

***Glee* and New Directions for Social Change**

Brian C. Johnson and Daniel K. Faill (Eds.)



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***Glee* and New Directions for Social Change**

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Glee and New Directions for Social Change

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(Brian)

To Darlene: You have been in my corner cheering me on for many years, and I am so grateful that you taught me how to believe in myself. I continue to be amazed by your love. To think, you “made” me watch that first episode of *Glee* after you binge watched the first season during a weekend of paperwork. You knew what a treasure trove the show was and helped me make the right decision to become a huge Gleek!

Dan: It was your wisdom that led to this collaboration. Having seen you use this show as a tool to teach student leaders about the importance of making people *matter* rather than marginalizing them inspired me very deeply. I am so glad that our paths crossed. I am honored to call you my friend and brother.

(Dan)

To my children, Riley and Carter, who are way too young right now to comprehend the contents of this book: Your laughter and love bring purpose to me every day. It is my hope that the society you grow up in has taken notes from what this book has set the stage for, and that you continue to grow up inquisitive and challenging social norms in order to live in a better world. To my family: Thank you for all of your support, love, encouragement and crazy. To my fraternity: Thank you for showing me how to be a fraternity man through our values of Truth, Temperance and Tolerance. To the Loyola Marymount University SLD staff and Ignatian Leadership Institute: Thank you for giving me the tools to comprehend and articulate the need for positive social change. To the CAMPUSPEAK family: Thank you for training me on the hard conversations and providing me the opportunities to travel the country to challenge and broaden the minds of students.

To my co-conspirator Brian: Your passion for pop culture, willingness to have the hard conversations and encouragement to put our ideas in a book are an inspiration to me. Please keep doing what you do.

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INTRODUCTION

Changing the World through a TV Series (Dan's Story)

The Journey

I remember when *Glee* premiered right after the Super Bowl, and I must admit I was skeptical at first, but I knew this series was going to be something special as soon as Finn and Rachel belted the Journey hit “Don’t Stop Believin’”. I loved the dynamic the show created between the ‘in crowd’ and the ‘outcasts’, mostly because it brought me back to my days in high school when I wanted nothing more than to fit in with the cool kids, or at least my construct of what cool kids were at the time. *Glee* took on the hard issues in a way that blended pop culture and music with social justice issues that sometimes go unnoticed, or seen and no one cares or confronts the issue.

Fast-forward to the end of season one, specifically the episode “Theatricality” (S1:E20). As someone who works in higher education and teaches courses on the concepts of change and social justice, this was the pièce de résistance. I was literally in tears during Burt Hummel’s diatribe on the microaggressions Finn Hudson was saying to Kurt, Burt’s gay son. From this point on, I was hooked. I firmly believed in *Glee*’s ability to facilitate controversial conversations during primetime, and I became confident in the show’s platform to illustrate positive social change.

“Loser Like Me”

After conversations with several other *Gleeks* who work in higher education, I began to see how there is a bit of Sue and Schue in each of us. We all have the potential to make others “matter” or to push them to the margins. Sue’s humor and delivery of her crass remarks and telling everyone “that’s the way Sue sees it” seem to make it OK to say what she thinks, with no concern of repercussions. Sue marginalizes others in an effort to make herself and those she cares about appear to matter. On the other hand Mr. Schue cares for everyone, almost taking remarks personally and defending those Sue offends. He wants to make sure his students know they matter. By endorsing self-worth in his students, Schue empowers his students to use their voices to stand up for what they believe in and stand up for each other. The dynamic of mattering and marginality plays itself out in countless interpersonal relationships and organizations – which made me think, how do effective groups function? How do effective leaders lead? Do they include? Or seclude? Do they build others up by investing in them? Or do they break others down in an effort to create in their own image? These are the persistent questions of mattering versus marginality.

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Mr. Schue always did his best to ensure that people felt like they mattered in glee club. He always took others' opinions into account and dealt with difficult personalities, especially Coach Sue. Mr. Schuester made it his job to make sure every voice mattered, so that no voice was the only voice of the glee club. Coach Sue on the other hand belittled others and made sure her group of cheerleaders, the Cheerios, kept the standard high school status quo of "popular" and "unpopular." The social caste hierarchy of high school would not be challenged under Sue Sylvester's tenure, until a jock took a leap of faith and joined the glee club. From there the rest, as they say, is history.

