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Brand Community Interface Design: An Adapted Method for User Experience Research

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BRAND COMMUNITY INTERFACE DESIGN:
AN ADAPTED METHOD FOR USER EXPERIENCE RESEARCH

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

by
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May 2016

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

As the field of user experience research grows, it is logical for its selection of methods to grow as well. This dissertation seeks to shed light on a research method traditionally used in other fields (namely, philosophy and more recently, marketing and consumer behavior) and how that method can be adapted and applied to user experience research. The goal is to investigate the method of existential phenomenology and the use of phenomenological interviews in order to determine if it is an appropriate research method for the constructivist approach to user experience. This dissertation begins by familiarizing the reader with three main areas of study that were employed to inform the research: usability and user experience, brand communities, and identity and the act of identification. Next, the method of existential phenomenology is addressed and the exact research process performed for the project is explained. Results from the interviews and their initial analysis via multiple coding strategies are described. Finally, analysis and application of the results are presented in an effort to demonstrate how designers can employ existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews to inform interface design. Based on the findings of the project, this adapted method can be considered a “constructivist” approach to user experience research and it does provide actionable results that can be employed by designers to inform interpellative interfaces.

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CHAPTER ONE

CONSTRUCTING A PERSUASIVE USER EXPERIENCE: AN INTRODUCTION

A quick glance at retailer REI's website and blog and users know exactly what kind of website they are viewing. The retail website is designed to appear open and spacious. Products are displayed in energetic colors and with fonts that walk the line between rustic and whimsy. The blog site is similar in its movement: it allows for much scrolling and includes more image than text. Both sites invite the user to become an explorer – whether they are searching for a new fleece jacket or seeking advice on how to build a campfire.

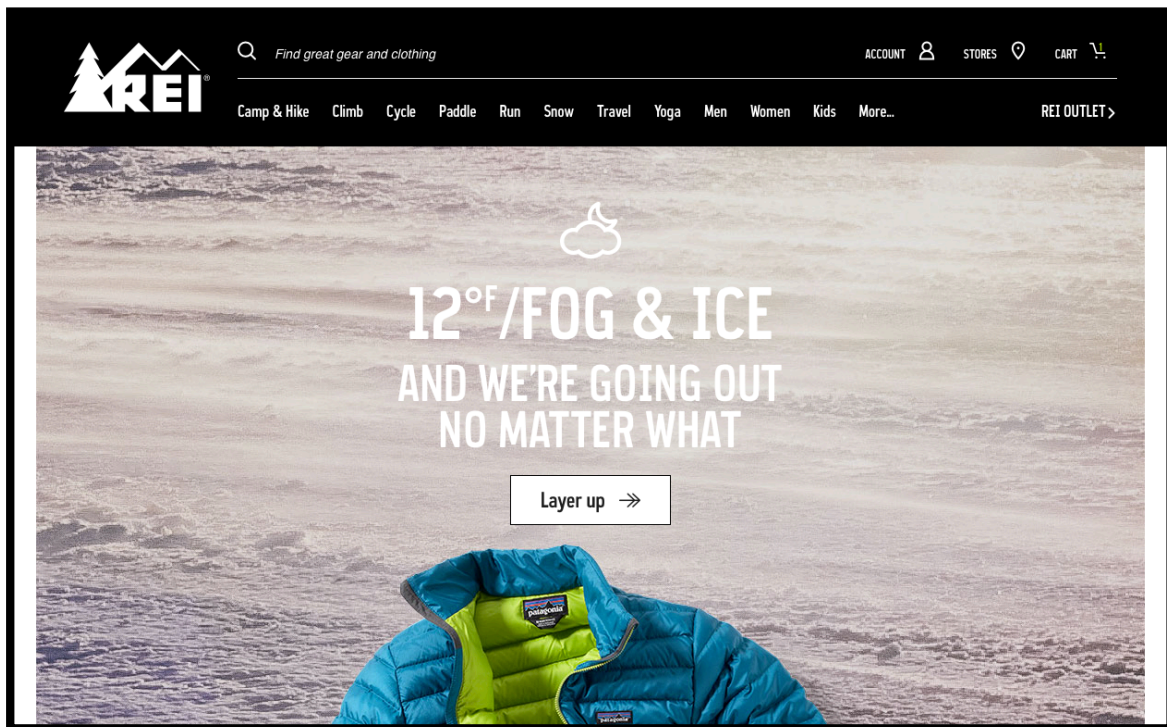


Figure 1.1: REI homepage (www.rei.com)

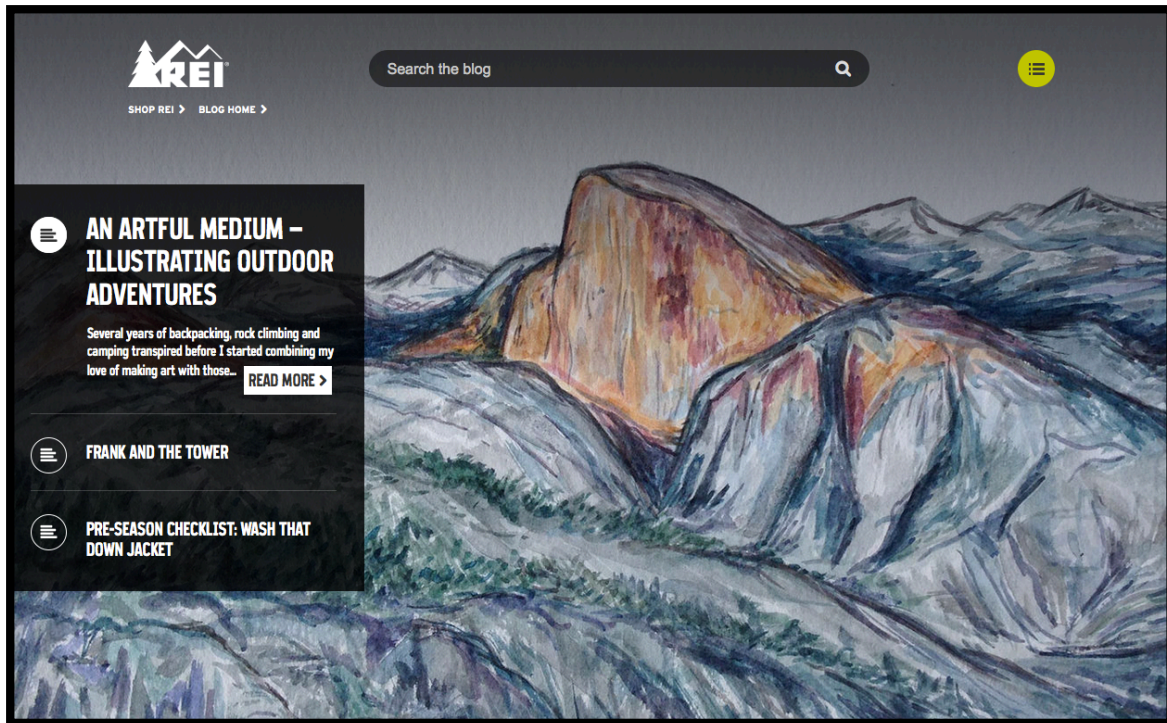


Figure 1.2: REI blog homepage (www.blog.rei.com)

Recreational Equipment, Inc. is more than an outdoor retailer. It is a co-op and a community. It exists online in the form of blog posts and also offline in the form of group hikes, volunteer opportunities, and workshops on a variety of outdoor skills. Since 1938, REI has worked to build a brand with a loyal community. It appears that they have succeeded in this endeavor in many ways. Being a retail co-op, anyone can be a customer, but those who desire to purchase a lifetime membership can do so for a mere twenty dollars. Membership in the REI co-op provides a host of benefits – all of which speak to the REI way of life. There are discounts on in-store services such as bike or ski repair as well as discounts on REI hosted trips and classes. Most importantly, members receive a dividend from the co-op's annual profit. This level of inclusion has helped build the REI brand into a

strong, supportive community of adventure seekers. However, the community extends beyond co-op membership. For anyone who is a customer of REI, the brand's retail website and blog do an exceptional job of communicating the community's aesthetic, including their social and cultural preferences, through both text and visuals. Those who visit www.rei.com are immediately presented with a choice of content depending on their relationship with the brand. They are invited to shop or they are invited to explore outdoor advice and personal stories on the blog. These two options correspond to the main reasons people interact with REI: to purchase quality gear for their next outdoor adventure or to seek advice and inspiration from the membership.

While to the users, such a well-executed community and interface design experience feels effortless and enjoyable; to the designers, brand managers, and community builders, it is a culmination of intense research, planning, and design. Those who produce such effective interfaces must be attuned to the invisible aspects of their audience. In other words, designers must have a way of knowing the social, ethical, and cultural nuances of the audience for which they are designing. This notion lends itself to a quote by designer and architect R. Buckminster Fuller: "Ninety-nine percent of who you are is invisible and untouchable" (Belonax). Successful designers recognize this about their audience and need methods for obtaining such information and applying it to produce informed designs. This project suggests one such method.

A common challenge for Web and user experience designers is to design a website or interface that will encourage users to stay on the site, to understand it, to use it, and to attain a positive experience. This is not an easy task. In order to encourage users to stay on the site, it is necessary for designers to know their audience, but what is it about their audience that they need to know and understand? What kind of information do designers need to make informed decisions about the direction their designs need to take? What information do they need in order to know the kinds of aesthetics, color choice, style of language, etc. to use? How can designers come to understand the social, aesthetic, and cultural preferences and tendencies of their audience, including the use of symbols, jargon, and other forms of “capital?” Further, what information do they need in order to identify the social roles the audience may play when interacting with a brand, so that they can develop a design that will “interpellate” users and persuade them to spend more time on the site?

The purpose of this research is to help designers answer the above questions and I will do this through the adaptation and application of a research method based on existential phenomenology. This method is often used in the field of marketing and consumer research, but I argue that it holds great promise for the field of user experience. Specifically, this research seeks to examine a particular approach to usability and user experience research that can be used to address and resolve designers’ problems. It also seeks to suggest an appropriate method for research. Currently, there is no widely accepted industry standard to examine or research the

constructivist approach to user experience. The constructivist approach, as well as the more traditional accommodationist approach will both be addressed at length in Chapter II. Questions to address this gap in knowledge include: “How can constructivist research be performed?” and “What tools are best for the job?”

This project asks if the answers can be found in research methods belonging to other fields, namely, marketing and consumer research. Briefly stated, this dissertation argues that the application of a marketing-based methodology – phenomenological interviewing – can provide valuable insights and a method of research for the constructivist approach to user experience. This is engaging in what Ernest Boyer called the “scholarship of integration” (18) in which connections are made across disciplines by applying ideas from one discipline to another. Based on the research thus far, phenomenological interviewing appears to be an appropriate method for the constructivist approach to user experience. This form of interviewing aids the researcher in uncovering a user’s underlying social, aesthetic, and cultural preferences and tendencies which allows the researcher to design persuasive – what will become familiar as “interpellative” – roles for users to assume when interacting with a particular interface, and thus, be drawn in to a specific brand community. This knowledge and insight is something that experience architects, usability professionals, designers, brand community managers, and others may benefit from taking into consideration when developing or improving brand communities. This work will help answer the question of how an analysis of brand community might inform the design of an interface or product to encourage

or persuade the user to spend time on and also, to either become part of the community or to continue their existing role within the community.

Three Areas of Examination

This project uses three main areas of examination to support the topic and research questions. The primary area is that of usability and user experience, which is a clear choice considering that this project revolves around identifying a research method that can be applied to user experience research. The methods addressed within this area reveal the ways in which the field is currently studied and help identify where gaps exist. It is also important to address how current methods contribute to identifying and understanding the factors that might encourage a person to identify with a particular brand community. Methods such as persona development which were introduced to the field of usability through the work of John Pruitt, Jonathan Grudin, Tamara Adlin, Ginny Redish, and Alan Cooper during a span of years in the early 2000s, at first seem promising and do begin to address the notion of user's social, cultural, and aesthetic needs; however, they do not result in an adequate description of user needs or the roles they may play when interacting with a brand community. Personas also tend to focus on the characteristics of the individual, not the entire community. While this project will address individual experiences within particular brand communities through the mention of personas and journey maps, it also seeks to focus on the community as a whole.

The second area of research for this dissertation is the concept of "brand communities." Brand communities can be defined as a group of individuals who

identify specifically with a particular brand and its lifestyle, values, and perceived culture (citation needed). Aside from the concept of the brand, its products, and associated experiences, members also identify with one another and their shared social ties are one of the appealing benefits of being involved with the community. According to Muniz and O’Guinn, members of brand communities tend to feel an intrinsic connection towards one another – something they refer to as “consciousness of kind” – and not only share rituals and traditions, but also a sense of shared moral responsibility.

The notion of brand community has led me to consider the work of Pierre Bourdieu – specifically, his concept of “habitus.” Habitus refers to a lifestyle, the values, dispositions, and expectations of a particular social group that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life (citation needed). Habitus is also described as a “structure of the mind” characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions, and taste (citation needed). For this project, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus has been used as a way to make a more in-depth examination of brand community. It is also being leveraged to ask questions such as “What constitutes these communities?” and “How and why are people interested in becoming part of them?” Habitus is also a useful construct to consider when asking: “What makes a community desirable enough to join?” Bourdieu’s notion of habitus is applied heavily and is a driving force guiding this research and will be discussed in Chapter III.

The third area of research is composed of the concept of “identity” and the act of “identification.” As alluded to in the brief descriptions of user experience and brand community, identity plays a large role in both – identifying the needs and values of a particular user and understanding the lifestyle with which a community member aligns him or herself. For this reason, it was necessary to research various identity-related theories to gain an understanding of the approaches used within the associated fields. This area of research draws from a variety of scholars and practitioners across the fields of user experience and branding, but also from literary criticism, marketing, and psychology, among others. One concept that has played a large role in the formation of this research and a number of research questions is the mechanism of “interpellation” discussed by Louis Althusser. Interpellation is a way of describing how people are “hailed” or assimilated into societal groups. This is an important action to consider when asking how to design interfaces that will essentially provide a persuasive experience with which community members will identify. Once again, Chapters II and III will provide further detail and discussion of these three areas of examination and their relevance to the overarching research topic and goals.

Expected Contributions

A number of important contributions result from this project. First, this work will begin to answer the question of what role existential phenomenology can play in the field of usability and user experience research. As will be discussed in Chapter II, the field of usability seems to be undergoing a shift, or more likely, an extension

into an area that is different from traditional usability studies. This in no way diminishes the importance and relevance of traditional usability, but instead, builds on it. The move is towards user experience and how people interact with interfaces. With this shift, there is a need for new perspectives and with its focus on the experience of the individual and how that experience contributes to and builds from the habitus of a community, existential phenomenology appears to be an appropriate direction for exploration.

In addition to providing a perspective from which to view usability and user experience, a second contribution of this work is the development of a method that will be suitable for the constructivist approach discussed in Chapter II. In brief, this approach seeks to identify the social roles users embody when interacting with interfaces and then to design an interface that constructs those roles for the users to accept. By understanding more about a specific brand community's *habitus* and the values of its membership, more engaging roles can be developed and contribute to an overall enhanced experience with the brand and its interface. Just as the accommodationist approach has its dedicated methods of inquiry, the constructivist approach is in need of a "tool box" from which to draw guidance during research. The method carried out in this dissertation is intended to serve as a "tool" for researching the constructivist approach.

Third, based on its findings, this project intends to provide a "roadmap" for designers, strategists, information architects, and others within the field of user experience who are working to develop persuasive, interpellative interfaces for

brand communities. As detailed in Chapter III, brand communities come in a variety of forms, many of which are distinguished by one or more dominant characteristics. This research takes those characteristics into consideration in order to provide suggestions for how to conduct phenomenological interviews tailored for specific kinds of brand communities. Suggestions might take the form of language similar to: “If you are X type of brand, focusing interview questions on X (culture, education, language, social connections, etc.) may be most useful in understanding your community and designing an interpellative interface with which they will engage.” These contributions and others will be discussed in more detail in Chapter VI.

Research Purpose and Overview of Chapters

The overarching purpose of this dissertation is to understand how experience with an interface can persuade and interpellate users into a specific brand community. To do this, I must gain insight into the *habitus* of the brand community and what its members value. This will be done by applying and adapting existential phenomenology, often used in the field of marketing and consumer research, to the field of user experience research. This project is intended for an audience in technical and professional communication, as well as usability and user experience research, making this approach unique in its application. The insights gained from this research will hopefully reveal phenomenological interviewing as an asset in the user experience professional’s tool box. Future applications of this research have the potential to aid designers, researchers, content strategists, and information architects – among others – in better understanding the audience for

which they create products and thus, provide the potential for engaging value-driven user experiences.

In order to carry out this research, a thorough review of existing literature must be undertaken. With this work concentrating on three main areas of scholarly work: usability and user experience, brand communities, and identity – there is certainly much to review and also, to connect and synthesize. Chapters II and III are dedicated to this purpose. A more developed background of the research topic will be provided and the gap in research methods will be made more apparent. A background of existential phenomenology and its interviewing style as well as the reason it was selected for this research will be addressed in Chapter IV. The adapted method adopted for this work will also be described in step-by-step detail and predictions for the outcome of the research will be presented. Chapter IV's focus on the method of research is highly important to the overall purpose of this project because it addresses the potential power of the method in usability and user experience design. By applying this adapted method to sample studies, this project seeks to make an argument for the benefits of existential phenomenology as a user-focused and community-focused research method. Chapter V will provide the results of the interviews and will begin the discussion of how the data can be applied for interface design. While it is impractical to include the transcripts of each interview, summaries of each interview participant, common themes, and a description of each brand community's general habitus will provide insight into how participants responded to the phenomenological interviewing style. After

presenting the results, further discussion, interpretation, and application of the data is necessary, all of which will be covered at length in Chapter VI. This chapter will also address the questions: “What can existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing contribute to the field of user experience?” and “How can the field of user experience benefit from this method?” Chapter VI will also address contributions and future research. Because this work seeks to adapt and apply a method from one field to another, it is undoubtedly important to project where future work may lead and what contributions it may make towards the fields of usability and user experience.

CHAPTER TWO

USABILITY AND USER EXPERIENCE LITERATURE REVIEW

This project focuses on developing a method of research to be applied by those in industry as well as academia in an effort to continue the advancement of the fields of usability and user experience. In order to provide a method with an aim towards the future, it is important to look to the past in order to review and understand the groundwork that has been laid. Thus, the next two chapters provide an examination of the three main areas from which this research springs forth: usability and user experience, brand communities, and identity and the act of identification. The three areas are illustrated in Figure 2.1 below. The center of the illustration represents the space in which this project takes place.

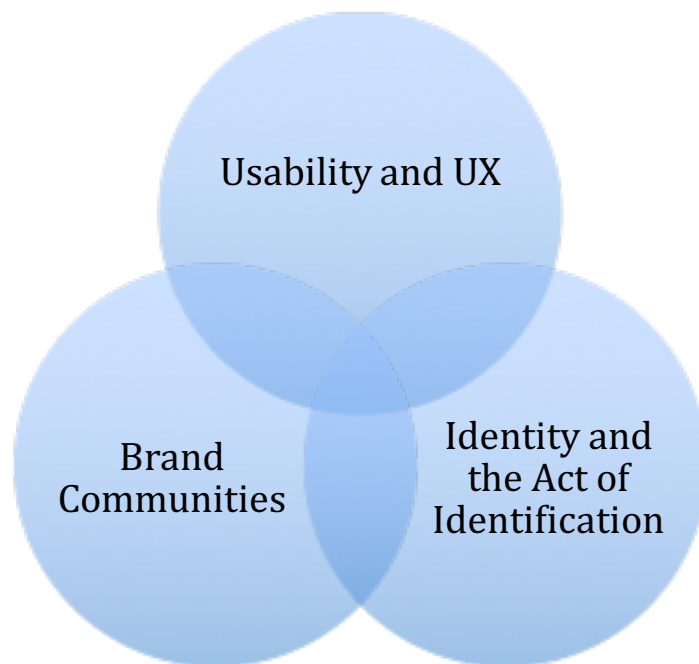


Figure 2.1: Relationship of three main areas of study

A literature review for each area is discussed as well as the main ideas and supporting ideas that provide the foundation upon which this research is built. Connections across areas of study are also noted and explored. This chapter explores the areas of usability and user experience and how they relate back to the central topic of the project. Chapter III focuses on the areas of brand communities and identity and relates their major concepts back to the topic at hand.

Defining Usability and User Experience

There is much debate and discussion regarding the differences between “usability” and “user experience” (UX). Some treat the two as totally different entities, while others consider them one and the same. The two terms are frequently discussed together and for good reason: they constantly inform and affect one another. Although they have much in common, there are distinctions between the two. Usability seeks to answer the question, “How usable is this product?” and provides a number of well-established testing and research methods that are designed to test the product or interface and identify the design elements or content issues that are preventing the product from having a successful and usable interface. The field of user experience is also backed by well-established research methods, but is concerned with the entire experience of the user interacting with a product. User experience often examines *how* the product is used and *how* it is perceived and experienced by the user. Although the term “usability” was in use many years before the term “user experience,” it is important to note that research in the areas of

usability and user experience had been happening for quite some time. The figure below depicts one view of the relationship between usability and user experience.

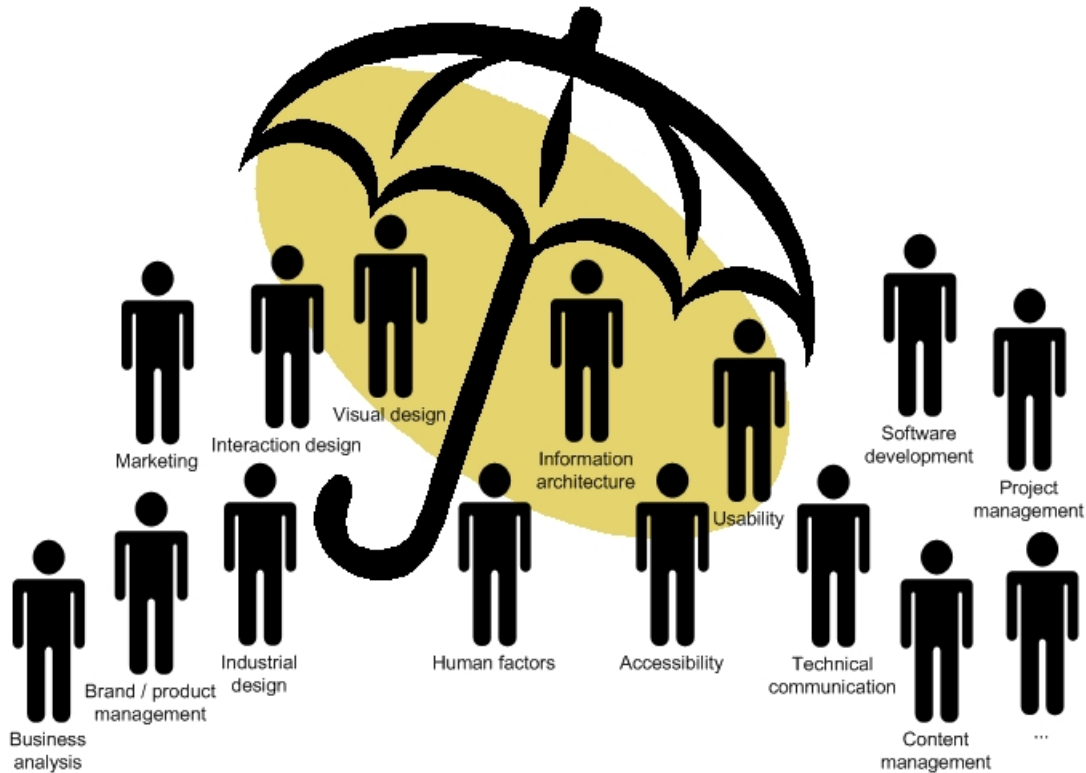


Figure 2.2: User experience umbrella. Source: www.uxnet.org

Here, the field of user experience is illustrated as an umbrella under which are other fields that contribute to the creation of the overall user experience. In this interpretation, usability is considered a factor that aids in the development of the more encompassing concept of user experience. The table below provides further comparison between the two terms.

Usability	User Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on what users do and how they do it. • Makes a task easy and intuitive to complete. • Minimizes number of steps or clicks needed to complete a task or locate desired information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on what users feel as they are interacting with an interface or product. • Makes a task meaningful and valuable to the user. • Creates an emotional connection.

Table 2.1: Comparison of usability and user experience

The fields of usability and user experience continue to evolve. Evidence of this is displayed in Carine Lallemand, Guillaume Gronier, and Vincent Koenig’s 2015 article. The article details the authors’ reproduction of a survey from four years earlier that sought to move towards consensus of the definition of user experience. Both studies provided participants with five definitions of user experience and asked them to choose one definition that they thought was best. In Lallemand, Gronier, and Koenig’s study, there was no clear frontrunner for the answer. One definition received roughly 31 percent of the vote, another received roughly 25 percent, a third received roughly 20 percent, a fourth received just short of 17 percent, and the fifth definition received 7 percent (Lallemand, Gronier, and Koenig 41). This lack of consensus demonstrates that the definition for user experience is still perceived differently by practitioners and academics within the field.

While the discussion of the definitions of usability and user experience is an important one to address; it is not the focus of this project. This project is focused on research methodologies – specifically, exploring a methodology that will be useful for all practitioners whether they consider their work to be in the field of usability,

the field of user experience, or both. Attempting to tease out what constitutes a usability research method versus what constitutes a user experience research method is a non-issue in regards to the aim of this project and the true intention of this work.

Instead of a focus on usability versus user experience, this project argues that a more useful division is needed. Specifically, a division of research methods in which all methods are appropriate for application in the fields of usability and user experience. Instead of field, the division is based on how the task or problem at hand is approached. This division is based on Howard's "accommodationist" and "constructivist" approaches to usability and user experience research. Ultimately, I am arguing that the focus should be on developing constructivist methods because a number of accommodationist methods already exist.

In this chapter, I will provide a brief history of the field of usability and user experience and will then discuss the accommodationist and constructivist approaches. I will provide support for the above argument by addressing a number of what can be considered accommodationist research methods. I will also address current research methods that are better suited for the constructivist approach; however, there are only a few and they are not ideal for collecting the data necessary to inform constructivist design. As I will show, this lack of constructivist-focused design methods is the main drive behind this project to apply and explore a research method that has the potential to be a useful method for the constructivist approach. Evaluating many of the current research methods is an important first

step as it will illuminate what is currently being used. The analysis of commonly used methods will also make it obvious that there is a gap to be addressed and a real need for other methods that favor the constructivist approach to research.

A Brief History

There is debate about specifically when the field of usability was born; however according to Joe Dumas, it began in the late 1980s and initially focused on the engineering process of products and their design (Dumas 55). At this point, the main focus was on engineering products that were usable and functional. The term “usability engineering” was often used to describe not only a well-designed product, but also the process through which well-designed products were created (Dumas 55).

The 1990s and the explosion of the Internet brought much interest to the field of usability. Instead of continuing to focus specifically on the engineering of products, usability became a concern for computer interfaces and websites. During these years, a variety of methods, such as cognitive walkthroughs and heuristic evaluations, were developed to help the field adapt to evolving technology (Dumas 55). The Usability Professionals Association (UPA) was formed in 1991 and served as a “place for people from different backgrounds to feel comfortable together—to meet, to share, to collaborate” (Redish and Barnum 92). The formation of UPA was important because it allowed those in industry and academia who had been carrying out usability research for years under various other names to come together and have discussions with other like-minded individuals.

In the 1990s, usability testing was mostly a way to identify the “low hanging fruit” or the obvious and quick fixes that could be made to a problematic interface to improve its use. It was a way of validating whether a design worked or did not work and was often something that was performed after the product or interface was designed and already prototyped. If major usability issues were uncovered, the design and prototyping process would have to start again. Usability testing continued to work in this fashion (being applied to the end of the design process) until many realized that there were emerging methods that could be used *during* the design process to create a more usable product on the first iteration. Although the exact date of this shift is not documented, it might be credited to the “dot com boom” of the mid- to late-90s (Mayhew 100). During this time, there were a number of start-ups jumping to the Internet and because of this, new usability-related roles began to emerge: the graphic designer, the front-end and back-end programmers, and the information architect (Mayhew 101) to name a few. Each of these played an important role on the user experience team. There was a need to differentiate one interface from another in order to stand out and remain competitive on the Internet and the question expanded from “How can we make this interface usable?” to “How can we design an easy-to-use and engaging experience for our users?”

Tharon Howard makes note of this shift in the field in his chapter on approaches to academic-industry partnerships (Howard “Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches” 160). Howard points out that in the late 1980s, the speed of a system was “king” (“Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches”

159) and the majority of computer manufacturers focused on how quickly their systems ran. But in the early 1990s, many manufacturers began moving away from a focus on speed (at this point, many competing systems were running at similar speeds, so it was less of an issue) and moving towards other ways to differentiate themselves from the market (Howard “Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches” 160). With this shift, usability-related factors, such as ease of use, became a distinguishing characteristic that customers valued and wanted.

Although for a time used only within certain circles of usability practitioners, the term “user experience” was introduced to a wider audience at the 1995 CHI conference. It was defined as a critical aspect of “human interface research and application” and also as something that involves “considerable research effort and attention to detail in the execution of products” (Norman, Miller, and Henderson). At the time, Donald Norman, Jim Miller, and Austin Henderson worked for Apple, which makes a great deal of sense given that Apple has become well known for its products’ enjoyable user experience. The presentation also alluded to the fact that developing a successful user experience requires a harmonization of the human interface and the industrial product design process (Norman, Miller, and Henderson). In this sense, user experience is what helps to humanize the technology of a product and as a result, aids the user in understanding the product’s purpose and functionality. Although the field of user experience has grown and changed drastically since, the above definition continues to hold true when viewing the field from a broad perspective.

While Norman et al.'s definition aimed specifically towards user experience on the Web, Lauralee Alben's perspective in her 1996 article for *Interactions* magazine opens up the concept to include tangible products. For Alben, user experience encompasses the ways in which an interactive product is used, including how the product feels in the user's hands, how well the user understands the product's inner workings and how the user feels emotionally when interacting with the product (12). Alben also argues that how well or poorly a product serves its purpose and how that product fits into the context in which it is used plays a large role in defining the overall user experience (13).

Other practitioners and scholars in the field echo Alben's broad definition and extend user experience to include interactions with physical products, not just websites. For example, Jesse James Garrett describes user experience as having an emphasis on product-to-consumer interaction (6), specifically how a product acts upon or interacts with the user. Garrett also writes that user experience is "the experience the product creates for the people who use it in the real world" (6). Del Coates also addresses the interaction between users and product interfaces in his book, *Watches Tell More than Time*. Coates, an industrial designer, writes that "products serve primarily as intermediaries...for conveying what their creators want to say to consumers, users, and the public. What a watch says, for example, is determined totally by its mechanism, which, in turn, has been determined by its designer" (102). This view of product-to-consumer or user interaction emphasizes the importance of the designer in creating effective interfaces. Because so much of

how a consumer or user interprets a product (or perhaps even the brand that makes the product) relies on the efforts of the designer, it is critical that the designer be aware of the goals, messaging, desired experience, and general identity of the brand and how that information can be communicated via the design and content of the product. How people perceive the “personality” or “feel” of interfaces, as well as how they interact with the interface, has an impact on their overall experience.

This view lends itself to the tangible and intangible experiences between interface and user that Donald Norman addresses in two of his books. *The Design of Everyday Things* (DOET) focuses on usability, while *Emotional Design* is concerned with the entire user experience. In DOET, Norman provides example after example of products and their interfaces and explains how their features and affordances either help or hinder the user’s interaction. Here, Norman is focused on how interfaces communicate information to the user. For example, how does a user know to push or pull a door? In the case of a well-designed door, the answer lies in its features: a handle indicates “pull” while a smooth pane indicates “push” (3). In the second book, *Emotional Design*, Norman takes the concept of usability and explains its importance to creating a positive user experience. One of the first messages conveyed in the book is that products and designs that are more usable tend to lead to the development of a more positive user experience. One of Norman’s most effective illustrations of this can be found in his story of the three teapots. One teapot is designed so that it is interesting to look at, but is unusable; another is functional, but requires time and patience and the final teapot is both functional and

charming (Norman *Emotional Design* 5). His point is that each of the teapots is predisposed to elicit a certain emotional experience when used and that when functionality and positive emotion combine, a memorable experience is created and thus, attachment to a certain product or even brand is possible.

William Buxton focuses more on a designer-to-consumer view, where user experience is perceived as a process that must be designed, not just to ensure the functionality and usability of the product, but also to ensure that the design is user-centered and intuitive (37). Assessing the user's needs and incorporating them into the initial design of a product or website encourages the likelihood of developing a user-centered design that allows users to maintain a relatively low cognitive load when making efforts to comprehend the design, thus allowing for a more positive experience.

Steve Krug is a proponent of maintaining a positive experience through low cognitive load and suggests keeping the design of products simple. When faced with a design challenge, Krug resorts to his "first law of usability," the statement: Don't make me think (11)! For Krug, the key to good user experience, specifically in his specialty of the Web, is to reduce complexity by maintaining a straightforward and self-evident design and navigation and to focus on which factors are likely to trigger pleasurable emotions (18). Krug's push towards simplification as the key to positive user experience ties in with the concept of "microinteractions." These are tiny piece(s) of functionality that only do one thing (Saffer 2), which in turn, simplifies the design and improves the ease of use. For some users, this experience appeals to

their way of thinking and thus encourages them, as Susan Weinschenk says, to click and continue to explore and use a website. For Krug and many others, simplifying is the first big step in creating a successful user experience on the Web.

The Role of Persuasive Design

Persuasive design plays a substantial role in the field of user experience research and provides the basis from which a constructive methodology can be built. A persuasive approach has the main goal of moving the user to action, which is an appropriate application for constructivist design considering its goal is to appeal to the user and thus have them identify with a specific social role. By identifying with a specific role, the user has been persuaded. It is important to note that there is a difference between persuasion and manipulation. There is also a difference between persuasion and deception. B.J. Fogg establishes this in his definition of persuasion in his book, *Persuasive Technology: Using Computers to Change What We Think and Do*. Fogg defines persuasion as the attempt to change someone's attitudes or behavior without using coercion or deception (15). He defines coercion as "using force" and deception as "misinforming the user" or not providing enough information so that the user can fully understand the context (Fogg 15). Persuasion is neither of these, in fact, it is voluntary. While a designer may create a product or interface that attempts to persuade a user to take a specific action, it is up to the user whether or not they allow themselves to be persuaded.

Discussion of persuasion often leads to the question of whether the practice is ethical. The answer is both yes and no – it depends on the perspective from which

it is viewed. For some, persuasion will always be perceived in a negative light (or at best, questionable) as something that encourages people to purchase something they do not need or do not truly want. Others perceive persuasion in a positive light as a way of helping people find products that benefit and improve their way of life. There will likely never be a concrete decision on whether persuasion is “good” or “bad;” however, it does exist in the field of user experience and it does affect the decisions people make regarding the products they purchase and the brands with which they choose to interact. Thus, persuasion is an important concept to consider for this project.

Fogg’s work on persuasive technology presents a case for persuasion’s benefits and carries this notion forward by defining his own area of research: captology. Captology is the research and application of persuasive computing (Fogg 16). Fogg’s work focuses specifically on human-computer interaction (HCI), but the key concepts of his thinking can be applied to other areas of experience and interaction. In response to the ethical dilemma surrounding the nature of persuasion, Fogg’s focus is on the designed intent of a technology, not what may come about by accident or by using the technology in an unintended way (16). In other words, a technology may be designed with the intention of providing a benefit to the user; however if someone then takes that technology and subverts it and uses it for unintended purposes and a type of negative persuasion results, it is not because the technology is bad or “evil,” it is because it was misused or applied incorrectly or inappropriately.

This notion of a technology or product being unethically persuasive ties into Chris Nodder's book, *Evil by Design*. Here, Nodder addresses a common question: is it ethical to allow technology to influence people, and by doing so, are people giving up control of their own actions? Nodder provides a number of examples of how technology has been employed to deceive users and to capitalize on their weaknesses, including websites with fine print or missing information. Essentially, "evil" design is anything that convinces users to take an action that benefits the designer more than the user (Nodder xv). The purpose of Nodder's book is not to encourage unethical design and the misuse of persuasion, but instead to make users aware that such practices and tactics exist in order to avoid them and become a more aware and savvy user of technology.

While on the topic of persuasion, it is critical to mention Louis Althusser and the mechanism of "interpellation." Interpellation is a way of describing how people are "hailed" or assimilated into societal groups and plays a major role in the constructivist approach. Althusser's concept of interpellation is a social identification process that addresses the notion and power of belonging and also, the concept of identity, both of the individual and also of the group. Althusser and his work on interpellation will be addressed in detail in the section on identity and the act of identification below; however, it is hopefully obvious that this process of "hailing" an individual into a group or lifestyle is in line with this project's concern with how and why individuals associate with brand communities. Interpellation is certainly informed by the act of persuasion.

Beyond the Screen

While there is great focus on the usability and user experience of websites and other technological interfaces, it is necessary to express that this research extends beyond that view to include physical products and experiences. Because of this broad focus on the entire experience, it is important to address the work of multiple scholars, including those who do not fall under the usual description of usability practitioners. The scholars and work detailed below draw from a variety of fields, namely consumer behavior, marketing, and engineering.

