daily behavior and in critical moments of crisis now, after seeing the film, compared to how they would have behaved prior to seeing the film. Nearly half of all respondents were moved to the extent of displaying empathy for someone else in their response.	"Yeah… it would change my actions. Before I saw the movie you showed us, I didn't think she should stay and waste time talking to the shooter. But actually she did very well and tried to feel what he felt and gave him an opportunity to change his mind. We often don't give people the time to change their mind. If that shooter was my brother, I would wish or hope that someone would give him the time to calm down and come out of it."

Figure 2. Condensed summary of research questions and findings.

Unexpected Findings. The findings expanded far beyond the original research questions, revealing six noteworthy areas that worked in tandem with the findings to the originating research questions to inform the development of the four analytical themes. These areas offer significant insight into key patterns that interview respondents and dialogue participants would routinely default to, which suggests larger cultural implications. For a condensed summary of the additional findings, refer to Figure 3 below.

Analytical Themes

After coding and reviewing the one-on-one interviews, then expanding the data beyond the originating research questions by coding and categorizing the field notes and analytic memos generated from the Civil Dialogue events, four over-arching themes arose from the findings. These themes incorporated several additional and unexpected findings, drawing attention to similarities and differences between the control groups (non-film dialogue events) and the other groups (film-dialogue events), and highlighting unique outliers to the dominant perspective which provide intriguing insights. The four analytical themes include:

1. Spectacle: Doing Things for Show
2. Changed Perspectives After Viewing the Film
3. People are "Naturally" Good or Bad
4. Fight or Flight: Our Only Two Options of Behavior

These themes stood out as most prominent in terms of frequency, but also the level of adamance or passion when discussing these elements or exhibiting this behavior.

Additional Findings Which Came Out of the Data and Did Not Pertain to the Original RQ's

Finding #	Summary of Finding	Findings	Supporting Datum
Unexpected Finding #1:	Participants' recommendations for what Antoinette Tuff *should've* done, to be "better off."	3 of the 15 interview participants expressed that Antoinette should have either fought or fled, rather than negotiate with Michael Hill.	"She could've taken self-defense and put herself in a more powerful position and still had the same outcome. It was a *very* rare thing where she talked him out of it. The most important thing is to remove yourself from the situation. Not *prolonging* the situation."
Unexpected Finding #2:	Participants' recommendations and feedback for making the Civil Dialogue "more successful" even when the dialogue went well, with many participating.	Participants expressed a general lack of confidence that people in a dialogue would be "willing" to participate or be genuine, especially in a dialogue outside of this context.	"If we used more dialogue, it would probably help, but it would be hard to actually make it happen in other contexts, or the community, for everyone to actually cooperate and participate."
Unexpected Finding #3:	Many participants enjoyed and appreciated the freedom to share a variety of opinions in the Civil Dialogue but often ended up in the middle, agreeing with one another.	In group dialogue, members would often echo one another when a salient statement was expressed, regardless of which end of the spectrum it was on.	Analytic Memo: Many people would agree or integrate the phrase into their own responses once phrases such as "Fight or flight" or "If you're violent you're violent" were used.
Unexpected Finding #4:	The extent that "live footage" impacts the weight of the film's message.	Older viewer (70+) thought live footage was incorporated in the film and was very impressed by the film. Younger viewer (millennial) was upset that it was not actual footage.	"It would've been better if it was just the audio and then only using real images and real footage, not a re-enactment."
Unexpected Finding #5:	Immediately, interview participants brought up the TV show *13 Reasons Why* which seemed to provoke strong responses.	Several students watch this TV show (nearly all interview participants). Both positive and negative responses to the show were offered, displaying strong emotional engagement.	"There is a line between being helpful and romanticizing it [suicide]. They could have handled it way better, but I definitely recommend watching it."
Unexpected Finding #6:	No means Yes.	Several participants expressed an immediate "No" they're not affected by films or TV shows, but then proceeded to explain how they actually *were* affected by this film and other films/TV shows, to the point of changing behavior.	"Honestly, there hasn't been a change [in perspective]. I just carried on as usual [after seeing the film]." (Rosalie: Do you think this film might affect your actions in the future?) "Honestly, I think I would try to use some of these techniques, because it's proven effective in de-escalating the situation, then I would attempt to."

Figure 3. Additional findings. Six surprising elements which came out of the data and did not pertain to the original research questions.

Spectacle: Doing Things for Show

This theme arose on a multitude of levels. Not only were interview participants talking about how the film made them more aware of just how important it is to treat others with respect and display compassionate behavior, but they also spoke about how individuals do things (like commit acts of violence, or even suicide) to "show" others. In this particular comment below, Tori was talking about the television show *13 Reasons Why,* which I had never heard of and had to ask for more details. She explained that it portrayed suicide almost in a romantic light, which may have negative repercussions for some viewers, who may feel inclined to do things for "show" to get attention:

> T.V. shows I watch, like *13 Reasons Why,* glorifies things a bit. With video, you have to be very careful how you portray things. In our society today, people are doing things for "Likes" and social media attention. In *13 Reasons Why* it kind of shows the glamorization and attention of committing suicide… The T.V. show encourages negative behavior maybe.

In this case, "showing" is working on a variety of levels – from what we see in others, to what we see on television, and what we try to project or show others in our mediated and embodied identities. It also indicates the role of film and television, both fictional and non-fictional, in impacting perceptions and influencing behavior, which points to the power of those who choose and create the content that is shown to us in the media.

Another element of doing things for “show” was people’s behavior in the Civil Dialogue. From what I observed, people remained respectful and calm throughout the process. While several participants’ responses echo this sentiment, a few respondents seem to perceive the encounter less favorably. Some comments indicate a grappling with two contradictory perceptions – an internally held belief (possibly derived from what has been displayed to them in the media and other cultural contexts) and the external experience of this particular dialogue (modeling civility and calm attitudes).

A few people expressed their support of the Civil Dialogue experience but did not think it could be possible outside of the context of college students participating. Many individuals expressed a lack of confidence in people’s “willingness” to participate in such dialogues. When asked about his thoughts about the Civil Dialogue process, Jack, a freshman from New Mexico responded:

> It did make me think about different perspectives and how people think differently about things. If we used more dialogue, it would probably help, but it would be hard to actually make it happen in other contexts, or the community, for everyone to actually cooperate and participate.

Maria from Connecticut who is a senior majoring in communication expressed a general apathy toward the process, and seemed to suggest that there may be a level of inauthenticity to it in which people may not reveal their true feelings:

> I feel pretty neutral toward Civil Dialogue, because some people feel entitled to correct others in their opinions, so it wasn't necessarily productive. Civil Dialogue *could* be productive, depending on the crowd. You could be just getting people who don't want to say anything to offend anyone. It could be great to utilize on campus, where anyone walking by could participate, and get a lot of different perspectives and ideas. That'd be good.

This was an interesting line of thinking that came from three different respondents, because it seemed as if they did not think dialogue could be successful, even if the dialogue they participated in was successful as far as having achieved the goals of listening, civility, and sharing a variety of perspectives. It builds upon the findings discussed in the responses to RQ3, in that there seems to be a constituency which lacks confidence in others' willingness to be civil, accommodating, or open to dialogue. It bears further discussion, as will be expounded in the next chapter, highlighting cultural narratives that contribute to these perspectives.

Additionally, several comments indicated inexperience communicating face to face with others (i.e. being surprised to hear other people speak in general; hearing other perspectives for the first time) and inexperience with being civil while communicating from different perspectives. For example, when Eliza was asked about her opinion of Civil Dialogue, she replied:

> The Civil Dialogue process made me see where my other classmates come from. One guy said something that totally surprised me, so I could see what kind of people they are, and how their family influences them and stuff. They brought up some interesting points that I hadn't originally thought of, so it was nice to hear some different perspectives. Now whenever I see that guy, we all wonder if he's gonna say something else that completely surprises us!

Katie, a freshman communication major offered:

> I definitely think Civil Dialogue is really powerful, because it's a real time example of people with different perspectives talking to each other, and it doesn't have to be about yelling and arguing. I'm totally a believer that people should get together and discuss things civilly, and it's also very welcoming, open, free and friendly, so it's not scary to participate.

Ironically, participants themselves were doing things for "show" even when it came to how they communicated in the interviews and the Civil Dialogue. Some participants often started out with strong talk, but then fell short when it came to following through with a deeper explanation. One participant claimed to have "mad opinions" about the film and other television shows yet was not able to articulate those thoughts or put it into words. I eventually started mentioning some other comments I had heard, which led the person to agree with those perspectives. Similarities between this

behavior in participants compares with what has been described of the shooters themselves – privileging the spectacle, or the dramatic display of emotion. It raises questions about the culture that gives rise to this type of behavior. It highlights a "showing" not "telling" culture, in which there exists quite a bit of bravado and puffery but is not substantiated by experience or deeper thought processes which support those claims.

To expand on this, it leads me to Unexpected Finding #1: Four interview participants (about one-quarter of the interviews) immediately claimed, "No, I wasn't affected by the film," in response to the question of whether it impacted their perceptions at all, but throughout the conversation with them they ultimately revealed that they were indeed affected by the film – sometimes even as soon as the very next comment. This highlighted a pattern of behavior that some individuals have a knee-jerk tendency to respond in the negative, which may implicate cultural norms of strength, solidarity, or definitiveness – and a corresponding perception that changing one's perspective is somehow weak. For example, John, a freshman from Arizona majoring in supply chain management originally answered the following question in the negative, but ultimately displayed a shift in perspective through his answers: "Did the film change your perspective at all?"

John: Honestly, there hasn't been a change. I just carried on as usual.

> Rosalie: Do you see value in exercising this [compassionate behavior] in everyday life?
>
> John: In everyday life? I see some value in it, but not necessarily a need for it in everyday life. Depends on the person and the situation.
>
> Rosalie: Do you think this film may affect your actions in the future?
>
> John: Honestly, I think I would try to use some of these techniques, because it's proven effective in de-escalating the situation, then I would attempt to.

These types of responses occurred frequently enough that it was quite noteworthy. It also was highlighted throughout various dialogues. It seems to indicate a cultural tendency toward displaying self-reliance or an immutable persona that isn't easily influenced and is instead autonomous or acts on one's own accord.

Unexpected Finding #2: Many people enjoyed and appreciated the freedom to share opinions and a variety of perspectives, yet several dialogues ended with people clumping up together, either on the *Agree* side, or with more people leaning toward the middle/neutral ground, agreeing with one another, and "seeing both sides" of the issue. In the control groups who did not view the film, there was an increased inclination toward homogenizing as a group of respondents toward the "neutral" category.

Oriana's comment highlights this trend:

> I guess it [Civil Dialogue] was helpful. I think at the end I remember most of them being in the middle, agreeing that the issue was complicated! Which is how I felt too.

For the most part people tended to agree with the notion that witnessing compassionate behavior encourages others to behave compassionately, (which was the initial provocative statement to begin the dialogue discussion) but the extreme perspectives seemed to simmer down a bit by the end of each dialogue. This could be because of the topic itself, but I've witnessed this occur with several other topics in other Civil Dialogue events as well. This could be an outcome of the format, of being witnessed/audienced by others. It might also indicate a tendency toward groupthink. Or it may indicate that we are not actually at such extreme odds with one another once we get into conversation and hear from other perspectives. While the Civil Dialogue literature does suggest that the format allows people to find commonalities with one another, I believe this study could expand upon our understanding of the process to suggest that one outcome of Civil Dialogue could be that it ultimately *moderates* people's perspectives.

Changed Perspectives After Viewing the Film

Across all 15 interviews, the general finding again and again was that people were indeed impacted by the film and many of them expressed a positive experience after

observing or participating in the dialogue. A greater rate of change in perception was more significant (markedly expressed) in those that viewed the film. This is partly due to the fact that the interview participants were from the film-viewing groups, but this marked difference was also observed in the general tone and comments made throughout the dialogue conversations. More passionate and emotion-based comments were made in the film-dialogue groups compared to the control (non-film) dialogue groups. Comments which exhibited more compassion (displaying concern or consideration for others) and empathy (perspective-taking) for the shooter, and also just being more mindful of this phenomenon on a larger scale, including discussion about people's behavior in daily interactions.

Nearly all 12 dialogues mentioned the need for some kind of training on a mass scale. The film-dialogue groups tended to focus that line of conversation on implementing training in compassion and being mindful of others, particularly starting with children, while the non-film dialogue groups expressed that the process of Civil Dialogue would be great to teach others about, focusing on the element of listening to other perspectives and conversing while maintaining civility. This was an interesting element that displays a general acknowledgment and interest in improving these areas at a cultural level, and further supports the film-dialogue combination, the need for a structured dialogue format to correspond with provocative, research-driven films.

Overall, findings suggest there was significantly less emotional connection or investment in the topic itself from the non-film dialogue groups. Eliza discussed her emotional response to the film in the following excerpt:

> I am *such* a sappy person, I literally cry at everything I watch. I *did* feel bad for the shooter, he *wasn't* getting attention or the things he needs, and it puts you in someone else's shoes, and that's what documentary does, it makes you realize the importance of that. Turning the other cheek and treating others kindly. Especially the beginning, with Obama. That was the first tear-jerker. I definitely teared up a few times, and this made me reflect on how important it is how we treat others.

Jeremy, a mechanical engineering student from United Arab Emirates responded to the question, "Did this film alter your perspective at all? Does it make you think about what events get publicized or memorialized?"

> Of course, if someone wanted to do something very extreme and was talked out of it because someone finally listened to him, of *course* my perception is altered. Because you don't hear about that very often.

Many respondents explained that they were now (after viewing the film) considering the reasons behind someone committing a violent act like this, when they hadn't ever considered the reasoning prior to seeing the film. One student, Oriana, went beyond considering how a generalized faceless person, such as a shooter in general, might be driven to behave in certain ways, and instead related it to a specific person she had an experience with.