All of this led me to believe that how you treat people is paramount to your success as a leader, and helping people see their own potential is one of the most important aspects. Sometimes it happens from having hard conversations with those we care about, or confronting someone when they make a mistake, or taking initiative to help someone in need. How we include or seclude is how we are perceived as a leader, and as a person.

Think back to season one when Kurt was being teased and bullied by the athletes, which was pretty often. Finn, who was quarterback of the team and leader of the glee club, did nothing. When Kurt's dad found out, he was angry with Finn for not standing up for Kurt when he needed him most. Later in the episode Kurt was being bullied in the halls again by a couple of athletes, when all of a sudden Finn comes out, dressed head to toe in a make-shift red shower curtain Lady Gaga outfit, telling them to knock it off and not hurt Kurt. Karofsky and Azimio laughed and mocked Finn, calling him a freak; but that didn't phase him. The other members of the glee club stood with Finn, all dressed in their Gaga and KISS costumes. Mr. Schue sees this and congratulates the team on being so close with each other (S1:E20).

Finn had the capacity to affect change and stand for those being marginalized. Finn risked his status as a popular kid to show others that everyone matters. As a leader, you may not have to dress up in red latex like Lady Gaga to make your point, but you will have to stand up for what is right and serve others. In the end, will you marginalize or make people matter?

"Don't Stop Believin'"

This project is the result of an initial presentation that Brian and I developed for an undergraduate leadership conference. Our first session, "Gleedership: Are You a Sue or a Schue?" was standing room only, and we knew we had something special, a topic something that people were attracted to and wanted to talk about. Several months later Brian and I saw each other again at a pop culture and diversity training workshop, where we both mentioned how fun the session was; and then we began to entertain *what if* scenarios. *What if* we turned this conference workshop into something more? *What if* there are others that also share our passion for pop culture and its ability to address social change and societal issues? *What if* there were other academics that also believed in *Glee's* ability to affect social change and would be

interested in collaborating on an article? *What if* it was more than just an article? Thus the idea for this text was born. It is our hope that, much like the show itself, this book not only continues conversations on creating directions for social change, but sparks new ones as well.

ESSAYS IN THIS BOOK

In the fall of 2009, the Fox network took a bold step in their primetime lineup. Borrowing from the success of reality music performance shows like its own *American Idol*, the network introduced us to the students at McKinley High School, a fictional high school in Lima, OH, and home to the glee club known as the New Directions. The group is made up of freaks and geeks who draw wrath and ire for being “different.” The cool kids, i.e., the jocks and cheerleaders, are hell bent on making life difficult for the kids in glee club. Yet, because of the determination of Mr. Will Schuester, the glee club advisor, along with a few great songs, *Glee* has brought a new tone of inclusion to modern television and direct parallels can be seen between the experiences of the McKinley High show choir members and what is happening in contemporary society. *Glee* has shown the importance of examining the intersections of pop culture and social issues.

Written to be accessible and useful for college students and popular culture scholars alike, this multi-authored text features chapters written by scholars in the humanities and social sciences. Authors were asked to provide critical analyses of the show, its characters, and/or its overall usefulness as a commentary on social issues. The show’s content regularly deals with such social issues as bullying, sexuality, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and family relations—topics that readily promote critical exploration. The editors of this manuscript take seriously the idea that popular entertainment is a cultural phenomenon and a way to understand social issues in America and, therefore, this text invites readers to examine the intersections between media, society, and the individual.

Perhaps atypical for a text of this nature, this collection of essays opens with a narrative of an experimental research report designed to test how the music and narrative of the show impacts viewers’ attitudes and beliefs. Overall, results showed that *Glee* narratives which display uplifting stories about individuals who are stigmatized for being overweight/obese or pregnant teenagers/teen mothers, with or without music performance segments, positively predicted feelings of elevation. Additionally, feelings of elevation significantly predict increased positive attitudes toward the stigmatized group featured and behavioral intentions to help the stigmatized group. The results of this study set the framework for examination of this musical television show’s treatment of contemporary social issues.