In their book, *The Experience Economy*, B.J. Pine and James Gilmore address this expanded view of the user experience. Pine and Gilmore's work contends that the economy has shifted from one that focuses mainly on the production of commodities, to one that focuses mainly on goods (products), to one that focuses on services, and now, to one that focuses on experience (3). This is not to say that commodities, goods, and services are irrelevant – they certainly are not – however, Pine and Gilmore are suggesting that customers are looking for more fulfillment and value and that value is often intangible. While the first three economies are still an important part of the overall economy, the experience economy is the one that is now gaining attention. Experience is what many producers of goods and services find can differentiate their product from others (Pine and Gilmore 8).

“Staging” is a concept that Pine and Gilmore use to explain the experience economy and they spend much of their book relating the creation of an experience to the production of a stage show (66). Aside from providing an interesting

metaphor for looking at the many elements of designing an experience, Pine and Gilmore also suggest four “realms” of experience: entertainment, education, escapist, and esthetic (47), which are shown in the figure below. They assign these realms to four quadrants that describe the role of the person having the experience. One axis runs from “passive” to “active” and the other from “absorb” to “immerse.”

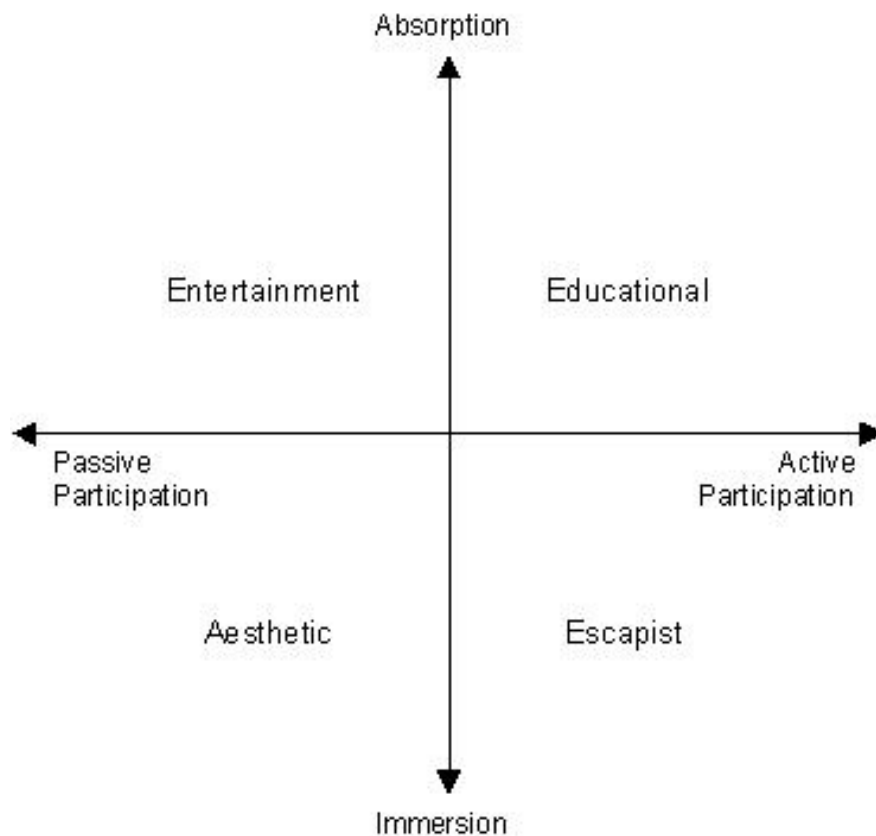


Figure 2.3: Pine and Gilmore’s experience quadrants

According to Pine and Gilmore, in an entertaining experience, the “experiencer” absorbs information and is passive (47). In other words, they do nothing and do not influence the experience. An example is watching TV. In an educational experience, one absorbs information and is active, which equates to

learning by doing or by engaging in discussion (47). In an escapist experience, one is immersed and active – for example, while playing a video game, one might feel immersed in the experience in which they are actively participating (50). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow" is often associated with the escapist realm. "Flow" is "the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered" (Csikszentmihalyi 6). It is a state where "self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted" (Csikszentmihalyi 71). Flow is often associated with the "optimal experience" and is considered gratifying and enjoyable regardless of whether or not the person experiencing it benefits. They simply enjoy being immersed and active in the experience. Finally, in an esthetic experience, one is immersed and passive (53). An example of which is standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon – you are immersed in the experience, but take no action to change anything. In an esthetic experience, the point is to just "be." Pine and Gilmore suggest that while each type of experience alone holds value, for a more rich and engaging experience, two or more of the realms should be employed (56). While it is perhaps possible to provide each type of Pine and Gilmore's experiences via a computer interface, by reading their work, it is evident that they are referring to experiences beyond the digital realm. Their work is applicable to this project because the participants interviewed for this research will be asked about the entirety of their experience with a particular brand community. There will be discussion of websites and perhaps mobile applications, but participants will also address their physical and emotional experiences with the brand community.

A second pair of scholars whose work influences this project is Patrick Newbery and Kevin Farnham. Their book, *Experience Design*, provides an overview of how business and design might be integrated to complement the entire customer (or user) journey by engaging the customer and providing value. The words “might be” are used here because Newbery and Farnham are open with the fact that what they propose is only a suggestion and a way they feel would work. They mention that it is by no means the absolute way to design an engaging and successful experience, but that they do hope that people will implement their suggested framework or pieces of it in order to develop their own framework and ways of approaching the intersection of business, brand, design, product, and experience (Newbery and Farnham 10). What Newbery and Farnham intend is to start and continue a conversation about experience design.

Throughout their book, Newbery and Farnham focus on the creation of value, of which, they define three types: tangible, intangible, and aspirational (3). Tangible value relates to the value derived from physically using the product. Intangible value relates to the emotion one might feel from using a product, and aspirational value, while also intangible, focuses on status, desire, and who or what a person wants to be. Aspirational value is often associated with luxury products (Newbery and Farnham 3). What Newbery and Farnham aim to establish is that products and services provide value and that value is what helps shape and influence the notion of a brand and the experience customers have with the brand. In developing a brand that encompasses not just products and services, but the customer’s experience

with those products and services, Newbery and Farnham state that there are two important components that must be considered: the brand concept and the brand attributes. The brand concept is the essence of the brand and the values it represents, much like an identity (Newbery and Farnham 89). The brand attributes are the qualities of the brand, many of which customers experience through use of the brand's products and promotional materials (Newbery and Farnham 90). When designing a product or service for a brand and considering the experience customers will have with it, Newbery and Farnham suggest asking the basic questions of "why" and "how" (90). Why this product? Why this feature? How does this feature, product, or service fit within the brand and its established values? How does this provide value for the customer? Also, what is missing? Is there a particular product feature that would encourage someone to make a first purchase? Is there an element of the product or brand that will encourage customers to continue buying the product and ascribing to the brand? In order to find answers, Newbery and Farnham suggest drawing up a customer journey map and answering these questions in each phase, beginning with awareness (how will the customer become aware of the product or brand?) and moving through the purchase phase to first use, ongoing use, and even discontinued use (why might a customer stop using the product or stop subscribing to the brand?) (134). The questions raised by Newbery and Farnham provided a starting point from which the interview questions for this project were derived. In an effort to identify the lifestyle, culture, values, and social

norms of an individual and to imagine the role they would play when interacting with a product, these questions must be asked.

Another scholar who comes to mind when considering a user's experience with physical products and interfaces is Donald Norman. Cognitive scientist and engineer by training, Norman's work is concerned with user-centered design and how people interact with the world around them. In his book, *Emotional Design*, he tells the story of three teapots as an example of how experience with a product affects the user (3). Norman writes about the teapots and the value he derives from them. One is unusable – the handle is on the same side as the spout. One is aesthetically charming – short, rounded, and transparent (so you can watch the tea as it brews). The third is highly functional and very specific about how the tea is brewed – the pot tilts to different angles so the hot water contacts the tea leaves during brewing, and when tilted again, the tea flows away from the leaves in order to stop the brewing and prevent steeping the leaves for too long. While the practicality of a product is important, the value instilled in products through emotion is often just as important – Norman argues that it may be even more important. While only two of the teapots are functional, Norman views them all as beautiful pieces of art. He writes of how each teapot relates to one of three main aspects of design: visceral design is concerned with appearances, so the charming, transparent teapot ascribes to this category. Behavioral design is concerned with the pleasure and effectiveness of use – the tilting teapot fulfills this role. Finally, reflective design relates to rationalizing a product and what it says about the values

of the person who obtains it (Norman “Emotional Design” 5). Reflective design also asks if one can tell a story about the product. So while Norman’s teapots are not all usable, their design can still be experienced.

Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches

As discussed earlier, there seems to have been a shift or evolution in the way products and interfaces are engineered. The element of usability is strongly at the core of all good design, but there is much discussion and literature exploring the numerous elements of user experience design. One discussion that is of importance to this project revolves around the “accommodationist” and “constructivist” approaches to user experience. These two concepts were introduced by Tharon Howard (“Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches”) only a few years ago and they provide a way of looking at usability and user experience in a new light. The table below provides a high-level overview of the main characteristic of each approach.

Accommodationist Approach	Constructivist Approach
Accommodates the interface or product to the user.	Constructs recognizable social roles that users play when interacting with the interface or product.

Table 2.2: The accommodationist and constructivist approaches

The accommodationist approach to user experience is most inline with the traditional forms of usability testing. Its goal is to accommodate the technology or interface to the user’s needs. Research methods that fall under the

accommodationist approach include those that are designed to identify and fix the “low hanging fruit” in order to ensure a usable interface. One widely used research method is think-aloud protocol, during which, recruited participants are provided with a product, website, document, or interface that is being tested. Depending on the specific type of think-aloud protocol being used, the participant might be asked to use the product to complete a task or answer a question. As the participant performs the task or searches for the answer to the question, they are instructed to speak their thoughts out loud. If the participant comes to a point where they feel they cannot complete the task, answer the question, or are unsure what to do next, they verbally communicate it and are typically given some time to think through the situation. The information that results from these kinds of sessions are very helpful for identifying weaknesses, problems, or gaps in the product being tested. The participants’ comments aid the usability professional, designer, or engineer in making the necessary changes to the product to improve its usability. This accommodationist research method is helpful when evaluating the design and content of written documents, instructions, and websites.

While this is a very necessary and needed approach that is applied in numerous businesses and research settings, Howard chose to pursue another kind of approach that was in-line with the recent shift to user experience design – an approach that would play a role at the beginning or during product design instead of towards the end. Traditional usability testing is excellent at providing direction to accommodate a technology or interface to the user, but wouldn’t it be useful to learn

about the intended user and then design the interface with specific social roles in mind that users could “play” in order to better use the technology? This is the idea behind the constructivist approach. Howard writes about his realization that Clemson’s Usability Testing Facility (UTF) began to get different requests from its clients – although they were still interested in traditional forms of usability testing like think-aloud protocols, many were requesting more up-front and user-centered approaches such as needs assessments and persona development (Howard “Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches” 168). These research methods provided the UTF clients with information on their users’ needs so that they could make decisions *before* spending the time, effort, and money necessary for developing prototypes. These methods provided the UTF clients with insight regarding product features and whether or not they should be included in the design based on users’ actual needs. This shift in thinking required the UTF to consider the social, aesthetic, and cultural characteristics of their clients’ users. Information about those characteristics led to insight as to the design cues the audience would be responsive to and thus, guide them into a specific social role that would give them predictive power over the interface or product (Howard “Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches” 168). This is the social process of “interpellation,” a term coined by Louis Althusser to describe how individuals are “hailed” or brought into societal groups. Based on his experience in the UTF, Howard aligned the notion of interpellation with the constructivist approach to user

experience in which users are considered first, their roles are constructed into the interface, and then the product itself is designed.

In regards to previous research on the constructivist approach, it appears there are only two scholars who have written about developing the approach: Tharon Howard and Alicia Hatter. Howard has published and presented on the topic, while Hatter addressed it in her doctoral dissertation. The dissertation discusses the constructivist approach to usability, as well as the notions of interpellation and habitus, both of which are also discussed in this project. Hatter's work specifically focused on the process of "hailing" or interpellating an individual into a habitus. She defined a six-step process that begins with the initial hailing and then explains how an individual behaves while moving towards interpellation into a specific habitus (Hatter 45). While Hatter's work runs parallel to the research contained within this project, she focused on the process of interpellation, whereas this research focuses on applying an adapted method in order to broaden the repertoire of methods appropriate for constructivist design. Howard and Hatter's work have certainly served as inspiration for this project and contributing to the existing conversation is surely a desired goal.

Accommodationist Design Methods

With the differences between the accommodationist and constructivist approaches defined, this next section addresses a number of research methods that are currently used in the field of usability and user experience. The research methods discussed below (with the exception of think-aloud protocol and needs

assessment) were culled from Jeffrey Rubin and Dana Chisnell's *Handbook of Usability Testing* and lend themselves to the accommodationist approach in that they focus on accommodating the technology, product, or interface to the user. With roots in user-centered design, it is easy to understand why the majority of these research methods cater to the needs of the user. One topic listed in Rubin and Chisnell's book that will not be discussed in detail here is that of participatory design – a strategy that involves users in the interface design process (17). Although this approach to interface design is important to the field of usability, it does not result in the collection of data and thus, cannot be considered a research method. Instead, participatory design is considered a strategy and for that reason, it will not be discussed as a research method aligned with the goals of the accommodationist approach. Each of the research methods described below provides a wealth of useful insight regarding interface design and provides much quality and value to the toolbox of research methods.

Focus Group Research

Focus group research is often done early in the design process, but may continue throughout the entire process. It involves recruiting a group of representative users and simultaneously involving them in a discussion and evaluation of a product. The focus group might provide feedback on sketches, storyboards, or prototypes of the product being designed. The purpose is to gather the thoughts and opinions of the group and use that information to refine the product design.

Think-Aloud Protocol

Whereas focus group research gathers data from multiple representative users at once, think-aloud protocols gather data from one specific user at a time. Think-aloud protocol is often used to uncover insights into how users interact with a product or interface. After being presented with the product, users are given a task or set of tasks to perform. The user is instructed to speak out loud as they complete the tasks. For example, if a user was instructed to navigate to a specific page on a website, but they did not know where to click, they would verbalize that they were unsure of how to locate the desired information and then talk through their thought process as they evaluated how to complete the task. By performing a think-aloud protocol, researchers are able to identify patterns of action that users take when interacting with the product. With this knowledge, the product can be re-designed to better suit the needs and mental models of typical users.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is used to identify and measure the gap between how a product or interface meets users' current needs and the users' desired needs. This method of assessment is conducted in a variety of situations. It may be used when a product or interface has been developed and deployed, but users are having difficulty obtaining what they need from the product. In this case, needs assessment would be used to identify what users actually need from the site and how the site or its content might be reconfigured to meet those users needs. The method may also be used if a new version of an existing interface is being developed and the new

audience's needs are different. For example, if a company known for developing online math education modules begins developing modules for writing, they would conduct a needs assessment and task analysis with users from their new target demographic who help reveal how the interface needs to be adapted in order for new users to successfully use the modules. JoAnn Hackos and Janice Redish detail the application of this form of assessment in their book *User and Task Analysis for Interface Design*. Task analysis focuses on learning how users typically use an interface. It asks questions such as: What tasks do users typically perform? How do they perform them? What do they need to continue performing the task when using the interface in question? Needs assessments are often conducted using interviews. The data collected from the interviews allows designers to adapt the product or interface in question to the specific needs of the target audience.

Card Sorting

Card sorting is used to accommodate the navigation of an interface to the needs of users. When creating a website, designers may know what content to include, but are unsure of the order. In this case, it is useful to turn to users representative of the target audience and ask them how they would categorize the content. To do this, designers or those conducting the research write the main content categories and topics on paper cards and then ask study participants to arrange the cards in a hierarchy that is logical to their way of thinking. Card sorting can also be used to determine the names of categories of information. Designers may have the website content, but need to identify how the content relates and fits

together and what that category might be called by users. While card sorting is traditionally done using paper, online software has been developed allowing for the method to be carried out on a computer or mobile device. This method is extremely useful in helping designers arrange a logical content hierarchy for users.

Constructivist Design Methods

While the research methods mentioned above are beneficial for certain kinds of user research, they are not useful for the constructivist approach to design. Each method mentioned above focuses on gathering data on users' needs and then adapting and accommodating the technology, interface, or product to those needs. These research methods are widely used and are extremely successful in aiding designers in creating a desirable user experience.

As the two approaches continue to be researched and developed, it is critical to establish guidelines for what constitutes a constructivist design or research method. As detailed above and listed in Table 2.3 below, the accommodationist approach already has a wealth of methods that can be applied for its research, but constructivist methods are still largely undefined.

Accommodationist Research Methods	Constructivist Research Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Group Research • Think Aloud Protocol • Needs Assessment • Card Sorting • AB Testing • Paper Prototyping • Walk Throughs • Surveys and Diary Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual Inquiry and Design • Persona Development • Journey Mapping

Table 2.3: Accommodationist and constructivist methods

In an effort to begin answering the question: “What are the criteria that must be in place for something to be constructivist design?” a list of guidelines (Figure 2.4) have been culled from Tharon Howard’s chapter, “Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches to Academic-Industry Partnerships in a Usability and User-Experience Facility.”

Constructivist Design Guidelines

- Persuade a user to engage in a specific types of behavior. Adapts the user to the technology, not the technology to the user.
- Construct social roles users can play to take advantage of certain technologies.
- Use social protocols, aesthetic choices, and cultural cues to interpellate users into a subject position that will enable them to predict and use the designer’s conceptual model (interface).
- Provide the user with “predictive power” over the interface - “a user could predict, with a high degree of accuracy and comfort, that interacting with an object in the interface would produce a specific result” (Howard, “Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches,” pg. 165)
- Give the designer explanatory power of how to design an interface.
- Provide actionable results that help designers understand the habitus and to make informed design decisions.

Figure 2.4: Suggested constructivist design guidelines

The guidelines in Figure 2.4 above should be taken into consideration when evaluating a research methodology to determine if it is aimed towards the desired goals and is appropriate for use as a constructivist method. These guidelines highlight the importance of the constructivist approach by defining its differences

from more traditional, accommodationist research methods. In order for a research method to be considered appropriate for constructivist design, it does not have to achieve compliance on each guideline, but it should accomplish the majority. This project uses the above guidelines to analyze existential phenomenology and the method of phenomenological interviewing in order to gain insight as to whether or not it is an appropriate research method for constructivist design.

As mentioned, these are the guidelines taken into consideration when evaluating the application of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews to the field of user experience. If the application of the method coincides with the majority of the guidelines listed above, then phenomenological interviewing can be considered an appropriate research method aimed at achieving constructivist design goals.

Focusing on the constructivist approach is appropriate for the subject of this project: brand communities. When working to build an engaging community focused on a specific brand, it is important to take into consideration the brand's social, aesthetic, and cultural elements. The constructivist approach and the use of existential phenomenology and the phenomenological style of interviewing should do just that – provide a well-defined image of the brand community's members and the kind of interfaces they will be most likely to engage with in order to feel a sense of belonging and community. If these assumptions hold true, one claim of this project might be that if user experience professionals or designers are looking to create an interface that will interpellate and engage their brand community

members, they can gather the necessary data through the application of existential phenomenology and constructivist design.

The next few sections address some of the areas of research and methods currently used within the field of user experience that begin to address the constructivist approach. While each research method described below is important to the field and provides valuable contributions to user experience research, they are incomplete as a stand-alone constructivist methodology. The following discussion will make apparent why each method is useful for constructivist design and will also point out each method's strengths and shortcomings.

Contextual Design

Contextual design is considered to be a user experience strategy; however, the research method was employed by usability experts long before the term "user experience" surfaced. According to Hugh Beyer and Karen Holtzblatt, contextual design "makes data gathered from customers the base criteria for deciding what the system should do and how it should be structured" (3). With this knowledge, designers can create roles that users will recognize and use when interacting with the interface. Contextual inquiry is the first step in the larger contextual design process (Beyer and Holtzblatt 22). It is a field interviewing method that involves identifying users and interviewing them in their workplace while they work in an effort to gain an understanding of their needs and the systems in which they work. By gaining knowledge of the typical roles and ways users interact with a specific interface, designers can work towards building an improved interface that speaks to

and interpellates users. An important aspect of contextual inquiry is that because it is conducted in the user's place of work – literally in the context within which they interact with the interface – it has the ability to reveal additional information regarding why and how the user interacts. Seeing the user-interface interaction in context provides information that cannot always be gathered within a research lab. Information learned from these in-depth interviews can then be translated into a design that suits the actions a user would likely take when interacting with the interface, and thus, make the user experience something that is comfortable, familiar, and enjoyable to use. This deep knowledge of the user is important so that designers can create roles that align with the user's habitus.

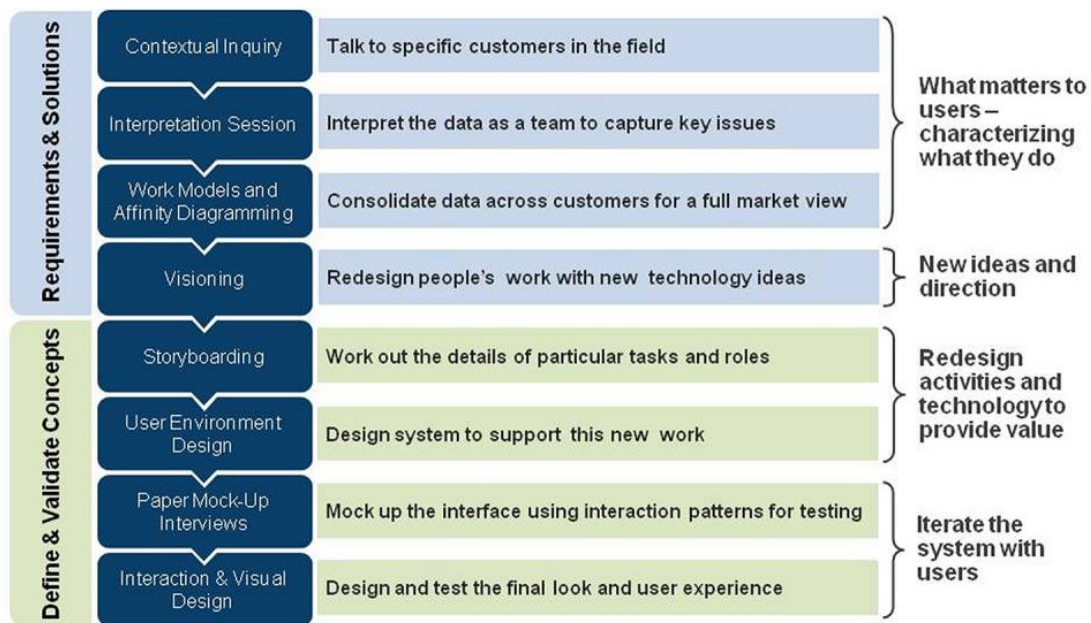


Figure 2.5: Contextual design process. Source: www.interaction-design.org

Persona Development




Emily	Johann	Paul
 <p>Age: 21 College student, Emory Atlanta, GA Single Proficiency: <i>Third year French in college; not fluent</i></p>	 <p>Age: 41 Corporate Sales for Siemens Salzburg, Austria Married, with a son and daughter Proficiency: native German; decent Italian; nearly fluent in French; fluent in English</p>	 <p>Age: 26 IT Professional Newark, NJ Single Lives in apartment Proficiency: <i>Native English; can get along in Spanish</i></p>
<p>Quote: <i>"I love French, but it is a struggle at times. I wish my reading comprehension and vocabulary were better. It would be cool to study abroad in France."</i></p>	<p>Quote: <i>"Traveling is my life. I go all over Europe on business."</i></p>	<p>Quote: <i>"I love dabbling in different languages, and I love to see new places and cultures."</i></p>
<p>Key Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes French; interested in French culture, movies • Likes trying to read French literature • Not naturally strong in language • Has visited Paris; would like to do study abroad program in France 	<p>Key Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travels all over Europe selling Siemens equipment to businesses. • Has built up a strong ability to acquire and learn language. • Likes to polish his fluency in the languages he uses for business (Italian, French, English) 	<p>Key Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loves to travel • Enjoys language and culture • Watches foreign films • Not a master of any second language • Likes to attempt conversation in various languages • Likes to travel with people or meet up with people when traveling • Purchases Rosetta Stone programs for fun • Enjoys language and culture • Watches foreign films

Figure 2.6: Examples of personas. Source: www.smashingmagazine.com

Perhaps the method that comes closest to being constructivist in nature is that of persona development. This user-centered method was popularized by Alan Cooper in his 1999 book, *The Inmates Are Running the Asylum*. Personas can be described as “archetypes” of actual users and are frequently used in the product design process where they are applied in order to provide an idea of how a specific type of user would react, use, or interact with a product. Personas are also known as “storytelling devices” (Goodwin 229). They have gained popularity in many businesses because their “greatest value is in providing a shared basis for communication” (Pruitt and Grudin 1). When a product or interface is being

developed, it is created by a team of individuals who belong to a variety of departments and specializations, including design, marketing, writing and copyediting, and usability testing to name a few. If personas are being used, each team member can use the persona and apply it to their specific part of the product's development. From this perspective, personas should provide an idea of the types of users who will be interacting with the product and shed light on how those users might behave.

While personas have gained popularity since their introduction, the method is not without its challenges. Numerous scholars have voiced their critiques of the method, including Christopher Chapman and Russell Milham in their article, "The Personas' New Clothes: Methodological and Practical Arguments against a Popular Method." Chapman and Milham's first critique of personas is that the methods for developing personas have "differed significantly across advocates" (1). In other words, the method for creating and defining personas is not the same in every instance. For example, Cooper writes that personas are developed from limited information available to the design team, whereas John Pruitt and Jonathan Grudin argue that they are formed from a much larger base of data collected by research on the design team (Pruitt and Grudin 5). Chapman and Milham also challenge the method by saying that it is impossible to determine if personas are accurate (2). Often, it is unknown how many users a particular persona describes and whether or not those users are the most important users to the product design process. Depending on the product, a persona might represent "thousands or millions of

potential users who have similar characteristics and goals” (Goodwin 232). Coming up with one persona that addresses the unique quirks and nuances of an audience that large is improbable. In their research, Chapman and Milham observed that members of a design team do not hesitate to dismiss or ignore personas that they find inconvenient or problematic to the product design process (3). They attribute this to the fact that personas are not always the products of solid empirical research, which means they cannot be easily validated.

The dismissal or refusal to adopt personas has also been addressed in the work of Erin Friess, specifically in her “Best of CHI” research study from 2012. Her work supports the notion that personas are not easily adopted by and used by all members of the design team. In her ethnographic study of a major U.S. design firm, Friess found that personas were only included in “3% of the conversational turns within these decision-making meetings” where members of the design team were discussing the product’s final architecture (1216). Further, she found that the designers who created the personas were the people most likely to use them in design discussions accounting for 85.3% of all the times that personas were mentioned. Other members of the design team mentioned the personas occasionally, but the bottom line was that personas were not used as they were intended. These are but a few of the critiques issued against the method of applying personas to product design. While they do make an effort to understand the user and the social roles they play when interacting with product and interfaces, the

practice of building personas is not well-defined and so it is difficult to make large design decisions based on such a method.

Journey Mapping

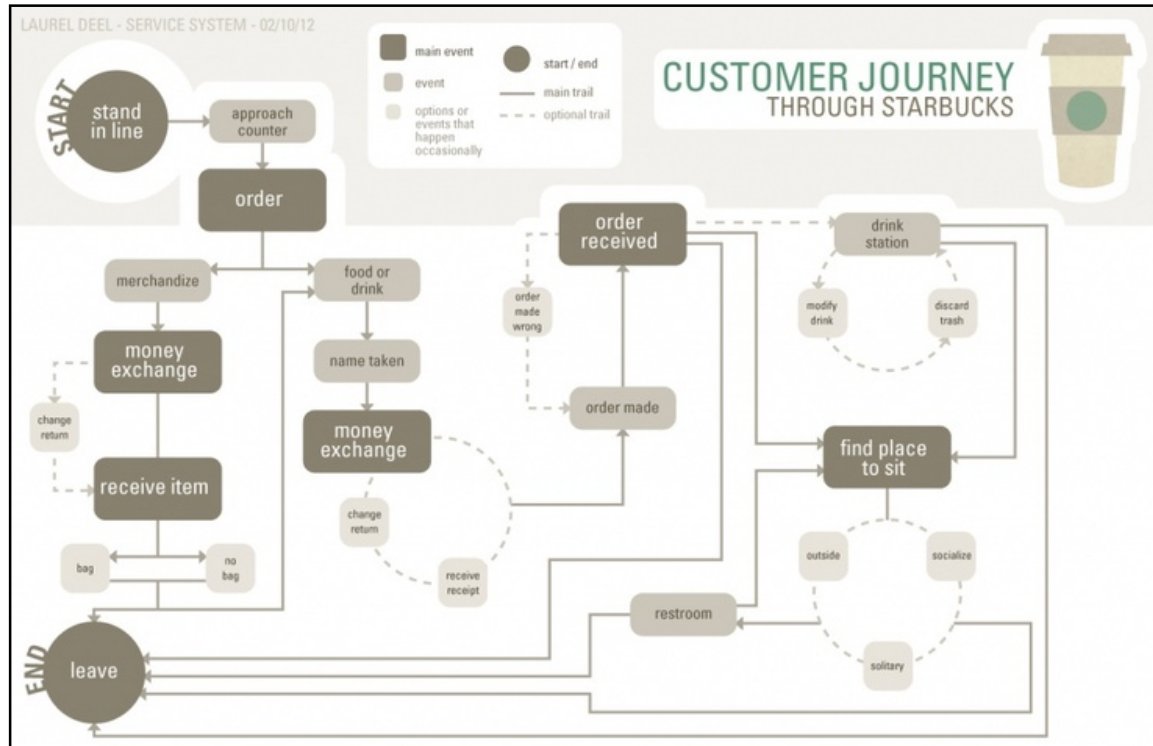


Figure 2.7: Starbucks customer journey map. Source: www.laureldeel.wordpress.com

Journey maps focus on identifying the touchpoints at which users will interact with a specific interface or product (Stickdorn and Schneider 158). By locating these moments of interaction, designers can better understand how a user will act and in what sequence. Identifying each touchpoint allows for the actual plotting of the user’s experience from the moment they first interact with the interface to the last. Journey maps, or “user story maps,” as they are sometimes called, also help a designer locate holes in the user’s interaction with the interface

(Patton 11). By gaining knowledge of users' movements through an interface, designers can plan and construct interactions that, in a sense, "call out" to the user and interpellate them into a specific role in their interactions, whether those interactions be with a website, a physical product, or an experience such as the experience of belonging to a brand community.

To explore user experience through the creation of a journey map, research must be done to better understand the audience to be interpellated. Often, data collection for this method involves interviewing actual users or representative users. The interviews help reveal the emotions and relationships users associate with the interface as well and the sequence of interactions with the interface. Interviews also result in stories told by users about their interactions and experiences. These stories are important data to collect since they explain from the user's personal perspective how they interact with the interface and why they "journey" through using the interface in a specific way. Such interviews often reveal the circumstances, motivations, and experiences that cause a user to act (Stickdorn and Schneider 158). Armed with this knowledge, designers can create interfaces that speak to the preferences of users and thus, interpellate the users. In the case of Web design, this may mean that users spend additional time on a site or page because it speaks to them personally and to the style of relationship or role they play when interacting with the website and its content.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL ROLES AND CAPITAL: DISCUSSING HABITUS AND INTERPELLATION

Having discussed the fields of usability and user experience, the concepts of accommodationist and constructivist approaches, and research methods that are attributed to each approach, it is now necessary to discuss two main concepts that will become the foundation of the research design applied for this project. The terms “habitus” and “interpellation” have already been mentioned in previous chapters, and it is in this chapter that the two are thoroughly discussed. This chapter will also demonstrate how these two terms connect to the literature on brand communities and identity – both of which serve as focused areas of interest for this project. The mind map below in Figure 3.1 attempts to show visually what I will discuss throughout the chapter.

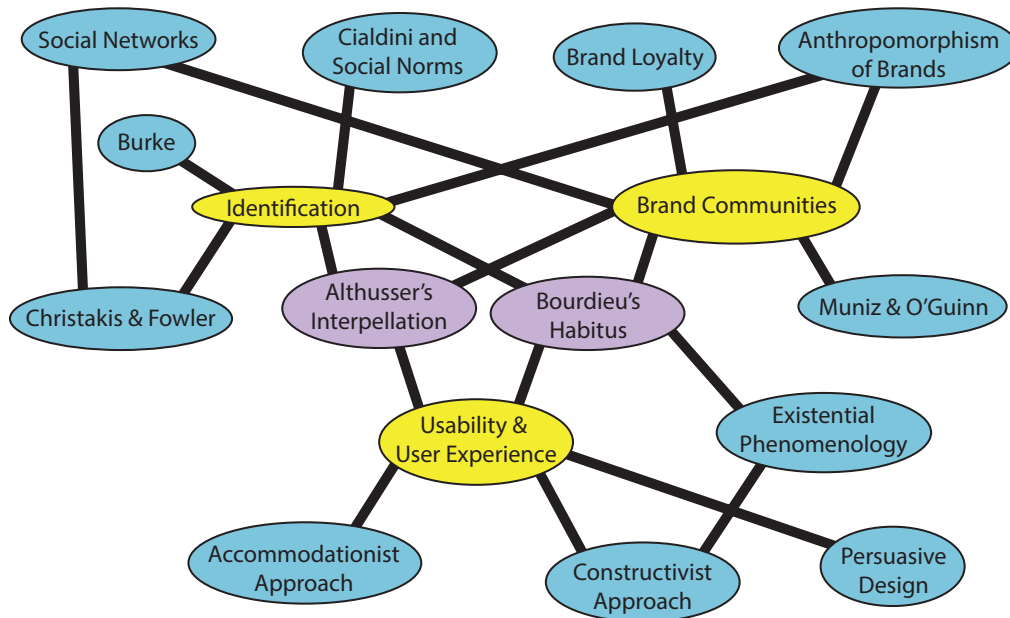


Figure 3.1: Connections between main areas of research

For example, when reviewing literature on brand communities, Albert Muniz and Thomas O’Guinn’s research is prominently featured and while it may not be immediately detectable, their work ties in to the concepts of habitus and interpellation. The discussion throughout this chapter will define and explain such connections and make apparent why it is important to review and consider the work of each scholar mentioned below. First, it is necessary to begin with two major concepts that drive the research associated with this project.

Pierre Bourdieu and “Habitus”

The term “habitus” has been mentioned in previous chapters, and finally, it will be addressed here. Habitus most closely aligns with the area of identification. Identity is closely linked to culture and so it is influenced by social conditions, values, and preferences. Often, identity is derived from accepted paradigms, where one falls within the class hierarchy of their culture and as Pierre Bourdieu argues, from an individual’s “taste.” In his book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu seeks to show that a person’s identity is centered on their judgement of taste, which is the “acquired, generally unconscious disposition to classify, to differentiate, and to label people in terms of their social standing” (Boghian 373). Bourdieu’s work, which has been described as employing a synthesis of social movement research approaches, although not directly (Husu 264), centers on the connections between artistic taste, whether it be music or art, and a person’s social position, which is situated in the “socio-cultural environment” (Kaptan 266) or what he defines as the space of “habitus.”

The concept of habitus is complex: it is a space within which a lifestyle exists, but it is also a structure and a relationship. It refers to the values, dispositions, and expectations of a particular social group that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. Habitus is also described as a “structure of the mind” characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and taste. It has also been described as a concept that “historicizes the new by drawing attention to the practices that connect it to the present” (Papacharissi, Streeter, and Gillespie 599), which illustrates that the concept is essentially, timeless and will always already be applicable. Bourdieu’s description of habitus is as follows:

Habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes.

(170)

A person may belong to one social class or another, but it is their taste, what they identify with, that situates them within a habitus. While it is generally accepted that Bourdieu’s notion of habitus remains relevant and strongly influential, criticisms have arisen, which interestingly enough, seem to only want to locate the weaknesses of habitus in order to strengthen the concept. For example, in his article, “The Subjectivity of Habitus,” Bret Chandler writes of his support of the concept, but points out that it could be strengthened by a more robust focus on social-psychology

and that more attention should be directed towards the individual's role in the formation of habitus as it has mainly focused on that of the collective (473-474).

Returning to the description of habitus, Bourdieu equates an individual's social status and movement with the gathering of various types of "capital." There are many kinds of capital including social, cultural, economic, educational, symbolic, and linguistic. These forms of capital are briefly described in Figure 3.2 below.

Social	Can be material as well as symbolic. Is derived from relationships between members of a specific group. Social capital is never completely independent of cultural and economic capital because it is influenced by both.
Cultural	Non-financial assets that promote social mobility. Is acquired over time and is most often inherited from others - especially family members.
Economic	Financial assets that promote social mobility. According to Bourdieu, it is the "root of all other types of capital."
Educational	A sub-set of cultural capital. Specifically focuses on social assets that are related to education.
Symbolic	Relates to reputation and how something or someone is perceived. It supports the kind of "image" that is projected to others.
Linguistic	May be derived from cultural or social capital and is cultivated by membership in a specific group.

Figure 3.2: Forms of capital

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu provides an example of how certain forms of capital shape a person's habitus – specifically; he examines a person's "food space," an interpretation of which is illustrated below in Figure 3.3.