> Before the video, I did have an experience where a guy came into our home, but I *never* thought to wonder *why* he was doing it. Now, after the video, it makes me want to talk to him and ask why, even though it won't make it any easier to understand, but I never thought about that 'til now.

What is noteworthy about this particular comment is that Oriana was one participant who also first answered "No" to the original question, claiming the film did *not* affect her perceptions.

> Rosalie: Did the film have any impact on the way you think about compassion? Like do you think this may impact your future behavior at all?

> Oriana: No. It did a little bit after the film I guess—I was more aware when other people were empathetic. But me and my behavior is pretty much the same.

This indicates, as the dialogue process also displays, that talking through a question or simply being asked to articulate one's perspective actually ends at different conclusions than original comments or emotional expressions might suggest. Sometimes an awareness, understanding, or knowing doesn't actually take shape until it is verbally expressed and talked through.

Moreover, in terms of the dialogue process, many people exhibited feeling more understanding for other perspectives after the dialogue, regardless of seeing the film or not. They talked about how it was nice to be able to listen to other perspectives. The dialogue process of being faced with conversing directly with people from differing perspectives highlighted an important element of embodied communication that seems to have been made salient in the act of *participating* in the dialogue. For those who viewed the film, this was even more apparent, considering the topic of the film was about treating others with respect. Tori's comment below shows a convergence of the take-aways not only from the film, but from the dialogue process itself. This highlights how the film illuminated the experience of the dialogue process and reciprocally the dialogue informed one's interpretation or understanding of the film. When asked if a film or television program has ever affected her actions after she's watched them, Tori responded:

> Definitely they affect my actions. When I first approach someone, I try to be more aware of my words and gestures, to word things in a way that doesn't negatively affect or hurt them.

While this comment seems to link to the subject of the film itself, it also highlights one of the key ground rules of the Civil Dialogue process that we reviewed before beginning the dialogue, which is to be respectful and civil to others. This piece of data demarcated a level of indistinguishability in determining whether a participant was impacted by the

film or the dialogue process itself, and instead showcased a convergence of the two methods; a witnessing and then a performing of the message.

Additionally, structuring information in narrative form works to engage people at an emotional level, exhibited by several participants claiming to be moved by the film, crying, or feeling bad for the shooter and his problems or concerns, as mentioned earlier. Several interview participants expressed being moved, whether in positive or negative ways, by other films, fictional television shows, and even specific fictional characters. For example, when asked "Has a film or television program affected your actions before?" Jacqueline responded:

> I'm sure it has. I think films can have a powerful influence on peoples' lives – especially bringing awareness to things. When I saw *Concussion* I didn't want to watch football ever again. I'm not really a football fan, but now I am actively trying to convince my brother not to do it.

Unexpected Finding #3: I was surprised to hear various comments from audience members after the film screening regarding whether or not actual video footage was used in the film. In particular, an older gentleman (mid-70's) mentioned as he was leaving the community dialogue event that he enjoyed the film and was impressed by all of the actual footage incorporated into the film (to which I corrected him that it was in fact a reenactment played in tandem with the actual audio recording of Antoinette's 911 call). Conversely, a young millennial college student who was an interview participant

commented on how she was “offended” by the choice not to use the “actual footage.” This brought up an interesting aspect I never considered, showcasing not only a generational gap, but an assumption that everything is captured on video or surveillanced in some way; a perception that it was an intentional choice to omit the actual footage, rather than not having access to it. It brings up questions of how viewers perceive what is “real” versus contrived – a privileging of certain visual modes of communication to determine fact from fiction. Taking personal offense also highlights the dramatic reactionary display of spectacle, mentioned in Theme #1.

Unexpected Finding #4: Throughout the course of several interview conversations, I learned about the show *13 Reasons Why,* which came up right away in the first interview and several subsequent ones after that. It was surprising how many people had strong feelings about this show, and immediately referenced it (along with other shows) as influential on their perceptions and behavior. There were mixed feelings – that it could be helpful, to show that your actions carry meaning – but it also could be damaging, because it seems to glamorize suicide without actually providing solutions. Coincidentally, within the same week of interviewing someone about this, we received a letter from our son’s junior high school that was warning parents not to let their children watch the show *13 Reasons Why* because it seemed to be encouraging students across the country to commit suicide and speak in a more favorably way about suicide. They suggested parents talk to their children about the show and maintain open lines of communication if they decide to allow their kids to watch the show. In the letter was a link to an article from the National Association of School Psychologists containing

talking points for parents. This supplied even further proof that the visual medium of film (which includes television and live-action performance that is video recorded), whether fictional or non-fictional in nature, has a measurable impact on people's perceptions and behavior.

People are "Naturally" Good or Bad

Several times throughout the various dialogues, a statement would be made that would often gain traction and be repeated by other members of the dialogue. Many of these comments often related back to what was perceived as "natural" go-to behavior that was unmalleable or fixed. Multiple participants during the Civil Dialogues expressed that people are "going to do something bad if they want to," or "if you're a violent person, and you want to do something violent, no one's going to be able to stop you" (*in vivo* codes from dialogue fieldnotes).

Others expressed that certain people, primarily women, are "naturally inclined" to behave in more compassionate ways. In the comment below, for example, behaving in compassionate ways equated to being maternal, an aspect that was suggested in the film as a controversial talking point, which led to Eliza drawing the conclusion that not everyone is capable of behaving in that way:

> Not everyone *does* have the capacity to be maternal, and I'd still stick in the Neutral position.

Similarly, someone commented during a dialogue that this scenario portrayed in the film "would have played out differently if Antoinette was a man," explaining that men are more inclined to be aggressive or to fight (taken from dialogue field notes).

Other comments in this theme of *natural behavior* displayed assumptions of what school shooters typically do, or how this particular situation was completely different than the 'average' school shooting. While this was something that arose quite a few times during the course of the dialogues, it also came up in the one-on-one interviews, exemplified by the following comment from Mark, a civil engineering student from Canada:

> The big difference I saw with this film was the guy didn't come in right away shooting, so that makes it very different.

Here, an important assumption is made indicating that these were unique circumstances that have never existed in any other school shooting scenario. However, several news reports have revealed what different shooters have said or asked individuals during the course of conducting a school shooting, from Columbine to Parkland. To mention so matter-of-factly that this was a uniquely different scenario dismisses the notion that there was an element of communicative behavior that may have contributed to the outcome of this situation. This highlights an element that was actually a complaint from one observer in the audience who came up to me after a dialogue was over, that this process of Civil Dialogue was difficult because "anyone can make up what they want – no one's

actually researching and finding out if what people say is actually factual" (participant quote from dialogue fieldnotes). However, what it does shed light upon are some of the cultural narratives that may guide individual's perceptions.

Tied to this line of thinking, that behavior is naturally occurring, is the idea that you have to genuinely be a compassionate person in order to behave in compassionate ways. "What if I don't *feel* empathy for that person?" or "I don't feel bad for shooters" (*in vivo* codes from dialogue fieldnotes), implying that you cannot behave compassionately toward someone you don't fully support and feel for. Comments like these make the assumption that Antoinette Tuff had genuinely positive and loving "natural" feelings for Michael Hill from the get-go.

On the other hand, some people who started out thinking all school shooters were "evil" had a change of heart and expanded their conceptualization of these individuals after viewing the film. Maria explained:

> Growing up, hearing about school shootings, I thought it was just evil people. I'm from Connecticut, and once Sandy Hook happened, my perspective kinda changed. He felt like his mom loved the students more than him. So it opened my eyes to the reasons behind school shootings, and watching your film reminded me of that.

Lastly, a recurring pattern in responses regarding the Civil Dialogue process highlights this analytical theme about how people are expected to naturally behave. Here

we see another comment from Mark about how people don't normally communicate in civil ways, and there's a slim chance that this dialogue process could work in contexts outside of a college campus.

> I think it was a great thing because it was very *civil*. Despite the fact that there was a whole range of viewpoints, so the fact that it remained civil was *amazing.* 'Cause you don't often get people from all different perspectives, from the extremes to somewhat in the middle. It doesn't happen very often. I think if you could get people in the room together, to sit together, and maybe even hide the positions from them so they don't know who they were with in terms of differing opinions, then people are much more likely to talk calmly with each other and get to know each other.
>
> Rosalie: What do you mean? You think it would work better to have nobody know what position they are taking? Like there would be a variety of opinions that would come out organically?
>
> Mark: I saw this commercial for an alcoholic beverage, and how they had opposite opinions, but were placed in a room together and had to complete tasks together and work together. And then they revealed at the end that they were different positions, and they could choose whether to walk out

> of the room or stay and continue to get to know each other. And they stayed. So maybe even *hiding* the position and inviting different people from different sides to talk could be good.

This leads to Unexpected Finding #5, in which a few individuals offered ways to improve the Civil Dialogue process, primarily by suggesting we hide the different perspectives. This indicates an element of fear of difference or disagreement in our culture, and a lack of familiarity with the notion of being civil when communicating about those differences. It also illustrates a primacy of visual communication, in referring to a *commercial* as the source of the information behind this suggestion.

Fight or Flight: Our Only Two Options of Behavior

This final analytical theme is an amalgamation of the previous three themes. It incorporates elements of each one of those to lead to a general conclusion offered multiple times, most prevalently in the dialogues, but also in a few of the interviews. In several of the dialogue conversations, participants would go down a line of conversation that suggested we don't know how we're going to respond in an emergency situation until it happens. This theme directly stems from the previous theme, in which respondents often spoke in generalizations about what the "average" person would typically do in a situation, or what "natural" behavior is. Several participants and interview respondents suggested that humans are self-interested by nature, and only concerned for their own survival, and when in survival mode, it's either "fight or flight."

This is exhibited by the following participant's response. Jeremy proposes the notion that Antoinette Tuff may not have consciously chosen what she did that day, when speaking to Michael Hill:

> Maybe it wasn't compassion. Maybe it was just rabid fear and trying to stay alive. Of course, compassion is a good go-to method. But in this situation, trust me, people are just thinking about themselves.

Similarly, another interviewee responds along the same lines – highlighting the survival aspect. John claims:

> I feel in those situations of course you are going to show empathy and compassion. I feel you would do anything to survive. So, it doesn't mean you feel empathy or compassion, it's more a survival tool rather than a trait.

Again, this last statement indicates a distinction between feeling genuine empathy and behaving in certain ways. This brings up an intriguing element that after further iterative reviewing of the field notes and analytic memos, showcases a common theme that came up in many of the dialogues and warrants further discussion (which will be explored in the next chapter). Additionally, research suggests, contrary to popular belief, that at the neurological level people are more inclined to preserve the *group* rather than

the self (Simon-Thomas, 2012). This draws attention to a dominant discourse which may be impacting perceptions about this issue, in terms of the common refrain that individuals are primarily self-interested beings.

Other interview respondents suggested that even after witnessing a productive example of conflict negotiation, it is still preferable and a "better" option to flee or stay away from others. For example, Mark, who hails from Canada, responded to the question, "Do you think this film might change your behavior at all in the future?"

> I just go for the policy, 'I won't disturb you, you won't disturb me.' I just try not to offend anyone. I got a stern warning from my mom, 'Don't offend anyone in the U.S. You never know how they might react.'
>
> Rosalie: Do you think she meant in terms of guns?
>
> Mark: Yeah, that's definitely a component. I always try not to offend anyone, and I find the best way to do that is just to not talk to anyone.

Some respondents even suggested that Antoinette Tuff would have been better off if she approached the situation differently. While it would seem as though the best possible outcome in this situation would be that both Antoinette and the shooter survive, along with all of the staff and students at the school (which is what actually happened), some

participants had a different perspective. Hakim, a psychology major from Pakistan suggests:

> Any time you have a different option that would be relatively safer, the compassion would be the last option, after trying to just run away and escape. If she had any chance to escape, she would have had a better chance.

John, from Arizona suggests something similar:

> I think if there was another way, or a quicker option that was more finite I would probably try that. So it depends on the situation, and I would have to weigh my options.

It's an interesting choice of words to use "more finite" and this seems to provide some additional cultural indicators with this line of thinking. Concepts such as speed, efficiency, finality emerge. Some participants suggested that Antoinette should have *fought* with Michael Hill and should learn self-defense. These recommendations for what Antoinette should have done (especially to be "better off") were genuinely quite surprising. This leads to Unexpected Finding #6.

Graphic design student, Jessica, indicates this line of thinking, with a focus on time and also power. The following comment also highlights a general assumption about

what is considered the norm for shooters' behavior, and what "typically" happens. Even when participants had mentioned they had never heard about this story before, and discussion ensued about these types of stories not being very prevalent in the news, there was still a confidently held assumption that there are specific typical ways these events play out, and the Antoinette Tuff scenario was uniquely special. Jessica suggests:

> She [Antoinette] could've taken self-defense and put herself in a more powerful position and still had the same outcome. It was a *very* rare thing where she talked him out of it. The most important thing is to remove yourself from the situation. Not *prolonging* the situation.

These comments imply that Antoinette made the wrong decision, as if there was a better outcome than both her and Michael surviving the situation. These responses and several comments throughout the dialogues suggest that fighting or fleeing are the only viable options. Elements of speed, efficiency, and achieving a sense of finality come up in these responses and draw attention to cultural norms and metanarratives which may contribute to these types of responses.

He had just gone through I don't know how many bankruptcies. But we made him out to be the most important person in the world. It was like making the court jester the king.

- Jonathon Braun, editor on *The Apprentice* (Keefe, 2019)

Main Street America saw all those glittery things, the helicopter and the gold-plated sinks, and saw the most successful person in the universe. The people I knew in the world of high finance understood that it was all a joke.

– Kwame Jackson, Season 1 contestant on *The Apprentice* (Keefe, 2019)

This is an oddly common refrain among people who were involved in "The Apprentice": that the show was camp, and that the image of Trump as an avatar of prosperity was delivered with a wink. Somehow, this interpretation eluded the audience. Jonathon Braun marvelled, "People started taking it seriously!"... With 'The Apprentice,' the TV producer mythologized Trump – then a floundering D-lister – as the ultimate titan, paving his way to the Presidency."