Over its five seasons, *Glee* has depicted various forms of bullying including social ostracism, cyber-bullying, physical threats and violence, and the terrible psychological cost for offenders, victims, and bystanders. More than any other issue, in its earlier

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seasons, the producers and writers of *Glee* addressed the topic of bullying. The glee club members were regularly taunted and socially outcast. They were targeted for numerous reasons by the popular kids: sexuality, weight, race, clothing styles, and more. In the first and second seasons, New Directions members were physically assaulted and beaten up and lived in constant fear of having icy beverages thrown in their faces. In Chapter 2, the author reports on a content analysis of social media comments made by fans of the show regarding the show's treatment of "slushie facials". Chapter 3 addresses major and minor characters who served as bystanders to these social acts of aggression. This chapter examines what role *Glee* characters' multiple identities play in their actions as bystanders. These performances of multiple identities and as bystanders can serve as important cues in a culture struggling to understand the new face of bullying.

For a while in popular media, the buzz surrounding *Glee* focused on its bold portrayals of gay and lesbian characters and issues. The show was both panned and celebrated for giving characters like Kurt, Blaine, and Santana such important places in the show. The next several essays focus attention of how the writers and actors turned national conversation regarding matters of sexual orientation. Chapter 4 explores how the show can be pivotal in the social identity development of teens in high school. It speaks to the heteronormative opposition, in this case, the bullies Azimio and Karofsky, and the institutionalized system of power as represented by Principal Figgins, and how they continually plague the *Glee* club member's attempts to represent their identity through theatrical representation. However, this dogged determination to normalize the *Glee* club members only spurs them on, in order to create new systems of fluid and multi-dimensional identities, as evidenced by Tina and Finn's transformations throughout the episodes. These new systems of identity forged by the *glee* club students stands in stark contrast to the fixed stagnant normative ideas of identity that Butler criticizes in her argument concerning identity politics. Arguing both support for and criticism of the show's portrayals of gay characters and relationships, Chapter 5 challenges Kurt and Blaine's desires to get married following heteronormative relationship models. The author argues that the current nature of the television series' sexual politics has undermined its original message of diversity and exceptionality regarding gay teen sexual identities to encourage social normalization. Where the show once promoted expressions of gay sexual identities outside of dominant social structures, the series' current focus privileges establishing gay teen narratives situated in homonormative aspirations. Through a close analysis of characters' Kurt Hummel and Blaine Anderson's relationship, both throughout the show and in larger socio-historical contexts of marriage equality, it is argued that *Glee* has abandoned its message of social awareness and change to reinforce a need for public recognition and acceptance through assimilation into heteronormative institutions.

Perhaps in contrast to the previous essay, Chapter 6 reflects on how, as a medium, *Glee* allows gay male youth the opportunity to see their own needs and desires reflected—most often by Kurt and Blaine. This chapter argues that Kurt's and

Blaine's relationship provides gay youth with a different sexual script, one that is outside of the non-committal, frequent sexual experiences norm typically portrayed in media. Instead, the complexities of mature gay relationships are displayed, encouraging consciousness of self, commitment, and congruence, which are all hallmarks of social change.

Situated at the intersections of representations of gender and sexual orientation, the seventh essay examines representations of femininity of four diverse characters from *Glee*: Sue Sylvester, Coach Beiste, Santana Lopez, and Wade "Unique" Adams. While *Glee* has often privileged gay male sensibility and aesthetics and glorified culturally normative feminine aesthetics and heterosexual relationships, these four characters offer new and different possibilities for the performances of femininity on primetime television. Using queer and feminist theories, the author reads these four characters as challenging traditional feminine aesthetics and relational styles. Feminine characters that defy traditional heterosexist logics of femininity and heterosexuality are rare, but when these diverse performances are embodied by television personalities and consumed by a mass audience, these alternative representations of femininity disrupt sexist and heterosexist media systems that attempt to limit women's expressions. The diverse representations of femininity do the work of social justice by providing alternative models for feminine performances, imbued with agency and possibility. In some ways, the subject of identity is problematized and "solved" within the space of a particular episode.