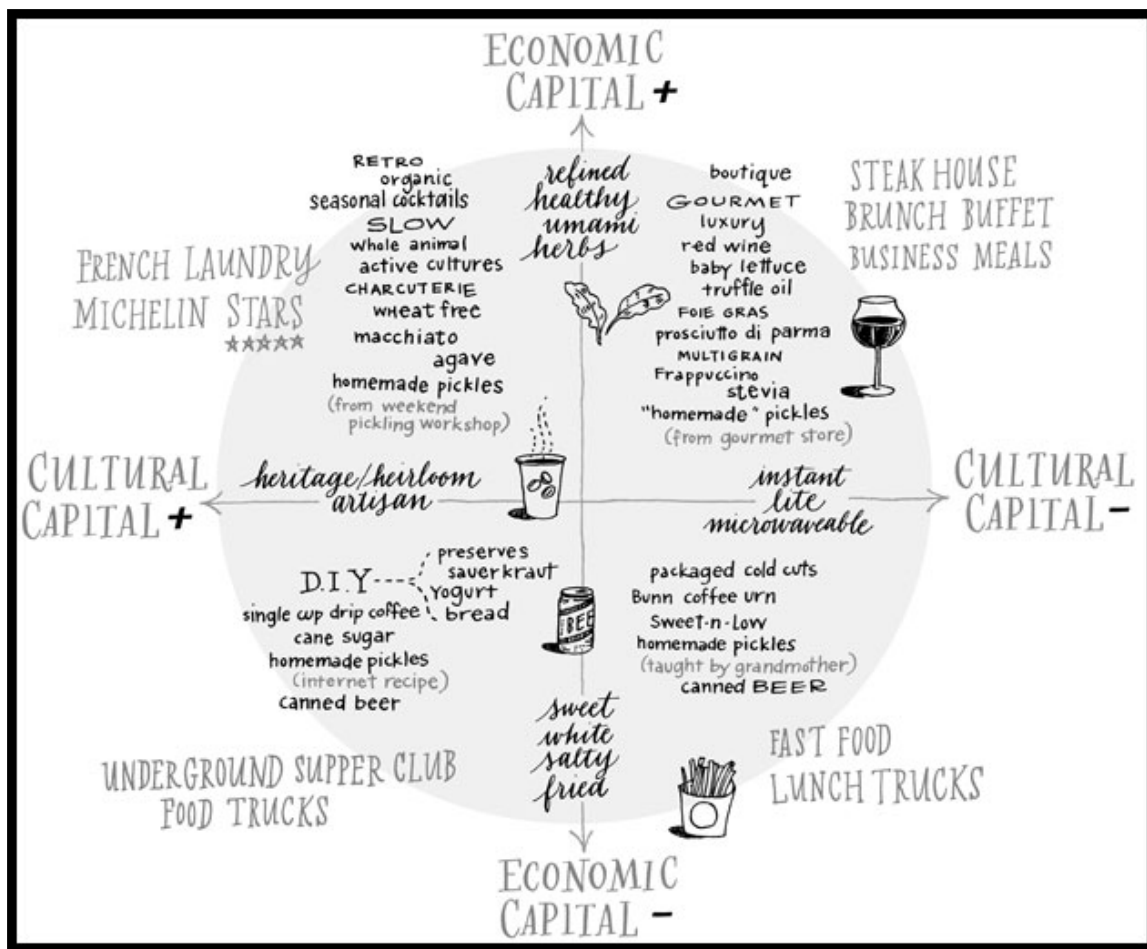


Figure 3.3: Updated take on Bourdieu's food space for Gastronomica Magazine

This visual depiction of habitus suggests that people with low cultural and low economic capital frequently ingest foods that are fatty, salty, and often, low in price, whereas people with high cultural and high economic capital tend to frequently ingest foods that are lean, refined, and light. Additional visual representations of habitus might focus on other forms of capital and the equated lifestyle preferences. For example, using the same axes of economic and social capital shown above, imagine the “entertainment space.” In this visual, we might find that people low in both cultural and economic capital frequently watch reality

TV shows, where as people high in both cultural and economic capital frequently attend the opera or Broadway productions.

By thinking of habitus as a space within which groups of people associate and live their lives, it becomes easier to see why this project equates habitus with the concept of brand community. Just like habitus, a brand community requires certain levels of capital for inclusion. Because of these parallels, habitus is used as a way to make a more in depth examination of brand community and to ask questions such as “What constitutes these communities?” and “How and why are people interested in becoming part of them?” and “What makes a community desirable to join?” Bourdieu’s habitus certainly serves as a driving factor guiding this research.

Louis Althusser and “Interpellation”

Another identity-related construct that is necessary for this project is “interpellation,” a term coined by Louis Althusser. Interpellation is a way of “describing how people are ‘hailed’ or assimilated into societal groups” (Hatter and Howard 228). It is the turning and transforming of an individual into a subject to which the “hailing” is being addressed (Clarke 6). Althusser likens the process of interpellation to that of an individual being hailed or called upon by a police officer. When the officer shouts, “Hey, you there!” the individual will turn his attention to the officer and thus, becomes the subject of the officer’s hailing (Althusser 174). The individual (now subject) recognizes that the hail was addressed to him or her and is brought into an ideology.

In her dissertation on the subject, Alicia Hatter identifies the six steps of interpellation. They are briefly described below:

1. The individual's attention is caught.
2. The individual recognizes the social role they are being hailed into.
3. The individual identifies with the social role and the behavioral rules associated with it.
4. The individual desires to perform the necessary behaviors in order to live within the ideology into which they have been hailed.
5. The individual feels security that if they follow the rules of the social role they have been hailed into, specific actions will result in specific outcomes.
6. The individual behaves and works predictably within the ideology.

Althusser's concept of interpellation is a social identification process that addresses the notion and power of belonging and also, the concept of identity, both of the individual and also of the group. Although the idea of interpellation can prove troubling to some and often raises the question of ethics, this project does not interpret the concept as a forceful mechanism that requires someone to accept a specific identity or role. Instead, it is possible to receive a "hail" and choose not to identify with it. This perspective aligns interpellation with Fogg's definition of persuasion – there is the possibility that the person being persuaded or interpellated chooses not to complete the process.

Interpellation is not just an action of being brought into a societal group or community; it is also recognition of the behaviors, protocols, and rules of such a group. Kenneth Burke's perspective on identification also centers on the recognition of similarities between individuals, which leads them to identify with one another; however, Burke does not provide an explanation for *how* the identification process happens. Althusser's interpellation provides such a mechanism and that is why it is used as the dominant theory driving this project's view on identification. More on Burke's perspectives on identity and identification is provided below.

Returning to the action of interpellation, it can be thought of as completing the form – much like a handshake. If someone walks up to another person and extends their hand, the other person is likely to automatically extend their hand and grasp the other. Interpellation has much to do with identifying the social cues present in a situation, or in the case of this project, the social cues in line with the identity of a brand community. When an individual is interpellated, they are communicating that they understand the group's rules and desire to follow and fulfill them. Hatter and Howard provide a succinct summary of interpellation when they write that it is about “recognizing gaps and desiring to fill them in predictable, often logical, ways” (228). This description of interpellation helps show how it has become a popular concept in the fields of consumer behavior, specifically with a nod towards the notion of fandom.

In his article on interpellation within mediasport, Lawrence Wenner addresses fandom or “fanship identities” (86) as a way of providing a logical

explanation of sporting culture where the connections of identity and belonging are often strong and loyal. He points out that “sports fans, and consequently, their identities, are discriminating, centered on a sport, team, player or locale” (86) and it is this particular identity that encourages the perceived entity of the fanship community. In Wenner’s article, the habitus of the “ideal” sports fan is the individual’s desired identity and thus, said individual will do what is necessary to recognize and fill the gap between their current state and their desired state and with effort, work towards interpellation into the desired habitus. Interestingly, the notion of sports, social capital, and cultural capital are often appropriate areas to further discuss Bourdieu’s habitus. As evidenced in the case study of the Pine View Swim and Tennis Club, participation in particular sports (swim and tennis) and perceived social class position reinforce a sense of an exclusive, privileged habitus (DeLuca 340).

While it seems that the literature supports the agency being on the side of the individual and it being the individual who is aware of his or her current social state, as well as the desired habitus they strive to be interpellated into, there is also evidence and reason to question the concepts of interpellation and habitus from a contrasting viewpoint. Instead of an individual identifying a habitus into which they desire to meld, what are the factors, the elements, and the variables that can be manipulated or offered and that in turn, encourage an individual to interpellate into a pre-defined habitus? In essence, what factors draw an individual into a community or culture and encourage or even cause them to strongly internally connect with the

identification of that habitus? How do consumer culture, habitus and interpellation come together to persuade and encourage the formation of a brand community?

Perhaps one avenue into these questions concerns the accumulation of a variety of capital. As previously mentioned, there are a number of forms of capital exchanged and acquired, including social and cultural, the former of which is viewed as resources “embedded in social relations and social structure” (Vorhaus 187). By accumulating certain forms of capital, individuals work towards the formation of their own identity and how they fit in and relate to others. In this sense, Bourdieu’s habitus is capable of providing a connection between the accumulation of capital (whether social, cultural or otherwise) and how that capital influences an individual’s identity via attitudes and behaviors (Hale 503). An Australian study addressed this exact concept by examining the accumulation of capital within sports gyms (Stewart, Smith, and Moroney). Their quest was to identify which values or motives translated into the acquisition of bodily and psychological capital and thus, translated to the interpellation of an individual into the gym’s habitus.

Identity and the Act of Identification

Both of the terms discussed above – habitus and interpellation – stem from the literature on identity and the act of identification. Although those are the main two identity-related concepts that drive this project, there are other concepts from the literature that contribute to a more thorough conversation of what it means to identify with a particular community or habitus. Those concepts and theories are depicted in Figure 3.4 below and are discussed in this next section.

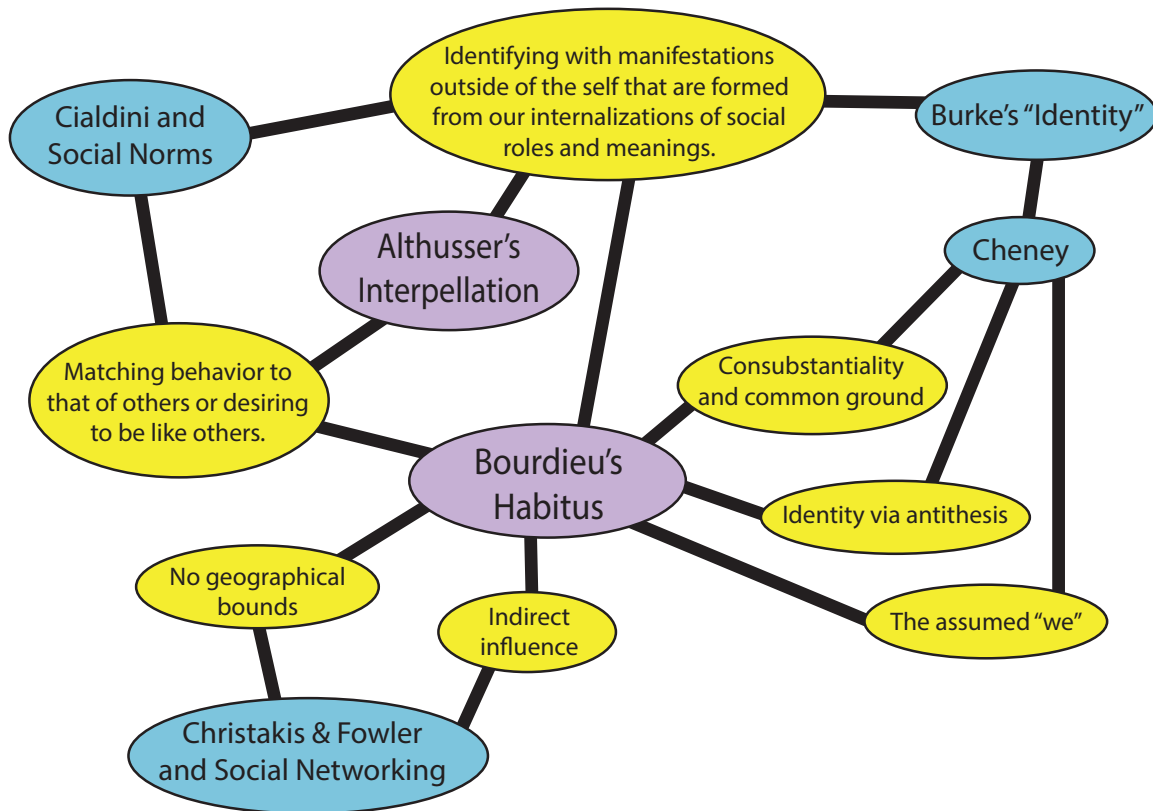


Figure 3.4: Identity literature connections

Identity refers to who people are as individuals, but also, to something that people can achieve as a group – as a community. The act of defining identity touches every aspect of human life. It involves an entire network of entities from family and friends to jobs to what someone eats, how they speak and what they wear. It also involves an invisible layer of internal associations: values, morals, preferences, likes and dislikes. This description of identity, although not complete, is the concept that influences and supports this project’s exploration into brand communities and user experience. It is the idea of identity and the act of identification that seems to be the string connecting these two fields. Before creating an effective and interpellative

user experience, the designer must have some understanding of their audience, including what appeals to and repulses that audience. Also, when considering brand communities, identity cannot be discussed without searching deeper into the term “community,” which involves social and cultural capital and a coming together of individuals – individuals who *identify* with one another and the values and attributes of the brand itself.

Considering Identity Through Social Norms

Aside from Bourdieu and Althusser, there are a number of other scholar’s whose work in identity influences this project, one of which is Robert Cialdini and his work regarding social norms. Humans are social creatures and are constantly influenced by the world around them and motivated to form meaningful social relationships with others (Cialdini and Goldstein 598). This is the basic notion behind social influence. In his research, Cialdini works to reveal just how powerful such influence can be on an individual, whether they are making a decision for action or aligning their values and beliefs with others in an act of identification towards community. More often than not, Cialdini points out that people do not recognize the subtle power of social influence and are unable to locate the true cause of their own behavior (158) and also find themselves acting in ways simply because others have done so before them (159). With this in mind, Cialdini and his colleagues have set out to test the subtle persuasive power of social norms in a variety of settings from energy conservation (Schultz et al.) to the desire of luxury brands (Mandel, Petrova, and Cialdini).

One of the most pressing questions Cialdini desires to better understand is why people feel obliged, even indebted, to change their behavior to mirror that of another person. It is a psychological exchange that has been witnessed over and over again in a variety of circumstances and it seems to have its roots in the formation of self-perception and the act of identifying with others. An example described by Noah Goldstein and Cialdini involves a professor approaching another professor's office to ask him to lunch. As the professor nears the office, he overhears the other speaking to a student who asks for immediate help with a previous exam. The approaching professor realizes his lunch plans have been foiled and on the way back to his office, he is confronted by one of his own students who was planning on stopping by later, but is there now and is seeking help understanding a lecture topic. Despite being very busy and hungry, the professor willingly agrees to meet with the student. Cialdini's point is that when a person witnesses another perform a task or engage in a specific action, they are motivated to perform a similar action – they have been influenced (Goldstein and Cialdini 402). This is a prime example of social norms and the desire of belonging. When a person realizes that another person or a group of people are participating in an action or making a popular decision, there is often a subconscious urge to follow suit, to identify with the actions of those others, and "join" them in doing what is the "norm."

Cialdini's work shows that this psychological influence can have both positive and negative effects. For example, when marketing campaigns aim to reduce destructive behaviors (binge drinking, smoking, drug abuse), although their

intentions are honorable and looking to bring awareness to a serious issue, what these messages are in fact doing is showing that people *are participating* in these activities and that it *is* a norm. This backfiring of intentions is referred to as the “boomerang effect” (Schultz et al. 430) and is thought to be motivated by a desired sense of belonging and identification with a certain group or culture. This desire for belonging can be aligned with one’s desire to participate in a particular habitus and although unintentional, the marketing effort to reduce destructive behaviors acts as an interpellative mechanism that provides a given social role for people to assume in order to achieve entry into a space that places value on forms of capital considered valuable only to that specific collective of like-minded individuals.

Kenneth Burke’s View on Identity

When discussing identity, it is also important to include the work of Kenneth Burke and his theories concerning the warring dualities of unity and division and how this ongoing restlessness contributes toward the investigation into persuasion and identification. In his book, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke draws attention to the dialectical pair of unity and division, also referenced as love and strife (Kastely 177). Here, Burke is arguing for a new understanding of rhetoric and how such rhetoric motivates and shapes who we are as people, how we understand ourselves and how we understand our worlds (Kastely 173). He points out that when a person identifies with another, those two people are both joined and separate. Each is simultaneously a distinct substance and also, consubstantial with the other (Burke 21). As noted by Bryan Crable’s analysis of Burke’s theory of

identification, Burke does not see identity as individual, but instead as a way of identifying oneself with other manifestations beyond the self (7). Crable writes that our “unique self is, at its very heart, not our own – it is formed from our internalization of social roles and meanings” (8). This harkens back to Cialdini’s discussion of social norms and also, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and various forms of capital. Identity is not just a state of being, but is also an internalization of external material and a way of finding a place to fit and exist within the world.

While there is a separation between two people that demarcates their individual identity, there is also a bringing together in their identification with one another and it is through this unity and division that Burke views identification as a “*means of achieving persuasion rather than the act of persuasion itself*” (Hatter and Howard 227). And while Burke’s view seems to focus mainly on the idea of identification as a response to division, others argue that there is much to be learned about identity and identification by a closer examination of division. Shane Borrowman and Marcia Kmetz address this in their article, “Divided We Stand: Beyond Burkean Identification,” in which they offer their view on the duality of division and unity. They point out that the duality of identification and division “rests comfortably among contradictions” (Borrowman and Kmetz 279), meaning that when people identify with one another or a community, although there is unification, there is also exclusion of those who do not identify with the values of the community or habitus. Essentially, one cannot exist without the other. Wherever

there is identification with someone, something, or a group, there is also division and exclusion.

George Cheney furthers Burke's discussion of identity in his article on the rhetoric of identification. Cheney explains that Burke's notion of identity is possible due to what he terms "consubstantiality" meaning an area of similarity or overlap between parties. This similarity can be either real or perceived and I argue that it is also a valuable element that plays a persuasive role in the act of interpellation and bringing someone into a community. Consubstantiality contends that two individuals share common interests. Cheney also describes three ways of identification as discussed by Burke: common ground, antithesis, and the assumed "we." Identification through common ground involves shared values and beliefs. Those who identify through common ground are likely to belong to the same habitus or at least place value on many of the same types of capital. For example, people who place high value on educational capital are likely to find they agree with one another on education-related topics.

Identification through antithesis refers to Burke's discussion of war where individuals unite with one another because they share a common enemy. This form of identification is often displayed in the world of professional sports. For example, in Major League Baseball, a Tampa Bay Rays fan is likely to cheer for the New York Yankees if the Yankees are playing the Boston Red Sox. Why would a Rays fan cheer for the Yankees? Because the Rays and Yankees are both considered rivals of the

Red Sox. So because the Rays fan cannot cheer for his or her own team, they become a Yankees fan for a day simply to unite against their shared rival.

Cheney relates the assumed “we” to what can happen within an organization when a group (or the organization itself) assumes that it and its employees value and believe in the same things. People who belong to the same habitus and place value on the same forms of capital are prone to employing the assumed “we” when speaking of those they identify with. Cheney’s interests lie in organizational identification and thus, he adds a fourth way of identifying: unifying symbols. According to Cheney, these are symbols that represent the identity of an organization, for instance, a logo or a recognizable gesture. Unifying symbols surely have their place within the notion of Bourdieu’s habitus and may aid in the persuasiveness of an interpellative hail. For example, say you are traveling overseas and you spot a person wearing a t-shirt with your alma mater’s logo. Although you may be thousands of miles from the physical location of the university, seeing the symbol clues you in to the notion that you have something in common with the person wearing the t-shirt. Cheney’s connection of Burke and organizational communication is interesting and ties in well with the conversation of brand community present in this project.

Cheney further explores the notion of organizational identity in an article with Lars Christensen. In this article, the authors suggest that organizations should consider how they communicate with others, whether those others are their employees or their potential customers, in order to establish their identity.

Organizations can do this through any communication they make public, including their logo, catchphrase or slogan, and even the tone of voice used in messages such as press releases and advertisements. The authors argue that all of these elements (and others) form a cohesive concept of a particular organization's identity. In the terms supplied by this project, these elements form a distinct habitus in which people identify with and interact with one another under a perceived identity.

Six Degrees of Separation: Identification Through Social Networks

Christakis and Fowler's book, *Connected*, proposes that people are constantly being influenced by those around them. Their interest lies in social networking and the book explains how people are not just influenced by their friends and family, but also by their friends' friends, and even their friends' friends' friends – this results in three degrees of separation. The authors mention that further degrees of separation within social networks can and certainly do affect people – for example, it takes an average of six degrees to pass a message around the world no matter where the message originates or where it is traveling. The example used in the book is that a person is given a letter addressed to someone across the world. Based on their contacts, the person then passes the letter to a friend, family member, or co-worker who they think would have the connections and resources to pass the letter along to its designated recipient. Over and over again in the experiment, messages made their way across the world and into the hands or inboxes of the correct recipient after changing hands only six times. The authors use this example to illustrate that although a person may think they have nothing in common with someone, if they

were to perform an analysis of their social network, they would likely find a connection and it might be much closer and more accessible than they think. This idea of connection relates to the form of many brand communities. While some communities may be located within a specific geographic region and thus are able to physically see and interact with others from the group, the majority of brand communities are connected through less formal networks. This also leads to the idea that a habitus knows no geographical bounds and individuals can identify with one another and be influenced by their indirect ties with others. Christakis and Fowler use the function of social networks to argue that they are powerful and influential structures and that identities are always affecting and being affected by the actions and choices of others whether it is realized or not.

Brand Communities

The final area of inquiry, “brand communities,” is important to this project because it provides a central focus for the methodology. As mentioned earlier, this project aligns the concept of brand community with that of habitus. Both are entities that place value on a certain combination of capital that is unique to that community or habitus. Thus, both create a sort of space in which people with similar values, morals, preferences, and lifestyles come together. The connections between the brand community literature and the concept of habitus are depicted in Figure 3.5 below.

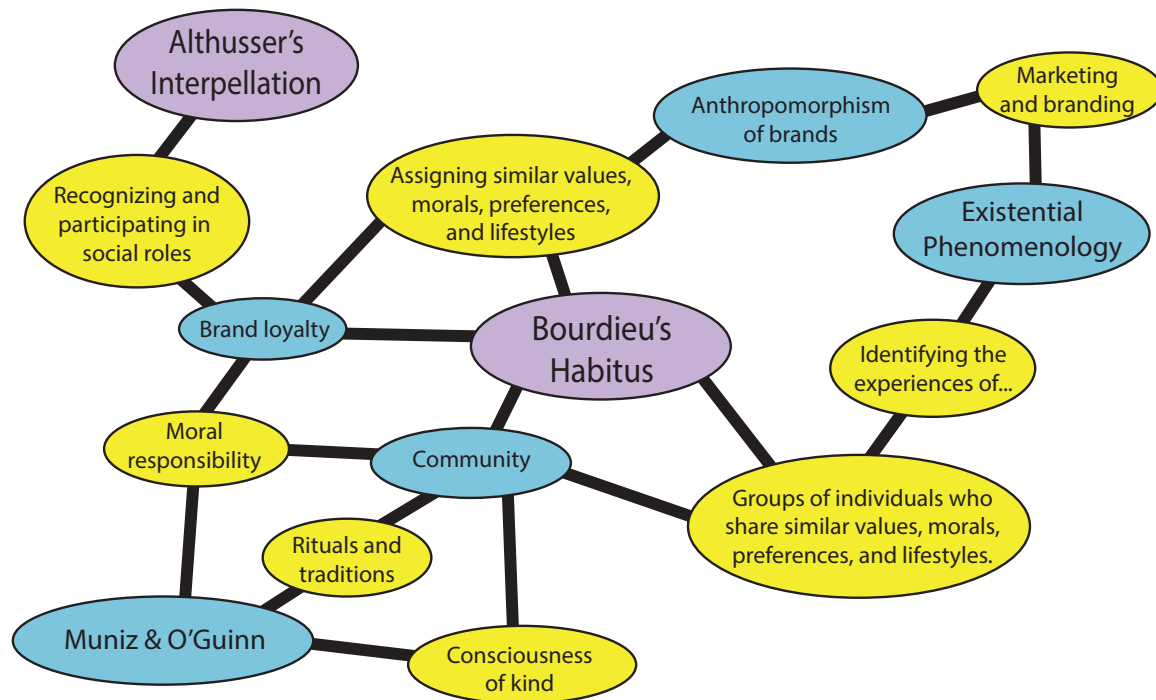


Figure 3.5: Brand community literature connections

Brand communities are found everywhere, from academia to corporate and retail companies. Some of these communities are small and consist of one unified group of people, while others are comprised of multiple smaller sub-communities or interest groups. Brand communities are an important entity to study in that they help us understand how audiences connect with and relate to specific brands. This knowledge is important for designers, branding professionals, marketers, and anyone else who is concerned with how people form relationships with brands. Knowledge of these relationships informs interface design by providing designers with information that their audience will be receptive to and interested in engaging with. This knowledge can lay the groundwork for building interpellative interfaces.

It is important to define precisely what is meant by the term “brand community.” Brand communities can be defined as: a group comprised of individuals who identify specifically with a particular brand and its lifestyle, values and perceived culture. This definition is a conglomeration of the various descriptions I have encountered throughout a wealth of brand community-related literature. Aside from the brand, its products and associated experiences, members also identify with one another and their shared social ties. In their article simply titled “Brand Community,” published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, Albert Muniz and Thomas O’Guinn begin with a definition:

“A brand community is a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. It is specialized because at its center is a branded good or service. Like other communities, it is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility.” (412)

This definition is thorough, yet succinct in summing up the concept of a brand community. Muniz and O’Guinn’s interest in brand community focuses on the social aspects and the relationships between its members. They were concerned with the negative reputation consumer culture gave brand communities and did not want them to be seen as “sinister” groups where people were made to purchase products they did not need. They did not want brand communities to be seen as something that destroys the notion of community. This misconception that branding destroys community ties in to Fogg’s discussion of persuasive technology and

Nodder's notion of "evil by design." Fogg argues in defense of persuasive technology – that it is not an approach to product design that unfairly convinces users to behave in a way that is unethical or against their better judgment. While technology *can* be used in inappropriate and unethical ways, it can also be used to guide users into specific roles which help them interact with the technology and the world around them, thus, using persuasion to help users rather than to hinder. Nodder presents a similar argument in his effort to explain that interfaces *can* be designed to deceive, however the same principles can be applied for good and to design an interface that helps users interact with the interface and achieve their goals or retrieve the information they seek. Just like persuasive technology and persuasive interface design, the idea of branding carries a reputation that can be perceived in a positive or negative light depending on the audience and their knowledge of the technology, interface, or brand.

Muniz and O'Guinn saw brand communities as important, beneficial, and valuable entities that did not destroy community, but broadened the definition of it and made it more accessible. After providing their definition, they go on to mention that a branding community also possesses three core markers of the basic concept of community:

1. Consciousness of kind
2. Shared rituals and traditions
3. A sense of moral responsibility (413)

Consciousness of kind refers to an intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another. It is a version of shared consciousness. The common saying: “birds of a feather flock together” is an example. The series of “I’m a Mac” commercials demonstrate this concept well. In these commercials, one actor portrays a Mac computer while another is representative of a PC. The commercial highlights Apple’s marketing message that PCs are definitely not Macs – they do not operate in the same way or have much in common. By portraying Macs and PCs as different and even incompatible, the commercial’s message alludes to the idea that Mac owners “get” one another and PC owners are not members of the same community. The commercials are an example of consciousness of kind by negation.

Rituals and traditions refer to the actions taken within a brand community. A community might have a well-known hand signal, or motto. Perhaps there is an annual event in which all members participate or a hierarchy within the group that members strive to achieve. An example of such is the Jeep community described in James McAlexander, John Schouten, and Harold Koenig’s *Journal of Marketing* article, “Building Brand Community.” Throughout the year and across the United States, Jeep owners gather at events known as “Jeep Jamborees,” “Camp Jeep,” and “Jeep 101” (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 41). At these events, Jeep owners attend talks and demonstrations, as well as participate in discussion and take their vehicles out on drives along technical terrain as a demonstration of the Jeep brand’s rugged identity. Jeep owners are a good example of a brand community in that they also have a specific hand signal: the “Wrangler wave” (McAlexander, Schouten, and

Koenig 42). This is simply a wave from one Jeep owner to another when they pass on the road, but it is a gesture that is well known throughout the community. Jeep owners and enthusiasts also have a saying: "It's a Jeep thing." This phrase is often heard as an explanation for why non-Jeep owners do not understand something being discussed by Jeep owners. This phrase indicates that there are topics specific to the brand that only someone who is a member of the community could understand. All of these are examples of rituals and traditions that help community members identify with one another.

The third marker, moral responsibility, refers to a sense of duty or obligation felt toward the community (Muniz and O'Guinn 413). This includes the relationship between group member and brand, group member and other group members, and group member and the entire community. Moral responsibility is seen in most sports team focused communities where group members identify with and support the team (the brand) and also identify with other group members who share in identifying with the team. A sense of moral responsibility leads a community of fans to defend their favorite team after a tough loss. It may also lead to a group member striking up a conversation and offering kindness towards a stranger simply because they are wearing an article of clothing with the team logo. There is an unspoken sense of duty or dedication felt to not just the team, but also to all others who support the team. An example of moral responsibility can be found by returning to McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig's analysis of the Jeep brand community. The marketers of Jeep, as well as the majority of owners are united under a moral sense

of responsibility to “tread lightly” with their vehicles in an effort to support the ethics of non-destructive driving. Presentations on how to enjoy the outdoors while maintaining a minimized environmental impact are often included at Jeep events and the practice is seen as a “cornerstone value of Jeep and Jeep ownership” (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 42).

Muniz and O’Guinn’s article also states that the concept of community is not bound by geography. As technology has evolved, people have been enabled to communicate with others outside of their immediate physical community (neighborhood, city). The concept of community has become more than “place” and is now understood as a group of people with a “common understanding of a shared identity” (Muniz and O’Guinn 413). As stated earlier, this definition of brand community aligns with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and the notion of shared values. Just as communities transcend geography, so do branding communities due to the technology of media that allows advertisements and information to be dispersed immediately to nearly anywhere in the world. Michael Beverland, Francis Farrelly, and Pascale Quester support the idea of non-geographic community in their 2010 article, “Authentic subculture membership: Antecedents and consequences of authenticating acts and authoritative performances.” Beverland, Farrelly, and Quester state: “With the decline of traditional markers of identity, such as local communities and institutions, consumers have renewed links to time, place, and culture by engaging in communities of consumption, including those focused on a single brand” (699).

With the most widely accepted definition of brand community described above, it is important to mention that this is not the only definition. Seth Godin has his own approach to these communities, which he refers to as “tribes.” Godin defines tribes as a group of people who have a shared interest and a way to communicate (24). He also writes that tribes form around leaders who are curious, innovative, and create change. Tribes are not necessarily focused on a specific product, instead, they are about making connections with other tribe members (Godin 26) and being a part of something that is larger than the individual and something that matters (Godin 29). While the concept of “tribes” is different from brand community, Godin’s book provides useful insight into a number of factors that motivate people to become members of a group.

Brand communities are not bound by geological constraints due in part to the use of the Internet. When considering the literature on communities and how they form, it is valuable to address Tharon Howard’s book on building online communities. *Design to Thrive* suggests four main elements necessary for the long-term success of online communities known as the RIBS heuristic (7). RIBS stands for remuneration, influence, belonging, and significance. Remuneration deals with receiving benefits for being a member of a group. Influence relates to having one’s voice heard and valued within the community (Howard *Design to Thrive* 8) and aligns with Godin’s notion of tribes form around thought leaders. Belonging maps closely to Muniz and O’Guinn’s “shared rituals and traditions.” An online community demonstrates belonging by having images, language, or actions that help members

identify others in the community and form bonds with those members. The Jeep Jamborees mentioned above are an example of belonging to the Jeep community. Finally, significance deals with the reputation of the community. Howard writes, “for a community to be successful it has to be seen as significant. It has to be respected” (*Design to Thrive* 8). The element of significance ties in to Bourdieu’s symbolic capital in that both are focused on elements concerned with community identity and outward reputation. While Howard’s RIBS focus specifically on online communities, each element is helpful to keep in mind when considering the structure of the brand communities examined for this project.

As the field of brand community research continues to grow and additional research is completed, other scholars and theorists will surely offer their definitions. It is also true that there is not just one type of brand community. Although there are no official categories of brand communities, it is easy to see that they are often organized around a brand or product that exudes particular dominant characteristics. For example, one community might have a strong focus on the product itself, while another is more concerned with supporting the lifestyle and culture of the people who use its products. Brand communities can also focus on a particular experience or common interest, for example, the Boston Marathon has a strong brand community that unites over not just the race itself, but the common interest of running and the culture of what members call “Boston Strong,” which grew out of the 2013 bombing. Consideration of the different, although unofficial, categories of brand communities mentioned above influenced the selection of

communities used in this research. More on community selection will be addressed in Chapter IV.

Brand Communities and Identity

As mentioned earlier, the development of a branding community involves the concept of identification. In the past, identity has most often been retained to the fields of psychology and organization science, but it is now catching the attention of marketing professionals (Stokburger-Sauer 348). In her article, “Brand Community: Drivers and Outcomes,” Nicola Stokburger-Sauer describes the importance of identity to the formation of community and how marketers have struggled to harness identity’s “power” to turn “customers into champions” (348) who are loyal and enthusiastically promote the brand, its company and products. The idea of attracting consumers to a brand or to become members of a specific brand community through the argument of identification aligns with the mechanism of interpellation. Interpellation aims to bring someone in to a specific social role, whereas the use of branding and marketing messages aims to bring someone into a specific community or buying role. Creating and fostering consumer-brand identification is one of the basic tenets of the branding community concept and is also the element that can encourage its strengthening or deterioration.

Another basic element of the branding community is its membership. While these communities are almost always presented as a unified whole, Beverland, Farrelly, and Quester argue that there are often subcultures that form within a branding community that if not addressed, may cause tension (699). These

subcultures most often form over the debate of a community member or group of community members' authenticity and dedication to the brand. In many communities, there is a dichotomy of "being" versus "doing" (Beverland, Farrelly, and Quester 700). Members who embrace the culture of the brand community, believe in the shared values, rituals and traditions of the other members and sincerely integrate it into their own personal lifestyle are "being," whereas members who lack sincerity and perhaps only look the part, but do not fully embrace the lifestyle are seen as "doing" or putting on a front (Beverland, Farrelly, and Quester 700). The differences between "being" and "doing" in a branding community can be viewed through the three subthemes of sincerity/ authenticity, temporality and authority. Each subtheme is viewed as a continuum where "being" is considered highly sincere, low in temporality and higher in authority. "Doing" ranks low in sincerity, high in temporality and lower in authority.

As previously mentioned, one aim of the research conducted for this project focuses on uncovering the habitus of select brand communities. Habitus is relevant to the discussion of brand community in that it has the potential to identify the various elements and tastes that give a community its identity. Essentially, this project aims to define the habitus of select communities through applying a method adapted from the field of marketing. That method is briefly described below and will be discussed in greater detail throughout Chapter IV.

Discovering an Appropriate Method

The support area of brand community research is responsible for identifying the research methodology that is adapted and applied in this project. While researching brand communities and how they are studied in the field of marketing and consumer research, the method of existential phenomenology was emerged. This method is typically used in the fields of consumer research and marketing; however, this project argues that it also has a role to play in user experience research. Existential phenomenology and the type of interviewing (phenomenological interviewing) that is characteristic of the method is used to reveal narratives and meaning through in-depth interviews. These interviews provide insight into assessing a consumer's experience with a specific product or brand. Because of its ability to provide thorough, in-depth information regarding a consumer (or user of the product) and their experience, phenomenological interviewing appears to be an appropriate method for understanding users, their habitus, and the social roles they play when interacting with products and interfaces. For this reason, the method was selected to be applied and adapted to user experience research in an effort to identify a method appropriate for the constructivist approach. The concept of existential phenomenology and the method of phenomenological interviewing will be detailed in Chapter IV.

Staying True: Brand Loyalty

Another topic and theory that influences this project is "brand loyalty." Loyalty links to Muniz and O'Guinn's discussion of moral responsibility in that

someone who feels a duty or obligation to a specific brand they identify with will likely remain loyal to that brand. Brand loyalty can also be tied to the overall notion of user experience – if a customer consistently has a positive interaction with the brand and others in the community, their inclination to become and remain loyal to the brand is strong. However, a repetitive negative experience weakens commitment to the brand and may lead a consumer to feel that they no longer identify with the brand and that the values they shared are no longer present or valued. Understanding a community to such a degree that the social roles of its members can be defined is of importance here and one construct that concerns whether or not a person will become and stay a member is brand loyalty. When a brand's product quality is consistent, the range of products is familiar, and the overall identity of the community is stable, members have no reason to lose interest or flag in their degree of loyalty, but when a brand introduces a new product that the community deems out of line with the overall brand identity or if the brand's logo or visual look is altered, loyalty may become fragile. The conversation surrounding the strength of brand loyalty and how, why and when it fails is evident in the research published by Son Lam et al. and Scott Thompson and Rajiv Sinha in the *Journal of Marketing*. Thompson and Sinha maintain that new product adoption from the preferred brand is more likely to be accepted if the community exhibits high levels of participation and if the majority of its members have a longer-term membership (65). For example, someone who has been a fan of Apple products for decades, owns a number of their products and is actively engaged with the brand

(perhaps so engaged that they tune in to the annual product reveals via social media) is more likely to adopt a new Apple product with little question and without lowering their level of brand loyalty. However, Thompson and Sinha also concluded that high participation levels and long-term memberships are not a guarantee of brand loyalty. Their research findings indicated that if a competitor introduced a new product that was first to market and not offered by the current brand community's product line, regardless of participation level or membership duration, a certain number of members would choose the competitor's product (Thompson and Sinha 65). Thompson and Sinha also introduce the concept that a person may belong to more than one brand community and in such a case, the issue of brand loyalty becomes even more complex.