– Patrick Radden Keefe, contributing author at *The New Yorker* (Keefe, 2019)

Chapter 5

Discussion

We are in an age of privileging the visual, the spectacle, and the performed. Through my discussions with participants over the course of this study, which happened to also coincide with the first few years of Donald Trump's presidency, this observation was further reified. More than ever, the power inherent in visual discourses and performative utterances carries rhetorical weight, on a societal and cultural level. This topic is increasingly relevant and pressing, as violence and hate crimes continue to rise. In fact, 2017 was deemed "the deadliest year for mass shootings in modern U.S. history," according to an article published by AOL, in which "two of the five deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history occurred in the span of just 35 days" (Manella, 2017). This included the Las Vegas Massacre (58 killed, over 500 injured), and First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas (26 killed). Then 2018 brought us the Parkland, Florida shooting (17 killed), the Tree of Life ceremony in Pittsburgh (11 killed), Santa Fe High

School in Texas (10 killed), McDonald's in Bakersfield (5 killed) and the list goes on (Hastings, 2018).

In the documentary-style film that I created for this project I provide evidence of the "copycat" behavior that people tend toward when performative events take place. After Curt Cobain's death, for example, there were over 60 replicas that followed suit (Coleman, 2004). When a famous person is in the spotlight for committing suicide, much of the research about suicide indicates that people who identify with that person (either in demographic or emotional state, but primarily in age and gender) are most at risk for considering the option for themselves, and in fact the numbers prove a correlation (Fink, Santaella-Tenorio, & Keyes, 2018).

After Robin Williams' suicide, for example, suicides in middle-aged males increased by 10%, and the specific method used (strangulation) saw a 32% increase (Fink, Santaella-Tenorio, & Keyes, 2018). This has been strongly correlated to how the information is conveyed through the media (Pirkis, Burgess, Francis, Blood, & Jolley, 2006; Sisask & Varnik, 2012), and the "dosage" or quantity of the story coverage that people receive (Etzersdorfer, Voracek, & Sonneck, 2010). As the internet and social media have exponentially expanded the rate by which stories can multiply and reach people, the copycat effect has expanded accordingly (Etzersdorfer, Voracek, & Sonneck, 2010). The copycat effect has been observed since the Victorian era when a popular novel called *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* by Wolfgang Goethe, triggered a series of similar suicides throughout Europe, and the phenomenon is now referred to as the *Werther Effect* (Coleman, 2004). However, this effect has been observed in many other

contexts beyond suicide – from random acts of violence, to mass murder and school shootings (Coleman, 2004; Fink, Santaella-Tenorio, & Keyes, 2018).

Proposing a New Concept

With social media providing an increasingly global platform for performative displays, the more individuals are able to consume and contribute to the visual discourse, extending their own reach of influence in the public sphere (Blackmore, 1999). Moreover, with greater social status and exposure comes a greater influence on the public – a phenomenon I will call *visual performative capital,* henceforward referred to as *visual capital*. It is not a fluke, for example, that a leader who incites his audiences to violence with aggressive, racist, and misogynistic rhetoric ("So if you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would you? Seriously. Okay. Just knock the hell [out of them] — I promise you I will pay for the legal fees. I promise" (Adams, 2016)) has coincided with the number of hate crimes increasing by 17% since 2017 (Karamehmedovic, 2019).

I propose *visual capital* as my own novel term, which indicates that the visual is intrinsically linked to the performative and it carries discursive value. Sander and Putnam (2006) define *social capital* as behaviors such as "getting together with neighbors, family dinners, political participation, philanthropy, religious participation" (p. 22). They suggest social connections carry value, similar to a cultural currency, which contributes to a better society, promotes social connections, and builds trust with others. Building upon this concept, I suggest *visual capital* is the currency by which people are able to exercise power at an individual performative-visual level. Power can

take the form of influence, agency, autonomy, group identity, or participation in public discourse. Filmmakers, creators, industry professionals, content producers, and even people like Kim Kardashian become "influencers" simply because they happen to be in front of (or have access to) a camera. Perhaps they're on television because of their look, unique circumstances, desire for attention, money, or fame. Perhaps there is an inclination toward showcasing themselves, communicating with others, or just because they're a teenager who happens to have access to visual modes of communication. Regardless of the motivating factors, people who have followers, fans, friends, or even haters, have people's *attention,* and therefore have influence. These individuals hold visual capital and contribute in a substantial way to public discourses.

While public discourse and mass media coverage suggest school shootings are spontaneous acts that occur when someone's mental health has reached a breaking point (Berger, 2011; Christensen, 2018; Griswold, 2018; Hennessy-Fiske, Pearce, & Jarvie, 2018; "Las Vegas shooting," 2017; McMahon, Alanez, & Huriash, 2018; Ortiz, 2018; Pearson, 2012; Salvatore, 1999; Serna, 2015; Tikkanen, 2017), evidence shows time and time again that every mass shooter actually has *significant* amounts of forethought, pondering, planning, fuming, and reflecting on their unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the object of their anger, most of the time manifested in visual form through social media accounts, film and photos (Blankstein, 2014; McMahon, Alanez, & Huriash, 2018; Ortiz, 2018).

One example is the Santa Barbara shooter, Elliot Roger, who killed 7 people including himself, and had written a 137-page manifesto in addition to posting several

Youtube videos of his rage and violent behavior prior to carrying out the killing spree (Blankstein, 2014). Through the mass media, most Americans also became privy to some of the film footage from the 28 video clips that the Virginia Tech shooter Seung-Hui Cho created prior to conducting his rampage. He had mailed NBC the videos, along with an 1800-word manifesto and 43 pictures, the morning of the shooting. In his videos he did everything from complain about various classmates at his school, with words like "brats" "snobs" and "trust funds," to speaking like he was a super-hero or movie villain, fighting terrorism and even mentioning Al Qaeda at one point (Windrem, 2007). Most of the images seemed to showcase his military-like arsenal and combat gear, with one iconic image showing him posing with a gun in each outstretched hand, as many movie characters have been portrayed (i.e. *The Matrix, Desperado, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Resident Evil, Shoot 'em Up, Tomb Raider,* the list goes on).

In a study of 56 mass shootings that occurred between 2009 and 2012, none of the assailants were diagnosed as mentally ill, and only four of those individuals had their mental health brought to the attention of a medical professional at some point prior to the shooting (Blankstein, 2014). This indicates a need to re-frame the conversation away from an issue of mental instability – in which these individuals have a unique mental anomaly, emotional dysfunction or genetic fluke – to how we are actually living in, creating, and perpetuating a culture of violence with increasingly disenfranchised people who are not having certain needs met. The way individuals are being conditioned to exercise their power and autonomy is through the vehicle of spectacle. Ironically, the method by which we may be disenfranchising people and making them feel inferior or

powerless in the first place may also be due to the vehicles of spectacle – through social media, film, television, military aggression and other cultural narratives or visual-narrative-making machines. Professor Ron Astor from the University of Southern California suggests that perpetrators often are attempting to "immortalize themselves in the media" (Blankstein, 2014). These are not spontaneous events, but outcomes of longstanding feelings of resentment or exclusion in which these perpetrators were perceiving others as treating them in a particular way (an interpretation which may have been stimulated/aided by various modes of visual discourse) and typified by exercising their own visual capital. Cultural narratives of individualism, self-reliance, and glorifying speed and taking action to achieve a sense of "finality" also influence individuals' behavior.

After the Columbine shooting, people were reflecting on the fact that the perpetrators wore black trench coats. As a response, my own High School banned people from wearing black trench coats. Whether it was because the coats could conceal weapons, or because they contributed to a visual discourse of rebellious, dark, or depressive 'goth' culture, it was a way to disassociate people visually from shooter-type style, archetypes, and behavior. In other words, the visual realm is where people reside, engage, respond, and react. It is the place where visual capital is exercised and exchanged. Perhaps this is the space where a *solution* also resides.

Cognitive linguistics suggests that language structures our thoughts (Carey, 1989; Kay & Kempton, 1984; Lakoff, 1987; Sapir, 1951; Whorf, 1941). How too might our gestures and actions act as a language which structures our thoughts and therefore defines

our world? Not only are our daily actions capable of contributing to the rise in violence, but our daily actions can also contribute to the decline in violence. A quote that Antoinette Tuff lived by and recited to herself every day (which she cites from Proverbs 18:21) is, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." This study suggests that life and death also hang in the balance of our performed actions. Shakespeare wrote "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown" in *Henry IV* (Hylton, 1993). It follows that those with high visual capital will have more ability to influence others and can either promote a culture of violence or promote a more civil and just society; but it is also important to note how *all of us* possess and exercise visual-performative capital. As the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, said in his 1989 Nobel Peace Prize speech, "Responsibility does not only lie with the leaders of our countries or with those who have been appointed or elected to do a particular job. It lies with each one of us individually" (Stoneham, 2011, p.105).

Extending the Concept of Cognitive Linguistics

Evolving out of cognitive linguistics, I suggest that there exists a *performative linguistics*. This term offers a new way to conceptualize the symbolic systems by which we communicate, and at the same time, it names the aspect that goes overlooked by cognitive linguistics. It is in the enacting, embodying, and performing that (just like language) is a schematic framework by which we know and make sense of things. Reality can be (and is) constituted by performative linguistics, which in its own right is a way of knowing or engaging with the world; a *performative cognition*. Our actions are not only an outcome of our thoughts and feelings but can also be the means through which we come to understand and feel – the building blocks of how we structure reality. To some

extent, there is a *lingua franca* of performative actions that convey compassion (Silove & Zwi, 2005; Ekman & Friesen, 1971). *Lingua franca* is defined by Meriam Webster's dictionary as the language that makes communication possible between people who do not share a native language; a third language that is distinct from both native languages ("Lingua franca," 2019). *Lingua franca* languages were developed for diplomatic reasons, cultural, religious, and administrative convenience; a global or universal language where knowledge could be exchanged across cultures. The English language itself was developed as a *lingua franca* between cultures and is an amalgamation of over 50 different languages – it was the method by which differing cultures could (and do) communicate (Jandt, 2016, p. 143). Cultivation Theory suggests that violence is the universally understood language that can be understood, sold, and disbursed on a grand scale (Griffin et al., 2019, pp. 350-358), but I would suggest so too is compassion. Showing concern for others transcends barriers (Silove & Zwi, 2005). How might we capitalize on that, and use it for the greater good? If we are in the age of the visual, then scholars, practitioners, humanists, and humans should be harnessing this power of compassion to spread a new *lingua franca*.

Privileging of display. After a few different interview participants brought up the show *13 Reasons Why,* explaining that they felt it is an accurate portrayal of high school and today's youth in America, I decided to research the television show. It turns out, according to a study published by *JAMA Internal Medicine,* just 19 days after the show first aired, there was a 26% rise in internet searches for "How to commit suicide" and the study claimed the television show "has both increased suicide awareness while

unintentionally increasing suicidal ideation" (Todd, 2018). In fact, suicide rates spiked by 29% in the month of April 2017, the month following the show's debut (Brookshire, 2019). Researchers found a spike in the previous month as well, when trailers for the show first started airing. Overall, they calculated that there was 195 more suicides than usual during the first few months the show aired (Brookshire, 2019; Bridge, Greenhouse, Ruch, Stevens, Ackerman, Sheftall, Horowitz, Kelleher, & Campo, 2019).

One particular article reviews the multitude of concerns expressed by seven mental health professionals who have analyzed the show. They describe one focus of the show which displays students constantly living online and therefore constantly comparing themselves to others. The article suggests that the problem resides in the teens grappling with the disconnect between the polished lives they observe and try to portray through their online personas, and the messiness of real life (Todd, 2018). Dr. Victor Schwartz, chief medical officer at a New York-based teen suicide prevention organization called JED Foundation, suggests that "one of the most empirically well-established and most effective means of suicide prevention is means prevention, keeping the means of self-harm out of people's hands," and having open access to phones and the internet is similar to providing teens with the means to commit suicide (Chuck, 2017).

If students were engaging with one another in person, they may be more likely to see the world as it is, rather than through the lens of perfection (or something to be fearful of) that is portrayed through social media, film, and television. Not engaging with others in an embodied way seems to create a tendency to be less and less likely to want to do so. It also seems to coincide with a fear of others, or a distrustful perspective of others. This

can be observed during the process of Civil Dialogue, as well as in my interviews with students. Some individuals will say something as if providing a warning that they have a *lot* of strong opinions, and there's going to be an onslaught of negative information to come, yet they do not seem to know why they feel a particular way. When asked to explain more, they can't quite articulate why they had to give such a drastic warning of their imminent onslaught of critical information. One interview participant seemed at a loss for words when I asked him to share his thoughts after initially taking a strong stance, and it took him a long time to get around to his ultimate point, which was not that intense in the end. Another interview participant described taking extreme offense (her words were that she found the film "completely offensive"), and yet when I invited her to explain what she meant, she really only meant the one aspect that live footage was not incorporated into the film.

While this was not an overtly pervasive theme, it was a pattern that still stood out as noteworthy throughout the interviews and dialogue events. It's as if some individuals have a tendency to speak in terms of harsh opinions, with reflex-like behaviors of displaying extreme or contrarian perspectives (such as immediately answering "No, the film didn't impact my perceptions," even when they ultimately meant "Yes"), yet they lack experience speaking about their feelings or opinions. It suggests a cultural tone that privileges the spectacle or *display* – based in reactions – rather than *engagement*. Throughout the process of interviewing, facilitating, and observing the dialogues, this trend in behavior highlighted the fact that many of these individuals don't seem to have experience being *asked* to articulate their positions, or put words to their feelings in order

to have a productive conversation. The show/display/spectacle aspects of interaction seem to reign over civil communication. The *hyperreality* is the currency people are using to communicate, a level outside of reality with no basis in the *real* to back it up, as Jean Baudrillard would suggest (Rivkin & Ryan, 1981, pp. 365-377).