In the essay "*Glee* and 'Born This Way': Therapeutic and Postracial Rhetoric", the author investigates how media has shifted to proclaim the beauty of difference and the need for individuals to embrace their supposed flaws including Lady Gaga's anthemic "Born This Way" wherein she proclaims that everyone – "black, white, beige, Chola descent" – is beautiful in their own way. Easily the most popular of the texts borne from this period, Gaga's approach is reflective of a shift to personal empowerment over an engagement with structural issues and ushers in what is functionally the "born this way" moment wherein personal empowerment is seen as *the* corrective to intolerance. Through an analysis of the episode's visual and verbal rhetorics, the author explores three keys ways in which *Glee* depoliticizes issues of race: a) making all oppressions equal, b) engaging in therapeutic talk that places the racialized on the therapy couch, and c) presence through absence. The essay suggests *Glee*'s approach serves to mask inequality in the status quo to argue that we are all one and the same and thus foreclose social change. The next chapter continues the discussion of problematic identity development. This chapter is concerned less with questions of such quality and more with the complexities of queer representation it has potentialized. The aim is to engage the contentious issue of LGBTQ representation on *Glee* by identifying moments in which the show has exhibited self-awareness of the representational problematics, specifically by focusing on the character of Kurt Hummel and the non-assimilable queerness he comes to represent.

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Chapter 10 examines the show's discourse around issues of ability/disability. The show's portrayal of disability parallels recurring patterns of problematic representations in popular media that are articulated to audiences under the guise of diversity and progressiveness. Informed by disability studies, this essay offers a critical analysis that seeks to uncover the discursive mechanisms by which the disabled body is re-enforced, contested, and potentially re-imagined in new directions for social change

The content of the show often is reflective of real-life beyond the screen. Because of tragedies such as school shootings and even the death of one of its own stars, McKinley High School students have had to come to terms with the fleeting nature of mortality. In the next several chapters, the authors examine the students' search for meaning in life and death. Chapter 11 examines two such episodes where death is the main subject. In the episode "Grilled Cheesus" all of the New Directioners are struggling to discover what they believe and find meaning in the scary tragedy of Burt Hummel's heart attack. All of the students, teachers, and staff--including Sue Sylvester--journey through a significant spiritual quest asking meaningful questions and sorting through beliefs and the challenging concepts of faith. In the episode "The Quarterback" the entire cast pays tribute to the incomprehensible loss of Finn Hudson and again the search for meaning continues in the face of life-altering heartbreak. This chapter walks through the characters own questions of how to move forward while celebrating the life of one who inspired you as a critical component of spiritual formation and the search for meaning. Through the stages of grief the search for meaning begins with the simple yet complicated question: *Why?*

Chapter 12, titled "On ~~My~~ Our Way: Gay Suicidal Logics and Queer Survival" digs into season three's fourteenth episode, "On My Way," wherein Dave Korofsky attempts to kill himself after being outed as gay and seemingly bullied, has cultural implications that exceed merely garnering social awareness of gay teen suicide. Rather, this chapter argues the episode works to reify a long established history of "gay suicidal logic," wherein mainstream discourse has work to make gay suicide a narrative convention that makes sense. While "On My Way" falls short of directly challenging several long-established narrative patterns that operate to naturalize gay teen suicide, the show sets forth a complicating and complex discourse of queer kinship; how different lives are constructed as grievable, how specific sexual relations are privileged, and to whom we, as an audience, are asked to identify with as "our" own—one of "us." The rash of school shootings in American high schools became fodder for the show's producers and in Chapter 13, the episode "Shooting Star" of *Glee* highlights the unfortunate reality of school shootings, but not in a manner that attempted to explain why shootings happen, nor how to prevent them, but rather from a perspective of using inclusiveness and community as a means to bring people together. Viewers witnessed many examples of how individuals create inclusiveness and communities, and ultimately places where individuals feel like they are cared about as members of the group. This feeling of membership creates a bond of love, and when faced with a challenging situation, the member feels

secure knowing that there is a support system for them. Too often in today's society, individuals go without being recognized by others, or are not included in a group or community, leaving that person to feel alone in the world, and unsure of how to react when faced with adversity. Perhaps one of the most important episodes in its latest seasons, Chapter 14 takes a look at the "Swan Song" of actor Cory Monteith, whose death is a devastating loss for the actors, writers, and producers as well as the series itself. In the episode, titled "The Quarterback," *Glee* offers its characters and viewers the means to memorialize Finn by celebrating his life in and through song. This can be considered *Glee*'s most difficult and rewarding performance—providing an outlet for grief that could otherwise leave the characters and viewers in stasis, unable to move on. *Glee*'s convincing performance is in its proposal of a new approach to grief-work, a means for addressing and combatting loss. In "The Quarterback," *Glee* introduces the possibilities of grief-work, performed in the dynamic combination of song, dance, and speech acts.