The Anthropomorphism of Brands

Another topic that contributes to the body of knowledge on brand communities and the behaviors of their members is the anthropomorphism of brands. While the subject of identity is deeply intertwined with the notion of branding communities, a few select studies have focused on consumers taking their identification with a brand to a more internalized and embodied level. In their 2011 article, "When Brands Seem Human, Do Humans Act Like Brands? Automatic Behavioral Priming Effects of Brand Anthropomorphism," Pankaj Aggarwal and Ann McGill examined the priming effects of anthropomorphized brands and how they affected consumers in their everyday lives. They chose two contrasting brands, Krispy Kreme and Kellogg's to prime a group of college students. Students were

assigned one of the brands and asked to imagine that the brand had come to life as a person. They were to comment on the brand's personality, physical appearance, profession, etc. The students were also asked to consider the brand in as much detail as possible and to list its "features, benefits, characteristics, and different aspects of the brand they may have heard about" (Aggarwal and McGill 313). After priming the students by having them anthropomorphize one of the brands, a scenario was presented: the student is on his or her way to class on the third floor of a building. There is a considerable line at the elevator and the stairs are conveniently close. The students were asked to respond on a 7-point scale on their likelihood of waiting for the elevator (1) or taking the stairs (7) (Aggarwal and McGill 313). The hypothesis held that students primed with the "unhealthy" brand (Krispy Kreme) would be more likely to wait for the elevator and students primed with the "healthy" brand (Kellogg's) would take the stairs. This held true if the students *liked* the brand; however, if students *disliked* the brand, they tended to act in the opposite way, almost in protest of identifying with the brand. This can be seen as an example of interpellation and resistance to interpellation into a specific habitus. By having the students assign values and characteristics to each brand, the researchers defined the habitus of both Kellogg's and Krispy Kreme. With the students now conscious of what each brand values and represents, they became aware of whether their own values aligned with the brand. Based on this information, it could be inferred that the students who were primed with Krispy Kreme and chose to wait for the elevator were effectively interpellated into the

habitus of the Krispy Kreme brand. Those who were primed with Krispy Kreme, but chose to take the stairs rejected the “hail” because they did not identify with the values and characteristics of the Krispy Kreme habitus. On the surface this may appear as a simple choice based on consumer preference, when in fact, it is the application of interpellation and habitus at work.

Others in the field of consumer research have commented on aspects of the anthropomorphism of brands and their influence on the consumer’s identity, including Wendy Maxian et al. in their article concerning “brand love.” Maxian et al.’s research focuses on the strong emotions consumers may feel when engaging with a brand and the symbolic rewards derived from the brand’s characteristics. “These symbolic rewards have their basis in emotional connections to brands and...they can potentially impact the choices consumers make” (Maxian et al. 470). Again, this idea relates to the alignment of a consumer’s identity with the identity or habitus of a specific brand. If there is an alignment and a connection, the consumer is more likely to be interpellated into the community and identify with the values of the brand and its surrounding community. For example, in studies described by Maxian et al., consumers who strongly identify with the characteristics of the Apple brand tend to act more creatively and those who associate themselves with the Disney brand respond more honestly when compared to controls. In other words, a person who identifies with Apple perceives it to be a creative brand and thus, considers his or her self to be creative and behaves in a way appropriate for acceptance into the Apple community. The same goes for the Disney example. The

Disney brand is often aligned with innocence, imagination, and children – all of which involve and value honesty. This leads to the assumption that someone who thoroughly identifies with the Disney brand and ascribes to the values set forth by its distinct habitus will behave in a way that demonstrates their identification with the brand. By anthropomorphizing a brand and associating certain lifestyle-related values to it, people express not only what they perceive as the identify of the brand, but also, what they perceive as a portion of their own identity. By examining cases of brand anthropomorphism and the identity of branding communities, much can be learned about their member and how they can be persuaded or interpellated.

Conclusion

With the three main areas of research now defined, the next step to consider is the method of research and how this approach is different, unique, and provides a contribution to the field. While there are a number of studies that make use of phenomenological interviewing, the research performed for this project has revealed no study focused on applying the method to the field of user experience as a way of providing a methodology for the constructivist approach. Not only does this research aim to identify and apply a methodology for those in the business of researching and creating brand communities, it seeks to identify a number of factors or components that enable a person to identify with and be interpellated into a specific habitus. Chapter IV explores the methodology of phenomenological interviewing and details its precise application for this research. The hope is that this adapted methodology, will both be of use and value to academics and

practitioners in the fields of user experience, branding, and other connected areas of work, including product design, engineering, and marketing. Another hopeful intention of this project is that the method can be used to provide innovative solutions and to further the research performed in these varied areas.

CHAPTER FOUR

APPLYING PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERVIEWS TO THE FIELD OF USER EXPERIENCE

With the three main areas of research now defined, the next step is to consider the method of research and how this approach is different, unique, and provides a contribution to the field. While there are a number of studies that make use of phenomenological interviewing, the initial research performed for this project has revealed no study focused on applying the method to the field of user experience as a way of providing a methodology for the constructivist approach. Not only does this research aim to identify and apply a methodology for those in the business of researching and creating brand communities, it seeks to identify a number of factors or components that enable a person to identify with and be interpellated into a specific habitus. This chapter explores the methodology of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing and details its precise application for this project. The goal is that this adapted methodology, will be of use and value to both academics and practitioners in the fields of user experience, branding, and other connected areas of work, including product design, engineering, and marketing. Another intention of this project is that the method can be used to provide innovative solutions and to further the research performed in these varied areas.

Existential Phenomenology

Before discussing why existential phenomenology was chosen for this project, it is necessary to achieve a general idea of the method, its origins, and its previous use. This chapter begins by addressing those points, as well as what makes existential phenomenology and its specific interviewing method different from other forms of interviewing. With the stage set, this chapter will then explain why the method was selected for application to the field of user experience and will provide justifications for how the research for this project was performed. Finally, this chapter will provide a step-by-step description of the research method applied to this project.

Background and Previous Usage

The method of existential phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and has been used in the fields of psychology, as well as marketing, to provide insights into individual's lived experiences with their surrounding world. As explored in Howard Pollio, Tracy Henley, and Craig Thompson's book, *The Phenomenology of Everyday Life*, existential phenomenology is an effective method to learn more about how people experience certain feelings and situations. In their book, Pollio, Henley, and Thompson discuss the origin of the method – leading back to Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Soren Kierkegaard, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. They address the concepts of existentialism and phenomenology separately to lay the groundwork for the nature of the method, which is to focus on the lived human experience. After establishing the nature of the method and its best uses, Pollio, Henley, and

Thompson provide detailed cases on the topics of isolation, love, and loss to illustrate how the method was applied in particular psychological studies.

Although the book focuses on psychology and has its roots in philosophy, in other work, Pollio and Thompson apply the method to the field of marketing and are successful in uncovering insights into the nature of consumer behavior and decision-making. In their article, “Putting Consumer Experience Back Into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology,” Craig Thompson, William Locander, and Howard Pollio argue that “existential-phenomenology can provide an empirically based and methodologically rigorous understanding of consumer phenomena” (133) – specifically, consumer experience. They point out that existential phenomenology is “contextualist” – meaning that experience is a pattern that emerges from a context, it is not separate from the context. They also write that the approach seeks to describe experiences as they are lived and that overall, the goal is to give *thematic description* of experience (Thompson, Locander, Pollio, 137). Their point is that, often, consumer research relies on response patterns and cognitive structures, not the lived consumer experience (Thompson, Locander, Pollio, 144), and so by incorporating existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews into consumer research, the consumer experience is sure to be highlighted and taken into consideration.

Throughout much of his research, Thompson continues to apply existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews to the field of marketing and consumer research. For example, Craig Thompson and Zeynep Arsel employed

phenomenological interviews to gain insight into how consumers experience the coffee chain, Starbucks. The interviews took place over a two-year span and provided information on how the international coffee powerhouse affects local coffee shop scenes. Specifically, the interviews sought to gain a better understanding of two anti-Starbucks consumer experiences: *café flaneurs* (those who do not like Starbucks' commercialization, but tolerate it because they enjoy the social ambiance) and oppositional localists (those who see Starbucks as a threat to locally-owned shops). These two cultures (that could also be defined as identities) developed as a response to the Starbucks culture and brand community. Thompson and Arsel's main point is that global brands do have influence on local brands in that they shape the local brand's identity (either they want to be like the global brand or they want to be unlike the global brand). Thompson and Arsel also point out that the "Starbucks revolution has crystallized and propagated a particular kind of third-place experience (coffee shop patronage) and that it has shaped cultural expectations and ideals about what coffee shops should be" (639). Whether the oppositional localists admit to it or not, their identity is dependent upon the existence of the very global, corporate, Starbucks brand. The phenomenological interviewing used for this study helped bring to light a number of social and cultural issues that are otherwise difficult to uncover. This case illustrates the usefulness of this style of interviewing when learning about the subtle nuances of the lived experience – something that is important to this project as it works to image and describe the habitus of brand communities.

Phenomenological interviewing has also been used by Jennifer Siemens and Steven Kopp to investigate the characteristics of online gambling environments. Specifically, Siemens and Kopp were interested in the effects of environmental characteristics on gambling consumers' behavior. Through their analysis of first-hand accounts of consumer experiences, Siemens and Kopp were able to perceive themes in behavioral patterns that shed light onto how influential the online environment can be on gamblers. Here, the use of phenomenological interviews was the method of choice to gain access to personal and particular information about the participants' experiences with various online gaming interfaces. This study piqued my interest because my project also deals with individuals' experiences with interfaces (and the brands portrayed on such interfaces).

These marketing studies are what caught my attention and guided me to the method of existential phenomenology and its in-depth, experience-focused style of interviewing. The fact that the method has been adapted for use in various fields indicates its flexibility. In my opinion, this is a strength of the method and shows that it can produce valuable insights when applied to a variety of fields and topics.

Why Existential Phenomenology Was Chosen for This Project

Just as Pollio, Thompson, and others have adapted the method for marketing, I intend to adapt the method to yet another field: user experience and interface design. I argue that existential phenomenology is an appropriate and highly useful method for the field of user experience research for a number of reasons.

The main reason is that existential phenomenology focuses on the lived human experience and attempts to provide a first-person account of what it is like to experience a specific event or situation. In my efforts towards uncovering and documenting the habitus of specific brand communities, it is important that the personal accounts and opinions of community members be captured. With a focus on user experience, it is important to find a way to obtain intimate details about the community members' lived experience with the brand. While it is easy for someone outside of the community to observe it and take a guess at what its members value and what forms of capital are considered important, such a guess is formed from an outside opinion that has not experienced the brand, its community, and all that they stand for through a lived experience. In order to form an idea of the habitus in which the brand community resides, the information must come from the perspective of those who are within the community – from those who have been interpellated into the community's unique habitus and who intrinsically know what it means to belong to that community. Phenomenological interviews are an ideal method for collecting this type of information.

Mark Vagle's book, *Crafting Phenomenological Research* provides further addresses the purpose of phenomenological interviews when he writes, "when we study something phenomenologically, we are not trying to get inside other people's minds. Rather, we are trying to contemplate and theorize the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world" (22). Using a phenomenological interview style allows participants to describe their experience

with the brand and surrounding community as they have lived it. This is a perspective that no outside observation could uncover on its own. It is also a perspective that allows the researcher to contemplate and theorize the relationships and meanings between the participant and their lived experience of being associated with a specific brand community.

Concerning the constructivist approach to user experience, existential phenomenology and the use of phenomenological interviewing helps reveal the natural actions and interactions between community members. The interviews reveal information on how community members communicate with one another. This data is useful in uncovering the social roles that community members play. By gaining an understanding of these roles as well as the community members' values, preferences, and lifestyle (the habitus), researchers can form opinions on how to design interfaces that appeal to those roles and thus, are likely to interpellate community members into familiar roles when interacting with the brand's online presence. If the adoption of existential phenomenology to user experience and brand community research is successful – which I strongly believe it is – it will provide important information that experience architects, web designers, and brand managers can use when constructing or enhancing the experience of brand communities.

Why Brand Community-Related Interfaces Were Chosen for This Project

As the world grows more and more dependent upon technology, it is increasingly common for consumers to have influential interactions with the online

presence of brands. While we will continue to encounter brands and their products in-person, it is typical for us to research a brand online in order to learn more about it and whether or not it is a brand that aligns with our needs. For this reason, it is important that a brand's online presence be appropriate and engaging in order to persuade and interpellate users into becoming consumers and members of the brand's community. For those who are already members of the brand community, it is important for the interface to align with the rules or guidelines within which the community operates and to create a seamless and familiar experience that aligns with the brand's habitus.

Because constructivist design is about designing social roles for users to play, the focus on brand community interfaces is an appropriate topic. The brand community desires to hail users into a specific social role in order to build support for the brand and sustain said support, so why not employ a constructivist design method that also aims to hail users into a specific social role. The goals and intentions of brand communities are aligned with the notion of interpellation. People identify with a particular habitus or way of life (or multiple habiti) so the question becomes: How can an interface experience be designed to appeal to a certain taste and to communicate a certain lifestyle in order to encourage people who identify with that taste or lifestyle to become part of a specific brand community? Aside from their interaction with the product of the brand – whether that product be something physical, the acquisition of a skill or level of education, or the inclusion into a specific lifestyle – people engage with brands through their

online presence and in order for interpellation to happen, the brand's interface must mirror the brand community's habitus. For this reason, uncovering the value of social capital within a brand community and incorporating those values into the brand's online presence is key to designing a successful, engaging, and enjoyable user experience.

Differentiating Phenomenological from Other Forms of Interviewing

Phenomenological interviewing is a "procedure for attaining a rigorous and significant description of the world of everyday human experience as it is lived and described by specific individuals in specific circumstances" (Pollio, Henley, and Thompson, 28). It is also described as a dialogic method conducted by two people on a "quest for meaningful description" (Pollio, Henley, and Thompson, 29). The method involves dialog between two people: the investigator and the participant. This dialog is not set in advance with a list of questions that must be asked and answered in the same way for each participant. Instead the dialog is guided by a set of questions that encourages the participant to lead the conversation and explore their lived experience. The questions are designed so that they do not evoke simple "yes" or "no" responses that confirm or deny information. Instead, the questions are designed to evoke descriptions from the participant. It is also suggested to avoid asking "why" questions because such questions often lead participants to provide an inaccurate or unnecessary justification or rationalization for their reasoning.

Questions used in phenomenological interviews tend to fall along the lines of "What was that like?" or "How did you feel when that happened?" (Pollio, Henley,

and Thompson, 30) These questions encourage rich discussion focused on the participant's experience. Due to the highly-descriptive and narrative nature of the phenomenological interview, they can take substantial amount of time to conduct. These "long interviews" are powerful qualitative tools that as described by Grant McCracken in his book, *The Long Interview*, "give us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (9). When conducting lengthy interviews, McCracken suggests that the interviewer must listen for key terms, must choose the most promising avenues of inquiry to further pursue, and must listen for themes and material that is alluded to, but not made explicit (41).

Once interviews are completed, they are transcribed and the transcripts are analyzed using a coding system. This system will be described in detail below, however it is important to know now that the final product of existential phenomenological interviews is to identify experiential patterns and relationships among themes (Pollio, Henley, and Thompson, 52). It is also of importance to understand that the validation of phenomenological interview data can be evaluated in two ways: methodological and experiential. Methodological evaluation asks: "Do the investigator's procedures seem rigorous, and are they appropriate for yielding the type of understanding claimed by the study?" Experiential evaluation asks: "Does the interpretation provide insight to the reader or evaluator?" (Pollio, Henley, and Thompson, 53-54).

Existential Phenomenology as a Suitable Research Method for the Constructivist

Approach to User Experience

While it is easy to describe existential phenomenology and how it has been applied to this project, it must be made clear *how* this project will make the claim that existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews are or are not a suitable research method for the constructivist approach to user experience. As noted in Chapter II, there are a number of design guidelines that are associated with the concept of constructivist design. Those guidelines are shown again in Figure 4.1.

Constructivist Design Guidelines

- Persuade a user to engage in a specific types of behavior. Adapts the user to the technology, not the technology to the user.
- Construct social roles users can play to take advantage of certain technologies.
- Use social protocols, aesthetic choices, and cultural cues to interpellate users into a subject position that will enable them to predict and use the designer’s conceptual model (interface).
- Provide the user with “predictive power” over the interface - “a user could predict, with a high degree of accuracy and comfort, that interacting with an object in the interface would produce a specific result” (Howard, “Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches,” pg. 165)
- Give the designer explanatory power of how to design an interface.
- Provide actionable results that help designers understand the habitus and to make informed design decisions.

Figure 4.1: Suggested constructivist design guidelines

The above guidelines are an important part in determining whether or not the results from this project indicate that phenomenological interviews do in fact produce information relevant to the constructivist approach. As mentioned in Chapter II, these are the guidelines taken into consideration when evaluating the application of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews to the field of user experience. If the application of the method coincides with the majority of the guidelines listed above, then phenomenological interviewing can be considered an appropriate research method aimed at achieving constructivist design goals. Relevance and appropriateness of the research method to the constructivist approach will be determined by a simple series of statements:

- Constructivist design does X.
- The method applied to this study did/ did not do X.
- Therefore, the method applied to this study is/ is not an appropriate method for the constructivist approach.

Taking the guidelines listed in Figure 4.1, an example statement is: “Constructivist design constructs social roles that users can play. The method applied to this study did or did not reveal information that identified social roles relevant to the brand community or information that would allow the development of informed social roles. Therefore, the method applied to this study is or is not an appropriate method for the constructivist approach.” If performing phenomenological interviews yields information that provides insight into the social roles that are valued for the brand community, then it would be concluded that phenomenological interviews are an

appropriate method to use when applying the constructivist approach to user experience.

A second example statement: “Constructivist design uses social protocols, aesthetic choices, and cultural cues to interpellate users into a subject position that will enable them to predict and use the designer’s conceptual model. The method applied to this study did or did not make use of the above-mentioned protocols, choices, and cues. Therefore, the method applied to this study is or is not an appropriate method for the constructivist approach.” If performing phenomenological interviews provides insight into a brand community’s society, preferred aesthetics, and culture (Bourdieu’s “habitus”) and that information can be used to influence the design of social roles that enable community members to intuitively navigate and use the interface designed for the community, then it would be concluded that phenomenological interviews are an appropriate method to use when applying the constructivist approach to user experience.

This process of verifying whether or not existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews are in fact an appropriate method for constructivist design is not certain. The current process is the result of the research performed for this project and is a first attempt at providing verification that the research method of existential phenomenology is suitable for constructivist design. Adaptations and improvements to the verification process are surely necessary. Further research on existential phenomenology and its application to constructivist design is needed to hone the verification process and make the evaluation more rigorous. One purpose

of this project is to suggest *how* it can be concluded that existential phenomenology is suitable for constructivist design. Critiques and suggestions for this process are necessary in order to develop a rigorous and more reliable process.

Developing the Research Study

This portion of the chapter provides details, explanations, and justifications regarding decisions related to the research method. This section aims to answer questions such as, “Why were the three brand communities selected? What qualifies them for use in this project?” and “Who are the participants? How and why were they chosen?” Other questions related to the major methodological decisions are also addressed.

Brand Community Selection

Three brand communities were selected for this project. According to the consent documents drafted specifically for this project and filed according to Clemson University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol, all participants as well as the brand communities they are members of, will remain anonymous. This is done not only to protect the privacy of each participant, but also, to protect the privacy of each brand including the positive or negative effects on their reputation that may result from the data reported in future chapters.

Each brand community selected for this project occupies a unique product space in comparison to the others. For example, one brand community is a university whose product is the college experience and a quality education. Another brand community is focused on the direct selling of skin care products. The third

brand community's product is a way of life – although customers exchange money for the brand's product, the product line is geared towards individuals who live a specific lifestyle. This project could be summarized and simplified by stating that it focuses on three different brand communities: one that focuses on an experience, one on effective retail products, and one on a desired lifestyle.

These three diverse communities were chosen in an effort to demonstrate that the application of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews can yield insights for any type of brand, regardless of their product. Each of the chosen brand communities has a distinct habitus in which they operate. Each has a unique set of experiences that community members associate specifically with the brand and with no one else. Through the application of phenomenological interviewing and a rigorous coding system, the particulars of each habitus will be made apparent and this information can then be applied for the purpose of designing interpellative interfaces that align with each brand community's values.

Interview Participant Selection

Concerning participant requirements and selection, the project focused on two groups: those who are inside the community (people who consider themselves members) and those who are inside the brand (people who work on or with the community – might be marketers, designers, corporate communication managers, social media team members, among others). A judgment sample was used, meaning that participants were selected based on their knowledge of and involvement with

the brand community. To identify those in the judgment sample, two main selection tactics were used:

- For two of the brand communities, a point-of-contact familiar with the brand community was established and was asked to make recommendations of who would make an appropriate participant. For this tactic, the point-of-contact provided a list of potential participants and their contact information. Each potential participant had been contacted by the point-of-contact and was aware of the general focus of the study. Potential participants were then contacted via email to set up an interview date and time.
- Snowball sampling was used for the third brand community. In this case, three participants were identified as a judgment sample and were then asked to provide contact information for other members of the brand community they felt would be interested in participating. Each additional participant was asked to suggest potential participants as well. This process continued until the target number of participants was reached.

The method of phenomenological interviewing focuses on depth of data gathered, rather than breadth, and because of this, the study aimed to recruit 8-10 participants per brand community.

Participants had to be more than just familiar with the brand being studied. They needed to have personal experience with the brand community including experience interacting with the brand's website or product, experience

communicating with other members of the brand community, and a good sense of the brand's identity (informed through their lived experiences with the brand, its product, and the surrounding community). For each of the three brands studied, some portion of the interview participants were involved in the creation or development of the brand's customer-facing identity. Also, for each of the three brands studied, some portion of the interview participants were customers, users, or participants of the brand's products.

Interview Question Development

The questions that guided the interviews were developed by accessing previous research that made use of phenomenological interviews. Interview questions found in the article, "Putting Consumer Experience Back Into Consumer Research" by Craig Thompson, William Locander, and Howard Pollio, as well as the article, "The Influence of Online Gambling Environments on Self-Control" by Jennifer Siemens and Steven Kopp served as the main inspiration. Following the lead of previous studies, the questions were designed to focus on a specific experience: the experience of being associated with a particular brand community. Within that main focus, questions also addressed experiences with the brand's interface or product, experiences communicating with the brand or with other community members, as well as a variety of topics concerning various forms of capital informed by Bourdieu's previously mentioned work on habitus.

With one of the goals of the project being to identify the habitus of each brand community being studied, questions were designed to uncover information

regarding cultural, social, economic, educational, linguistic, and symbolic capital. The term “capital” was not used during interviews and its concept was not explained to participants, however, use of the term and an understanding of its meaning are not necessary in order for participants to discuss their experience with a particular type of capital. By refraining from using this kind of language, the interview questions were kept informal and approachable to the participants. When applicable, language and specific terms previously mentioned by participants were used to further the discussion. This adoption of the participant’s language is suggested as a positive strategy in Pollio, Henley, and Thompson’s work.

While a list of interview questions existed for this study, the same questions were not asked verbatim to each participant. Instead, the list was used to gently guide the flow of discussion. Proceeding with the method of phenomenological interviewing in mind, the conversation was led mostly by the participant, but when necessary, in order to continue productive dialog, questions from the suggested list were worked into the conversation. The list of suggested questions used to guide the interviews can be found in Appendix A. “Why” questions were avoided because they tend to encourage participants to rationalize their answers. The goal of the phenomenological interview is not to have participants provide a rationalization that may or may not be accurate; it is to focus on the description of the lived experience and from that description, to identify common themes that provide insight into the participant’s actions and opinions. The descriptive nature of the interview style and the lack of asking the exact same questions to each participant

allows the method to resemble a conversation rather than a question and answer session. Instead of pointedly asking a participant why they did or did not do something, the answer to the “why” question becomes evident as the conversation-style interview unfolds.

Transcript Analysis Strategies

Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed both manually and by a professional transcription service. A sample transcript from one of the brand communities can be found in Appendix B. This is included to illustrate the typical flow of conversation in the interviews. The transcripts were then uploaded to the NVivo qualitative data analysis software that allows for the implementation of various coding categories and strategies. Before the coding process could begin, it was necessary to determine how the data would be broken up. In other words, it was necessary to identify the coding units. In his chapter on coding data, Keith Grant-Davie discusses how the data in transcripts can be divided into units for “subsequent classification into categories” (275). Grant-Davie discusses the options for dividing up a transcript using syntactic units or episodic units (276). Syntactic units are often limited to clauses, sentences, or even paragraphs. Grant-Davie did not prefer these units because comments on one topic often last more than a sentence or paragraph. Instead, Grant-Davie looked to Linda Flower and John Hayes’ notion of “composing episodes” and their boundaries (Grant-Davie 275). These units began and ended when the focus of the topic shifted and are often bookended by pauses. These episodes can be one sentence or many. According to Flower and

Hayes, “Episodes are not like paragraphs of a text, organized around a central *topic* which a causal reader can easily follow. Instead, episodes seem to be organized around *goals*, so that one episode could include various topics and various processes...” (238) Grant-Davie used this notion to develop what he termed “episodic units.” Episodic units last “for as long as the subject continues to make the same kind of comment” (Grant-Davie 276). The episodic unit is the unit used when analyzing the transcripts for this project. While a unit may be a short phrase, a full sentence, or a lengthy paragraph, the boundaries for the units for this project will be determined by a participant’s pause and/ or change in topic or goal.

While there is no one piece of literature that specifies how phenomenological interview transcripts are to be examined, there are several examples in the literature describing how the data for a number of research projects was analyzed. Looking back to the previously mentioned studies conducted by Siemens and Kopp, as well as, Thompson et al. provides examples of how the resulting interview transcripts were treated. This indicates that there is room for customization when it comes to transcript analysis. In fact, in reference to phenomenological research analysis methodology, Vagle writes:

...there are many approaches and ways of crafting phenomenological research. This is one of the reasons why I see this as a craft more than a method. As phenomenologists, we are actively engaged in crafting something, and as we engage in craftwork, we need to resist the urge to follow a recipe

and, instead, embrace the open searching, tinkering, and reshaping that this important work requires. (104)

Based on this notion, the analysis performed for this project did not adhere to a strict way of processing, but was customized in order to address the underlying theories that drive the main research questions. This manner of coding is not uncommon in qualitative research. In his book, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, Johnny Saldana writes that “coding is not a precise science; it’s primarily an interpretive act” (4). The transcripts from the phenomenological interviews performed for this project were analyzed and coded with three strategies in mind:

1. *Basic open and axial coding*—This is a common coding strategy employed in a number of fields from marketing research to user experience. Used in grounded theory (Creswell 191), open and axial coding is frequently used when analyzing texts that result from qualitative studies. For this project, grounded theory was first used to identify the open coding categories. This “unrestricted coding of the data” (Strauss 28) was performed when the interview transcripts were uploaded to the NVivo software, were read, and comments that fell into similar categories were marked. According to Anselm Strauss, the “aim of the coding is to *open up* the inquiry” (29), and thus, the categories named during this stage are often temporary and change as more transcripts are analyzed and additional categories emerge. The open codes are “descriptive” codes (Saldana 3), meaning that they summarize the

primary topic or idea of the episodic unit to which they are assigned. Next, axial coding was conducted, whereby “intense analysis [is] done around one category at a time” (Strauss 32). In this phase, the open coding categories are examined in relation to one another to reveal themes in the data.

2. *Bourdieu’s forms of capital as main coding categories*—Using NVivo, comments relevant to each form of capital (shown below in Figure 4.2) were grouped together for each brand community. Overlaps between forms of capital and remarks that fell into multiple categories were noted.

Social	Can be material as well as symbolic. Is derived from relationships between members of a specific group. Social capital is never completely independent of cultural and economic capital because it is influenced by both.
Cultural	Non-financial assets that promote social mobility. Is acquired over time and is most often inherited from others - especially family members.
Economic	Financial assets that promote social mobility. According to Bourdieu, it is the “root of all other types of capital.”
Educational	A sub-set of cultural capital. Specifically focuses on social assets that are related to education.
Symbolic	Relates to reputation and how something or someone is perceived. It supports the kind of “image” that is projected to others.
Linguistic	May be derived from cultural or social capital and is cultivated by membership in a specific group.

Figure 4.2: Forms of capital

3. Intratextual and intertextual analysis. Intratextual analysis focuses on the story of experience derived from one interview transcript and pays close attention to three elements: 1) temporal sequence, 2) narrative framing, and 3) dialectical tacking. Intertextual analysis involves looking at the stories of experience across all transcripts and seeking common story lines.

While the notion of open and axial coding is familiar across many disciplines when analyzing qualitative research, the idea of intratextual analysis with a focus on temporal sequence, narrative framing, and dialectical tacking requires further explanation. Temporal sequencing is used to arrange the fragmented comments from one interview into a coherent story. While an interview may have lasted an hour or more and the participant veered from one topic to the next and then perhaps back to a previous topic, temporal sequencing untangles the narrative and provides a cohesive account of the experience discussed. Next, according to Jeff Murray, “narrative framing encourages the researcher to construct an interpretation around key meanings” (PPT #2, slide #24). In other words, as a single transcript is analyzed, key meanings should be identified (open coding will help identify these key meanings) and an interpretation should be developed alluding to what those key meanings indicate in terms of the participant’s described experience. The third focus mentioned by Murray is dialectical tacking. This concept can be the most challenging to understand, but based on Murray’s work, I interpret dialectical tacking as drawing (or “tacking”) connections between each individual transcript’s interpretations and the overarching theory applied to the study. In the case of this project, dialectical tacking involves connecting interpretations from the transcripts to the notions of habitus and interpellation. Dialectical tacking will help answer questions regarding how the information collected from interviews relates to the construction of habitus and the social act of interpellation.

Performing the Research Study

The next section of this chapter discusses the step-by-step research process that was performed to carry out the project. This information is provided for two reasons: to shed light on exactly how the study was carried out and to provide the methodological details for future applications. The process described below began after the three brand communities were selected.

The Research Process

Identify Participant Sample

1. A main point of contact (or contacts) was established for each brand community. The contact provided a list of potential interview participants (in two of the three cases). After being contacted by the point-of-contact, each potential participant communicated whether or not they were interested in participating in the study. Once their interest was confirmed, the point-of-contact shared the potential participants' contact information with me (the researcher).
2. Introductory emails were sent to each potential participant. These emails included a greeting and explained the reason for the contact. They also included a PDF of the consent form, the audio release form, and a link to the pre-interview questionnaire. Potential participants were asked to complete and sign the two forms and return them via email. They were also asked to complete the pre-interview questionnaire and to provide 2 – 3 dates and times that fit their schedule for a 1-hour phone interview.

Conduct Phenomenological Interviews

3. After contacting potential participants, interviews were conducted on a rolling basis as participants submitted the completed consent forms and identified a date and time for their interview. The audio of all interviews was recorded using a digital recording device.
4. After completing all interviews, the audio files were sent to a transcriber.

Collect, Code, and Analyze Data

5. With interviews transcribed, NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to perform various coding strategies, beginning with basic open and axial coding. To identify the open coding categories, the transcripts were uploaded to the NVivo software, were read, and comments that fell into similar categories were marked. Axial coding, whereby the categories are examined in relation to one another then revealed themes in the data.
6. The transcripts were also analyzed with Bourdieu's forms of capital in mind. Using NVivo, comments relevant to each form of capital were grouped together for each brand community.
7. As transcripts were analyzed intratextually, the concepts of temporal sequence, narrative framing, and dialectical tacking were kept in mind. While these strategies are not required for the analysis of each transcript, Murray suggests keeping them in mind as analysis is performed and making use of them when they are appropriate or useful in revealing data. Transcripts were also analyzed intertextually to seek out common story lines across all

transcripts. As mentioned, all coding strategies were performed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software, which allows for in-depth analysis, coding, and visualization of qualitative data.

8. The text analysis of all interview transcripts followed the coding and categorization practices outlined above. Transcripts were analyzed individually and then overarching themes across texts were sought.
9. Resulting data was analyzed and interpreted. The results of all coding exercises were summarized and when possible, presented in visualizations representative of the findings. Through coding, it is hoped that certain interpellative or persuasive factors – including social roles – regarding the formation of a brand community and its user experience will emerge.

Report Findings

10. The study results, analysis, interpretations, and future directions are addressed in the following chapters. Through analysis of the results, the argument is made whether or not existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing are suitable research methods for the constructivist approach to user experience research. Collecting this data also allows me to construct a visualization of the brand's habitus. This will provide a useful illustration for experience architects and brand managers who are concerned with the factors of building strong brand communities.

Intended Accomplishment and Application of the Research

One deliverable of this project is a research method that can be applied to the constructivist approach to user experience. As mentioned earlier, the constructivist approach is a newer perspective to the field and thus, there is currently no “go-to” method that is proving particularly fruitful for user research. It is my intention to show that existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing are methods that have the ability to reveal important information about users and that the resulting information can be used to inform decisions on interface design.

The mapping of a brand community’s habitus that results from the interview data is another useful deliverable of this project. Regardless of whether a persuasive interface needs to be designed, the ability to visually map a brand’s habitus is a powerful tool that can be used for a variety of marketing and communication-related purposes. The attempt to define the social roles of users is frequently done by developing personas and customer journey maps, however, neither of those methods provides an in-depth account of the “space” within which the users operate. Mapping the habitus does just that. It provides a sense of how important specific forms of capital are to a user or a brand community and thus, can aid designers and marketers in appealing to more specific user needs. Mapping the habitus helps shed light on the values and social roles of a particular user community. The fact that the habitus can be visually mapped and presented instead of described using only text may help the concept be more easily accepted by those not already familiar with the concept.

With the details of the project's data collection method and form of analysis laid out, Chapter V presents the results from the phenomenological interviews. The results of each brand community are presented as separate cases in three main sections. Each section of the chapter begins with a brief description of the brand community, its identity, and its participants before presenting the results. Further chapters will provide analysis, discussion, and implications of the described results.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the phenomenological interviews and to also provide a brief description and analysis of what those results mean for each brand community. The results from each case are presented individually and will be compared and contrasted when possible. Recall that the purpose of examining three brands was to demonstrate that this research method can be applied to a variety of brands and consistently produce informative and illuminating results. The brand communities described below are quite different from one another. Case 1 is a brand whose product is an experience. Case 2 is a brand whose product is a tangible skin care line that can be physically applied. Case 3 is a brand whose product is a lifestyle, although they do sell physical goods. Regardless of product type, phenomenological-style interviewing and application of the thorough coding system introduced in Chapter IV produce large amounts of rich data that can be used to influence interpellative interface design or to advance alternative constructivist methods, such as persona development, journey mapping, or customer experience mapping.

Each case begins by describing the brand community and its known identity. Next, details on the participants are provided and their relevance is discussed. Intratextual analysis is addressed next and provides individual summaries for each interview participant. Intertextual analysis provides results related to Bourdieu's

forms of capital and explains how those forms of capital inform the brand community's general habitus. Findings from open coding are presented and examples of how those codes and their associated data contribute to defining the brand's habitus are explained. Next, the brand community's audiences and "found" roles are defined and discussed along with their common interpellative cues. Finally, the suggested interpellative roles for each brand community are defined based on the findings of the brand's general habitus, the brand community's found roles, and the common interpellative cues. The chapter concludes by leading into a discussion of how the results from this project are actionable and can be applied for persuasive interface design.

Case 1: The University Experience

Description of the Brand Community and Its Identity

The first brand community analyzed for this project is a private, liberal arts university with a focus on producing high-achieving students who are proficient in the classroom, but also committed to learning and growth outside of the classroom. For privacy purposes, this brand community will be known as "Rigorous Education University" or "REU." The university was founded in the upstate of South Carolina in the 1800s and has maintained a reputation of prestige and academic excellence. REU is small with approximately 2,700 undergraduates. It is well-known for its picturesque campus, which is open to the public and often used by the surrounding community for events and recreation.

This brand was chosen because as a university, it employs a number of interpellative measures to attract students and employees. These interpellative efforts are accessible because they are open to the public. Having access to such information inferred that much data on the community’s interpellative practices would be easily obtained. The brand community is also unique in that its *product* is an *experience*. While graduates do receive a physical diploma for their efforts, the true product is the experience of physically being at the university and interacting with members of the brand community in order to form meaningful relationships.