A study out of UCLA suggests that putting your feelings into words shifts your brain activity away from the feeling side (amygdala) to the thinking side (neocortex), which results in a measurable impact that actually reduces those feelings and brain activity in that portion of the brain (Lieberman, Eisenberger, Crockett, Tom, Pfeifer, & Way, 2007). We are living in a world of reacting rather than engaging. Feeling rather than thinking or speaking. Social media seems to bring that out in people, especially when individuals observe and emulate the behavior of those with high visual capital, as we've witnessed during this current presidential administration. The idea of mindfulness is to become more aware of your own thoughts and responses in the moment, gaining knowledge and insight from simply observing the world around you (through your senses, feelings, natural instincts, and embodied *engagement* with the world). It means less mind-wandering, and more intentional tuning-in (Brewer, Worhunsky, Gray, Tang, Weber, & Kober, 2011). Mediated forms of communication such as social media, and to a larger extent film and television, have the capacity to numb our ability to tune in to others. Holding one's personal screen and tuning into social media, or putting in the earbuds to listen to music or a podcast as one moves throughout the world is almost like a defense mechanism or safety blanket – it has a disembodying effect that works to separate one's self from a level of reality, which weakens the social fabric and even our

own value or self-worth as individuals. It inhibits the elements of mindfulness – being mentally, emotionally, and physically present, aware, and open.

The visual and the "real." The participant's response that the film should have included the "real-life" video footage highlighted an expectation that everything is always captured in video form. This draws attention to the widespread expectation that there is a visual record of everything, even things that are privately happening behind closed doors. Visual communication is so entrenched in our lives, particularly in the American millennial population who were the primary respondents in this study, that there is a tendency to assume that surveillance is omnipresent, and there is always photographic evidence of events. It also draws attention to the fact that people seem to have the need to witness (or be an audience to) events as they unfold, and anything that is perceived as lesser than official visual documentation, even a re-enactment of true events accompanied with actual audio recordings, (let alone a written description in someone's autobiography or a researched journal article), is therefore not real or valuable. Reality television shows, for example, often contain jostling camera movement as camera operators follow contestants around, which gives the illusion that it is raw, unedited, unscripted footage – all the while creating an illusion of reality. Yet contestants are provoked and asked questions by producers from the other side of the camera, who know that more drama creates more viewership and increased revenues. Reality television shows like *The Apprentice* are portraying a narrative, even in direct contrast to actual events in real life and in doing so, reveal that the visual (especially when packaged as

documentary in nature), is privileged over other methods of communication. The following case expounds upon this power of visual communication even further.

Trained behavior. Before the research, knowledge, and messaging strategy was created, the average person had a narrow selection of behaviors to choose from when they were on fire. Perhaps they ran around wildly, hoping the wind would put it out. Perhaps they would douse themselves in water. Perhaps they would just panic until they ran into a wall or something else made them lose consciousness. Maybe they would be lucky to be standing near someone who knew that they could throw a heavy blanket over the flames, because that person had witnessed such an action at another time. Before it was known in people's consciousness that there is a particular line of action that could help solve the dire life-or-death problem of being on fire, an individual most likely would not use rolling around on the ground as a go-to method of behaving when in this predicament.

In the early 1950's, there was an influx in deaths, particularly in children, because clothing would spontaneously combust and easily catch on fire. Before certain laws were passed which made it a legal requirement to use fire retardant in the manufacturing process of clothing, it was also a desperately needed public good to educate the general household on what to do in case their clothing caught on fire. Who was the go-to person to be the face of a nationwide program to implement fire safety training through the medium of a television commercial? Why, Dick van Dyke of course ("U.S. Fire Administration," 2019). The commercial streamlined the standard protocol into a quick 3-word phrase that would be easy for everyone (especially kids) to memorize and recall:

“Stop, drop, and roll.” The commercial was shown in schools across the country, and also shown on television to the public (“Stop, Drop and Roll,” 2015). Once the fire safety training program was implemented in the early 1970’s, death-by-clothing-fire drastically dropped (“U.S. Fire Administration,” 2019). Contrary to popular belief, all reasoning does not go out the window when faced with a life or death situation. People are able to reason and consciously select a line of action accordingly when given the tools and knowledge to do so – in other words, when there is a particular protocol or “script” to follow. This type of training applies to a variety of behaviors that individuals can call upon during a life and death situation, from martial artists, the military, firemen, and policemen, to conflict negotiators, and emergency responders. These examples illustrate a form of *knowing* or apprehending the world through a lens which reveals different possibilities or options of behavior. Just like the research that suggests behaving in positive ways allows the brain to perceive the world in a positive light – altering the mental synapses, therefore the brain physiology, and subsequently the information the brain is capable of taking in – it is in our *actions* that reality is constructed (Simon-Thomas, 2012). Through our actions, we have the ability to perceive new possibilities of behavioral tracks and can also impact others’ behavior as well.

Performative cognition. In addition to our daily actions constituting the world around us, I propose that the process of Civil Dialogue is a form of *performative cognition* (my novel term)**.** It provides a framework to guide behavior throughout the process of conversing about difficult subjects. Over the course of a full Civil Dialogue which amounts to approximately 45 minutes, when participants are focused on intentional

listening and articulating one's own perspective in a respectful way, something bigger happens. One's adrenaline and awareness increases, not only because of the subject matter and intentionality, but also as an outcome of having an audience. The emphasis on civility and using one's *own* words (participants are advised beforehand to steer away from "catch-phrases" and other catch-all terms that proliferate the media) forces the mind to engage at a deeper, more critical level than people may be accustomed to. The physical positioning of everyone's bodies also serves a two-fold purpose. Being positioned in close proximity and yet across from others who have differing perspectives allows individuals to look into each other's eyes and witness a human being with lived experiences speak from that particular position. It humanizes the communication and puts a specific name and face to that perspective. Simultaneously, the participants are arranged in a half-circle, with every individual within arm's reach of one another, rather than at separate tables facing one another, or at isolated podiums placed far apart. Here, there are no tables. Only chairs. This conveys an invitation to speak openly, and not plan or strategize. Participants can reach across and shake each other's hands. If nothing else, they can see each other's name tags and (through the guidance of the dialogue facilitator) refer to one another by name. The half-circle also gives the impression that these individuals are on one united team – the team that chose to place themselves in the vulnerable position of being audienced or witnessed. This entire process as a whole engages both the mind and body. This layering, synergistic, pluralistic effect is what led to the second theme discussed in the findings – that participants have a transformative experience through this process. The outcome being that they felt tuned-in, present, and

even *surprised* to be engaged in a lively discussion of differing perspectives that could all come together and find points of commonality or agreement. The film compounded this effect by engaging the emotions as well – a full body and mind, or *holistic*, approach to engagement.

Audiencing. One element that contributes to the Civil Dialogue effect is the experience of being audienced. Whether you are a participant, or sitting in the audience, everyone feels a sense of commitment to one another, and to the room as a whole. In an odd way, it disciplines the body in such a way that you are more acutely aware of your comments, your positioning, your facial expressions and tone of voice. The introduction and "ground rules" set the tone for the process, and I have never witnessed a dialogue (out of dozens I've attended over the last six years) that have ever veered away from this respectful tone.

According to John Fiske:

> The definition of 'the audience' depends upon the way it is positioned in the social order: located within the economic system the audience is a market segment to be reached, and, simultaneously a commodity to be traded; located within the socio-ethical system, the audience is a site of acculturation or socialization; and when located in the materiality of everyday life the audience stops being a social category and becomes a process, a constituent element in a way of living. (Fiske, 1992, p. 354)

The Civil Dialogue process, which includes the important element of an audience, who remains engaged yet primarily bears witness to the dialogue, is a site in which this

process of learning, embodying, behaving, and respectfully communicating takes place, and in doing so, constitutes new modes of being.

Visual language. In 1944 there was a landmark study that helped inform subsequent theories of attribution, perception, cognitive linguistics, dialogue, picture theory, and what eventually became known as the narrative paradigm (Allport, 1979; Burke, 1985; Fisher, 1989; Heider & Simmel, 1944; Mitchell, 1995; Wittgenstein, 1953). Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel created a short film about two minutes in length, utilizing stop action photography, in which a large triangle, a small triangle, and a small circle moved around a white space. There was also the outline of a rectangular box that the shapes moved in and out of through one section that seemed to open and close like a door. Heider and Simmel conducted three experiments, showing this film to three different audiences (ranging in size from 34 to 44 students), one time in reverse, and asked people what was happening in the film. The results found that all but three students conveyed the actions of these shapes as people. Two respondents referred to the activities of the shapes as birds. In all cases, participants conveyed what was happening in the form of a narrative, and attributed behavior that was human in characteristic and motivation. Only one respondent described the events in terms of shapes (Heider & Simmel, 1944).

It is this study that highlights people's inclination toward perceiving and understanding things in terms of narrative structure. What it fails to acknowledge is the visual vocabulary and performative language that is bestowing symbolic meaning upon the shapes. Heider and Simmel's study is presented as if these are random shapes, making random movements. Yet, for anyone who has knowledge of visual symbols relating to

art, history, anthropology, or sociology, these shapes and movements have meaning – the triangles represent males, and the circle represents a female. These symbols are most frequently linked to (and still used in) anthropological family lineage charts, which derived from historic uses of geometric shapes being associated with males and rounded organic shapes associated with females – from clothing patterns, to architecture and art (Bouquet, 1996; Schott, 2005; Stearn, 1962). These symbolic references become embedded in our cognitive schema to operate at an unconscious level. Additionally, the size of the large triangle in comparison to the two smaller shapes, combined with its slow, steady movements toward the small shapes, causing the smaller shapes to scurry around in a frenzied, hurried motion at a much faster speed, and results in backing one into a corner, is not devoid of symbolic meaning either. These are not innocently un-imbued shapes that move in equally sporadic ways.

From the shapes themselves to the size, speed, quality of movement, pausing, and positioning, this two-minute film is a treasure trove of culturally symbolic elements that point to a visual-performative language. Yet these elements were overlooked when subsequent theories grew out of this experiment – theories that suggested people *attribute* certain motivations and characteristics to others' behavior (Shaver, 1983), as if behavior was independent from visually symbolic cues, signs, and signifiers. It is this general premise that undergirds *this* study and highlights Antoinette Tuff's performative actions as a unique site to inform our understanding of compassionate behavior and conflict negotiation. Every performative nuance impacted the exchange, moment to moment.

In the final scene of the film I created is a noteworthy juxtaposition of Antoinette's physical positioning, demeanor, and tone contrasted with the body language, voices, movements, and tone of the incoming police officers. This was something that was captured by the real-life audio recording and was also described in detail by Antoinette Tuff in her written account of the events (Tuff & Tresniowski, 2014). For me this was an important moment to include in the film, where it was reenacted in tandem with the real-life audio. Antoinette Tuff describes this moment in her book:

> The men rushed in one or two at a time, and in an instant there were eight or nine or ten armed officers in the room, maybe more. They came in crouching behind their wide shields, in case they were met with gunfire. They pointed their rifles and yelled commands and darted swiftly from one spot to the next. Three officers dropped themselves right on top of Michael, smothering him, one across his torso, another across his legs, the third atop them all, pinning them down. One of them grabbed Michael's hands, which were already behind his back, and handcuffed them there. They did these things with force and speed and purpose. Michael did not resist or say a word. I stayed in my chair behind the desk and tried not to move a muscle. I can't say I felt relief when the SWAT team came crashing in. If anything, I felt more fear. I'd never been around so many drawn and loaded weapons in my life, and it was not a comfortable feeling. (Tuff & Tresniowski, 2014, p. 195)

To analyze these events through a visual performative lens highlights an area of communication, conflict negotiation, and compassion that has not yet been explored. Instead of using a *lingua franca* of compassion, police officers and SWAT teams use a *lingua franca* of violence. Moreover, cultural norms and values draw attention and give praise to individuals who behave in this way and glorify it in popular culture.

For example, the three American friends who in 2018 charged a gunman on a train traveling to Paris from Amsterdam became heroes overnight, particularly the two who were members of the military (Karimi, 2018). They were praised in numerous ceremonies and events, received various accolades, and even had the chance to act in Clint Eastwood's movie about the event. It could be argued that the one with the most visual capital (in the form of physical attractiveness) was offered the most accolades and opportunities, including a spot on *Dancing With the Stars* (Westcott, 2015). This is not only a narrative that leaves out various components, such as the two additional European individuals who helped take down the gunman and incidentally were not associated with the military (Karimi, 2018), but it also exemplifies the cultural tendency to lionize those who behave in the expected action-oriented, military-like, quick precision behavioral standards of exceptionalism. While there is certainly value in possessing this ability, and there are contexts which necessitate this form of behavior, it highlights the significant cultural discrepancy in the *lack* of attention given to narratives that do not fall in line with this master-narrative of self-reliance, speed, action, individualism, and might.

Take for example stories such as that of Uli Derickson, the female flight attendant who played a crucial role in talking down a pair of gunmen who hijacked the plane she

was on in 1985 (Bayot, 2005). It is said that she prevented various beatings of passengers by placing her body in front of others as a shield, and also prevented passengers from getting shot by spending hours singing, recounting personal experiences and memories, and finding points of commonality with the hijackers to soothe their emotions. She negotiated the release of several individuals during the 48-hour period she was held hostage (Dominus, 2005). While she did receive an award for bravery and honor, it is stories like these that have become lost in the cultural fabric of other narratives which overshadow these.

