THE IDEA OF POPULAR:

A FLIRTATIOUSLY THEORETICAL TOUR OF BELONGING

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read THE IDEA OF POPULAR: A FLIRTATIOUSLY THEORETICAL TOUR OF BELONGING by Jonathan Brady, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. in East West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

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Abstract

Formal studies of popularity, while attempting to understand and legitimize the existence of popularity as a social construct, simultaneously dismiss popularity as trivial and unimportant. This interdisciplinary study on popularity recognizes this dismissal and articulates various ideas of popularity, in particular how the idea of popular affects interpersonal, communal and political relationships. Popularity, therefore, is an intrinsic aspect of how humanity is collectively bound together.

In applying a broad perspective, this study engages in a grand tour of theories. In order to enrich the academic and non-academic discourse on the ideas of how we are with others, this study explores the significance of this notion of popularity and the impact of technology on our capacity to be with others. Recent technology, otherwise known as social media, binds us even closer together, accelerating the rate and widening the reach of popularity. This work expounds the application of the notion of popularity through several lenses: Freudian and contemporary psychoanalytic formulations of civilization, Platonic ideals of beauty, Marxist notions of power, Mahayana Buddhist literature on the notion of interdependence, Buber's dialogical relationships, Machiavellian political tactics,

contemporary feminist discourses on oppression, as well as the presence of internet based social networking sites.

The objective, herein, is to address the problem of disconnection in a digital age, while articulating the need for a broad theoretical exploration to understand popularity. We do not need to overvalue popularity at the cost of devaluing what is unpopular; we belong regardless of how we are labeled.

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This work would not have been the same without all the wonderful, supportive, and ultimately patient people in my life. There have been numerable people that have held my process, pointed me to authors, and reminded me to place commas, to cut the jargon, and to be congruent while writing about popularity and not denying my own social life. Although I generously acknowledge theorists in my work, here is where you will find those persons who know or have inspired the idioms and possibly obscure cultural references. Each of them deserves personal recognition; each of them deserves to have their names within this work. More than a tangible collage of all the people that have helped me, these acknowledgments also show all the people whom this work belongs to.

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Dedication

This work was written for, and inspired by, each of the faces at each of the cafeteria tables of my youth. In some ways, there will always be kids wanting to sit at the supposed *best* table, kids that fit in, and those denying that cliques happen. They all belong, beautifully so. This writing is a declaration that you all—whether you feel it, subtly recognize it, or dismiss it—belong.

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Chapter One: Roadmap

A Very Brief History of Popularity

Popularity has an evasive yet simplistic history. The evasive component derives from the fact that the adjective *popular* can be attached to anything or anyone, and once that adjective sticks then something new is created. *Popularity* as a noun arises from something labeled *popular*. Popularity, generally, is an adjective concerned with the present state of a noun, wherever that noun resides, and whatever condition that noun is in. That's it. That's the history of popularity, albeit the simplistic history.

Exploring One Example of Popularity: Lady Gaga

My dismissive tone exists because I find popularity to be tied up with the present rather than with the past. For example, in this present moment Lady Gaga's *The Fame* album (2008) is conveniently playing from my MacBookPro™. There are many potential examples of popularity in this moment. Gaga inhabits the pop music genre as she identifies with pop culture from her website biography (2009). The Fame is a popular album, selling 2.3 million copies worldwide as of May 28, 2009 (Gregory, 2009). Apple's MacBookPro™ is a top selling computer with, as of August 26, 2009, the highest customer review rating (http://biturl.cc/DdL) of any current laptop computer. I like Gaga and some of her songs have inspired this study [see Appendix A]. I listen to her music because I admire her and enjoy her danceable album. Also, she has said (Hobart, 2009: ¶9),

> I want to hammer it into people's heads that pop music is legitimate art when it's done right. A good pop song can be played anywhere in the world for any kind of person, and it's gonna make them wanna get up and fucking dance. Like it or not, it's an incredibly powerful genre.

Gaga's brazenly transparent defense of all things pop is a revitalizing presence in the music industry. She is current, fashionable, vulgar, brash, shiny, infectious, or in her own lyrics to *Boys Boys Boys*, "tastes like glitter mixed with rock and roll" (Lady Gaga & Red1, 2008). Gaga exemplifies popularity and her media presence is but one indication of her belonging within the cultural and social milieu. It is trickier to find out what is popular outside of specific examples. The difference here, and a large scope of this study, is that the concept of popular is not the same as concrete examples of popularity.

Before I get to the literature review, or the problematic issues revolving around popularity, I will stay with this image of Gaga and how she fits the definition of popularity. Addressing the nuances of theorists needs grounding with images, so I find it helpful for myself to stay with images as they relate to ideas. Gaga is one example that I will stay with for now and I plan to further explore other images and instances of popularity throughout this work. I will discuss the images and different ideas to further broaden your, and my, understanding of popularity.

When attempting to understand an idea, I like to reference a dictionary; building up my vocabulary allows me to discuss subtle aspects of an idea. The editors of the American Heritage Dictionary 4th edition (2001) define popularity as, "the quality or state of being popular, especially the state of being widely admired, accepted, or sought after" and defines popular as, "widely liked or appreciated." These are the core characteristics of popularity. Each example, each occurrence of something labeled popular instantiates the idea of popular.

Following this definition, there are three interrelated aspects of popularity within this example of Gaga. These aspects are her being liked, that many people like her, and she is sought after or common. If I liked Gaga, then my liking her is proof enough of me wanting to call her popular. Since I also included a reference to her album charts, I've demonstrated that there is a widespread acceptance of her. You could think of the first aspect, her being liked, as expanding to become the second, her being liked by many people. Thirdly, she is common; her music is repeatedly played on the radio for all to hear and her image is saturated in the media for all to see, therefore she has a presence in our social consciousness.

Common is also associated with lowbrow, vulgar, uncivilized, base, artificially fabricated, plastic, unoriginal, and a host of supposedly undesirable social attributes. This "plastic" descriptor is used to talk about commonly popular girls even in mainstream media, like the film *Mean Girls* (Waters, 2004). Each previously mentioned characteristic, that someone is liked, widely liked among people, and accessible or attainable by many people, can be used to label her as popular. All three together make a strong case for an instance of a person being popular (Lease, Kennedy, & Alexrod, 2002).

Gaga embodies and enacts all of this, possibly with a knowing wink. She unapologetically swears in interviews, unashamedly discusses her sexuality, and wears provocative or flamboyant clothing if she wears clothing at all. This demeanor is considered abrasive to those more inclined to a conservative or refined—read condescending—perspective that prioritizes modesty and discretion. As a social theorist on status and acceptance, Alain de Botton (2004)

might argue that Gaga takes a precarious position by acting in a way that might offend some people, yet she still wants most people to like because she is continuously engaging in the public eye. In this she still wants to be loved by the world. Some might see this aforementioned behavior as skilled or as a practiced personality done for greater notoriety, and not unlike the affected expressions done towards the paparazzi cameras or newspapers by most celebrities. Not everyone likes what is common—whether in the well-recognized sense or in the low cultured sense—nor is the common universally liked. Those inclined to refined tastes value exclusivity and rareness and would not like songs continuously played over airwaves. Popularity, it seems, is easy to identify but more complicated to conceptualize.

Going Beyond One Example of Popularity

Popularity is incredibly powerful in shaping society. Looking out at society, you can find many examples of popularity as a shaping force within different schools of thought: pop psychology trickling into mainstream television dialogue, pop art adorning the same walls as art from antiquity, political leaders—much like celebrities—lending their voice to causes to gain popular support, or the magazines Popular Science® (http://www.popsci.com) or Popular Mechanics™ (http://www.popularmechanics.com/) showcasing engineering marvels to further push the influence of technology. I will not dissect the ways that popularity presents itself in the labeling of material objects. The above was a simple preface that at times I may digress from and acknowledge the ubiquity of popularity as it does spread out to envelop more than simply people.

The pervasiveness of popularity, and the idea of popular in general will arise throughout this study, allowing us a window to see how we are all together, how we are with each other, or how, using the original Latin term for popular—*popularis*—we belong to each other. The idea that we belong to each other, that we, as humans, can be labeled popular is a radically obvious notion. But how can we grapple with this powerfully shaping force? If you, the brands of your clothing, the name of the street you live on, or the company you keep is deemed popular, then in a very tangible way you belong. This binding power, this belonging, is the crux of the power in popularity. Lady Gaga (2009: ¶7) said of the vision of her album and of the powerful force of popularity,

> Pop culture is art. It doesn't make you cool to hate pop culture, so I embraced it… But, it's a sharable fame. I want to invite you all to the party. I want people to feel a part of this lifestyle.

Popularity is bound up in feeling part of something larger than oneself, part of society. This isn't a nebulous "larger than oneself" feeling, it is concrete in the actual number of people, the amount of things, plastic or performed, which happen; this is popularity impacting society not in the abstract, but concretely, in the present.

The Presenting Problem of Popularity

The impact that a popular person or thing has upon society is augmented by the presence of technology; technology mediates relationships. The technology that we had ten years ago is Neolithic compared to what we have going today. Nonetheless, some academics have noted the changing landscape of relationships due to technology (boyd, 2008; Zywica & Danowski, 2008). Charlene Spretnak

wrote in 1999, when cellular phones were becoming more utilized by teenagers, about the problem of technology mediating our relationships.

> We are told that the world is shrinking, that vast distance has been conquered by computer and fax, and … all of us are connected as never before. It feels, however, quite the opposite. It feels as if distancing and disconnection are shaping modern life. If anything is shrinking it is the fullness of being that is experienced by the modern self. (p. 11)

She saw a growing dissatisfaction in relationships along with the greater capacity to be with others due to technology. Her writing, though a decade old, addresses a contemporary problem that has only expanded with Facebook®, one of several social networking sites on the Internet.

Facebook® (http://www.facebook.com/) is but one Internet based social networking site used, not only by youth, but by millions of people across the globe who can post personal contact information, plan events, monitor birthdays, announce births, declare the beginning or end of romantic relationships, announce their music preferences, and start or maintain friendships (Acquisti & Gross, 2006). All of these acts are relational in nature; its impact on our relational capacity has not yet been determined (Zywica & Danowski, 2008). Furthermore, almost a third of individuals in the United States report having no close friends and spending almost five hours a day doing non-social activities like watching television and using a computer (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashers, 2006). Though technology has a presence in our relationships, the time that could be spent relating to others is not spent directly relating to others. It seems that we are not relating in the same way that we were before 1999: pre-Facebook®.

Technology isn't the sole emphasis on my study of popularity, but it is a factor that needs explicit attention. Our theories, too, need some updating.

The Problem of Outdated Theories

It may be that our theories of being with others are not working correctly because technology has shifted the landscape of what is relational. Max Weber's (1920/1993) idea of charismatic authority didn't include paparazzi. Georg Hegel's (1886/1993) aesthetics didn't tackle media saturation to the likes of Gaga. Karl Marx's (1834/1992) theory of alienation or Alfred Adler's (1938) social feeling, made no references to having zero friends on Facebook®.

Ideas have influenced the use of technology and our ability to be with others. If we have the tools and technology to relate with greater skill but we aren't relating to each other, then something is amiss. If something is not working correctly, in a mechanistic sense, there may be a broken part. I believe that what is not working correctly is our ideas of being with others.

Buddhist practitioner Stephen Batchelor's (1983) transparent framing of how ideas impact us is better than my own writing. He clarifies, "Our conceptions of the world affect our perceptions of the world which, in turn, condition the way we subsequently conceive the world" (p. 98). If we believe social competition—popularity contests—is a given, then we come up with theoretical and academic research to justify our hypothesis that competition is a fact of nature. How empirical of us. If, however, we believed that being with others is a given, then popularity isn't necessarily a competition, but it likewise becomes an idea of how we are with others. Theories about being with others may help us re-conceptualize

ways of being popular. Articulating these theories leads to potential advocacy for approaches that do not result in feelings of disconnection and denigration.

History, though, has provided many reasoned and passionate studies on ideas of being human, being with others, and the contexts that being with others occurs in. Classical psychoanalysis from Sigmund Freud (1923/1962) is different than the contemporary psychoanalysis of Jessica Benjamin (1988); however, both frame being with others along different relational theories while maintaining a similar vocabulary. Classical evolutionary theory from Charles Darwin (1859/1985) has changed with Joan Roughgarden's (2004) notion of social selection. Biological competitiveness is no longer genetic, it can be conceived of as collaborative. Political theory which views citizens as objects to be manipulated, that of Niccolò Machiavelli (1532/1999), also has to be paired with political, psychoanalytic and the existential theory that humanizes a populace and warns of the dangers from manipulation. This counterpoint is expertly argued by Eric Fromm (1941). Ideas grow and evolve in time, and the history of those ideas about and concerning popularity frame the arc of this exploration.

Multiple ways of conceiving of relationships, others, popularity, and political structure, is all potentially part of this discourse. It is my ambition to clearly present them. I want popularity to be respected; I want it to be looked at again, with care.

Research Objectives

The specific themes that I have chosen structure my exploration of this far ranging topic. I plan to examine popularity along a sequential path, where the

following chapters trace a tour of popularity, stopping at ideas that are aligned, integral, and sometimes misaligned with various ideas of popularity. Each chapter and each additional idea builds upon previous ideas and each part of this work comes together to expand our ideas of popularity. Therefore, one objective is that through a wide and broad theoretical exploration, many different facets of popularity can be uncovered within different schools of thought.

This assertion of popularity as a topic that is implicit within other theories allows for popularity to receive some academic attention outside of ethnographical studies about teenage “cafeteria” social behavior. I’ll speak more about ethnographical studies and how popularity has been academically studied in the preliminary literature review.

More likely than not, philosophers pondering metaphysical inquiries do not often discuss adolescent seating preferences for lunch over Facebook® conversation. I hope that after reading this, those philosophers feel capable of discussing seating preferences at the cafeteria tables as well as other phenomenon related to popularity. The specific themes that will be addressed are located in the chapter breakdown section. For now, I’d like to reiterate that my objective is to study popularity in an interdisciplinary manner and move the discourse into serious current dialogue.

Above all, I want to offer a lens or a theoretical ground, for seasoned academics, curious teenagers, nonacademic readers, technological enthusiasts, social outcasts, and marginalized peoples and so many others to feel that they too belong. I would like for those that read my study to walk away from the book or

computer console and recognize their place and perfect belonging in this contemporary world. Though it appears that the world is more fragmented by technology and social media, going into the idea of popularity and the pervasive social world, may offer us a way to better understand how we are with others and what belonging means in this digital age.

Significance of the Study

Now, more than ever, technology has placed us in the position where our relationships are more scrutinized, impacted, and pervasive. We all have to deal, in some way, with popularity. I see the sheer complexity of all the relational, social, and interdependent aspects of the world, as the real world. This is similar to the way that post-modern philosopher David Abram (1996) frames "reality,"

> The "real world" in which we find ourselves, then—the very world our sciences strive to fathom—is not a sheer "object," not a fixed and finished "datum" from which all subjects and subjective qualities could be pared away, but is rather an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles. The mutual inscription of others in my experience, and (as I must assume) of myself in their experiences, effects the interweaving of our individual phenomenal fields into a single, ever-shifting fabric, a single phenomenal world or "reality." (p. 39)

Theories of our own understanding of the world, will, out of necessity, come into focus throughout this study. I will not pay too much attention to tracing out an epistemology of how we come to know the real world, nor will I sketch a metaphysical treatise on what is truly real. In today's age, we have many ideas and conceptions of what real relationships are. Rather than measuring the "reality" or proving the existence of "reality," I will focus on ideas that revolve around popularity, how these ideas impact the notion of popularity, and

subsequently how we feel a sense of belonging. It is with these ideas about popularity, rather than what is popular, that will be both the aim and the scope of this study.

Academically, the topic of popularity offers an important window to examine the human experience and the impact that being with others has on us all. The contribution of this study lies partly within the interdisciplinary dialogue it seeks to foster. Inclusive and interdisciplinary work is the complement to more reductionist approaches in which singular approaches often define a specific problem that only that singular approach can address. Crafting an experience into a psychological problem overshadows its political implications. Likewise seeing an action as purely political denies the psychological experience therein. With popularity as a topic, we can examine the particularities of belonging to one another beyond singular examples that leave out many aspects of ideas of popular: the multiple social contexts, the concrete actions, the structural processes, the interdependence of all beings, the minute operations in relationships and their significance, and the wisdom of belonging to others. The vastness of what popularity allows us to examine is quite broad and significant. For academia in general, this work opens up space for more research that attempts to hold a broad perspective, leading the way for other theorists to come along and challenge singular perspectives on tightly narrowed topics.

The topic of popularity, for me, is inherently personal and spiritual, for in being with others I have come to learn far more than I could have imagined. Popularity, whether person-centered in individuals, or the non-person-centered in

experiences, places, communities, objects, is part of the collective world that we are all bound up in. Ideas of being with others are explicitly personal, social, and spiritual, for we are in this world with other persons and how we choose to be with others matters. I cannot forecast what may arise when studying popularity, but I am doing it to aid in my own understanding of an idea that continues to baffle me.

Preparing to Depart

While there will be many instances when I reiterate what I have written, or foretell what I will eventually discuss, most tourists have a sense of what the tour will contain before it even starts. To help acclimate you, my reader, to the upcoming terrain, I offer you this section on what is the context of the dissertation. Think of this section as the academic equivalent of fastening your seatbelts and taking out your cameras.

Psychological Literature

One of the first studies on popularity is from Donald Laird (1935). His book, *Why We Don't Like People*, was written for a general, non-academic audience for the purpose of outlining specific things that a person could do to maintain a popular personality. He argues that popular people are likeable because of their personality and it is acceptable to not like people when they have an unpopular personality, or are in a lower social status, socioeconomic status, or race. His formulation is circular; we all want to be liked so a person doesn't like others that aren't liked. Rather than framing popularity as how we are always being socially judged and critiqued in relation to others, he shapes popularity into

a performance and therefore advises behavior that is manipulative of others in social situations, as well as classist and racist; his idea was not politically correct.

Following Laird, L. P. Thorpe (1941) wrote a chapter in *A Practical Guide to Personality Improvement* utilizing Laird's work, and articulated his own formulation of popularity as the behaviors associated with becoming popular and how it can be achieved. Thorpe stressed the ability to learn popularity and get others to like one's self. His logic was less circular; it was more goal-oriented with moral implications. Popularity, he stresses, is the state of being liked by others, which we all want to be liked, therefore it is right to act in a way to be liked. He does not explore the ethical implications of getting others to like one's self, or how being liked is a process of cultivating and maintaining one's relationships. He does, however, demonstrate the social skills necessary to develop and maintain both superficial and deep social relationships. Both authors place the topic of popularity in the psychological subcategory of personality, which they argue is performance based and not innate. To Thorpe and Laird, popularity is not part of who we are or an aspect of our being. For them, popularity resides in how we are seen and is noted in the social choices we make to get others to like us. This is far from seeing us all as constituted by relationships, but it does articulate an engaging dynamic of popularity, not as a passive given, but as a social process to be engaged with and actively cultivated.

Sociological Studies

Sociological thought, away from notions of personality and the psychological community, came to view notions of attribution as how we create

order in our social worlds. In talking to the scholarly community, Bobby Calder (1977) noted how leadership is based on attribution from singular persons and collective groups. Attribution is a mutual process whereby an individual does not claim to be something, but it is a label given from their relationships. The specific behaviors that leaders do, such as asking for advice from followers, spending time socializing, gaining personal information about others, setting tasks, accomplishing tasks, keeping appointments, and so much more, are all subsequently modeled by followers. Leadership is therefore attributed to individuals and groups whose behavior is deemed acceptable and beneficial to others. In terms of popularity, this is more commonly called "being loyal", "having integrity", and "keeping promises." Calder weakly acknowledges that the attribution process of leadership is similar to the process for popularity but does not go further. While given an opportunity to discuss the attribution of popularity, Calder chooses to not elaborate the behavioral or sociological implications of leadership as popularity, yet he does add a needed dimension to this paper. Following this understanding of attribution, our perceptions of popularity are dialectical, wherein both beings (individuals and/or groups) mutually affect each other and this offers a sociological grounding for popularity. Other researchers, (de Bruyn, & van den Boom, 2005; Gest, Graham-Bermann, & Hartup, 2001; Ladd, 1983) further this notion.

Parallel to leadership studies, two researchers from the sociological and anthropological community brought their attention to the study of popularity, particularly within the social world of junior high school girls. Rather than

abstractly discussing popularity, Donna Eder's (1985) ethnographic study of female adolescents, ages twelve to fourteen years old, attempted to see the unfolding of the dynamic attribution of popularity within that particular social context. Her work is seminal to the study of popularity and is referenced in subsequent studies regarding popularity (Adler & Adler, 1998; Merten, 1997; Wiseman, 2002). She explored the social stratification of a particular middle school and the formation of stable social hierarchies, which she saw as stratified depending on individual or collective salience, extra-curricular activities, attractiveness, and social power. The social hierarchies are elaborated as those social groups compete for coveted signifiers of popularity (cheerleader positions, cute boyfriends, etc.) and this competitive framework was made possible with these supposedly scarce resources. Popularity is described as a nuanced quest for social power; power becomes tangible in the competition for party invitations and attractive dates. Eder demonstrates how individual and peer group popularity are interrelated and socialized with interactional processes, notably the avoidance of peers and demarcation of group boundaries as a display of social power.

Expanding Eder's work, Don Merten (1997) within the field of sociology utilized similar ethnographic research tools. More than the acquiring of symbols of higher status as the way to gain popularity, Merten uncovered the maintenance of the competitive framework of popularity through interpersonal dynamics rather than the acquisition of social resources (friends, party invitations, cheerleader position, etc). Competition, or utilizing "niceness" and "meanness" as the social skills for obtaining social status, changes popularity into a covert power struggle.

In the overt display of popularity, and by overt I am referring to brazenly acting with social power or social status, an individual or a group lessens its social status. Merten elaborates this social dynamic with more nuances than I am briefly mentioning here. In short, being nice to others gains social status, covert meanness gains social status, but overt hostility or aggression lessens one's, or a groups', social standing. Interpersonal conflict is also viscerally felt as attacks, backstabs, losing everything, and being on top. However, going back to the articles themselves, both theorists further heterosexist notions of gender specific conflict as they articulate what occurs in middle schools, for neither critically opposes how ideas of gender are being normalized.

These articles additionally develop popularity into a coveted social position within a hierarchy rather than exploring the collective endeavor to mutually agree on what is desirable; *how* popularity is desirable. The authors ground this competition in a social economy of scarcity, theoretically furthering the notion that there is a limited amount of social power. Alternatively, if we are constituted by our relationships then we all have the opportunity to maintain relationships with others, because we are all mutually impacting each other and ourselves. The collapsed form of popularity, that it is a scare resource, a coveted status, or a competition, all reduce and objectify the embodied experience of being with others in this living world. As much as it reduces our being in this living world, these studies also describe what some children do when faced with the overwhelming complexity of being close to others and being affected by them. The quest for popularity, from an embodied and embedded perspective, is a false

quest in becoming what one already is, which is socially and personally significant. Having social power isn't within a vacuum, for it exists amongst the thousands of other people in the nearby living world and billions of other humans on the earth at this moment.

Organizational Theory and More Complexity

Other fields, such as social psychology and organizational management, examined social consciousness and information processing shortly after the sociological and anthropological studies mentioned above. One research study by Wegner, Erber, and Raymond (1991) examined how we are socially aware, at the cognitive level, of what others know and how a person knows that another person has information. Their research demonstrated that memory is designed to first assess *who* knows information and then *where* one is at in relation to that information. For loose social bonds, knowing that a particular piece of information is with a particular person then makes the memory and knowledge less real and substantial due to the loose social bond. Having a certainty of knowing that a close friend has a particular piece of knowledge comes with a stronger social bond. The implications of their research reveal the socially cognitive aspects of relating and how memory systems organize information as initially relational; our knowledge resides within our relationships. Popularity, following this study, is also a reflection of knowledge.

Moving beyond singular relationships to complex organizations and networks of relationships, Brandon and Hollingshead (2004) noted how large social systems operate by dividing labor and information throughout relational

networks according to specific tasks and thereby create cognitive interdependence. These studies on transactive memory and social consciousness expand theoretical approaches to popularity. This cognitive dimension of popularity, this transactive memory as an awareness of social relationships, is integral to both the operation of popularity as a dynamic embedded community process and how it is embodied on a neurological and pragmatic level. For if one develops social awareness and knowledge of the multidimensional interactions within the living world, then knowing what other beings know expands one's awareness of the living world.

Popularity, belonging to the people, acknowledges the tentative nature of trying to own one's knowledge and awareness. Popularity is interwoven with other's knowledge and affects what others know and what one knows. Someone that is seen to be popular is concurrently and extensively embedded within networks, beyond home, workplace, neighborhood organizations, or any other regional boundary. Those deemed popular subsequently have access to a significant body of information. Popularity also affords a person(s) the generous ability to physically bring other beings into contact with that broad base of knowledge and therefore allows others to feel more connected, to be touched, and to realize their embedded nature in the living world. Framing popularity as a competition, however, makes the possibility of relational generosity less likely.

Popular Literature

Rather than journal articles or scholarly research on different context specific popularity (i.e. elderly care facilities rather than junior high school) or

research instrumentation (i.e. narrative studies of those deemed popular rather than sociometric scales), the study of popularity has continued offering guides and behavioral "how-to-be-popular" codes similar to Thorpe's (1941) work. These newer additions to the body of literature are written for adults to help their children navigate popular competitions, and are like Thorpe's general guidelines for popularity. Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler's (1998) work focuses on peer culture and how it is created in the absence of adult participation in the culture. Children's relationships with each other are viewed from a sociological, primarily ethnographic, lens while focusing more on the quest for power as the grounds for popularity than on likeability. The utilization of gossip, bullying, inclusion, exclusion, bossiness, meanness, loyalty, gender normative behavior, and social status all help children competitively develop a sense of identity and order in their lives. The children's feelings about themselves form in a collapsed hierarchy, for there are no groups operating simultaneously in a complicated social world. Childhood self esteem, according to the Adlers, is based upon one classroom's friendships and does not take into account years of social interaction between classes, between years, with non-school friends, with family members, or with familial friends. This book outlines many peer status categories and develops a map of relational behavior for children, while it does not fully explore the parental influence on children in developing, modeling, or constructing a social world.

Rosalind Wiseman (2002) wrote her book, *Queen Bees and Wannabes,* for parents about the socialization process of popularity in adolescents and what parents can do to guide their daughters through the social world. The primary aim

of the book is to educate parents on what their children, specifically their daughters, are experiencing in their interpersonal and peer group relationships. The wide range of topics in the book navigates the reader through understanding social status, social roles, gender normative behavior, and conflict resolution. This practical understanding of popularity for parents as outsiders addresses the ability of parents to empower their children to develop social relationships within this framed competition. Adler & Adler (1998) and Wiseman's (2002) books do not address other forms of relating and therefore foster the idea that competitive forms of popularity in the living world are expected and normative. In both works, discussions of popularity revolve around helping parents guide their children through this social situation yet the discussion does not go further in adult forms of popularity or popularity as seen outside the school setting.

The literature mentioned above draws a cursory sketch of different approaches to the idea of popularity, some underlying biases, and some limitations in looking at specific aspects of popularity from a single perspective. With a more detailed exploration, and more time to survey the breadth of theories, comparisons, critiques, and convergent ideas can be made more explicit.

Theoretical Tools

Though I hope to open up the theoretical framework for the study of popularity, it is also important to make explicit my procedure for opening up the theories. Thematic analysis of an idea as it arises in multiple theories is one way to explore the topic of popularity, which is also a theoretical perspective rather than a qualitative perspective. Qualitative research methods find different ways of

addressing a given topic from the vantage point of individual or collective lived experience. Qualitative approaches study the lived experience of being popular rather than the thought of popularity and how that thought has impacted us. I want to study that impact, so a theoretical study is best suited for this topic.

This study is very similar in approach to James Hillman's (1960) *Emotion*, which is a comprehensive study on theories of emotion and how those theories apply to therapy. In his own defense of his method, he organizes it to,

> take the theories as witness to the way emotion has appeared to the consciousness of man. We shall get to the origin, nature and purpose of emotion through the phenomenology of theories of emotion: taking them each as they appear and asking them what testimony they bear about emotions, about consciousness and about man. Only in this way, by giving full authority and validity to each view, by refusing to take 'sides', can we circumambulate the problem and hope to come to an integrated view. (p. 21-22)

The focus of his study was the phenomenology of the idea of emotion as it is present in contemporary theories of emotion; his was a theoretical study of emotions. He limits the scope of his study to the field of psychology, not allowing literary, cultural, and legal definitions to frame the study. He refines the study more specifically to only theories of emotions that were created within the century he was writing, which was also the still young field of psychology. He chose, rather than an empirical hypothesis of what emotion "should do" under certain situations, to study emotion as an "enlargement of comprehension."

Enlarging the comprehension of emotion was done by his spending time with different theories, holding them, giving sufficient time to explore each idea as it related to emotion, and thereby broadening the scope of what is considered emotion. His work does not integrate various theories of emotions to create a

unified theory. Similarly, this study on popularity is not meant to integrate or neatly explore theories or research on popularity as if they all cohere. I am challenged to present various theories, which, I believe, have impacted our notions of popularity and show them in their tense, conflicting, overlapping, and at times synergetic harmony. James Hillman (1960) goes on to write,

> These [conclusions] will come not only at the end; there will be conclusions within the discussion of the different theories as part of pointing out their inadequacies and exposing their conceptual models. Because the problem is many-sided and the method we have chosen is many-sided, the conclusions must fall in at many points. The fundamental conclusion we can state in advance: an amplification of the problem of emotion in our time as it appears in concept and theory, or, in short, the conclusion is the work itself. (p. 23)

I would identify my perspective to this research as interdisciplinary. The topic doesn't really sit in one field, so I won't either.

Stylistic Tools

If you were to say I have a contemporary psychoanalytic bent similar to Jessica Benjamin (1988), a Buddhist worldview inspired by Shāntideva (8th Century CE/2006), a feminist agenda that mirrors Judith Butler's (1997) exacting deconstructionist approach, or a stylistic and theoretical closeness with James Hillman's (2006) archetypal perspective on patterns that shape lived experiences, I wouldn't argue with you. Perhaps you are curious about this broad theoretical foundation. Academically, I'm more interested in the relationships between ideas and the psychological and theoretical structures that surround ideas, even if those ideas are beyond my familiar home of psychological studies. Perhaps this postmodern style begets broad academic tours of ideas, but it seems fitting to explore ideas that surround ideas so as to see a theory within its variegated

contexts. My style is therefore interdisciplinary in its broad scope and postmodern in its approach.

You might also be curious about my writing style and the usage of the "you," the second person. I'm going to offer a little aside about my writing before going elsewhere into the study. Some people might look down upon a stylistic approach to a formal study that addresses the intended reader in a personal manner. Since this study is about how we are with others, I find myself wanting to write to you the reader, where or whenever you are, about this topic of how to be with a "you" or even a "them." I want to engage in a conversation with you about what this being with others means to me and might mean to you. In order for me to address a topic, which is about the ideas of others, oneself, public life, private life, and the community in its totality and parts, then I also need to address that which is bound up with it, namely, you and me. Mark Kingwell (2008), in his study on urbanization, addresses this style better than I am doing right now.

> The second-person point of view acknowledges the important limitations on writing's authority. The subjective first person, deceptively chummy and confessional, and the stern third person, laying down the law, are both fictions. Also fictional is the notion that there is no choice other than these; rock-solid objectivity ("Now, this is how it is!") or presumptively weak subjectivity ("Well, this is how I feel!") somehow exhausting the available options when it comes to writing, thinking or the truth. There is an alternative superior to either, though it requires us to discard this soothing false dichotomy. Finding our way in a text, just like finding a way in the world, is not a matter either of attaining transcendental conviction or of receiving flattened-down personal opinion. It is, rather, an exercise in engagement with the other, accepting the risk of being unsettled by the importance of what matters to us. (p. 22)

Hopefully, this fits; when I talk to you it applies to you. However, I am methodologically arguing the use of the second person because it is accessible and

less distancing than other styles. Using the second person brings me, the writer, closer to you, the reader, while it also acknowledges the distance between us.

Theoretical and Stylistic Agenda

What also aids accessibility of content is my decision to use as little technical jargon, professional verbiage, as possible. I am writing about popularity, and if I want this paper to be read by many people, then I'll need it to be readable by many people at many different levels of understanding. Some of the authors I mention will be unfamiliar, some you may know better than I do. Altogether, I hope that at whatever level of understanding you are at, you will walk away knowing a little more about popularity and have a few more tools, albeit theoretical ones, to go out into the real world and be with others.

The Following Chapters

This section is a breakdown of the work to come. It is a skeleton of the larger body of this theoretical tour. If you want to begin reading the dissertation, then you may do so. However, if you want to see the map of the terrain before venturing there with me, then this section describes the following chapters and points you to sites that will come up along the way. After this roadmap, we'll continue onwards.

Chapter Two: Owning my Popularity

Due to the nature of a theoretical tour, I fully own my own role as tour guide in shaping this study. I am, at the writing of this study, 27 years old, a white male, queer, college educated, and socially active. Who I am as a person, as a friend, as a social butterfly is as much a part of this dissertation, is as much a part

of the limits and methodology of this dissertation, as my choice of authors to consider. Therefore, my own story of popularity necessitates its own explicit chapter. My personal way of being with others and navigating my own overscheduled social life is not separate from my own sense of spirituality, sense of collective unity, and idea of community. Here I will acknowledge my assumptions, my limitations of knowing popularity, and some of my history from my time served at middle school cafeteria tables. Bad haircuts, Prom, living in a small town, my first computer breakdown, Paris Hilton's celebrity are all part of my own life, and they are part of my coming to see popularity as pervasive, embodied, and embedded wherever I look.

Chapter Three: Beyond the Cafeteria Tables

The third chapter of this study will move popularity beyond the study of cafeteria tables, where it is often studied and where my own self-story (Chapter Two) began. I will use these paradigmatic studies as a metonymy to connote important but also limiting instances of popularity; the cafeteria table is a grounding image that will be a beacon throughout this work. Exploring cafeteria tables opens up a broader world-view that does not narrow down objects to study while dismissing those objects. Urban studies, architectural planning, computer based communication, even cosmopolitan ethics weigh into the notion of how we are in the world with others, other things, and their impact on our humanity. James Hillman's (2006) *City and soul* describes the relationship that a person has with a deadened, soulless, individualistic world while bell hooks' (2000) simple call to love reinstalls hope that the world can change if we move beyond

individualism to encourage others to grow. Mark Kingwell's (2008) *City and consciousness* looks at architecture and philosophical perspectives on being with others in concrete ways and Michel Foucault's (1995) formulation of how observations from others are more commonplace further erodes the notion that persons exists independent of social spaces. danah michele boyd's (2007a; 2007b; 2008) extensive work on social networking Internet sites, like Facebook®, will be included here to note the social spaces created digitally and, together with Judith Butler's (1990; 1997) reasoned argument for the performativity of identity, loosen up those boundaries of what can be considered a place for belonging and identity; it becomes more ephemeral and substantiated online. Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2006) *Cosmopolitanism* ventures into the ethics of territory to caution against drawing borders, separating out what defines one place from another. The reframe of this chapter is to move the discussion of popularity beyond the cafeteria tables.