Description of the Participants

There were nine interview participants for the REU brand community. Interviews ranged in time from one hour to one and a half hours. Interviews were transcribed, resulting in 252 pages of double-spaced text. The interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software and the following results are the product of that analysis. Of the nine participants, five were female and four were male. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 63. Four participants were students, and the remaining five were employees of the brand. Because this method aims to define the habitus of the brand community, basic demographic data was collected. The demographic data collected from each participant is displayed below in Table 5.1:

	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	# in Household	Occupation	Avg. Household Income	Time with Brand
P1	Female	31	White	Married	3	Assistant Director of Marketing	\$100,000 to \$149,999	More than 5 years

P2	Male	47	White	Married	5	Vice President for Enrollment Management	\$200,000 or more	Less than one year
P3	Female	18	White	In a committed relationship	7	Student – Freshman	\$100,000 to \$149,999	1 – 2 years
P4	Female	19	Hispanic or Latino	In a committed relationship	5	Student – Sophomore	\$35,000 to \$49,999	1 – 2 years
P5	Female	36	White	Married	6	Senior Associate Director of Admission	\$200,000 or more	More than 5 years
P6	Male	38	White	Married	3	Professor of Philosophy	\$75,000 to \$99,999	3 – 5 years
P7	Male	23	White	Single	1	Student – Senior	Less than \$20,000	3 – 5 years
P8	Female	19	Black or African American	Single	2	Student – Sophomore	Less than \$20,000	1 – 2 years
P9	Male	63	White	Married	2	Vice President for Academic Affairs	\$150,000 to \$199,999	More than 5 years

Table 5.1: Demographic data of REU participants

The demographic data contained in the above table is representative of the range of participants and provides more detail on precisely who was interviewed. This table is important because it allows for insight as to the habitus that each participant ascribes to and provides background information to go along with the individual participant summaries provided in the intratextual analysis section below. It also provides a snapshot of the general REU habitus, which will be further explored in the section on intertextual analysis. From this table, we can see that the judgment sample for the REU brand community is quite diverse. Not one classification overwhelmingly dominates. This communicates that the REU brand community is comprised of a variety of individuals and that while there may be a

general consensus on the brand's habitus, the individual accounts of each interview participant are likely to range widely.

Intratextual Analysis

As mentioned in Chapter IV, each interview transcript was first analyzed intratextually, meaning it was analyzed individually and not in relation to the other interview texts. This intratextual analysis provided a description of each participant and a glimpse into their personal values and opinions. Common and overarching themes across interview transcripts were noted and are addressed in the next section on intertextual analysis. The results of intratextual analysis for each interview participant are detailed below:

- Participant 1: An employee of REU who is concerned with how the brand is being portrayed to an outside audience. She describes the brand as being known for hardworking students, high-quality academics, a beautiful campus, and serving others. She is most concerned with issues related to symbolic capital (how REU is represented to others), social capital (the relationships between community members), and educational capital (the purpose of the brand is to educate). Concerning REU's website, she commented that "it's more about evoking the emotions than it is throwing stats at someone." This alludes to her efforts to interpellate others by showing the brand community experience through images and stories with an engaging narrative.

- Participant 2: An employee of REU who perceives it as a high-quality academic institution with a united community, even though its members are from a variety of educational, financial, and geographical positions. He emphasized symbolic capital and alluded to the tradition and heritage of the brand. He also mentioned that economic capital was very important in gaining access to the REU community. Social capital and fostering a strong community holds importance, which Participant 2 alludes to by saying, “it is considered a community, so there’s pride around place. Just like any school or a church. All the church members feel pride, and so, anyone that’s associated with REU would have that school spirit and that pride of place.” With the purpose of REU being the experience of a quality education, educational capital is also of value.
- Participant 3: A student at REU who views the brand as a high-quality, strongly academic institution. She was cognizant of stereotypes and mentioned that although the brand is working to move away from those stereotypes, it is a difficult perception to break because many students fit the demographic of the stereotype. She was very complimentary of REU and spoke at length about its hospitality and efforts to help others within and outside of the community. She spoke of the drive of students and mentioned that the drive was present in most professors as well. Participant 3 had a highly positive, although critical, view of the brand community. Educational and economic capital were portrayed as important to gaining access into the

REU community; however, within the community, social and cultural capital held more importance.

- Participant 4: A student at REU with a highly critical view of the brand. She recognizes that REU is making efforts to include those who don't fit the stereotype that it is known for (economic capital), but she feels that the efforts aren't strong enough. Participant 4 is different than the other students (in race, economic position, and educational background) and she is constantly reminded of it and feels excluded. The exclusion is done primarily by other students within the REU community. Participant 4 commented that employees and professors are very encouraging and friendly. She appreciates the beauty of the campus, but often feels excluded from social connections. In her view, economic and social capital are the most important – all other forms of capital stem from having high amounts of these two.
- Participant 5: An alumni and employee of REU who is very enthusiastic about explaining her personal views of the brand experience. She has a highly positive perspective and described the brand as one that is prestigious and focused on highly-driven students and a high-quality liberal arts education. She told numerous stories about her experiences on campus and it was evident in her voice that she was genuinely proud to discuss her involvement with REU. Social and cultural capital are important to developing the brand experience, although she emphasized that symbolic capital was key to

communicating the brand experience and helping those outside of the REU community understand what it means to be a member of the community.

- Participant 6: An employee of REU who views it as a “prestigious, top-tier, liberal arts university.” He has a critical view of the brand and sees it as having an identity problem. Instead of owning up to what makes the brand distinctive and unique, Participant 6 feels that REU is too concerned with trying to be like other competitor brands (strong value on symbolic capital). Participant 6 feels that there is nothing wrong with REU’s brand and that it is strong and superior to others, it just needs to learn how to “own” that identity. He stressed symbolic and educational as the most influential forms of capital when communicating the REU brand.
- Participant 7: A student at REU who views the community’s reputation as privileged students and rigorous academics (educational capital). He has a positive view of the brand, although he is critical of it as well. He alluded to social capital and emphasized how students and the administration work together to understand and support one another even if they don’t see eye to eye on how things are being done. Culturally, students are dedicated, hard working, and stressed – the campus counseling services are popular. He mentioned symbolic capital in relation to how REU’s website communicates its identity saying that the images don’t communicate what REU is, but what REU wants to be.

- Participant 8: A student at REU who views the community's reputation as a rigorous academic institution that values diverse viewpoints and experiential learning. She comes from a different economic, educational, and racial background than the stereotypical REU community member; however, she feels that REU is the ideal place for her because it welcomes diversity and varied viewpoints. She commented that she does not feel different from her peers and that she feels that she made the best choice in attending the university. She has a very positive view of the brand and is a curious learner. To Participant 8, educational and economic capital are not important when gaining access to the REU community, although both tend to grow as a result of joining the community. She placed the most importance on social and cultural capital.
- Participant 9: An employee of REU who views it as an institution that aims to deliver a unique experience that produces well-rounded students who are capable of being successful inside and outside of the classroom. He emphasized excellence in academics (educational capital). He has been associated with the REU community for over 40 years and has had a positive view of the brand that has only grown. He commented repeatedly on the beauty of the REU campus and how it influenced his decision to join the community. He finds the website problematic in that it doesn't accurately communicate the identity of REU at first glance. He says to "fully understand what's happening," someone must be drawn in to click multiple times and

that is a problem – they should be able to glance at the site and understand the purpose and values of the brand (symbolic capital).

Providing summarized descriptions of each participant's interview is useful because it helps communicate long and often complex discussions by giving the designer a more succinct account. This is helpful to the designer because they do not have to read through every interview transcript to gain an idea of the participants and their thoughts, opinions, and preferences. In a way, the data collected through intratextual analysis creates "mini personas." These summarized descriptions are helpful later in the process when interpellative roles are being defined. The descriptions are also important because they highlight the differences between individuals in the brand community. While this research method is focused on obtaining a description of the brand's general habitus, the differences between individuals helps the designer understand a brand community's various audiences and the roles community members play in relation to one another, as well as to the brand itself.

Intertextual Analysis

With each interview transcript individually analyzed, summarized and its main topics noted; focus shifts to intertextual analysis which provides insight into the codes and themes found to be common across transcripts. Returning to Bourdieu's theory of capital and habitus, the nine interview transcripts were analyzed and episodic units related to the six defined forms of capital were marked. Identifying comments associated with each form of capital supports the project's

focus on describing the habitus using data related to the significance or insignificance of capital. It is important to identify which forms of capital are most and least important to the brand community because this data can provide suggestions for interpellative interface design. In total, 581 episodic units were coded as being related to one of the six forms of capital. The breakdown of the capital-related comments is shown below in Table 5.2 and the percentage of comments in relation to all other capital-related comments is shown in Figure 5.1.

Capital	Cultural	Economic	Educational	Linguistic	Social	Symbolic	Total
# of Comments	145	58	79	52	77	170	581

Table 5.2: Number of capital-related comments from REU transcripts

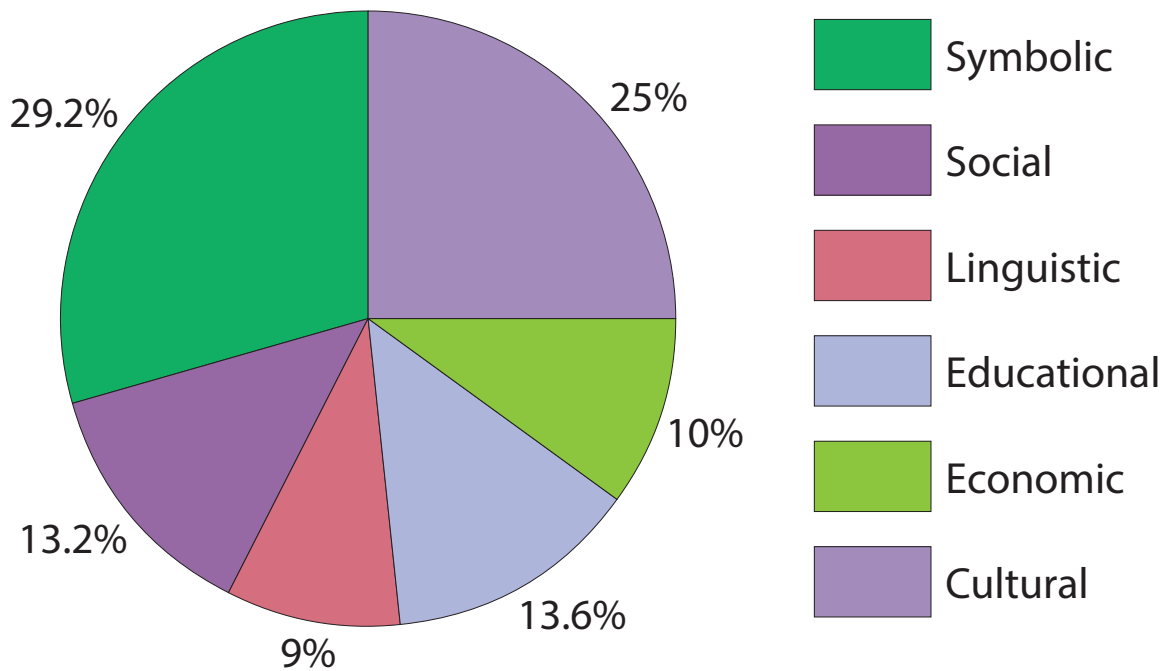


Figure 5.1: Percentages of capital-related comments from REU transcripts

The importance and relevance of these forms of capital to the REU habitus and the social roles of community members is key to informing suggestions for

interpellative interface design. For example, the most frequently mentioned form of capital for the REU community is symbolic capital, followed by cultural capital.

Based on this data, a designer knows that this community places value on communicating its identity and reputation, including its culture, heritage, traditions, and any other elements related to cultural capital. An interface design that would likely speak to this community would strongly and obviously communicate the REU name using logos and familiar symbols and perhaps any awards or recognitions it has received. An interpellative design for the REU community might also portray the culture of the community through images of community members, events, traditions, and memorable locations on campus. Overall, the REU habitus should come across as an identity that values its reputation, heritage, ways of being, and community members. Further discussion and a suggested application of this data for interpellative interface design is demonstrated in the following chapter.

Findings from Open Coding

While coding for specific forms of capital provides insight as to which forms are or are not valued within the REU community, open coding was used to provide additional insight into what those forms of capital represent. It is one thing to know that the REU community values symbolic capital, but in order to better understand the *lived experience* of REU, it is necessary to know that symbolic capital equates to chanting a well-known cheer or displaying the school's colors, logos, or mascot in a particular way. From the previous section, we know that the REU community also values cultural capital, but what does that mean in terms of the lived experience?

Open coding of the phenomenological interview transcripts tells us that the REU community regards cultural capital as traditions on campus, attending certain events with other community members, and treating other community members with warm hospitality, as alluded to in this quote from Participant 5: “You will hear: this is the REU family. It’s something that not only the current students, but the faculty, the staff, the parents of current students are all part of this experience.”

These details of the lived REU experience are important in that they provide a more thorough understanding of the six main forms of capital. These details help the researcher form a more complete impression of the habitus of a REU community member. Knowing what kind of symbolic or cultural capital is valued to the community also influences the design details of an interpellative interface. For example, with value placed on symbolic capital and reputation, the REU interface would likely be more interpellative if it included obvious references to the REU logo, symbols, and colors or if it included an image and caption touting the university’s latest top ranking or achievement among its competitors. In order to obtain descriptive information like this, it is important to thoroughly code and mine the interview transcripts to form a more cohesive impression of the brand community’s lived experience. The next chapter will demonstrate how these details can be used to influence the design of an interpellative interface.

Through the process of open coding and consolidating those descriptive codes across all interview transcripts, twelve codes were identified. Additional analysis of those codes resulted in a reduction to five main descriptive coding

categories with a number of sub-categories. The main codes and the number of episodic units associated with each code are listed below in Table 5.3:

Code	# of Comments
Attempts at diversification	25
Communicating the brand	279
The university experience	373
Limited exposure	14
Privileged or prestigious	47

Table 5.3: Open coding categories from all nine REU transcripts

The codes “communicating the brand” and “the university experience” were broken down into additional sub-codes. “Communicating the brand” was sorted into six categories. The main code was assigned to comments that referred to communicating the brand, but did not specify a mode of how the brand was communicated. The other five sub-codes pertain to the different modes of communication. Comments for this code had to meet two qualifications: the comment had to address communicating the identity of the brand and also, communicating the identity of the brand through a specified mode. For example, this quote from Participant 1 coded as “communicating the brand” and the sub-category “website” because the participant was describing how the REU website communicates the expected experience of interacting with the brand:

I think what is missing here is something having to do with, and this is hard to capture in one image, but something having to do with the relationships that you build here, like I was saying earlier with the students and the faculty and how you’re, when you decide to come here you are instantly part of this community that’s going to support you all four years you’re here.

Another example is this quote from Participant 3 coded as “communicating the brand” and the sub-category “face to face:”

I think there is probably a little bit of everything at REU. But as a general rule, probably the biggest thing is face-to-face, which I think is awesome because that is not super true in our world anymore. But professors want you to come in and talk to them in their office. They’re not just going to email you about everything.

This quote provides insight into one of the ways that community members interact with one another in their lived experiences as members of the REU community.

As previously mentioned, while this coding process is tedious, it provides valuable details regarding the lived experience of each interview participant. Quotes like the two above help the researcher understand a number of elements including the roles that members currently play in the community, current efforts to interpellate people into the community, and values that members share or consider critical to the identity of the brand. Details of the “communicating the brand” code are shown below in Table 5.4:

Code	# of Comments
Communicating the brand	130
Email	5
Face to face	7
Print	4
Social media	17
Website	56

Table 5.4: Sub-codes of the “communicating the brand” code

“The university experience” was sorted into eight categories. The main code was assigned to comments that referred to a general sense of the REU experience. The other seven sub-codes pertain to the most prominent depictions of the university experience. A sample comment coded under the sub-code “sense of community” comes from Participant 3: “I think the community as a whole is just so caring. If you’re sick, six people offer to take you to a doctor and bring you soup. It really is everyone taking care of each other so that we can all be the best instead of everyone focusing on just themselves.” Another quote to further contextualize the coded data comes from Participant 1 and falls into the sub-category “beautiful campus:”

We’ve always tried to pair the idea of a beautiful campus with the fact that it’s intentional for us to have a beautiful campus because we believe the residential experience here is an important part of a student’s education. Our campus is one that encourages creativity and encourages introspection and encourages someone to leave their dorm and go study under a tree one day and get out in nature for a little bit. It’s an important part of the college experience here.

From the quote above, a designer can better understand the value of REU’s campus aesthetics and how they play into the larger picture of the brand’s habitus. Cultural capital is important to the REU habitus and the experience of the campus and its beauty is a part of that culture. With this in mind, a designer might make the decision to speak to cultural capital by showcasing images of the campus. Quantified

details of the “the university experience” code and its sub-codes are depicted below in Table 5.5:

Code	# of Comments
The university experience	104
Beautiful campus	55
Campus traditions	23
Hospitality	28
Sense of community	46
Serving others	23
Strong academics	64
Supporting students	30

Table 5.5: Sub-codes of the “the university experience” code

Current Interpellative Efforts by the Brand Community

With a desire to define the habitus and interpellative roles of the REU brand, it is valuable to analyze the current interpellative efforts put forth by the community. The REU interview transcripts yielded 96 episodic units related to the act of interpellation. Those units can be placed into nine different categories, which are listed below:

1. Communicating affordability
2. Evoking emotions through stories
3. Familiar images and nostalgia (shared rituals and traditions)
4. Obvious Web content
5. Projecting a desired lifestyle
6. Student generated content (not pushed from REU)
7. Surrounded by those who are similar (consciousness of kind)
8. The promise of continued success

9. The relationships you will build / being cared for (sense of moral responsibility)

What can be learned from this data? The majority of the comments were related to projecting a desired lifestyle, which makes sense given that the most important forms of capital to the REU community are symbolic and cultural. These nine codes also tie in to the interpellative cues discussed in the next sections on roles that bring people into the REU community. It is worth noting that some of the current efforts map to Muniz and O'Guinn's basic markers for brand communities: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility. This makes sense considering these are efforts to bring members in to further grow the existing community. Muniz and O'Guinn's three markers are noted for the other two cases and their current interpellative efforts, as well.

Taking a closer look at the community's current interpellative efforts provides a context for discussing how designers can use this data to develop interpellative interfaces. The next section keeps these efforts in mind and considers them when thinking about the roles brand community members play.

Identifying Audiences and Found Roles

Based on the content of the interviews, there are four notable audiences for the REU community: students, employees, alumni and parents. Generally, a fifth audience is often thought of for universities: prospective students. This fifth audience was not included in this project because the data collected from interviews did not provide much support. While common sense tells us that this is certainly an

important audience for a university, there was simply not enough discussion of that audience and their roles in the nine phenomenological interviews. Future research dealing with universities could address this audience by seeking out prospective students and having them participate in the interviews.

Considering the four main audiences that were discussed in the interviews, episodic units related to these audiences and the roles that they play within the community were identified. In total, 170 units provided insight to the student audience, 62 to the employee audience, 35 to the alumni audience, and 6 to the parent audience. The coded comments were analyzed and roles associated with each audience were identified. It is important to note that these roles are ones that current REU community members either play or project that others in the community play. Meaning, these are “found” roles, representative of how the interview participants interact with the REU community. These roles provide valuable information that helps shed light on the common cues that interpellate people into the community. These cues are signals that designers can incorporate into the interface design to encourage people to play a certain role. The next chapter will demonstrate how these cues can be used. The found roles and their common interpellative cues are described below.

Content from the student audience comments provided descriptions for three specific roles, as well as their common cues for interpellation. The three roles and common cues are described below:

Found student roles:

- The Legacy Student: typically high income, white, Christian, conservative background, second (or more) generation college kid, described as always looking presentable (hair and make-up done)
- The Typical Student: often middle-class, in school with loans or federal aid (majority of students)
- The First Generation Student: typically lower income background, in school on a scholarship, first generation college kid

Common interpellative cues:

1. Driven, hardworking, high achievers, curious, motivated to ask questions, open-minded
2. Service-focused, a desire to help and serve others, cognizant of the world around them and want to contribute, hospitable towards others
3. Competitive educational background, either public or private school
4. Not competitive with each other – support each other
5. Entrepreneurial, start non-profits
6. Highly involved (clubs, organizations, attending speakers/ events)
7. Form quality relationships with other students and faculty, close-knit
8. Pride in their alma mater, school spirit, pride of place
9. Social media savvy, but appreciate face-to-face interaction

The employee audience comments provided descriptions for two specific roles.

Again, a number of common interpellative cues were shared by all of the identified

roles. The two employee-focused roles and their common interpellative cues are listed below:

Found employee roles:

- The Enthusiastic Administrator: dedicated to developing and furthering the reputation of the brand community, focused on supporting students, proud to work for the brand
- The Motivating Faculty Member: dedicated to students' success, pushes students to succeed, focus on teaching over publishing, often liberal (in a political sense), geographically diverse, diverse socio-economic backgrounds, diverse ideologies (in regards to political and social philosophies), highly educated (PhDs)

Common interpellative cues:

1. Hardworking, high-achieving
2. Supportive of co-workers, treat others like family
3. Values a liberal arts education: "Committed to being good wherever they are and making wherever they are better." (Participant 6)
4. Quality relationships with other employees and students, close-knit
5. Pride in their community members (both colleagues and students)
6. Frequently use email to communicate with others, but prefer to communicate face-to-face with students
7. Feel fortunate to work at the university

The alumni-related comments provided descriptions for one general role. This description was consistent across all participants who discussed alumni and their relationship with the REU community. Although only one main role was identified, there are six common interpellative cues listed below:

Found alumni role and common interpellative cues:

The Nostalgic and Supportive Alumni:

1. Pride in their alma mater, thankful for the opportunity to attend
2. Leaders in their communities and professions (many entrepreneurs, doctors, teachers, non-profits, missionary work)
3. Attend annual Homecoming events
4. Close-knit, stay connected to the community via the website, social media (mostly Facebook), the alumni magazine, and “alumni days” in various cities
5. Participates in fundraising via social media
6. Encourage their children, grandchildren, other family members to attend

The parent audience comments provided descriptions for two specific roles. The parent audience was only mentioned by three out of the nine participants. It was depicted as a less prevalent audience in the REU community. For this reason, little data was collected on the audience and not much can be implied by what was collected. However, for the purpose of being thorough and addressing all audiences mentioned in the participant interviews, the two parent-related roles and their common interpellative cues are listed below:

Found parent roles:

- The College-Educated Parents: bachelor or graduate degrees, middle- or upper-class economic standing, higher income
- The Non-College-Educated Parents: no degree or a high school degree, lower economic standing, lower income

Common interpellative cues:

1. Use the website to gather information before introducing the university to their children

Using Found Roles to Define Interpellative Roles

The rich data described above can be used in a number of ways to design or enhance the user experience. For example, this data could be helpful in creating descriptive personas because it is detailed enough to provide information on an individual or specific audience's preferences and personality traits. This kind of data could also be used to inform the design of a journey map or customer experience map because it allows the researcher to better understand the individual's lived experience. It is simultaneously exciting and overwhelming to be confronted by such a large amount of descriptive data. This is one of the benefits of performing phenomenological interviews.

While the data has much potential and could be employed to suit the needs of other constructivist research methods – which is certainly something to explore in the future – this project uses it to inform the development of roles that people would be interpellated into as they interact with a brand community's interface.

Although the data collected from the interviews could be applied to persona design, it is instead applied to user role design. There is a distinct difference between personas and roles. According to Kim Goodwin in her book *Designing for the Digital Age*, “roles are familiar constructs in the world of enterprise software, where system permissions differ based on job descriptions and levels of authority” (237). Roles are largely defined by tasks meaning that a specific role interacts with a product, system, or interface in a specific way. Goodwin writes that it is not uncommon to have multiple personas associated with a role where the differences in personas represents the “range of behavior within a role” (237). From another perspective, one persona may represent more than one role (Goodwin 238). While both personas and social roles can be derived from the data and analysis of this project, they are two distinct entities and the focus for this project is on the development of the roles.

Based on the found roles, supported with details from their common interpellative cues, and taking into consideration the brand community’s general habitus as defined using Bourdieu’s forms of capital; interpellative roles that the community can use to hail non-members into their community can be developed. The common interpellative cues drive the interpellative role description, while the found roles represent possible variations – to one side of the spectrum or another – of the goal interpellative role description. Based on the data above, four main interpellative roles have been identified for the REU community. Each description was derived from the common interpellative cues associated with found roles. The

cues were considered against the brand community's general habitus and the interpellative roles, suggested content, and design strategies were formed. Figure 5.2 depicts a visual interpretation of this process.

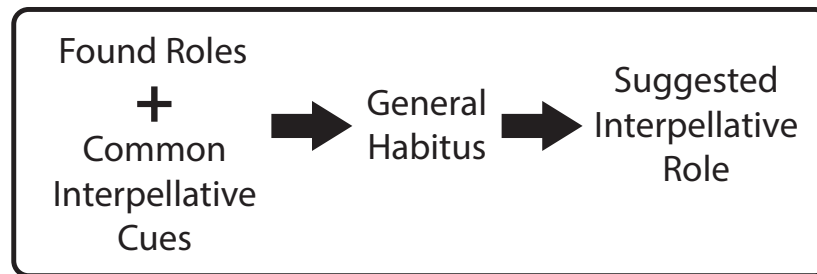


Figure 5.2: Using data to influence and define the interpellative role

The suggested content and design strategies align with not only the interpellative role descriptions, but the forms of capital valued by the brand community. Each interpellative role, its suggested content and design strategies, and a rationale explaining how the role and strategies were extrapolated from the data is discussed below. The next chapter will demonstrate how these descriptions and strategies can be used to influence interface design.

Interpellative Role 1: The REU Student:

A dedicated and high-achieving student who is motivated to serve and help others, whether it be someone inside or outside of the community. They have entrepreneurial tendencies. The student values quality relationships and builds them through community involvement. They are savvy with social media, but know the value of face-to-face communication. The student takes pride in their community and what it represents.

To hail someone into this role, a designer must communicate the lived student experience. To do this, they might incorporate social media, display symbols of the community and provide a link to purchase products that use the symbols (t-shirts, flags, bumper stickers), tell stories of students and their ventures, tell stories and provide images of student-student or student-employee relationships, provide images of students enjoying an event, or highlight various service opportunities.

Why might a designer incorporate this content or these design elements? Because each element not only aligns with the interpellative role description, but it also aligns with a form of capital valued by the brand community – in the case of REU: cultural and symbolic capital. For example, displaying symbols of the community and providing a link to purchase items with those symbols relates to symbolic capital in that it focuses on communicating the reputation and identity of the community. Being able to purchase this symbolic capital and wear or display it aligns with someone who has pride in their community and wants to make it known. Another example: telling stories and showing images of students and their ventures or experiences with non-profits relates to cultural capital in that it focuses on non-financial values that contribute to social mobility within the community. The notion of working with non-profits and businesses aligns with someone who has entrepreneurial tendencies and is motivated to help others. Showing these values through images speaks to symbolic capital. Similar arguments can be made for all other suggested content and design elements for each interpellative role associated with the community.

Interpellative Role 2: The REU Employee:

A dedicated and high-achieving employee who values a liberal arts education. They value quality relationships and face-to-face communication. The employee takes pride in their colleagues' and students' achievements and feels fortunate to work for the university.

To hail someone into this role, a designer must communicate the lived employee experience. To do this, they might highlight employee achievements, highlight and stress the values of a liberal arts school, tell stories of employee-employee and employee-student relationships, provide images of those interactions, highlight student achievements, show images of the beautiful campus, and incorporate quotes from employees on why they value the university.

Interpellative Role 3: The REU Alumni:

A nostalgic alumni who values staying connected to the community and who takes pride in the community and what it represents. The alumni contributes to fundraising (often via social media) and encourages others to join the community.

To communicate the lived alumni experience and thus, hail someone into the role, a designer might include familiar images from the community, incorporate social media links for networking and fundraising opportunities, tell stories of star fundraisers, tell stories about legacies and include a "refer a student" link, include an alumni directory for reconnecting, and display symbols of the community and provide a link to purchase. Given the fact that this audience has already been

interpellated into the brand once (when they were students), guiding them into the desired alumni role should be a simple task.

Interpellative Role 4: The REU Parent:

While the data indicates that the parent audience is important to the brand community, interviews did not provide enough data to develop a thorough description of the interpellative role or to suggest content and design strategies. Future research could be aimed at this audience and provide a better idea of its lived experience.

The other two cases for this project are detailed below in the same format as above. The results and analysis of Case 1 included explanations, qualifications, and contextualizations for why the data was important to the overarching purpose of the project, as well as how it can be used to influence interpellative interface design. The results and analysis of Cases 2 and 3 will focus more on the data since it has already been explained why the data is relevant and important.

Case 2: The Community Built from Direct Sales

Description of the Brand Community and Its Identity

The second brand community analyzed for this project is a fast-growing, direct sales, high-end skin care company. For privacy purposes, this brand community will be known as “New You Skin Care.” New You Skin Care was founded in the early 2000s by two dermatologists who had already made a reputable name for themselves in the skin care product industry. Products were sold in high-end department stores until the decision was made to pull products from the shelves

and to adopt a more personal direct selling approach. With over 50,000 product sellers, or as they are called within the New You community: “consultants,” the company has experienced fast growth and is considered one of the largest skin care brands on the market. With its wild success in the United States, New You has recently expanded to other countries. With skin care as such a lucrative industry, the brand expects to continue its trend of fast growth as it expands world-wide. The New You business model consists of consultants who work on teams. Not only do consultants earn commission on the products they sell, but depending on their level within the business model, they can earn commission from up to five levels of consultants below them on their team. New You touts itself as a company with products that not only change people’s skin, but change their lives as well. This mission can be interpreted in a number of ways, the two most common being that the products physically change people’s skin and thus, give them confidence and that the company changes the lives of each consultant by providing them with the opportunity to run their own business and make additional income to support their desired lifestyle.

New You Skin Care was chosen for a number of reasons. One of which is the fact that it seems to be everywhere: on television, on social media, and being sold by many friends and family members. It has a reputation for facilitating community, especially among the consultants who choose to pursue a career with the company. Consultants who are members of the same team are frequently noticed on social media supporting, promoting, and congratulating one another on their

accomplishments. This very public view of the brand is also an interpellative tactic that hails others to join as new consultants. With its open policy on touting its community members and their progress and with a number of consultants with personal ties to myself, New You Skin Care was an obvious choice for this project.

Description of the Participants

There were five interview participants for the New You community. Interviews ranged in time from thirty minutes to one hour and forty-five minutes. Interviews were transcribed, resulting in 139 pages of double-spaced text. As with the first case, interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software and the following results are the product of that analysis. All five participants were female and were between the ages of 29 and 36. All participants were customers of New You Skin Care at one point and four of the five participants went on to join the brand as consultants. With a focus on defining the habitus of the New You community, basic demographic data was collected. This data relates to a number of elements that play a role in shaping the habitus of the brand and is taken into consideration when defining the interpellative roles that community members are hailed into. The demographic data collected from each participant is displayed below in Table 5.6:

	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	# in Household	Occupation	Avg. Household Income	Time with Brand
P1	Female	29	White	Single	1	Graphic Designer and Independent Consultant	\$50,000 to \$74,999	Less than one year
P2	Female	35	White	Married	4	Part-time	\$150,000 to	3 – 5 years

						Pharmaceutical Sales and Level 2 Executive Consultant	\$199,999	
P3	Female	31	White	Married	4	Attorney and Independent Consultant	\$100,00 to \$149,999	Less than one year
P4	Female	36	Asian	Married	5	Level 5 Executive Consultant	\$100,00 to \$149,999	1 - 2 years
P5	Female	29	White	Married	2	Teacher	\$75,000 to \$99,999	Less than one year

Table 5.6: Demographic data of New You Skin Care participants

The above table of demographic data is useful because it simultaneously provides the researcher with information about each individual participant and provides a quick preview of the brand’s habitus. All five participants have much in common. This suggests that the New You Skin Care brand community is comprised of individuals who are quite similar and likely, are able to easily relate to one another. While the table shows that the majority of participants are young, married women, the additional intra- and intertextual analyses detailed below will provide further insights as to the general habitus of the brand community.

Intratextual Analysis

As with the brand community from Case 1, each interview transcript was first analyzed intratextually. This analysis provided a detailed description of each participant, including their personal values and opinions, which shape their lived experience with the brand community. The results of intratextual analysis for the New You Skin Care participants are detailed below:

- Participant 1: An employee with New You Skin Care who sees the community as a way to make extra income on the side. She believes in the products and that the community holds value for those who are members; however, she is not fully invested. She views the brand as high-end, credible, and a vehicle to obtain more economic capital. Social capital is very important to the New You community in that through relationships, employees sell products, grow their sales team, and find financial success. Although she was not cognizant of it, Participant 1 use a lot of brand-specific language indicating that linguistic capital plays a prominent role in interpellating members into the community. She does not like the community's website in that it is clunky and difficult for her to place orders for her customers. Using the interface is unpleasant and this demotivates her from pursuing sales.
- Participant 2: An employee with New You Skin Care who views its reputation as high-end, desirable, and credible. Social and cultural capital are the most important to her in that she grows her business by forming relationships and by helping customers find value in living the New You community's target lifestyle. Economic capital is important because the products are expensive and as an employee of the brand, you must spend money to make money. Participant 2 has a very positive view of the New You community and is constantly reaching out to those who she feels fits the image of the brand and encourages them to either become customers or employees. She utilizes social media as well as the website when interacting with the New You

community. Although complex, she does not take issue with the website and feels that it supports the needs of the consultant role.

- Participant 3: An employee with New You Skin Care who is more interested in the business component of the community (economic capital) than cultivating the brand's lifestyle. She views the brand as high-end and professional. She values the New You community because it provides financial flexibility. She did stress the importance of social capital. Through relationships, employees grow their business, leading to higher economic capital. She feels the website is more focused on products than the culture of the community, and although frustrating, she did not name the website as a barrier to business success.
- Participant 4: An employee with New You Skin Care who is energized and motivated to tell others about her experience with the community in order to grow her social network and interpellate others into the brand. She is a full-time consultant who is highly motivated by the incentives provided by the brand. Although she enjoys the high levels of economic capital that have resulted from her involvement with the New You community, she is more focused on growing social capital and enjoying the cultural capital associated with the brand. Participant 4 feels like she has found the ideal career and that she embodies what it means to be a member of the New You community. As with Participant 1, Participant 4 uses a lot of brand-specific language, but is not cognizant of her usage. This usage indicates that linguistic capital plays a

prominent role in interpellating members into the New You community. She is very positive about the brand's website and feels that it does a good job of communicating the brand's identity. From an employee standpoint, she uses the site multiple times a day and welcomes any simplifications.

- Participant 5: A customer of New You Skin Care who is skeptical that she fits in with the community's reputation. She is most concerned with economic capital and does not like how expensive the brand's products are. For her, being part of the New You community means that she occasionally uses their products, but she does not feel that she is living the lifestyle of the brand. She does have a positive view of the brand and will continue to be involved; however, she does not feel that participating in the New You community contributes to her personal identity. She sees the brand's website as functional, but unimportant. Her interactions with the brand are mostly face-to-face or over the phone.

As mentioned in Case 1, the above summarized descriptions of each participant's dialogue are valuable in that they communicate the participants' individual thoughts, opinions, and preferences in a concise way that can be easily accessed by the designer. Details from these descriptions highlight the differences between individual members of the brand community and can be useful when defining the various social roles and cues likely to interpellate users to the community. For example, as explained in the next section on intertextual analysis, the New You Skin Care community most values social capital and as summarized above, all four

participants who work for the brand see social capital as important to the identity of the community.

This alignment of general habitus and individual participants suggests that those who work for the brand value social capital and relationships with others. In order to interpellate the “right” kind of people into the role of New You Skin Care consultant, an interface should appeal to a highly social, highly relationship-focused role. A designer might translate this information into an interface that uses images of consultants interacting with other consultants, as well as customers. They might also translate this into a featured article on a consultant and his or her relationship with a top customer and how that relationship has brought benefits for both the consultant and the customer. Participant 2 increases her social capital by presenting the appealing lifestyle of New You Skin Care, so perhaps a designer could incorporate this detail by displaying images that not only communicate a sense of personal relationship between consultant and customer, but that also communicate being a part of a certain lifestyle. In this way and many others, the descriptive summaries of each participant can influence interpellative interface design.

