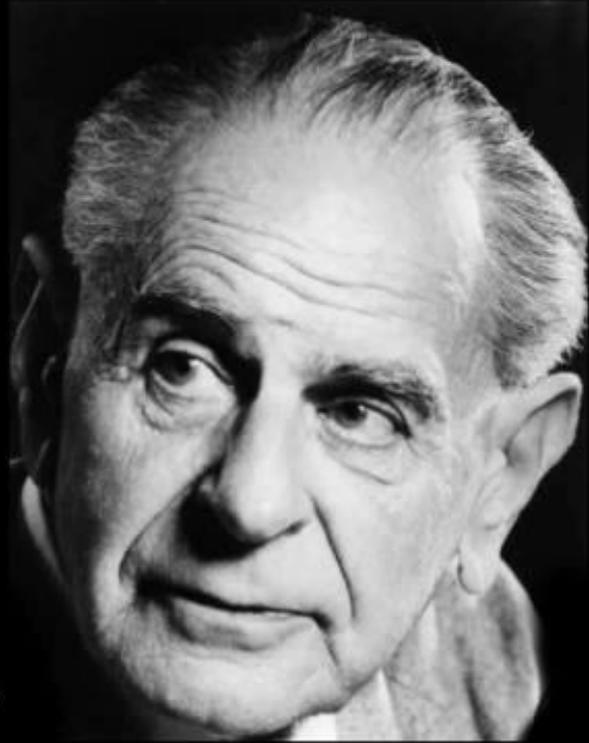


“True ignorance  
is not the  
absence of  
knowledge, but  
the refusal to  
acquire it.”

Karl Popper



**Social Media Engagement: The Comparison of Page Types on Facebook**  
**Brittany Rosario | Fall 2015 | ENGL 3100: Rhetoric | Rhetorical Analysis Paper**

## ***Facebook: Background & Purpose***

As I've been learning and applying my knowledge of rhetoric, I realized that I am most interested in the way social media functions rhetorically. Since I use social media every day in my professional and personal life I decided to study the distinct characteristics of rhetoric in communication, social media, and content creation.

Social media uses effective means of communication that are related to rhetorical language including the visual rhetoric used in these online platforms. While researching the combination of content integrations and their relation to the rhetorical meanings behind why people enjoy using social media, I found that most professional groups use social media because of the spreadable media aspects, easy audience engagement, and ways to interact with clients through on the go methods and staying connected on a more personal level which offers customer service in a virtual space.



With this kind of subjectivity, I have decided to focus on one social discourse platform of choice, Facebook. Facebook is a social media web site that started in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. It was originally purposed to connect college students and has shifted from that intellectual, youthful crowd base to families and friends sharing their opinions and views or daily activities (pictures, feelings, interest, games, etc.). Account users also see new features and updates incorporated into the site's usability every few months in order to make multimedia content from all types of external digital applications and sites such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus, Pinterest, Sound Cloud, and others more shareable and mobile. Facebook continues to create new text, video, and other digital elements, as the world supports it with substance of what's happening now, and therefore has established a reputation in usability and spreadability.

### ***Professional versus Personal Pages***

I started my rhetorical analysis by sectioning the subject of social media's rhetorical function in order to analyze the depth of the standards of different discourse specific groups in social media and how those groups play a crucial part in rhetorical media engagement. The two groups I chose to compare for this study are "Intellectual Takeout" and "Genderqueer Mercury". I chose these two pages for study because they are so different in page type, followers/audience, purpose, and the content they post/share. We have the resources to acquire knowledge about anything. But what do social media sites like Facebook tell us about the content shared on different page types and how people interpret that information?



Intellectual Takeout is a non-profit organization that started their Facebook page in 2009 who have established enough ethos and rhetorical sound strategies to get 518, 583 likes by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. This page is run by a "non-partisan, educational 501(c)(3) institution based

in Minnesota, with staff and volunteers located around the country and even internationally,” who are serving up a menu of diverse ideas for open, honest debate, with the goal of working towards a freer, just, and flourishing society.