Upon reading Antoinette Tuff's book recounting the events of the day Michael Hill came to her school to conduct a school shooting, it becomes apparent why and how she was able to behave in the way that she did (Tuff & Tresniowski, 2014). Her daily mantras and practices of intentionally internalizing positive and compassionate behavior toward others contributed to a schematic framework that allowed her to draw upon these types of behaviors in a moment of crisis. Reading, reciting, and repeating biblical verses to herself on a daily basis, particularly the Proverbs verse about the power of life and death in the tongue, gave her the option of an alternative approach at that critical moment. She had a course of action already within her tacit schema of behaviors from which to choose. Antoinette talks about the moment when Michael Hill spoke to her, and how she was surprised by her own voice, as if having an out of body experience, when she automatically responded to him. She wrote: "So why, if I was so terrified, was I able to speak so calmly? …I did not have to pray to have this understanding – it was there" (p. 38). In the moment of action, it no longer required a conscious praying or mantra, the

behavior was automatic. The understanding, acceptance, and calm came from within, because it had become a habit conditioned through daily training.

Conversely, police officers are trained to disarm and act fast. De-mobilize. Take down ("Police Use of Force," 2019; Kaste, 2016). Their courses of action are drawn out like plans to choose from. Peter Kraska, professor at Eastern Kentucky University specializing in police militarization, suggests, "One of the cultural changes that has gone along with what we call the militarization of policing is a type of training that specifically comes from military-trained people that emphasizes that the police need to have a warrior mindset" (Kaste, 2016). Kraska claims that the videos used for training police officers show footage from dashcams of suspects ambushing police officers, often with fatal results, which causes officers to be paranoid. Consequently, a kind of 'script' of behavior exists which perpetuates modes of behaving in swift, action-oriented, results-driven ways. Draw weapon, intimidate, coerce, tackle. Dis-empower.

Compassion, on the other hand, is about *giving* power; Allowing the other person to be heard, witnessed, and acknowledged. For example, once Antoinette Tuff told Michael Hill that no one would hate him, and everything would be okay because he hadn't yet hurt anybody, she then said the words "I love you" to Michael. This is when he asked her, "Do you remember me? My name is Michael Hill." He explained that he had once visited the school back when he was in high school band (Tuff & Tresniowski, 2014, pp. 148-151). In this moment, it was as if he wanted his existence to be acknowledged. Today's culture is full of people (particularly disenfranchised males) who do not feel listened to, who feel stripped of (or devoid of) power, agency, or efficacy

(Greene, 2015; Howe, 2019). How might we start inserting that back into our daily interactions and communicative moments with others? How might we start *giving* power to others? This study, along with other research on compassion, suggests we do that through giving attention, listening, and acknowledging. Film offers us the vehicle for establishing different (additional) narrative story lines to consider as options for behavior.

Performative linguistics. The various interview respondents and dialogue participants who responded with action-oriented language focusing on time, efficiency, taking action, or fleeing from the situation highlights a cultural master narrative which structures much of our thought processes. It follows then that organizing information into this schema would yield the limited results of responding in only one of two ways: fight or flight. However, as research suggests, narratives, dialogue, and engagement offer opportunities to reconstruct the schematic structures which guide our thought processes.

Compassionate behavior can become an option to choose from, to put into action a behavioral script, like "Stop, Drop, and Roll" or the "Just Say No" drug campaign. It becomes an option to choose in the moment when the time comes, because it's been catalogued into your psychological schema or database – a behavioral skill set that, with increased use and practice, becomes more automatic and available to employ, like martial arts self-defense skills.

Extending the Concept of Emotional Capital

Cognitive scientist Paul Thagard introduced the concept of *emotional capital,* which he defines as "the abilities of people to use emotions effectively for many purposes" (Thagard, 2015a). This refers to "the emotional resources that enable people to

be successful in their economic and personal lives," according to Thagard. It includes self-esteem, emotional energy, resilience, optimism, agreeableness, and self-regulation. All of these factors correlate to successfully behaving in compassionate ways. Self-regulation, for example, is "the ability to control undesirable behaviors." This is a worthy and desirable trait to possess, especially when it concerns communicating with others in productive or compassionate ways. However, I propose that behavior in fact constitutes and perpetuates emotion. Research on Alba emoting, for example, suggests that individual's facial expressions, posture, and breathing all impact one's emotional state (Baker, 2008; Bloch, 2017; Tomkins, 1987). As an actress who has practiced Alba technique, I can fully testify that this is indeed the case. Breathing a certain way while engaging specific facial combinations in fact *triggers* emotions, memories, and feelings. This can be as simple as a smile triggering positive emotions and increased endorphins being released into the bloodstream, to specific breathing patterns causing full on transcendent mental states, a perspective with roots tracing back thousands of years to yoga and meditation (Bloch, 2017). Much research also links physical movement to triggering and un-triggering emotional trauma (Kabir, 2013).

Deborah Way and Sarah Tracy (2012) offer a concept that extends Miller's (2007) suggestion that behavior which can be perceived as compassionate by a receiver constitutes compassionate communication. Way and Tracy (2012) propose *(re)acting* as a concept which extends this conceptualization of compassion by suggesting that compassionate behavior may in fact precede emotion or empathy and be a proactive response to someone else in pain (p. 307). (Re)acting is at the core of a three-part process

that includes recognizing and relating with others to communicate compassion – a concept illustrated by the Compassionate Heart model (p. 308). While this model and the recommended implications focus on organizational training, suggesting the goal is to feel empathy or connection with others, and ultimately then potentially more satisfaction in one's job as a result (especially as it concerns hospice workers and their patients), the chief concern of my study is the visual performative impact on emotional capital. Rather than empathy being an end-goal, it is instead a potential positive outcome of behaving compassionately. For this reason, I would suggest the concept of emotional capital be expanded to be considered *emotional-behavioral capital*. Behavior as an element which informs emotion, instead of vice versa.

Perhaps a secondary outcome offered by engaging with the world in a positive emotional state is the visual (and hence behavioral) impact on others. A smile begets a smile. An act of kindness begets another act of kindness. Research shows that doing a good deed for someone causes that person to do a good deed for someone else, in other words it causes them to "pay it forward" (Emmons, 2007). One day last year I was in a drive-thru line at my neighborhood Starbucks, and the person in front of me paid for my order. This caused me to pay for the person behind me. Later that evening, I heard on the local radio that the Starbucks phenomenon lasted for 6 solid hours of uninterrupted paying it forward that day. This in fact draws attention to the notion that people are probably more generous than we might think – referring back to the interview participants who don't believe people would be willing to take part in a dialogue – if only we did more of the type of behavior we wanted to see in others. Or as Dr. Jamil Zaki,

professor of psychology at Stanford, discovered – people experience a "warm glow" after doing something kind for others, activating pleasure circuits in the brain, which actually impacts the data one gathers from the world or how someone perceives other people's actions (Simon-Thomas, 2012). This is *emotional-behavioral capital*. Our behavior can trigger emotions in ourselves, and subsequently trigger behaviors and emotions in others, in a reciprocal process.

As it stands, increased media consumption tends to lead to a fearful outlook of others (Gerbner et al., 1978), and therefore less inclination to engage in face-to-face dialogue. In Figure 4, below, a plus sign (+) indicates that both variables are positively correlated and increase or decrease together. A minus sign (–) indicates variables are negatively correlated, so as one variable increases, the other decreases (Griffin et al., p. 110). The diagram I created below suggests that emotional capital increases with embodied interactions and dialogue with others. Emotional capital decreases with extended use of technology and media consumption, which in turn also isolates people from face-to-face communication. With our current media coverage and pop culture content, there is a proliferation of negative or damaging messages which often reflect violence, discrimination, and exclusion, which is mirrored in the millennial generation and much of the adult population (Cacioppo, 2009; Howe, 2019). What if compassionate messages increased in the media on a large scale to change the relationship between emotional capital and technology use to a positive correlation? Moreover, how might we use technology and media programs to in fact *foster* more face-to-face dialogue and interaction? What if we turned these negatives into positive correlations?

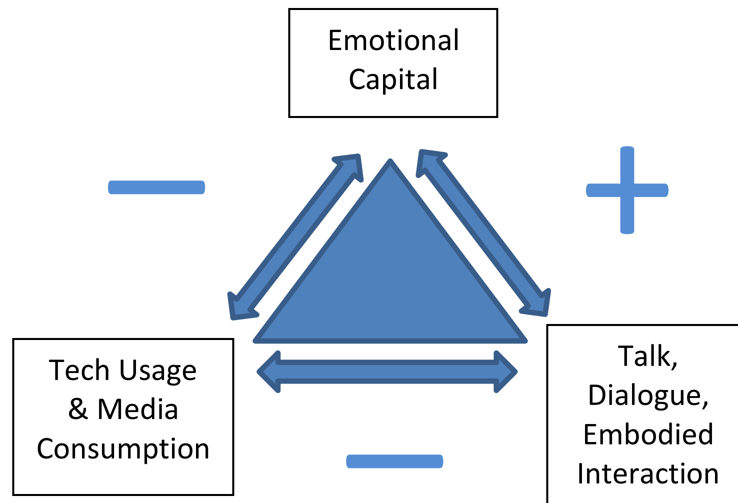

Figure 4. Communication cycle of emotional capital.

Extending and Responding to Affect Theory

In a visual culture, it is important to take note of the phenomenon that what is shown visually is what is privileged, valued, circulated and reenacted in the culture. According to Cultivation Theory, "Representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 182). That is what we have done with compassion – it has been symbolically annihilated from popular culture and our media, and it is time to bring it back on a grand scale. The following model proposes that the individual is constantly interacting with the outside world at multiple levels – interpersonally and at a societal level – and is not only a product of these elements but also a contributor to the discourses and communication at all three of these levels. An individual's emotional capital therefore is influenced by and influences others in a reciprocal effect that goes back and forth in both directions. This model is intentionally in the shape of an eye, to convey that this transfusion and

transmission of behavior largely happens occularcentrically. The more we treat others with respect and compassion, the more likely they will behave in a similar way, producing individuals who have high levels of emotional capital, who will enact and embody positive behavior, perpetuating others to behave in a similar way, and reinforcing others in a reciprocal cycle. Emotional Capital (individual) → Behavioral Mimicry (interpersonal) → Promulgation of Behavior (societal), in a cycle of mutual reinforcement (See Figure 5).

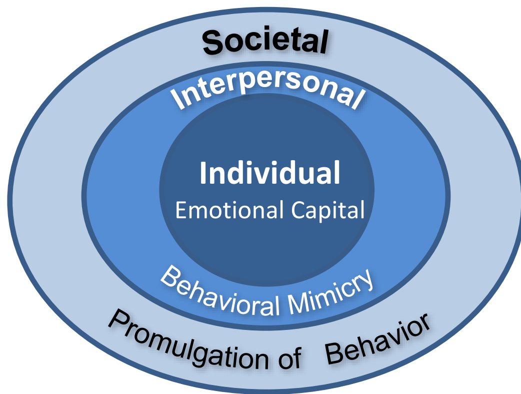

Figure 5. Behavioral cycle of emotional capital.

The Tuff-Hill Phenomenon

The grounded theoretical approach led me to a co-cultural and narrative reading of this event I am calling the Tuff-Hill Phenomenon. The limited media coverage and cultural response to Antoinette Tuff's type of heroism was portrayed as a pursuit undertaken in solitary singularity – lone individual as hero – echoing the familiar trope of a hero's journey embedded in the narrative architecture of hundreds of years of storytelling (Svoboda, 2013).

While it is common to hear people talking about how we are experiencing a cultural shift, where we see women starring in superhero movies, or movies like *What Men Want, Oceans Eight,* or *Ghosbusters* in which a remake or re-packaging of an original movie now features female actresses in the lead role, the argument can be made that the female lead in the story is only the lead because they happen to be behaving like males. The stories themselves aren't necessarily changing, or being written for a female lead, but the character happens to be cast as a female body. The appeal of such a story seems to be marketed to audiences as a cultural *irony* that a female is filling a male's "natural" role. Yet it's still operating within the structural tropes of masculine power. The story fulfills its own (studio's) interests by teaching/training/creating/reinforcing the audiences that consume it. What if we train audiences in a new way, with new cultural tropes?

A more feminized reading of heroism could offer an alternative trope, in which it is constituted by a co-dependent, dialogic give-and-take performance, with sequential actions taken, and outcomes co-created moment to moment, achieved through collaboration and communication. Just like an improvisational scene between two actors; An actor must be open and receptive to how one's scene partner is behaving, moment to moment, even if they've rehearsed the scene a million times before. If one actor has a different disposition that day, or a different motivation behind their words, it plays out in a completely different way and makes for a different scene as a whole. If one day Actor A conveys the script's lines in a loving way, Actor B responds receptively. The next day could be the exact same scene, but Actor A delivers the lines in an aggressive and heated

tone, then Actor B responds in a more defensive tone with hurt or aggression. There is something to be learned from actors' emotional availability, adaptable responsiveness, and their ability to truly tune-in to the person they are interacting with.

Co-culturalism and Narrative Tropes

Culturally, Americans are conditioning themselves to focus on individualism so much that we are becoming isolated silos, walking around campuses with headphones in our ears, or staring at our cell phones as we move through our day, in a bubble of solitary one-way entertainment and mediated/detached/de-humanizing communication. To reframe our view of Antoinette Tuff not as stand-alone hero, but as a tuned-in and present force that works in *tandem* with Michael Hill offers a new form of archetype. Open, receptive, supportive, and responsive. The ultimate scene partner. Could we call this compassionate? Sure. Maternal? Perhaps. Humane? Definitely. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *humane* as "having or showing compassion; intending to have a civilizing effect on people" ("Humane," 2019). The outcome of treating someone in a humane manner and performing compassionate behavior had an overall civilizing effect that urged Michael Hill to treat Antoinette with reciprocal respect – like when she suggested he drink some water, he offered her the opportunity to use the restroom (Tuff & Tresniowski, p. 99) – a performative transaction that resulted in supporting and helping each other, strengthening a bond, and then ultimately helping the system as a whole when their connection resulted in Michael allowing Antoinette to convince him to put down his weapons. In this case, Antoinette is one strand in a net that happens to intersect with another strand (Michael Hill) to then form a knot of support that works together to create

and support a larger system or structure (See Figure 6). The whole being greater than the sum of its parts. A synergistic effect. To offer a more complex (feminized) reading of heroism opens a space for a more acceptable usage of what is traditionally coded as "feminine" behavior (and therefore deemed weaker, less-productive, emotion-based, or even something females are "naturally" predisposed to). From a Communication perspective, co-cultural theory offers a helpful framework here (Orbe, 1996; Kramarae, 1991).