Chapter Four: Cliques to Community

Moving beyond where popularity is explicitly studied (Chapter Three), this fourth chapter expands the notion of popularity with an emphasis on community and the navigation of being with others. This chapter also addresses the militaristic and political language used to discuss popularity. Sigmund Freud's (1930/1989) *Civilization and its discontents* will lay a psychoanalytic foundation for being with others in a social and developmental sense. Elaine Scarry's (1985) thesis from *Body in pain* elaborates the social difficulties in being with others and forming communities as she explores trauma and war. Niccolo' Machiavelli's (1532/1999) *The Prince*, and Sun-Tzu's *The Art of War* (6th Century BCE/2002),

combined, outline processes used to manage others, what to do when one has influence over a community, and how to defend against threats against community. Herbert Marcuse's ideas of how culture shapes our desires (1966) as well how industrialization and technology can lead to one all encompassing modern clique without dissenting opinions (1964) are equally relevant in this section. Also relevant are the voices of those who *clique* such as the interviews conducted by Frank Zappa (1983) on groupies. This fourth chapter will demonstrate the difficulty that social thinkers have had in grasping the notions of how we are with others and to what extents we will go to be with others.

Chapter Five: Contesting Competition

Whereas popularity has been introduced (Chapter One), extended beyond one place to study it (Chapter Three), and wrapped up in ideas of people joining together (Chapter Four), this chapter address the divisive aspects of being with others, and how being with others in competition and contests leads to hierarchical categorization. The notions of social competition draw upon Charles Darwin's (1859/1985) seminal work in biology. His thesis was that species that are most adaptive to their environments survive, and his ideas on species have been extended to human relations: social Darwinism. Joan Roughgarden's (2004) challenging of the competitive notions of Darwinian theory in *Evolution's Rainbow* acknowledges the errors in attributing Darwinian concepts of competition to human relationships. David Quammen's (2003) field journalism of carnivores in *Monster of God* further erodes social Darwinism while reframing survival as more than fending off potential predators; we can be both predator and

prey, never completely bracketed in one category. These two authors, Roughgarden and Quammen, critique human interaction based on biological sciences, and they undermine the idea that humans are hardwired to compete for survival. These theorists tie together ideas of being with others without competition; belonging to others does not require competition.

Chapter Six: Power and Rejection

Continuing on from where popularity can be studied (Chapter Three), how we hypothetically organize being with others (Chapter Four), what occurs when we compete against one another (Chapter Five), leads to examining popularity for its own impact, otherwise thought of as social power. Power as the indicator of popularity, and even popularity as power, are aspects of multiple theories across disciplines. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) *Black Feminist Thought* outlines the utilization of power to objectify another, to *other* them, and the necessity to identify oppression within power dynamics. Karl Marx and Engels' (1848/1967) idea of power addresses popularity from the vantage point of alienation, and that there are forces controlling and benefitting access to resources—popularity being the accumulation of social resources. James Hillman's (1995) *Kinds of power* sketches a phenomenology of power and the multiple ways that power can arise without domination or "othering." Thich Nhat Hanh's (2007) *Art of power*, from his perspective as a monk, was written to identify the internal dynamics of power, outside of social situations, where most previous authors anchor the idea of power. These authors, taken together, traverse many layers and dimensions of power, including the power of the marginalized and oppressed, all the while

commenting on popularity and the human experience of living publicly. To paraphrase Lady Gaga, like it or not, popularity is incredibly powerful, and a tour of popularity would be incomplete without this chapter.

Chapter Seven: Skin Deep

Considering that beauty is often a synonymous descriptor of popularity, studies on aesthetics and ideas about how we objectify what is beautiful is also a stop along this tour. Plato's (1st Century BCE/1974) discourses on Beauty, Harmony, Grace, and Evil in *The Republic* add a classical conception of beauty to popularity. Alfred North Whitehead's (1967) *Adventures of Ideas* goes over Plato's conceptions of these ideas, equally reverencing the aesthetic response as necessary to life and being with others. Hegel's (1886/1993) *Introduction to Aesthetics* draws an extensive portrait of the historical development of art, beauty, and outlines a "scientific" approach to objectify what is beautiful. To broaden the discussion from philosophers, I include Twyla Tharp's (2003) *Creative Habit.* Her ideas of beauty, of performance, and presentation, act as a pragmatic counterpoint to the more theoretical musings of Plato, Hegel, and Whitehead; she herself struggles with creating art, being critiqued for her art, and making a livelihood from her popularity as an artist.

Chapter Eight: Character Studies

The motivations for a person to want to be popular will be the focal point of this eighth chapter. What kind of person would utilize their friendship network and social resources, or power, to humiliate another person (Chapter Four), compete with supposed "friends" for the title of most popular (Chapter Five), or

even spend hours grooming or purchasing clothing to be pretty (Chapter Seven)? I'll wager that the answer to this question is somewhere within ideas of character; character, following David Shapiro's (1999) *Neurotic styles,* are all the ways that humans guard against simply being with others. Jessica Benjamin's (1988) *Bonds of Love* and Michael Eigen's (2005) *Emotional Storm* are both contemporary psychoanalytic accounts of interpersonal relationships and being with others, and both of which focus on intersubjectivity and the impact that we have on others. Being with others, and belonging to others can often lead to interpersonal attachment, and John Bowlby's (1990) attachment theory in *A Secure Base*, articulates the process whereby persons become attached to other persons. James Hillman's (1996) *Soul's Code*, drafts a decisive thesis on how character is about growing, becoming, and developing in the presence of other people. These theorists articulate how others matter to us and how we all belong to each other from an embodied, lived, and predominately psychological perspective.

Chapter Nine: Charisma

Popularity and spirituality are the focus of the ninth chapter. When describing a person labeled popular, they might be addressed as "over at the popular cafeteria table" (Chapter Three), as part of a clique (Chapter Four), on top of the social hierarchy (Chapter Five), the most powerful person (Chapter Six), pretty (Chapter Seven), or even charismatic. Charisma, though, is the theological term for gifts, usually from the divine. This section explores notions of charisma as a spiritual gift, the virtues of being with others, the vices that arise with others, and how religions flirt with the idea of popularity, interpersonal relationships,

conduct, and the purpose of others. Martin Buber's (1937/2000) *I and thou* pulls apart relationships within an overriding notion of contracts, both social and spiritual, and being with others without whether objectifying them or not. Max Weber's (1920/1993) *Sociology of Religion* resurrects the idea of charisma from ecclesiastical doctrine and looks at spiritual figures as deserving the label popular because of their charismatic authority. To round out Buber and Weber, Shāntideva's (8th Century CE/2006) *Way of the bodhisattva* examines the daily practice of being with others, and that this being with others can lead to personal growth and many other gifts. My agenda in this chapter is to reclaim popularity as neither materialistic nor secular in a negative sense, but to see the inherently spiritual strivings within being with others.

Chapter Ten: Cosmetics, Technology, and Cosmology

I conclude by bringing up a cosmology of popular, or an acknowledgement of the particular place of many things. With this chapter, the idea of popularity is reviewed and given a final analysis, showing some of the spaces between ideas, where bridges are built, and where conflicts occur. Popularity could be the social idea that displaces feelings of disconnection and isolation, and it might be the lens needed to see the world as less fragmented in this digital age if we cultivate popularity rather than ridicule it. I think that if anyone feels a little less lonely, disconnected, or if you feel that you belong in this world after reading about popularity, then I've achieved my objective.

Chapter Two: Owning my Popularity

Unfortunately, brevity limits my ability to draft the complicated map of middle school tables that I occasionally frequented, sometimes was invited over to, and those that I only wish I was asked to sit down at. I didn't have the familial ease to be the "little brother" or "older brother" joining a table because my siblings were in a different school. I had to make a decision of where to sit and whom to sit with every day of middle school. With every coming year I had more opportunities to sit with people I knew, and choosing where to sit became a daily stressor; choosing whom to dine with still stresses me out.

Before I conjure up images of awkward adolescent amblings through ill painted corridors, I would like to preface it with the importance of self-stories. Within many qualitative studies, rather than theoretical studies, the self-story is used to situate the author and make their writing transparent. There is a person guiding this study and I am that person. In doing a self-story, the author writes a biographical narrative, chronicles significant events, and in doing so becomes more present as a person and not a removed or distanced researcher (Czarniawska-Joerges, B., 1998). I could drop names and shout-out middle school tropes, but I'll start with my experience at high school and my fledgling social skills.

Finding a Seat

In high school I rejoined my older brother, reconnected to friends from my two elementary schools, had stronger relations with my junior high school peers, and began to meet new potential friends. At this time the overwhelming

complexity of social dynamics became apparent to me. Growing up in a small and rural town was an isolating and dreadful experience. I ironically never felt connected to the place where I grew up—ironically because I was over-involved in a hometown with limited social opportunities. I dreaded my hometown for its lack of opportunities, social or cultural, and tried to compensate by networking at every opportunity.

I involved myself in the diving team, because I had a background in gymnastics, but left because I kept hitting the board. This lead to a stint in water polo and lettering as varsity for the swim team. I stayed in orchestra for eight years but also joined the marching band, which resulted in accidentally learning how to play the xylophone. I joined the chess team, started to edit the school newspaper, and later found myself gazing at meteor showers as the secretary of the astronomy club: proof of my social skills and nerd status. My friends from these organizations (Abby Deats, Adan Jimenez, Billy Johnson, Jessica Humann, and Sarah Villicaña) would later join with me to form an Odyssey of the Mind® (http://odysseyofthemind.com) team, where would compete in academic challenges to solve logical puzzles. I was body painted to demonstrate our creativity. We went on to compete in the state finals: a testament to our creativity and ability to work together as well as my feeling that, in a small way, I belonged.

I was not different from most adolescents. For many adolescents and prepubescent children, the process of becoming social is about becoming as busy and involved as the environment will allow. In high school, I wasn't only looking

to fit in with other people's networks, but I was beginning to lead my own. College would continue this pattern.

This process of becoming increasingly more involved in activities outside the home is developmentally congruent with establishing a separate social life from one's parents (Eder & Kenney, 1995). Partially out of a desire for freedom from my parents and from boredom, as well as a deep desire to experience the fullness of life, I built this extensive social network for myself amidst the lack of felt community. I created all of this and yet I didn't always feel that I fit in. In this small town the common after school activity was traipsing through orange groves, discussing the engineering necessary to go cow-tipping, or slinging homophobic epitaphs towards anything remotely different: vegetarians, progressive activists, pacifists, educated folks, and non-Christians. I fell into every above category, and I had my share of epitaphs, had slurs written on walls or my desks, and ducked a few rocks hurled out of passing trucks.

My reflections on leaving my hometown, and my felt sense of rejection for being queer, are not contained in my memories alone. Sarah Villicaña, still a fervent supporter in my life, encouraged me to participate in a local newspaper story about the pressures of growing up in the central valley as an out teenager (Farrell, 2003). The article did not explicitly go over my urging of youth everywhere to make a community for themselves where they do feel they belong, or the tension of being in an unsupportive place without access to economic or social resources to leave. It did give me a voice to express the frustrations of

growing up in a town that tolerated me but didn't invite me to participate with it; I entered many places without an explicit invitation.

My voice as a person, and a queer youth, wasn't sought out. This lack of acceptance and feeling as though I was only being tolerated, encouraged me to invest my time and energies where my voice was valued and celebrated, and not simply accommodated at the table. I left for New York City in the August of 2000 with two duffle bags, a three-day train ticket, one-way, and a shiny laptop computer with the email addresses of my friends.

Going Digital and Getting Organized

I cannot say if it was my own social and outgoing nature, the environmental challenges of small town living, or the reactive desire to separate from my own parents that gave me the desire to build a community in my hometown. My social role then and now is not iconoclastic, for I do not completely reinvent communities to suit my own needs. I try to find a way to belong to a community, open up when I am invited, or bring people together around a shared activity.

Still, this doesn't compare to the experience of being invited. I was accepted to New York University. They wanted me there. They invited me. The moment my foot arrived at Penn Station I felt at home. I knew where I was, having planned to memorize the entire city grid on the train ride over, successfully accomplished that mission, and knew that I belonged.

As an adolescent, I got involved and stayed active to maintain my social life and feel a sense of productivity and engagement, which is the developmental

course of many youths (Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl & Acker, 2000). Back then I loosely organized my calendar and didn't have that much variation in my daily socializing. I knew the rounds of the tables to frequent, class friends to keep tabs with, acquaintances to acknowledge in the halls, but those skills wouldn't serve me as well in college having friends in most other time zones. Email was my saving grace for staying in touch with my physically distant friends. I started emailing when I was 15 years old (I was an early adopter of Hotmail™ [http://hotmail.com] in 1996, before going to Graffiti.net™ [http://graffiti.net] towards the end of high school, and I was elated to get my Gmail™ [http://gmail.com] invitation in 2004). I waited to purchase my first cell phone at 19 years old. I then joined the social networking site Facebook® in 2006 only to delete my Myspace™ (http://myspace.com) account in 2009. Through all of this I still felt like a luddite for waiting to adopt the new technology. Technology, for me, had always been in service of social goals.

Organizationally, I needed a way to manage all the bits of information I have acquired over my life. I have spreadsheets filled with all the books I own, whom I've lent books out to, cities that my friends have visited, calendars with birthdays, marital anniversaries, separation anniversaries, and "how-I-met-so-and-so" data. My memory isn't as sharp as I would like it to be, so externalizing my memory, transferring it into bits of digital data, has helped me assuage some of the guilt of forgetting important information. Mistakes are still made, some entries haven't been updated regularly, I haven't called some friends for years, but I try.

One horrific day, in 2003 when I had my first PDA (personal digital assistant), an HP iPaq Pocket PC h1900 series®, I cried for weeks because I lost all my contact information for my friends. My shaky Compaq Presario CM2036® series computer crashed, my PDA lost all my data, and I had little way to retrieve my permanently erased information. I met my fear that day. I lost and couldn't replace the most valuable thing I owned: my friends' addresses and phone numbers. The sheer isolation, powerlessness, and disconnection I felt were beyond palpable. Luckily, although my more personalized notes were lost from my digital records, I was able to reconnect with almost all of the people whose contact information I lost through Facebook® and emailing some friends that I knew were in touch with other friends. Within two weeks I had almost 95% of my contact information back. Now, I daily backup my data in multiple places. Nonetheless, the digital capacity to store and replicate information, beyond technology's utilization to connect, through phone, email, text messaging, or satellite imaging helped me realize my reliance on technology to stay connected.

Labeled "Popular"

It wasn't until starting my education at California Institute of Integral Studies, my eighth school, that I was given the label popular. I'm not fully certain how it stuck, but I jokingly admitted it in a class on Eastern Theories. I was asked by a new classmate what "my spiritual practice was." The timing of the question was sublime, I hadn't committed to a formalized tradition of spiritual practice, but I was renewed in my desire to stay close to my friends. I said, "my popularity is

my spiritual practice." Fortuitously, the self-label stuck and looking back, I've been training and preparing for this label my whole life.

I wasn't labeled popular when I joined the math club in middle school, but I felt like I belonged at my middle school when I knew I could sit with them at lunch. I didn't exactly feel popular in high school, rather over-involved in whatever club I could find. Getting requests to plan community-building activities in college wasn't exactly being popular; it was fun. There are many examples, even after high school, where I was sought out, widely liked, and accessible to many people. I built community, learned the leadership and organizational skills necessary to host events, and made others feel at home in unfamiliar surroundings. One of the best tools I honed was that of introducing strangers into new relational dyads, triads, and hordes. Even as I played match-matcher, and continue to do so, I am more at ease calling myself *nosey* rather than popular.

Perhaps there is still within me that fear of rejection. Lingering habits from my middle school days still prevail. I had the options of many different places to sit, but those options also meant many different groups could reject me.

Role Modeling

My friends and acquaintances could reject me for who I was as a person, but if they rejected me for my image, well, that didn't hurt as much, but it still hurt. Unfortunately, like so many other humans, I'm attached and care about what I look like. I never agreed with Henry David Thoreau's (1854) phrase, "I say; beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes" (p. 17). Thoreau wrote about going back to nature, and sounded a call for

the early American transcendental movement to prioritize one's inner feelings. This was a defensive statement against the societal pressures to fit in and on becoming fixated on one's image or social standing. Going to nature meant ditching the wireless computer portals and regaining a sense of self away from civilization. My rebuttal to Thoreau's agenda is that geography may change but all the people that were left behind in the exodus to nature are still there, for those relationships haven't ended.

I care about my image, I care that my clothes are clean, the furnishings are placed, my hair is coiffed, and each new day rises with another outfit preparing me to be out in the public world. This is truer now that I have a broader wardrobe than when my parents bought my clothing. Beyond my adolescent baggy, brown, corduroy pants that never fit, my style continues to change. For my hair alone I've had bowl cuts, bangs, blond (my natural color), black, brunette, strawberry blond, faux-hawked, mo-hawked, spiked cuts, textured cuts, razor cuts, frosted tips, pomaded pompadours, waxed tangles, crew cuts, buzz cuts, champagne highlights, bronzed lowlights, feathered waves, and full-on peroxide blond with purple tips. I've changed my style and image to reflect various aspects of my life, and each time I've done so I've also become more aware of how I am treated. Rather than Thoreau's directional emphasis, I've noticed with each change in style or fashion on my outward appearance, I find new things inwardly.

I am fond of the dubious expression by Bret Easton Ellis' (1998) signature and fictional character, Victor Ward, in his daily repeated mantra, "The better you look, the more you see." Victor Ward didn't go back to nature, he walked

catwalks for Calvin Klein, worked his abs with his trainer, graced magazine covers, opened up a night-clubs, and continuously dropped the name of every celebrity, model, designer, actor, or busboy that he can remember. All of this was in the service of looking good and having the right presentation. Perhaps though, Victor's reaction to learning that Sandra Bullock, fictionally, that is, might not come to the opening of his club is an even better literary window to my ideas. Beau, who is helping Victor open the club says, "You've gotta learn that it's more important to these people to be invited than to actually show up" (p. 80) The invitation is crucial after all. Victor doesn't leave the unresponsiveness to an invitation at that, it being simply offered without consequence. He follows, "'No,' I snap, pointing a finger. 'People just really need to learn how to embrace their celebrity status'" (p.80). This fictional story spoke to me and for me about the importance of invitations and looking the part as integral to relating to others. Although I first read Glamorama (Ellis, 1998) in 2004, its narrative of a person understanding how he has access to the world, and that the world itself uses supposedly beautiful people for dastardly deeds, had an impression on my sense of self and popularity.

Admittedly, I exercise with a religious devotion, watch my carbohydrate intake, bleach my teeth, buy jeans in the correct size and fit, and I have an unhealthy adoration for Paris Hilton (http://parishilton.com), who follows Daniel Boorstin's (1961) definition of celebrity: known for being known. I too have most of the trappings of being self-absorbed, narcissistic, and egomaniacal about my appearance, and yet, I know that with a little flirting and a tight v-neck, I can

freely talk to and enter most conversations. Having a fit and polished appearance helps, being popular helps, it makes things a little easier in this world, and they go together. There is a certain radiance, a particularly beautiful veneer that someone social has, and I admire it.

Paris Hilton oozes this practiced presentation, a coy wink or air-kiss to a camera, a playful one-liner tossed oh-so-casually; her effortlessness in social situations beams power and also belonging. She seems natural in any situation, and I both admire that and seek to emulate that sense of grace and ease. I admire Paris Hilton's polished social savvy; she is my media model for popularity and power.

Anecdotally, more than a few friends and strangers have mentioned that I travel in hordes of people, which I agree. At the time when I first heard this expression, back in April of 2008, I was rereading Malidoma Patrice Somé's (1993) book *Ritual*, and I was struck with his reference to "Mineral People," or village members that are self-selected in rituals because of their knowledge of the community. They can perform many roles in the community, yet they are best suited to simply remember and recount what occurs in the village: weddings, wars, funerals, seasonal celebrations, who attended, who did not, and the like. In this book I had found a guided outline, an example of how to be in community, and how to relate to others.

I saw in this tribal role the capacity of a person to extend the parameters of a community through including others. One person can invite another person, one person can add another into a story, and they can belong. One person can be in a

horde of people and make them all feel together, simply welcoming them by remembering their name and giving them a seat at a table. I have the guiding image of Paris Hilton, one tribal definition of a role, and lots of history navigating multiple ongoing and overlapping friendships; this is my personal collage of how to be with others and belong.

My Popular Manifesto

I feel a sense of belonging within my social circles, I do want to be liked, and I like getting the validation that I belong. Moreover, I love the response of someone that I haven't met being invited to a party of mine, or a dinner, and have them walking away knowing more people than they expected. I can see their comfort in belonging at that very moment.

I love that response. I love knowing that I can, by simple invitation and networking, allow someone to feel accepted. In that moment I embody popularity, but I also want to share it and remind others that they too belong.

Chapter Three: Beyond the Cafeteria Tables

I have stated that a majority of articles about popularity, as a social construct, situate the experience around the cafeteria table. This chapter draws out how limiting that physical reality is in this digital age, but also how limiting, yet perfect, the image of a cafeteria table is when there are no concrete walls fencing it off. Anyone can sit down at a cafeteria table.

Where to Formally Begin This Study on Popularity?

I find it helpful to start with an image, a more physical image, especially when writing on something as abstract as an idea like popularity. Adolescent girls, presciently forecasting the dialogue that will occur that day, clustering together, applying lip-gloss, wearing skinny jeans, checking of cell phones for new text messages, dangling Hello Kitty® charms from glittery cell phone cases, slinging rumors at unaware passersby, and listening for all the right names, begins the image of the cafeteria table. *Did Jessica really want to go to the party? I didn't think she wanted to go, but did you see that Sarah was wearing Jamila's jacket? She said she really liked it in math. She was really nice when Meiying asked to borrow a pencil. Meiying always asks to borrow a pencil!* Here is the typical image of popularity: names, opinions, places, things, and people. This image is a typical one when a person thinks of popularity and middle school. It is a middle school cafeteria table where these girls are clustered. It is also where popularity is often studied.

Cafeteria tables do not only fence in the idea of popular, because popularity is all around us. Behind the velvet rope, front or back seats on the bus,

wooden pews other than the front row, heavily trodden paths, designer clothing labels, overpriced orchestra seats, glossy magazine covers, hats with or without feathers, images on museum walls, names written about in diaries, billboards in New York's Times Square, London's Piccadilly Circus, Tokyo's Shibuya crossing, cash registers, polling booths, campfire songs, coffee drinks, places to drink coffee drinks, warmed-over benches, heavily trafficked websites and named streets the likes of Los Angeles' Rodeo Drive, Paris' Champs-Elysées, San Francisco's Haight Street, New York's Broadway, Shanghai's The Bund (Zhongshan Road). Each place, each item, is filled with stories, ideas, and personal histories; all of these things shape ideas of popular and none of them are the sole place to study popularity.

When I scan the horizon for signs of popularity, I am met with specific places, people and relationships, but I am also met with neon signs, crisp advertisements commanding, "eat me," "drink this," and "wear that." The whole world is calling out to me, inviting me to participate in it. Looking out into the world, I see innumerable objects, items, people, places, and relationships. This is a very broad statement because of the breadth of what I am trying to examine; popularity, could be a label attached to anything. However, I will be spending most of my time looking at how the label is attached to people, and people inhabit many different places. Therefore this topic needs to have an expanded scope, a wide perspective to find the outer edges of popularity. To see yourself in a full body mirror, you needn't stand two inches away from the mirror; a few steps back allows you to see a fuller image.

Narrow Cafeteria Tables

Overly strict boundaries and too narrow of a focus can limit what you see. They might also enrich the small piece that is being focused in on, so there is a definite need for both. For now, the idea of popular is confined to the image of childhood social settings, primarily school (Adler & Adler, 1998; Berndt, 1982; Dodge, Schlundt, Schocken, & Delugach, 1983) or online (boyd, 2007a; boyd 2007b; boyd 2008) and not the full expanse of childhood. Only time spent at cafeteria tables in middle school spanning the length of the woodened veneer on a cafeteria table or in front of a computer screen counts in the above mentioned studies on popularity. My assertion and argument is that popularity is woven into greater social spaces, metropolitan cities, cosmopolitan hubs, and political discourse. Unfortunately, popularity gets dissected in relational dynamics rather than in theories of society. Note Rosalind Wiseman's (2002) cafeteria table as the central literary device to help adults imagine the world of popularity.

> You have a close group of friends, but for some reason one of your best friends comes up to you between classes and tells you that one of your other friends is spreading rumors about you. Your face feels hot; you can feel everyone looking at you. Thoughts race through your head. What did you do? Why is she mad at you? Are your friends going to back you or side with her? All of a sudden, a question drives an icy stake of fear through your heart as you stand there clutching your orange plastic lunch tray in the cafeteria line: Where are you going to sit at lunch? (p. 9)

Understanding popularity is frequently isolated to this powerful social experience in childhood. Popularity gets narrowed down to that orange plastic lunch tray, to that specific cafeteria table and not the greater ideas that surround it. The ideas that limit the focus to cafeteria tables are what I will wrestle with, for now.

As an academic outsider studying adolescent social relations, I am less inclined to see the framing of my study in adolescent social settings as reducing my study. I might think of the cafeteria table as the typical place to study popularity and not as limiting my exploration of popularity. This is how academia typically operates. Stewart & Bennet (1991), speaking broadly about American cultural processes, saw through this when they argued in their introductions, "Cultural self-awareness is not always easy since culture is internalized as patterns of thinking and behaving believed to be 'natural'–simply the way things are" (p. x). To get at the idea of popular requires some preliminary articulation of how academia grapples with different ideas, how popularity is studied, and how academia can devalue or dismiss ideas as it tries to uncover them.

Understandably, I am faced with the task of conveying to you academia's faults in studying popularity, while also being an academic. I've been taught that the best way to approach any research topic, any idea, is to go in for the specificity, narrow the range, isolate the problem, and reduce extra questions for "further research." Ideas are limited before they are studied. This creates concise titles, but also prejudges what can be the scope of any study. Studies on popularity could easily study tie-dye shirts, Easter brunch, veganism, United States' first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, or carrying wallets in particular pockets. These behaviors, things, persons, or anything, can be individually reflective of the idea of popular. To reframe studies of popularity only to fashion, diets, political personalities, or particular cities is to once again limit the scope of popularity. The academic culture of isolating problems and reducing variables isn't questioned,

and on a larger scale it is various world-views that affect how the world is sized up, measured, and treated. It seems that to get into a study of the idea of popular, I need to first get into ideas about how to study, not merely cafeteria tables, but how to approach studying in general.

Into the Cities and the World

Studying popularity necessitates getting at a fuller image. A fuller image of the cafeteria table necessitates how the cafeteria table is used in studies of popularity as well as discourses on world-views and cities as places where we are with other people. Therefore, talking about cafeteria tables leads us beyond the physical landscape of the table itself and into the cities and world in which those tables are located.

James Hillman, in his work, *City and Soul* (2006), identified an ideological bias in academia and psychology that reinforces a particular world-view. He writes, “One of humankind’s favorite fantasies is that the soul is best off in nature and needs to slow down to nature’s pace, for in cities the psyche becomes sophisticated and corrupted” (Hillman, 2006, p. 20). The world-view that he addresses is the individualistic world-view, where we can systematically and scientifically examine individual entities and find ways to measure them, utilize them, and gain profit from them. The world as a calm “natural” whole is fractured through fast pace living, with technologies sophisticated corrupting. As the argument goes, it is the fault of technology for how we abuse, dismiss, and depersonalize other people, not how we instrumentally use technology for precise problems. Hillman sees the problem of how we assess the world as leading to the

use of things, use of people and material things, in an individual capacity. Rarely do we assess the world without limiting it to the specifics. Popular, the idea that there are things that belong to the people, is tied into how we assess the world, and in particular, what can belong.

The quickening of engagement, with others and with our surroundings, occurs primarily in cities. Hillman (2006) looks towards cities as social spheres where we can examine our world-views, our notions of individuality, and grasp ideas of ourselves that aren't as narrow. He points out the difference between cities and nature as antagonistic, placing "city and soul in opposing camps, resulting in soulless cities and city-less souls" (p. 21). World-view, for Hillman, is about cities, technology, parks, as much as it is about soul. The world, to Hillman, can be looked at with regard to soulless civilization and civilization seemingly opposed to nature, or simply nature being better than civilization. His thesis of the individualistic ideology is that, if we are civilized creatures at heart then nature must be tamed. Accordingly, if we are natural creatures then we cannot be separated from each other, from nature, nor do we need to be tamed. His thesis, then, is that world-view establishes ways to relate and treat the world.

For Hillman, conceiving of the world is both an external appraisal and an internal reflection on the world. Thinking of the world and our relationship to it as being *in* the world and *with* the world, as some philosophers would argue leads to our participating in the world with others, meeting others and meeting places (Abram, 1996; Spretnak, 1999). Studying the world comes out of how we participate in the world.

The Heart and Soul In…

Hillman saw this mutually internal awareness with external judgment within the concept of *anima mundi*, a resurrected term from the studies of alchemy. Alchemy was the refined skill of turning one thing into another within the ancient world. In order to change something, an understanding of what could be changed was needed, as well as an understanding of soul. I'm not going to get into the ideas of alchemists, the shift from alchemy to chemistry, the Egyptian, Persian, Hellenistic, or European variations in alchemy, or the myriad definitions of soul. I'll simply note that alchemists would say that we could forget to see the soul of the world if we see the world as cold, dead matter. Following this idea, when we forget that other people matter, they remain placeholders for a seat at a table and are not persons who belong.

Plato (1st Century CE/1974) flirted with the idea of a soul of the world, Kahil Gibran's (1973) poetry explored it, Walt Whitman's (1855/2005) prose celebrated it, and Paulo Coelho's (1993) character Santiago wanted to commune with it. However, not everyone accepts the idea that the world has a soul. Descartes (1637/1960) and Kant (1785/1993) railed against a purely subjective world, and from them we have developed many empirical sciences, exacting the world into Aristotles' (1st Century BCE / 1997) categories of what things are or are not, what is mine and what is yours—or if you will—what is or is not popular.

But what if we agree with Hillman and don't see the world as dead matter? Soul is in shrubbery, subways, cell phone charms, lip-gloss, ideas of economics, evolution, language, technology, and not only in the isolated human. This goes

beyond animism, or the belief that everything has its own individual soul. Both of these notions isolate souls from each other. A world soul, or a collective all-encompassing soul, changes the landscape of what can be studied. Those cafeteria tables are no longer soulless defaced placeholders for scientific examination or social identity; they meet us in our belonging.

What if we dismiss Descartes and Kant's arguments in search of objective ideals? Maybe then we can see the world as a vibrant ground that allows for cultural, personal, and soulfully meeting those other things. Lip-glosses, disposable napkins, and names on guest lists are no longer material objects but soulful markers of my, and your, belonging to the world and an invitation to participate in the world. As Hillman offers, "the world without soul can never offer intimacy, never return my glance, never look at me with appeal, with gratitude, nor relieve the essential isolation of my subjectivity" (2006, p. 45). Lip-gloss can be applied with the forethought of wanting to be presentable to another, a napkin extended in kindness across a disheveled table has care within its fibers, and a name on a clipboard acknowledges the significance of another and isn't simply ink. We can respect lip-gloss if we choose to not look at it coldly.

Belonging to one another can be cold, depersonalized, deodorized interaction when soul is left out and placed only in one's internal experience. If one's personhood is the only place to find soul, then we focus on person-centered relationships, internal preoccupations with one's sense of self, and forget about what's outside, what's external, and what also matters. Over-focusing on the internal, the isolated individual, leads to ideas that refashion popularity into

consumerist impulses to acquire shiny, new, upgraded, powerful, trendy things, but things that don't really matter beyond what a person attaches to it. These consumerist fads can, with a different frame of mind, be more than tacky trinkets but markers of belonging with others.

bell hooks (2000), in her erudite writings on love, individualism, and gender, acknowledged how the use of resources and things can lead to a lack of love for others. She writes,

> All over the world people live in intimate daily contact with one another. They wash together, eat and sleep together, face challenges together, share joy and sorrow. The rugged individual who relies on no one else is a figure who can only exist in a culture of domination where a privileged few use more of the world's resources than the many who must daily do without. Worship of individualism has in part led us to the unhealthy culture of narcissism that is so all pervasive in our society. (pp. 213-214)

Love, to hooks, is in the verb, rather than the noun or object to be captured. Love for her is the ability to extend one's own nurturance for the growth of another, and individualism is the opposite of growth. hook's critique is that mainstream American culture does not offer proper roles for how to love, but American culture does offer roles for how to be an individual at the cost of others, society, and the material world we inhabit. If I focus too closely on my objects, my lip-gloss, and forget that I am adorning so that I can meet another person, then I am treating the world, and my interaction with you, without love.

To bring a summative close to the idea of souls and cities, individualism as a world-view arises within societal reflection. When soul is left out from others, from the physical world, then there is no love and no belonging. However lifeless the world may be with individualism, the city is erected in defiance of

individualism as it promotes the illusion of individualism as the natural way of being. What the image of cities also does is articulate the ways in which we belong in specific places, in our homes, communities, and the tables we sit at.

Conscious of What's Beyond the Cafeteria Table

Thinking about cafeteria tables, and the cold perspectives taken on deadened cafeteria tables, leads me to the question of, "how has thinking about cafeteria tables in this regard shifted my consciousness of what I am aware of at the cafeteria and beyond the cafeteria table?" Answering this question furthers the connection between consciousness and place, and how each influences one another.

While traipsing through ideas of individualism, and soul, the image of popularity, adolescent girls giggling and glittered upon cafeteria tables, has remained relevant. Whether it is studying the world, cafeteria tables, or adolescent girls, any object can be studied as soullessly dead matter. Individualism can be attacked with more theory, more abstractions based in philosophical discourse, but it can also be addressed with concrete, gritty realizations, from cities themselves and the technologies therein. Mark Kingwell (2008, p. 37) unravels both individualism and technology when he writes,

> Expansive individualism, sure; but *for everyone*. The genius of the city, of all cities, is its layered, fluid, always shifting contracts between sovereign individuals, each dependent on all the others for their sovereignty. Indeed, the sovereign individual is revealed by the city as a myth, a legal or political abstraction unrooted in real experience of the urban lifeworld.

Kingwell, whose primary writing on philosophy, architecture, and urban thought reflects a very pragmatic sense on consciousness as what we are aware of and how we come to be aware.