Intertextual Analysis

With each participant’s interview transcript individually analyzed, intertextual analysis was performed to identify overarching themes across all New You Skin Care transcripts. Just as with the first case, the analysis focused on Bourdieu’s forms of capital and their level of value or importance to the community. However, as shown below, Case 1 and Case 2 differ in which forms of capital are

most valued. Knowing which forms of capital are significant or insignificant to the community provides information that can be used when defining interpellative roles, as well as design elements for an interpellative interface. From the five New You Skin Care interview transcripts, 297 episodic units were coded as being related to one of the six forms of capital. The breakdown of the capital-related units is detailed below in Table 5.7 and the percentage of comments in relation to all capital-related comments is detailed below in Figure 5.3:

Capital	Cultural	Economic	Educational	Linguistic	Social	Symbolic	Total
# of Comments	22	68	29	46	75	57	297

Table 5.7: Number of capital-related comments from NYSC transcripts

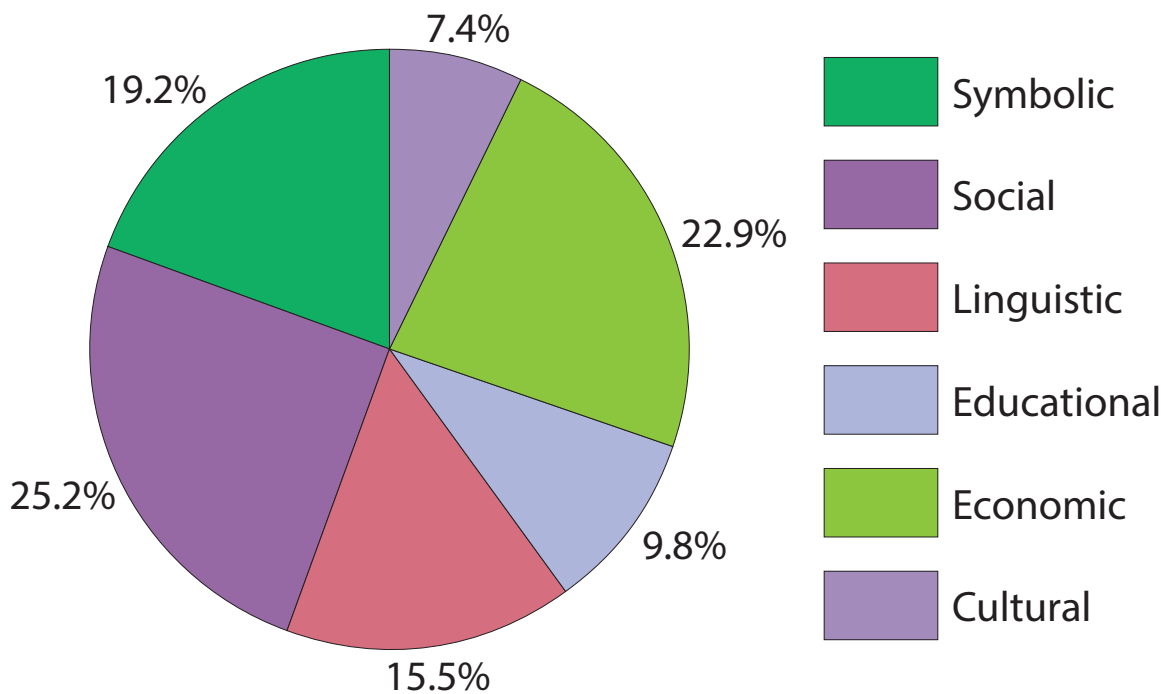


Figure 5.3: Percentages of capital-related comments from NYSC transcripts

The most frequently mentioned form of capital for the New You Skin Care community was social capital, followed by economic capital. Based on these findings, a designer knows that this community holds relationships with others in high regard. It also communicates that economic standing and finances play a key role in forming the brand's identity. Further investigation into the data reveals that the high-pricing of the brand's products and the nature of how employees run their personal business is what contributes to this focus on economic capital. Money is required for involvement in this community, whether that involvement is as a customer or as a consultant investing in his or her own personal business.

Based on this knowledge, an interface design that would likely speak to the New You Skin Care community would strongly communicate the idea of forming bonds and building relationships with others. This might be done through images or emotional stories that highlight a community member's connection with others. An interpellative design for this community might also be up-front with its value on economic capital by showing photos of the incentives, prizes, vacations, and luxury vehicles that many consultants aspire to obtain. From the customer viewpoint, communicating the pricing of the brand's products and perhaps a rationalization of the high price would also be helpful.

It is important here to note that by applying the method of phenomenological interviewing and a thorough coding system, key elements of both the New You Skin Care and Rigorous Education University brand communities were revealed. While all brand communities are likely to place some level of value on the various forms of

capital, this method has shown which forms are more frequently discussed and in turn, likely considered to be of higher importance to each community. New You Skin Care was found to place value on social and economic capital, while REU was found to place value on symbolic and cultural capital. The ability to reveal these differences between communities and to provide this unique data is highly useful for design purposes.

Findings from Open Coding

Next, open coding was applied to gain a more thorough image of what the forms of capital represent for the New You Skin Care community. This detailed coding process provided insight into the lived experience of the community. We know that the community values social capital, but what exactly does that mean? Through coding the phenomenological interview transcripts, it was learned that the community values face-to-face interaction with other community members and that they grow their business through networking on social media. Social media is also a space in which community members offer support for one another as they grow their personal business or find success with the brand's products. Open coding is important to the analysis of the brand community because it provides additional details that help us understand the lived experience of its members. Obtaining this detailed level of data helps form a more cohesive vision of the brand's habitus and in turn, provides designers with important details that can be used to cue people into specific roles. The next chapter will take some of these details and demonstrate how they can be applied to guide interpellative interface design.

Through the process of coding the New You Skin Care transcripts, thirteen codes were identified. Additional analysis of those codes resulted in a reduction to seven main coding categories. These categories are useful in that they provide a more in-depth understanding of the brand community’s habitus and lived experience. The main codes and the number of episodic units associated with each code are listed below in Table 5.8:

Code	# of Comments
Be your own boss	36
Communication practices	132
Consultant support	42
Focus on business, not product	5
Growth	45
Product-related values	63
Reputation	79

Table 5.8: Open coding categories from all five NYSC transcripts

The codes “communication practices,” “product-related values,” and “reputation” were broken down into additional sub-codes. “Communication practices” was sorted into nine sub-codes. Each sub-code pertains to a different mode of communication used by the community. For example, a quote from Participant 1 coded as “communication practices,” sub-code “social media:” “...it is a great resource for quick answers and to get other consultant’s opinions because with a network as large as it is, it’s pretty good odds that someone else has had a customer with a very similar issue or question.” This quote provides insight into communication practices of the community, but also speaks to how the community places value on social capital and forming relationships with others. Another example from Participant 2 about company recruitment presentations:

It's just a really collaborative spirit that you feel like everyone is there to help you and it's such a team environment and it's pretty magnetic when you get there and that's why they do those events all over the country all the time is because I can talk to you all day long and you can be like, "Ehh," but then I can take you to an event where there are a lot of people who look like you and you have stuff in common with, you went to school with and it's just a really good experience and you want to be a part of it. And it's fun, too!

The above quote coded as "communication practices," "in person" and gives the reader an idea of the kind of social capital the community values. With this information, a designer learns that attending recruitment presentations and other in-person events are influential in getting people to join the company. Knowing this, they might incorporate an image of consultants enjoying an event or include encouraging quotes from event goers. Details of the "communication practices" code are displayed below in Table 5.9:

Code	# of Comments
Follow ups	1
From the brand	20
In person	8
Mail	2
Networking	11
Phone	15
Social media	27
Website	40
Word of mouth	8

Table 5.9: Sub-codes of the "communication practices" code

The "product-related values" code is comprised of four sub-codes. The sub-codes pertain to the most prominent values associated with the physical products

produced by New You Skin Care. For example, this quote from Participant 4 coded as “high end or high quality:” “Premium, premium meaning we’re running with Este Lauder, Clinique, and Lancome. That’s premium. It’s higher, better ingredients, anti-aging, age-defying ingredients in there.” And this quote from Participant 1 coded as “expensive:” “I think for a lot of people in our age demographic, when they hear the price, it’s a bit of sticker shock.” Both of these quotes address the community’s focus on economic capital and provide insight as to how customers perceive the brand.

Details of the “product-related values” code are shown below in Table 5.10:

Code	# of Comments
A product for everyone	14
Convenience	14
Expensive	15
High end or high quality	20

Table 5.10: Sub-codes of the “product-related values” code

The “reputation” code consists of three sub-codes. The sub-codes address the three main topics from discussion that are related to the reputation of New You Skin Care and its community. This code and its sub-codes provide insight into how the community views symbolic capital. For example, Participant 3 said: “They’re very focused on the actual skin care products and then through what that can do all around – the confidence building and making people feel more comfortable in their life, as well.” This quote coded as “helping people with their skin,” which is an important part of how the brand communicates its identity to others. Insights like those mentioned above can hold great value, especially when trying to better

understand how the community views different forms of capital. Details of the “reputation” code are shown below in Table 5.11:

Code	# of Comments
Changing lives	34
Credibility	21
Helping people with their skin	24

Table 5.11: Sub-codes of the “reputation” code

Current Interpellative Efforts by the Brand Community

As with Case 1, the interview transcripts were coded for comments relating to any current interpellative efforts put forth by the community. The New You Skin Care transcripts yielded 88 episodic units for this code. Again, connections can be made to Muniz and O’Guinn’s three basic markers of brand communities. The 88 units were allocated into nine different categories:

1. Credible reputation and quality products
2. Customer interface design
3. Get in on the ground floor
4. Incentives
5. Positive motivational language
6. Selling with a personal touch
7. Strong support system (sense of moral responsibility)
8. Success stories (shared rituals and traditions)
9. Surrounded by those who are similar (consciousness of kind)

One insight gleaned from this data is that all community members, both customer and employee, are motivated by incentives whether it be a 60-day money back guarantee or a new Lexus. This finding ties in with the fact that economical capital is highly valued within the community. Also, employees are often attracted to the brand because of its robust support system, which includes support from their fellow team members as well as the brand itself. This finding supports the notion that social capital is highly valued within the community. A third insight is that community members are drawn to the brand because of its credible reputation, which includes being known for high-quality, effective products. The interpellative efforts listed above are helpful when considering the cues discussed in the next section on identifying audiences and found roles within the community.

Identifying Audiences and Found Roles

After analyzing the content of the interview transcripts, there are two main audiences for the New You Skin Care community: consultants and customers. Episodic units related to these two main audiences and the roles that they play within the community were also identified. In total, 136 units corresponded to the consultant audience and 51 provided insight into the consumer audience. The episodic units coded for each audience were analyzed and “found” roles for each audience were recorded. The roles described below correspond to the common roles that current New You Skin Care community members play or suggest that others in the community play. Through identifying and analyzing these found roles, a number of common cues that are helpful in interpellating people into the

community are named. These common cues are useful for designers in that they can be incorporated into the interface design and aid in interpellating people into a certain role. The found roles for the New You Skin Care community and their common interpellative cues are described below. An application of these cues to interface design will be discussed and shown in the next chapter.

The consultant audience comments provided descriptions for two specific roles that shared a number of common interpellative cues:

Found consultant roles:

- The Enthusiastic Consultant: typically full-time consultant, young, quick to success, wealthy, incentive-driven, disciplined, aspire to be leaders within the community, motivated to build their business, focused on self-growth, focused on growing their personal team and not necessarily selling products
- The “This is my Side Gig” Consultant: typically part-time consultant, not entirely committed, frustrated and not making much money because the business is not as easy as was advertised, not necessarily fanatical about skin care, more interested in the business model, focused more on selling products and gaining customers than growing their personal team

Common interpellative cues:

1. Seeking extra income
2. Want to work for themselves. Flexible schedule to spend more time with their family.
3. Polished, well-dressed, well put together with good skin.

4. Good at sales or business management.
5. Has a large social network or is good at making connections.
6. Prefers to communicate face-to-face or over the phone because it helps create a more personal connection with each customer.
7. Social media-savvy.
8. Work with others on their team to grow. Taking each other “to the top.”
9. Seeking community, support, and camaraderie.
10. Truly believe in the products (that they work) and the brand (that it helps empower others). Want their customers to gain confidence in their appearance – want to help others.

The customer audience comments provided descriptions for three specific roles and their common interpellative cues:

Found customer roles:

- The All-In Customer: typically older customers who don't mind the price due to a higher income and more expendable income, middle or upper-class, more educated, often enrolled in the preferred customer program, trusts their consultant with their credit card information, curious about the brand and how they can get involved, notices the high-volume of positive social media posts by consultants
- The Skeptical Customer: typically younger customers who don't doubt the products, but balk at the price; often skeptical to enroll in the preferred customer program; attempt to be their own consultant; don't want products

pushed onto them, want to purchase on their own terms and schedule; use the products, but don't advertise it; don't feel connected to the brand or community

- The Convenience Matters Customer: busy and need a convenient way to purchase skin care, desire to wear less make-up (new to skin care, saves time and effort – they are busy), want a quick in and out experience with the website (visits are purpose-driven to purchase products or to learn more about a product, not for browsing and entertainment)

Common interpellative cues:

1. "Anybody with skin" from all age ranges.
2. Value a more personal approach: face-to-face parties, phone calls, the one-on-one relationship with their consultant.
3. Unsatisfied with their skin.
4. Educated – at least high school, most are college

Using Found Roles to Define Interpellative Roles

The found roles, as well as the common interpellative cues, communicate what motivates people to become members of the community; knowing this, two main interpellative roles for the New You Skin Care community were defined. The common interpellative cues were considered in relation to the brand community's general habitus, resulting in the interpellative role descriptions, as well as suggested content and design strategies. Each interpellative role and its suggested content and

design strategies is discussed below. The design strategies will be applied to interface design in the next chapter.

Interpellative Role 1: The Consultant:

A polished and well-put-together individual who has a desire to empower and support others, whether through improving their skin or helping them launch their own personal business. The consultant is driven by incentives. They are savvy with social media, but prefer more personal forms of communication such as face-to-face or over the phone. The consultant has a thorough knowledge of the products and believes in the ability of the products, as well as the reputation of the brand community.

To hail someone into this role, a designer must communicate the lived consultant experience. To do this, they might include images of well-dressed consultants, highlight a successful consultant and their recent achievements (including images of any received incentives), tell stories of consultant teams with a focus on their relationships with one another and with their customers, provide links to resources and stories of successful product applications, incorporate social media links, communicate any awards or rankings, showcase the community's founders and the brand's logo and tag line.

The suggested content and design strategies listed above align with the interpellative role description and also align with a form of capital valued by the brand community – in the case of New You Skin Care: social, economic, and symbolic capital. For example, highlighting a successful consultant and their recent

achievements relates to economic capital in that it shows that consultants can become wealthy and receive a number of monetary and product-related incentives. Telling stories of consultant teams and focusing on their relationships with each other as well as their customers ties into social capital. Finally, communicating information about awards, rankings, the community founders, and the brand's logo and tag line provides symbolic capital and showcases the identity of the brand.

Interpellative Role 2: The Customer:

A customer who is dedicated to improving their skin. They value a personal approach to purchasing products and have the necessary income to afford high-end products.

To hail someone into the customer role, a designer might highlight a customer and their experience with the products, including images of their skin before and after treatment. A designer might also demonstrate the personable relationship between a customer and consultant by telling a story of how they contributed to improving each other's lives. Other strategies include showing the product lines and describing their uses, describing how simple it is to use the products, showing the pricing up-front, including a fast and easy way to find a consultant, incorporate social media links, and communicate any awards or rankings, showcase the community's founders, and the brand's logo and tag line.

Case 3: The Value-Driven Brand

Description of the Brand Community and Its Identity

The third brand community analyzed for this project is an apparel company headquartered in the upstate of South Carolina. For privacy purposes, this brand community will be known as “Love and Serve Apparel” or “LSA.” Love and Serve Apparel’s main product consists of customized uniform apparel for a variety of local and national clients. Clients range from quick service food franchises to manufacturing companies to corporate charity events. LSA also maintains a smaller outdoor lifestyle apparel arm of the brand, which they have plans to expand. The brand is well-known around the upstate of South Carolina and is frequently commended for its hospitable approach to business. For this brand, success is not measured in sales, but in how you treat those around you, whether they be fellow employees, current clients, potential clients, or a stranger on the street. While LSA sells apparel, its identity is focused on building trustworthy relationships and living a spiritually fulfilling lifestyle. Although founded on Christian principles, LSA does not consider itself a Christian company. Importance is not placed on an employee or customer’s religion or faith; instead, it is placed on the brand’s core principles of being relational, responsible, resilient, humble, and authentic.

Love and Serve Apparel was chosen because of its strong focus on community and inclusion. Its reputation is highly positive among both customers and employees and those involved with the LSA community are open to discussing what makes their brand unique. My personal ties to the two founders of the

company were also useful in that I knew I would have access to a wide range of community members. With an open and positive reputation for community inclusion, the LSA community was a desirable choice for this project.

Description of the Participants

There were eight interview participants for the Love and Serve Apparel community. Interviews were shorter than those for Case 1 and Case 2, ranging in time from twenty-five to fifty minutes. The difference in interview length was due to employees not being able to take much time out of their workday. The interviews were transcribed, resulting in 120 pages of double-spaced text. The interview transcripts were then analyzed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software and the following results are the product of that analysis. The participants were divided evenly among genders with four males and four females. Participants were between the ages of 25 and 60. All participants are employees of the brand. Because this method aims to define the habitus of the LSA community, basic demographic data was collected. This data addresses a number of elements that play a role in shaping the habitus of the brand. The demographic data collected from each participant is displayed below in Table 5.12:

	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	# in Household	Occupation	Avg. Household Income	Time with Brand
P1	Male	30	White	Married	2	Program Manager	\$100,000 to \$149,999	More than 5 years
P2	Male	60	White	Married	2	Director of Retail and Customer Experience	\$100,000 to \$149,999	3 – 5 years
P3	Female	25	White	Single	2	Executive Coordinator	\$35,000 to \$49,999	Less than one year
P4	Female	30	White	Single	2	Senior Coordinator of Cultural Engagement	\$35,000 to \$49,999	3 – 5 years

P5	Female	25	White	Married	2	Program Support Specialist	\$50,000 to \$74,999	3 - 5 years
P6	Male	25	White	Married	2	Procurement Specialist	\$35,000 to \$49,999	Less than one year
P7	Male	48	White	Married	6	Senior Director of Supply Chain	\$100,000 to \$149,999	1 - 2 years
P8	Female	51	Black or African American	Married	2	Customer Service Manager	\$150,000 to \$199,999	More than 5 years

Table 5.12: Demographic data of LSA participants

Just as with the first two cases, the demographic data collected from each interview participant is valuable and useful when moving forward with analysis. While the table above is representative of each individual participant, it is also representative of the general habitus of the collective participants. The table communicates that the LSA brand community is comprised of individuals who hold a range of positions and who have spent a variety of years with the company. While the analysis in future sections will reveal a general consensus on the brand's habitus, the individual summaries of each interview participant's dialogue are likely to vary. The demographic data above is valuable in that it can provide additional detail to both the individual accounts, as well as the description of the brand's general habitus.

Intratextual Analysis

As with the previous two communities, each interview transcript was first analyzed intratextually in order to provide a description of each participant and their lived experience with the brand. The results of intratextual analysis for the LSA participants are detailed below:

- Participant 1: An employee with Love and Serve Apparel who describes the community as “family.” He emphasized the importance of open communication within the LSA community and that it helped to build strong, trusting relationships, which serve as a cornerstone for the brand (social capital). He mentioned that the LSA community’s web presence was not very important since they were more focused on communicating with community members and customers via the phone or face-to-face. Cultural capital is important here in the sense of LSA’s heritage, local roots, and being true to their core values. Participant 1 used a high amount of brand-specific language, indicating that linguistic capital is important to the community. The terms “love and serve” and “core values” were prominent in the discussion.
- Participant 2: An employee of Love and Serve Apparel who places value on the open nature of communication within the community, the acceptance of mistakes, and the idea of growing together (relating to cultural and social capital). He sees the LSA brand as a place where he belongs and is surrounded with like-minded people. Participant 2 used a lot of brand-specific language (linguistic capital) and discussed the core values as the key to the brand’s identity. He mentioned that heritage is important to the identity of LSA (cultural capital). He feels that the main website does a great job of communicating what the brand represents to an outside audience. Educational capital was briefly mentioned in that most people involved with the LSA community are college-educated. Economic capital was not stressed.

- Participant 3: An employee of Love and Serve Apparel who is new to the community. She spoke of how impressed she was with how different the LSA culture was from other businesses (cultural capital). She frequently commented on the feelings of family and support (social capital). She emphasized that she wasn't afraid to fail with the company and through that, she was able to grow as an individual and as an employee (educational capital). She emphasized the theme of "love and serve" and adhering to "core values" as a driving force behind how she perceives and interacts with the brand (linguistic capital). She spoke of open communication and working as a team.
- Participant 4: An employee of Love and Serve Apparel who is focused on cultivating the culture of the community (part of her job description). She focused on the LSA community culture and relationships (both within the company and outside). She used similar linguistic capital to the other participants – "love and serve" and "core values." She mentioned the importance of heritage and telling stories so that people could better understand the brand (cultural and symbolic capital). She described the LSA community in terms of strong relationships and being similar to a family (social capital). She feels that the LSA website gives an accurate portrayal of the brand's identity; however, it is there for educational purposes as the majority of relationships are built face-to-face. Participant 4's comments were very much in-line with all other participants.

- Participant 5: An employee of Love and Serve Apparel who mentioned how appreciative she was of the opportunity to be a part of such an impressive community (social and cultural capital). Her description of the LSA community focused on the “love and serve” model and adhering to core values (linguistic capital). She was a customer of the brand before she became an employee and commented that her outside impression of LSA matches what she now knows to be the brand’s true identity (symbolic capital). Her discussion centered around the idea of nurturing a community where it is OK to be wrong as long as you learn and grow from it (cultural and educational capital). She feels that the website is an accurate representation of the story and culture of the LSA community. Participant 5 was very much aligned with the answers and descriptions of all other participants.
- Participant 6: An employee of Love and Serve Apparel who sees the brand community as very caring and family-oriented (social and cultural capital). He told the story of how LSA got its name, what it means, and why it is so important to the brand’s identity. He discussed the importance of open communication and how that style of communication is mirrored in the layout of the company’s office (social capital). He mentioned the importance of heritage in LSA’s identity and how remembering where they came from keeps them humble (cultural capital). As with all other participants, linguistic capital is important and brand-specific jargon was woven throughout the

entire discussion. Although he didn't comment on the LSA website, he discussed their social media efforts and how their online presence is more concerned with communicating the culture of the LSA community and who the community members are (social and symbolic capital) instead of what the community produces. Economic capital was mentioned briefly in that a new retail line will be high-end, resulting in a target demographic of middle-to upper-class customers. Otherwise, economic and educational capital were not prevalent in the conversation.

- Participant 7: An employee with Love and Serve Apparel who described the community as “founded in our belief of love and service in the community” (linguistic, cultural, and symbolic capital). He emphasized that “at the end of the day, it’s all about people.” Participant 7 also discussed the hospitable nature of LSA and how people are quick to support one another, learn, and grow as a company (social, cultural, and educational capital). He mentioned the importance of sharing the lifestyle of the brand and that work is “an integral part of your life and life is an integral part of your work” (cultural capital). Concerning LSA’s web presence, he spoke to their use of social media and how it is focused on communicating who the brand is more than what the brand does (symbolic capital). Participant 7’s comments and perspective on the LSA community are very much in line with all of the other participants’ accounts.

- Participant 8: An employee with Love and Serve Apparel who feels that she and the others who work for the brand embody the core values of the community. She described the LSA community as a “hodgepodge of people” from varying backgrounds. She made it clear that educational and economic capital were not important (as did all other participants), and that relationships and serving others (social and cultural capital) were the most important. Regarding the LSA website, she commented that it was recently improved and more people friendly in that she now feels it accurately portrays the LSA community’s identity and story (symbolic capital). Participant 8 used a fair amount of brand-specific language, indicating that linguistic capital is important to the interpellation of community members.

Just as with Cases 1 and 2, the summarized descriptions above aid designers by simplifying pages upon pages of interview transcripts into succinct paragraphs of useful information. The “mini personas” help designers see the similarities between community members, and also their differences. These details are useful in providing further insight into the general habitus. For example, in the following section, the data indicates that cultural capital is the most frequently discussed and most valuable form of capital to the LSA brand community. Comparing that knowledge to the eight participant summaries, there is consensus and the summaries provide unique details that can be designed into an interface so that it speaks to the cultural capital of the LSA community. For example, a designer might use Participant 7’s comment about an LSA employee’s life and work being integral

parts of one another and incorporate an “employee spotlight” type article where a star employee discusses his or her work/ life balance. Additional culture-related comments regarding how employees feel like family to one another and how the heritage of the brand and its core values are what make the LSA identity can be used to further design an interpellative interface, perhaps with images of employees or images and text related to the brand’s humble beginning. Although these summarized descriptions provide a very focused view of each individual participant, they have the ability to be applied in a way that contributes to an interpellative design that appeals to the general habitus.

Intertextual Analysis

Intertextual analysis focused on the codes and themes that all interview transcripts had in common. As with the first two cases, attention was given to identifying episodic units related to Bourdieu’s six forms of capital. Through this analysis of capital, a more thorough description of the LSA community’s habitus and values was achieved. After collectively analyzing the eight interview transcripts, 277 episodic units were coded as being related to one of the six forms of capital. The breakdown of the capital-related units is detailed in Table 5.13 and the percentage of comments in relation to all capital-related comments is shown in Figure 5.4:

Capital	Cultural	Economic	Educational	Linguistic	Social	Symbolic	Total
# of Comments	96	13	12	40	54	62	277

Table 5.13: Number of capital-related comments from LSA transcripts

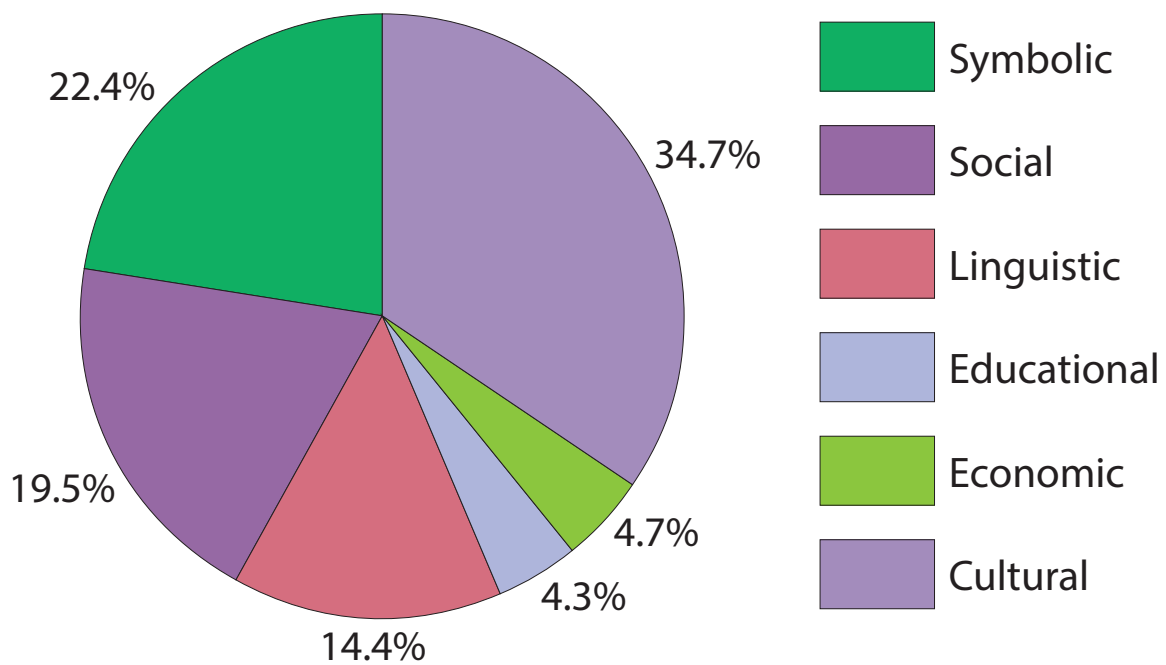


Figure 5.4: Percentages of capital-related comments from LSA transcripts

Knowing which forms of capital the LSA community values or disregards provides knowledge of the brand’s habitus, as well as suggestions for what might motivate people to become members of the community. The most frequently discussed form for the LSA community was cultural capital. With this information in mind, a designer understands that the community places value on developing its culture. The brand’s heritage, office culture, shared traditions, and ways of operating are what makes the community attractive to its members. An interface design that would likely pique the interest of this community would make use of descriptive text communicating how the community members interact with one another and what they value. It might use vivid imagery to capture the look and feel of the office space or to reference the brand’s origin story and how it grew to its current state. Additional text or images might draw attention to traditions valued by the

community. The next chapter will provide further discussion and suggested application of how the forms of capital can be used to successfully inform interpellative interface design.

Findings from Open Coding

Through the process of open coding across all eight LSA interview transcripts, a more thorough representation of the community's lived experience was revealed. During the first round of open coding, sixteen codes were identified. Additional analysis of those codes resulted in a reduction to six main coding categories. Much useful information can be extracted from performing intertextual open coding. For example, the findings above show that the community values cultural capital; however, it is unclear exactly what cultural capital means to the community. Through open coding, there were a number of episodic units identified that had to do with the workplace environment, communication practices, and shared core values. These three codes provide an idea of the cultural capital that is important to the LSA community. Knowing this, a designer could create an interface that speaks to those codes and thus, makes cultural capital a dominant feature of the brand community's interface. A designer might do this by including vivid images of the LSA workplace, showing its quirks, character, and its nods to its textile heritage through use of exposed beams, reclaimed wood floors, and other decorative industrial elements. A designer might further speak to the LSA culture through an "employee spotlight" type article on the home page. This article could explain the

importance of the LSA culture’s core values and open communication practices and how they come together to make LSA an outstanding company to work for.

As mentioned with the first two cases, the details of the lived brand community experience gained through open coding are valuable in that they allow for a more thorough and contextualized understanding of the six forms of capital and how that capital relates to the brand community’s identity and habitus. A suggestion for how this data can be used to inform the design of an interpellative interface is discussed in the next chapter.

Through open coding, six main codes and a number of sub-codes were identified. As mentioned with the other two cases, this form of thorough coding, while tedious, has the potential to provide rich data and insights into the research questions. The main codes and the number of episodic units associated with each are listed below in Table 5.14:

Code	# of Comments
Communication	70
Core Values	52
Reputation	48
Serving Others	52
Strong Relationships	31
Workplace Environment	120

Table 5.14: Open coding categories from all eight LSA transcripts

The codes “communication,” “reputation,” and “workplace environment” were broken down into additional sub-codes. “Communication” was sorted into four sub-codes. Each sub-code pertains to a different mode of communication. For example, this quote from Participant 2 coded as “face to face:”

I think most of us would probably rather walk into a room than try to figure out how to do a conference call on their phone. This is just not how we do this. I would think it's in support of our vision and our purpose and our core values to actually have face-to-face conversations when we can and we try to do that.

Not only does this quote provide information about communication practices, it falls under the category of cultural capital and provides insight as to what the community's culture entails. Details of the "communication" code are depicted below in Table 5.15:

Code	# of Comments
Face to face	17
Main website	17
Open communication	15
Vis comm - the office	21

Table 5.15: Sub-codes of the "communication" code

The "reputation" code is comprised of four sub-codes. The sub-codes pertain to the most prominent values associated with how the Love and Serve Apparel brand is perceived by an outside audience. An example of a reputation coded quote that additionally codes as "local," comes from Participant 7:

When I think of LSA, I've been working here almost a year, I associate it very closely with downtown. Even the bridge at the park, the recreational trail that runs right next to our office. I know that's intentional. That's been really intentional of LSA's branding over the last year...to really tie in to different areas downtown."

This quote speaks to the fact that the LSA community places value on symbolic capital and is actively concerned with how they are viewed by those outside of the community. The brand’s corporate offices have been strategically placed so that when people think of the brand, they think of downtown, and vice versa. Details of the “reputation” code are depicted below in Table 5.16:

Code	# of Comments
Hard working	9
Heritage	14
Local	13
Product quality	12

Table 5.16: Sub-codes of the “reputation” code

Finally, the “workplace environment” code is comprised of five sub-codes. The sub-codes pertain to the most discussed qualities of the space within which Love and Serve Apparel community members work. For example, this quote from Participant 1 codes as “unique company culture” and does a good job of contextualizing what the culture is like: “...it’s probably weird to people or to some people, that family atmosphere, if you don’t come from something like that, it’s probably a big culture shock.” Additionally, Participant 4 addresses the sub-code, “happy to go to work” when she says:

I’m proud to work here. I love working here. I love what I do. I love being able to feel that I’m helping people, whether it’s my boss who’s one of the co-CEOs and founders or that what we’re doing is helping in some regard. I would say, I feel pretty good. I feel happy that I’m here.

Participant 4’s quote provides more information about the brand community’s culture. Knowing the community culture is helpful when defining its habitus and considering how the community interpellates members. Details of the “workplace environment” code are depicted below in Table 5.17:

Code	# of Comments
Family	11
Happy to go to work	11
OK to make mistakes	9
Sharing values with others	33
Unique company culture	56

Table 5.17: Sub-codes of the “workplace environment” code

Current Interpellative Efforts by the Brand Community

As was done with the previous two cases, a thorough analysis of all eight phenomenological interview transcripts was performed in an attempt to identify the current interpellative efforts put forth by the community. The LSA interview transcripts yielded 34 episodic units related to the act of interpellation. Those units were divided into five different categories, which are listed below:

1. Communicating core values (sense of moral responsibility)
2. Projecting a desired lifestyle
3. Receiving branded merchandise for display (shared rituals and traditions)
4. Building relationships
5. Surrounded by those who are similar (consciousness of kind)

The majority of the interpellative comments were coded as “communicating core values” and “projecting a desired lifestyle.” This aligns with the finding that the

community values cultural and symbolic capital more than other forms. They communicate who they are and what their culture represents in order to hail other people who identify with the same values. This data is useful in considering the kinds of interpellative roles the community uses to grow its membership.

Identifying Audiences and Found Roles

Considering the content of the eight interview transcripts, there are two main audiences for the Love and Serve Apparel community: employees and customers. Episodic units related to these two main audiences and the roles that they play within the community were noted. In total, 110 units corresponded to the employee audience and 31 provided insight into the customer audience. As with the first two cases, the episodic units were analyzed in order to identify roles associated with each audience. The found roles for the LSA community, as well as their common interpellative cues, are described below.

The employee audience comments provided descriptions for a number of common interpellative cues, but only one specific role. This was surprising given that the employees who were interviewed come from different departments and perform different functions within the LSA community. However, all eight participants were aligned in their depiction and description of the employee role for Love and Serve Apparel. The identified common interpellative cues are listed below:

Found employee role and common interpellative cues:

The Core Values Focused Employee:

1. Relatable, warm, and friendly (to employees and customers), focused on family-like relationships, supporting, and “loving and serving” others
2. Proud to work for the brand
3. Work hard and play hard
4. Communicate in a variety of formats, but prefers face-to-face conversations
5. Aim to learn all they can about their customer and provide a unique, customized product and experience
6. Prefer honest, open, and truthful communication (even if it is a criticism)
7. Trust other employees to do good business
8. Make mistakes (accepts that others make them too, humble)
9. Volunteer in their community (related to work and outside of work)

The customer audience comments provided descriptions for two specific roles and their interpellative cues listed below:

Found customer roles and common interpellative cues:

- The Retail Customer: typically outdoorsy, active, 20-45-year-old, college graduates from the Southeast, likes local products, upper-middle class with a flexible income, mostly men (older, married, with families), many have a personal connection with the company
- The Uniform Customer: “All types of people” (quick-service restaurant employees to corporate employees to non-profits), often referred from current customers, looking to “elevate their brand” through “creative opportunities” with their apparel.

Using Found Roles to Define Interpellative Roles

Through analyzing the data described above, suggested interpellative roles for the Love and Serve Apparel community can be developed. The found roles, common interpellative cues, and knowledge of the brand community's general habitus work together to inform descriptions of interpellative roles that the community can use to hail non-members into the community. Based on the interview data, two main interpellative roles for the Love and Serve Apparel community were defined:

Interpellative Role 1: The LSA Employee:

A dedicated and hard-working employee who is committed to the brand's core values and is motivated to serve others, whether they be co-workers, customers, or others outside of the community. Their behavior is relatable, friendly, and humble. Employees value open communication and interaction with others.

To hail someone into this role, a designer must communicate the lived employee experience. To do this, they might highlight an employee and their recent achievements or how long they have been associated with the brand. They might incorporate images of employees working with others and doing community service or tell a story about a recent situation where an employee served someone. Content might tell the story of an employee who learned from a mistake and used it to grow and improve his or her self and their business relationships. Design might include images of the open office layout or tell a story of "a day in the life" of an employee and highlight how they work and communicate with others. The brand's core values

might be listed and a story told about how an employee exemplifies those values. Awards, recognitions, the brand's origin story, and brand logo might also be highlighted in the design.

As with the previous two cases, it is necessary to ask: why might a designer incorporate this content or these design elements? Each element listed above aligns with the interpellative role description and also aligns with the forms of capital that are most valued by the brand community. In the case of Love and Serve Apparel, those forms are cultural, symbolic, and social capital. For example, highlighting an employee and their recent achievements or their involvement with community service communicates cultural capital. A story about an employee learning from a mistake or describing how they embody the brand's core values also communicates cultural capital. Highlighting the brand's origin story, recent awards, recognitions, and logo represents symbolic, as well as cultural capital. Stories about communication and helping others speaks to social, as well as cultural capital.

Interpellative Role 2: The LSA Customer

While interview data and common sense indicate that the customer audience is important to the brand community, interviews did not provide enough data to develop a thorough depiction of the interpellative role, suggested content, and design strategies. All interview participants were employees of the brand and so their conversations of experiences mostly focused on the lived experience of the employee. Future research could be aimed at the customer audience and provide a better idea of its lived experience.

Applying the Data for Actionable Results

To re-cap what has been discussed in great detail above: based on data collected from phenomenological interviews, an idea of a brand community's general tastes, preferences, and lifestyle – its “habitus” – can be defined. As revealed through the application of this research method, the habitus for each of the three brand communities is quite different. Figure 5.5 below illustrates each habitus and allows for comparison and contrasting.