The final chapters help to round out understanding about the role of the show in helping audiences to understand social justice more broadly. Most of these conversations focus on race, gender, sexual orientation and religion. What about the experiences of those who may be overweight as a matter of inclusion? The essay, "Defying Gravity: Are *Glee*'s Fat-Bottomed Girls Helping Us Rise Above Fat Stereotypes?" posits that while a diverse cast is *de rigueur* nowadays, overweight women are still routinely passed up for leading roles and asked to reprise a handful of supporting roles, which, even at their best, are one-dimensional, tired depictions that do little to change the public's perception of fat women. In the midst of a grim sea of sameness, the hit series *Glee* appeared to offer a beacon of hope. Perhaps it was the island-of-misfit-toys feel of the show or the creative team's willingness to take on controversial issues that made it seem like fertile ground to begin to problematize the archetypal portrayal of overweight women. Characters like Lauren Zizes and Mercedes Jones hinted at a promise to eschew the stereotypes and maybe serve up a fresh alternative to the clichéd identities to which heavy women are circumscribed on the screen. The question is: Did they deliver?

The final essay brings our original concept of mattering versus marginality full circle. Our first conversation about this show centered on the disparate methods employed by the main adult leaders, Mr. Schuester and Miss Sylvester. It is very clear that the show values the roles of teachers, parents, and other adults in the shaping of young minds. In the concluding chapter, the author challenges the representation of the guidance counselor, Miss Pillsbury, in the ways she supports students' learning about social justice. Miss Pillsbury is one of the most lovable characters on *Glee*. Her cluelessness as a high school guidance counselor offers much comic relief to counter some of the more serious topics taken on by the show's writers. Unfortunately, this is the one aspect of the show that does some of the greatest disservice to *Glee*'s mostly millennial generation audience. The role of a guidance counselor is key in assisting students in their educational journey, especially as it pertains to advocating for social justice. This article presents some suggestions to *Glee* writers on how they

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could further strengthen its advocacy for a just and equal society by adopting a more reciprocal and transformational leadership style for Miss Pillsbury.

Like the show itself, the essays in this book invite fans of the show and even casual viewers to question important societal issues. Following the lives of these characters, we are challenged to care about the human beings—not the categories to which they may belong—who are often within arms' reach of us at any given moment. At the core, this show offers viewers an opportunity to look within themselves, question beliefs and behaviors, and ultimately decide to make a positive difference in the lives of others. That is the goal of social change.

GLEEK OUT!

SECTION 1
THE FRAMEWORK

DREW SHADE, KEUNYEONG KIM, EUN-HWA JUNG &
MARY BETH OLIVER

1. USING THE “NEW DIRECTIONS” TO MOVE MEDIA VIEWERS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTIONS

*Examining the Effects of Glee Narratives on Attitudes and Behavioral
Intentions towards Stigmatized Groups*

Great concern exists about the marginalization of stigmatized groups in the United States (Link & Phelan, 2013). Stigma involves the severe social disapproval of a person based solely on possession of unique features or characteristics that set them apart from others in society (Goffman, 1990). Numerous negative outcomes are associated with stigma, including stereotyping, neglect, devalued social identity, discrimination, and prejudice (Miller & Kaiser, 2001). According to Allport (1954), prejudice can be defined simply as “thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant” (p. 6). This definition includes the two essential components needed to understand the concept. Those components are a judgment that is unfounded (otherwise known as a belief), and the tone or feeling associated with that judgment (or an attitude). When people act out on their prejudicial attitudes and beliefs, the results can include discrimination, avoidance, physical attacks, and even extermination (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Ford, 2013).