Kingwell hinged cities and urban development with consciousness in his abiding respect for location as the physical and conceptual ground for relations. He wrote,

> Thus does position become an all-important aspect of human consciousness. Even today, when mobile communications have more and more rendered the idea of location irrelevant, the first question most people ask of a cell-phone interlocutor is, Where are you? It doesn't matter, and yet it matters—even as talking on the phone in the first place, that disembodied act, seems to give people a sense of their own solidity, their existence confirmed. Talking to you, I feel myself affirmed. I want, at the same time, to visualize your position, to sketch mentally the distance between where you are and where I am. (p. 195)

Let's take some time here to unpack city living and how being clustered with others, whether in cities or cafeteria tables, alters our consciousness and sense of relationships. As previously mentioned, the dense packing in of other people does not necessarily commodify others, induce morally bankrupt behavior, nor does it depersonalize, deny, or disregard others as soullessly unimportant. That is an argument set up by those defending a return to nature, not by those wanting to explore culture. Rousseau (1762/2003), Emerson (1836/2009), and Thoreau (1854) champion this return to the "natural" and turning away from civilization.

Returning to the limiting image of the cafeteria table, there are only a certain allowable number of people that can sit in any given place. Perhaps there is room for six adolescent girls at the table, eight if they squeeze in. There is a limit to the number of interactional processes that is shaped by the very presence

of the cafeteria table. Similarly, there is a limit to the number of backpacks, cell phones, textbooks, and cafeteria trays that can fit as well. If only six or eight girls can be at a cafeteria table at any one time, then there are many girls and boys that are excluded from joining that table. Coming to live in cities, and coming to sit at a cafeteria tables, expands ones consciousness about the limitations of a setting and how many people can fit.

A division has been defined with whoever is at the table and who is not. As Kingwell (2008) indicates, "The logic of inside and out belongs to us all—not only because we all must live with and in buildings, those monuments to human desire, but also because and more profoundly still, it structures consciousness itself" (p. 93). What we are aware of is shaped internally and externally, and belonging is a felt sense of being inside, whether in a city or among others at a cafeteria table.

Inside and Outside

Being popular denotes both an idea of inclusivity and an idea of exclusivity, or more colloquially thought of as being in or out. Furthermore, making a personal distinction between what is on the inside or on the outside is an indication of both inclusivity and exclusivity. One philosopher, Michel Foucault (1984) thought just that.

> In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. (¶24)

Heterotropic is a weighty term, which Foucault, and architects that followed, used to describe specific places, and places within places, such as cemeteries, barracks,

courtrooms, and the like. These heterotropic places create roles for persons, have their own etiquette, manners, customs, and seemingly isolated culture. The world, therefore, asks individual persons to change so that entrance can be granted to a specific place, even though a place may be accessible to anyone. Heterotropic places, as Foucault frames it, are isolated and separated off in an illusory manner.

Roles are adopted at the cafeteria table, whether lending someone a seat, or being the one to reject others for attempting to sit down, as many middle schoolers would agree. However, the making of roles, which is somehow dependent upon location, is broader than just cafeteria tables or Foucault's idea of *heterotopia*. Kingwell (2008) describes this pervasive sense of location affecting the roles we are in as he opens up the idea of place to include non-localized locations, such as advertisements, commercials, and the Internet. He ponders,

> Under these conditions, sites of human interaction are off-loaded to a non physical "space" of technology, nodes and networks of an electronic omnipolis: the place that is at once everywhere and nowhere, the city as "omnicenter of nowhere." Life reduces to curating the domestic interior, the last inside, the site of the individual's self-creation—all under the watchful eye of social-networking sites that create the softest of soft surveillance, the kind we sign on to eagerly and of our own volition. (p. 224)

Foucault called this *panopticism*. He defined panopticism as an awareness of constantly being watched. This is a term in prison systems referring to the guard-tower that would allow one guard the ability to see into all inmate cells without the guard being seen. Away from the term, being watched, therefore, creates a relational dynamic wherein people nowadays act with the notion that they are being watched, their moves are measured, and decisions recorded. One could

argue that it is the price of being popular, that being watched is what celebrities, star athletes, and politicians both want and agree to.

That is a simple argument. What is more complicated is the notion that in response to being watched, a person might want to keep something private, and to label this a right to privacy or an individual right. A world-view based in individualism would follow this rationale, it would be wary of social networking sites and popularity in general. If the world-view wasn't individualistic, then a notion of a private self being defended doesn't exactly fit in. Only when a person is regarded as separate, as an individual, does privacy become defendable.

Going back to Hillman's ideas of the world and adding my own focus on popularity, if the entire world were regarded as ensouled, then everything would be treated as significant. Roles could be shifted without fear of losing one's sense of self and being public wouldn't mean losing one's privacy, for everything is now, more than ever, on display.

Inside, Outside, and Online

Digressing from world-views back to popularity, technology is now more than ever a part of the landscape of popularity. The art of flirting, declining party invitations, coordinating parties through text messages and voicemails, or updating a Facebook® profile, are more expansive thanks to technology. We have the capacity to offer roving social commentary on anything we witness with Twitter® (http://twitter.com), which is another social media outlet for the purpose of digitally broadcasting, in 140 characters or a picture, whatever one wants to broadcast. If we hold that the entire world has a soul, that nothing is soullessly

mute, then we can take these things seriously. Popularity allows us to take other things seriously as it changes the landscape of what is significant to us. Popularity allows everything and everyone to matter, if we take that leap.

It is not, however, nameless faces that are using technology to monitor other people, but actual persons. Wiseman (2002) articulated this herself when she noted that adolescent girls are the ones that both police each other's behavior and use technology in service of the policing.

> The dominant, or alpha clique absorbs and reflects media images with little interpretation; they're the girls who look like clones of the latest pop stars. The beta cliques create their look in response to or in opposition to the alpha clique. Markers matter because they affirm to the girls in the clique that they belong in the social hierarchy; they get the attention of others (especially boys), and they announce to the world who's in and who's not. (p. 82)

The cafeteria table is a physical marker of popularity, but popularity also exists in those placeless places, like the Internet. To borrow more of Foucault's (1995) terminology, adolescent girls and Facebook denizens are the respective panopticons of popularity around the cafeteria table and on the Internet.

Getting Online

danah michele boyd's work is at the forefront of studies on social networking sites, otherwise known as social media. Her interest in, "networked publics stems from a fascination with the differences between what is imagined as possible and what people actually do when they gather in and create public spaces online" (2008, p. 62). Her work has articulated a conceptual view of culture, and of the world as it is becoming more collapsed, complicated, and boundaries are blurred. The idea that online relationships are somehow separate from other

relationships is suspect to other theorists (Boellstorff, 2008; Taylor, 2006) as well, especially when searching for an approach or methodology to separate cultures in an isolated context (Clifford, 1997).

In creating public spaces online, boyd found that teen "bedroom culture" was similar to online profiles on Facebook® or Myspace®. Unlike Wiseman's (2002) work on parental involvement with teens around issues of fashion and appearance, boyd (2008) speaks to the tension that adults and adolescents face regarding digital self-representation within teenage culture.

> As adults seek to control the ways in which teens can engage in acts of self-expression, teens seek out new spaces, including the Internet. Because profiles are both a representation of an individual and also a space for social interaction, the practices of self-expression that take place parallel both bedroom culture and fashion. (p. 140)

Culture isn't isolated in one specific place, one specific table, one specific group, society, or role. Therefore, how you choose your outfit matters as much as how you fill out online profiles, or if you even participate in social media.

The point I am trying to make is that forming an image of oneself for the public, whether that is on display in the classroom, website, or on a résumé, is wrapped up in ideas of how roles are adopted to suit these places.

Roles Online and in the Seats

Stepping aside from talking about technology explicitly, Judith Butler (1997), noted philosopher, feminist, and social theorist, explores the performative aspects of roles as well as culture. She argues both are constructed rather than given. "Consider gender, for instance, as a corporeal style, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' suggests a

dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (p. 175). This is not to say that roles do not exist, nor do they have no meaning. They have meaning for what they offer, which is a way to be in the world. This is not to dismiss a world-view of isolated individuals as incorrect, for Butler, and myself included, are following the notion that our ideas of what exists shape how we respond to it, including our ideas of our own individuality. Some people need roles to proscribe ways to act and determine what is technically, and therefore socially, correct. For a woman to act in one way and a man to act in another way is learned behavior. Here we can go back to an idea of popular, a person-centered idea, that holds being popular to be similar to acting in a certain way: feminine girls and masculine boys are the more popular of their peers. The idea here that popular is often given to typical adolescents that adopt typical and often heterosexual roles, is one of those situations where the rigid definitions of gender are emphasized more than the creation of those rigid definitions.

This is the main reason that I am including boyd’s research; roles and categories of popularity erupt online and at the table. Social networking sites, the Internet in general, has therefore shifted the landscape of how we interact. Technology, then, is a mediating factor in our interactions. boyd writes (2008),

> In unmediated social situations, people tend to know who is present to witness a social act. This is not often the case in networked publics where audiences are invisible and access is asynchronous. Physical limitations help control the boundaries of unmediated environments—walls define the space and expressions can be witnessed only in hearing or visual range. Online, boundaries are porous—search collapses contexts, replicability allows traces of social acts to be copied to other spaces, and the persistence of data means that acts performed are not bounded by ephemerality. (p. 159)

Here, boyd can be seen as broadening Kingwell's ideas of consciousness and the expansiveness of the external, physical, and digital world. By acknowledging the Internet's creation of a pervasively persistent external and the placeless physical, the external world grows larger than cities; the Internet has absorbed cities and made our relations with others even broader. There is no limit to the number of digital friends a person has on Facebook whereas there is a limit to the number of people sitting at a particular cafeteria table.

Thanks to social media, unmediated social situations are becoming more rare, for cell phones might outnumber persons in a room, cameras can capture and distribute images instantaneously thanks to Twitter®, and the skill used to navigate social media is becoming more widespread with each new generation.

Being with others is more than relational, it is also geographical; we know where we are because of others. In a café talking over coffee, strolling down a street, and gossiping feet away from the heels of one talked about, location and relation occur simultaneously, even on the Internet. When we are with those who make us want to go hurriedly in the opposite direction, those we block from seeing our online profiles, or preemptively block by not joining networking sites, they all redirect ourselves to where we are at in the moment. The "where" that I am speaking of is both physical and embodied, because there is a computer console or café where a person can be at and that computer console can be anywhere and still provide the same sense of location and being with others. With the Internet, more locations and places that are not bound by geography are available to us than before.

The choice, then, that each of has to make, is how to be with other persons online and in person. Now, we have the choice to be with persons online or not online, and our level of engagement with others is mediated by these social medias.

What is given the label popular also has this nebulous boundary. There is no one specific place that popularity resides, no one exclusive domain, no one noun that gets labeled more than any other noun. The idea that one thing can be labeled popular while other things are not is built into individualistic ideas, because individualistic ideas that promote competition. If only the individual matters, then others aren't as important. Exclusivity is a neighbor to popularity; that which belongs to the people might be considered public domain, but it might not belong to *all* people. One example might be brand identification similar to the likes of Paris Hilton. She can be seen wearing any clothing and anyone can identify with her, and yet, she doesn't wear every clothing label, but those that she deemed high-end, stylish, cute, or any other synonym for expensive. Paris Hilton is therefore associated with particular things as those things bespoke exclusivity, for not everyone can afford what she is associated with. Her popularity furthers a notion of exclusivity as it also furthers a notion of the materialistic belonging.

If a person does not look like Paris Hilton, then they are not seen as stylish, cute, moneyed, or any other idealized adjective for popularity. Wiseman (2002), speaking obliquely of exclusivity and roles, wrote about this desire to look like a particular person and therefore dismiss others that do not look like that idealized person. "Cliques are self-reinforcing. As soon as you define your role

and group, you perceive others as outsiders, it's harder to put yourself in their shoes, and therefore it's easier to be cruel to them or watch and do nothing" (p. 40). The cyclical nature of belonging extends beyond exclusivity of objects and into the utilization of roles.

Media Mavens

It is difficult to be outside of technology or not be connected to others. Part of the pervasiveness of today's technology is in the variety of media available for connection. We are no longer tethered to a phone line. We can walk down the street and talk, send an email from a computer, find contact information for friends online, digitally disclose our current whereabouts and activities, and if either the cell phone or computer crashes, there are backups that allow us to track down and find others. Decades before, if you moved, changed addresses or changed your name, those contact routes were lost, and information was misplaced or forgotten. Friendships ended because we couldn't find one another. In this way, locality is always important, even though technology has made it more nebulous. People can text or blog from anywhere, and yet, location matters. If each place allows roles to be performed, then a role is created in relation to others and with relation to that place. Context specific roles broaden when the context broadens.

The narrow cafeteria table is not limiting when the Internet and technology expand who is considered part of the cafeteria table and who belongs there. When we revision places, and what is considered inside and outside, we

also revision relationships. In doing so, popularity places us with others and where we belong.

Ethically Navigating the Cafeteria Tables and Digital World

There are well pulled together people everywhere, in person walking down the streets and online with sleek profiles and well-lit photos. If one were outside of mainstream middle America, or in working class America, or in another continent altogether, those labels, those styles, change, yet the process of dressing and labeling retain its social significance. However, to whom do these styles belong? Popular is about belonging to the people; so, it follows, to whom does something or anything belong? Kwame Anthony Appiah, noted ethicist and philosopher, addresses this belonging in his notions of property and ownership.

> One connection—the one neglected in talk of cultural patrimony—is the connection not through identity but despite differences. We can respond to art that is not ours; indeed, we can fully respond to "our" art only if we move beyond thinking of it as ours and start to respond to it as art. But equally important is the human connection…. The connection through a local identity is as imaginary as the connection through humanity. The Nigerian's link to the Benin bronze, like mine, is a connection made in the imagination; but to say this isn't to pronounce either of them unreal. They are among the realest connections that we have. (2006, p. 135)

In his defense of the imaginal, but also in the defense of art and beauty, Appiah asserts the looseness of boundaries as he appreciates all that can, and cannot, be owned; this is cosmopolitanism. His idea of ownership is also beyond an individualistic world-view, for there is no concern for what is mine above what is yours when one adopts a cosmopolitan world-view. What is shared, what is common, what is available to all is important in cosmopolitanism which is a world-view that attempts to hold all cultures together with respect.

Speaking with greater emphasis on the ethical implications of being with others in today's technological age, Appiah asserts, "And the one thought that cosmopolitans share is that no local loyalty can ever justify forgetting that each human being has responsibilities to every other" (p. xvi). Although choosing to eat at one cafeteria table for lunch, the image of that middle school student with the orange plastic tray expands to acknowledge that the student is constantly aware that there are other tables to potentially eat at. That cafeteria table is not isolated or separate from other tables. The illusory distinction of belonging exclusively to one table thereby denies the belonging to all others, denies the capacity to sit at any table, and denies the responsibility that comes up with belonging to others, with being popular.

In those small moments of seeing another and offering them a seat, we are taking responsibility for allowing another to be with us. To turn aside, to look away, is to deny the responsibility for taking care of another. Refuting another person as if they do not belong is an illusory stance that nonetheless affects us all. We may know that we belong, but when we aren't offered a seat next to someone, there is a sense of being expelled from humanity and feeling less than fully human.

Following this idea of responsibility for everyone, it is also possible to say that everything can be accorded a different value. While an individualistic appraising of the world would hierarchically categorize each person based on socioeconomic value or some such measure, a cosmopolitan approach wouldn't seek to categorize people and therefore makes appraisal of persons altogether

more complicated. Appiah (2006) doesn't believe everything should be measured along the same standard, or even a moralistic standard, of what is good or what is bad.

> What would the world look like if people always spent their money to alleviate diarrhea in the Third World and never on a ticket to the opera? … That answer presupposes that there is really only one thing that matters: that all values are measurable in a single thin currency of goodness and badness. (p. 166)

This is not a morally relative position in that depending on the situation or context, what is good or bad changes. This is much more subversive. A cosmopolitan world-view acknowledges that everything has value, but value is not universally measured. Likewise, an empirical attempt at trying to measure the popularity of one person, the value of one person in a social hierarchy, is a misleading venture. It is in putting a person into a social hierarchy that they are valued as individuals separate from others and isolated from everything else. Therefore the idea of individuality, isolation, competition, power, and collectivity are all part of a world-view that seeks to understand the individual while dismissing other views on persons that do not hold people to be isolated.

The Perfect Seat

Where is the articulation of a world-view within the social positioning of junior high school girls? Popularity is studied at cafeteria tables and in interpersonal dynamics washed out from ideas of world-views, technological musings, ownership, or physical landscapes as they all impact popularity. Even though these are all integral to the discussion of popularity, their inclusion in studies on popularity is noticeably absent.

Technology has changed the landscape of what can be studied. All these theorists, Hillman (2006), Kingwell (2008), Appiah (2006), and boyd (2007a, 2008), wrote their ideas after 2006. Each of them has reconceived an image of the world, possibly in response to greater technological opportunities. Each has also shifted how we can look at things. True, I did not offer you a detailed sociological construct of the world, nor did I dig up a historical notion of how the world has been examined. Doing so would show how popularity is pushed into a biological framework of competition (see Chapter Five) or what motivations exist to perpetuate popularity contests (see Chapter Eight). A world-view shapes how we see things within the world, so it was necessary to start here and layout these assumptions before going further into this tour. Here I have drafted a landscape of where popularity resides, how technology is integral to that landscape, and how the cafeteria table is graffitied with scratches of individualism. If a scientific measure of the world is going to be used, then something must be narrowed down to study popularity, then it was cafeteria tables and our ability to relate to others in social settings that bore the brunt of that examination.

If we imagine popularity to be a symptom of individualism, then the material collecting of other people and goods is perhaps a failed attempt to break out of individualism. If we imagine popularity to be about people, places, and things, all of them necessary, then we can allow popularity to matter. If we embrace an expanded and interconnected digital, physical, material, meaningful world then we all have to struggle with choosing to network within the public or not. You can remove yourself from Facebook, throw away your cell phone only to

have it returned by your family (Slatalla, 2008), or move to the remote tundra with no indoor plumbing yet still have broadband internet access (Nir, 2009), but that does not mean you are disconnected from anything or anyone. You can accept, with grace or grimace, your ability to be with others, or you can fight it. Regardless, we are in this world with technology allowing us to be closer, to know more about our neighbors and friends, than ever before.

Chapter Four: Cliquish Community

To study the idea of popular is to also study those lens utilized to dissect the world into discernable parts. Usually the lens is the tool used to study something else, however lenses also need examining. While the previous chapter detangled the cafeteria table as a place of dead data to be dissected, this chapter is on people and we are with others is a further broadening of the idea of popular. This chapter expands the notion of popularity, for it examines an ideological bias that is present when discussing popularity. Cafeteria tables were respected in the last chapter, for they were looked at again. Now, the power of the clique begs for the same respected analysis. If cafeteria table trace the borders of who belongs, then cliques are the embedded social networks within those borders.

Us-Vs.-Them

You may ask, “what do I mean when I use the word cliques?” I use it in the same way that Wiseman (2002) routinely uses the word to distinguish groups of people that act together as a cohesive unit, otherwise thought of as popular groups. All the people at a particular cafeteria table are deemed a clique because their behavior identifies group boundaries. Their actions police the boundaries of who can sit down at the table or not. In telling a friend they are no longer welcome to sit at a table they are told they do not belong. In mistakenly inviting others to overfill the seats, in “not having room”, or in “forgetting” to tell about the change in plans, others are told they do not belong. Acceptance in this case is felt by being invited inside of a group and allowed at the cafeteria table, or on the list of visible friends on a social networking site.

However, cliques are not simply any ordinary grouping, because cliques are a vocal group, or as Dictionary.com (2009) illustrates cliques are identified because they make a sound. The public display of a group that is supposedly separated away from other groups—that motif of difference may be deemed higher, distant, tighter, trendy, better, or popular—and makes the idea of cliques into a notion of exclusivity. What is it about group formations that emphasize boundaries? What ideas surround notions of popularity as being exclusive? Where did these ideas of exclusivity, social separation, or cliques become wrapped up in notions of community? To answer that question, we might look at warfare, political theory, psychoanalytic structure, and anecdotes from some groupies.

It may be an appropriate time to diverge from the idea of popular, and the alluded to topic of cliques, with a redirection away from the Latin roots of popular to look at a possible Greek equivalent over in the Online Etymology Dictionary (2007). I have been using the Latin root of *popularis* and the Greek root also adds a more complete perspective. *Pandemos* might be the Greek equal of popularity, for pandemic originates from the Greek *pan* for "all" and *demos* for "people" or "common people." Pandemic has a bite in the English; its infectious, viral, policed, politicized, and not very polite. "That which belongs to the people" has a different connotation than simply "all people"; the first has graceful hints of inclusion, the later is more definitively inclusive.

The populace is quite difficult to study as a whole. The totality of anything is difficult to study, therefore theorists oftentimes break up a complex problem into discernable parts. Every time the whole is broken apart new categories

emerge, new ideas arise, but sometimes ideas carry through theorists. What has carried through is the practice of dividing people along the lines an *us* and a *them.*

Looking historically at this practice, Plato (1st Century BCE/1974) supported an ontological difference in the type of person one is based upon their role in society. For Plato, a statesman that governed the people were different than guardians that educated the people, or the younger generations that would become statesmen or guardians. Plato Military strategists, like Sun-Tzu (6th Century BCE /2002) and Niccolò Machiavelli (1532/1999), gave explicit attention to generals and soldiers, those outside of the military ranks were civilians, and further military distinctions of who enforces and guards the boundaries of the state. Karl Marx (1844/2004) very simply defined the bourgeois as those with access to resources, and the proletariat, or working class, as those outside of a sphere of influence, which is an economic differentiation of separate people in society. Martin Heidegger (1962) differentiated people as either authentic or inauthentic along meritocratic and racial lines, advancing an idea of separation in many different ways beyond racial or emeritus distinctions. To stay a moment more with Heidegger, a person's worth defined their belonging, and a person can belong if they "earned" it through work or simply by being born within the right lineage and bloodlines. Both of these ideas of separating people along the lines of merit or race denies the social and personal experiences outside of elitist cliques.

Writing about the line of demarcation between groups of people, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) notes that those with longstanding influence, are associated with hegemonic institutions, whereas those excluded are the oppressed peoples.

While I will address what occurs when one is excluded, the power dynamics at work in being popular will come up in Chapter Six, Marx and Patricia Hill Collins will, therefore, get their deserved time later on in this study. Presently, how exclusion arises, rather than the power differentials that follow exclusion, needs some unraveling.

Militaristically Organizing

Reading articles on popularity, often with the junior high school set, you could become readily aware of the political tactics at work; political verging on open warfare. Wiseman (2002) outlines how "Queen Bees," her term for the most popular girl in a clique, utilize teasing to cajole peers into doing her bidding. Wiseman writes, "Actually, the Sidekick and Wannabe do a lot of teasing because they need to build their position in the group. The Queen Bee gives her approval by a quiet comment that backs them up" (p. 119). As my mind contemplates a junior high school girl instrumentally using others to tease and police the behavior the others, I am reminded of Sun-Tzu (6th Century BCE /2002) and his articulation of effective strategies for warfare. In this way, the idea of popular is bonded with exclusivity and cliques within a language of military tactics. Wiseman probably sees the connection to Sun-Tzu when she writes,

> The common definition of a clique is an exclusive group of girls who are close friends…. I see them as a platoon of soldiers who have banded together to navigate the perils and insecurities of adolescence…. Group cohesion is based on unquestioned loyalty to the leaders and an us-versus-the-world mentality. (p. 19)

It may be that militaristic operations are one lens to look at behavior, but that does not account for the notion of defensiveness as central to group formation.

To preface, Sun-Tzu was a 6th Century BCE general in many successful military campaigns who wrote a definitive text, *Art of War*, on strategy, battleground tactics, discerning political advisement, and how to effectively defend a state. On elemental tactics he wrote,

> All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. (p. 42)

For Sun-Tzu, and most theorists that study popularity, those with popularity seek to maintain their popular social status and defend it against supposed attacks.

Wiseman's identifies Queen Bees (who rule the clique) as those persons utilizing Sidekicks (people who unquestionably follow the Queen), Wannabes (who aren't officially part of the clique but identify with it and follow whatever is asked), Bankers (who hold vital information for a clique), or Floaters (who can come and go in a clique and whose allegiances are permeable) to accomplish their desires to protect the group. This varies only slightly from Sun-Tzu's generals commanding captains to position infantry or spies to assist in a campaigning, but the variation is largely with terminology. Both writers categorize the roles of persons in groups, and demonstrate an overriding tactical idea of popularity as the lines drawing who is inside and outside, who is popular and unpopular, who belongs and who does not.

Diplomatically, Sun-Tzu wasn't writing in celebration of violence, or a defense of murdering others to protect a state. Sun-Tzu's Taoist ideals shine through this precise military strategy, which seeks to end unnecessary harm in warfare. However, one of the ideologies present throughout his ideas is the notion

of a state that needs to be defended to remain a state. There is very little questioning of any general's commands to enter into conflict. Sun-Tzu's consolation is that war is constant and one must be successful at it. Furthering the idea that exclusivity or a separate state needs defense through military campaigns, he wrote,

> Lastly, it is by his information that the surviving spy can be used on appointed occasions. The end and aim of spying in all its five varieties is knowledge of the enemy; and this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from the converted spy. (p. 99)

Knowledge of other groups, other clique's operation is instrumental. Not merely knowing one's own clique, one's own nation or state, but understanding the intricacies of others better supports the enforcement and defense of the warring general. Perhaps more eloquently discussing the weaknesses of others, Sun-Tzu emphasized the necessity of understanding one group as different from another, and to use those differences to further one's goals. He advises, "Carefully compare the opposing army with our own, so that you may know where strength is superabundant and where it is deficient. In making tactical dispositions, the highest pitch you can attain is to conceal them" (p. 62). Exclusivity, with Sun-Tzu, is bound up in its utilization to form a strong unit to wage war. Coming together is in service of accomplishing a mission, and what must be guarded is how strongly an army is bound together. Here, ideas of *us* and *them* are beginning to be formulated; *us* is the state and the state is defended from *them*.

Political Order and Ruling

As a preface, Machiavelli wrote his own *Art of War* treatise (1521/2005) in addition to other political and militaristic treatises concerning order, whether in

battle or in governance. His ideas follow from the assumption that order is already in place and someone or some group is ordering society. It is easier to govern a people when the people already know their ruler, and that a ruler is beyond reproach, so as to not have any challenges to his rule. His ideas nestle between former realist notions that a state's interests are the highest priorities and the idealist notions that the ideas of a state are more real than the geopolitical state. Machiavelli's (1532/1999) idea of what a state is, for him, is just as real as the state itself; therefore he can be considered one of the modernist philosophers, arguing a pragmatic approach to governance that isn't too philosophical. He makes this explicit when he prefaces his understanding of ideal states and how they often diverge from actual states.

> Many have dreamed up republics and principalities which have never in truth been known to exist; the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done moves towards self-destruction rather than self-preservation. The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need. (pp. 49-50)

Order is kept above all, and order isn't seen as good, bad, right, evil, or any other moral connotation. Order is supposedly necessary, as is war.

An action may not be intrinsically evil like, say, the omission of a person from a group of trusted friends, denied admittance into a clique, but it is instrumental for the maintenance of order. The term for this, echoing back to Platonic (1st Century BCE/1974) or Kantian (1785/1993) moral definitions, is an extrinsic evil, for it isn't evil in its own right but allows for evil to occur. Examples of this include capital punishment promoting state sponsored murder

(Mello, 1997) or fast food products being sold at cheaper prices than more nutritious alternatives (Cardello & Garr, 2009). Order is kept regardless of popular approval and regardless of what the people want or like.

Primarily, Machiavelli wasn't concerned about intrinsic evils, nor of the label of extrinsic evil. For him, the impact of a ruler, a prince, and how he was viewed from within his own princedom—read clique—was what mattered most. He wrote (1532/1999), "princes should delegate to others the enactment of unpopular measure and keep in their own hands the means of winning favours. Again, I conclude that a prince should value the nobles, but not make himself hated by the people" (p. 61). This is very close to Sun-Tzu's elemental tactics and utilization of espionage. However, Machiavelli acknowledges this delegation with a pointed directive, that using others is necessary for ruling a group of people and keeping a state together, keeping the people together, regardless of that decision being liked or widely accepted. Taken to the context of popularity, the banding together of adolescents and the rising of one to the status of Queen Bee can rival the Machiavellian assumption of a prince to a newfound state.

Whereas Sun-Tzu didn't explicitly state that *us* was his state and *them* was his opposing states, it is assumed from his position on warfare. Machiavelli, likewise, didn't hold that the *us* was the nobles, and the *them* was the peasants, but that the peasants were both *us* and *them.* The peasants were represented by the prince, therefore part of his state*, us*, but they weren't noble or considered equal participants in society, so they were also *them,* to the prince. They existed to be appeased. Machiavelli did not argue for princes to be generous or loving to his

people, or to be outright hostile and manipulative, but that, “it is far better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both” (1532/1999, p. 54). If a people hate their leader, then that leader has a difficult time ruling, and if he—Machiavelli only considered men capable of ruling a nation—is exceedingly loved, he will also have a hard time being taken “seriously.”

Nonetheless, the argument that keeping order through exercising fear is not easily cast aside. Merten (1997) titled his own work *The Meaning of Meanness* possibly with these amoral ideas in mind, especially the idea of fear being used to bind people together. Machiavelli advised, in an off-handed manner, that princes, “must only endeavor, as I said, to escape being hated.” (p. 56) This is similar to Merten’s articulation that explicit displays of meanness, or inducing fear in others, will lead to a lessening of popularity.

Machiavelli thought on this grand scale and believed public officials and leaders need to emphasize their role through exhibiting the boundaries of the community. “The first opinion that is formed of a ruler’s intelligence is based on the quality of the men he has around him” (p. 75). That boundary of what was acceptable for a princes’ inner circle of confidants and advisors was also the people that he instrumentally used to govern his state. Within this boundary, the exclusive inner circle of advisors was under the same scrutiny as the singular leader. This is no different than a Queen Bee enduring the scrutiny of her clique while not caring about opinions from others; internal critiques have more weight than supposedly external ones. Persons outside the clique are not seen as real, as mattering, or as valid as someone inside the clique, an *us*, would be.

Again, Machiavelli did not emphasize the rules of governance over the utilization of techniques used to manage people or to maintain order. He wrote,

> The main foundations of every state, new states as well as ancient or composite ones, are good laws and good arms; and because you cannot have good laws without good arms, and where there are good arms, good laws inevitably follow, I shall not discuss laws but give my attention to arms. (1532/1999, p. 39)

Although Machiavelli gives some time to discuss weaponry, his main focus is on the formation of people, as troops, as mercenaries, as auxiliary battalions, and as those that volitionally agree to murder and kill others for the sake of *the state*. By *the state*, they are in fact willing to give themselves to die for its ruler, the mentioned prince, and not necessarily the will of everyone. Before I get into the utilization of war to further ideas of exclusivity through popularized military campaigns, I want to reiterate Machiavelli's insistence that princedom is only achieved when there is an *us* to battle a *them*: "in my judgement [sic], those princes can stand alone who have sufficient manpower or money to assemble an army to an encounter with any aggressor" (p. 35). It is only in battle and warfare that a group, a nation, is considered by Machiavelli to be bound together. While warfare may not be liked by all, admired, or sought after, it does supposedly bring people together against a common enemy.

Politically ordering a cafeteria table and determining who can or cannot sit at it has the same shrewdness of many political campaigns; boundaries are falsely erected. The appeal that war has to unite a people is certainly one example of popularity, perhaps the over-utilized dehumanization of an enemy, but it is another idea of separating an *us* from *them*.

Psychic Organization

There is more to say about ideas of warfare, murder, and exclusion as they relate to ideas of popularity, but to get there requires some time with Sigmund Freud. One of his major works, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930/1989), lays out both a psychoanalytic formulation of what it means to be in society for the individual, and how society is formed. Historically, it was written at a time, towards the end of World War I, when most nations were divided up into two opposing camps. The *us-vs.-them* mentality was prevalent in that time and in Freud's writing. He stated,

> *Eros* and *Ananke* [Love and Necessity] have become the parents of human civilization too. The first result of civilization was that even a fairly large number of people were now able to live together in a community. And since these two great powers were cooperating in this, one might expect that the further development of civilization would proceed smoothly towards an even better control over the external world and towards a further extension of the number of people included in the community. Now is it easy to understand how this civilization could act upon its participants otherwise than to make them happy. (1930/1989, p. 89)

As Freud pondered society, he believed an individual man desires to enter heterosexual union with a woman for safety and security against a threatening world; the whole outer world is therefore considered other or a *them*.

This joining together is driven by the need to feel safe from danger, safe from a threatening *them*, which subsequently leads to the production of offspring and the unit of a family. Man then presumably joins with other men, like brothers, to resist a father, or other men, and this collective act is the psychoanalytic bedrock of civilization. We come together, first as families, and then with other families. Freud's discourse on community begins, not with rulers or leadership,

but with familial bonds and assumptive heterosexual parents and offspring as the markers of who is *us* and who is *them*. Rather than a militaristic preformed state that needs defense against the *them*, or a civilization with a ruler exerting order over *them* while worried about other warring nations, Freud looked at the coming together of the people forming their own *us-vs.-them* as one that is rooted in a preset psychic disposition. The instinct to join together furthermore comes with the cost of joining together, which is repression.

Following Freud's initial idea about coming together as a group of people, all of our supposed instincts cannot be fulfilled when we are dependent upon others for safety or security. According to Freud's inner psychic structuring of who is *them* and *us,* the price of being in civilization is the repression of instincts into the unconscious and unaware aspects of the mind. It is only with repression, for Freud, that an individual can remain in civilization. Freud, in his own expansive way, made the instinctual drive theory into an anthem for delineating an *us* formed in opposition to a *them*. This idea progresses a notion that relating to others is natural in an *us-vs.-them* dynamic whereas to be an *us* isn't a given, it is in behaving similarly to others.

For Freud (1930/1989), one of the central struggles in being with others is the sometimes contradictory—albeit his own presumptuous dichotomy—of the needs of an individual against the needs of a group. He offers, "A good part of the struggles of mankind centre round the single task of finding an expedient accommodation—one, that is, that will bring happiness—between this claim of the individual and the cultural claims of the group" (p. 50) However, he doesn't

just name the problem as two opposing needs. He sees one of the results of civilization circularly in that civilization is created out of the psychic structure to join together which further promulgates the necessity to be together. To participate in civilization, to be with *us*, is to undergo the same repressions and constraints all the while having the same instincts and fears; popularity, it might follow, is inherently neurotic much like society.

Organizing Ourselves

Freud's ideas of how civilization formed did not go unquestioned by those inside his field of study. Fellow psychologist Alfred Adler (1938) articulated the arising of social feelings and desired goals in dissent of Freudian instincts or structures. Erich Fromm's (1941) critique of Freudian authority was based not on familial bonds or obligations but out of individual volition and not repression. Carl Jung (1921/1971) also challenged the idea of individuals coming together as the foundation for society, for he argued that when a person individuates from the collective then that internal psychological act allows for a harmonious presence in society that is not repressive or neurotic.