Figure 6. A net as synergistic effect.

Several participants during the Civil Dialogue process suggested that compassionate behavior comes naturally to women and that it is not the purview of men. One student even explained and justified this interaction by saying confidently, "Office ladies are trained to be compassionate" (*in vivo* code from dialogue fieldnotes). As the offspring of a life-long "office lady," I can definitively say that no such training exists. These statements however were prompted by the provocative statement of the film itself, in which Antoinette's behavior was reflected back as the Mother archetype. However, it was surprising how much it came out in the group dialogues that men are not inclined toward such behavior, and it is the natural domain of women.

Toril Moi, professor of English, Philosophy, and Theatre Studies at Duke University, suggests that Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 book *The Second Sex* is something feminist scholars should return to because it complicates the idea of women away from just the sex/gender binary, which is the main focus of contemporary feminist theory.

Instead, Beauvoir, like Moi, suggests female behavior is a *response to* culture as much as it is *confined by* the social exigencies that give it shape: "Beauvoir believes that the fact of being born with a female body starts a process which will have specific, yet unforeseeable consequences. Each woman will make something out of what the world makes out of her" (Moi, 2001, p. 82). If women have only been allowed to behave in certain ways, or exercise agency via certain methods, then it follows that such behavior may then be considered female behavior. It seems as if, in these Civil Dialogue conversations, the onus of compassionate behavior falls on the shoulders of women. Men *cannot*, and therefore *should not*, be expected to behave in that way. An unforeseeable consequence of being a woman.

Expanding from this feminist perspective, the field of communication offers co-cultural theory. Mark Orbe, a professor of communication at Western Michigan University described co-cultures as the non-dominant groups in a culture, who establish alternative modes of communicating (Orbe, 1996). He offers nine co-cultural orientations, with three preferred outcomes: separation, accommodation, and assimilation (Orbe, 1998). From a co-cultural perspective, women's communication style has been both a result of the confines of the roles that they are forced into, but also a way to *accommodate* and simultaneously set themselves *apart from* the dominant modes of communicating. It is this 'departing-from' element which my film undertakes, and what this study ultimately suggests. How might we utilize communication in a way that is *different* from the prevailing standard of communicating, conflict negotiating, or even daily moving about through our world? Because the standard norm of behavior is clearly

not working. Feminist theorists have written about the problematic aspects in everyday life (Butler, 1988; Moi, 2001; Smith, 1987), but what if everyday life is also the solution?

This theoretical conceptualization derives from similar lines of thinking across a variety of areas, including Cissna and Anderson's (2002) four principles of public dialogue, which address the constitutive nature of dialogue and the need for creating dialogic spaces. Mark Orbe (2004) describes dialogue as "active and processual" (p. 202). Benjamin Broome (1991) offers a relational approach to empathy, which "de-emphasizes similarity, concentrating instead on the development of a 'third-culture' between the communicators" (p. 235). From a relational perspective, "understanding is not viewed as a 'product,' but as a 'tensional event' occurring between the communicators" (p. 240). It implies a co-creation of meaning, as Tracy and Huffman's (2016) research highlights about the scenario between Antoinette Tuff and Michael Hill, and a compassionate exchange based in action (Way & Tracy, 2012).

In questioning and re-examining the dominant modes of communicating, it may be helpful to reframe the non-dominant modes of communicating into a language that is more easily consumable by the masses (Singhal et al., 2004). To reframe Antoinette's behavior as *heroic*, which is what my film suggested – an intentional shift away from Tracy and Huffman's article about Antoinette's compassionate, positive face-enhancing, and deferential behavior – expands our conceptualization of the narrative tropes of "heroism." This may in fact offer a broader understanding (and therefore the subsequent promulgation, teaching, and learning of) compassion and empathy. A shift from *lone*

hero, as portrayed in the media and cultural discourses, to "hero" as *synergistic communicator*. A shift from selfless caregiver to an expectation of humane behavior.

In addition to co-cultural theory, narrative theory offers additional insight here. To return to the acting example, if Actor A surprised Actor B by delivering their lines in an aggressive tone after they had been rehearsing it in a *loving* tone, Actor B cannot respond back in a loving tone as in previous rehearsals, because it would be inconsistent and do a disservice to the scene and to the show as a whole. A requisite rule in acting is to listen, adapt, and *engage* with one another in a way that maintains the structural coherence of the scene, which preserves/undergirds/reinforces the integrity of the show as a whole. One person (or strand) acknowledging, engaging, and interacting with another person (or strand) whose interactions mingle and lock together, contributing to the narrative stitching of a scene, and reinforcing the entire net of the larger story. Or, as Walter Fisher would suggest, providing narrative *fidelity* and *coherence* (Fisher, 1989a; Fisher, 1989b). *Coherence* indicates the character's behavior as being consistent with his/her own individual experiences or expressions, and *fidelity* indicates the character's behavior as consistent within the contextual elements of the scene/story or generally accepted reality (Fisher, 1989a; Griffin et al., 2019, pp. 301-302).

Audiences, actors, and participants expect a character that behaves in a manner consistent with the surrounding contextual elements of the scene. A human outcome that fulfills a human expectation. If Actor A says something, and Actor B responds with a line from a different script, or in fact doesn't respond at all, the narrative fidelity is dismantled. There is a *disengaging* from that moment and that co-creation of meaning. A

rupture in the narrative fabric. The narrative paradigm suggests that real life interactions play out, carry meaning, and are understood in terms of narrative form as well. If someone comes to a school carrying guns and ready to kill people because they have faced years of being ignored or feel they have been treated poorly, the narrative rationality would suggest that someone listens to him and responds in kind. Acknowledging, "I hear you."

Instead, what is the script we see so often play out when someone is enacting behavior that is a cry for help? Perhaps people freeze, cower or run. Perhaps others, like law enforcement, go on the offense and take them down – fight or flight (Cannon, 2009). What amounts to a disruption in the narrative structure; a disengagement from the interactive, dialogic, give-and-take process. It becomes one-way communication. Script theory suggests that people's behavior often follows patterns, like scripts (Tomkins, 1987). Silvan Tomkins established this theory, which proceeded from his previous work on affect theory (Tomkins, 1978) which measured people's behavior as a response to an emotional stimulus. Many people I interviewed and observed saw "fight" or "flight" as the only two options to choose from, which is not surprising when this is a prevalent refrain in our culture – the only script we are given. The fight or flight concept is taught/reinforced everywhere from biology and communication classes to mainstream media and cartoons (Goldstein, 2009; Cannon, 2009). When in reality, these are animal instincts we are referring to, not the evolved human brain which is capable of much more. This line of action is not supporting the narrative fidelity of this particular interaction or "scene," nor the betterment of the culture as a whole. Every time we disregard someone

– for example someone holds a door open for us, and because we are too distracted with our phones, we walk through it without acknowledging them (this very thing happened to Michael Hill as he entered the school that day) – we are creating a disruption in the script; a rip in the fabric of the narrative; a hole in the net. A moment when what *could have been* a connection became a *missed* connection. In doing this, we contribute to the problem – the build-up of frustrations, of unacknowledged behaviors, of missed lines in a script – and consequently a growing population of the unheard. Those that "slip through" the holes and are unsupported by the net. An actor speaking into a void or missing a scene partner; What amounts to a cultural infidelity.

For critical theorists, a good theory should foster change and social action. Kenneth Gergen (1982) suggests that a strong theory should have "the capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions of the culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is 'taken for granted,' and thereby to generate fresh alternatives for social action" (p. 109). Johnny Saldaña (2013) suggests that "a social science theory has three main characteristics, as it is traditionally conceived: it predicts and controls action through an if-then logic; explains how and/or why something happens by stating its cause(s); and provides insights and guidance for improving social life" (p. 250). Saldaña also suggests that the theory is capable of being stated in a single sentence. The theory constructed from this study is called *the Tuff-Hill Phenomenon, which suggests that positive and compassionate visual performative behavior contributes to cultural narratives, behavioral scripts, and performative cognition that enhances emotional capital*.

Summary

To review, this chapter extends concepts such as *emotional capital* to include an emotional-behavioral connection which influences and is influenced by others' behavior. It is constituted by a *performative cognition,* a novel term which explains the phenomenon of how individuals make sense of the world and subconsciously organize information into a cognitive schema by way of enacting behavior. *Visual capital* is my novel term which describes the persuasive influence every individual has upon one another within the fabric of a culture, through both mediated and embodied modes of visual communication. Certain individuals have higher visual capital, or more currency, influence, and power depending on their status and visual exposure. Finally, the *Tuff-Hill Phenomenon* is a novel theory that suggests exercising compassionate behavior enhances emotional capital in individuals, influences behavioral scripts and thereby impacts the culture as a whole. These scholarly offerings derive out of the data corpus, with one of the most salient themes encapsulated by the following interview response. When asked what she thought of the film and of Antoinette's behavior, Jacqueline responded:

> I never looked at it from that perspective before… It gives us other options in terms of what to do. We're not really ever presented with options of what to do, other than like a lockdown, where you just sit there. So, this is good, to have another option.

Individuals are the vehicles of power.

– Michele Foucault, Power/Knowledge

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Working from a Grounded Theory approach, findings led to an analysis informed by co-cultural, narrative, and script theories. Performing as a responsive scene partner does not have to equate to "feeling sorry for" or feeling empathy for every human you come into contact with. What it means is being a responsive human. Being present in the moment. Every moment. To acknowledge that all day every day we are engaged on the world stage, as Shakespeare has said, and we are playing parts in a larger story. As individuals, whether in real life, or on social media, we carry *visual capital*. A currency by which we exercise power, and it is a power that weighs heavily on others whether we know it or not. Everyday life is full of performative moments (Butler, 1988; Smith, 1987) which have implications for carrying the story forward in a certain direction. We can either choose to connect with our scene partners, and contribute to a more supportive net overall, or we can continue to miss lines, miss connections, and miss opportunities to reinforce that net. Moreover, performing the actions actually contributes to genuinely feeling the emotions (Baker, 2008; Bloch, 2017; Simon-Thomas, 2019; Tomkins, 1987), which further reinforces the net – contributing to ongoing collaborations of compassionate and humane behavior, and providing support for the culture as a whole.

It seems as if my research has come full circle. School shootings may not necessarily be embedded in 9/11 public memory, but there certainly is a growing segment of mass shootings that are a distinct offshoot of the anti-Muslim sentiment ignited by the War on Terror. With a growing global trend of placing intolerant leaders into office, this mass shooting epidemic is an even more pressing matter because it has implications worldwide. Implications that can fuel more wars and more acts of violence. Children of today who were in the New Zealand mosque when their parents were gunned down in front of them may grow up tomorrow to commit acts of violence against those whom they perceive are the source of the problem. Anger, hostility, and fear-mongering have replaced actual human interaction and acceptance of differences. There is a call for help with every act of violence. This is a response to that call. It is an attempt to allow the hundreds of people who have died in mass shootings (49 more just recently in March 2019) to not have done so in vain (Regan & Sidhu, 2019). To have died for *no reason*, with no reaction or change as an outcome, is essentially the same as being completely forgotten and dismissed. It's time to make a change and *engage* in the narrative.

Kevin Barge (2003) talks about creating "new images of possibility" as I discussed earlier in Chapter 2. While Barge is referring to the internal visualizations that are co-imaginings of individuals with shared visions and goals, crystallizing a shared *hope*, (also highlighted in Tracy and Huffman's (2016) discussion of co-creating hope), I suggest that it is also in the tangible physical reality that these images are suggested, shared, and implemented. If mental images, viewed images, and viewed experiences are all processed in the brain the same way, to inform one's perception of reality as discussed

in Chapter 2 (Loftus & Palmer, 1974; Ross, Reid, & Toglia, 1994; Weingardt, Toland, & Loftus, 1994), then what if, in hosting film-dialogue events such as these, it works as a training program to train others to enact these compassionate, civil, and humane behaviors of listening, perspective-taking, engaging, and acknowledging others; creating a new *image* in our collective unconscious, or even in our communal consciousness. An image to emulate, replicate, and draw strength from.

Rather than promoting this type of behavior with vocabulary that has traditionally been coded as feminine, which may trigger biased or unsavory responses through words like "compassion" or "love" or "nurturing," perhaps we re-package it as "humane." It is what we as humans must start doing to show concern for other humans, to improve social life for humanity. In doing it, we begin feeling it, and subsequently encourage its promulgation. This was most evident by the multitude of comments which arose during nearly every dialogue event, when various audience members would suggest that this type of dialogue event "should be taken to schools and trained to everyone" (taken from dialogue field notes). It displayed a shared desire to encourage others to learn, emulate, and promote this type of behavior – even if those individuals may not have necessarily chosen on their own to attend this event originally, but just happened to be sitting in their regular class when it took place – it was in the enacting, taking part, and witnessing that encouraged these types of comments. This illustrates the *visual capital* inherent not only in the film – which is perceived as an authority of sorts, because of its "documentary" nature and dramatic narrative form – but in the actions and behavior of each individual in the room. A two-tiered influence of visual capital. Additionally, as teachers, facilitators,

and public servants, it is important to acknowledge the tremendous visual capital inherent in such a role.