Although negative media depictions of stigmatized groups can serve to exacerbate or create social stigma, new research has shown that, in some cases, media have the ability to reduce negative perceptions (Gapinski, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2006; Teachman, Gapinski, Brownell, Rawlins, & Jeyaram, 2003) and improve attitudes toward stigmatized groups (Ramasubramanian, 2007; Swift et al., 2013). To expand this line of inquiry into the context of entertainment television that deals with a range of social issues, the musical-dramedy program *Glee* was selected as the focus of our research, as it is consistently viewed as a “progressive turn in television representation” (Meyer & Wood, 2013, p. 446). Specifically, we conducted a social scientific experiment to investigate whether narratives from *Glee*, that feature the struggles of stigmatized characters paired with musical performance, have the ability to improve attitudes toward stigmatized groups through feelings of elevation. Elevation is defined as “a warm, uplifting feeling that people experience when they see unexpected acts of human goodness, kindness, and compassion. [that] makes a person want to help others and to become a better person himself or herself” (Haidt, 2000, p. 1-2). Since elevation is an emotional state (Haidt, 2000), we reasoned

that musical performance may be able to raise levels of elevation due to increased *emotional understanding*, or accurate comprehension of the emotions that are intended to be communicated (Juslin, 2000; Juslin & Laukka, 2003), thus resulting in more pronounced effects.

This study extends and contributes to prior media effects research and scholarly understanding of the impact of *Glee* in at least two ways. First, given that media psychology has only recently begin to explore the emotional response of elevation (Oliver, Hartmann, & Woolley, 2012), this study extends this line of research by analyzing the influence of elevation on attitudes and behavioral intentions toward stigmatized groups in the context of *Glee* narratives. Second, the effects of music and musical performance, especially in terms of the vocal expression of emotion, are vastly understudied (Scherer, 1995). Consequently, this study was conducted to help fill this gap in understanding and to investigate the impact of *Glee* given its widespread reach to a large audience (Wood & Baughman, 2012).

THE EFFECTS OF ELEVATION AND MUSIC ON ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

Elevation has been characterized as a meaningful affective state that is a response to seeing exemplary acts of virtue or moral good and that often result in heightened altruistic motivations. Elevation is also characterized by mixed affect, similar to feelings of bittersweet emotions, in which a person experiences both happiness and sadness at the same time (Haidt, 2003). Additionally, elevated individuals typically also report experiencing physical responses, including warm or “tingling feelings” in their chest, after watching media content containing depiction of humanity and its better nature (Haidt, Algoe, Meijer, & Tam, 2002). Media studies have found that consuming meaningful media that depict moral virtues (e.g., kindness and compassion) stimulates feelings of elevation signified by mixed affectation and physical reactions, as well as heightened motivations to exemplify the moral virtues by being better people or helping others (Oliver, Hartmann, et al., 2012).

Because elevation is conceptualized as an emotional state (Haidt, 2000), prior research (Juslin, 2000; Juslin & Laukka, 2003) implies that music and musical performance may be able to raise levels of elevation due to increased emotional understanding as noted previously (Juslin & Laukka, 2003). This reasoning is based on the idea that music often does more than just *express* emotions; music also *produces* emotions (Scherer & Zentner, 2001). Music is an important part of almost any media viewing experience, and some scholars argue that music may be the most efficient way of expressing emotions via media (Kalinak, 2010). Within the context of television, music contributes to the establishment of a general mood, which allows for a viewing experience that involves emotions that are both deep and sincere (Cohen, 2001). Music often serves several functions in this televisual context, including: (1) directing attention to the most important features on the screen; (2) inducing mood; (3) communicating meaning and furthering the narrative;

(4) causing the viewer to become integrated within the program through memory recall; and (5) heightening the sense of absorption into or reality of the program by “augmenting arousal and increasing attention” (Cohen, 2001, p. 259).

Several studies have shown that musical performance has a strong influence on emotional expression and can communicate emotions such as sadness, fear, anger and happiness (see Juslin, 2000; Juslin & Laukka, 2003). A review of 41 studies on musical performance found that there is often great accuracy in terms of the emotions that the communicator intended to relay and what emotional understanding took place on behalf of the receiver (Juslin & Laukka, 2003). To ascertain the impact of musical performance and emotional understanding, Gotell, Brown, and Ekman (2007) looked at the impact of singing and background music on dementia patients’ emotions and moods. Gotell et al. (2007) found that singing enhanced positive emotions, sincerity, and intimacy in caregiver-patient interactions. Based on the research reviewed here and the desired aims of this study, we proposed the following hypothesis regarding the relationship between uplifting stories and the musical performances featured in *Glee* narratives:

H1: *Glee* narratives featuring the struggles of stigmatized characters will be more effective at inducing feelings of elevation when the content is presented with a musical performance as opposed to no musical performance.