From, simultaneously a psychoanalytic, existential, and social psychological perspective, Fromm critiqued Freud as being too dualistic and oppositional in his thinking of civilization. Desire and repression were the two pillars of a person's world that Freud argued. Fromm disagreed,

> Freud always considers the individual in his relations to others. These relations as Freud sees them, however, are similar to the economic relations to others which are characteristic of the individual in capitalist society. Each person works for himself, individualistically, at his own risk, and not primarily in co-operation with others. But he is not a Robinson

> Crusoe; he needs others, as customers, as employees, or as employers. (1941, p. 9)

Fromm elaborated Freud's individualistic assumptions and drive theory, yet Fromm also humanized the individual in society and made the individual a person. He articulated the need for meaning through leadership and the willingness to submit to authoritarian dictators to satisfy those needs. However, the reason for wanting to join together under a leader was not to align with inner psychic needs, but to quell the anxieties of living in a world without inherent rules. Persons living together in society without a leader uniting them will likely feel alienated and disempowered, lacking their own self-efficacy, sense of authority or influence.

Rather than looking into a deeper discussion of what Freud's colleagues might have thought about society, adding in a critique of Freud by someone who had more distance, by a few decades, allows for a broader examination of the impact of Freudian ideas on how all people are grouped together. Social philosopher and critical theorist Herbert Marcuse (1964; 1966) lends a necessary perspective on society and the coming together of persons. Marcuse (1964) noted how a person's needs indicate their belonging in society. In his words, "Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs" (p. 7). Those assumed basic human needs are not fundamental to civilization, but a reinforcement of civilization. The needs are false in the way that they are assumed to be true; they are in fact engineered and not psychically predetermined.

Freud took it as a fundamental structural given, that man was predisposed to come together in fear. Freud didn't see this as belonging, but as structure. Marcuse acknowledged the weakness of this claim as he took a step back to see that the idea itself, of what civilization is and how we belong, isn't automatic but does instill a unity and creates a one-dimensional *us*.

> Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension. (Marcuse, 1964, p. 14)

The *us*, here, has a one-dimensional, simplistic, or narrowly focused perspective that seems only to examine itself through its own lens. Therefore, *us* can only come to discuss *us,* and the collective *us* taken as a whole determines both the unity and the direction of progress. What the *us* is and what it will become are bound from within. Marcuse (1964) is not defending the supposed need to guard against others, like Sun-Tzu has alluded to, or defend the natural logic that society is the way it is, like Freud does. Marcuse acknowledges the way in which an *us* reinforces its togetherness by not allowing itself to expand beyond a one-dimensional perspective that does not accept any goals, ideas, or ways of being that are not embraced by the assumed civilization, clique, or *us.*

A few years later, after writing *One Dimensional Man* (1964), Marcuse wrote *Eros and Civilization* (1966) to an address the consequences of civilizing, which was what is lost when civilization are formed. He writes, "Society emerges as a lasting and expanding system of useful performances; the hierarchy of functions and relations assumes the form of objective reason: law and order are

identical with the life of society itself" (1966, p. 89). This organizational structure of society as a whole, with law and order as the formalized rules for that organization, lifts the purpose of organization out of defensive militaristic language or psychological predispositions.

Marcuse articulates that if organization were merely a side effect of society, then it is only in looking back at society that it becomes apparent how it was shaped. This does not lead to universal ideas about civilization forming. However, and more theoretically, the coming together to make formal rules to govern or organize a society rests upon the idea that formalized plans occur only in hindsight, and that we are predisposed to organize. This is similar to the arising of ideas with organizational and cognitive sciences regarding transactive memory in that we are neurochemically predisposed to organize and manage our knowledge (Wegner, Erber & Raymond, 1991; Brandon & Hollingshead, 2004). Day planners, smart phones, or more simply the watch, are external supports for this, our innate, organizational processes. Going back to Marcuse, *how* organization occurs is more cultural and peer influenced than it is technical. To me, all of those influences are impacting and there is no need for hierarchical qualifiers.

Technical and Technological Order

Marcuse (1966) offers this idea of organization as a natural byproduct of being together and as a defense of Freud's structural theory, but also to further the idea that organization emerges from social relationships and is not predetermined. He writes, "In the same process, repression too is depersonalized: constraint and

regimentation of pleasure now become a function (and ‘natural’ result) of the social division of labor…. Subsequently, the individual’s instincts are controlled through the social utilization of his labor power” (p. 89). As society arises out of relations, rules are made to then define those already existing relations. Taken beyond Marcuse, those relations can become generalized to the point where the rules are remembered more than the ability to relate to one another without rules. The structure of society, as the rules restricting how to act and behave with others, is part of the idea that an individual can accomplish something productive for society because the rules assist in the reaching of collective goals. In this way a person can be depersonalized in becoming a law-abiding citizen.

Is the only respite from being depersonalized then to defy convention, break rules, or buck societal norms at every available opportunity? Do we risk being labeled “unpopular” rather than “popular” when we choose to go against societal norms? It seems so from Marcuse’s perspective. Shifting his focus to technology and its role in the family and personal development, he acknowledges

> As early as the pre-school level, gangs, radio, and television set the pattern for conformity and rebellion; deviations from the pattern are punished not so much within the family as outside and against the family. The experts of the mass media transmit the required values; they offer the perfect training in efficiency toughness, personality, dream, and romance. With this education, the family can no longer compete. In the struggle between the generations, the sides seem to be shifted: the son knows better; he represents the mature reality principle against its obsolescent paternal forms. (1966, p. 97)

Here, Marcuse articulates the reformations of familial relationships through technology and how technology allows newer kinds of differentiation. In the case of *us-vs.-them* he notes how technology is triangulated in this dynamic.

Technology, rather than national boundaries to be defended, kingdoms to be governed, or civilizations that repress desires, is a mediating factor in what separates *us* from *them*.

Rather than diverging into the instrumentality of technology to accomplish desired goals (Heidegger, 1962), or the existence of technology as an mediating presence that is collective and arising in our relationships (Wilber, 2006), like political systems or YouTube™ (http://youtube.com) memberships (where persons can upload videos of themselves to be broadcast digitally for anyone capable of going online to see), the note here is that technology becomes the *them* that is attacking and pulling apart *us*. The alluded to *us* here is traditional family values besieged by cosmopolitan imagery (O'Reilly, 2006), or self-esteem being assaulted under media images in soap operas, food packaging, or sexualized child actors (Cardello & Garr, 2009; Levin & Kilbourne, 2009). The *us*.-*vs.-them* mentality is as much a part of ideas of being with others, today, as computer consoles and video phones (mobile phones that have the capacity to digitally record videos as well) have become tools for how we are with others; technology is equally the conduit for relating and weaponry in relating. For as studies on popularity generally attest, the nobler meanings of sites often become twisted and can lead to gossip, rumor spreading, bullying, and unfriending; which, serendipitously, "unfriending" is the New Oxford American dictionary's new word of 2009 used to designate the public denial of a relationship (Berndtson, 2009).

In stepping beyond Marcuse's notion of one-dimensional thinking, Freud's ideas of lockstep behavior to stay in society, Machiavelli's defense of organizing society at any cost, and Sun-Tzu's ideological bias that defense is a given; that which belongs to the people, the definition of popularity, has a price. The cost of an *us-vs.-them* mentality is a repression of desires and a warring state.

Destruction and Order

Another social theorist looks at civilization and how society is created in the deaths, the broken bodies, of *them*. The theorist, Elaine Scarry (1985), interweaves a psychological view of sadism, a philosophical view of political torture, and both Judeo-Christian and Marxist creation myths, to offer the idea that we join together in the act of killing others as we construct our civilizations. Speaking about warfare or defending boundaries with neutral terms, like Sun-Tzu, is a dismissal of the violence and destruction that is implicit in militaristic ideas of opposition. To her, what separates *us* from *them* can be conceived of in the act of torture. "To have great pain is to have certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt. The doubt of other persons here as elsewhere, amplifies the suffering of those already in pain" (p.7). Sadism and the desire to inflict pain on another might be connected to the motivation to matter. In hurting another person, I know that what I do matters, because there is a felt response: pain.

The marking of boundaries in groups, whether nationally or within the circle of friends on social networking sites, is in a way noting who belongs. Not being aware of those that do not feel that they belong is an unintentional dismissing of another's pain. Denying another's pain is what separates *us* from

them. Again, following Scarry's thesis, to really understand the pain of another is to not keep them apart as a *them*, but in denying the existence of pain, whether that pain arises through isolation, mocking, playing around, teasing, avoidance, or those subtler ways of not seeking out others, pain distances the *us* from the *them*. These two operations, inflicting pain and not empathizing with pain, are combined to further separation; in this act a perceived *us* is separate from *them.*

> Neither can occur without the other: if the person does not perceive the distress, neither will he with it gone; conversely, if he does not wish it gone, he cannot have perceived the pain itself (he may at that moment be experiencing something else, such as his own physical advantage, or his resistance to having to attend to another person, but he cannot be perceiving the pain, for is in its essential nature 'aversiveness,' and thus even within technical medical definitions is reorganized as something which cannot be felt without being wished unfelt.) p. 290

Applying a Judeo-Christian lens, the *them* here can be God and *us* the followers. With a Marxist lens, the bourgeois controlling textile machinery are *them* to the *us* of the worker. Scarry uses both Marxist and Christian lenses to note how *us* is separated from *them*. In both frameworks, Scarry enunciates that the one's who have bodies that can be hurt, and the ones who do not control the tools of production and technologies are the ones reliant on another person(s) for their physical safety. Both of these lenses allow a person to perceive the separation of an *us* from a *them*. Workers, believers, citizens, soldiers, even Queen Bee minions, are people who are therefore together in the shared experience of being under governance and being subject to another, whether divine or despotic.

Scarry's ideas of collectivity and how people come together on a national level of organization, can be applied to Laird's (1935) work on popularity and his ideological basis of not liking people without having empathy for their not being

liked. For Laird, the feelings of those beneath one's station or with dubious moral standing are outside of society and are not looked upon with kindness or compassion. This repetitive circle of not empathizing with those who are unpopular, furthers the social distance between persons and keeps *them* unpopular. Laird follows Machiavelli's (1532/1999) tactics, which further defends this idea of separation. If one takes up "the enactment of unpopular measure," as Machiavelli has already penned, then one might not be liked in return. The utilization of pain, whether physical through killing, or social, through non-empathetic distancing or isolation reinforces the notion that popular is separate from unpopular. This tool is also an idea and this idea is that *us* is not *them*.

Almost in the Clique

Beyond ideas of who is inside and outside, there are the personal accounts of fitting in and belonging. The powerful, political, even scholastic elite have weighed in ideas of being an *us*, and in their domains they do belong. However, there are those that are inside but not completely; their invitation to the popular cafeteria table is tenuous.

Exclusivity itself may even be based on something as simple as not wanting to include outsiders. This happens in the middle school world of cafeteria tables seating patterns, and as well the adult world of collegial organizations, corporate networking events, invitations to beta testing groups, and inner office politics. Tim Murphy's recent (2009) interview with Condé Nast's advertising executives, whose internal social dynamics have led to a group of "well-pulled together" gays that have formed a "sniffy clique." Condé Nast

(http://www.condenast.com) is the fashion and editorial powerhouse that produces Vogue, W(magazine), The New Yorker, Architectural Digest, GQ, Brides, and many other glossy magazine titles that tell American consumers what they should buy. The sniffy clique therein considers themselves, “The Majority.” The irony here, of an exclusive club referring to themselves as The Majority is not lost.

One founder of this social group, said, in response to people being excluded, “If someone asked to come, we would probably allow them to. Again, we'd only exclude someone if they came to an event and brought a non-Condé gay.” The emphasis here is on maintaining the internal exclusivity. The *us.-vs.-them* in this instances is the *us* as the Majority and *them* as those people who work for Condé Nast and are not gay, or are gay do not work for Condé Nast. For this clique, the social organization revolves around the internal exclusivity, and it is only in betraying that internal exclusivity that is grounds for unfriending. They see no point in adding social networks from outside of their work environment. The adult world, much like the middle school cafeteria tables, has organizational principles policing the lines of who is part of the clique and who isn’t. The *us-vs.-them* mentality is militaristic, corporate, and above all political.

Looking at who might fit into a particular clique rather than the formation of cliques would be similar to forwarding an *a priori* account of popularity, by which I mean the category of popular and unpopular exists prior to the labeling. This logical argument is circular, because it doesn’t acknowledge variations in the label of popular, how any label can be attributed, or what occurs when the label of popularity is applied. The point that I am making is that there is a difference

between fitting in and belonging, on an ontological level, and a felt sense of belonging, or on a personal level. Social mobility aside, one may never quite feel like they belong or are popular, even if they are seated at the most popular cafeteria table. Those *them*'s that become an *us,* those not in a clique who find a way in, they have an idea, and a perspective on this as well. One account of this progression, of getting inside of a clique to becoming an *us*, is Frank Zappa's (1983) sociological interviewing of his own groupies.

Zappa took time in 1969, away from his band *Mothers of Invention,* to interview three persons to discuss their process of becoming groupies. The groupies wanted into the group and wanted to belong with the band, or simply, to belong. While I am not certain if he was inspired by Foucault's (1984) theory of heterotopia—which was mentioned in the preceding chapter as the idea of entering new spaces, whether geographical, digital, or political, and being changed in the process—but Zappa did seek to show what occurs when a person enters an exclusive group, or when they "clique in." Cynthia, one of the supposed originators of the word *groupie* attests of her relationship with the band in that she, "never got to know them *as a person* because they couldn't talk to me like they would talk to *somebody*. They could never talk to me as if I *wasn't* a groupie" (¶ 47). Cynthia wasn't treated like a real person, like a real part of a group, an exclusive group, but as one that wanted in, which to her felt like a dismissal of what mattered to her: fitting in. In that dismissal she felt trapped in the role of an outsider. She did not really feel inside the group, but close, as a groupie.

The band wasn't defensive about not allowing in new people, they simply didn't accept new band members, thus exclusion through not being open to inclusion. One point here that Cynthia makes is her felt sense of materialization, for she wanted to be part of the group and in being part of the group, to matter and be a somebody. Belonging to a group bends into being perceived as a person. This shift from an *us* to a *them* does revolve around personhood or what constitutes a person, whether on a national, familial, political, or on a physical definition. Each of these definitions leads to roles, some of which attribute personhood more than others: citizens, immigrants, expatriates, aliens, rulers, leaders, ruled, followers, parents, siblings, children, friends, acquaintances, enemies, and frenemies might be equally human, but their roles within their relational dynamics are negotiable.

Another example of this account of some persons being recognized, and to follow recognition, to be treated as more of a person, is Jennell. She is another interviewee of Zappa, and offers, perhaps, two of the most humanizing passages about being a groupie. In the first, she describes her position as an outsider. She was always a fan of the music of the groups she liked, more so after becoming a groupie. She admits, "I can get *into* it more, whereas when I first heard it I said, *'Wow, it's the Mothers and look what he's saying!'* Now I say, *'Wow, it's someone I know and it's a friend, now look what he's saying'*" (¶ 64). Her perspective on the music, on the group she admired, on the people within the group, changed as she saw herself within that group and as she found a role and a place within that group. Her articulation of this being in the group, of belonging there, is both personal and impersonal. She goes on to state,

> Being in a group is *just another job*, and the only purpose for that other job is that it's *entertainment*, and I'll go watch a concert because it's great entertainment, but it's no more of a thing like *you're a better guy* or that you'd be *better to have as a boyfriend* than a *plumber*, because they can give me *exactly what I want from them*, the *same love* that I want. (¶106)

Her statements were both personal and impersonal in that her articulation of her feelings of personhood, for being close and inside of a group, she also speaks of her position as being replaceable or insignificant to the band as it is personally significant to her. While she doesn't fall into the idea that she was the most popular person around the band or that inclusion with the band was the only benchmark of belonging, she does address her own relationship with the band as emblematic of feeling like a person. This feeling arose in tandem with the idea of being replaced; another groupie for another band, another soldier for someone's war, a citizen for another politician, or another child for a parent. Zappa's interview lent the voice of the outsider as it becomes an insider, if not completely, but in some small way, as a *them* became an *us*.

Back in the Clique

Trailing behind this idea of social mobility or getting into the clique is the nagging fear of losing momentum. Stagnancy is feared if social mobility is the desired ideal. Sun-Tzu (6th Century BCE /2002) worried about losing battles, Machiavelli (1532/1999) feared losing political power or rank, Freud (1930/1989), perhaps unintentionally, furthered an idea than an unmarried adult loses social status, while Scarry (1985) redirected the idea of coming together requires losing lives. How cliques factor into this is that social dynamics, if they become stagnant, dead or lose momentum, then they are not captivating.

In that rapt attention, perhaps public criticism is where cliques and community are more visible than anywhere else. To see a clique in action is to see a group of people come together to form an opinion on something, to make a defensive posture. One natural consequence of dividing up people, or things, or places, into what belongs and what doesn't is a furthering of the idea that it is natural to do so. It isn't natural to separate out one group, one people, from another, but it does make it organizationally easier to manage groups than all people together. This is an insidious consequence of organizational management.

Fearfully Staying in the Clique

Inclusivity versus exclusivity is a simple differentiation. Getting an invitation to a party, hosting a party, joining in conversation while at the party, and joining with others to not attend a party are all ways to be included around a party. More complicated are the ways that people are included in others' lives. Whom to include and how to include them are problems that we all face when examining our social life. However, once inside a clique, once a person feels part of an *us*, it doesn't stop. Stagnancy is feared; rejection is possible. There is constant pressure to fit in a clique, to stay in a group, to maintain a significant social status, and that is part of competition, which is the next stop in this tour.

The dynamic that arises when the fear of being outside or unpopular, takes place within organizations or systems of people, is competition. Whereas fear of being outcast is one motivating factor in staying with others, it isn't the only feeling that arises when people attempt to stay together. Belonging arises when people are together; cliques are one way of managing the feeling of belonging.

Chapter Five: Contesting Competition

The previous chapter identified ideas that revolve around the separation of an *us* from a *them*, and *them* was an external group that was apart and separated from *us* on political, national, familial, or simply empathic distinctions. This idea has been ideologically naturalized in military strategies, nationhood and protecting boundaries, governing a people, participating in a society, forming a family, and acknowledging or dismissing another's pain. Ideas of *us* and *them* can go further into what occurs within the *us*. The preliminary division of what is inside and outside leads to further internal division, or more simply, competition.

Competition, regarding popularity, can be several things. Researchers on popularity often note how children will compete to be noticed by their peers (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982). Researchers will also differentiate children based on how often there are noticed quantifiably *more* times than other peers as an indication of popularity (Newcomb & Bukowski, 1983). Academics have documented several factors, which enforce and continue this contest to be liked and to be more recognized than peers (Berndt, Hawkins, & Hoyle, 1986), and some theorists emphasize behavior in describing the social skills of popular children and the problematic behavior of rejected children (Asher & Coie, 1990). Other scholars are beginning to take into account school environments as a mediating social context for behavior that might not occur outside of school grounds (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990).

Researchers, that I have discovered, consistently look at the relationships between children at school, which is where popularity is often studied, and

articulate those relationships as competitive in nature. Calling behavior "competitive" is a judgment, just as much as calling behavior "polite" is also a judgment. What is observed is the behavior, judgment can be withheld, but the labeling of behavior as competitive adds another dimension to this tour of popularity. Competition is an idea that presumptuously appears alongside popularity, therefore an understanding of this dynamic of competition, and how it is articulated, is another stop along this tour. In order to tour popularity, the rhetoric of competition, and how competition is misaligned with popularity, needs to be called into question.

Popularity Contests

The metaphor of popularity contests is perhaps overused to describe the drive to be liked. Your prize, then, of winning a popularity competition is multifaceted: adoration, fame, celebrity, or simply the tacit knowledge that you are liked. With being liked, one is also recognized, which goes beyond a simple acknowledgment of memory and denotes mattering, or as I phrase it, belonging.

I won't get into the psychological formulation of competition and how it becomes internalized with inferiority complexes or superiority complexes (Adler, 1938), how winners develop narcissism which becomes pathological (Freud, 1923/1962), or extroversion as being the temperamental type that is more likely to enter into competition with others rather than the supposedly stronger willed introverts (Jung, 1921/1971). This idea of competition and how it becomes internalized denies various relational dynamics that are not conceived of as competitive between two people, two groups, or multiple people in overlapping

and knotted social structures. Divisions may be dualistic, such as Team Brady or Team Loser, or a gladiatorial free-for-all mêlée with the last one standing as the winner, but there is an oppositional dynamic at work when interaction is framed competitively. I am addressing this presumptively competitive divide.

Popularity as the winning prize of a competition, popularity as a contest, popularity accorded to those that have earned an esteemed social status, are ideas rooted in competition as the primary relational dynamic. In competition, one person benefits at the expense of others. You may see competition as existing solely within political theories, economic systems, sociological conceptions, or cafeteria table voting booths for prom queen, but the biological sciences root competition into our cells and bodies. That is where I am taking this tour, into how popularity is falsely rooted in competition, which is presumably biological.

Justifying the Biological Sciences

Most of the ideas from the biological sciences have a broad influence over many ideas, and popularity is but one. Several schools of thought develop offshoot arguments from the biological sciences and further competitive ideologies. Evolutionary psychology sees reasons to believe relationships are based on ideas of reproductive motivations (Symons, 1992). Evolutionary morality further separates humans from animals as it enforces a hierarchy within ethics as proof that “the last 100,000 years … made us—and no other species—moral animals to a degree unprecedented in nature” (Shermer, 2004, p. 31). Religious studies and theological circles fixate on creation accounts and the superiority and dominance of humanity and create scientific theories to back their

theological assertions (Numbers, 1993). Competition exists outside theological enclaves and within academia, notably between the physical sciences and the sociological, philosophical, or diffusely theoretical—read *weaker than us real academics* (Lang, 1998). As a result, ideas of what is presumably *natural*, and how competition is a given among species, permeates ideas of popularity.

Justifying Competition

Competition at the expense of others is often framed as "survival". It is, perhaps, typical to begin an exploration of biological sciences with an introduction of Charles Darwin (1859/1985) and his classic *On the Origin of Species.* In it he wrote candidly about competition as integral to order,

> The inhabitants of each successive period in the world's history have beaten their predecessors in the race for life, and are, in so far, higher in the scale of nature: and this may account for that vague yet ill-defined sentiment, felt by many palaeontologists, that organisation on the whole has progressed. (p. 343)

There are two ideas at work here: the first being that competition is natural among species, human included, and the second idea is that competition is hierarchical with one person or group dominating another by becoming more adaptive and better competitors. These two ideas, and how they come together is also part of the way that popularity is understood, constructed, theorized, and made into the metaphor of popularity contests.

To be balanced, Darwin wasn't the first to argue the necessity of categorizing species into dominant predators, prey, wild feral beasts, domesticated farm animals, parasites and hosts, or any other taxonomical classification. Aristotle (1st Century BCE/1998) might be the first to categorize species on earth

and place them within a hierarchy, with humanity being the dominant species. Descartes (1637/1960) would agree with Aristotle on the need to categorize, although he refuted Aristotle's own categories. Aristotle spoke more about the characteristics that animals share with humans rather than a competitive dynamic at work within animals, or the natural inferiority of animals, which Descartes trumpeted. Darwin, commenting on Aristotelian categorization while forming his own taxonomy, wrote,

> The truth of the principle that the greatest amount of life can be supported by great diversification of structure, is seen under many natural circumstances. In an extremely small area, especially if freely open to immigration, and where the contest between individual and individual must be very severe, we always find great diversity in its inhabitants. (p.157)

Darwin was speaking here on the divergence of individual characteristics within species, and he was talking about species competing within species for dominance of one another. Many girls clustered at a specific cafeteria table may have different hair accessories to attempt to be prettier than others outside of the table, but they are all at a particular table and attempting to have the best hair.

Social Darwinists, the term used to identify theorists who take Darwin's theories of animal behavior and apply them to humans, have used this idea of a divergence in characteristics as support for the idea that humanity itself is naturally competitive and that competition supposedly brings about diversity (Bannister, 1989; Degler, 1992; Kaye, 1997). There are a plethora of arguments, cross-critiques, and contested controversy erupting within the biological community about the role of competition and the utilization of animal behavior. One critique is that anthropomorphizing animals with human tendencies for

competition is an arrogant presumption that humans know better than animals in describing animal behavior (Foreman, 1991; Singer, 1975). Would animals themselves think of their lives as constant competition? Perhaps they do not see their lives or relations as competitive at all. Private ownership, individualism, coercion, manipulation, and militaristic order are human conceptions that can erroneously be applied to animals as proof of our supposedly animalistic actions. In judging animals we are in fact moralizing our own behavior. In this regards, competition needn't be moralized, but it is justified with biology. In biology we can examine competition and how popularity is misaligned with competition.

Trailing Behind First Place

It is also a somewhat obligatory note that competition is often talked about as being *over* territory and mates as it is *for* survival. Competing for popularity, is about competing to be at the best cafeteria table, the cutest boyfriend, to be at the top of the social hierarchy, and being the first person talked about in magazine and internet social networking sites rather than the last to join in. Again, the competition itself is one frame of looking at what is occurring.

This misappropriation of Darwin's concepts of internal competition amongst species, or that winners of competitions merit evolutionary progress, has been used to case evolutionary orthodoxy. The contests that Darwin talked about were occurring in the moment and dominance wasn't over a long span of time, but noted with every passing second (Grosz, 2005). In Darwin's own words,

> The theory of natural selection is grounded on the belief that each new variety and ultimately each new species, is produced and maintained by having some advantage over those with which it comes into competition;

> and the consequent extinction of less favoured forms almost inevitably follows. (1859/1985, p. 323)

What does survive in the competition is a species suited to win other competitions; that species is efficient at competing, which is therefore considered a dominant species. To take Darwin's taxonomical differentiation of species as the grounds for some species to be destroyed, genetic modification to breed superior species, or for an ultimate species to arise from the most competitive and adaptable amongst a group, is an ideological misstep. If there can only be one winner, then the idea follows that all the rest are losers.

Temporarily Winning

Competition isn't natural selection, but the ideas border each other. Natural selection is the process whereby one species becomes more adaptive to their environment and members of the same species that are not as adaptive, fail to survive. Competition, then, is both the inner fighting between members of the same species for survival and between different species over the same territory, food supply, or watering holes. The same holds true in popularity and the contests that occur outside of a clique (between those identified as popular as those unpopular) and within a clique (between the brighter, prettier, *more* popular people of an identified group). Competition surrounds both the internal dynamics and external dynamics, in the wild and in the cafeteria.

Competition, however, doesn't result in the permanent dominance of one species over other species or one member of a particular species against others within their own species. It does set into place an idea that contests are constantly occurring, for Darwin notes, "Natural selection tends only to make each organic

being as perfect as, or slightly more perfect than, the other inhabitants of the same country with which it has to struggle for existence" (p. 229). Natural selection as the guiding force behind evolution has received some strong critiques from outside of the biological sciences by groups that support "intelligent design" and "creationism" (Behe, 1998; Dembski 2007). These critiques do not undermine or address the notion of constant competition and how it is biologically rooted.

While the evolution-vs.-creation debate wages on, how we belong is played out in the margins of those paginated arguments. One side argues that we belong as we compete with others, for humans are equally competitive as animals. The other side argues that we belong because we were created, and humans were created to be the dominant species. I'll spend more time with the theological arguments for belonging in Chapter Nine, so for the rest of this chapter I'll spend time with the arguments about belonging in the biological sciences.

Temporary Social Selection

The biased vocabulary at play in many biological studies puts competition as intrinsic to all behavior without offering alternative relational models. Those biologists might dismiss other forms of relating in saying, "Cooperation might be seen as the opposite of competition… it is instead another form of selfish behavior," (Taborsky, 1994, p. 47). The individualistic world-view pervades biological sciences when biologists offer, "It is a fact, of course, that many species occupy … most communities. It is also a fact that they are not sufficiently segregated in their needs to escape competition" (Hairston, Smith, & Slobodkin, 1960, p. 423). Sciences is used, even when empirical data is not collected, in that,

“The numbers of the competition vary irregularly, but all are always present” (Hutchinson, 1948, p. 239-240). This bias is made more concrete as it is critiqued by Joan Roughgarden (2004), an evolutionary biologist, in her work *Evolution’s rainbow: diversity, gender, and sexuality,*

> Although scientists are perhaps justly proud of early population genetics, they rarely bother to mention that those equations also fundamentally change the interpretation of how natural selection works. In the Malthusian scenario, the “struggle for existence” emphasizes competition for scare resources, making aggressive combat the theme of natural selection. Yet the equations for natural selection do not concern a struggle for limited resources at all. (p. 161)

It is with Roughgarden that the idea of struggling against others, competing with others for dominance within a territory or the presumed scarcity of resources, where she argues against the innate competitive drive.

The inclusion of Roughgarden’s (2004) work in this study is for the purpose of demonstrating the bias of competition in science, which she does so by describing: “female mimicry” in studies on fish (p. 100), male hummingbirds’ seeking out more “masculine”—read longer billed—females (p.103), bighorn male sheep labeled “effeminate” when being mounted for receptive sex and living with female sheep as “aberrant,” whereas the male sheep that mount other males and live exclusively with males are “normal” (p. 138), and many other examples. Her usage of scientific observation to note the tendencies of scientists to reinforce their ideology disputes their science. Scientists that see into an animal or human relational dynamic with a competitive framework reiterate that framework. In her own terms, “Words like stealing, parasitism, deceit, and mimicry dominate the discussion and distort the sophisticated reality of what really happens in societies

that contain a biological diversity of participants" (p. 74). Making these ideas of scientific ideologies more explicit, Roughgarden goes further, in that she sees them as being in service of a greater scientific discourse that moves past ideological assumptions of competition or sexual selection. She writes,

> As ever-increasing similarities between animals and humans are revealed, do animal societies become more relevant to human societies than previously believed? Should political science and sociology, basic subjects in the human social sciences, be widened to include investigations of how animal societies function? I think so. People are not demeaned by the comparison with animals, but animals are elevated by the comparison to people. (p. 178)

She is not arguing an anthropocentric position, where human thought or the frameworks of society should be laced over animal species. She is enunciating, and I am agreeing with her, that we can have a mutually impacting relationship with other species when we look at behavior and see it as behavior without adding extraneous human judgments or characteristics.

I bring this up not to divert the conversation away from popularity and what belongs to the people, nor to critique Descartes arguments, but to make more tangible the notion that human frameworks for understanding any idea or topic can be expanded when looking beyond narrow models or perspectives. Roughgarden advocates looking at multiple species to discern relational and social frameworks within biological paradigms, a position I believe, that expands multiple discourses, including popularity. Why is so much of biology and sociology biased with notions of competition and contests when the actual relations under examination are more complicated, nonlinear, and nonhierarchical, as Roughgarden observes?

One example of the complicated nature of relationships is what occurs directly after sexual selection. Roughgarden points to the ongoing dynamics when choosing mates, and not by the "competitive alpha male," which is the most dominant male suitor in a community, chosen by a fertile female. Roughgarden acknowledges that the choice is rarely between "alphas" and "betas", but between "best matches," which could be determined based upon many different reasons, socialization processes, fertility patterns, parenting concerns, migration patterns, frequency of mating, or could be beyond reasoning. Partner selection in animals, like humans, may be more a complicated matter of love than we would like to imagine. Additionally, once a mate is supposedly chosen, all other potential suitors, all other beings vying for acclaim, recognition, likeability, or to be chosen, don't disappear; they exist and are in relation to the mating duo even though they are not chosen. This dynamic isn't necessarily competition, but it is collective, and that is the point that Roughgarden stresses. A relational dynamic, in humans or animals, is competitive only when it is thought of as competitive.

Lonely Competitors

If we are discussing the interplay of competition, then the visceral metaphor of becoming food, of being the resource fought over, of being the meat, brings competition back to survival at the livelihood of others. To some animals, we are food. Field journalist David Quammen (2003) spends considerable time outlining ideas of predation and competition, not as a biological given, or as a form of instantiation, but in the very factual realm of humanity as being competed for as food.

Quammen's (2003) work on predators of humans isn't written to document horror stories of predation against humans by animal species, but to uncover the roots of the idea of predation, and competition, as an experience in the natural world and not as the given way to relate to others. He cautions,

> What I'm asking you to contemplate are the psychological, mythic, and spiritual dimensions (as well as the ecological implications) of a particular sort of relationship: the predator-prey showdown between one dangerous, flesh-eating animal and one human victim. That relationship, I believe, has played a crucial role in shaping the way we humans construe our place in the natural world. (p. 5)

Ideologies of competition have sweeping implications, notably in the world of popularity and cliques (Wiseman, 2002). In trying to unravel the existence of the given of competition as normal, Quammen attempts to explore the historical and cultural construction of competition, beginning on the plains and in the jungles where humans were competed for and were not, and still are not, the dominant species. What I mean by the historical and cultural construction is that there was a time when the idea of competition wasn't considered a fact of nature but was experienced. This is not a defense of competition as the natural way that we are with each other; much more insidious is this clarification that it was *once* a way that we related to the surrounding environment and that it *still* impacts our ways of relating.

Since history has a beginning it also has an end. There was once a time when we didn't think of competing to sit at particular cafeteria tables, and simply saw all the options of where to sit. Competition, however, excludes other ways of relating and only sees the contest as the utmost concern; the best cafeteria table matters the most and the rest demark unpopularity and not belonging. This

narrowing of vision, of priorities, is part of the competitive framework that Quammen elaborates; when we are fighting each other for survival, there is no room for closeness, gentleness, or simply being with others. Other cafeteria tables are not valid options for table selection in their own right, for they are extraneous placeholders for those that are not popular enough to be at the one chosen table. Again, the idea of competition removes all other priorities and thoughts, for we can only fight to survive. Does this sound similar to individual's competing for popularity, betraying friends, or being super-nice to appease rivals and still be welcomed at the cafeteria table and get an invite to a party? It does to me. There are other ways of being popular than competing, but when the idea of popularity as a contest is the dominant one, then the only options seems to be competition, betraying friends, and getting that invitation. There are other options.

Getting the Prize

Predation seems to be bound up with territoriality amongst predators. Much like popularity is bound up with cafeteria tables, territoriality has a presence in field notes of predators. Quammen phrases it,

> Territoriality is what separates the haves from the have-nots. Holding a territory within good habitat strongly affects the life expectancy of an individual, as the total supply of such territories limits the size of a population in the presence of predators. (p. 123)

Although using an economic idea of territory and spatiality as indicators of biological dominance in a particular community isn't the focus of this chapter, the idea of predation does lead to the concept of policing a territory. By policing I mean the noting of who is a successful predator, who wins competitions and demonstrates the ability to dominate others. If one isn't a predator, they are

outside, they are unsuccessful, and they do not survive. Those are heavy terms for the outcomes of a competition, but it is because the sense of competition for survival seems so epic that it is conceived of as necessary.

If the biological sciences and Darwin's observations look at competition as the accumulation of more advantages, then no one really "wins" a competition, because the winner is simply the most adapted to their environment (Roughgarden, 2004). The "top" species belongs just like every other species in the ecosystem belongs therein. Speaking about humanity, being adapted to the social environment may mean acquiring a quarterback boyfriend or a tiara, or some signifier of popularity to flaunt at the cafeteria table, but adapting to an environment is the not the same as belonging. This is how competition, or how winning a prize as a token of belonging, is also misaligned with popularity.