Genderqueer Mercury is a social and cultural page that started their Facebook page earlier this year in January 2015. This page is run by a “fangirl feminist” who is just fighting for equality by sharing opinions on issues in society, LGBTQIA rights, hate comments and negativity, and use popular culture references to express herself freely.

### ***Intellectual Takeout (IT): Media Engagement***



The mission of this non-profit organization is to “play a pivotal role in fundamentally reshaping American culture based on the ideals of freedom, justice, and subsidiarity.” The goal that follows this action is “to do so [by feeding] minds, foster discussion, and inspire action based on the principles and virtues necessary for human flourishing.” When a virtual audience member reads through this they may begin to think, *well how does Intellectual Takeout meet their mission and their goals? I mean, yes, I am a follower of this page but do they really accomplish anything stated in their mission and goals by using this Facebook page?* That thought is the driving force behind why I chose this as a page for comparison. In order to see if the mission and goals are met we must first go through the years of timeline activity and see what worked and what didn’t.

### ***IT: Feeding minds***



The Intellectual Takeout features a plethora of playing with words to make situations and trending topics interesting, comical, and more universal. This is displayed in the pages post down to the profile picture being an image of a takeout container and the cover photo being fortune cookies (above), where the fortune says, ‘feed your mind.’

### ***IT: Fostering discussion***

The audience for this page is universal, meaning for any gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and otherwise. The page features new topics and findings about things that people may not think about or may not even know are happening in the world right now. This page shares content that is relative to any American Facebook user/digital follower who is interested in staying informed on issues.



Intellectual Takeout posted this article (image left) about how school is the advertising agency for making people think that they need society as it is, implying that schools are brainwashing people into thinking that they shouldn't fight the system and that the way things are don't need to be changed. The irony of the implication is that most people would agree with it but only 86 people out of the half million likes/followers.

What makes this argument or post so controversial though? What makes it rhetorically effective? Well the audience of this follower group is universal but also open-minded due to that level of diversity.

Out of the 86 likes, 40 shares, and 5 comments we can imagine that either people already have an understanding of this topic and don't find it interesting enough, haven't seen it yet because it was posted on a Sunday or maybe they don't know that the post is even there yet because it has only been posted for 4 hours, or didn't agree with the message sent, which all in all depending on when and how the Intellectual Takeout page shared the content makes a difference in how fast people will see it on their personal timeline.

### ***IT: Inspiring action***

One of the exemplary actions of a leader is to get their followers to share a common vision or goal. So by Intellectual Takeout sharing the selective content that they do, how do they truly inspire action towards a common vision or goal by engaging on social media? Considering that this page post and shares content at least five times a day, let's take a look at the most recent action inspiring post that has the highest number of likes in a day.

In the post (image right) the title of the shared article is, “Most Americans Say Children Today Need More Discipline.” This shared article received 3,341 likes, 1,251 shares, and 324 comments (not including replies) in a phenomenal 20 hours. The full day wasn’t even up when people started having heated debates on the trending topic related to the issue between child abuses and raising children with discipline through the form of corporal punishment. The shared content uses pathos (an emotional appeal) with the image of a child crying and being drug by his arm in a public setting to get people to act in response, by sharing their opinions and thoughts on the topic of how, when, where, and otherwise to discipline children. Here are what the top comments for this post looked like (below).



Originally after reading through these comments I found myself agreeing with them all. The appeals sent within the arguments of the followers/commentary of social media users on this Facebook page vary. The first person presented an ethical case that parents shouldn't have the cops called on them for spanking their children as it is a form of disciplinary punishment. The rhetorical response of others was that 249 people agreed/liked this comment. The second person presented an emotional and logical case that people don't take the time to look at their own children but other children when it comes to discipline which leaves their children being raised as "hellions," a term synonymous with "little demons." Surprisingly enough 154 people liked this comment. The

third person made a point of logic and timing by stating that it is the job of the parents to remove the child from the situation, calm them down, and then rationalize the punishment for the child. This received 46 likes and 2 replies, which means that almost an eighth of people who commented liked this comment and only 2 felt that it was deserving of a reply. The last two comments share a bit of their own experience, which establishes credibility for the follower, and say that there is a difference between disciplining and spanking. These two users say the same thing in a dissimilar way and get varied responses and likes.