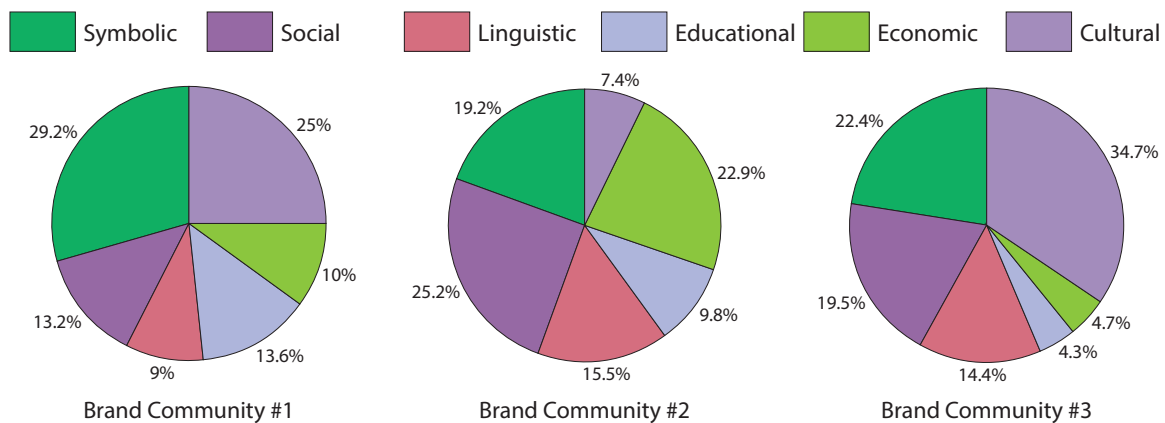


Figure 5.5: Comparing the habitus of all three brand communities

With the knowledge that a community values a certain form or forms of capital more than others, designers can return to the interview data for specific instances of how that form of capital might manifest in an interface design. For example, knowing that the third brand community (Love and Serve Apparel) values cultural capital, a designer might look to the descriptive summaries of each interview participant for an example of what that cultural capital represents. For LSA, they would find that it relates to how community members interact with one another in the office, as well as the overall office environment, and the stories,

traditions, and heritage of the brand. With this knowledge, elements related to those examples of cultural capital – perhaps a video depicting the office culture, visual appearance and feel or a story about the brand’s origins – can be incorporated into the interface design and will serve as an interpellative cue.

This data provides guidance on design elements that would result in a broadly appealing interface. From the interview data, found roles for each of the brand community’s main audiences emerge and supported with details from the identified common interpellative cues and considering the community’s general habitus, an idea of interpellative roles that the community can use to persuade and hail others into their membership can also be defined. Knowing the nuances of the brand community’s general habitus and with the goal interpellative roles in mind, an interface design can be developed that is representative of the brand community’s habitus and that also appeals to the interpellative roles. With this rich data, designers can work towards creating a persuasive interface that speaks to the general community and also to the specific roles that hail people into the community. Examples of how this data can be made actionable and applied to inform interface design are provided in the next chapter. The next chapter will also address the contributions, limitations, and possible future directions of this project.

CHAPTER SIX

APPLICATION OF RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

With the data presented and analyzed, further discussion is necessary to understand how the data can be applied to interface design. This project has taken on a number of questions with the main research question asking if applying the method of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing to the field of user experience was an appropriate step towards identifying a constructivist research method. To do this, the research method from one field was applied to another and the results were analyzed to A) learn about the habitus and interpellative techniques of three brand communities, and B) to assess the appropriateness and fit of phenomenological interviewing as a constructivist research methodology. In total, there were five major questions to address with the resulting data. Two questions focus on the more detailed level of identifying elements of brand communities, one question focuses on the application of those elements to interface design, and the final two questions address broader, methodological issues that intend to advance the field of user experience research.

The five major questions are:

1. What is the habitus for each brand?
2. What interpellative roles are associated with each brand?
3. How can knowledge of the habitus and interpellative roles (the data from Chapter V) be used to influence interface design?

4. Does existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews meet the criteria to be considered a constructivist research method?
5. Is the application of phenomenological interviewing an appropriate and successful method for constructivist design?

Before addressing these questions, let's revisit the previous chapters and their contributions to the conversation. Chapter I introduced the project, its purpose, research questions, and the three areas of examination. It also included the expected contributions of the project, which will be addressed again in this chapter. Chapter II provided background on the fields of usability and user experience. The chapter is helpful in situating the concept of constructivist design within the broader field of user experience and contributes to the understanding of why a constructivist research method is valuable. Chapter III presented background on the concepts of "habitus" and "interpellation," which play a large role in the overall project. The chapter discussed concepts, scholars, and practitioners involved with work on brand communities and building identity. Chapters II and III provided the context and background information necessary to understand the content and relevance of this project and why it is important to pursue. Chapter IV focused on the method of existential phenomenology and the application of phenomenological interviews. This chapter focused on how the method was adapted for the purposes of this project. It provided detailed information in regards to how the research was performed. Chapter V presented the results of the research, as well as some analysis. Data retrieved from the phenomenological interview transcripts was presented and

its importance to the overall purpose of the project was made known. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to discussing and applying the data presented in Chapter V, as well as exploring the potential contributions of this project, considering its limitations, and providing suggestions for future work.

Analysis and Application of the Interview Data

This project is the beginning of a conversation in the field of user experience. It is focused on the idea that as the field continues to grow and evolve, new research methods are needed to obtain the data necessary to make informed design decisions. In order to design interpellative interfaces that hail individuals into specific roles that dictate how they interact with the interface, brand, or other community members, new research methods are needed to gather detailed and rich data from those users. This data can be pain-staking to collect and challenging to analyze, but it is rich and it provides valuable insight into how interfaces can be designed in order to provide an enjoyable user experience.

This project addresses the growth in the field and makes an effort to not only collect that important user data, but to interpret, translate, and apply it in a form that designers, communicators, brand managers, and others can use. The analysis of this project will move from specific to broad. It will begin by providing answers about the brand communities and interviews and will then zoom out to address the larger question of how the research method aligns with the concept of constructivist design. Beginning with the three brand communities, this section will analyze each

case individually and use the data from Chapter V to answer the following questions:

1. What is the habitus of the brand?
2. What interpellative roles are associated with the brand?
3. How can data from the first two questions be used by designers to influence interface design?

Case 1: The University Experience

The general habitus of Rigorous Education University (REU) can be described as one that places value on communicating its identity and reputation, including its culture, heritage, traditions. This description is supported by interview data that indicates that the community places the most value on symbolic and cultural capital. The least emphasis was placed on linguistic capital, which may point to the notion that how community members speak and the words they use are not as important. Although it was commented on the least, linguistic capital is present in the REU brand community, it is simply not a focus of how individuals identify with the brand.

This description of habitus is further defined with help from the open coding process. The two most discussed codes were “the university experience” and “communicating the brand.” “Communicating the brand” speaks directly to symbolic capital in that it provides context on how the brand community communicates the brand. For example, Participant 1 addresses symbolic capital in this quote:

Something we’ve also talked about is the REU lifestyle and how we project that. When we’re attracting students who are in the higher income bracket,

then we need to project a REU that lives up to that so that when they come here, they're going to have nice dorms to live in. They're going to have their pick of different food options and they're guaranteed they can go and study abroad. So part of it is projecting that lifestyle.

“The university experience” maps well to cultural capital in that it provides details of what the REU lived experience and culture is like. This account from Participant 3, a student at REU, provides a thorough example of how a quote coded as “university experience” relates to the culture of living in the student role on REU’s campus:

REU has REU Fridays. Everyone wears purple and you try to find...there are people running around with t-shirts and you have to find them. If you find them, you get a free REU t-shirt for wearing purple. It’s fun! A different REU association will have donuts and coffee in the morning on the library steps and we have puppy – oh my gosh, what’s it called? Puppy therapy during exams. It was awesome. But I think it’s a combination of experiences that really do make REU, because they want to make your time here memorable and special. I think they do a great job of it in a sense that they really do have these little things that seem kind of trivial. It’s like, “Oh great, you have puppy therapy.” But at the same time, you know what? Midterms are stressful. I needed puppy therapy and they do that for you. And I think that goes back to that they really do care about their students. Sometimes, they just really know how to make your week. You’ve got a free t-shirt and it is just a great feeling.

The transcripts for all nine community members were consistent in describing the identity and general habitus of the REU community. Although there were differences in how the participants responded to and interacted with the community, their general descriptions of the identity were very much in-line.

It was previously mentioned that the data from this research method could be applied to aid in the development of other constructivist methods. It is at this very granular level, dealing with the specifics of each interview participant, that the data could be used for persona development. For example, interesting quotes might be used to represent the “voice” of a persona. Personality traits of participants might be identified and assigned to a persona. It is also on this detailed level that data could be applied towards the development of journey maps or customer experience maps. Although the interviews for this project did not focus on the specifics of the entire user journey from realization of the brand’s existence through their decision to either leave the brand community or to maintain membership; in other applications of the research method, interviews could be aimed at attaining such narratives from participants and those narratives would be valuable in the development of journey and experience maps. While the data from this research could be applied to other constructivist methods, for this project, it is used to identify the brand community’s habitus. The way the data is used for this project is different from how it would be used for persona or journey map development because it provides an additional feature: the interpellative roles and the cues used to hail individuals into the habitus of a brand community.

With data focused on the community's general habitus, a broadly appealing interface can be designed. As mentioned in Chapter V, a design that would likely speak to this community would strongly and obviously communicate the REU name and perhaps any awards or recognitions it has received. It would also portray the culture of the community through images of community members, events, traditions, and memorable locations on campus. Based on the importance of capital and supported with details from open coding, one can develop an idea of the REU brand community's general habitus and can obtain cues for designing a broadly appealing interface that would likely resonate with the majority of its community members.

What interpellative roles are associated with the brand? Based on the data, four main roles emerged and are described in Chapter V.

1. The REU Student
2. The REU Employee
3. The REU Alumni
4. The REU Parent

These roles were derived after considering the found roles, their interpellative cues, and the brand community's general habitus. These roles can be employed by the brand community to attract and interpellate non-members into their community. An example of how the general habitus and interpellative roles can be applied to interface design is demonstrated and explained below:

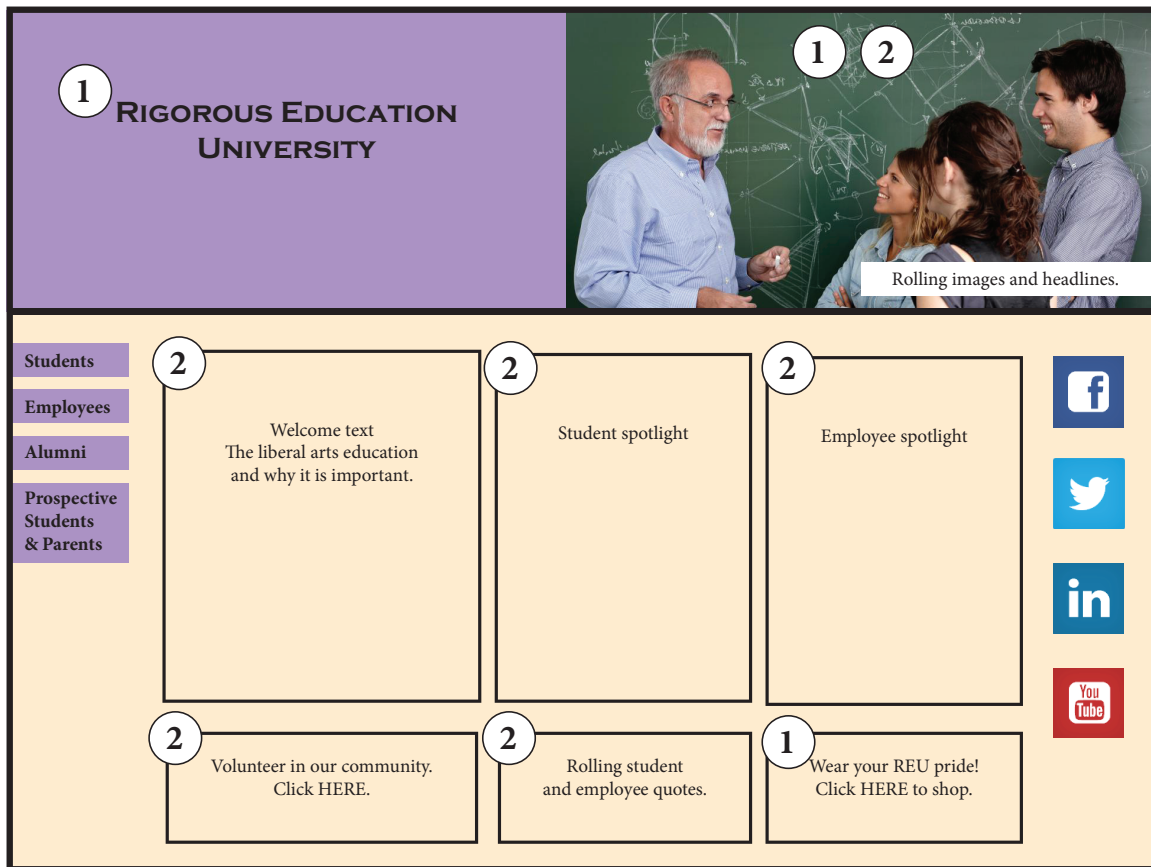


Figure 6.1: Sample “general habitus” interface design for the REU brand community

The website wireframe shown above is very basic (I am not a graphic designer!), but for the purposes of this project, it is helpful in explaining how the data from Chapter V can be applied for actionable results. In other words, this basic graphic will help explain how the data from Chapter V can guide the development of an interpellative interface design. The wireframe is intended to appeal to the general habitus of the REU brand. Elements indicated with the number one marker relate to symbolic capital and elements indicated with the number two marker relate to cultural capital. For symbolic capital, the design would include references to the brand’s logo or tag line. Symbolic capital is also involved with the image of the

professor and students – this scene is representative of the brand community’s desired reputation. The link to the university shop is also in-line with symbolic capital because it allows the option to purchase products representative of the brand. For cultural capital, the design might include spotlight articles on students and employees to communicate how things are done and what is being achieved within the community. A block of welcome text explaining the values of the community and the importance of a liberal arts education would also contribute to the cultural capital of the site. An obvious link to volunteer opportunities could be another persuasive cultural element in that it shows the community is dedicated to serving others – something that was commonly discussed in the interviews.

Not only does this wireframe speak to the general habitus of the REU community, it also addresses a number of elements that are key to interpellating users into the desired roles of the community. The REU wireframe is shown again below, but this time, interpellative cues for the student role have been mapped onto it. Each number on the figure coordinates with an interpellative cue listed below.

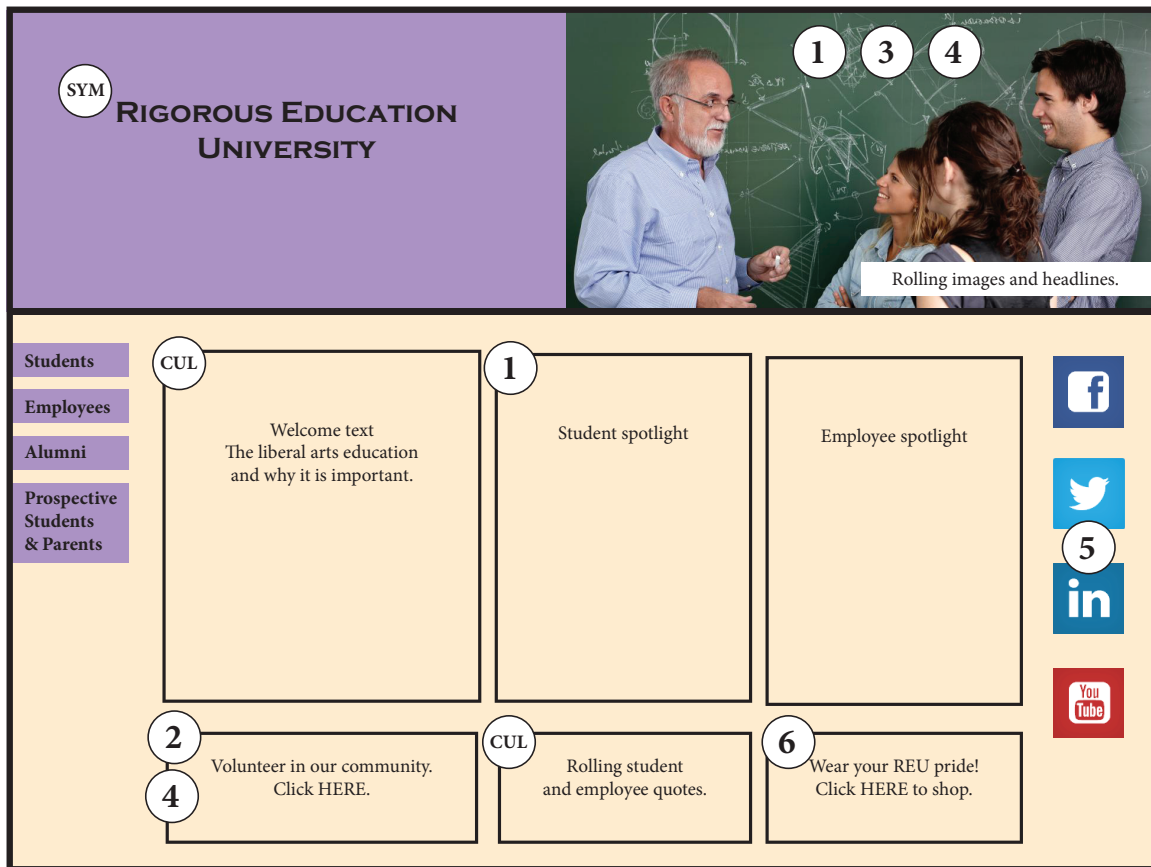


Figure 6.2: Sample student role interface design for the REU brand community

1. Dedicated and high-achieving student
2. Motivated to serve and help others
3. Entrepreneurial tendencies
4. Values quality relationships and builds them through community involvement
5. Savvy with social media, but know the value of face-to-face communication
6. Takes pride in their community and what it represents

As you can see, each element in the above wireframe corresponds to either a form of capital valued by the community or a cue that interpellates individuals into the student role within the REU community. The same wireframe is shown below with interpellative cues for the employee role marked. Each number on the figure coordinates with an interpellative cue listed below.

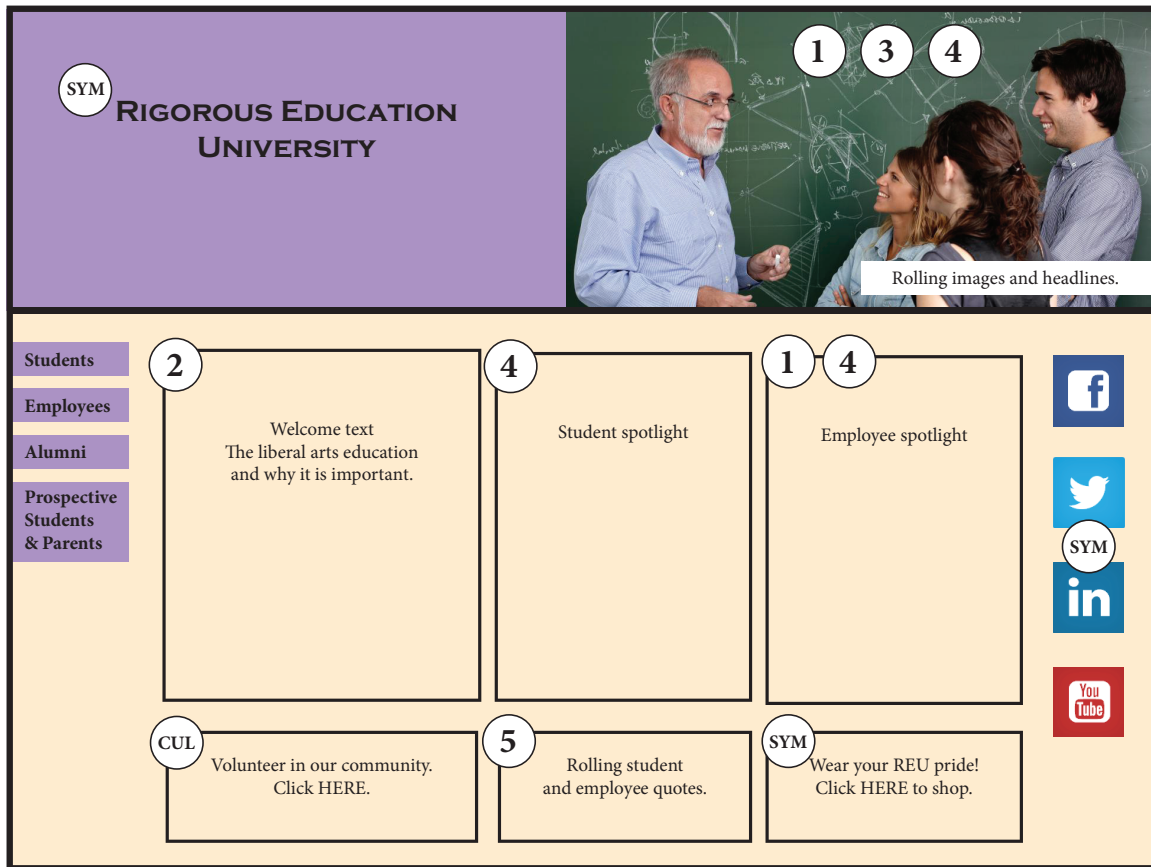


Figure 6.3: Sample employee role interface design for the REU brand community

1. Dedicated and high-achieving employee
2. Values a liberal arts education
3. Values quality relationships and face-to-face communication
4. Takes pride in their colleagues' and students' achievements

5. Feels fortunate to work for the university

Once gain, each element in the wireframe corresponds to a particular cue.

These cues have the potential to interpellate individuals into the employee role within the REU community. The data is such that wireframes for each interpellative role could be created in this way. To further illustrate why considering this data is important for interface design, consider the wireframe below in Figure 6.4.

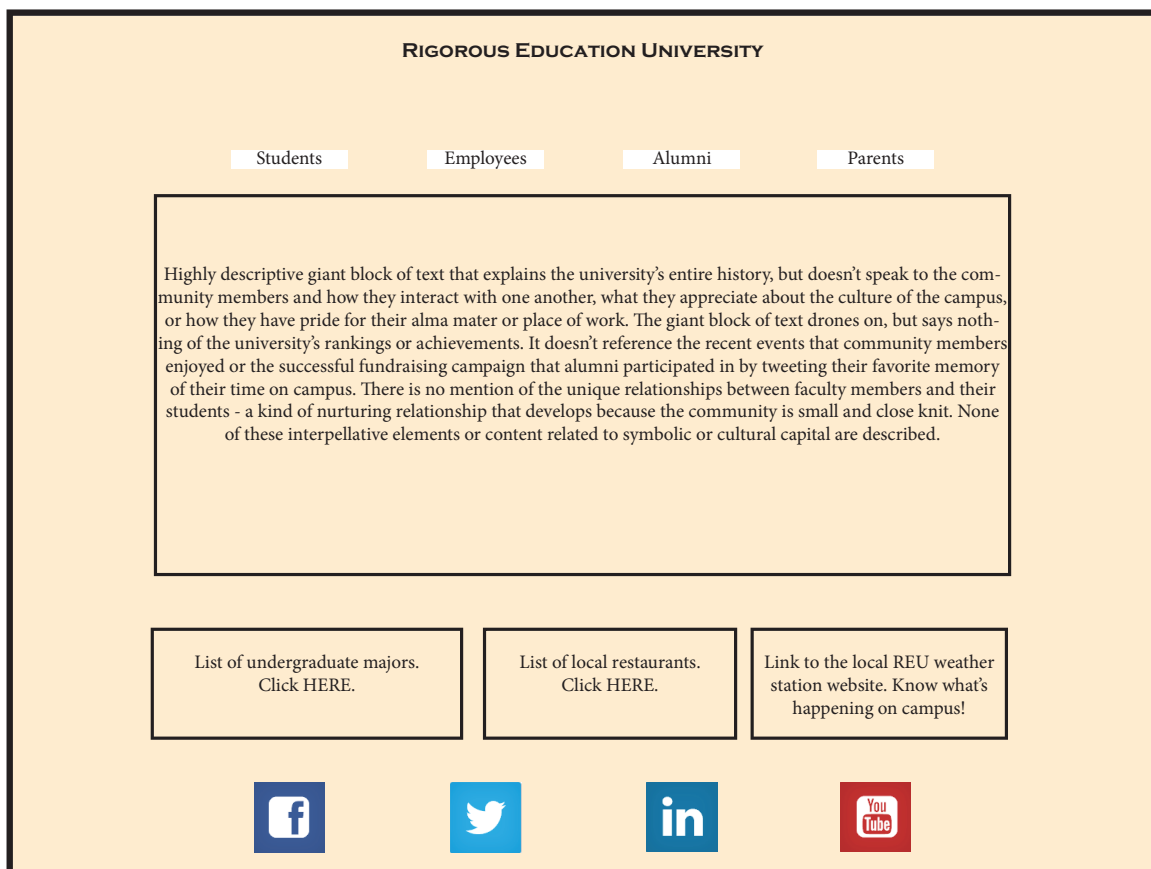


Figure 6.4: Example of an interface design that does not align with the REU habitus

This wireframe does *not* take into consideration that the REU brand community values symbolic and cultural capital. Gone are the interpellative cues, design elements, and content that appeal to the brand. Instead of communicating its

identity and reputation through a prominent logo, a link to the university shop, or an image/ article related to rankings and recent awards; the interface above downplays this information, if it is included at all. The university's primary color has disappeared and so has the image representative of community members interacting with one another. References to cultural capital are reduced or missing. Text communicates the history of the university to the campus, but that doesn't give the user any indication of what the lived experience on campus entails. Links to lists of information, such as undergraduate majors, local restaurants, and the weather do communicate something about REU, but it does not provide a sense of the brand's identity, habitus, or lived experience. Without the guidance of the brand community's habitus and interpellative roles and cues, the REU interface design falls flat and does not hail new members. In fact, it likely pushes them away.

These examples above demonstrate how the forms of capital, the themes from open coding, and the common interpellative cues from the interview transcripts are important and actionable to the brand community's interface design. By incorporating design elements and content that map to this information, engaging and persuasive interfaces can be built. Without this information, the design risks missing its mark and perhaps interpellates people into the wrong roles or does not interpellate them at all.

Case 2: The Community Built from Direct Sales

According to the data, the general habitus of New You Skin Care is focused on building relationships with others and being financially independent. This is

supported by interview data that indicates that the community places the most value on social and economic capital. The least emphasis was placed on cultural capital, which suggests that developing the culture of the community is not as important as building the community itself. The New You Skin Care community values making connections and expanding their social network, not developing the nuances of the community's culture. While the culture of any community is a relevant point of discussion and is important to the community's identity, the New You Skin Care community does not appear to find culture important when identifying with the brand. Instead, making connections and obtaining additional income are the stronger interpellative mechanisms.

The description of the New You Skin Care habitus gains detail through data obtained from the open coding process. By far, the most discussed code was "communication practices," which is appropriate given the finding that the community most focuses on social capital, building relationships with others, and growing their team. The focus on communicating practices and expanding one's social network is supported by this quote from Participant 4: "Why do I do half the things I do? I honestly do a lot of things because I need to know more people." This quote shows the emphasis that community members place on expanding their networks. In this case, social growth and expansion is the main thing driving all of the actions the community member performs.

The general habitus and identity for New You Skin Care were described in very similar ways across all five interview transcripts. Of the four consultants who

were interviewed, two fell into the found role of “enthusiastic consultant” and two fell into the found role of “side gig consultant.” While their approach to the business aspect of the brand was different, when they spoke of core characteristics, values, and the identity of the brand, all four consultants were in-line. The fifth participant was a customer and although she insisted that she did not feel like she was a member of the brand community, she also provided a similar description of the brand’s identity. This participant fell into the found role of “skeptical customer” and although she doesn’t feel connected to other community members, her interview transcript did indicate a connection to the brand and its values. As mentioned for the previous case, this is the data that would likely prove useful in persona development or influencing the details of a journey or experience map. However, this project further analyzes the data and instead, extracts interpellative roles and their supporting cues that can be used to influence interface design.

Based on the data described above and the data presented in Chapter V, an idea of the brand community’s general habitus can be defined and a broadly appealing interface can be designed. As mentioned in Chapter V, a design that would likely speak to this community would communicate the idea of forming bonds and building relationships with others. The design might also be up-front with its value on economic capital by showing photos of incentives that many community members aspire to obtain.

Two main interpellative roles were identified for the New You Skin Care community: the consultant and the customer. These roles were derived from the

found roles, their interpellative cues, and the identity of the brand community's general habitus. As mentioned with Case 1, these roles can be employed by the brand community to attract and interpellate non-members into the community. An example of how the general habitus and the interpellative roles can be applied to interface design is shown and explained below.



Figure 6.5: Sample interface design for the New You brand community

As mentioned for the Case 1 wireframes, these are by no means the absolute best designs – I am not a graphic designer and don't have the talent or training to design the "ideal" interpellative interface. What I aim to show with these wireframes are elements that could be included in the design based on the interview data and

what we now know about the interpellative roles associated with the community. These designs are representative of what could be done with the data. The interface wireframe shown above in Figure 6.5 is designed to appeal to the general habitus of the New You Skin Care brand. Elements marked with the number one relate to social capital, while elements marked with the number two relate to economic capital. For social capital, the design might include images or emotional stories that highlight a community member's relationship with others. Links to social media might be prominent features and language such as, "Connect with us!" could be employed. For economic capital, the design might include a spotlight story on a high-achieving consultant that describes their success and the incentives they have been awarded. From the customer's perspective, economic capital might be addressed by communicating product pricing.

As was mentioned with Case 1, this wireframe speaks to the general habitus of the community, but it also incorporates a number of elements and content that are useful for interpellating users into the desired roles of the community. The New You Skin Care wireframe is shown again below in Figure 6.6, this time indicating interpellative cues for the consultant role. Each number on the figure corresponds to an interpellative cue listed below.



Figure 6.6: Sample consultant role interface design for New You Skin Care

1. Polished and well-put-together individual
2. Desires to empower and support others
3. Driven by incentives
4. Savvy with social media, but prefer more personal forms of communication
5. Believes in the ability of the products, as well as the reputation of the brand community

The same wireframe is shown below in Figure 6.7, this time with interpellative cues for the customer role marked. Each number on the figure corresponds to an interpellative cue listed below.



Figure 6.7: Sample customer role interface design for New You Skin Care

1. Dedicated to improving their skin
2. Values a personal approach to purchasing products
3. Has the necessary income to afford high-end products

The cues listed and indicated above have the potential to interpellate individuals into the customer role within the New You Skin Care community. If other interpellative roles for the brand were identified, its cues could be used to

influence interface design as well. As was shown for the REU brand community, the importance of considering this data is illustrated below in Figure 6.8 by showing an uninformed design that might result from *not* considering the brand's habitus.



Figure 6.8: Example of an interface design that does not align with the New You Skin Care habitus

The focus on social and economic capital is gone. The inviting text of “Connect with us!” intended to encourage the building of relationships has been removed. Gone are the spotlight articles and content that communicate economic capital-related elements, such as the focus on incentives and success for consultants and the rationalization of the product price for customers. Gone is the uplifting and

relatable story of a customer who not only loves the products, but has developed a valuable friendship with her consultant. The social media links that are so important to how the brand members communicate with one another have been minimized and are more difficult to locate. While the image of smiling faces is welcoming, a link to an online store and product ingredients communicates very little, if anything at all, about the social and economic capital-focused habitus of the New You Skin Care brand. A link to shop is potentially useful and many customers appreciate when a brand supplies the ingredient list for its products; however, they are presented in the wrong context here and do not work to interpellate users into the desired social roles associated with the New You Skin Care community.

While the non-interpellative wireframe shown above is an extreme example, it serves to illustrate the importance of considering the forms of capital, themes from open coding, and common interpellative cues when designing persuasive interfaces that are appropriate for a specific brand community and its habitus.

Case 3: The Value-Driven Brand

The Love and Serve Apparel (LSA) general habitus can be described as one that places great value on developing the brand's heritage, office culture, ways of operating, and shared traditions. Considerable attention is also given to the brand's reputation and how it is portrayed to an outside audience. Finally, the LSA habitus is one that values people and their relationship to not only the brand, but on a more personal level with employees of the brand. This description is supported by interview data that suggests the brand places the most emphasis on cultural capital,

followed by symbolic and social capital. The least emphasis was placed on educational and economic capital, which suggests that the brand does not turn potential members away based on their educational or financial background. This is consistent with conversations from the interviews that argue that the brand's culture is most important, not how much money or what school someone attended. This notion is supported by a quote from Participant 8: "You've got the different nationalities, the different financial backgrounds. It's a whole, big ole melting pot working toward one thing!" Although it was commented on the least and was often described as a non-issue in terms of belonging with the LSA community, education and economic capital are present in the brand community, they are simply not a main element of how individuals identify with the brand.

The description of LSA's general habitus is further defined with support from the open coding process. The most discussed code was "workplace environment." This code aligns well with the notion of cultural capital. Its sub-codes include the topics of family, happiness, learning from mistakes, sharing common values with others, and unique workplace relationships – all of which provide a more thorough idea of what the LSA culture values and represents. A quote from Participant 1 illustrates the unique culture:

I actually met my wife here. She had been here five or six months before I got here. They called us the "Royal Couple." (laughs) We were the first intra-office romance. The owners ended up throwing us this big engagement celebration type deal and the whole company was here and they actually

covered our honeymoon. That seems kind of crazy when I tell people that, but if you're around LSA, it's just par for the course. It's just a place where they take care of their own and that's a really big example.

The interview transcripts for all eight LSA community members were consistent in describing the identity and general habitus of the brand. There was a heavy focus on the core values of the brand and how the employees all worked to conduct their business according to those values. This reinforces the finding that cultural capital is the most important and influential form within the community. It is at the detailed level of participant transcripts described above that the resulting data could be applied for persona development, journey map, or customer experience map creation. The above quote from Participant 1 about meeting his wife and his interaction with the brand community could serve as a humanizing anecdote for a persona. It could also be an indicator of how his relationship or experience with the brand has grown and matured, providing insight into how employees experience the brand community. However, the purpose of this project was to identify the general habitus of the brand community and to suggest social roles that interpellate individuals into the community. A deeper mining of the data revealed those roles, as well as interpellative cues that are instead useful for persuasive interface design.

Based on the data described above, an interface that would appeal to the majority of the community members and the brand's general habitus can be designed. Such a design might make use of descriptive text to communicate narratives about how community members interact with one another, the office

space, their customers, and the brand in general. The design might also make use of visuals to show the look and feel of the unique office space. Additionally, text and images might be used to tell the brand's origin story and how it grew to its current state. Such a design will be shown and explained later in this section.

Concerning interpellative roles for the LSA brand, based on the data from the eight interview transcripts, two main roles emerged: the employee and the customer. These main roles were culled from an analysis of the found roles, their interpellative cues, and the brand community's general habitus. When looking to interpellate others into their community, LSA should keep these two roles in mind. A suggestion for how LSA could design an interface that would speak to these two roles, as well as the general habitus of the brand is depicted and explained below.

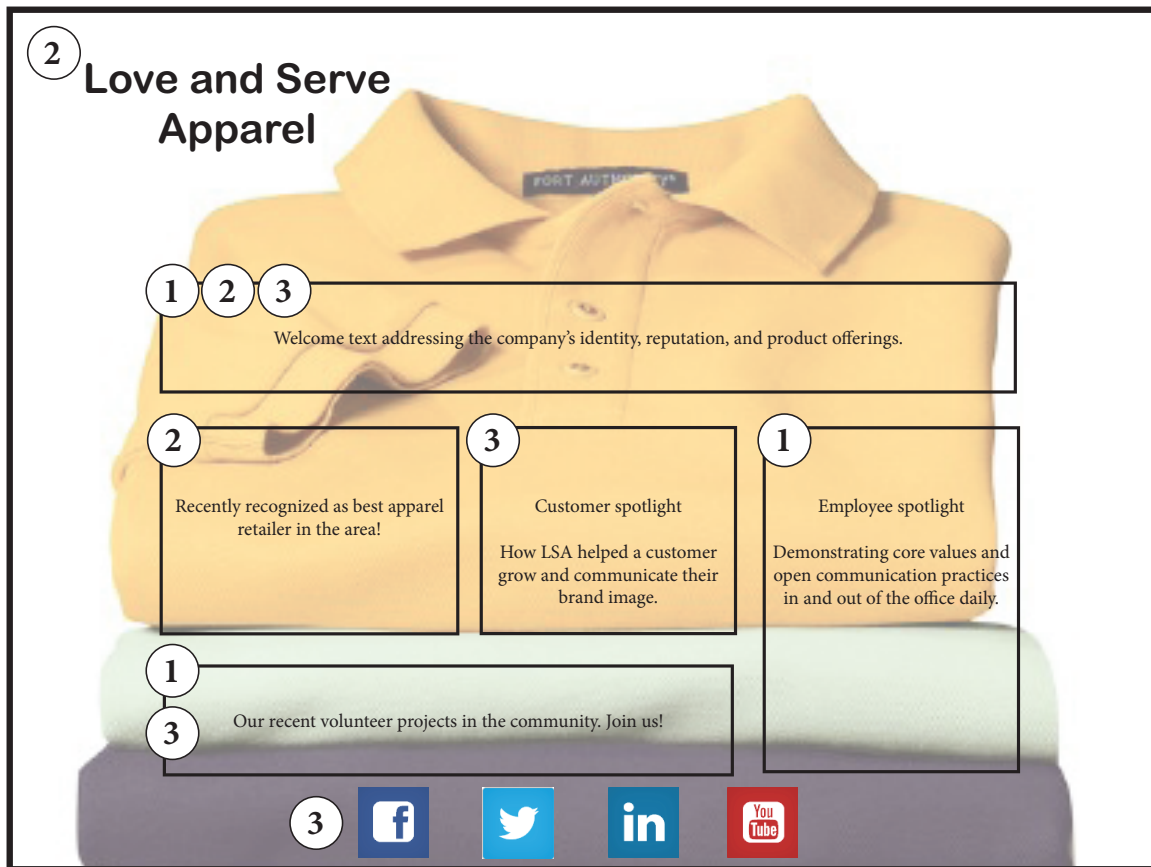


Figure 6.9: Sample interface design for the LSA brand community

The wireframe depicted in Figure 6.9 is aimed at appealing to the general habitus of the Love and Serve Apparel brand. Elements marked with the number one relate to cultural capital. Elements marked with the number two relate to symbolic capital. And elements marked with the number three relate to social capital. For cultural capital, the design might include a spotlight article on an employee that explains how they exemplify the core values of the company culture. The interface might also include a link or text highlighting the brand's connection to volunteering in the community. Symbolic capital might include obvious references to the brand's logo, as well as mentioning any awards, rankings, or recognitions.