The counterargument of this idea, that dominant species within particular ecologies are the most competitive, is a prioritization of one group against another group. All species belong, whether they adapt or not, and even if a species does not adapt and becomes extinct, they did belong. All middle school students belong in the cafeteria table whether they get attractive quarterback boyfriends, cheerleader girlfriends, or become expelled for supposedly inappropriate behavior.

Winners and Losers

Returning to philosophical ideas in biology, David Abram (1996) articulates the precarious position of the biology in our understanding of the world and relationships when he writes, "my finite bodily presence alone is what

enables me to freely engage the things around me, to choose to affiliate with certain persons or places, to insinuate myself in others lives" (p. 47). Our bodily presence becomes lonely when others are not thought of as equals, and are thought of as superior or inferior. A person might rationally understand the thought of being lonely while being popular, but it is the idea that popularity is competitive which makes a popular person seemingly lonely.

Connection can be cultivated, worked upon, put effort into, but on a simpler level it can be recognized. This is a different way of thinking about being with others without a competitive mentality. When a person is consistently rejected, when a child is continually overlooked and not welcomed with peers, that person begins to see her/himself as unworthy of peer acceptance, a social loser, and does not feel a sense of belonging (Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Griesler, 1990). However, refuting competition as the primary and sole relational dynamic exposes the multiple ways that persons can come together and recognize one another. Being in relationships, being actively engaged in community, whether virtual, political, or ecological, is cliquish but needn't be competitive. Cliques make a noise but their noise does not necessitate the silencing of others.

Something happens when people create community, establish group boundaries, become a clique, or compete with one other another: they are working out ways to relate. It is not a given to compete, nor is it a given that any particular gender or type of people is *more* relational or competitive than another group, but competition is the one relational option that denies the need to relate in favor of the ability to dominate.

Chapter Six: Power and Rejection

Sizing up others as being superior and envying their accomplishments, judging them as being inferior and ridiculing their failures, or noting their similarities and fighting to be better, are three different competitive ways to relate. As discussed earlier, a competitive mindset frames popularity as both a contest and as an object to be competed over; acquiring the popular label is synonymous with winning the popularity contest and dominating the competition. The idea of popularity automatically sets up the space for those outside of the clique or those not sitting at a table, and those outside are labeled unpopular.

It would be a disservice to this tour to deny the framing of unpopular. Those who lack popularity and social status are part of this tour of popularity and their labels distinguishes the gritty side of supposedly not belonging. Being rejected and alienated is the polar counterpart of belonging.

Unpopular

A multiracial girl covets a seat at a cafeteria table, never asking to join in or assert herself. Instead she tells herself that its only because her clothes aren't cool enough, and not that her parents don't make enough money to afford the coveted fashions. In time she forgets that she wants to sit at the table. She will look at magazines and not see her image or body-type reflected. Her memories of school will include the felt sense of never measuring up and not belonging.

A rambunctious African-American boy, ominously labeled emotionally disturbed within the special education department, runs around calling out to the girls glittered upon the table. He wants to ask one of the girls out on a date. He

doesn’t because he’s told not to bother those girls; they are better than him. He’s trapped in a social role that only criminalizes his behavior rather than seeing it as assertive. He may grow up to be trapped in the criminal justice system, with only cell bars to demark where he belongs.

A boy, posture erect and in his muddy soccer shorts, bemoans sitting with his teammates because of their dreadful conversation. He wants to sit elsewhere but doesn’t tell anyone. He’s not sought out; he’s expected to be there. He loves to read, but no one expects that to be in his character. Many, many years later, his sense of gender identity will shift and those years in middle school will be brushed away. Looking back, he will want to sit at the table with the glittered girls, not as a trophy boyfriend, but as one of them. Those feelings will be buried, for now, but will later have a new voice.

A brunette girl, friends of all the girls at the popular table, is never really given a seat. She has a reputation for being too sexual, even though she has only had two boyfriends in middle school. She doesn’t think it is wrong to be in love with more than one person. The girls at the table call her a slut, a whore, and a dirty bitch when she isn’t around. She’ll never stop wanting to fit in, even though in her heart she knows that the idealized caricature of a demure and monogamous woman isn’t her.

These are images that don’t fit the mold of the popular girls at the cafeteria table. They are children of color, poor, of various sexual and gender identities, physical and mental abilities, and they are disempowered before they are even offered a seat. They, too, belong.

Discarding Others

Early studies on popularity attempted to identify popular children as those that were liked from those that were disliked (Lehmann & Solomon, 1952), but another study on popularity would later indicate (Hayvren & Hymel, 1984), that the act of noting who amongst one's peers and was liked or disliked is not without ethical implications. Naming the unlikeable peers as unlikeable furthered their rejection. To be explicit, the labeling of others has societal impact, whether that label is popular or rejected. Although some research points to the behavior of peers as an indicator of rejection (Coie, 1990), it is a misdirected exploration to uncover the ways that persons are unliked. Any reason can be given for why a person is disliked, and oftentimes the reasons are not even plausible such as race or sexual orientation. Regardless of the reason for rejection, it is important to note the emotional underpinnings of rejection and the felt sense of powerlessness at the thought of not belonging and being socially discarded.

I think an illustration from the Joss Whedon's (2009) television series *Dollhouse* would help describe this sense of what is Other, and how others are often discarded. The premise of the show is that humans supposedly volunteer to have their personality erased and become whatever someone else would like them to be; thus *dolls* are persons that become objects by having their subjectivity erased. In the episode appropriately entitled *Belonging* (which originally aired October 23, 2009), the resident technological genius Topher Brink, is caught in a moral dilemma. Adelle DeWitt is Topher's boss and tells him of his new orders: release one of the dolls and give her the personality and memories to make her

marry a man. That man is the same person who coerced, manipulated, and drugged her to make her a doll to begin with. Adelle consoles Topher in saying,

> You'll do it because you must. The cold reality is that everyone here was chosen because their morals have been compromised in some way; everyone except you. You, Topher, were chosen because you had no morals. You have always thought of people as play things. This is not a judgment. You always take very good care of your toys, and you're simply going to have to let this one go.

The character of Topher looks at people as programmable and able to become anything with the correct neurological impression, but he, too, gets attached to what he objectifies.

In this instance, the character of Topher is turning other people into whatever he is told to make them into, which one might think this manipulativeness is the definition of a soulless monster. The idea of humans *as* humans, rather than *as* monsters, evil, or other morally dubious expressions hinges upon a person treating other persons with care and concern. Supposedly, only monsters or those who are evil treat others like objects or discard another's integrity and sense of self. Yet, Topher does care about these dolls, dolls that he is entrusted to care for, and when needed to, discard. Other characters in the show have other morally questionable reasons for their involvement in the dollhouse, as either doll or doll caretaker, but Topher's character affirms a morally iffy presence. He doesn't lose his humanity as he creates, recreates, and objectifies others to do whatever is asked of him, because morals aren't a part of his character. He leaves an impression on others, but concerns of right, wrong, good, evil, aren't his imminent concerns.

It is easy to think of monsters without souls treating fellow humans like objects, but it is more honest to remember that it is fellow humans who are the ones rejecting and tossing away others like unwanted playthings that don't belong with other shiny new dolls. The previously mentioned rambunctious African American boy is oftentimes seen as problem rather than as a person and might be thrown away in jail to show that he does not belong in society. It is in this act of thinking less of another and tossing them aside as broken or as a problem, that rejection and power distinguishes who or what belongs.

Material Power

While it may seem polarizing to examine Marx's (1834/1992; 1848/1967) theory of society and oppressive power, his work is foundational for many theorists that I have already mentioned (Scarry, 1995) or will mention (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007; Collins 2000). It is his work that began the modern discussion of power, dissecting what it is, and how it presents itself within all manner of relations. Power is often used to reject and discard others and it is here that I will begin circling this idea of power as it arises from the cafeteria tables.

Marx's exploration of the social structures of life, along with the work of Max Weber (1920/1993) and Emile Durkheim (1924/1974), laid out the idea of power as embedded in oppression and alienation, and as operating forces in society. The crux of Marx's argument about social structure is that society is an organized system of power dynamics and that access to resources is an indicator of power. Power emanates from the collection of resources, and the oppression of others occurs through denying them access to resources. While a discussion of

Weber's idea of charismatic authority is one aspect of power that will be addressed in Chapter Eight, it was Durkheim (1924/1974) that sought to explore these very real "social facts" of what occurs in society: rejection, oppression, class, etc. However, it was Marx that attempted to address the operations of these facts and the impact that they have upon us all. Therefore, I'll start with Marx and work my way through ideas of oppression, power, rejection, and the price of a competitive mentality.

At the start of one of his (1848/1967) more widely recognized works, *The Communist Manifesto*, which was co-written with Friedrich Engels, Marx lays out his thesis on power. He addresses power within a number of relational dyads,

> Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. (p. 79)

This is the second sentence of the manifesto. This sentence frames the relational dynamics within his entire argument about people who are oppressed in naming who it is that oppresses. He also, in his naming of positions of power, acknowledges that oppression takes on several relational forms. The result of understanding power and oppression, he hinted at, is the overthrow of those who are supposedly powerful and a change in the ways in which we relate to one another.

Domination and oppression occur through the utilization of resources—material resources like land ownership, food, trade relations, people as laborers, technologies, and even production equipment. The lack of resources, or access to

"instruments of production," results in a divide between those that have influence and those who are subjected to it. Acquiring resources is not a singular instance of having power; controlling resources continues in ever changing new ways. "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society" (p. 83). The same holds true for social capital, or the relationships within and between social networks that allow a person to have access to other people and thereby have influence over others. Social capital, in this definition, is used in service of dominating others and building up more social capital.

Popularity, when examining the power dynamics involved, exists within this same mentality of ever-constant competition for the resources of friendships, alliances, and the building up of information networks and social capital. Who knows what at the cafeteria tables is just as important as the clothes that are worn and who isn't allowed at the cafeteria table. For those outside of the access to material resources, or social resources, there is a growing sense of the feeling of alienation, or not belonging. Alienation, to Marx, is being outside of society, outside of having the means or resources to survive. Beyond the discussion of the material conditions of life, the communal attitudes in the *Communist Manifesto* address how to acknowledge power and the dynamics that maintain power. In addressing those conditions, Marx and Engels support those without power in their efforts to regain power.

An idea of oppression, domination, and rejection arises within Marx's understanding of material conditions in that all of these are noted in social relations. Bosses treat their workers differently than their own peers, both in material ways with wages, and relational ways in not seeking out employees as confidants or advisors. The way that bosses treat their workers is very similar to Machiavelli's advice on ruling, but with the focus on internal dynamics rather than fighting a foreign country. It is within the relationships, or the internal dynamics between a people and their governance, of landowners and those working the land, rulers and ruled, military generals and replaceable troops, merchants and consumers, that conditions arise which further oppression and the distancing of one person from the experience of another. A person that has always had a seat at the cafeteria table does not know the feel of not being offered a seat.

The person not offered a seat is equally thought of as the person that had to work for someone else's material benefit. The landless had to toil under the sovereignty of another. The other person was seen as alien and other than a full citizen, thus feeling alienated and not belonging. It is these material conditions that Marx identified as the leading cause of people seeing each other differently. "Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?" (p. 102). On a very simplistic level, noting differences in clothing, grooming, and accents, leads to placing people in supposedly different categories of personhood. Here we can remember the brunette girl from a lower socio-economic class and

how her image is rarely reflected in glamorous television scripts outside of a token role so as to feign wider demographic appeal.

It is the material conditions of persons, which lead to conceptualizing categories of belonging or alienation. Those with more resources belong and those that do not are alienated; otherwise thought of as powerless against the forces of society. It is in the withholding of resources that another person is oppressed and some people benefit from exclusive access to resources. Although Marx saw this as one aspect within a historical trajectory that would eventually end in the equality of all, the trajectory starts with the notation of oppression.

Oppression

Patricia Hill Collin's (2000) work on the multiple layers of oppression operating simultaneously went beyond Marx or other thinkers on oppression and their singular focus on material forms of oppression. In a 1848 speech, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1993) proposed that women would never be considered equal if they aren't able to vote, however she did not discuss the necessity of all women of color needing the ability to vote. Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1993) noted that women are perceived as "other" in male-driven societies and that gender, as one of the categories to represent the "other," is socially constructed and not a given at birth. Betty Freidan (1963/2001) articulated the discontent and pain of being oppressed as a woman by one's own family and household. These theorists articulated aspects of oppression on a personal and political level, yet some of the dynamics of power and oppression operating from multiple places didn't enter the wider collective consciousness until women of color came to join the public

discussion of power, pain, and all the subtle ways that a person can be considered *Other*. Patricia Hill Collins is a noteworthy theorist in this regard.

While Collins would be placed in the Marxist school of critical theory, her articulation of the idea of power hinges upon an understanding of personal agency within larger societal factors,

> One way of approaching power concerns the dialectical relationship linking oppression and activism, where groups with greater power oppress those with lesser amounts. Rather than seeing social change or lack of it as preordained and outside the realm of human action, the notion of a dialectical relationship suggests that change results from human agency… Another way of approaching power views it not as something that groups possess, but as an intangible entity that circulates within a particular matrix of domination and to which individuals stand in varying relationships. (p. 274)

Marx wrote his ideas for a large audience, an audience concerned with the making and unmaking of economic and political progress throughout time. Collins wrote from within her personal and political experience of oppression for those concerned with the politics of race and ending many kinds of oppression (racial, sexual, class, etc.). From her perspective, power is often identified with domination and it is apparent when change is implemented. In this understanding of oppression, those not sitting at the cafeteria tabled are branded Other.

The Other is usually thought of as powerless. Whereas Marx emphasized the material disadvantages of those who are powerless and encouraged their revolution to change those oppressions, Collins saw disadvantages coming out of "intangible" aspects. Powerlessness did not revolve around possessions per se, but relational dynamics that are harder to pin down than property rights, voting abilities, or textile equipment ownership. The short sketches given above of

middle school students not invited to a particular table were too cursory to give fuller descriptions of the relational dynamics at work amongst those at the cafeteria table and neighboring the table, but that was my attempt at illustrating several kinds of oppressions that occur around the cafeteria table; multiple forms of oppression occur simultaneously and are often less tangible than material advantages.

Those more "intangible" characteristics of power are what Collins addresses. For her, it is important to note the broader categories of power as well as aspects of power that arise in particular and daily situations.

> Whereas the structural domain of power organizes the macro-level of social organization with the disciplinary domain managing its operations, the interpersonal domain functions through routinized, day-to-day practices of how people treat one another (e.g., micro-level of social organization). (p. 287)

It is in these micro-level interactions, those sometimes small and sometimes intangible exchanges that occur between persons that power is felt. Someone might not like you, but *why* don't they like you? It could be many different reasons, some known to you, others only speculative. However, in that small act of knowing that someone doesn't like you, didn't invite you to a party, or request to be your friend on a social networking site, it is in *how* people are treated that rejection occurs and power arises within those relational dynamics. Those inviting others or rejecting others have power, and those being rejected are seemingly powerless. In these actions and many more, it is one person, or one group of people, that defines, restricts or categorizes, the other as an *Other*, and as not like *me* or *our*.

Coming together isn't a problem because organizing isn't an intrinsic evil, but it does allow for extrinsic exercise of power and rejection. "Groups organized around race, class, and gender in and of themselves are not inherently a problem. However, when African-Americans, poor people, women, and other groups discriminated against see little hope for group-based advancement, this situation constitutes social injustice" (Collins, 2000, p. 23). Social justice is another idea about the way of looking at the idea of rejection, who is considered *Other*, and power. There is social injustice when grave differences exist between whole categories of persons. When children are consistently held to binary gender distinctions, those outside are marginalized and denied a voice at the table, and in this way the seemingly confident soccer player has little power and no voice.

Social justice exists when groups of persons are accorded the same rights and are equally invited to participate in society, and social injustice occurs when the opposite is true. Social justice isn't another abstract concept that is only theoretical, for it is seen and experienced daily. Media images saturate are but one place to look to see social just being enacted or denied. Collins, writes,

> The growing influence of television, radio, movies, videos, CDs and the Internet constitute new ways of circulating controlling images. Popular culture has become increasingly important in promoting these images, especially with new global technologies that allow U.S. popular culture to be exported throughout the world. (p. 85)

Again, it isn't the grouping that is emblematic of power dynamics, but what occurs when that grouping happens and how those circulated images become idealized as popular and constitute social justice or injustice. In this, the images of

what is popular are also defining what isn't popular, and are thereby powerful in their capacity to esteem or vilify anything.

To illustrate this point, Collins (2000) addresses the ways that ideas of what is beautiful simultaneously set up an opposition between what is unbeautiful. "Within the binary thinking that underpins intersecting oppressions, blue-eyed, blond, thin White women could not be considered beautiful without the Other—Black women with African features of dark skin, broad noses, full lips, and kinky hair" (p. 89). For Collins, binary thinking emphasizes one image and simultaneously denigrates the opposing image, and taken to ideas of power, it is the emphasized image that is both imbued with power and a signifier of power. Looking at the behavior of children, researchers have noted that younger children often prefer white dolls as "more beautiful" than darker skinned dolls (Clark, 1955) and that this observation still holds true to this day, as seen in in Kiri Davis' 2007 documentary *Girl like me*, which depicts the still prevalent preferences for white dolls over black dolls. For a young girl to see the skin color of dolls and declare one more beautiful than the other, on this one attribute, is a stark indicator of social justice and how binary thinking leads to disempowering and oppression.

From the perspective of Marx and Collins, media saturation of images is one resource that is denied to the *others*. If the media reflects society at large, then only showing images of particular groupings in society, only showing postured camera conscious faces on the Real Housewives® franchise, The Hills®, Keeping up with the Kardashians® or any reality television programming is denigrating to women as it supposedly elevates them (Cole & Crossley, 2009). Sanitized family

dynamics on Leave it to Beaver®, 7th Heaven®, or The Cosby Show® skew an image of family interactions (Hewlett, Rankin & West, 2002). Beauty pageant winners the likes of Carry Prejean representing traditional family values while hawking sex tapes and denouncing civil rights (Nagraj, 2009) constitutes a skewed image of what belongs and conversely what doesn't belong in society.

In showing one image, in displaying one kind of group, or physical type, then that type becomes the dominant one by its lack of variation. There are no other images to be saturated in the media other that the typical, and therefore popular one. This image gets higher Nielsen ratings® (http://www.nielsenmedia.com) and has displaced alternative possibilities or simply Others from being shown onscreen.

This is one way that power is identifiable; control of options and limiting possibilities is one way to exercise power. Another showcase of power is in the ability to choose alternatives and control options. Collins articulates this; power allows more options to be possible but also restricts those options being used. In other words, although power grants access to options it also limits their utilization. For her, power and dominance, are in service of further domination. It is in oppression, and the oft-complicated intersections of oppression in daily experiences, that power is rooted. Power though, isn't external and isn't always felt as an outside group or force impacting one's own personhood or group; it can be internal and oftentimes internally fixated. Somewhere between feeling power internally—strong, capable, energized, popular, etc.—and exercising power

externally—dominating, ruling, governing, winning competitions, controlling others—lies another aspect of power: the mythic kind.

Many Kinds of Power

Utilizing power over others is subtlety different depending on the theorist, or their focus on internal rather than external circumstances. Machiavelli (1532/1999) advocated using power externally over others “for their betterment” as others are governed without regard to their inner well-being. This differs from Freud (1930/1989), who saw power within relations and felt psychically. The difference here is directional, whereas Machiavelli’s idea of power is externally preoccupied—I exercise influence and rules on you—Freud’s idea of power can be situated internally as well as relationally—I exercise power over you and affect your experience. The difference might be between Freudian psychological or Machiavellian sociological formulations. However, there is something beyond these two ways of approaching the topic.

Returning to psychologist James Hillman (1995), the experience of power is personal, relational, and structural as many different aspects of power arise when rejecting or not rejecting others, even if one is not openly engaged in a supposed popularity contest. To Hillman, ideas of power, of what is powerful (e.g. growth, efficiency, action) follow styles of power (e.g., formal power, titular power, charismatic power), and he might say that Queen Bee’s have a particular social kind of power. However, Hillman looks at power from a conscious standpoint in that, “Empowerment comes from widening your understanding of the kinds of power going on around you and from uncovering a wider spectrum of

possibilities for embracing power…. Expanding ideas comes first; widened practice follows" (1995, p. 11). Power, for Hillman, is both an idea, an abstraction, but also an experiential certainty in possibilities; he refutes neither Marx nor Collins nor Freud nor Machiavelli in this point. In his terms, "our problems are inside our lives, yes; but our lives are lived inside fields of power, under the influence of others, in accord with authority, subject to tyrannies" (1995, p. 15). Psychology, as a field, terms power with the idea of subjecting others, dominating them, and desiring to stay on top of others. The psychological dimensions of power, or more aptly of power complexes, revolve around the individual reasons for subordinating other persons, thinking lesser of them, or the reasons *why* one person would exclude another from the cafeteria table.

Hillman doesn't give much discussion to this topic of *why* one person dominates another but only touches it in passing. Marx does the same in talking about political and economic systems that oppress and *how* they oppress rather the motivations of politicians or economists. Collins likewise examines societal factors that articulates the oppression of persons and groups but does not examine the oppressor's own sense of justice. Regardless of the theorists' preference for psychological formulations or sociological, one aspect remains: power involves some forms of rejection and is experienced in relationships with others. It takes only a step to see that popularity is powerful, because what is popular is not rejected.

The psychological formulations of power aside, one myth of power, from Hillman's (1995) perspective, is that singular approaches to gain and wield power

are misleading. A Queen Bee rarely has one reason for disinviting a peer to a party. In this way, narrowly focused desires for power often lead to problems of oppression, pain, apartheid, segregation, isolation, and a host of other social ills that cannot be easily narrowed into singular causes. Including the mythic dimension of power, or that power has archetypal qualities (heroic quests, dark nights of the soul, monsters to battle, etc.), brings up another idea of power. The rejection of power is also a rejection of *others*. Rejecting the power implicit within popularity is likewise a rejection of others and of our belonging with others.

Whereas Marx saw power within economic systems, and Collins saw power within systems and interpersonal dynamics, neither addressed the rejection of power; the bourgeois rejecting their dominant social roles, or white heterosexual patriarchs refuting their social standing weren't explicit in their studies. Hillman, however, spoke of abdicating power and refuting power, whilst respecting power. He accomplished this in his threefold approach to discussing power: identify ideas of power, address the subtle differences in expressions of power, and acknowledge the heroic elements of power in their acquisition, utilization, and rejection. He offers, if economic systems are modeled after growth and efficiency as power, then stagnancy and pause are not powerful in an active sense, but powerful in that they react to what is deemed powerful by countering it. This is the meta-perspective, the mythic dimension, of patterns of power. There are many ways to be powerful and to resist power, yet all actions and relations have some implicit kind of power. If a Queen Bee abdicates her role of governing

who is allowed at the cafeteria table or not, she is also, in her own way, allowing others to welcome possible lunch buddies, and is therefore sharing her power.

Reframing Power

One of the common conceptions of popularity, or of being powerful, is the accumulation of status symbols: more friends, meticulously cultivated clothing, high-end grooming products, more party invitations, faster cars, smaller phones, or more generally, any display of money. Ascetic virtues aside, power is routinely identified with displays of money. Thich Nhat Hanh (2007), the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, who was exiled from his native country for his speaking out against violence, has a personal and unique perspective on power that is outside of economic, social, or mythical perspectives. As a practicing and fervent adherent to non-violent beliefs, he sees power as starkly non-hierarchical and non-possessive. His rebuttal to Sun-Tzu's *The art of war* (6th Century BCE /2002) is his own *The art of power* (2007). In it he writes,

> But if we look deeply, we see that people who are running after power suffer greatly. We suffer first in the chase, because so many people are struggling for the same thing. We believe that the power we are searching for is scarce and elusive and available only at the expense of someone else. But even if we achieve power, we never feel powerful enough. (p. 12)

There are two critiques of war and power that he is offering here. One is the economic notion of scarcity, that there isn't enough for everyone to have what they want and that there is a limit to the number of friends you can have. The second is that *wanting* power, craving it, is bound up with taking power from others, and waging war at their expense.

This is part of the common definition of popularity, or that which is collectively sought after. If popularity were a prize to be captured, then social power is recognized when popularity is taken away from others who had or might possess it. Rather than domination, power here is accorded to the person that has the desired object; rejection isn't a factor as much as losing is, for to not get what one wants, one has lost the supposed popularity contest. "My happiness is not dependent on popularity, on other's approval. My happiness depends on me" (2007, p. 134). Here, Hanh repeats the meme that popularity isn't important, admiration of others isn't relevant, and what is most important is internal fortitude. This thought leads to isolationist worldviews, separatists ideologies, and distancing oneself from others. Interestingly, I do not think that Hanh would use that phrase if he spent time examining popularity while thinking of that which belongs to the people. He might see power as interdependent, much like success.

> Success isn't a matter of talent alone. There are many elements that contribute to success. Even if you're the most talented person, even if you have real insight, if the right time has not come, you won't be successful. So you just do your best, and if conditions are sufficient you'll have success. You can never be sure that you'll be successful. That's the reality. (p. 134)

Perhaps it is a simplistic idea that power is interdependent, or that it arises within relationships and is part of the concrete structure of society. In repositioning power as interdependent rather than oppressive, his is also a reframing of power.

An empty cafeteria table with one fully occupied table doesn't hold the same power or presence as a densely packed cafeteria adorned with all kinds of people. The coveted cafeteria table is inherently interdependent, and relies upon those not seated at that particular cafeteria table, and therefore sitting elsewhere,

to instantiate it as a placeholder for popularity. The same is true for the persons at the table; popularity arises in the embedded networks of relationships elsewhere.

For scientific data to legitimize interdependency, then the cognitive sciences are a rich ground to study interdependence and human relationships. Cognitive interdependence is a necessity in social operations, because a person needs to know what another knows in order to finish any mutual operation (Brandon & Hollingshead, 2004; Hollingshead, 2001). Furthermore, the brain empathizes and actually feels what another person feels through mirror-neuronal pathways, which are instrumental in synaptic development (LeDoux: 1996, 2002). Also, studies on brain development emphasize the role of nurturing others for successful emotional growth (Wegner, 1986; Wegner, Erber, & Raymond, 1991). These studies from the realm of cognitive science and neuropsychology further support an acknowledgment of power and interdependence.

I am trying to not get too far away from the topic of popularity by going into consciousness studies, cognitive neuroscience, or interdependent world-views, but in acknowledging power I find these additions to be the furnishings, or the extra accessories that complete the outfit, of power. Hanh (2007) doesn't rely on cognitive science, or any academic research to validate his argument; he simply states what he sees and asks for a response. "Please raise your voice so that you can come together with others. When we come together, we can voice our concerns strongly and effectively. Because collective awakening is the only thing that can change our situation" (p. 161). This may seem like an obvious statement on power, that collectivity means greater power. However, any exercise

of power that aims to separate others out, to reject them, to oppress, to suppress, to dominate, is an irony of power and popularity. Attempting to identify those with power or popularity denies the broader awareness that all of are within the same system that articulates power and labels particular people as powerful, popular, or not being popular. We are together as we note power, whether at a cafeteria table, conference table, war room, or meditation hall. Additionally, several studies demonstrate that when popular adolescents exercise their power to reject others, they also lose their popularity by being perceived as arrogant (Babad, 2001; George & Hartmann, 1996). In noting power, it is not always an indication of arrogance. In believing that wielding power makes a person somehow better, those cafeteria tables, conferences halls, or wherever, become places where Queen Bees do not hear the voices of unpopular peers.

Acknowledging Power and the Unpopular

While traipsing through ideas of power, I have also been acknowledging the presence of power as a shaping societal force. In truth, you could put me on the teams of all the above-mentioned theorists; Marx, Collins, Hillman, and Hanh all acknowledge different aspect and different particularities of power, which I agree with. These theorists examine how power accumulates, how it is used, how it affects us, and I chose these authors rather than other ones that stress the necessity to have power as a driving force within the individual rather than relationships (Nietzsche, 1968), the divine right of kings (Stuart, 1603) or the mandate of heaven (Morton, 1995) bequeathing power only to nobility, or the necessity of power to govern unruly masses (Hobbes, 1651/1998), to show that

power does not automatically seek the dominance of others. Power, as I see it, is enacted rather than given. Rejection, too, is enacted and not a given.

My addition to this tour of popularity and giving several pages to the idea of power is to acknowledge power and how popularity is instrumentally used as social power. If power is thought of hierarchically, with one person or one group ruling, then continual domination of others and remaining at the top is of utmost concern to those deemed popular. This hierarchical thought of power disempowers those considered unpopular and does not see them as integral to society. Popular people, unpopular people, and paparazzi alike feed into this idea of power and rejection, but rejecting others is not a prerequisite of those with power. We all have more conscious choices than we realize, and power need not be in service of only acquiring more power or oppressing unpopular persons.

Chapter Seven: Skin Deep

Studies on popularity, too, note the power of attractiveness and beauty. Facial attractiveness is often one of the primary markers of a person's popularity (Hartup: 1970, 1983), and attractiveness can denote popularity (Babad, 2001) as it is anecdotally a factor in happiness (Feingold, 1983). Grooming to look more attractive has some correlation with higher academic performance and social acceptance (French, Robins, Homer, & Tampsell, 2009). Attractiveness even extends into digital interaction, where flirting and the usage of personal photos on social networking sites is deemed crucial to being liked and accepted online (Whity, 2004). What we like and seek out is often determined in rushed moments, wherein we grasp the beautiful and reach away from what is ugly.

Image, therefore, is crucial to what is liked and what is not liked. That moment of decision, the kind scrutinized in Gladwell's (2005) study *Blink*, boils down to a small judgment. While a person's social reputation and prior history of rejection or acceptance amongst groups can precede another's judgment, a person's initial impression, and sometimes their social reputation, is often the bedrock of further relating. How persons present themselves, how products are packaged, the lighting on a cafeteria table, and even what accessories pull together an outfit are all part of those sartorial touches that note where to find beauty. They are also signifiers of popular, visually showing what belongs and what is coveted. First impressions and images impart belonging, if only in the first assessment and subsequent judgment on whether the person belongs.

Staying on the Surface

That packaging, polishing, outer-coating, and prettiness is the focus of this chapter on the idea of popular. Therefore, low carbohydrate soft drinks, peep-toe Louboutin™ pumps, keffiyehs, metallic high-tops, even Sonic-Care® toothbrushes are coveted for their functionality as well as their sleekness. Beyond listings of current merchandise in department stores, what is beautiful can be synonymous for what is popular. Researchers on popularity often describe a constellation of attributes for a person or group that is deemed popular, and pretty, beautiful, or attractive is often listed among the more pronounced attributes (Babad, 2001; Eder, 1985; Merten, 1997; LaFontana & Cillessen, 1999; Wiseman, 2002). Addressing the idea of popular necessitates addressing beauty.

Rather than spending time in the chapter on competition and how primping our appearance is a preparation for the competition to be popular, this chapter addresses beauty not as a contest or a pageant. Beauty acknowledges the presentation of a person, and not competitive relations. This chapter speaks to that objective: beauty acknowledges persons and popularity likewise acknowledges beauty. Unfortunately, the study of beauty focuses, at least initially, on how to know that something is beautiful before, how to objectify art, before address how we judge others based upon their beauty. As I talk about the history of studying beauty I am also showing you how we have come to judge and objectify others based upon beauty.

Applying Foundation

The philosophical study of aesthetics rarely discusses the idea of popular or the idea of pretty, but it does address beauty. Since the main arguments and conversations occur within this philosophical branch, we will spend some time over here. In order to dissect mainstream images of beauty and how the idea of beauty and popularity flirt with each other, I will give some context and history on the study of beauty. Unfortunately, schools of thought that study beauty favor studying art more than persons. Therefore, I will spend some time talking about objectification and art before getting to persons and how persons are objectified in the name of beauty.

Depending on your idea of popular, beauty may be the antithesis of popular; likewise depending on your idea of beauty a Facebook® profile might be the perfect example of your definition. To me, Facebook® (http://facebook.com) is a perfect example of what is pretty, polished, and popular, because Facebook® has a beauty all unto itself for it presents each person to the world while also displaying each person within their friendships. The beauty of Facebook and the public discussion surrounding the utilization of beauty is not unlike the statuesque Venus de Milo fought over by France and Italy (Curtis, 2003) or Sarah Palin's folksy wink being hotly debated as an alluring gesture (Lewinson, 2008). What is considered beautiful and what is admired takes up our collective attention and in this way form many public discussions. These three images, though representing several ideas of popularity, of likeability and wanting to be liked, outline the foggy parameters of beautiful persons, popularity, and what is pretty.

Classic Beauty

Coincidentally, the idea of beauty is as elusive and broad as the idea of popular. The idea of beauty is further complicated when the label of beautiful is applied to persons, deeming beautiful persons apart from ugly persons. Both the idea of beauty and the idea of popular have this in common; they are wanted and they are attainable or graspable by all people and create distinct categories. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, Beauty, with a capital "B" was often referred alongside of Grace-*Charis*, Justice-*Dicaiosyne*, Love-*Eros*, Necessity-*Ananke* (Cicero, 1st Century BCE/1933); capitalized because these ideas were more than descriptors, they were alive, and they were ideals. Some were even gods. While a polytheistic structuring of the idea of beauty would lend a considerable classical and historical context to this study, I will only pull out Plato's (1st Century BCE/1974) idea of Beauty.

While Plato's idea of Beauty was reasoned in *The Republic*, I could have as easily focused on Heraclitus' emphasis on change within beauty (Haxton, 2001) to guide this study. Socrates' appreciated the formality in beauty (Xenophon, 1st Century BCE/1923). Aristotle's empirical defense of beauty went up against Plato's ideas (Aristotle, 1st Century BCE/1997). Epicurus' (1st Century BCE/1993) freely sensuous beauty is perhaps the antithesis of Pyrrho's (Empiricus, 1st Century BCE/1933) indifference towards beauty, although Pyrrho valued the surface of things as knowable while anything else was speculative. Each of these nuanced approaches to beauty is distinguished, and worthy of

mention. Plato's work, however, is foundational to the other theorists I'll touch upon, so I will spend more time with his ideas than other classic thinkers.

Plato's (1st Century BCE/1974) *Republic* offered a philosophical, yet unashamed political treatise on how to create an ideal society. Plato took his philosophical ideas, etched them within political discourse on justice, and still covered a tremendous territory of other ideas: beauty and aesthetics are but one of his mapped terrains. In his time, music, theater, and drama were adored because of their appeal to people's senses. "But there is one thing you can decide at once, that beauty and ugliness result from good rhythm and bad." (p. 102). Moral sensitivities for what is right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly were part of Plato's world-view. He accorded this sense of moral distinction, that the good is socially acceptable, to beauty and to society in general. This was not Aristotle's decree of rationalized conduct and being right, but rather a base for affective sensibility within morality. Plato, however, did not discuss beautiful persons in his idea of beauty, but he did moralize beauty and how we come to recognize beauty.