## *Genderqueer Mercury (GM): Bringing Awareness*

This social/cultural personal page brings issues into the light from popular culture references to the way the admin user (let's call her fangirl) engages with followers. A consistent theme that is quite noticeable on this page is the reference to Sailor Moon in memes, profile pictures, and the cover photo.



This short blue haired character is Sailor Mercury from the popular Japanese manga series, Sailor Moon. Her powers are based on water and ice elements, intelligence, and her computer skills. I think this is a great character to use as the face of this social page because Sailor Mercury represents using strategy to protect instead of offend, various computer skills to make help study her foes,

and dominates the colors of blue and white. All of these traits that Sailor Mercury embodies are complimentary to the elements of the Genderqueer Mercury Facebook page from the blue and white appearance to the usage of digital space as a way to see what others are doing and protecting people's rights and opinions to point out an issue instead of offending people with rude or distasteful content.

## *GM: Sensitive Topics for Discussion*

Now that I've went over the basic rhetorical structure and layout of the Genderqueer Mercury Facebook page, I would like to bring up the issues. Society has a way about making one issue more important than another but this page tries to display fair equality to issues of gender, race, and sexuality.

The above screenshot image is of a post from the Genderqueer Mercury page, originally put online in April 2015. Considering the topic being related to Breast Cancer awareness the post was shared several more thousand times in October than originally in April. People from all over share their thoughts about the breast cancer promotions and the oversexualization displayed in the "save the boobies" campaign. There were 61,568 likes, 236,678 shares, and 1.5k comments on this one post. I think we can say that this page knows what they're doing when it comes to being rhetorically effective to create media engagement and spreadability.



**BISEXUAL**  
is just as cool as  
**PANSEXUAL**  
but heck,  
**they're not the  
f\*cking same.**

It's an LGBT thing tumblr



Genderqueer Mercury also post issues related to sexual orientation and knowing the difference between someone who is bisexual and someone who is pansexual. There are also posts on this page about the importance of using gender neutral language and understanding why people get offended when you don't use the pronouns they use to describe themselves. The particular post

above has 25 likes, 3 shares, and only 2 comments. Much less of a response than the other post about oversexualized promotions for breast cancer awareness.

Lastly, this page makes post about the touchy topic of race (left), where we see a post about how an artist chooses to imagine the character, Katniss Everdeen, as described in the without the clear definition of white or black race.

This post only received 4 likes. No one shared or commented on this, which is what tends to happen when we begin discussing race with things like this post that actually have room for open interpretation. How do we react? What do we do? Well, we don't react and we do nothing. This is

The Hunger Games - Katniss Everdeen



the post where most people walk away from the screen or keep scrolling before they can say something that might be easily taken the wrong way and offend someone.

***GM: How to interpret...***

The audience for Genderqueer Mercury ranges from LGBTQIA community members and supporters to anime/manga viewers, and any gender or race that supports, stands up, and fights for the real issues at hand presented in the content of the page.

***The Difference Really is...***

Why does the Intellectual Takeout page have more followers than Genderqueer Mercury even though when we look at day to day post Genderqueer Mercury gets more likes and shares than Intellectual Takeout? Well, it's a matter of appeal. Followers on the Intellectual Takeout page are the kind of people who listen to logic, reasoning, historical facts, and timing. They are not likely to share content unless they feel strongly about it. However, they are more likely to have a friendly debate with digital strangers. Whereas the followers on the Genderqueer Mercury pages know that they are fighting for change based on emotion, equality, and doing what's right for

society. These are the kind of people who share and like content to the rest of the digital world and let the content speak for itself, especially because they are sensitive and controversial topics that need to be sent out, read, and heard by the majority who can do something. They know that movements are best made in higher numbers.

### *What now?*



Intellectual Takeout and Genderqueer Mercury will continue to make their separate impacts on society based on their audience, purposes, shareable media and content, as well as, the personality presented by the page admin and its' followers.

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Sources:

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[http://sailormoon.wikia.com/wiki/Sailor\\_Mercury](http://sailormoon.wikia.com/wiki/Sailor_Mercury)