Positive emotions, such as empathy, have been found to influence attitudes toward stigmatized groups in a favorable manner (Teachman et al., 2003). Similarly, prior research has shown that feelings of elevation are associated with changes in attitudes toward others (Haidt et al., 2002). As such, we proposed our second hypothesis:

H2: Feelings of elevation elicited from *Glee* narratives will lead to favorable attitudes toward the featured stigmatized groups.

Previous research has shown that feelings of elevation have the potential to motivate people to perform positive behaviors in general (Oliver, Hartmann, et al., 2012), and toward stigmatized or oppressed groups in particular. For example, Freeman, Aquino, and McFerranm (2009) reported that feelings of elevation served to mitigate the negative effects of social dominance on White’s contributions to a charitable organization assisting African Americans. With this research we mind, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H3: Feelings of elevation elicited from *Glee* narratives will result in positive behavioral intentions toward the featured stigmatized groups.

While the previous hypothesis proposed that feelings of elevation will lead to specific behavioral intentions, the final hypothesis examined whether favorable attitudes, as opposed to elevation alone, would lead to specific behavioral intentions. Batson et al. (1997) reported positive associations between favorable attitudes toward a stigmatized group and intentions to behave in a way that was beneficial for that group (Batson et al., 1997). Likewise, Oliver, Dillard, Bae, and Tamul (2012) found

that favorable attitudes toward stigmatized groups elicited by narrative-formatted news stories led to heightened prosocial behavioral intentions toward the group as well as to actual behaviors such seeking more information about them (Oliver, Dillard, et al., 2012). Based on these results, we proposed our final hypothesis:

H4: Favorable attitudes toward stigmatized groups will be positively associated with intentions to perform behaviors that are beneficial to those groups.

METHOD

Study Design and Participants

The present study employed an experimental design using six video clips that featured three versions of different *Glee* content (story with a musical performance, story only, or a control condition) and two different types of stigmatized groups (the overweight/obese or pregnant teenagers/teen mothers). The sample included a total of 270 undergraduate students, which were 61.1% female and 77.4% White/Caucasian. The average age of participants was 19.76 ($SD = 2.17$), with a range of 18 to 30 years. Participants were recruited by offering extra credit for participation, and the study was conducted online. After completion of the informed consent form, the participants were asked a series of questions regarding their demographics and general media habits. Subsequently, they were shown one of the six video clips based on the study design. After watching the video, participants answered questions pertaining to their media experiences, including feelings of elevation, explicit attitudes, and behavioral intentions tied to their reactions to the clip they had just viewed.

Experimental Conditions

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three *Glee* narrative conditions that depicted one of the two stigmatized groups featured in the study. Participants in the story-with-musical-performance condition viewed a four-minute uplifting clip from *Glee*, which depicted a character's struggles as part of a stigmatized group, followed by a three-minute musical number where the character sings with the school glee club, "The New Directions," about their situation. Those in the story-only condition saw only the four-minute uplifting clip, and those in the control condition saw a brief recap of an episode of *Glee* with no uplifting content or musical number. We chose to compare two different stigmatized groups in order to test whether the *Glee* narratives, particularly when paired with a musical performance, might have a similar effect for each stigmatized groups. Feelings of elevation should function well in relation to these uplifting narratives, as they feature acts of moral beauty (Haidt, 2000) where characters are shown helping others deal with their struggles as

part of a stigmatized group. The narrative-congruent musical numbers allow for a continuation of elevation felt as they involve a group of friends rallying around and building up a specific character as they sing together.