Beautiful and Good

According to Plato, doing what is wrong, bad, or ugly, isn't considered popular and shouldn't belong in society. Both beauty, in specific examples and in the general idea, as well as "good rhythm all depend on goodness of character; I don't mean that lack of awareness of the world which we politely call 'goodness', but a mind and character truly well and fairly formed.'" (p. 103). In this passage, Plato notes the intention of a song should follow the singing of the song, and a

person of true character can express art in this idealized, perfected way. Artists, then, are the true characters who know the idealized world more than those who are not artists. When the moralistic sense is added, that truth is synonymous to beauty, then deceptive beauty is likewise ugly and wrong. However, Plato also dismisses goodness with polite sensibilities of the world, in that a good person is well aware of what is happening in the world. Are manners and politeness one identifier of popularity? I would agree. Being aware of how to treat others is important to Plato, but his emphasis is upon the internal strength and merit of the individual, their character, rather than the object or person judged to be beautiful.

Correctly knowing beauty, to Plato, is also knowing what is true, but *how* does one know beauty? How is it possible to be "well and fairly formed" in order to identify beauty, especially when it is persons that are or are not considered beautiful? David Hume (1757/1998), the English philosopher often cited with the subjective approach to aesthetics, offered one answer to this question. Hume reasoned that each person may find things beautiful and that others might not. This idea supports accepting whatever is beautiful for whoever views it. Hume doesn't stop there. His rationalistic argument, that beauty needs "confirmation" lends support to those with more "refined" tastes to determine what is beautiful. Therefore, we should trust the artists, the innovators of style, and those making art rather than the common or general response or popular opinion of art or a person.

Hume studied philosophy during a time, the Enlightenment period, where literature and philosophy was flowing throughout society, often extolling the rational approach in judging anything or anyone. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's

(1762/2003) social contract as the capacity of individual to forfeit liberties to be with others was brazenly published to further this goal. François Voltaire defended the civil liberties of all citizens to while criticizing the management of freedom through philosophy (1764/1984) and his own satirical writings (1759/1959). Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/2003) critiqued individualism in America while examining the impact of capitalism on social structure and merit. Through these authors, rationalism was extolled by many prominent thinkers and the above are merely a few of the more widely read authors. Kant (1764/1960) took rationalism into the domain of beauty and extolled the presumably natural ability of women to identify beauty with greater accuracy than men and argued that women should therefore have more domain in domestic affairs where beauty was needed. The above theorists were possibly considered popular in their own time or shortly after their death, and reasoning was what they valued more than an object or someone that looked pretty.

These Enlightenment period thinkers favored rationalized arguments above all else. Plato would agree with the idea of trusting a disciplined and rationed response to art, informed by those with more educated artistic abilities. Plato declared, "But to love rightly is to love what is orderly and beautiful in an educated and disciplined way…. Then can true love have any contact with frenzy or excess of any kind?" (1st Century BCE/1974, p. 105). Plato confirmed beauty as a truthful display, lacking frenzy, and that a refined education, especially a refined education of character, would lend a person the ability to know beauty. I'll dig into this idea of character, how character and impressions are noted with

beauty and other factors in the next chapter. For now Plato's idea that Beauty neighbors his idea of truth, and the enlightenment era's support of truth as rational further supports Plato's idea of an education being necessary to comprehend beauty. The enlightenment thinkers didn't end at Hume, with his subjective appraisal of beauty. The Enlightenment ideals were at their highest with Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Rational Beauty

Hegel (1886/1993), though admiring the classic understanding of Beauty, lent his academic rigor to understand beauty as it appears in art, *high* art, rather than its closeness with truth or with regard to persons. His studies on beauty were meticulous. He approached the study of beauty as a science, and as an exacting science supported by reason. In doing this he rationalized a subjective approach to beauty. He wrote,

> We may, however, begin at once by asserting that artistic beauty stands *higher* than nature. For the beauty of art is the beauty that is born – born again, that is – of the mind; and by as much as the mind and its products are higher than nature and its appearances, by so much the beauty of art is higher than the beauty of nature. (p. 4)

Hegel's examination of beauty through his formulaic structuring of art, more than beautiful persons, rests upon a cognitive and rational understanding of the world, rather than an imaginative and sensate understanding. Take Hegel's statement,

> Mind, and mind only, is capable of truth, and comprehends in itself all that is, so that whatever is beautiful can only be really and truly beautiful as partaking in this higher element and as created thereby. In this sense the beauty of nature reveals itself as a but a reflection of the beauty which belongs to the mind, as an imperfect, incomplete mode of being, as a mode whose really substantial element is contained in the mind itself. (p. 4)

Here we can see Hegel's introduction to beauty, the beginning of his framing a rational emphasis of art; it is not the emotive, compelling, or visceral experience of art that he acknowledges. The emotional experience of beauty in art, through Hegel's perspective, is not as prioritized as the rational elements of art, and in this shifting focus, Hegel steps over ideas of beautiful persons that are alluring. Although the admiration of form within beauty is present in both Hegel and Plato's idea of beauty, it is Hegel that makes a rational argument for beauty whereas Plato sees beauty as requiring no argument, no justification or purpose beyond its own presence. Hegel rests his argument on the mind and the mind's ability to know itself. However, Hegel wrote during the above-mentioned Enlightenment period when the mind was valued for its objectivity and its detached comprehension as somehow separate from the body. Hegel emphasized beauty as recognizable only through the mind and split beauty away from bodily response. In this way, Hegel gave the world a language with which to objectify bodies and accordingly judge other persons based upon their beauty, even if this wasn't his intention.

Rational Popularity

Rationalizing art or saying that art has a rational purpose is supported by Hegel's admiration of literature, poetry, and especially painting. Art is an expression of how the world is, according to Hegel. Literature and poetry can rationally expresses the values, judgments, and reasoned theories of philosophy so that ideas can be more widely discussed, and beauty is instrumental in this regards. We can discuss the idea of grace philosophically, or we can discuss the

idea of grace, or falling from grace, within the context of John Milton's (1674/1993) poem *Paradise Lost*. For Milton a charismatic ideal didn't offer much room for discussion but an imperfect image, say of Lucifer rather than Jesus, offered richer artistic material for discussion of redemption, guilt, shame, and perfection. Hegel would applaud this artistic discussion. Art then, using Hegel's structure, allows for rationed understanding of ideas. Beauty, then, exists to make an observer aware that there is something rational to be understood.

Stepping back to popularity, rationalizing popularity and noting the benefits of being popular, the attendant markers of popularity in beauty, deportment, style, and social likeability, and the detriments of being unpopular are all rational approaches to observing popularity. There is more than a rational understanding of popularity; the feeling of belonging that arises with popularity. The vulgar, crass, uneducated or the refined, educated, and sublime forms of popularity exist alongside each other as a way to indicate the expansiveness of popularity. Popularity needn't be rationalized and objectified, like art, for it to matter.

Objectifying Art

Hegel also goes as far as to acknowledge that there are some people who can know art, who understand art, with greater skill. Art, though collectively experienced, is appreciated, seen with more detail, in those persons who have spent more time studying art and analyzing it. Here, too, rational understanding is the "definite" way that, Hegel argues, a person can understand something.

> And even if artistic works are not abstract thought and notion, but are an evolution of the notion *out of* itself, an alienation from itself towards the

> sensuous, still the power of the thinking spirit (mind) lies herein, *not merely* to grasp *itself only* in its peculiar form of the self-conscious spirit (mind), but just as much to recognize itself in its alienation in the shape of feeling and the sensuous, in its other form, by transmuting the metamorphosed thought back into definite thoughts, and so restoring it to itself. (p. 15)

This passage was included not to jumble the argument of a rational understanding of art, but to show the underlying ideas of how to know beauty that allows for a reasoned and rational approach to beauty. He uses an empirical method to support a subjective appreciation of beauty that is presumably more objective than it is subjective. The aesthetic response, he asserts, identifies ideas, which is validated only through the mental capacity of an artist to abstractly represent ideas. Hegel could have made a defense of beauty without needing to make it a rational justification of beauty or to convey his agenda that rational understanding is superior to other ways of knowing. Beauty, to Hegel, can reveal what is real in a sensate form, but to Hegel, what is most real is what is most rational. Rationalizing beauty removes it vibrancy, its voice, its subtlety, as it attempts to dissect and cognitively know it.

Hegel emphasizes the ability of any person to be touched by art and to sensuously respond to it, but those that can grasp the intent within art *really* understand beauty. It follows that if a rational understanding of art is required to fully understand the intent of an artistic piece, then popular opinion and the labeling of something widely like is secondary. Popularity, again, is dismissed.

> For before the mind can attain the true notion of its absolute essence, it has to traverse a course of stages whose ground is in this idea itself; and to this evolution of the content with which it supplies itself, there corresponds an evolution, immediately connected therewith, of the plastic forms of art,

> under the shape of which the mind as artist presents to itself the consciousness of itself. (p. 79)

The most evolved among us apparently are what we turn to as the most correct, most educated and therefore right, or eyes to behold beauty; popularity doesn't matter as much.

Overall, Hegel's lengthy sentences shape an idea of beauty that is simultaneously elite and unattainable. He lends support for a critique of what is labeled popular, in that it needs to be rationally understood, and empirically validated from a scientific perspective. Applying a scientific perspective or only using one method to seek understanding isn't always necessary. Rather than treating beauty or popularity as necessitating a scientific appraisal, spending time with popularity, similar to spending time with the idea of beauty, need not be restricted to a rationalizing perspective. Academia still favors narrow, precise, exacting research questions with quantifiable data, which are remnants of the Enlightenment period that Hegel embodied. This work, as you have been reading, has not been narrow nor quantifiable. A flirtatious tour is not a narrow perspective, but an attempt to see the porous borders of many different ideas.

It is from the objectification of art that beautiful people become objects of desire, objects of critique and public discussion as well. Hegel did not leave behind a guidebook for objectifying other people, but he did leave behind an approach to rationally understanding beauty and a language for appraising beauty. It is my elaboration that we now discuss the beauty of another person in regards to their facial asymmetry, bone structure, complexion, musculature, skin color, and sartorial choices have arisen from a supposed rational understanding of beauty

elaborated from Hegel's attempts at rationalizing art. In the act of judging another person and appraising their beauty, social likeability, personality, or any other measure, we can label another person. In labeling another, whether as beautiful, popular, or repugnant, a rational argument can be composed that utilizes Hegel's structure for critiques.

Composing Beauty

I've brought up many other ideas while talking about beauty and the predominantly rational approach to ideas that has been thus far present in studies on beauty. One philosopher explains it as, "beauty belonged to composite things, and that the composition is beautiful when the many components have obtained in some sense their proper proportions This was the Greek doctrine of Harmony, in respect to which neither Plato nor Aristotle ever waver." (Whitehead, 1967, p. 148) The above roughly segued quote is by Alfred North Whitehead, a philosopher that starkly diverted from Enlightenment era allegiance to scientific processes. He was more concerned with changing ideas, how ideas take form, and how ideas shape society. Philosophically validating the existence of fixed things, absolute definitions, clinical trials, or replicable outcomes weren't as important to Whitehead even though his was a mathematician. While Hegel used an idea of beauty as a preliminary argument for a rational defense of subjective responsiveness, Whitehead took Plato's idea of beauty and continued along a non-empirical path. He uncovered the idea of beauty as interacting with other ideas. Whitehead articulates how our ideas impact our very being with others.

Whitehead then shifts the conversation of beauty beyond an objective study of art but not fully towards a discussion about beautiful persons.

Whitehead's (1967) philosophical argument, on the way we hold our ideas, is a rallying call to not use an exclusively scientific rationale. "We have to discover a doctrine of nature which expresses the concrete relatedness of physical functioning's and mental functioning's, of the past with the present, and also expresses the concrete composition of physical realities which are individually diverse." (p. 157) Here Whitehead can be used to challenge Hegel. Whereas Hegel (1886/1993) looked to the composition of a piece of art, its technical precision in color, form, texture, balance, world-view, and intent, the context of a piece of art wasn't as important. Yes, Hegel admired classic Greco-Roman art over the contemporary art of his 18th Century Germany, but Hegel didn't spend time writing about the idea of beauty relating the very people or the particular places where art originated. To hold the context of a piece of art as integral to the piece, as integral to its beauty, is to see more realities and not one "absolute" reality. The painting of the piece, the life of the painter, the politics in the city of the painter, the social environment of the piece, the public relationship between artist and community, the popularity of the artist, are all part of the context of the art, and this is how Whitehead saw art and beauty: pluralistic and enveloped in multiple processes.

One of those processes was when art was seen in collections, or together with other art. "There is not a mere pattern of qualitative beauty. There are those statues, each with its individual beauty and all lending themselves to the beauty of

the whole. Enduring individuality in the details is the backbone of strong experience" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 264). Whitehead sees these multiple process as harmonious, and clarifies Plato's "bad rhythm" as disharmonious. Bad rhythms are notes that crowd out others, and good rhythm is the coming together of various elements (an artist's intent, the cultural context of the work, mood lighting, atmospheric incense, ambient sounds, or anything that offers a sensate response) and in doing so forms another equally vivid display of beauty: composed beauty. Examining one solitary sculpture does not evoke the same aesthetic response as standing in a room full of dozens of sculptures, each piece interacting with each other, and exponentially building the possibilities of aesthetic responses; this is composed beauty. There is no singular response when art is looked at as composed of many different elements, for each element adds a new layer and new kind of response. This is not looking at a collection and forming a response on the whole, but looking at a collection and noting a response for each and every piece including the whole, which is a much larger response.

Dismissing Beauty

A dozen roses, a full pantheon, and a full cafeteria table have an altogether different kind of beauty, and are nonetheless beautiful. Yet, to deny the growing, changing, expression of beauty is accordingly dishonest, brute, and above all else, ugly. The idea of beauty is somehow connected to the idea of good, and the idea of ugly. Is this why we often say, "you look good"? If goodness is somehow related with the idea of beauty, then desiring beauty, to be beautiful, subsequently

creates an idea of how to live; polished images are mixed with morality in this idea of beauty.

This is similar to Arthur Danto's (2003), an Andy Warhol admirer and philosopher, idea of the third realm of beauty. The first realm of beauty is natural, what already is, like sunsets and rainbows. The second is created, what is to be expressed, like poetry and painting. Lastly, the third realm of beauty is instructional and shows us how to live, like fashion and design. Plato idealized natural beauty and man-made beauty, Hegel emphasized man-made beauty over natural beauty, and Whitehead reframed the idea of beauty as a composition, and an evolving composition including all three forms. Whitehead would agree with Danto in that beauty can show us how to live, more so how to continue living. Whitehead (1967) wrote, "Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay either from anarchy or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows" (p. 88). This idea of beauty, that "nature alive" is an expression, perhaps man-made, shows us how to be with others and how to be in this world, is the third realm of beauty.

For a more pop cultural, as opposed to classical or enlightenment era, reference, Alice Walker (1982) wrote, in *The Color Purple*, "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it." (p. 196). This is different that Plato's admiration of what makes something beautiful or Hegel's argument of how we can understand beauty and its intent. Rationally, someone can deny the impact of beauty, fashion and style as cosmetic, superficial, materialistic, and frivolous "stuff." Some would say that what is popular isn't

really beautiful, just trendy. Denying that fashion is significant, that haircuts don't matter, that the fit of a suit isn't important, is a dismissal of the aesthetic and of our ability to respond. This is the walking by the color purple and not noticing it.

The old adage that "what matters most is on the inside" is a prioritizing of the internal and a devaluing of the external. Both are important and beauty reminds us that what is external is as important, and belongs as much, as the internal experiencing of what is beautiful.

Whitehead also thought that societies that were not amenable to changes of culture, style, fashion, art, any signifier of society, would have a fragile society, and be vulnerable to decay. His later work elaborates this idea when he wrote, "But even perfection will not bear the tedium of indefinite repetition. To sustain a civilization with the intensity of its first ardour requires more than leaving. Adventure is essential, namely the search for new perfections" (1967, p. 258). Adventure, excitement, the rush of inspiration; is it not beauty that sustains culture, supports us being bound together, reinforces the idea of popular? New images are constantly revealing themselves to us, more so now in this digital age. Beauty then calls out to us to explore, to take risks, and to be interested in another. If beauty holds our attention then the new pursuits of beauty, and of becoming beautiful, happen collectively and further notions of what is civilization, what is liked, and what is popular.

Crafting Beauty

Plato, Hegel, and Whitehead are great theorists on aesthetics, but their ideas are rooted in the contemplation of beauty and aesthetics. Contemplating

beauty is one approach to aesthetics and creating beauty is another approach. If Plato's other idea of Beauty, that beauty is ideal and therefore exists independent of our knowing, then artists are the ones that continue to express ideals and are the people who know beauty from a more idealized perspective and not necessarily a learned rational perspective. Therefore, the idea of beauty would be incomplete without at least one artist talking more explicitly about art, responsiveness, and aesthetics.

Beauty, from an artistic standpoint, isn't singular or rationally prescribed. Pop iconographer Andy Warhol's philosophy is that the canvas and society are primarily blank (Danto, 2009). Fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld offered diet tips to celebrate achieving a beautiful body type; he wasn't the first designer that reinforced the fashion industry's notion of thinness as beauty (Lagerfeld & Houdret, 2005). Surrealist painter and writer Salvador Dalí (1998) found art as a vehicle for political debate regardless of beauty. Impressionist painter Claude Monet saw obsession as the psychoanalytic root of beauty (Levine, 1995). Romantic painter and diarist Eugène Delacroix's (1995) critique of conventional art is that it lacks vitality in its presentation of beauty; beauty must be vibrant. Architect I. M. Pei's (Pei & van Boehm, 2000) study of light and illumination described the necessary conditions to expose beauty. Singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell's technical precision as an artist is an acknowledgment of distinctively personable beauty (Whitesell, 2008). Graphic designer Milton Glaser's (2008) arguing that art isn't inherently beautiful but shows us how to understand beauty is his thesis on creation as beauty. Lastly, archetypal Renaissance artist

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni attempted to close the gap between beauty and ugly in *how* we observe rather than *what* is observed (Marchetti & Panconesci, 1997). Each of these artists have been studied academically for their own relevance on the field of aesthetics and beauty. Each of these artists have spent time drafting ideas of art and of beauty. I turn now to a dancer, Twyla Tharp, to discuss creating beauty.

Dance is art in its ability to express, to mold, to fashion, to create or recreate, human experience through endless variations of movement. Tharp (2003) writes, "Variations, by definition, begin with a theme and alter it. The wealth of techniques for varying the theme without destroying it creates the beauty of form." (p. 150). This is not Plato's idea, the ideal of Beauty as a perfected whole, nor is it Hegel's studied sense of beauty. Beauty persists despite one form, one ideal, or one standard for beauty, for within all the different kinds of variations, changes, adaptations, interpretations, recreations, or copies, something new and beautiful is put forth. Taking Plato's Beauty, a child splashing through puddles wouldn't be considered dance, for there is no artistic education responsible for creating this dance; it is unstudied therefore not dance. Hegel would not see the child splashing about as dance, for it lacks the intention of an aesthetic response. Whitehead, however would acknowledge that

> Youth is distinguished for its whole hearted absorption in personal enjoyments and personal discomforts….. Youth is particularly susceptible to appeals for beauty of conduct. It understands motives which presuppose the irrelevance of its own person. Such motives are understood as contributing to the magnification of its own interests. (p. 287)

This may be why youth are more captivated, more at ease, with play. Tharp however, would look at that child splashing about as dance, as sheer physicality and enjoyment of life, of water, and a celebratory dance of vitality. The form of dance is there for Tharp because of her openness to seeing it as art and beautiful. She aesthetically responds to the child splashing about and sees in it something beautiful. She aesthetically responds to the child and labels the child beautiful.

Beauty, here, is recognized in the sensate reaction, the response to what is present, and it is an act of labeling, much like the act of labeling someone popular. Tharp writes about those moments of aesthetic response that, "It never fails to elicit a gasp from the audience. It is a gasp of wonder and sorrow. We immediately sense that this ripple is a metaphor for the fluttering of bird's wings" (p. 156). She is talking about a ballet, specifically *Swan Lake*, but she is also talking about the aesthetic response, or the gasping in of breath and physical reaction to beauty. It is not a reaction to refined craftsmanship, a world-view, or an intention, but it is a reaction to the very thing that is present, be it a sculpture, finger painting, or advertisement. Beauty can come to us at any angle; we can know it when we find ourselves out of breath, transfixed on something. Is this not also part of the idea of popular? A stylishly pretty or charismatic person enters a room and attention is suddenly upon him or her. A pop song comes on the radio and instantly a room full of people is dancing with, loving, hating, or sharing some opinion on that song. A group of friends, sitting at a cafeteria table, motion for a passerby to join them, much to the shock, awe, or bemusement of those already at the table. Any of these situations, images, or experiences can elicit a

gasp, for they all have their own beauty about them if one is open to feeling it, to sense it and therefore are not anesthetized to beauty.

Model Beauty

There are endless variations possible within form, within a given structure, and yet beauty isn't only in the repetitious formality. Beauty is there with each recreation, each variation, both in the original and the copies. Beauty also persists in the artistic works that are remotely inspired by the original. Beauty isn't only in the originator, the original, or the perfectly rational ideal; each presentation has its own particular beauty. The difficulty though, in identifying an image of beauty and replicating it is in the consequences of identification, otherwise thought of as not measuring up. This is true for art as well as for humans.

Supermodel Kate Moss's daily mantra when eating is, "nothing tastes as good as skinny feels" which slightly undermines her dictum of "if you are beautiful on the inside it shows on the outside" (Wardrop, 2009). She is criticized for elevating unhealthy eating habits at the expense of self-esteem and dress sizes. Again returning to ideas of belonging and being inside of a community, to repeat a look, and by look I mean body type and attendant clothing sizes, is to feel on the inside of a group. Going back further to ideas of oppression, if only one look is held up, one look supported by a dietary standard, then beauty is bound up with that idealized image and is circumstantially popular in its widespread acceptance as the standard. Kate Moss then is an ubiquitous example of popularity. Her placement as a fashion model both within and outside of her native United Kingdom is one that millions of media savvy observers can idolize, criticize,

lionize or project whatever feelings or thoughts onto her. In looking at her one can discuss beauty, beauty standards, fashion ideals, body types, or any idea of what looks *right* or beautiful. Regardless of what the response is, she, like all of us in our own way, aesthetically presents herself to others and others respond in kind. Responses range between gasps of adoration, ideally popularizing, or disgust.

Morbid Beauty

Diverting from gasps of wonder to gasps of terror and pain, sociopaths aren't the only ones that like to witness grisly violence and murder scenes. Look no further than the recent cinematic splatter canon: Rob Zombie's directorial *House of 1000 Corpses* (2003) *The Devil's Rejects* (2005) *Halloween* (2007) and *Halloween II* (2009), Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* novel (1991) turned movie (Harron, 2000), and Eli Roth's directed *Cabin Fever* (2002) *Hostel* (2005) and *Hostel II* (2007) are contemporary examples of this morbid beauty. There is an aesthetic responsiveness at witnessing these torturous scenes, perhaps not the same response as when standing in front of Edvard Munch's 1893 *The Scream* painting and unraveling the anxiety or psychological torment therein (Prideaux, 2005), but there is a response. I'm attempting to not differentiate the kind of response, the level of gore, the intent of the artists, or the objective kind of beauty for the horror genre, but merely note that the darker shades of humanity have a beauty. A biting beauty is another kind of response to what is being presented.

Are then the darker, morbid, and demented visions in art rooted in the evil aspects of the artists? I wouldn't say so. To Tharp, it is a matter of generosity and grace rather than evil intent.

> Stars become stars because they have a gift for pulling the world into them; they draw people's attention through their beauty, talent, charisma, and wiles. As a result, I don't think they're generally willing to project their own artistic hopes and desires onto other people. They are used to having their own assets supported. This isn't evil selfishness or egotism, it's simply a part of their creative DNA, the way they are. (p. 136)

Moralization of beauty doesn't occur in Tharp's idea of beauty, as it does with Plato; beauty isn't good to Tharp, it simply is. Rather than putting up a division between good and evil, macabre or pretty, popular or unpopular, Tharp acknowledges that stars, possibly those stylists, models, actors, artists, or persons with a repeated image, often spend so much time cultivating their own individual pursuits that they are not interested in others. Disinterest isn't evil or false; it is looking the other way. Plato would see this as evil, for pursuing one's own interests without supporting others is the dismissal of others needs; turning away from beauty could also be a denial of the truth.

Plato (1st Century BCE/1974) would also argue that ugly exists to remind us all of what is beautiful, and what is good; the redirect to what is beautiful is still a prioritization that beautiful is better than ugly and that beauty is good and ugly is evil. However, Tharp's idea is more humane than it is moralistic. Sometimes a person may forget about others, forget to say hello, and not give everyone an invitation. Sometimes a person can willfully deny the pain of others while others remain unaware that others are in pain. This forgetfulness of others is socially isolating, and can feel like torture. A person that looks pretty needn't dismiss, deny, or torture others to be beautiful.

Pretty and Popular

We are overloaded with images, on billboards, computer screens, television consoles, magazine covers. All of these images are vying for attention, all hoping to inspire purchasing, mimicry, thought, reflection, or some kind of response. Feeling discarded, unwanted, isolated, unpopular, repulsive, are the adjectives to the label of ugly. However, these adjectives are nonetheless responses to what is present. There is an aesthetic response in labeling something pretty as much as there is a response in labeling something ugly, and yet the labels of pretty, attractive, handsome, beautiful, looking *good*, or hot, somehow connote belonging. Achieving the look of someone on the inside evokes the response of feeling that one belongs inside. Some people—Hegel and Hume aficionados—need a reason or rational to be with, but what is, perhaps, really is there to simply be with and needs no rationale. Saying that beauty exists to attract a customer, sell a record, or promote a social campaign reframes beauty to have a purpose and to make that purpose essential. This rationale sounds hollow.

Purpose, though, presupposes an efficient meaning, in that beauty is there to do something or accomplish some project. Purpose doesn't, however, connote existence as simply existence; the purpose of beauty may be simply to be. This is intertwined with the idea of popular. Beauty belongs to us all, touches us all, and no one person, thing, or idea can hold onto it. The definition of popular is that which belongs to the people, and beauty definitely belongs. We are touched by beauty from so many angles, ephemeral and digital, and yet the world continues to present itself to us in new and untold ways. We all have to deal with beauty as

we all have to deal with being popular; social media like Facebook® and YouTube™ show us a world that is more connected and on display than ever before. Accordingly, the world also gives us more images to find fault with (i.e. profile picture poses, whom to friend, whom to reject, what kind of image to present to the world, etc.). This is not to say that beauty can't be utilized, because almost anything can be objectified with a particular perspective.

I have brought up these ideas of beauty after the chapters on place, clique, and rejection because beauty is another way to feel like one does or does not belong, in that a person can be rejected or accepted with a surface appraisal. Psychologist William James (1890) footnotes this idea of beauty, more the idea of sensate responsiveness, as an indicator of the existence of the other. "For the moment, what we attend to is reality; attention is a motor reaction; and we are so made that sensations force attention from us" (p. 322). What we attend to grounds our experience, if not in our own internal subjective reactions, then in the external validity of what is stirring us up, taking our breath away, and forcing attention from us. Beauty gets our attention, inspires us, and now, thanks to technology, we are saturated with more images of beauty that inspire lives of beauty. This is also thanks to popularity.

Chapter Eight: Character Studies

The aesthetic images we portray, in dress, manners, hair color, social networking site profile pictures, and fine grooming are also very closely identified with the impression that we make. This leads to another theme and another chapter: character. If there is a response to another, or even an aesthetic response, then what is responded to makes an impression. All the variations in response, the nuanced kinds of impressions, might be lumped together and attributed to a person with the umbrella term of character.

The impression itself that a person has on others is what I am calling character. For most people character is thought of as personality or the qualities of a person and not their impact. I've spoken of the impact of thoughts on the world, how competition limits relational possibilities and a host of other factors that impact society, friendship, and the ways that we are with others. Character, as noted in the Online Etymology Dictionary (2008) arises from the Greek *kharakter* which signifies an "engraved mark." Character, it seems from the word alone, is as much about what has impacted a person as how a person impacts others, which is more than a list of qualities or characteristics. The image, and the person that embodies the image, has an impression on others. This section is an attempt to better understand this connection between a person's image, their personhood, how context is central to character, and how character is integral to popularity. Throughout this section I will discuss character as an ideal, what is seen as a *good* or reputable character, and how this idea of character impacts popularity.

First Impressions

Having a solid reputation or a respectable character are more than clichéd superlatives for someone labeled popular, for they are another aspect of popularity itself: the consequence of being liked. Three researchers, Newcomb, Bukowski, and Pattee (1993), took a broad analytic look at all of the research up to date on popularity, and how the many different subcategories of persons (e.g. popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, average) affect their behavior. They tried to identify how "social preference and social impact" work simultaneously, and they did this by an evaluation of "the empirical support for behavioral differences" (p. 99). What they found, and what I am noting, is that a person's impact on others changes with the label of popular and that shifts in individual temperament and in relationships co-occur with that label. When a popular person invites you to sit at the table, it impacts you in a different way than someone else inviting you, and the invitation changes your sense of self and relationships.

I haven't written too much about "social agency," the term denoting the ability of individuals or groups to affect change in their relationships or affect change within institutions. Social agency can be seen in organizations arguing the civil rights issue of same-sex marriage, parents requesting employer offered childcare to change the workplace environment, and teenagers altering strip-malls to cater towards younger demographic consumers. A person's character is noted when a person acts in society and affects something tangible: getting a housing loan, becoming married to the person one loves, making the choice to start a family, or deciding to purchase cruelty-free products, all create shifts in societal values. The implicit assumption in the notion of character is that a person has the

capacity to change society and leave an impression. This is not always evident when those without money, education, or any dictates of class, are dismissed as unpopular. The ability to leave a mark, to have an impression on others is a hallmark of popularity and by extension, character.

Popularity is not merely a label affixed to a person. Popularity accomplishes something; it conveys belonging. This chapter tours how we impact other. The ways in which belonging can be conveyed through our relationships and our sense of identity, and the ways that we guard against having an impact on others are also a significant aspect of popularity.

Building a Reputation

If each of us makes an impression on others, then the impression of a person is identifiable, for the impression that I make on others is not the same as the impression that you make. I can make an impression both through my personal actions and in relation to others, together they are my social capital. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1983) perspective on social capital is that it is, "the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (p. 248). Every person has social capital, has relationships that offer access to resources, and yet every person's ability to impact others hinges upon their social capital. Popularity and *good* character, then, is having access to many durable networks, and is therefore crucial to social capital and having an impact.

Popularity conveys belonging through the utilization of social capital, and when that popularity is lost, social capital is lost as well. On the television show

Glee (Murphy, 2009), the character Quinn Fabray, the signature blonde cheerleader—socially outcast for both participating in the show choir and for her ironic membership in the celibacy club while being pregnant—spoke succinctly about character and losing her ability to impact others. She did so while acknowledging her lack of social capital, and the fallout of being less popular and not liked by her peers. Quinn Fabray asked guidance counselor Emma Pilsbury how she can reclaim her coolness, and rebuild her popular reputation.

> We were [popular] until we joined glee club. That's why he got a slushee facial I'm sure of it. Status is like currency. When your bank account is full you can get away with just about anything. But right now we're like toxic assets. When my mom applied to college she put 'being popular' as her main extracurricular activity, and she got into Arizona State.

Here, the voice of individualism, and supposed reason is Emma Pilsbury. Her response to Quinn Fabray's desire to regain her popularity was, "The most important thing is that you be yourself. And if people don't like you for that, then I'm sorry. Who needs them?" To Emma Pilsbury, and the assumed rational voice in this scene, reputation and esteem from others isn't as important as self esteem, which is the supposed benchmark of strong character. The guidance here is specious; her advice avoids the question.

Character could be about wanting to leave an impression on others, and to be liked, admired, or sought after. Character could also be about how one person thinks of her or himself. If a person wants to leave an impression on others and is concerned about that impression, then that person can be labeled an extroverted character, because their focus is directed towards the outer world. If a person isn't concerned about the impression they leave, then they could be call an introverted character, because they are more concerned with their inner experience.

Regardless of the labeling of an extroverted or introverted character, we all leave impressions. However, common logic dictates that what matters the *most* is on the inside. What follows is my challenging of that dictum in the hopes of elevating and not dismissing the desire to impact others, for impacting others allows them to feel like they belong.

Armoring Up

What Emma Pilsbury described is a kind of introverted armor or a defensive posture commonly used to brace oneself against the supposed impact of an outside force, be it person, place, or hostile ideas. Character armoring, then, is an idea that addresses individualized accounts of personality and psychological development. Admittedly, psychology is primarily concerned with inner experiences, but the ideas that arise from the psychological community's prioritization of inner strength against external influence make character into a seemingly internal construct rather than one shaped by your relationships.

In the beginning of formal psychological studies, psychoanalysis arose from the Freudian idea that an individual had impulses and drives arising from their own innate personality (1923/1962). Personality, or psychic structure as Freud called it, was responsible for all sorts of things that might seem outside of the individual but were in fact internal, like the feelings of self-esteem. Donald Winnicott (1951), a psychologist following Freud's psychoanalytic work, believed that receiving attention from a mother led to self-esteem, or inner strength against external influence, arising in her child. According to Winnicott, the child felt close to the mother, a sense of acceptance, and therefore felt apart of

the family when the child received attention. If a mother did a *good enough* job, then the infant felt a basic confidence and trust in the world and a trust in her or his own ability and innate goodness. This was all internalized in a child's own sense of self, otherwise termed *ego*. That is a more technical description of the process of first feeling esteemed from others before a sense of esteem rises from within. Again, the external forces, such as the mother's feelings toward her child, are not as important as the child's feelings about her or himself. The morally termed *good enough* mother is more a verb than a noun, emphasizing that it is less about the parent and more about the child's experience of their parent. *Good enough* mothering involves parenting a child to make her/him feel close but not too close and this is important because of the child's feelings about her or himself, regardless of the inherently social experience of parenting.

Psychologists have examined the zealous drive to be liked, to receive affirmation and esteem from others, and this drive is rarely seen without mention beyond an internalized experience. Psychologist Alfred Adler (1938) saw the desire to be admired, to be superior rather than inferior, as developmental. Wanting to be admired was a milestone of competence in early childhood, but less important as the years progressed. Wanting admiration and esteem from others is often pathologized as narcissistic if the desire to be admired is lifelong and pervasive. Freud noted this condition as a neurotic one, and eventually thought of it as a disorder of personality (Freud, 1923/1962).

Carl Jung (1921/1971) proposes the distinction between introversion and extroversion, a distinction that although seemingly neutral in fact had a slant

towards introverts being the stronger of the two dispositions. Introverts didn't suffer from the more severe mental illnesses of hysteria, psychosis, or dependent personality disorder. These psychologists drafted ideas of personality and character while looking at a person's experience of others under the guise of a person's inner understanding of the world, rather than a person's impact on the world. It is Jung, that I credit the emphasis of character reflecting internal experience and not a balanced perspective, which would include the external impact of one person on another. However, simply looking at predispositions towards the desire to impact others, emphasizing the internal psychological dimensions of wanting to impact others, negates the external behavior of relating and impacting others. To address this more external dimension of character I turn to psychologists that focus on relationships and what occurs between individuals.