Implementing a New Method

At its core, this study originated at the meta level – I was driven to communicate about how we communicate. One underlying question that grounded my approach was, "How might we implement a new method (harnessing the power of emotional contagion) to start conversations in the community to improve compassionate communication, and thus improve humanity?" How do we get people moved, riled up, or passionately engaged in the perpetuation of their own culture which they simultaneously criticize yet create? They are the object of study and the subject which is enacting the behavior. The problem AND the solution. The "spect-actor" as Augusto Boal would say, the spectator and the actor (1979; 1998). The film-dialogue combination was my response to the question, "How might we get people to *care* about a particular topic?" This question could potentially go even further to inquire, "How can we get people to care enough to actually change their behavior?" The answer can best be incapsulated by the parsimonious acronym C.A.R.E. This method could potentially be used in a multitude of contexts, addressing a variety of topics.

Catalyzing Event. What is the event, topic, or issue that is concerning and in need of our attention? For this project, the event was the day Michael Hill went to an Elementary School, armed and ready to conduct a school shooting, and proceeded to be talked out of it by Antoinette Tuff. This event was the catalyst for researchers Sarah Tracy and Timothy Huffman (2016) to conduct a study about it, for legislators to

potentially respond to it, for the public to have thoughts about it and contribute to the public discourse, and for artists such as myself to create an artifact that could be witnessed, audienced, and engaged with.

Art Spark. This refers to the visual artifact that is produced as a culturally discursive utterance (Baxter, 2004; Baxter & Norwood, 2015; Bakhtin, 1986); an artistic or cultural contribution to the discourse. Artistic creations are responses to, outcomes of, and commentary on social events, circumstances, or issues. It can include images, paintings, mixed media, installations, film, performance, song, or any other type of creative product. I've coined the phrase *art spark* because it is the element I am suggesting be added to the behavioral change model. The visual-visceral spark that lights the fuse of conversation, engagement, passion, emotion, community dialogue, and thus potential shifts in attitudes and behavior. It opens up and creates a space – it prolongs a moment (Pollock, 2013, p.63) that occurred in history and makes it last forever; thereby creating a memorial in a way, eternalizing the event so that it can remain something to be grappled with, acknowledged, spoken about and responded to ad infinitum. Art as the spark which I'm adding to the behavioral development and social change model (Singhal et al., 2004), which will be discussed further later in the chapter. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Paul Zak (2015), a neuroeconomist from Claremont Graduate University, suggests that the more emotionally engaged viewers are, the more their brain produces oxytocin, which opens them up to *feeling* more, identifying with the characters more, and empathizing more. Artists not only engage our emotions but expand our imagination about what's possible.

Respond (& Relate). Art is produced *as* a reaction, and *for* a reaction. It is through our witnessing, audiencing, and reactions that we have the potential to relate to others. If we are not urged to respond to something, then we can move robotically through an apathetic existence. Similar to the format of Civil Dialogue, the role of art is a "provocative statement" which triggers a response of some kind (Genette, Olson, & Linde, 2018). This is how we are able to get people to participate in expressing their attitudes, reactions, and responses. It is the way we hear from different perspectives and begin to have a give-and-take exchange of ideas. It is this liminal space that deserves our attention and is the area of my research. Cultural utterances such as artistic creations, and people's subsequent reactions to them, are one source of emotional contagion. Consider the visual cultural climate we see in the U.S. with violent video games, violence in films, narratives of power, dominance, and heroism exhibited by several different movie franchises and television shows, and how these seem to instill or perpetuate modes of behavior that echo those themes – power, dominance, aggression, physical superiority exercised through acts of violence. What do we see then play out in our culture? Young men trying to assert their power and control by utilizing the visual-behavioral language they've been given – weaponry, aggression, and violence (Katz, 2014; Kilbourne, 2016; Conley & Ramsey, 2011). Some might say that the aggressive behavior is contagious, as one of my respondents, Alex, noted:

> I was just thinking how that movie affected me, to be more compassionate, and I just started watching "House of Cards" – it's the opposite end of the spectrum,

> where it's more ruthless and cold, and it's very good and convincing. So I could be more like that, if I let it influence me. I could see how it influences people.

Maria offered similar examples that other interview participants suggested, stating:

> I was hooked on House of Cards too and can see how shows like that definitely influence a lot of people's actions these days.

An important consideration is to acknowledge that even fictional characters in television and film have social influence, gain responses, recognition, scorn, or admiration from audiences. In other words, even fictional figures have visual capital. The letter we received from our son's school, warning parents to not let their children watch *13 Reasons Why* was a strong example of this power that television shows and fictional characters have on real individuals. There was a measurable impact of that television show on teens' behavior. In recent months, I attended a speaking event in which the keynote speaker, a Rhodes scholar, said that she had to "channel Olivia Pope," a character from the television show *Scandal*, as she was being interviewed to be a Rhodes scholar so she could sound authoritative and knowledgeable. Artistic and visual creations have the power to spawn new emotional reactions, which can then become contagious and gain traction.

According to several interview participants, they have been influenced by fictional television shows in both positive and negative ways. Maria expands upon this point a bit more:

> I was hooked on a Netflix series for a very long time – Flashpoint … psychologically very similar to your film, and it definitely influenced me. So it's kinda cool to get more education on that so if you ever are in a situation like that, down the road, you know how you can help. It really gets you thinking about people's psychological reasoning behind things.

Many interview participants offered different examples of being influenced by fictional television shows. This highlights the tremendous power of such a medium. For example, Mark, who hails from Canada explains:

> My favorite TV show is Dr. Who, and how he approaches everything in that non-conflict way, and that's definitely how I would approach things. I watch this show and always think about how I like the way he would talk compared to everyone else. That's how I like to approach things.

Engage. The final stage of the communication process that is catalyzed by the initial event. It is the conversations we have with others, the responses we have to not only the event itself, but to the cultural utterances that have arisen as a response to the

event. It is our contributions to the cultural discourse, and the area where we have the potential to experience the most growth, exchange, and understanding. Research suggests that organizing information into narrative form is healing and helps one process the event more fully so that they may start working through something (Pennebaker, 1999). Visual Communication scholar Rick Williams suggests, "Visual cognition operates on preconscious levels to process visual information into knowledge that motivates behavior before the conscious processes of the neocortex receive or understand the information" (Williams, 2006, p. 35).

I posit that it is this notion of combining the visual stimulus with the physical engagement of the dialogue which activates the whole embodied self, and in doing so we are activating the whole brain – the parts that are stimulated when we use our physical body, the parts that are stimulated when we are engaged emotionally, the parts when we engage critical thinking, when we engage socially, and when we engage sensorially. In other words, when we are at our maximum "tuned-in" state. It is in the processing, enacting, and talking things out with one another when we shift from the reactionary (back of the brain) thinking to the frontal lobe thinking where abstract reasoning plays out, and where the potential for empathy becomes a possibility (Simon-Thomas, 2012). The out-of-body, or in-someone-else's-shoes thinking (Thagard, 2015; Rogers, 1980); The mindfulness thinking (Brewer, Worhunsky, Gray, Tang, Weber, & Kober, 2011; Svoboda, 2013). In this way, art is not only the catalyst for dialogue, but also the means of processing information in a meaningful way, so that people shift to more mindful, compassionate *capabilities* of response; A new option.

Scholarly Offerings. In 1991, UNICEF worked with various governments and NGOs, the BBC World Service, along with creatives from a number of Southeast Asian countries to develop an entertainment education (E-E) program "to address discrimination against girls and to promote their education, health, and development" (McKee, Aghi, Carnegie, and Shahzadi, 2004, p. 334). The outcome was a cartoon character named Meena, and the communication program consisted of an animated video series, posters, comic books, discussion guides, and a radio series. Through long-term research, testing, and collaboration with the host cultures, the E-E program has made a significantly measurable impact on attitudes, perceptions, and behavior.

The goal was to create a character that would be universally loved and accepted, while portraying themes which focused on human rights, gender, discrimination and agency (McKee, Aghi, & Shahzadi, 2004). Measurements of social mobilization and behavior change were the key variables in assessing its effectiveness. The cartoon character was utilized in schools, with the intention that the stories be informative, provocative, motivating, and entertaining. By 1999, after nine years of implementing this program in schools, the character of Meena was recognized by 85% of girls and 87% of boys in the countries which implemented the program – Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. "Less than one-fifth of children saw Meena as a cartoon character…Identification with Meena's character was quite strong among all interviewed children. A large portion of parents (85% of females and 80% of males) said that Meena helped bring about increased gender awareness by highlighting specific problems" (McKee et al., 2004, pp. 331-349).

One outcome of the *Meena* project was a new model of behavior development and social change (McKee, Manoncourt, Chin, & Carnegie, 2000). The model displays a conceptual framework for the process of initiating social change, illustrating how the creators of *Meena* "believed that only when knowledge of health and social issues is combined with motivation and skills, with full consideration of all environmental barriers and facilitating factors, will girls and women become more equal partners in society" (McKee et al., 2004, p. 342).

It is this groundbreaking study in the entertainment education literature that gave rise to my conceptualizing the C.A.R.E. process. The model created by McKee et al. (2000) highlights the factors that influence an individual's behavior, and the elements that impact transferability at a societal level. The aforementioned suggestion that it is the combination of *knowledge* and *motivation* which most greatly impacts social change incited my analysis exploring the elements of "motivation." I suggest the answer is the creative element. Just like the cartoon character Meena, which stimulated audiences to become emotionally involved and consider controversial issues in a non-threatening way, it could be argued that artistic creations of all kinds (whether film, television, performance, or even paintings and music) create a visceral response and therefore a spark of motivation. The more abstraction from recognizable conceptions of reality, the less clear and concrete the message is that may be received, and therefore potentially less motivation, but nonetheless, the creative arts (particularly the *visual*) light the fuse of interest in a topic and lie on the cusp of information, motivation, and community – hence the location of the "spark" in the model below.

Creations such as a cartoon series that have a narrative structure and foster positive messages via emotional contagion and education offers a new *lingua franca*, or vehicular language, beyond the language of violence as Cultivation Theory suggests (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli, 1978; Griffin et al., 2019; Hestroni, 2007), which can be communicated to the masses and therefore impact social change. For this reason, I have added the “art spark” to the Behavior Development and Social Change model proposed by McKee et al. (2000), shown in Figure 7.

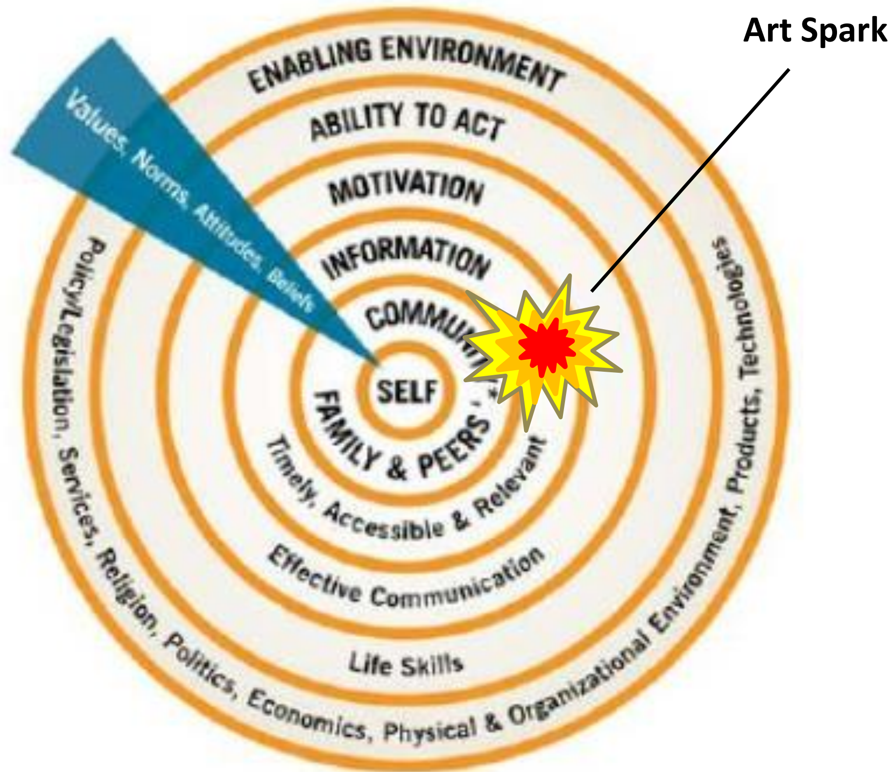

Figure 7. Behavior development and social change model with art spark. Adapted from McKee, Mononcourt, Chin, & Carnegie (2000, p. 214).

An Interdisciplinary Scholarly Contribution

Post-structuralists like Judith Butler have unwittingly drawn a distinction between "performing" and the "genuine" (Butler, 1988), questioning the modes by which we move through our daily life and enact/embody our identity as a kind of "performance." This was a helpful move in terms of bringing attention to the performative elements of gender and identity. However, an implied element of the words "performance" and "performativity" seems to suggest a dis-association from the real, genuine, or authentic. I suggest we erase that hard line and admit that performance *is* a part of the "real." It constitutes and creates the real. It drives, is a response to, and reinforces our daily interactions, with tremendous power to impact and influence others. By thinking of actions as having to originate in some free-floating authentic emotion or intent (as many respondents seemed to suggest is the case when people behave in compassionate ways) disregards social learning and cultural transmission of values and norms. It does not acknowledge all of the contexts in which we must *learn* certain behaviors before we are capable of enacting them. Humans act – they do not "perform" – and those actions are real, with real reactions, and real consequences.

I propose a new method, not only for scholars but for practitioner audiences, by suggesting the change to the Behavioral Change Model, and that change is art (visual/film/performance). The *art spark* is the key to changing behavior on a massive scale. Additionally, I also propose a new theory, as reviewed in the previous chapter – for academic audiences and the general public alike – called the Tuff-Hill Phenomenon,

in which co-cultures are constituted by (and interact, relate, and perceive one another through) narrative-producing performative actions, whether mediated or in real-life.