Social capital might be portrayed using images of employees working with others or a feature story about a star customer and their relationship with the brand.

This singular wireframe not only speaks to the general habitus of the LSA community, but it contains cues and elements that are useful for interpellative efforts. The LSA wireframe is shown again below in Figure 6.10, but this time, it highlights interpellative cues for the employee role. Each number on the figure corresponds with an interpellative cue listed below.

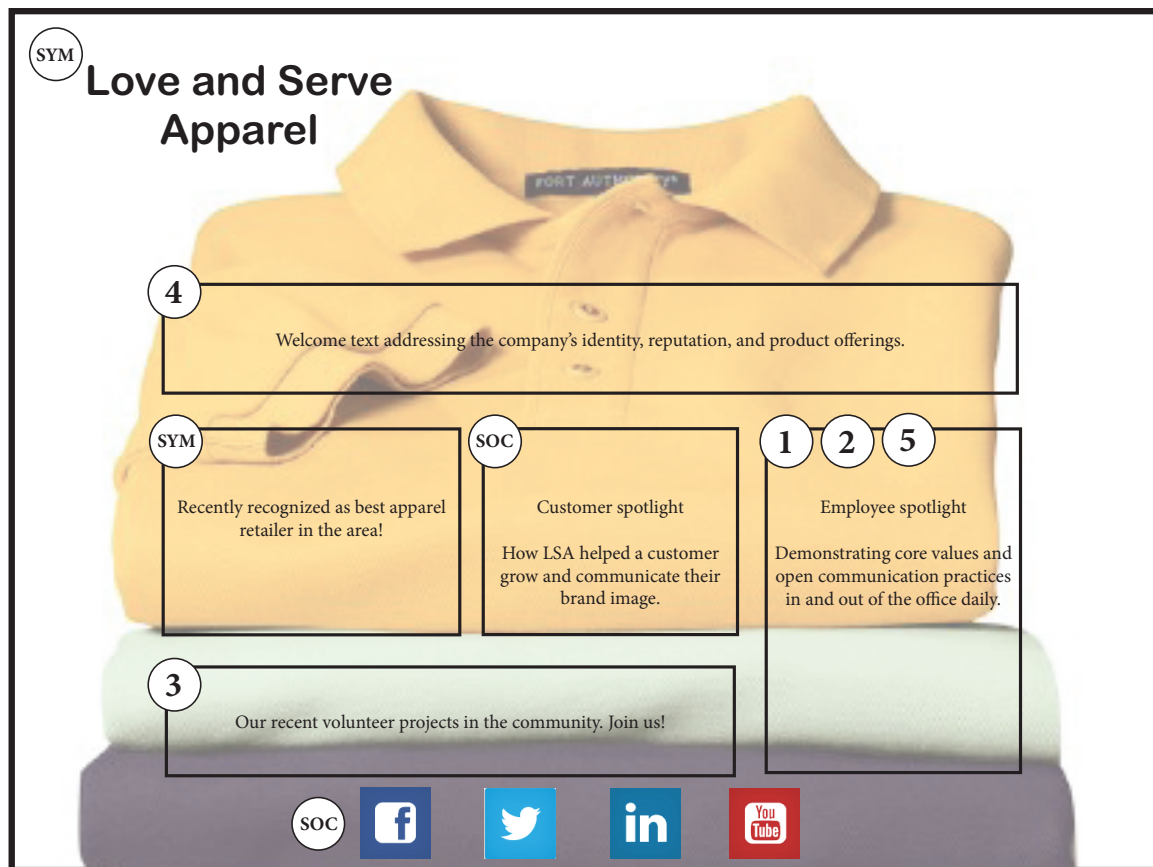


Figure 6.10: Sample employee role interface design for the LSA brand community

1. Dedicated and hard-working employee
2. Committed to the brand's core values

3. Motivated to serve others
4. Relatable, friendly, and humble
5. Values open communication and interaction with others

While an interpellative customer role was not defined, should future research identify interpellative cues for the LSA customer role, the same process could be used to design the visual elements and content of an interface for that audience. Figures 6.9 and 6.10 apply the data from Chapter V appropriately, whereas Figure 6.11 shows a wireframe that does *not* take that important data into consideration.

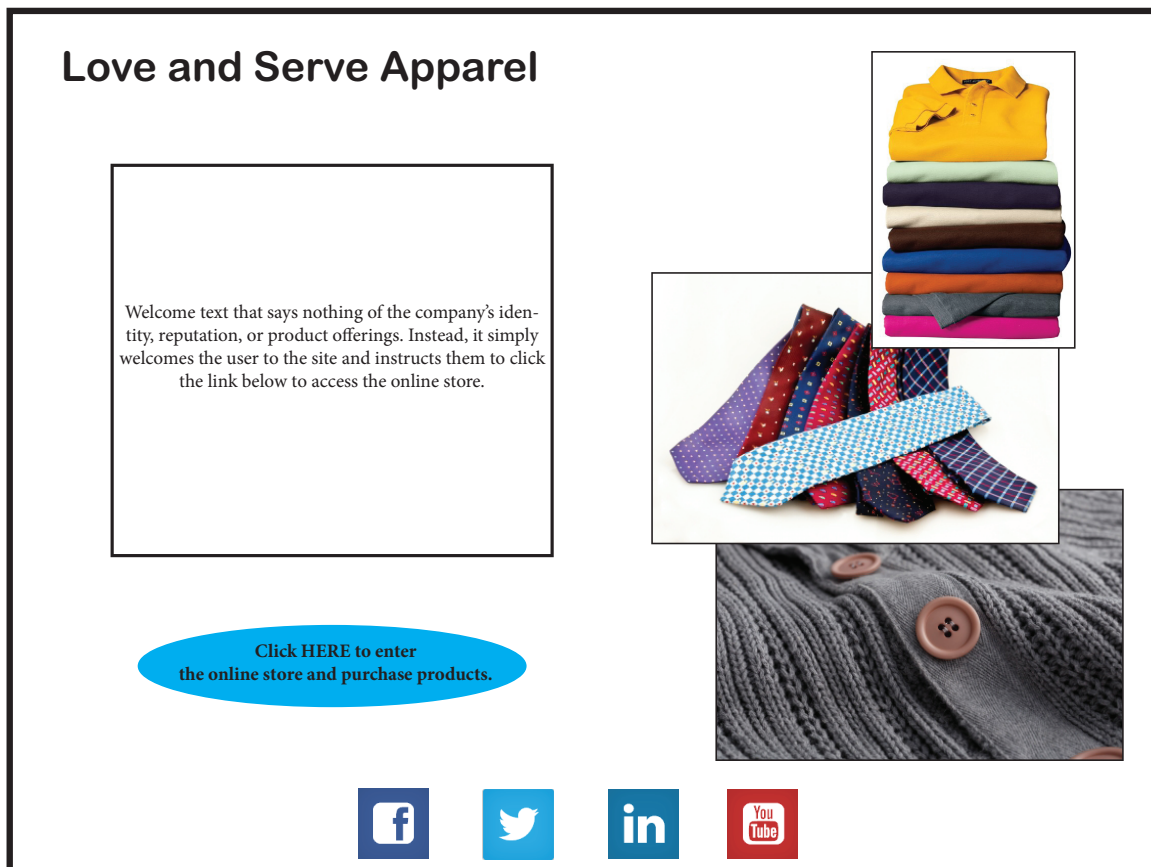


Figure 6.11: Example of an interface design that does not align with the LSA habitus

Not only is the wireframe design shown above a poor design, it is also devoid of references to cultural, symbolic, and social capital in relation to the LSA brand habitus. Gone are all of the cues and elements that speak to the LSA culture of heritage and working well with others. Gone are the majority of the elements that speak to symbolic capital, with the exception of the brand's name. Social capital is present in the form of social media buttons, but without an idea of who or what the brand is or represents, it is doubtful that site visitors would click the buttons. The wireframe depicted in Figure 6.11 has been stripped of the important elements that communicate the LSA habitus, and thus, results in an ineffective interface design.

Again, it is important to remember that the wireframe designs shown above (excluding Figure 6.11) result from analyzing the community's forms of capital, themes from open coding, and common interpellative cues from the interview transcripts. This analysis makes the data actionable and result in interface designs that speak to the general habitus and also the interpellative role of LSA employee. The process of this analysis and its application could be carried out with any rich data that focuses on uncovering the interpellative elements and roles of a specific brand community.

From the analysis and application shown and described above, it should now be clear how adapting the research method of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing to user experience research holds value and is worthy of further exploration. The next section shifts from the tight focus on the

three brand community cases to the broader research questions aimed at the application and function of the research method itself.

Analysis of the Adapted Research Method

The top-level research question for this project asks: is the application of phenomenological interviewing an appropriate and successful method for constructivist design? Before answering that question, I must first answer this one: does existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews meet the criteria to be considered a constructivist research method? This section will address both of the above questions, beginning with the question of whether or not the research performed for this project meets the guidelines for being considered a constructivist research method.

Analyzing the Research Method Against the Constructivist Design Guidelines

Introduced in Chapter II, the list of constructivist design guidelines below defines what sets the constructivist approach apart from the more traditional accommodationist approach. While a research method does not have to achieve compliance for each guideline to be considered “constructivist,” it should accomplish the majority.

Constructivist Design Guidelines

- Persuade a user to engage in a specific types of behavior. Adapts the user to the technology, not the technology to the user.
- Construct social roles users can play to take advantage of certain technologies.
- Use social protocols, aesthetic choices, and cultural cues to interpellate users into a subject position that will enable them to predict and use the designer's conceptual model (interface).
- Provide the user with "predictive power" over the interface - "a user could predict, with a high degree of accuracy and comfort, that interacting with an object in the interface would produce a specific result" (Howard, "Accommodationist and Constructivist Approaches," pg. 165)
- Give the designer explanatory power of how to design an interface.
- Provide actionable results that help designers understand the habitus and to make informed design decisions.

Figure 6.12: Suggested constructivist design guidelines

Chapter IV explained how these guidelines would be used to evaluate existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews. It was stated that the relevance and appropriateness of the research method to the constructivist approach can be determined by a simple series of statements:

- Constructivist design does X.
- The method applied to this study did/ did not do X.
- Therefore, the method applied to this study is/ is not an appropriate method for the constructivist approach.

After considering the results and analysis of this project and using the second statement above, the following statements apply to the research method of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews. The method applied to this study...

- **has the potential** to persuade a user to engage in a specific type of behavior.

It cannot be confirmed whether or not users would in fact engage in the desired social role because the project's method focused on identifying the roles users might play, not assessing whether users would or would not be interpellated into the roles. Assessing the success of interpellation using social roles constructed via data collected through phenomenological interviews would be an interesting topic for future projects.

- **did** construct ("define" is the more appropriate word here) social roles that users can play when interacting with a specific interface. These interpellative roles are defined for each brand community in Chapter V.
- **did** use social protocols, aesthetic choices, and cultural cues to interpellate users into a subject position. Although the actual act of interpellation was not tested for this project, the data culled from the phenomenological interviews was used to identify social protocols, aesthetics, and cues that would likely serve to interpellate one into the desired social role.
- **has the potential** to provide predictive power over the interface. Again, whether or not a user would be interpellated using these interface designs was not tested for this project; however, the purpose of the common

interpellative cues is to do just that. The cues should serve as clues that resonate with the user and help them understand how to interact with the interface. Picking up on these interpellative cues would give a user predictive power over the interface. These cues can be addressed in future research.

- **did** give the designer explanatory power of how to design an interface. Examples of how a designer can use the data to influence interpellative interface design is demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter.
- **did** provide actionable results that help designers understand the habitus and to make informed design decisions. After analyzing the data from interviews, designers will have a better understanding of the community's habitus, including which forms of capital are most valued and the kind of roles that users play when interacting with the community.

Based on the findings, analysis, and application, existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews fully satisfied four of the six constructivist design guidelines. The two remaining guidelines might also be satisfied; however, determining the answer would require another project with a focus on assessing the success of interpellative cues. By meeting four of the six guidelines and having the potential to meet all six, pending further research, it appears that existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews are an appropriate research method for constructivist design.

Determining the Success of the the Method

Finally, the main research question must be asked and answered. Having determined that the research method meets the criteria for being considered a constructivist method, it is necessary to ask: is the application of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing an appropriate and successful method for constructivist design?

First, is it an appropriate method? I argue yes. Constructivist design goes beyond the bounds of more traditional accommodationist approaches to user experience and considers culture, aesthetics, tastes, and preferences of users in order to understand the social roles they might adopt when interacting with a specific brand community or interface. With its focus on the lived experience and its ability to examine the role of various forms of capital on the tastes and preferences of a community, existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing are certainly an appropriate approach for obtaining such personal and detailed data.

Second, is it a successful method, meaning, did it provide the data and insights it was expected to provide? Here again, I argue yes. Employing this approach to in-depth interviewing was expected to provide rich data that would reveal the nuances and intricacies of each brand community's habitus, as well as provide data to help designers create interpellative interfaces. As shown above in the applied examples, the results obtained from the interview transcripts are actionable and do provide guidance for interface design.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the contributions and potential future directions of this research. Influenced by the analysis, application, and discussion above, the next section discusses the research contributions and implications of this project.

Research Contributions and Implications

From the beginning, this project has been an interesting exercise in building bridges across a variety of fields. Focusing on the main area of user experience, the project also drew support from usability studies, branding, marketing, consumer behavior, cognitive psychology, communication theory, persuasive design, identity studies, and surely, more. With a project that has the capacity to reach in a number of directions, I expected that its contributions would also range widely. In Chapter I, the expected contributions of this project were listed as:

- Answering the question of what role existential phenomenology can play in the field of usability and user experience research.
- The development of a research method for the constructivist approach to user experience.
- To provide a “roadmap” for designers, strategists, information architects, and others within the field of user experience who are working to develop persuasive and interpellative interfaces for brand communities.

It is my opinion that all three of these expected contributions were achieved. They will be addressed below and joined by additional contributions that are theoretical, methodological, and industry-related.

Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

From a theoretical standpoint, this project adds to the discussion of the constructivist approach to user experience and what that approach can do for the field. As previously mentioned, the constructivist approach to design is an emerging perspective that is still taking root in the field of user experience. While the notion of designing interfaces that persuade or interpellate users is fascinating and valuable, methods for how to acquire the data necessary to inform and build those interfaces are few. While this project aims to make a theoretical contribution to the field of user experience research by expanding the concept of constructivist design and showing how it can be applied and why it is valuable; it also aims to make a methodological contribution by suggesting existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews as a constructivist method.

This project looked to another field, the field of consumer behavior, and found a method that had the promise of producing the data necessary to inform constructivist design. By adapting that method for user experience research, this project has expanded the methodological “tool box” for user experience designers and information architects. Applying a method from one field to another has made significant contributions and aided in the advancement of many other fields. For example, social network theory draws from a number of physics equations and the branch of statistics known as “survival analysis” is frequently applied to engineering, economics, and sociology. This borrowing from one field and applying to another is what Boyer refers to as “scholarship of integration.” By integrating the

method of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing into the field of user experience, a promising method for constructivist design has emerged and the theoretical literature surrounding the notion of constructivist design has been expanded.

Substantive Contributions for Industry and Beyond

Aside from theoretical and methodological contributions to the field of user experience, this project also produced actionable data that can be used for practical application and design. An expected contribution of this project was to provide a “roadmap” for designers, strategists, information architects, and others within the field of user experience who are working to develop persuasive and interpellative interfaces for brand communities. Based on the results of the interviews, this project is successful in showing designers how they can use the rich, detailed data from phenomenological interviews to better understand a brand’s habitus, as well as the social roles that would interpellate users into the brand community. While this is not a quick method, it does yield a wealth of data that designers could mine as superficially or deeply as they’d like to obtain a general idea of the brand’s habitus or a highly detailed description of what matters to the community.

A second contribution expected for industry application of this project was that based on the type of brand, it could be recommended which forms of capital to research in order to gain the best idea of the habitus of the brand. Common knowledge of brands shows that they come in a variety of forms, many of which are distinguished by one or more dominant characteristics. Some brands produce an

experience as their product, others produce a tangible product, and still others provide a service. It was hypothesized that this project might provide the answer to a query such as: “If you are X type of brand, focusing interview questions on X (culture, education, language, social connections, etc.) may be most useful in understanding your community and designing an interpellative interface with which they will engage.” However, it was found that completing queries like the one above is not applicable to the project because regardless of the type of brand, all forms of capital influence its habitus and identity. Regardless of the kind of products a brand community produces, all forms of capital should be examined to gain an informed description of the brand’s habitus and identity.

Future Research

The work performed for this project, as well as all of the results, insights, and contributions that have come from it, serves to continue and amplify a conversation surrounding user experience research methods. As the field continues to grow and evolve, and as it becomes more and more popular to focus on how users experience something and how that experience can be designed into an interface, it is necessary for the field’s research methods to grow and evolve as well. This project aims to do just that. While project was successful in meeting its objectives and providing contributions to the field, it is not without its limitations.

Limitations of the Study

Time is surely one factor that placed limitations on the project. The richness and robustness of the resulting data make it possible to analyze and re-analyze the

results for months or a considerable amount of time longer. Bound by the desire to graduate in a certain time frame, I did not have that kind of time available. Spending additional time with this rich interview data would likely provide additional insights into a brand community's habitus or interpellative roles that were overlooked.

The large amount of data itself acted as a limitation of sorts. For those who are interested in performing a research project using existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews, I recommend starting with only one community in order to devote all attention to thoroughly analyzing its results. This project looked at three communities, resulting in twenty-two interviews, twenty-one hours and sixteen minutes of audio, and 511 double-spaced pages of transcripts. This was an overwhelming amount of data to work with given the time constraints of the project. With such rich data, it is difficult to focus on all of the cases and synthesize all of the data.

This leads to another limitation: performing the project as the sole researcher. As mentioned in Saldana's coding manual for qualitative researchers, "coding in most qualitative studies is a solitary act (26);" however, Saldana goes on to write that larger projects with immense amounts of data can be more easily assessed by a team. The interviews for this project resulted in a large amount of data to be analyzed in a very thorough manner. Because of this, a project of this scope would be better suited for a team of researchers with an abundance of time. This would allow for inter-rater reliability on the coding and a more thorough analysis of the very detailed data.

Suggestions for Future Research

This project serves as an invitation and a jumping off point for future research concerning constructivist design and the field of user experience. Considering the research method of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviews, there are three main questions that come to mind. First, how can we assess the success of interpellation using the social roles constructed via phenomenological interviews? In other words: how can we assess whether users would or would not be interpellated into specific social roles? Is there a way to confirm that the interpellative efforts succeeded? Perhaps by purchasing a product or subscribing to an email newsletter, a user indicates that they have been interpellated into the desired social role.

Second, do the interpellative cues introduced in Chapter V actually serve as clues that resonate with the user and help them understand how to interact with the interface? The logic is that by noticing these interpellative cues, a user would be interpellated into a specific role and given predictive power over the interface. Perhaps future research could focus on these cues and whether or not users picked up on them. Additional research in this direction would likely draw heavily from cognitive science since it deals with how a user thinks about and perceives the interface. Here, the question to answer is, “are the interpellative cues successful at interpellating users?”

A third question concerning the application of existential phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing concerns the data that results from the method.

How might the resulting rich data be applied for other constructivist design methods? As mentioned in Chapter V and throughout this chapter, the data could be helpful in creating descriptive personas because it is detailed enough to provide information on an individual or specific audience's preferences and personality traits. It could also be used to inform the design of a journey map or customer experience map because it allows the researcher to better understand the individual's lived experience and interaction with the brand. One of the benefits of performing phenomenological interviews is that they yield such a large amount of descriptive data. This data can then be used to develop interpellative roles, as is done for this project, or to influence a number of other descriptive methods.

Aside from looking at the nuances of the research method itself and how the method can be further adapted to inform constructivist design, it is also worthwhile to consider how the research method used for this project can influence or contribute to other areas of user experience research and other fields entirely. For example, how might data from phenomenological interviews be applied to the design of not just an online interface, but other marketing materials? How might data from phenomenological interviews be applied to physical product design? Thinking back to Pine and Gilmore's experience economy, how might the data from phenomenological interviews be applied to service design and then to experience design itself? According to Pine and Gilmore, the world is moving more and more towards experiences as products. Future research might address how those experiences can be built and made interpellative.

Conclusion

Returning to the REI website from Chapter I, it should be abundantly clear how and why the interface speaks to its audience and interpellates users. You now understand why the interface design experience feels effortless and enjoyable to those who visit. How have you achieved this realization or new understanding? Over the course of these six chapters, you have been introduced to and somewhat immersed into the concepts of habitus and interpellation. You are well-versed in the research method of existential phenomenology and its phenomenological interviewing style. You are attuned to language that is representative of the six forms of capital and you understand how that capital informs the general habitus of a brand community. You also understand how an adapted coding system can be thoroughly applied to raw interview data and can result in descriptions of interpellative roles and their cues that designers can then use to develop content and elements that speak to a brand's habitus and in turn, create a persuasive interface design. You are now able to tune in to the social, ethical, and cultural nuances of a brand and how those nuances can manifest in interface design. You understand what designer and architect R. Buckminster Fuller meant when he said that "ninety-nine percent of who you are is invisible and untouchable" (Belonax).

The research method adapted and applied for this project is focused on that invisible and untouchable identity that is the brand community. It is my hope that this research method will find its way into many a researcher and designer's "tool boxes" and that it will provide valuable data supporting the constructivist approach

to user experience research. As the field of user experience continues to grow, so too should its selection of research methods and the wealth of data they provide for useful, functional, and enjoyable design.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Suggested Questions to Guide Interviews

General Identity and Reputation

- Describe the identity of X. What does it look like? What/ who does it involve? What does it represent?
- How does X brand community compare to Y brand community? (asking about reputation)
- Tell me about your first experience with X.
- Tell me about your current impression of/ experience with X.
 - Has your impression of X changed? How so?
- Tell me about an experience that is uniquely X. For example, “That was such a typical Apple experience.”
 - What part of that experience communicates that it uniquely belongs to that brand?
 - Have you participated in this experience? What was the experience like?
 - How did you feel when you participated?
- What symbols, colors, or other visuals have you encountered that are uniquely associated with X?

Community Members

- How do you know that someone is a member of the X brand community?
- When you think of people associated with X, what descriptions come to mind?
 - How would you describe their backgrounds? What kind of people are they? Where do they come from?
- Describe the financial/ economical position of people who tend to identify with X.
 - Explain how a person’s financial position is involved with X.
 - How important is financial/ economical standing to X? Explain your reasoning.
- Describe the educational background of people who tend to identify with X.
 - What other institutions have they been involved with?
 - What is your personal educational background?
 - How important is educational background to X? Explain.
- Describe yourself using 3 adjectives.
 - How does your self-description relate to your perception of X?
- How does being involved with X make you feel? List three adjectives that describe that feeling.

- Tell me about (one of the adjectives).

Communication with the Brand and Other Community Members

- In your experience with X, describe how people speak to and communicate with each other.
 - If there are certain words or phrases that are commonly used, tell me about those including who uses them, when, and why.
- Explain how you communicate with other members of the X community – your use of social media or online communication, face-to-face interaction, and other forms of communication.
 - What is it about X that encourages you to communicate in that specific way?
 - How do you prefer to communicate with others about X? Explain why that mode of communication is preferable.

Website and Online Experience

- When was the last time you were on X's website? Why were you there?
- Tell me about a time you had a pleasant experience with the X website.
 - What was that experience like?
- Tell me about a time you had an unpleasant experience with the X website.
 - What was that experience like?
- If you could give advice to the web designer, what would you say?

Appendix B

Sample Interview Transcript

Participant 4 for Love and Serve Apparel

* Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Interviewer: Describe the identity of LSA.

Participant: A lot of what I've come to understand, as far as what LSA represents and means, from the perspective of others and my hope internally, is that people view us the same way, is that the legacy that our owners created almost twenty-two years ago of a love and serve model. Based on our stewardship. Based on our relational apparel. It's communicated in all of our relationships. That goes back to LSA's purpose, which is to love and serve others. Then it's expounded (?) upon our time, our resources. My hope is that people see that outwardly, no matter what the interaction is. Whether it's over the phone, in-person, if they know someone from their church or a restaurant or across the street that works at LSA. That kind of reputation that they're building is a love and serve model. It is faith-based, but I know for a fact that people in this office may not profess the same faith, but they stand behind the principles and the purpose of loving and serving others. I hope that that's what, overall, people grasp.

I: Thinking of other brands that operate in the same space as LSA, what do you think LSA's reputation is amongst its competitors and what sets it apart?

P: For LSA, I feel that, unlike any other apparel company, it is more relational. We're getting to know the ins and outs of our customers to boost their brand, make them more authentic, into who they are, learning about those relationship buildings between us and our customers and really seeing how we can better them and better serve them. Whereas, I would say maybe a competitor that just creates apparel is just creating apparel. Whether it's for a purpose of fashion or it's a purpose of a uniform to be designated in some way, but they may not take a relational aspect that I've noticed, other than a fashionable aspect. They add both of these at LSA in terms of it being relevant. It being workable for the customer. And it makes sense because we've heard the feedback. We've taken the time to get to know who they are. Whereas that makes it a little different than most other quote apparel companies or quote uniform companies. Because we aren't a uniform company, we're strategic branded apparel. We are being strategic about our decisions and what we're putting our name on and who's wearing LSA and how they feel in LSA. Those are all very calculated, but yet relational aspects that I don't think you may find with another company. I don't know exactly even, to say, competitor, it's kind of hard for me to

say we're a competitor with "B" because I don't know very many other companies that operate in that way.

I: That offer exactly what LSA offers?

P: Right. And that's just for me. I don't think I know, personally, and I've been here for a while and I also, in general, I'm not aware of anyone who designs and takes that to the level that we take it to for customers. I think it's pretty much run of the mill for most other apparel companies. You buy what we create and then you can put your name on it and I think for LSA, it's more of we're creating something for your brand. Even if they were outwardly looking for apparel and they go, "I like that striped shirt, can we put our name on it?" For us, we would say, "What kind of things do you like?" to compensate, "I like striped shirts." "Oh, ok."

I: Tell me about your first experience with LSA.

P: I did not know what LSA was. (laughs) I'm not from here and so the background of seeing the outdoor apparel was not a background that I had understanding of. I came here under the understanding that I was going to help one of the CEOs with day-to-day life and scheduling and that aspect. The more I got intertwined into the company, I started to realize what we did. My first day, and my first experience was actually really awesome because it was the first time we presented to a potential customer to win their business. I was driving up with a group of people that I had never met and helped unload mannequins, dressings, putting the presentation together while people are rehearsing what they're going to speak about and the portion that they're going to talk about LSA. I was in the room for all of that and I was meeting all of these people and then I actually experienced, behind the scenes, what happens when a customer comes to us and says, "We would like for you to make our apparel." I got to see what that looked like for LSA to say, "This is what we do." I don't know of very many people that experience that on their very first day. Now, almost four years later, that customer is our customer, which they have been for that amount of time. We did win the contract and I know why we did because we were relational. Because we learned about them. Because we took the extra mile to show them what we could do for them specifically and how we understood who they were as a company and what things were valuable for them. For me, it was a really awesome experience. That's how I really came to know what it was and it was all at once on the first day. It was overwhelming, but it was awesome.

I: Has your impression of the brand changed or grown?

P: I think we definitely like to be relevant and grow and be... The three pillars that LSA is resting on right now are that we are creating a culture of stewardship. We are being focused on our discipline, dreaming, and design. And the third is that we are

also incorporating relational apparel. Those three things are something that we're always trying to grow and do and I felt all of those things whether they had been defined my first day or not. I think that's something that people are definitely continuing to try to create. I, personally, am focused here in the office on our culture and that's part of my role in terms of emphasizing culture, understanding LSA's culture, showing LSA's culture to other people in the office, making sure they understand from an onboarding standpoint what the LSA culture is like because it's so unique. Making sure those values, purpose, our vision, those pillars are understood within the first little bit of coming to LSA is really key in what I do here, but I think overall, more and more I'm noticing it. More and more people are really starting to incorporate that in the way they model everyday at the office. I think that was really a growth thing for LSA to define it and put it down on paper.

I: How do you go about doing that...communicating those important morals and values?

P: For me, the first part is really that we're making sure that we're intentional about the beginning of the process. This is a growing (inaudible) area. This is an area we're trying to emphasize and grow within our company. It is something that people are trying to focus upon, overall, and especially me. The way I'm right now, trying to learn and grow is how I can be excellent in this area so that people do know it from the beginning. It really does start from a relational side the first day. They spend time with me, we take a tour, they get to know their employees, whether they're really going to be working with that department or not, but they get to walk around, they get to hear the LSA story, they go through the employee handbook...the actual storytellers(?), the vision, the purpose, the things that set us apart. The fact that we do design for our customers. The fact that we offer a love and serve (inaudible) without the corporate purpose, they get to kind of take that whole scope and it could be overwhelming, but we try to expose them to as much of that as we can within the first few days of being onboarded to the office. A lot of it is going over material and asking questions and answering questions and getting to know the person as well, when they're here and they start.

I: What visuals, symbols, colors, and other images come to mind as uniquely LSA?

P: Our logo - "LSA" - which is just simple, interlocked letters. Which a lot of people don't understand and don't know how to say or ask how you pronounce it the first day or what does that stand for? What does that mean? Which then leads into a conversation about how LSA was created and the history and the legacy and how the owners met at college and how they came up with the word, "LSA." What the experience felt like during that time and when they referenced having an "LSA" day - is what they're trying to create with this company and our apparel and anything that we do. That symbol, hopefully, after they understand what it is, is recognizable.

Because a lot of times, it's not a first. "Oh, I think I've seen that. I don't know." So that's more of an outward brand and it should be the same internally, that people know. As far as other logos and colors and things in the office, we have other logos, signifying our leadership group – they have a logo. Our "M" meetings, which happen monthly, which are called "cross-functional-management meetings" – those are the ones where that logo is recognizable. There's a logo for "FX" meetings, which are functional, different groups of the departments within the company that meet bi-weekly or weekly, that symbol is becoming more prevalent. That people know what "FX" is. They are new symbols within the company, but they're being recognized. Another one is a work wheel that we have in the office that was a gift from the owners on our twentieth birthday. It is a symbol of our core values and what we're all doing here. We're all putting our hands to that work wheel and it's visually in the office, but then on your first year anniversary, you receive a replica with your name and your hire year and all of the core values that you've demonstrated while you've worked at LSA. Those big things. Those being resilient moments. Those are all on the wheel. Everyone receives that after they've completed a year of service at the office. The company verse is on there and so there are things that are kind of continually emphasized to show people what we're doing here. In terms of any other colors, from a brand perspective, our creative and design team, marketing, spend some time within the first two days with new hires going over brand standards including how the logo can be used. The colors that are used. Black or white or silver. They go over all that. As far as LSA colors, since I've been here, I believe they've settled on a navy and a green kind of color that they use on our stationary. Any other types of symbols or colors, I can't really put my hand on it if there's anything else besides those.

I: Thinking more broadly, what images do you connect with the identity of LSA?

P: I think a lot of people think of LSA as an apparel, outdoor apparel company based on the history. Kind of Patagonia-looking type items where people are out in nature and wearing LSA apparel. But other than that, there's nothing. And then obviously, (national fast-food chain), they know us well and then people start to realize, "Oh, LSA made the apparel for (national fast-food chain)" when they're in those environments. Or other large customers that they recognize, "Oh, they produced the apparel for the local pro-am golf tournament." You know? Like, "Oh, I think I've seen that somewhere."

I: Let's focus on the people – the LSA community. How would you say you know that someone is a member of the community?

P: For me, hopefully, it is a level of, I'm hoping that everyone here demonstrates servant leadership and is aligned with that. A lot of the people internally and the customers we work with are very aligned with the same aspects of their own type of

love and serve model within their own companies. The same types of values that they hold true of being authentic, being resilient, being humbled, those are all things that are continually encouraged and I would think that that's also how people are operating inside of the office, in a relational way. I think those are probably the recognizable ones that you would hope that someone would notice from the outreach (?) of the LSA people, outreach (?) that they are loving and serving others. Or that they are a relational person or the companies we work with are excellent at what they do. They're your favorite place. LSA is creating that vision of being the favorite. We're trying to be the favorites of our internal customers, that community internally, and LSA, our outward customers. So I think that's another one that's big is that you can kind of recognize that they are too. That is vision.

I: When you think of the backgrounds of those associated with LSA, what comes to mind?

P: Honestly, we're really across the board. Because I know people come from all different backgrounds here in the office. If they are a culture fit, then it was recognized in the interview process or through a relationship. Oh that person would be really good at this or whatnot. We also have a lot of people who have worked at really large companies prior to this, but they would prefer to work in an environment like LSA because of our culture of stewardship, because of the people that they work with, because of that community that is created here. I think it really spans. I couldn't even just say, "They're all college grads" or "They're all from the South." There is no really consistency other than the culture of what people are made of internally.

I: How does being involved with LSA make you feel?

P: I would have to say that I'm proud to work here. I love working here. I love what I do. I love being able to feel that I'm helping people, whether it's my boss who's one of the co-CEOs and owners or that what we're doing is helping in some regard. I would say, I feel pretty good. I feel happy that I'm here. In past jobs, it was more of a job and this is kind of a lifestyle, really. There isn't really a stop for me, either. I think it spans throughout. It goes after 5 PM. Whether that's my role or not, but I would hope, like I mentioned earlier, that someone would recognize, "Oh, she works at LSA." I feel like I hope that someone would be able to align the two.

I: Thinking about communication between the people who work at LSA and also with customers, are there any certain words, phrases, things that are commonly said around the workplace that are unique to the brand? What communication channels does LSA tend to utilize the most?

P: I definitely think “love and serve” is used a lot. And how we’re loving and serving each other, our clients. I think that’s a big one. As far as any other phrases or ideas, I’m not landing on any, but.... Internally, again, I would hope that it would reflect that same model. For us, we don’t have an actual brick and mortar store, currently. It’s not a retail presence, in that regard. It’s an e-commerce website. Whether that’s websites that we’re creating for our customers, like (national fast-food chain)’s website – that would be a web-based interaction. Or, if you or anyone else wanted to go to LSA commerce or LSA.com, that would be an online offering of what LSA is. Internally, it’s email, it’s meetings that are established, face-to-face interactions, phone. One thing that we’re looking to do in this year is an intranet where there is more interaction on a social basis internally. Right now, a lot of that takes place over email. In terms of social media, I wouldn’t really say there’s necessarily a presence right now.

I: It sounds like there’s not really one mode of communication that tends to be a “go-to.”

P: I would say so. Just because different departments use different tools whether they use different share drives or forums or forms or they use some type of SharePoint website. Email, I would say is the internal communication channel that most used. Then external would probably be our website. Or, if they have their hands on an actual catalog, which again, would have to be something that they were given or a presentation that was created for them. Some sort of printed material.

I: That probably would have come from a face-to-face interaction at some point?

P: Right.

I: Thinking of online presence and experience: how does the LSA identity translate online?

P: I feel like the web developers, I feel like our graphic artists, I feel like our IT and our designers have put the best foot forward there that we could of this is our apparel, this is LSA’s story, this is what we stand for, these are our people, this is how we spend our time, this is where we’re located, our history. I feel our online has a pretty good representation. I think they did a very good job of trying to create LSA on the web, as much as they could. As far as who we are and what we do. The people that work here and what makes us stand out.

I: Building off of that, if there was anything you could add or change about that web presence to better communicate something about the LSA brand – what would you change?

P: The only thing I can think about, honestly, would maybe be some type of video because it would be something that maybe people would want to see what LSA is in some regard or hear from the owners, what LSA is. The owners, they're story tellers. They love history. They love the lineage, the heritage of LSA, the passing down of information. And I think if that could be presented in a way that would be really unique and interesting. As far as being able to hear it. For me, I feel like even if our new hires were able to spend a lunch with the owners within the first few months of hiring, would be awesome because then they get to hear it from the owners. A lot of what LSA has been created and built on is something they created. I don't know if the owners necessarily are wanting to continue on that presence or if they want the people here to really become more of what's standing out as far as being a relational apparel company. I'm thinking in terms of having a video on the website, they probably would really more like it to be about the people that work here and how that has transcended in twenty-two years. A little tid-bit of what they have done, but then kind of get background on what a day in the life means for different people in the office or what LSA means to different people. Like what we've been talking about or what I feel like other people feel about the office. I think it would be neat to hear that or see that somewhere online. It might be a little more difficult that I think.
(laughs)

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