David Shapiro (1965), in his psychological studies, identified four different ways that most people interact with the world; the world for Shapiro is other persons and all manners of relationships with others. He called those styles of interacting with the world, especially the maladaptive ones, armor. Armor is a defense in that, "it 'binds' impulses in stable ways, limits flexibility, and constitutes an armor against the external world as well as the inner one" (p. 8). This understanding of character, that a person naturally develops a defense against the world, presumes a hostile world that attacks an inner sense of self. A sense of self, then, needs to be strong and unswayed by the feelings or thoughts of others. Jean Piaget's (1955) developmental understanding is that adolescence is the time when we are more able to understand relationships from abstract perspectives,

consider idyllic relations, or have the capacity to compare relationships between others within contexts. Development, for Shapiro, is born from the necessity to guard against other people, other threatening ideas, and other ways of being that might hurt or undermine one's internal sense of self. In Shapiro's own words,

> The result of a developmental phase is not merely a matter of the fate of the instinct, but—as the mode is crystallized into socially provided forms (modalities)—it is a way of functioning, an attitude, and a frame of mind. (p. 11)

This is armor, armor forged of supposed developmental necessity. Wilhelm Reich (1933/1980) thought the same of character in his analysis of it. Reich was a theorist that sought to bring together social conditions, economic influences, and parental behavior as the building up of character. To him, armor can be seen even in physical postures, or the muscular armoring *of* the body. The developmental understanding of this idea of armor, that it is necessary within an individual at a certain time for them to become a competent adult, follows the formal studies on popularity in middle school and not throughout the lifespan. With this theoretical framework, and elaborating from Adler's (1938) theory of development, popularity is important during adolescence, for developing social competency, but afterwards it is less important.

For any person, or psychologist, to dismiss the lifelong importance of popularity is to also deny the years of growth and development that people endure as they live a public life. Adolescence is not the only time when we are with others, but theorists on popularity would like us to imagine that it is the only time that popularity matters.

Shapiro saw within the idea of character, and armoring, that each of us puts on a defense against the world, and defense builds a sense of who we are. Retracing our steps, territoriality and the policing of borders are contingent upon what is acceptable as belonging inside (Chapter Three). Ideas of survival revolve around perceived threats (Chapter Four). A defensive mentality is considered normative for nations as well as the individual in an *us-vs.-them* world view (Chapter Five). A rejection of others occurs when we defend against allowing another person to matter (Chapter Six). We also guard against aesthetically responding to another when we reject them (Chapter Seven). Here, in this chapter, armor arises to titrate feelings of rejection from others and to guard against the fear of being rejected, and in this way manage those feelings of belonging.

Shapiro doesn't believe that only one type of person, one particular character type, is more prone to armor. Shapiro himself doesn't go far in saying that only one type of character armor is predisposed to impulsive socializing and is an armor against perceived threats to a sense of self. He supports an idea that armor is a defense against being with others that might lead to others leaving an impression on one's self.

Is armor though a defense against insecurities? Yes. We are all vulnerable, we can all be touched, and others undoubtedly effect us. We all have defenses and guards to help us through our days. The Queen Bee sitting at the cafeteria table is no more hardened, no more invincible, or beyond attack than anyone. She can be touched like all of us can be touched. She may be more aware of her impact on others, or less aware, but she guards against feeling rejected like all of us do, even

if she is the one often rejecting others and not wanting to appear outright mean and develop a reputation for pushing others away. That Queen Bee enthroned at her table is not more insecure than others in the cafeteria because she is aware of her impact on others and doesn't want to seem like an outright bully; she manages to get through her day like we all do, even as she calculatingly insults anyone.

Attaching to Others

Wadding through research on infant-parent relationships, psychologist John Bowlby (1990) came up with a theory of attachment and how people develop a capacity to be with others. Developing *healthy* attachment is an openness to being concerned about others and allowing them to make an impression. His idea of attachment, however, didn't end at childhood relationships, because attachment is an entrenched pattern of ways that all of us, throughout our lifespan, can get close to or distant ourselves from others. Bowlby (1990) writes, "Attachment behavior is any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world" (p. 26-27). Attachment, and character, it seems, is about safety in the world. From attachment theory, safety is felt with another person and yet safety is also felt from others.

While it may seem to be a common understanding that people express love and feel closeness differently, it was a relatively new concept in its time when Bowlby articulated this idea.

> By conceptualizing attachment in this way, as a fundamental form of behavior with its own internal motivation distinct from feeding and sex, and of no less importance for survival, the behavior and motivation are

> accorded a theoretical status never before given them – though parents and clinicians alike have long been intuitively aware of their importance. (p. 27)

In other chapters I have articulated various ideas about *dealing* with other people, defending against them, ruling them, oppressing them, dominating them, managing them, as if they were the problem. Here, with the idea of character and impression, attaching to others is done within the context of getting closer to others and allowing them the possibility to make an impression. Armor can be taken off. By this, Bowbly states,

> To say of a child (or older person) that he is attached to, or has an attachment to, someone means that he is strongly disposed to seek proximity to and contact with that individual and to do so especially in certain specified conditions. (p. 28)

This is the crux of Bowlby's stance on character. A person matures in relationships with others and the process of relating to others is habituated. Attachment to others, getting close to them, is both defensive against perceived threats and attacks as well as adaptive in setting the tone for future relationships.

Making impressions and managing one's impression through cultivating an image and style of relating to others also pervades the field of public relations. In public relations celebrities, businesses, and customer service representatives for Lexus automobiles are all concerned about their impression (Gladwell, 2000). Why? Character armor is built up to guard against getting close and attaching, but it also is erected to guard against rejection. Brands seek loyal customers, people seek loyal friendships, because if brands lose customers and persons lose friendships, then they are less liked and not popular. In the example above, brands are seeking out a secure attachment where loyalty and fidelity are desired, which

is dissimilar to an avoidant attachment or a disorganized attachment style that respectively does not want loyalty or has little sense of ongoing commitment.

An example of attachment may help conceptualize this idea. A straight woman enters a mostly straight club and instantly guards up against what she believes will happen that night: men pawing over her, women bumping into her while making catty comments, all the while wanting to be approached yet rebuking any approach from potential eligible bachelors. This image can be fleshed out with this woman coming in the club with a cadre of friends, each polished up to prepare for being hit on by men who will no doubt fall less than their standards of desirability: too short or too tall, too tanned or not tanned enough, too passive or too aggressive, too pretty or too unattractive. Any criteria that can be appealing or unappealing is supported by the preferences of that cadre of friends. Each woman in this instance wants to be the prettiest, most charming, and to impress more men than her peers; conversely when opportunities arise to develop new relationships, those potentially are rebuked preemptively. Merten, Wiseman, and a host of other researchers on popularity, if taken beyond the middle school set, would note this popularized gendered characterization.

What exactly is the character armor in this example? Arm-chair psychologists might talk about an overall distrust of men stemming from a tense father-daughter relationship and reference Freud's (1962/2000) theories on sexual development and assign an avoidant bordering on disorganized attachment style to that particular woman. Those same opinion lenders might dissect the learned behavior reinforced by many similar nights at bars where the revelers acted

likewise, thus grounding those ideas in B. F. Skinner's (1971) ideas of behaviorism. The armor here is a the defensive posture used to see the world as full of men that do not meet one's expectations and that all a woman can do is wait to be approached. This armor can also be acknowledged with sociological theories that point to gender as performed (Butler, 1990) and the expectations on women to be passive yet flirtatious. Regardless of the lens used to understand this experience, an armoring, a performance, or a behavior is used to guard against simply being with others. Furthermore, I would not call this healthy attachment.

The overriding assumption here is living in a world requires some defense against threats to one's sense of self. This assumption has a secondary quality; others can actually impact you, and you can impact others. This is one dimension of character, but the other element of the impressions we ourselves have *on* others, is equally important. To that I look at the contemporary psychoanalytic camp and their discourse on what happens between people.

Diagnosing Popularity

Permit me now to do what you might have been expecting from the beginning: draft a thesis on *why* a person would want to be popular. Classical psychoanalysis (Freud, 1923/1962) looks at the infant-mother relationships as the bedrock of all future relationships, and from this particular relationship every other relationship is subsequently impacted and affected. This is a gross introduction to psychoanalysis that I will continue to unpack throughout this section.

A person that desires to be popular and liked by many people likely had earlier experiences of being with more than one loving and caring adult. Any parent thinking back to the infant-rearing years remembers passing around their child to rooms full of people, or parties where the baby was the center of everyone's collective attention. Psychoanalysis, however, has yet to articulate the experience of an infant in large social settings and what impression this has on a child's sense of self and relationships.

In psychoanalytic terms, that early experience of being adored by many people was internalized to become the seat of wanting that adoration again, and therefore wanting to be popular again. More than seeking out intimacy from only one person, like a solitary primary caregiver, many more loving people are desired. Maturing beyond infancy, adolescence is a coming together and attaching to others in friendships to guard against unfamiliar situations. Rather than looking at Adler's (1938) developmental models of growing social competencies, adolescence is the time when organizing parties and accepting or declining invitations to events becomes highly prioritized for what occurs when invited; belonging comes with party invitations. Again, infancy from Adler and Freud's perspective is the time to feel adored by many adults and peers, and leads to an adolescent time of wanting to be at the most popular and adored cafeteria table. Later in adulthood the desire to be liked by others could be pathologized, as narcissistic, histrionic, or antisocial; all character disorders and yet characteristics that are commonly shared amongst us all.

In the above character disorders, a person may feel better than others, sexualize him or herself to maintain shallow relationships, or treat others like objects without regard to their feelings. In histrionic disorders, maintaining flirtatiously shallow relationships merely for public gain is seen as textbook pathological behavior. In a cultural setting that idealizes monogamy yet denies the capacity of individuals to genuinely love more than one person, this behavior can only be conceived of as pathological, wrong, or morally dirty. Returning to the sketch of the unpopular brunette girl at the cafeteria table denying her romantic feelings for more than one person, she will more than likely not have a voice to talk about her feelings and possibly develop a sense of shame around those feelings. On the other side, dating someone that is popular may bring up feelings of jealousy to possess the other person or feelings of envy to be the other person. If you cultivate many relationships, others may judge you even as they relate to, and possibly deny, their desire to be liked.

Why a person would want to be popular would be seen with this emphasis on psychopathology. Introverted people that do not focus on being liked by others and cultivating an impacting reputation would be seen as healthy, and those that desire to be liked, to be loved by a lot of people, or those that use others to evoke a sense of belonging, all mistakenly wind up along a pathological spectrum. I am not concerned with etiology and labeling behavior as disordered to marginalize those that want to be popular, nor to I want to continue marginalize those already labeled disordered. Because of my concerns, I am more curious about what

occurs in this process of being labeled popular and feeling a sense of belonging than in arbitrarily casting judgment on people for wanting to be liked.

Getting Psychoanalytic

The psychoanalytic tradition has put forth several ideas of how we impact each other. Wilfred Trotter's (1908) idea of the herd instinct, coming from his studies on neurosurgery and social psychology, found that groups of people are inherently driven by animalistic tendencies to group together. We are all therefore predisposed and psychically oriented to be aware of and persuaded by group behavior. Freud (1922/1989) argued against this idea when he wrote, "Trotter's pronouncement that man is a herd animal and assert that he is rather a horde animal, an individual creature in a horde led by a chief" (p. 68). Trotter was attempting to understand how groups of people act together, but Freud turned those ideas into a defense of a person's isolated experience and desire for powerful governance. Freud prioritized the inner experiences and accounted for the desire to be with others within the psychic need for structure and order. Order in being treated like a unit in society rather than a person that impacts society.

Contemporary psychoanalysis goes a long way to reorganize psychoanalytic thought away from the primacy of internal experience and what happens *to* a person rather than what occurs *with* others. The idea of defense connotes an awareness of what is done *to* the individual moreover what an individual is doing *with* another. Two contemporary psychoanalytic theorists that explore this idea: Jessica Benjamin (1988), questions how persons connect and impact one another, and Michael Eigen (2004), writes about the overwhelming

sensitivity that we have when with others. Jessica Benjamin, herself, writes of this concept as intersubjectivity, and her definition follows.

> The intersubjective dimension, on the other hand, refers to experience between and within individuals, rather than just within. It refers to the sense of self and other that evolves through the consciousness that separate minds can share the same feelings and intentions, through mutual recognition. Its viewpoint encompasses not simply what we take in from the outside but also what we bring to and develop through the interaction with others – our innate capacities for activity and receptivity toward the world. (p. 125)

Modern psychoanalytic community, has developed ideas about being with others Of particular interest are all the English and American intersubjective schools: self psychology, object relations, intersubjective psychoanalysis, and many others.

The intersubjective dimension is one that follows character, for if people impact one another then what occurs between persons is where belonging can be felt. This idea of character, with the intersubjective aspect, allows us to see that a person uses defensive postures to ward off the potential impact of others. This is a paradoxical setup; feeling accepted or rejected by others acknowledges that what others do impacts a person feeling accepted or rejected. Therefore, those shallow or not-quite real friendships that are horded by supposedly popular people are in fact very real, very substantive, and do matter. Benjamin asserts this paradoxical experience of the other person mattering, even when not considered a deep and intimate relationship, when she declared, “Without concrete knowledge, empathy, and identification with the other subject—with the other’s needs, feelings, circumstances, and history—the self continues to move in the realm of the subject and object, untransformed by the other” (p. 195). If I don’t come to see you as a person, I do not allow you to impact me and consequently to not grow; you can

consider this the mentality of a Queen Bee in regards to those around her or a Machiavellian prince ruling his kingdom. If there is no intersubjective exchange, and a person only objectifies others, then the ability for persons to mutually impact one another is mute. To someone that objectifies others, other persons do matter but they matter as objects and not as persons.

When popularity encompasses each person caring about many other persons, then the intersubjective dimensions of popularity allows for a greater meeting and conveyance of belonging. Going further into the idea of not being affected by the other person, there is another acknowledgment of the *realness* of the other person that becomes a factor in allowing them to matter. Benjamin writes, "The distinction between my fantasy of you and you as a real person is the very essence of connection" (p. 71). The difference between seeing a relationship as real or intimate lies within the degree of what is considered real. My stance is that the impressions that others have from us, regardless of the impressions that we have on others, are significant. This is in contrast to a person's own sense of themselves as mattering *more* than others' thoughts or opinions. Both matter without the need for qualifiers.

Being Sensitive

Disconnection with others occurs when external relationships are seen as less important than one's relationship with oneself. Stephen Batchelor (1983) a Buddhist scholar and practitioner wrote of having relationships as, "husbands, wives, children, friends, and acquaintances are all arranged in a circle around us connected to the center by threads of attachment and possessiveness" (p. 26).

Identity is bound up in threads of connection and attachment to others. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1971) understanding of family as the primary cultural frame and sense of connection to the world, and Durkheim's (1924/1974) social construction of identity as a process of acculturation, shed some light on this subject. In staying with the idea of the social aspects of identity and being true to ones self, having high self-esteem downplays how opinions, feelings, and thoughts occur in the context of being with others. Likewise psychologists turn the very social aspect of developing esteem for oneself into an internal process, which dismisses the external ground in that process.

This idea of integrity, of inner strength guarding against outside pressures neighbors the idea of popular, is illusory. It is only considered weak to change for others if strength is idealized as not changing for others. This notion of integrity, of staying true to yourself, undermines other ideas of constant change, and it also undermines the social construction of identity. Is it a weaker sense of self, a superficial temperament, which constitutes a desire for popularity and to be liked by others? Quite the contrary, for I believe it is a response to being with others: a sensitive response.

I've been using the term armor with several different meanings, mostly with the possible association that it is wrong, or somehow pathological, to guard against others. That is not my intent. Again, Reich (1933/1980) articulated the notion of character armor as the defensive patterns used to guard against what occurs in the world, but also as a presumed functional necessity to allow a person to be with others.

It is the second part that I will spend some more time with. As a functional necessity in being with others, not having armor can be crushing, for everything and everyone having an impact can be overwhelming. This can be felt as everything coming too soon, too much, everywhere, and being bombarded all the time. More concretely still, this is felt as dictates, insults, commercial advertisements, sexual advances, offers of assistance, follower notifications on social media websites, marriage proposals, or election results pressing on you in seconds. Taking everything in, feeling all of what occurs might not be an easy event, especially with the limits of what can be known or experienced from our own particular personhood. It is with this idea of disarmament and the staggering complexity in being open to the impact of others that I bring up Michael Eigen's (2004) idea of sensitivity.

Michael Eigen's ideas of being with others, himself a devout psychoanalyst, comes from his clinical work and case studies of his patients. Persons suffering from psychotic disorders constellate his writing, and his understanding of schizophrenia fleshes out his idea of sensitivity.

> The sense of the social persists in psychosis, although the composition of personality, ordinarily taken for granted in social exchange, becomes a focus of internal debate. A cacophony of shouts from capacities that ordinarily work together smoothly press for a hearing. Capacities not only work against each other, they splinter and work against themselves. Thoughts fight thoughts, feelings fight feelings, senses do not agree with each other. (2004, p. 70)

He is writing about psychosis, the symptoms of schizophrenia and the distortions of reality that occur with this illness. He is also talking about the overwhelming experience of experiencing people, both within their own perceptions of others and actual interactions with others. I'm not insinuating that popularity is akin to

schizophrenia, but the fragmentation and complicated feelings that come out of being with an overwhelming amount of others is hard to deny. This articulation of schizophrenia, or the psychotic experiencing of others, lends a cautionary ring to what might occur when one person metaphorically takes off their armor and simultaneously feels the impact of everyone that they are aware of.

Often times, a person may not feel like they belong. Popularity or attending to the impact that one has on others and desiring to be wanted and liked by others, can be a pervasive pattern of inhabiting the world. It might too, be a reflection of being with others and feeling the presence of innumerable forces, relationships, and interrelationships between people. In wanting to appear that one is unconcerned with being with others, one might build a hallow façade of independence to defend against letting others matter and from actually feeling a sense of belonging. With so many voices clamoring with different advice and perspectives in front of us and digitally through Internet sites, perhaps there is a hint of schizophrenia in this overwhelming impact that others have.

Whether ideas about being with others augments a person's feelings of belonging, or the other people evoke a feeling of belonging or identification, it is the public presentation of this that allows for the feelings of belonging. Eigen said, "Every narcissistic triumph depends upon a supporting cast" (2004, p. 70), and the feeling of popularity, being liked and admired by others, requires others. I, too, am not equating popularity with narcissism, but as with schizophrenia, there are emotional clues about responses to others that exist within these problematic ways of relating to others. Without going too far into the idea of

narcissism and a self concern about one's own needs *above* others, or the countervailing antisocial denial of others' feelings, there is a guardedness and isolation within the idea of only being concerned with oneself.

Narcissism, though, has a grain of the human aspiration to gain public recognition. Narcissism can lead to overvaluing one's impact on others and the media offers many images of this. A father might lie about his son being trapped in a balloon, hovering somewhere, at risk of falling any moment simply to get nationwide media coverage (Rich, 2009). Photographers intentionally misidentify New York Socialites to undermine the socialites publicized reputation (Wilson, 2007). Teenage celebrity Miley Cyrus bemoans that Twitter® should be "banned from the universe" because the Internet can display too much information (Matyszczyk, 2009). These are all expressions of a tense relationship with public recognition and how technology itself furthers narcissistic pursuits.

The problematic aspects of popularity are not in regard to narcissistic self-aggrandizement or identity, but in the relationships a person has with others. Batchelor (1983) spoke of being impacted by others in this regards.

> Every attitude we assume, every word we utter, and every act we undertake *establishes* us in relation to others. Our thoughts mold the image we have of ourselves in relation to others and our words and actions help suggest the impression that others have of us. (p. 77)

Whether we like it or not, it seems that others leave an impression upon us and we, too, leave impressions on others.

Being liked by others doesn't automatically translate into having a recognized image, but it is part of the process of developing a sense of self, a particular sense of who you are within your context. It was poet John Keats

(1899) that said, “There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions, but they are not souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself.” (p. 369) He goes on to ask, “Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul?” (p. 369). The forging of a character is then about the particular person and the pains and troubles that arise as they are with others. Those tribulations build armor, theoretically, as a way to be in the world, and the armor itself is a result of being impacted upon.

I’ve already written that what is guarded against is a feeling of rejection. With the fear of rejection comes its counterpart; being accepted. Acceptance comes not with tolerance but the capacity to experience the impact that another person has. We may rebuke all of the parties that we are not invited to, the times when we are left out of the picture with friends for the yearbook, and we may defend against the idea that these dismissals don’t matter, but they do. They leave a mark. That, however, is the largely negative impact that people can have on others. One mark, a mark that is integral to popularity, is the willingness to invite another to the table. The invitation itself bears the mark of belonging.

Lasting Impressions

Feeling loved by the world is not an abstract synecdoche: the literary device whereas a part represents the whole. This is each, and sometimes every, person acknowledging each other and feeling their presence. I’m partial to the term love to signify that seeking out of another’s presence, of wanting to be with them, and of inviting them to the table. I’m partial to the word love because so much of what we do is beyond our sense of self. As psychologist Rollo May

(1969) deftly pointed out, “For in every act of love and will—and in the long run they are both present in each genuine act—we mold ourselves and our world simultaneously. This is what it means to embrace the future” (p. 325) Craving popularity and the love of the world is a desire for community, a desire to be appreciated and respected, by all, and to participate in making the world inhabitable for others to come. What might follow this idea is that the craving for popularity, the desire to feel loved, may not be felt.

It is one thing to push past others and force oneself down at the cafeteria table. It is altogether different to be invited to sit with others at said cafeteria table. I do not feel like I belong when I am not invited, and I imagine the same is true for you. The difference that I am making between attending a social event—whether sitting at the cafeteria table, helping a friend buy a new outfit, or going to happy hour with scads of colleagues—and being included at a social event is the invitation and the willingness to accept or reject it. The invitation and the intentional act of wanting another person to come to the party, or personally requesting to have someone sit down with you at a table, leaves the lasting impression that the other person belongs. It leaves the impression of belonging. In getting an invitation you are longed for and wanted; you matter. The person who consistently invites others, extends a seat at the table, and remembers names a reputation for being with others without competition or belittling. That person can also be imagined to be popular, gracious, or charismatic.

Chapter Nine: Charisma

Popularity is the term for the state of belonging to others and to many people it is a social goal without any spiritual value. By spiritual, I am implying something meaningful and also personal, which for some faith traditions envelops notions of relationships and how to be with others. For example, the Buddhist notion of interdependence, the Jewish idea of covenant, and the Christian idea of all being brothers and sisters in Christ are three approaches to being with others and relating to others. Why am I bringing up this notion of how faith traditions discus relationships within respective schools of thought? The answer is that the word *charisma*, which is a religious term, comes up in studies regarding popularity and leadership (Shamir, 1995; Hogg, 2001; Wiseman, 2002).

Stumbling Upon Charisma

I inadvertently stumbled on this idea of charisma in connection to popularity while reading the *Bhagavad Gītā* (Nikhilananda, 1943) and its section on austerity. Austerity is,

> cleanliness, uprightness, continence, and non-violence—these are said to be the austerity of the body. Words that do not give offence and that are truthful, pleasant, and beneficial…. these are said to be the austerity of speech. Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, and purity of heart—these constitute the austerity of the mind. (16:14-16)

These actions are valued because of the restraint involved in acting accordingly. It takes work to be austere, it isn't easy, and that diligence in living a disciplined life is deemed valuable and virtuous. Incidentally, these austerities reminded me of Louis P. Thorpe's (1941) guide to popularity when he advised those seeking to be popular to,

> (1) keep your clothing neat and tidy, (2) do not be bold and nervy, (3) do not laugh at the mistakes of others, (4) do not take a vulgar attitude toward the opposite sex, (5) do not be inclined to find fault with everybody else, (6) do not correct the mistakes of others, (7) do not tell jokes at the expense of those listening, (8) do not try to have your own way, (9) do not lose your temper, (10) do not take the initiative in arguments, (11) smile pleasantly, (12) do not talk continually, and (13) do not pry into other people's business. (p. 169)

These two similar positions on how to be with others (the position being that deportment and a concern for others matters) have both a secular (by which I mean materialistic and concerned with worldly rather than spiritual affairs) and spiritual connotation. For the more secular position, another person matters because you want to be liked. For the more spiritual position, treating others kindly is a reflection of living a disciplined, and therefore devotional, spiritual life. Religious and spiritual treatises on relationships do not often address topics outside of a spiritual framework, and the divide between the two is questioned with the connection between popularity and charisma.

Secular Divide

There is a strong focus within religious systems on proper conduct, esteemed as righteous action, but the valuing of proper conduct is anchored in spiritual goals, rather than social goals. Breaking social mores doesn't have the same impact as breaking a religious law, but to a middle school student that is disinvited to a cafeteria table, the isolation and exclusion from the table can feel like hell.

This is how I began to think of the ways that religious systems separate themselves from social and secular values. There is tension in examining spiritual and social values when they are separated from each other or when one is seen as

oppositional towards the other. The tension or opposition is similar to those ideas emanating from an *us-vs.-them* mentality, either-or dichotomies, or individualist world-views that seek understanding through separating out differences between fictional categories. Spiritual studies are no freer from this bias than sociological, psychological, or pop cultural studies that prioritize one way of looking at the world and deny the validity of other ways of looking at the world. To continue this study, I'll need to attend to the explicit language of relationships in spiritual traditions as they discussing being with others and the idea of charisma.

Charisma Widens the Divide

To those following a Christian tradition, the concept of *charisma* acknowledges two sets of ideas. *Charisma* is commonly used to describe a divine gift (compassion, loving-kindness, speaking tongues, or an embodiment of divine love) that is bestowed by God. *Charisma* is generally thought of as a personal embodiment of spiritual characteristics to demonstrate divine love in the secular and material world (Bartholomew, 2004). From the Christian faith, there are other dismissals of the secular world because living a spiritual life means the possibility of being misled by material concerns, relationships, or the events in this world. In these regards, charisma emphasizes the necessity of the divine to mediate true relationships, and individuals lacking charisma are not relating to others in a way that embodies spiritual virtues within the Christian faith to exemplify a meaningful relationship.

This dismissal of relationships with other persons by emphasizing the power of a spiritual intermediary is present in the repeated Biblical passage of my

youth to cajole me to going to church. One memorable passage was Hebrews 10:25 (KJV), "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." The connotation of this passage is subtlety undermining. Community is not to be denied, because community is necessary to worship, albeit secondary to one's faith. The gift of charisma, then, is a gift that devalues other "human" mediating factors such as attraction, social status, beauty, character, or those trivially conceived notions of popular or shallow relationships.

Covenants and Dialogue

The Jewish notion of entering covenants and receiving spiritual gifts, the organization of the Christian church, idealizing others, and the ethical implications of Bodhisattva path within Buddhism, trace an interreligious route along this tour of popularity. The concept of charisma appears in the social theories of popularity and leadership (Shamir, 1995; Hogg, 2001; Wiseman, 2002), but for now I will limit this writing to the aforementioned three spiritual traditions. I am interested in exploring how these spiritual traditions conceptualize relationships and what their conceptualization of relationships does to the idea of popularity.

Let's start with the idea of covenants. Specifically, one covenant that pulls my attention is the Pentecost, or the "feast of harvest" (Ex. 23:16 KJV). In the feast of harvest there are prescribed gifts that the Jewish people were to give, such as meats, fine flour, lambs without blemish, one kid goat (Leviticus 23:15-19 KJV), and those offerings are to be burnt (Numbers 28:27-29 KJV). This feast

was in honor of what G-d had given the Jewish peoples, which was the Ten Commandments. The binding covenant was for G-d to protect and be with the Jewish people and for the Jewish people to worship and obey the dictates of G-d. Receiving the gift of the commandments was an acknowledgment of the authority and relationship with G-d.

Martin Buber's (1937/2000) notable writing on coming into relation speaks of the specialness that occurs in covenants and the acknowledgment implicit in meeting another. Buber distanced himself from many Jewish customs yet reawakened the meaning of covenant when he wrote that dialogue is a way to examine our very being with others. Buber conceptualized dialogue as occurring between one person and either an object (*I*) or another being (*Thou*). He writes,

> The *Thou* meets me through grace—it is not found by seeking. But my speaking of the primary word to it is an act of my being, is indeed *the* act of my being. The *Thou* meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one: just as any action of the whole being, which means the suspension of all partial actions and consequently of all sensations of actions grounded only in their particular limitations, is bound to resemble suffering. (p. 26)

Through the receiving of this gift, the Jewish people came into relation with G-d. I have previously mentioned the necessity of an invitation to feel accepted at the cafeteria table and to be popular. In middle school imagery, the covenant is the offer to sit at the cafeteria table and belong, because it is an acknowledgement that one did not have an offer but now does. The above quote shows Buber unfolding the act of extending an invitation within spiritual discourse, and we can expand that image to see within it spiritual dynamics at work within cafeteria tables.

The making of the covenant occurred within an understanding of what a relationship could be. Whereas a person (*I*) can go to an *It*, and persons meet each other, the *Thou* meets the person(s). It is *Thou* that extends an invitation.

> The *I* of the primary word *I-It* makes its appearance as individuality and becomes conscious of itself as subject (of experiencing and using). The *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* makes its appearance as person and becomes conscious of itself as subjectivity (without a dependent genitive). Individuality makes its appearance by being differentiated from other individualities. A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with other persons. The one is the spiritual form of natural detachment, the other the spiritual form of natural solidarity of connexion. (p. 67)

Buber, here, develops his idea of relationship into the implications of relating. Holding others as objects puts us in the stark perspective of how we are alone in a secular gulf. Meeting others in relation acknowledges how we are, fundamentally, with another in a spiritual union.

Going back, studies of popularity focus on the objectification of persons in relationships, and how those who are labeled popular treat other people as inferior. However, there are few people who embody popularity, who fully belong with others, and not in an objectifying way (Wiseman, 2002). In other words, popularity as an *I-Thou,* as opposed to an *I-It,* dynamic is a social covenant to belong with or to other persons. Buber impressively articulates the process of coming into relation, whether as an *I-Thou* or as an *I-It* encounter, yet the nuances of what happens after relating are a step ahead. Meeting another is the start; staying engaged is the next step.

Distance Between Persons

In the initial moment of meeting another, a person can view other people as expendable, transitory, or placeholders for the title of friend. These are all ways

to prematurely distance oneself. Distancing also occurs, beyond geographically removing others, when one keeps others around, closely, but as a collection and as depersonalized objects with assumed closeness. Is this charisma? Does charisma exists to attract others so that you or I can collect people as tokens of popularity? Is this attraction the purpose of charisma? Can charisma allow others to feel close to someone even though that other person is distant, at another cafeteria table, or in another social group? As Buber (p. 48) would note, "The primary connexion of man with the world of *It* is comprised in *experiencing*, which continually reconstitutes the world, and *using*, which leads the world to its manifold aim, the sustaining, relieving, and equipping of human life." I do not see a morally bankrupt position in relating to others in a depersonalized manner. It occurs because we are human and it is difficult to directly relate with another person, and take off our armor and defensive postures. Reducing another person to being less than a fully human may be a response to the millions of people surrounding us all. I think Buber's morally neutral tone, in that he doesn't elevate or denigrate the ways in which we can relate to others, speaks to this.

The Pentecost, the gift of the commandments through Moses to the Jewish people, is a narrowing of the gap between the sacred and the secular. In being chosen, in *I* being met by *Thou*, what is spiritual is not outside of the social world. Choosing another, inviting another, is an act of participating in the world. Again, Buber is fond of repeating this phrase with slight augmentations, but I prefer the one previously mentioned. "But my speaking of the primary word to it is an act of my being, is indeed *the* act of my being" (p. 26). The act of speaking, of entering

into dialogue is an act of being with. The ability to address another, dissolve into conversation, join together in being, is an encounter that is fully sacred and secular in act and in place. Dialogue occurs where we occur, so it would make sense that community, organizations, places, and the technology to communicate, have a mediating effect on how we connect and feel a sense of belonging. A charismatic person at a cafeteria table is witnessed by hundreds of other people in the cafeteria table while millions, if not billions, of other people, see a charismatic person on a television screen. Wherever we meet or encounter another person, be it in grocery stores, wedding receptions, magazine covers, or cafeteria lunch lines, where we meet and how we meet impacts the way that we meet.

Ideal Authority Figures

The story of charisma within the Christian tradition, as opposed to the Jewish tradition, typically begins within the historical context of Paul and the charismatic origination of the Church. In Acts 2:1-4 (KJV)

> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

From that day forward, those who were filled with the Holy Ghost, who had this divine gift, went to talk to others about the power and presence of Jesus. Paul, perhaps the most outspoken of those at the Pentecost, went to Corinth to establish the Church. In doing this the Pentecost was the initial moment of contact with the divine and the receiving of the gift to continue God's edict of spreading the message of righteous life through this particular religious system. Charisma, the

gift, was present in the speaking of other languages, and was bound up in the ability of the disciples to convey the message of Jesus to others. That was the purpose; charisma mediated the disciples being with non-believers so that they could see the power of God and follow their behavior to be more like Jesus.

This Christian tradition of charisma has many different aspects, more than organizational qualities, or the Jewish, or Buddhist notions that I'll get to shortly. Rudolf Sohm's (1909) work on religious culture and social conditions resurrected charisma as a topic of academic interest, not simply as a historical and organizational context for the establishment of the Church. Sohm's interest in charisma came from his desire to uncover the historical picture of Christian thought as a way to understand the trajectory of philosophical progress within Church teachings. Charisma wasn't the primary focus on his work; the evolving relationship between the human practice of spirituality and the practice of politics was his concern. However, his exploration of theology often included the cultural observation of those practitioners, which he deemed more extreme. In his observations, Sohm (1909) mentions,

> There had been ascetics before, who had held themselves bound to renounce marriage, property, and the enjoyment of flesh and wine, for Christ's sake; and the gift of asceticism passed for a *charisma* or gift of the Holy Spirit, but only for one *charisma* among others, not for a special *charisma* with a value belonging to it alone. (p. 66)

Renunciation, an austere life, was a spiritual calling arising from the opposition to the presumed socially immoral world. For Sohm, the tension between collective unity in an organized faith and the personal practice of faith was part of the divide between the Western and Eastern Christian Churches. Charisma to the early

Protestant church—a further division within the Western Christian Church—wasn't unique as a spiritual gift. Charisma wasn't separated from other virtues or other spiritual gifts. What Sohm refused to do, in noting the formation of charisma from a protestant theological standpoint, was explore the characteristics of charisma, and the significance in the utilization of charisma as a virtue as opposed to a gift. Sohm did not delve into what this meant to have an internal virtue rather than an external gift. He noted a difference and didn't spend time elaborating that difference.