This study draws upon performance theories of dramatism, performance, and script theory, along with communication theories such as cultivation theory, co-cultural theory, and narrative theory to contribute to the literature of visual studies, emotional contagion, affect theory, and entertainment-education (E-E). This study also extends and engages elements from the fields of communication, linguistics, psychology, sociology, intercultural dialogue, and qualitative research.

Limitations of this Study

A shortcoming of the process of Civil Dialogue is the fact that we invite people to fill the position of a seat even if they don't necessarily agree with it. How does that impact the way we measure it? It opens up an area for inauthentic responses, even at the same time as it helps us hear from that perspective. Something is better than nothing in this case, which is the general idea behind having the full range of perspectives accounted for during a dialogue. However, it may lead to comments that do not necessarily reflect one's actual views.

A second limitation is the fact that everyone who responded to the call to have a one-on-one interview were from the groups that did view the film – all 15 respondents. This highlights an interesting correlation between an individual's emotional investment, passion, or interest being ignited to a further degree after viewing the film compared to those who did not view the film. However, it also may skew the interview findings,

being that those who care about the topic more may have been the ones to volunteer to participate in an interview.

Limitation as Strength. One of the limitations that kept arising in the dialogues was that people did not believe you could talk someone out of committing an act of violence if they have “already made up their mind” to commit that act. While the act of violence itself isn’t necessarily the end goal for these perpetrators, as discussed above, typically the end goal is gaining attention, exercising power, utilizing agency, and showcasing efficacy or impact. However, one “strength” or potential outcome of seeing it from this perspective that it is “too late” to interfere with a grown adult who is acting on his/her own accord, is that this offers an entry point to approach this issue from the ground up. To initiate compassion and behavior training programs not only in prisons, businesses, and organizations such as the police force, but also to promulgate these programs in schools, religious and community institutions as early as pre-K and daycare.

It is noteworthy that nearly every dialogue conversation brought up this idea, that something like this needs to be brought to schools and taught to children on a large-scale basis. This was a pleasant finding, because it showcased people’s general agreement in the benefit of a dialogic process such as this. Many participants suggested compassion and empathy training begin as soon as kids start school, and a few audience members expressed that they wished they had been “exposed to something like this sooner” (*in vivo* code from dialogue fieldnotes). Individuals who grew up with this type of training could potentially grow up to raise children from day one with this attitude, similar to the way the “Stop, Drop and Roll” phrase transferred intergenerationally to be used in

everyday vernacular. This shows a general consensus that compassionate behavior is indeed beneficial and a necessary requisite of curriculum, and moreover, an under-promoted skill to possess. As Frederick Douglas said: “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Future Directions

This process could be taken to a variety of audiences, with practical applications. Its focus is about making public input and experience visible. Getting out of our individual bubbles and engaging with the larger cultural narrative. Dis-connect to re-connect. It could be applied to a variety of contexts ranging from workplace practices, to police officer training, conflict negotiation, public schools, community centers, the filmmaking industry, and beyond. An important element of this approach is education and engagement for out of school publics – this is a demographic that often gets left out of pertinent findings established in academia, and to be able to address cultural change, it is necessary to engage the entire culture. It could range from local to international contexts.

Broome (2009) proposed an interactive design process for building relational empathy. The methods and techniques employed by the individuals composing dialogue groups from opposing sides in the Cyprus conflict “allowed them to engage in a form of structured dialogue that promoted the emergence of a ‘peace-building culture’ within the group and the creation of a shared vision and a collaborative action agenda that was built from convergence of multiple views” (p. 187). This general premise undergirds much of this study’s findings, focusing on relational empathy and providing a structured space to

come together, engage, and co-create understanding. It is also the process that Antoinette Tuff and Michael Hill underwent together. Antoinette Tuff was not a lone hero who deserves all of the accolades – it is equally important to acknowledge Michael Hill's role in working with Tuff to achieve collaborative action.

This study extends and also invites others to continue exploring elements such as building inclusive environments for intercultural dialogue, creating new conceptualizations and frameworks for listening, cultivating empathy, and examining unconscious biases and privileges (Broome, Derk, Razzante, Steiner, Taylor, & Zamora, 2019), along with finding new innovative ways to keep engaging others in this necessary collaborative effort. A recent PBS Nightly News special commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting interviewed law enforcement and school administrative officials who are grappling with the issue of how to deal with school shootings. They are even considering tearing down Columbine High School because it seems to inspire others to conduct similar acts of violence (Ferrugia, 2019). According to John McDonald, Executive Director of Safety and Security at Jefferson County Schools in Colorado, in all these years there has been no local, state, or national standards of protocol for training individuals how to deal with a school shooting. In recent years they have adopted the Standard Response Protocol in Colorado and begun training several agencies and administrators across the country. However, what is most discouraging is that this protocol focuses on the same methods I was exposed to back when I was in High School during the very week the Columbine shooting happened: "lockout, lockdown, evacuate, shelter" (Ferrugia, 2019). The same militaristic style of

training that police officers have been learning and training others to do for years. McDonald claims 198 people a month attempt to get into his school that are not permitted to be on campus (Ferrugia, 2019). This approach doesn't seem to be working. What would it look like to implement a completely innovative approach, and lead by modeling compassionate behavior? Not only in our daily actions, but in our mediated forms of communication and popular culture.

Final Thoughts

To return to Paul Ekman, from the Greater Good Science Center, who posed the question: Can altruism, and therefore heroic compassion, be taught? If it's something that occurs "naturally" within someone, how can we teach what isn't *learned*? Now, after this study, I would respond to Paul Ekman's question with this antecedent: Why are we associating compassionate behavior with altruism? Does empathic behavior which lacks an altruistic origin render the *impact* null and void? The originating question (and even nomenclature of organizations such as Stanford's *Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education* (Simon-Thomas, 2012)) implies that people could not behave in ways that are beneficial to others unless those individuals were altruistic. Does the fact that Jude Law didn't *actually* fight in the Civil War make his performance in *Cold Mountain* meaningless and ineffectual, or prevent us as viewers from being emotionally captivated and moved? Does asking to be excused from the dinner table hold no significance because the child never *wanted* to ask for such permission? Does a rose by any other name not smell as sweet, or in this case, not *look* as beautiful?

This study suggests that actions carry weight – visual performative elements carry weight – regardless of the act*or*'s internal motivations or personal opinions; and that "weight" is the impact on other people's perceptions, and therefore their emotions, feelings, behavior, and reactions, or what can be described as their *learned* behavior and habits. Performative actions are the signifiers *and* the signs in our visual language. Actions impact *re*actions. Motions impact *e*motions. Behavior is learned, modeled, emulated, and repeated in every communicative act that one observes each day – whether it is observed in real life, in the media, or in movies. To return to Shakespeare one last time, I would agree that "all the world's a stage" (Hylton, 1993) and we are all actors, but a significant addition to this sentiment is that we are also all act*ees* who are acted upon or influenced by others. All of us as individuals are simultaneously teachers and learners as we go through our daily embodied lives. Who, and what, did we teach today?

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Eric Margolis
Human Communication, Hugh Downs School of
480/965-0131
ERIC.MARGOLIS@asu.edu

Dear Eric Margolis:

On 11/28/2016 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Communicating Compassion: The Missing Link in Entertainment-Education Discourse
Investigator:	Eric Margolis
IRB ID:	STUDY00005296
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• IRB form, Category: IRB Protocol; • Consent Form, Category: Consent Form; • Questionnaire, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Recruitment Script, Category: Recruitment Materials

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 11/28/2016.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Rosalie Fisher

APPENDIX B

CODE BOOK

Codebook

First Cycle Coding

Open-coding highlighting thought-units → Themes → Focused Coding (Process + Initial Coding) See pages 47-53 for details about the code types.

1. **Your actions impact others**
    A. Online
    B. Face-to-face
2. **Significance of embodied/in-person communication**
    A. Verbal
    B. nonverbal
3. **Limited exposure to certain information or stories, because of what the media focuses on (agenda-setting theory: we focus on what the media's focus is)**
    A. Have not heard about this event prior to watching the film
    B. News media focuses on bad (negative) things
        i. We *expect* that it focuses on bad (negative) things
    C. Dominant media (news, film, and television) limits or determines the issues we "care" about
        i. We *expect* and *accept* that it dictates what we think
4. **We go numb to bad/negative stories because of seeing so much of it**
5. **Mediated Communication** (communicating through mediated means in place of face to face interaction)
    A. Doing things for "show" – the superficial nature of communicating online
    B. Doing things to get attention (on the internet)

THIS SPECIFIC FILM

6. **Emotionally affected by watching this film**
    A. Being moved by the "realness" or "rawness" of it (perhaps pertaining to the live audio + re-enactment combo)
        i. Not "real enough"
        ii. Too one-sided
    B. Caring more about this issue
    C. Reinforced Beliefs
    D. More awareness about this
7. **Changed perspective or opinions after watching this film**
8. **Changed BEHAVIOR after watching this film (or anticipate changed behavior)**
    A. Behaved more compassionately – showing actions
    B. Felt more empathy – perspective-taking
9. **This film being more impactful than fictional film/tv shows**

FILMS & TV IN GENERAL

10. **Changed perspective or opinions because of a film or TV show**
    A. More awareness
11. **Changed BEHAVIOR because of a film or TV show**
    A. **Positive impact** of film or television
        i. Documentary films in general
        ii. This specific film
        iii. Fictional film/TV shows
            a. Specifically, "13 Reasons Why" glamorizes suicidal behavior
    B. **Negative impact** of film or television
        i. Documentary films in general
        ii. This specific film
        iii. Fictional film/TV shows
            a. Specifically, "13 Reasons Why" glamorizes suicidal behavior

CIVIL DIALOGUE PROCESS

12. **Positive impact of dialogue**
    A. Being able to hear other perspectives
    B. Being able to express yourself
    C. Practice listening
    D. Practice compassion (displaying concern or consideration for others)
    E. Practice empathy (perspective-taking)
13. **Changed perspective (of this topic) after the dialogue**
    A. After *participating* in the dialogue
    B. After witnessing the dialogue
    C. Surprising results/experience

14. **Being prepared for communicating in unexpected situations (like emergencies)**
15. What if I don't FEEL empathy for that person? I'm not gonna behave compassionately – from - **Civil Dialogue**
16. **People doing things** (in real life) **for attention or for show**
    A. Behavior out of habit
17. Does not believe they were affected by Civil Dialogue
18. Does not believe they were affected by the film.
    A. Needed to be more convincing
19. Does not believe they're affected by any film/TV/media
20. "Natural" behavior
    A. Everyone's different and has a different approach. This kind of thing is completely "situational" (indicates therefore that compassionate behavior is not affective or necessary)
    B. Takes a lot of time to behave compassionately – most people probably won't do it.

C. Humans are naturally selfish (will do anything to survive)
    i. "Fight or Flight" – from **Civil Dialogue**
D. If you're a violent person, you're a violent person – from **Civil Dialogue**
E. Females as natural care-givers – from **Civil Dialogue**
F. Males as natural aggressors – from **Civil Dialogue**

21. The impact of Civil Dialogue depends upon people's willingness to participate/try
    A. Feeling hesitant/scared to participate
    B. Needing to feel safe to participate
22. POSITIVE assessment of CD: Civil Dialogue was a welcoming environment.

23. Antoinette should have behaved DIFFERENTLY – either fight or flight
24. These were extremely rare circumstances which allowed for these conditions; it's not likely to occur again.
    A. This compassionate approach won't work every time.

Codebook

Second Cycle Coding

Pattern Coding → Final Categories

Pattern Codes include:

1. Time-oriented and action-oriented
2. *Displaying* certain types of behavior
3. "Realness" (*Could it happen? Did it happen? The level of perceived realness impacted believability and acceptance*.)
4. "Natural" inclinations and behaviors
5. "If someone has their mind made up, there's no stopping them"
6. Witnessing things in movies or on TV impacts perspectives and behaviors
7. Originally displaying disagreement, then general agreement.
8. Changed perspectives after witnessing the film
9. Changed perspectives from beginning to end of Civil Dialogue
10. Displaying empathy (perspective-taking) in participant responses.

Final Themes:

1. Spectacle: Doing Things for Show - Focused codes 2A-B, **3A-C**, **12A-E**, 21A-B, 22; Pattern codes: 1, 2, 4, 7, 9

2. Changed Perspectives After Viewing the Film and Dialogue - Focused codes **1A-B**, **6A-D**, 7, **8A-B**, 9, **12A-E**, 13A-C; Pattern codes: 3, 6, 8, 9, 10

3. People are "Naturally" Good or Bad - Focused codes 15, **20 A-F**, 23, 24-A; Pattern codes: 1, 4, 5, 6, 7

4. Fight or Flight: Our Only Two Options of Behavior - Focused codes 14, 17, 18, 19, **20A-F;** Pattern codes: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

APPENDIX C

GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Guiding Questions for Interviews

These are open-ended in the sense that they are meant to loosely guide the conversation and allow participants to expand on their thoughts wherever they like.

- What is your major?
- What year are you in college?
- Where are you from?

1. Had you heard about this event before?
2. Does being aware of this event alter your perception of what you see on the news?
    a. Does this draw your attention to what events are covered/publicized/memorialized versus things you don't hear much about?
3. Did the film change your perception at all? (whether it's in regards to school shooters, or communication during an emergency situation?)
4. Did the film have any impact on the level of empathy you felt for the shooter?
    a. Did the film have any impact on the way you think about compassion?
5. Do you think this film (and/or experience) may affect your actions in the future?
6. Has a film or TV program affected your actions before?
7. How did you feel (and what role did you play) during the dialogue?
    a. How do you feel that it went?
    b. Did it involve your critical thinking at all, or your engagement with these ideas?
    c. Do you think there is a benefit to doing this?

- Do you have any other comments or additional items you'd like to share?
- If you care to provide your political affiliation, please do.