Stimulus Material

Because this research was interested in studying stigmatized groups per se rather than any specific group or issue associated with stigmatization, two different stigmatized groups were examined in this research: (1) the overweight and obese and (2) pregnant teenagers and teen mothers. For the first group, weight bias (or anti-fat bias) involves widely held perceptions that the overweight and obese possess a range of negative personality characteristics including laziness or lack of willpower and flaws in “competence, attractiveness, and even morality” (Schwartz, Vartanian, Nosek, & Brownell, 2006, p. 440). For the second group, negative perceptions of pregnant teenagers and teen mothers include the idea that these individuals are lazy, a burden on the nation’s economy, likely failures in schooling and social settings, and even the personification of a societal problem (Kaplan, 1997; Kelly, 1997; Lesko, 1995). Each condition focused on one of two characters and their struggles as part of a stigmatized group: either an overweight young woman (Mercedes played by Amber Riley) or a pregnant teenager (Quinn played by Dianna Agron).

In the overweight/obese narrative clip, taken from the episode “Home” (S1:E16) (Falchuk & Barclay, 2010), Mercedes had previously joined the cheerleading squad, and in this narrative, was asked by her coach (Sue Sylvester played by Jane Lynch) to lose 10 pounds. Mercedes had been overweight for a long time, but had always been very comfortable with who she was. However, when pressured by Sue and her teammates, her status as part of a stigmatized group started to take its toll. The story clip ends with her emotionally discussing her situation with another student in the glee club. In the story/musical-performance condition, participants watched as Mercedes began singing “Beautiful” (Perry, 2002) and was then joined by members of the glee club and other students in attendance at a high school assembly.

In the pregnant teenagers/teen mothers narrative clip, taken from the episode “Throwdown” (S1:E7) (Falchuk & Murphy, 2009), Quinn had known that she was pregnant and was having difficulty dealing with the idea that people were going to start finding out. The members of the glee club also knew about Quinn’s pregnancy and had chosen to keep her secret. Throughout the clip, Quinn struggled to maintain her status as the most popular girl in school by hiding the truth and doing her best to avoid being part of a stigmatized group. Toward the end of the clip, more and more people learned the truth and had negative reactions to the news. The story clip ends with one student posting the news on his blog and Quinn crying as she realizes everyone knew. In the story/musical-performance condition, participants watched as Quinn sang “Keep Holding On” (Lavigne & Gottwald, 2006) with the rest of the glee club.

Measures

Elevation. To assess feelings of elevation experienced during exposure, the participants responded to a number of closed-ended affect items. Responses were gathered on scales from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). The affective reaction items included in the measure were: uplifted, tearful, compassionate, inspired, hopeful, elevated, moved, tender, and meaningful (Oliver, 2008; Oliver, Hartmann, et al., 2012; Cronbach's alpha = .96).

Favorable attitudes. The 7-item measure of attitudes was adapted from Batson et al. (1997) and included the following items tailored for the specific stigmatized group condition (overweight or obese people/pregnant teenagers and teen mothers): "For most [stigmatized group], their problems are usually all their own fault", "When [stigmatized group] have problems, they are usually ones that these people could have avoided", "How much do you personally care about the plight of [stigmatized group]?", "Our society does not do enough to help [stigmatized group]", "Compared with other social problems we face today (e.g., education, homelessness, energy conservation), how would you rate the importance of helping [stigmatized group]?", "Our society should do more to protect the welfare of [stigmatized group]", and "In general, what are your feelings toward [stigmatized group]?" Responses were gathered on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), Cronbach's alpha = .77.

Behavioral intentions toward stigmatized groups. A measure of behavioral intentions was constructed based on a modified version of a scale produced by Peng, Lee, and Heeter (2008). The instructions asked the participants to rate how willing they would be to engage in different types of behavior to assist the stigmatized group depicted in the clip they viewed. The 4-item measure included the following items: "Donate money to help fund crucial awareness and advocacy programs needed to assist [stigmatized group]", "Sign a petition to build the political pressure needed to assist [stigmatized group]", "Discuss with family or friends the issues facing [stigmatized group]", and "Forward the link of a news story to friends to disseminate the message about the issues facing [stigmatized group]". Responses were gathered on a scale from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*) Cronbach's alpha = .85.

RESULTS

Our first hypothesis (**H1**) predicted that uplifting media content featuring stigmatized groups would be more effective at eliciting feelings of elevation when paired with a musical number. A statistical test using a one-way ANOVA with Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons revealed significant differences in feeling of elevation among the participants in the three conditions: story with musical performance, story only, and control group, $F(2, 263) = 32.56, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .20$. The findings indicated that