For his part, Joachim Wach (1924/1962) focused on the distinction between philosophy and history within religious systems. He explored the social dynamics involved in being with someone who has the gift of charisma. Whereas Sohm wrote of the charismatic organization of the church, Wach writes about the philosophy embedded in the historical formation of the church. He was concerned with the relational dynamics at work within the church, and within those persons labeled charismatic. While not ascribing Jesus with the label of a charismatic leader, he did see charisma within the structure of the role of disciple to a religious leader. Wach writes,

> It is the union of friends in which the master finds the comfort and strength which allows the lonely one to experience human fellowship. The circle is the supporting and nourishing ground out of which everyone who belongs gains his strength; it is the concrete revelation of the "power" of the master. (p. 21)

Wach places mutuality as the hinge in the charismatic master and the loyal disciple relationship; both people come together and feel less lonely. Returning to the cafeteria table, the Queen Bee at feels less lonely with her minions gather

around her for lunch, and those minions feel less lonely in return. This is one part of the gift of charisma, loneliness can be diminished all around through persons coming closer together, and the fear of being alone is ameliorated. However, with the gift or virtue of charisma, one may dismiss others for their genuine need for human fellowship and affect charisma merely to assuage one's own feelings of loneliness without regard to the feelings of others.

Philip Rieff (2007), a theorist whose work on charisma was published posthumously, critiqued Wach on this point of loyalty towards a charismatic master. Rieff argued, "Discipleship is thus supremely objective in character; it is a devotion shared with the charismatic. The true charismatic is himself a disciple" (p. 137). If there is a moral element in the meeting of two persons, then moral discipline and social restraint are central to both parties and the meeting between the two removes loneliness. Wach and Rieff maintain an understanding of the human qualities even in the spiritual, and supposedly secular, relational dynamics.

Sohm and Wach looked at the organizational structure in the church and the implicit philosophical values therein to find charisma. For Weber (1920/1993), himself a sociological scholar on religion, charisma is a type of authority, not bound up in the organizational structure or in the philosophy of the church. He coined the term charismatic authority. From another perspective, charismatic authority is a large part to the psychological effects of closeness due to the "followers' wishes to identify with the leader and their actual emulation of leader traits and behavior patterns [which are] more frequently associated with close leaders than with distant leaders" (Shamir, p. 39). Weber did not use this

technical language; this is from Shamir's study on charisma in leadership with allusions to popularity.

In Weber's notion of closeness to an idealized charismatic authority figure, one learns what to emulate, how to act, and then feels connected. This coming together of two people was not a rational move on the part of the one person to acquire more social power, social capital, or followers. It is not rational because feelings play the guiding role, especially the feelings of loneliness and belonging. Weber (1920/1993) asserts,

> Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest. (p. xii)

The charismatic ideal becomes, not only how we imagine the world to be, but also how we imagine ourselves to be. Our idealization, in the material world of who we aspire to be, is different than rational ideas. In the process of idealizing we are also adding a layer of our own personal wants and desires.

Jumping back to the Buddhist practitioner Stephen Batchelor (1983), his clear framing of this thought captures this notion of idealization when he writes, "Our conceptions of the world affect our perceptions of the world which, in turn, condition the way we subsequently conceive the world" (p. 98). Batchelor's description agrees with Weber's formulation that charisma is bound up with aspirations of how to act and be in this world. For a person to see how another person behaves and relates to others in this world, the onlooker may form aspirations of what are attractive and desirable qualities to reenact. Deeming another person charismatic because they hold up an idealized way to be in the

world is similar to labeling someone popular because they, too, embody a way to be with others and be liked, admired, and sought out.

Not Quite Perfect

When standing next to a paradigm of grace, beauty, popularity, and all things charismatic, and when one also idealizes that other, then one conversely looks at themselves as less than and feel guilty for not being exactly like that ideal. According to Rieff (2007), “The charismatic can only be one’s ideal self. To recognize such a person is to be indebted to him for his existence, for his presence in one’s self. Thus there can be no charisma of perception without guilt” (p. 36). When one recognizes charismatic authority then that person is more aware of what is right and what is wrong because of the existence of a living example. Rightness is therefore made manifest. Weber does not resolve this tension of guilt arising in the presence of charisma. The charismatic ideal narrows the gulf of loneliness while creating another gulf, which the imperfectability of the uncharismatic.

Weber looks at models of charisma in church leaders, but Rieff (2007) brazenly offered a psychiatric study of Jesus as a charismatic. He insisted,

> Christ as the son of God can no longer be considered simply a charismatic figure to whom something is given, the gift of grace; on the contrary, there is no gift of grace here. The adoption and apotheosis motif, the deification motif, completely eliminate Jesus from the category of charismatic…. [Virgin birth] became by far the most popular tradition, and this, too, is clearly a trangressive motif in the sense that it divinizes a particular figure which was entirely against the symbolic within which virgin birth was the most obvious kind of self-deification, because here there is no father with whom to identify, and from whom one’s authority emanates. (p. 56)

I will not digress into Rieff's political usage of the word popular in his above quote. However, Sohm, Wach, and Weber all looked at the Christian Church and its leaders, yet none of them ventured to analyze Jesus as a charismatic ideal, if we put aside the allusions they made of the relationship between masters and disciples.

Rieff deconstructs charisma to be the gift of grace, which is the human capacity to embody divine authority. If Jesus were fully human, and not divine, then he would be charismatic, contends Rieff. However, if Jesus is not fully human and is actually divine, then he would lack the austerity issuing from an internalized father figure. This is Rieff's classical psychoanalytic take on Jesus. A more contemporary psychoanalytic perspective on Jesus, inspired by the Buber's, Eigen's, and Benjamin's intersubjective thought, would hold the relational capacity of Jesus, rather than the psychic formulation of discipline from an internalized father, as the seat of his charisma.

Regardless of the psychoanalytic formulation of whether or not Jesus is a charismatic ideal or how he is an ideal, there exists a distance between a charismatic ideal that is perfect and the less than perfect person that idealizes. My reference for this tension comes from many years, circa 1993-2000, of sitting in a pew at Calvary Baptist Church in Porterville, CA while listening to Pastor Dale Seaman speak of the divine glory of Jesus and the sinfully imperfect nature of humanity. The abiding presence of an ideal validates that which is not ideal and is therefore wrong. Similar to the erection of the label of unpopular in relation to the label of popular, a perfect ideal carves out the category of the imperfect.

A friction exists between relational closeness to the ideal and the attendant reminder of not being ideal when in proximity of the ideal. The closer you get to a charismatic person, the less lonely you feel, but you might also feel depersonalized and less than worthy. I could get into the psychodynamics of contemporary religions arising from social needs (Stark & Bainbridge, 1986), cult leaders revitalizing individual commitment along psychological needs (Galanter, 1999), or how any of us can have our vulnerable needs exploited by charismatic persons (Langone, 1995). I will not. I will, however, note that an idealized person, whose status makes him or her unattainable, elicits many relational dynamics and not all of them are beneficial to the person idealizing the other.

Further nuances arise in coming to a charismatic understanding of Jesus as an ideal and when his idyllic role displaces other ideals. Karen Creff (2004), at the Servant Leadership Roundtable Conference in Virginia, presented her work on *Ubuntu* (an African philosophical term for an ethical understanding of community) and its connection with servant leadership (based on the idea of following Jesus as he was an ideal servant to others). While discussing the spiritual framework inherent in both ideas, she presented different notions of an idealized person. I mention this because Creff makes explicit how one religious system can be diametrically opposed to another yet claim similar goals. She says, “While the *Ubuntu* concept comprises admirable values relating to community, relationships, caring, and humaneness, the spiritual connotations cannot be separated from the concept” (p. 6). Taking the social out of the spiritual, separating the secular from the spiritual, changes the nature of both.

While differentiating *Ubuntu* and servant leadership, she notes how servant leadership prioritizes a religious belief through an exclusive and dogmatically monogamous relationship with Jesus as the foundation of servant leadership. Jesus is supposedly the only charismatic ideal and there can be no others. Likewise, at a particular cafeteria table there can only be one Queen Bee that demands loyalty above all else. In contrast, *Ubuntu* prioritizes the community and ancestors of a person as supportive of the community. *Ubuntu* is an understanding that "a person is a person through other persons" (p. 6). There are no ideals here, only other persons that equally support and are with others. Similarly, there are many cafeteria tables that are equally worthy and capable of seating many people, and one needn't be possessively prioritized above others. Creff does not reconcile Christianity with *Ubuntu*, nor make this argument simple or complimentary. She demonstrates the power of charisma to erect an ideal image that negates other ways of being; multiple stories are not weighted equally when one story, one ideal, professes sole authority.

Returning to the theoretical ground of Sohm, Wach, and Weber, charisma infuses an individual with a sense of direction due to witnessing another person behave in the social world. This authority is oftentimes felt as a pull to act like another person and follow their example. Weber emphasized the emotional basis of following the pull of charismatic authority. He argued that intellectuals,

> transform the concept of the world into the problem of meaning. As intellectualism suppresses belief in magic, the world's processes become disenchanted, lose their magical significance, and henceforth simply "are" and "happen" but no longer signify anything. As a consequence, there is a growing demand that the world and the total pattern of life be subject to an order that is significant and meaningful. (p. 125)

According to Weber, charisma resides both in the moral authority of an ideal other as well as in their actions. Charisma also does not exist in a vacuum, for he saw in it a need to have meaning and significance; there is a spiritual yearning that presents itself in this social experience of charisma. Rieff (2007) agreed,

> Nor shall we be concerned in this context with the question whether the followers of a prophet are more attracted to his person, as in the cases of Zoraster, Jesus, and Muhammad, or to his doctrine, as in the cases of Buddha and the prophets of Israel. (p. 46)

The moral authority that makes charisma so appealing is the "inner discipline" that is cultivated, but cultivated in the yearning for meaning.

When a person lives a disciplined, strict and moral life, others witness a conduct befitting society; they see a meaningful way to be in the world, they find a concrete answer of how to act with others. Following the Christian scaffolding of charisma, being with others allows for a person with charisma to impact others and thereby demonstrate divine love. Taken to the idea of popularity, in labeling a person popular, that person has the ability to pull others toward them and infuse others with a sense of belonging. The secular may, in fact, be spiritual because what affects others matters.

Solidarity With Others

Religious communities, covenants, dialogic relations, authority rooted in ideals, and organizational structure all address *charisma*. In addressing, these notions, many different branches or schools of thought differ in their approach to an idea. This is true of Buddhism as it is true of Judaism and Christianity. Buddhist writings vary by school and tradition; to narrow the scope of my review

of Buddhist writings and theories, I will use an English translation of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, a primary text within the Mahayana system. In the Mahayana school, being with others is a spiritual practice.

Returning to Mahayana literature, Pema Chödrön (2005) is a Buddhist nun who wrote her own personal understanding and commentary on the *Bodhicharyavatara* (Shantideva, 8th Century CE/2006), otherwise known as the *Way of the Bodhisattva.* The text, and not her commentary, is a definitive text on both Buddhist philosophy and a guidebook to the practice of the bodhisattva. Chödrön's writing is helpful in understand the original author, the 8th Century monk Shāntideva, and his approach to being with others. She goes slowly, verse by verse, over all the nuances of Shāntideva's work and she gives both the general intention of the passages as well as how they have impacted her own growth and development. Her vulnerable sharing of her own mess-ups, confusions, and irritations allows me, as a reader, the space to grapple with these ideas in a personal context. This goes beyond an abstract discussion, for even the bodhicharyavatara itself is not abstractly theoretical but designed to be practiced.

Chödrön's commentaries convey a sense of solidarity between her and the reader. It is as if she is saying, *I understand that following a discipline path is challenging. I'll stay with you in the challenges*. This is a both a style of her writing and a theoretical principle of Mahayana Buddhism; there is a deep concern for the wellbeing of others within this school of Buddhism. One tenet of Mahayana Buddhism is that one is concerned about the wellbeing of all beings, and Chödrön's writing style expresses and encourages this.

Mahayana can be translated to mean "greater vehicle," which conveys an association of "more passengers." It is called the greater vehicle because it encompasses everyone as significant and relevant to one's spiritual path. Shāntideva (8th Century CE/2006) writes, "The hand and other limbs are many and distinct,/ But all are one—the body to be kept and guarded./ Likewise, different beings, in their joys and sorrows,/ Are, like me, all one in wanting happiness." (8:91). The separation of spiritual from secular is denied in this notion of social relationships, for there is no separation of different beings. All persons have the desire to be happy and this emotional yearning is an equalizer. Equalizing closes the distance between individuals that idealizing can create.

When we see ourselves as equal to others, we can simultaneously work for our happiness and the happiness of others. Shāntideva encourages this working for mutual happiness, and the belief that the happiness of others matters, when he declares, "With perfect and unyielding faith,/ With steadfastness, respect, and courtesy,/ With conscientiousness and awe,/ Work calmly for the happiness of others" (5:55). This is what Shāntideva conceives of as virtuous; here, virtue is what helps us be with others. Chödrön writes, "We gather virtue when we are considerate about how our actions affect the environment" (p. 142). Our capacity to alter our environment is immense, and with that capacity we can act in ways that are helpful to other beings or hinder other beings. If we understand that all beings want to be happy, like us, then our actions are rooted in an equal, non-idealized relationship between two persons. If this is carried out of theory and

onto the cafeteria table, everyone might feel like they belong regardless of where they sit down to eat.

The Space Between Persons

Charming people, those described as charismatic, are rarely considered offensive, but more often considered virtuous. Going back a few steps, Shāntideva's above quote to "gather virtue" as a way of encouraging politeness, is a call to act graciously and be considerate of others, not to do virtuous work, but because other people matter. Much like the *Bhagavad Gītā* extolled the virtues of austerity in thought, speech, and action, Shāntideva offers a guideline for proper conduct, again, because the feelings of other people matter. Spirituality here is not bound up in covenants or duties, but in the significance given to others. It is bound up in what Martin Buber theorized in the mutuality of the *I-Thou* dialogue.

I will conclude by noting one notion within the Mahāyāna tradition: decorum is thought of as a personalized meeting rather than a formulaic response. Shāntideva advised, "But that I may relax my gaze, / I'll sometimes raise my eyes and look around. / And if there are some people standing in my sight, / I'll look at them and greet them with a friendly word" (5:36). To this, Chödrön's own commentary on this passage is that, "If a child tickles you, you're not so serious that you can't laugh. Being awake means acting appropriately" (p. 122). Having a structured way of meeting people reduces the possibility of meeting another person as a full person; the other becomes an *it* in a routine interaction. This also eliminates mutuality; this depersonalizes. While there is no negativistic judgment that it is bad to follow a code of conduct, being able to meet another person while

focusing on the happiness of the other person emphasizes the other person as significant and important. Manners are helpful in new situations because they offer a guide in how to act appropriately; the next step is to know whom the other person is so that I, or you, can truly meet them.

While I have yet to find explicit references to charisma within the Mahayana school, this is the closest theory of gift; being able to accept another as they are is a gift, it is a receiving of them. When I think of grace I think about styles of acceptance; being able to accept what is offered is also a gift. This reframe of accepting another person or persons—not as an idealized authority, a demonstration of divine love, nor as the accrual of followers—is also a reframe of the idea of charisma. This reframing emphasizes the significance of the other person rather than the one labeled charismatic.

Charismatically Popular

Consciously cultivating sustained relationships with others, including the technical aspect of popularity, could be acknowledged as neither a materialistic nor a secular temptation away from spiritual goals, but as a goal in an of itself. Some might find this form of neutralization as turning charisma into a secular skill devoid of spirituality, but I think is a way of emphasizing charisma within popularity without devaluing popularity or social relationships.

There are many nuances in regards to social skills and spiritual gifts, such as the kindness, generosity, and service to others that I did not address. The way that faith traditions conceptualize relationships, in this chapter, is brief and painted with broad strokes. The theoretical separation of the secular from the

spiritual, and the consequential devaluation of the material world as secondary to the spiritual world can, if the theory of that separation is rigidly held, dismisses social relationships and any potential spiritual implications therein. Weber (1920/1993) called this stance of religions to minimize what happens in the social world with the blanket expression, “world denial.” Schools of thought, religions, and ideas, have a tendency to exclude other options from being considered relevant, and Weber’s note is an indication of this tendency.

Religious belief isn’t necessarily ideas or feelings erected to deny and exclude other thoughts. Batchelor (1983) summarizes more eloquently than I can how our daily lives embody this. He illustrates,

> Religion should not be considered as an ‘optional extra’ to life that we can either adopt or discard at will. In its true sense religion is the outcome of life itself. It is not something we adopt in addition to all our other concerns and partition off into a special section of the mind. When firmly rooted in the dimension of being our whole life becomes religious. (p. 29)

Our whole life is religious when we choose to not separate out aspects of it, such as separating out our beliefs from our daily life, or our material thoughts from our spiritual practices. We like to share our beliefs with others, find commonalities between our beliefs and other’s beliefs, and it is possible to compact those beliefs into tight and separate ideas or as dogmas for others to understand. Ordinarily, this works and a person can come to understand another’s beliefs through hearing dogma and religious rhetoric. Unfortunately, living our lives cannot be reduced to clean systems of interaction, tight and unchanging beliefs, or unalterable conditions; beliefs, much like our daily lives, are typically messy and complicated without the need of extra layers. Charisma is not a shortcut, whereby a person can captivate another and instill another with ideas and beliefs about how to live in

this world. Charisma is a gift in that it brings people together, and hopefully when people come together they can share their lives, share their stories, or simply be with one another. In this way, collapsing charisma into a solely spiritual gift does not convey the fullness of charisma or how it is another factor in popularity.

Outlining the ways that one can be spiritual, the categorical experiences that may qualify as religious—psychologist William James (1902) already did a superb job of this—would broaden the theoretical tour of popularity. This was not a reconstruction of James' study. In holding these three perspectives on charisma and ideas of being with others, I've hopefully expanded an idea of charisma that does not degrade spiritual traditions or the supposedly secular world. Perhaps the term charisma has a charm of its own because it does not degrade the secular world. Our capacity to attract others is a gift. Popularity points towards charisma, which redirected me, and hopefully you, to the gift inherent in being with others.

Chapter Ten: Cosmetics, Cosmology, and Technology

I've gone quite far along this tour the idea of popularity: cafeteria tables and context, pretty and beauty, social networking profile pictures and impressions, charisma and character, cliques and community, competition, politeness and politics. I've also given my own story, and shared my limitations and biases when addressing popularity. I might not have done an adequate job emphasizing that popularity, thanks to technology, is something we all have to contend with. I am also heartened to know that you have continued on with me.

If it seems odd that a study of popularity should be overwhelmingly academic, then it is because the domain of ideas, at least the recorded domain of ideas, is largely scholastic. To study the idea of popularity necessitates grappling with ideas and their location in textbooks and academic essays. Maybe you thought that the topic of popularity would fixate on narratives of celebrities, reality television programs, or a definitive guide to fads and fashion tips. Maybe you, like me, see into the idea of popular something equally rare: an expansive notion leading us to re- examine the world and our relations therein.

I've covered many ideas in this study. Ideas can also be misleading.

Cosmetic Touches

Many ideas have been touched upon, and some final blending might aid in the polishing of this study. Cosmetics, as most assume, are those surface adjustments in makeup, but they are another thing: a validation of what is present and immediately below the surface. A beautiful person has a cosmetic presence because although we might at first see a pretty face, there is also a person attached

to that face which we judge to be ugly or attractive. Popularity, too, has this cosmetic principle. Popularity can show us what is present, whether it is a person, brand, or commodity. Popularity also directs us towards what we can attend to, all the while indicating that everyone, and everything else, belongs.

Does this reframe of popularity away from elitist or competitive notions dilute the meaning of the word? Does the effect of being popular somehow lessen if each of us, in our own way, belong? I do not think of it as a dilution to acknowledge how each of us fits that label, because each of us can be labeled popular in that we all belong. Articulating the dynamics around popularity, tactical strategies, competitive mentalities, territorial policing, presenting images, or the simple being with others, doesn't dismiss the impact of competition or individualistic world-views. It shows them for what they are: ideas and not absolutes.

Cosmology

Respecting popularity also speaks to how to regard the place others hold in our internal experiences and external lives with others. Considering and respecting the choices of others, listening to their feelings and how their decisions are made are important points to consider in these multifaceted relationships we inhabit. We are rarely surrounded by the same people who think exactly like us, dress exactly like us, vote exactly the same way, or appreciate the same kind of art. With all of these conflicting and overlapping agreements and disagreements, we have a greater capacity to be with others that we find popular or possibly unpopular. Technology furthers our capacity to be with people that we admire or

possible do not admire because we can be in contact with people we have yet to meet. Thanks to popularity, and with the idea that we all belong to each other, we have the option to formulate a way of relating to others on this grander scale.

The idea of popularity therefore leads to the ethical impact of being with innumerable other persons, but does it lead to greater social accountability? What you say matters, how you vote matters, where your family raised you matters, and when you arrive to a party matters. What also matters is what others do, such as what they say of you, how other people vote, and what other families eat for dinner. Who you don't know matters. These small details add up and are monitored and noted by friends, family, colleagues, and even loose associates. This growing transparency, a benchmark of living in publicized times where personal information is more readily publicly displayed, is cumulative in its impact. Popularity has more weight because we are now privy to a greater understanding of the social and personal dynamics around us, and it also has more weight if we take it seriously.

My Due North

One intention of this work was to make popularity a weightier topic amongst scholars and those casually consumed by thoughts of popularity. How we envision and conceive of popularity influences how we relate to others, whether we are academics or not academically inclined. I wrote this work to allow you to change the way you relate to others and how you prioritize others. This has been my guiding compass. I want to change the way we relate to each other even at cafeteria tables.

Going back to one previously mentioned academic, Judith Butler (1997) acknowledges the multiple kinds of impact that a person, and the public in totality has, when she wrote,

> The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (p. 93)

In this she writes to me and for me. Popularity, when partnered with individualistic drives to be better than others, more pretty, more social, is a limited definition of popularity that we can move beyond. Looking up to another and admiring their social qualities is human. Having an ideal loosens the fear of inventing a life and living it by oneself. That idealized person, that social being, has all the skills, graces, and charm, has the popularity, which one might want to emulate and be. This acknowledgement does not make a person labeled popular into an automated role or somehow better, for the label allows recognition.

This is not universal; it is cosmological. The difference between those two words makes all the difference. Cosmology, like cosmetics, refers to the order or placement of things, and those things are particular things. It is the particular individual impact that a person has on others, the particular impact that others have on oneself, which comes up when one considers popularity from an expanded perspective. Each person, also, has her or his own place amongst others and in this way we all fit. I am not using this in the pejorative, or restricted sense, that others are *put* in a place. I am declaring that we all *have* a place, and in having a place, we all belong.

At the Northernmost Point or Thesis

If we all took popularity a little more seriously, then our relationships with each other would change. Rather than competing to be better than others, prettier than others, more knowledgeable about gossip and tidbits of celebrity culture or any other hierarchical way of proving that one is more popular, we can simply be with others. We all belong and framing popularity with hierarchical qualifiers dismisses this point altogether.

Studies on popularity gloss over this note, which is that examining popularity broadens our ability to see all the ways that we falsely categorize belonging. If we over focus on technological and geographical dimensions of belonging, such as cafeteria tables, we limit the extensiveness and personal impact of popularity. If we emphasize the psychological characteristics of belonging and the motivations therein, we lose the social impact of belonging. If we focus on the sociological dimensions of popularity, we forget the meaning of beauty. If we dwell on the beauty and aesthetic dimensions of popularity, we leave out the studied scientific appraisals of belonging in communities. In these academically specific ways, studying popularity within one particular school of thought makes it difficult to learn about popularity outside that specific school or to move beyond categorical distinctions as a way of identifying popularity.

Closer to the point, changing the idea of popularity through broader theoretical dialogue has allowed us all to examine and study ways of belonging outside of narrowed empirical walls. At the cafeteria table this point becomes even clearer; rather than focusing on who is or is not popular, who does or does

not have the right clothes, or even who has the best hairstyle, we have the ability to sit down with and relate to others without categorizing or ranking each other. If we are not ranking others or labeling people into categories then we are simply meeting others. In choosing whom to sit with we can alienate others, rob them of their feelings of worth, beauty, and belonging, or we can welcome others regardless of their level of education, height, tax bracket or any other petty distinction. Our choice of how to include others then becomes more important. How we include others is, after-all, how that initial feeling of belonging can arise. When we discard ideas of the ways in which a person is or is not popular, and also acknowledge that we all belong, then we can chose to sit with people have met or those we have yet to meet and there is no longer a contest.

Technology

Mark Zuckerberg (2009), one of the five founders of Facebook®, penned a letter to the Facebook community about the nature of privacy. He typed,

> It has been a great year for making the world more open and connected. Thanks to your help, more than 350 million people around the world are using Facebook to share their lives online. To make this possible, we have focused on giving you the tools you need to share and control your information. (¶2)

The sheer number, 350,000,000 people on one website, is a huge number and it continues to grow every day. As of May 26, 2010 over 450 million people are on Facebook® (http://facebook.com). This acknowledgment is not to undermine the digital divide that not all people have access to the Internet, but to highlight the ability and growing capacity of persons around the world to share their lives. One's life, stories, photos of themselves and their loved ones can be shared with

the click of a button. It is so much easier to stay in contact with people we know or want to know, and yet, technology has in a way modified our ability to relate. Whitehead wrote, “It must be remembered that just as the relations modify the natures of the relata, so the relata modify the nature of the relations” (1967, p. 157). We are changing technology as technology changes us. Technology is breaking down ideas of privacy while making more of the world public. Technology also reminds us that we have new techniques to stay in touch, and to touch, others persons.

If technology serves to bring more people into our awareness, then doing so allows us to become spectators on the lives of innumerable persons. Robert Romanyshyn (1989), a psychologist, thought of technology and its impact on our relationships and sense of self, when he saw technology as a symptom of society. “In every symptom there is, so to speak, the whisper of a direction, the hint of a path about how one can find one’s way back to health or balance or, perhaps most descriptively, home” (p. 13). He was writing here of technology allowing us all to be spectators on one another, viewing events as spectacles devoid of personal impact, and of becoming specimens ourselves for science and technology. He was writing about technology as a symptom, but also as a dream. We can be reminded of what we were and discover how to proceed now that we cannot return to a time before this technology. Most of his ideas revolved around the impact of nuclear weaponry, but they also speak to social networking sites and how publicized the world has become. In my writings I have tried to show you those whispers of directions about popularity and finding a path onwards where popularity isn’t a

contest or divides people, but allows us to connect with each other rather than disconnect.

New York Times correspondent Steve Lohr (2009, ¶4) writes that the "social expectation is that one is nearly always connected and reachable almost instantly via e-mail. The smartphone, analysts say, is the instrument of that connectedness – and thus worth the cost, both as a communications tool and as a status symbol." That expectation to be constantly connected is further buttressed by the ability of technologies to serve as externalized memory aids, giving us the capacity to remember more persons, and not forget relationships (Harris, 1978). We have the technology, and we are learning the techniques to use them. Popularity, and using technology to stay connected, is one way that technology is utilized in service of social goals, but it is also used in service of competing with others, furthering disconnection and fragmented relationships. As Romanyshyn reminds us, technology gives us a direction about how to come home and with it the hope that technology can be used to bring us closer together rather than further apart.

Loose Threads

This tour did not make all the possible stops. As your tour guide, I would like to note some of the places that I did not explicitly take you to and acknowledge that these places, even though they were not given considerable pages, were part of this tour and belong herein.

Privacy rights and the ever growing legal structures around identity theft, such as the right to one's image and celebrity culture is a large part of popularity

that has been left out of this tour. As religious thoughts structure our beliefs around being with others, legal thought also structures our rules and conduct in being with others. The legal issues regarding popularity, property rights, and possessions is another avenue that touches upon belonging.

Systems theory was also glossed over in this tour. All of the various people that swirl around a popular person and the interpersonal dynamics at work, with friending someone popular, dating someone popular, or having a popular family member, are possible pathways around popularity. These auxiliary yet essential persons further the exploration of the label of popularity and how other persons feel popular, not quite popular, or on the sidelines of the popular crowd.

There are other feelings that arise when considering popularity as an idea, and one is the sense that persons are replaceable and merely placeholders. This sense and feeling was touched in passing when I discussed how persons are objectified, but in truth deserves a chapter on its own. Admittedly, I could have taken this tour wherever I wanted, but the decision to not address these above mentioned threads was made in part to allow this tour to not become lost in egregious academic name dropping or parading out more lists of people that obliquely discuss popularity. The paths I did take, however, were the necessary ones to shape, and reform, how popularity is often discussed.

Implications

What if popularity was our birthright? What if that feeling of belonging, that sense of right fit occurred wherever our toes touched ground at any place or as our fingers clicked through any website? How would our lives be different if

that was our daily experience? What would our cafeterias, our professional conferences, our social networking homepages look like if we cultivated relationships with everyone we came in contact with? What if we said hello to everyone we saw? What would social philosophers take to be the bedrock of our humanity if they envisioned us all as popular? How would local and international government change if your voice was heard, and your voice was sought after? How would we relate to our environments if we recognized that we belong, not only to each other, but we also belong to the Earth, not the other way around? How would we relate to other people if we belonged to them, rather than them belonging to us? The idea of popular undermines, subverts, reverts, reorients, and respects these questions.

The word popular refers to that which belongs to the people, therefore you, and me, and everyone else in some way belongs with one another. We are all *kinda* popular. This is not an obligation, not a duty, not some specific religious tradition, but it is an idea arising perhaps because we are here with others. That is the idea of popular that I have attempted to describe whilst talking about various theories and studies about popularity. Some people may disagree, some might not see cafeteria tables with this level of reverence, not find Lady Gaga beautiful, loathe Facebook®, tell themselves that having people like you doesn't matter, and detest high school reunions. These same people may have many ideas about how to be in the world, and about how to be with others. What is beautiful is that all of them, all of us, get to show up with our ideas and put them out for other people to see. Psychologist Michael Eigen (2005), states it similarly when he wonders,

> It is very easy to create a thought that can destroy. It is, after all, thinking that develops weapons of mass destruction, making it easy to wipe out and maim each other…. It is easier to destroy than to build. Thinking about caring is something else, more difficult it appears. What would technology of caring look like? Caring requires a different kind of effort than destruction. p. 127-128

Perhaps then there is a balance that exists between the technique, the social skills and technologies utilized to be with others, and the feeling that arises in being with others. Those feelings, that caring about and for others, in addition to the sense of belonging, then are an indication as much as the goal of popularity.

Following this goal, can we continue to study popularity after we have broadened the way we study it? From this widened vantage point we can research practical ways to include others and promote connectivity with each other while not belittling the desire to be with others with supposedly selfish, narcissistic, or materialistic framings. Further studying of these two interrelated parts—popularity and belonging—can continue to help us navigate our social relationships and our contemporary lives. Future studies in popularity can also close the academic divides that separate ideas into different schools of thought, thus allowing broader perspectives to shape the ways that we examine the world and each other.

Coming Home

Returning to the image of Lady Gaga—most tours end where they start—before a performance on *The Ellen Degeneres Show* on November 27th, 2009, she spoke about her vision of art as well as her fans and the public. In my own transcription of the show, Lady Gaga said,

> The whole point of what I do; the monster ball, the music, the performance art aspect of it. I want to create a space for my fans where they can feel free and they can celebrate. Because I didn't fit in at high school and I felt like a freak. I like to create this atmosphere where they have a freak in me to hang out with and they don't feel alone.

Is it, all of what she does on stage, in front of cameras, for the publicity? No. She continues to responds in an altogether humble tone,

> It took a long time for me to be okay with that [to be a freak]… so I really want my fans to know that you might not feel like a winner but that doesn't mean you're not a winner.

Her fans are invited to be with her from within the place that she felt like she did not belong. In that act of extending an invitation to her "little monsters" as she calls her fans, they feel accepted, they belong with her, and with each other.

To conclude, there is a particular comfort that comes with being given an answer. If we are told what to do, we can relax, for someone else has shouldered the burden of uncertainty and fear of not knowing what to do. There is another comfort that comes from knowing that no one has the right answers. If I told you there is a right way to relate and a wrong way, I would be lying. There is no specifically right way to be with other people, no definitive way to be popular. Each of us, in our own way, struggles to live in this world, which is peopled with countless relationships. Denying the significance of other persons, denigrating other ideas and thoughts of being with other persons, or esteeming one approach above others are simple comforts. It is my hope that reading about popularity, from this broad theoretical perspective, hasn't been a simple comfort to you. It is written in solidarity with those still curious, still overwhelmed, still trying to be in this world.

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Appendix A: Furnishings

While writing this dissertation, several songs helped inspire, motivate, and soothe me. They are ordered, not alphabetically, but in the order that I cyclically listened to them while writing this dissertation. They are as follows:

O'Conner, M. (Composer) (2001). Butterfly's day out [Recorded by Mark O'Conner, Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer] On *Classic Yo-Yo* [CD]. New York: Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

Lady Gaga, & Kierszenbaum (Producers) (2008) The fame [Recorded by Lady Gaga] On *The Fame* [CD]. Hollywood, CA: Interscope Records.

Lady Gaga, & Fusari, R. (Producers) (2008). Paparazzi [Recorded by Lady Gaga] On *The Fame* [CD]. Hollywood, CA: Interscope Records.

West, K., & No.I.D. (Producers) (2009). Run this town [Recorded by Jay-Z, Rihanna, Kanye West] On *Blueprint 3* [CD]. New York: Roc Nation.

Watters, S., & Biancelo, L. (Producers) (2009). I want you [Recorded by Kelly Clarkson] On *All I Ever Wanted Deluxe Edition* [CD]. New York: RCA Records.

O'Keefe, L., & Benjamin, N. (Composers) (2007). Positive On *Legally Blonde the musical: Original Broadway Cast* [CD]. New York: Ghostlight Records.

Schwartz, S. (Composer) (2003). Popular [Recorded by Kristin Chenoweth] On *Wicked: Original Broadway Cast* [CD] New York: Decca Broadway.

Esthero (Writer) (2005). Everyday is a holiday (with you) [Recorded by Esthero and Sean Lennon] On *Wikked Lil' Grrrls* [CD] Hollywood, CA: Reprise/WEA, Warner Brothers Entertainment.

Lidell, J., & Salole, D. (Writers) (2008). Another day [Recorded by Jamie Lidell] On *JIM*. London, England: Warp Records.

Jordan, L. (Writer) (2006). Is you is or is you ain't my baby [Recorded by Anita O'Day]. On *Shortbus Soundtrack* [CD]. New York: Team Love.

Levy, M. (Writer) (2007). The things you keep. [Recorded by Marissa Levy] On *Charmed and Dangerous* [CD]. New York: CrayonBox Records.

Lady Gaga, & Garibay, F. (Producers) (2009). Dance in the dark [Recorded by Lady Gaga] On *The fame monster* [CD]. Hollywood, CA: Interscope Records.

Fields, D., & McHugh, J. (Writers) (1999). I can't give you anything but love [Performed by Diana Krall] On *When I Look In Your Eyes* [CD]. New York: Impulse! Records.

Cohen, L. (Writer) (2005). Dance me to the end of love [Performed by Madeleine Peyroux] On *Careless Love* [CD]. Burlington, MA: Rounder Records.

Anaïs, E., & Monthieux, C. (Composers) (2006). We're all in the dance [Recorded by Feist] On *Paris Je T'Aime Soundtrack* [CD]. New York: Universal Records.

Tancharoen, M., & Whedon, J. (Writers) (2009). Remains [Recorded by Maurissa Tancharoen and Jed Whedon] On *Remains* [iTunes Digital Single]. Nervous Circus.