

CrossFit (Cult)ure: A Rhetorical Analysis of Symbolic Convergence Through Digital Media

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ABSTRACT

Community is created, developed, and produced by CrossFit as an organization through their website mission statement and visual media, and the community of CrossFitters are able to respond in kind on CrossFit social media. CrossFit culture has become a tour-de-force in the health and fitness industry over recent years, where individuals come together from all walks of life to connect to others through a health and fitness-centric focused community. The high-quality promotional media produced by CrossFit HQ offers a glimpse into what the organization promotes and values, and the official webpage is the main starting point for potential new members to engage with CrossFit as an organization. Likewise, the CrossFit Facebook page offers research into how individuals in the CrossFit community engage with promoted material, as well as how they may shape their identity or understanding as a result. Fantasy theme analysis (FTA) is useful for analyzing the way CrossFitters define their identity through their membership in CrossFit culture. FTA can help explain how both the CrossFit website and Facebook posts present the "CrossFit way of life" as an ideal fitness community and its implications for members. Using symbolic convergence theory (SCT) as a lens, research will utilize fantasy theme rhetorical criticism as the methodology with which these CrossFit artifacts (both Facebook posts and corresponding comments) are analyzed in order to develop a better understanding of the fantasy themes found within the CrossFit community as well as how members develop a sense of shared reality and identity through their membership in the organization.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

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Introduction

Community is created, developed, and produced by the CrossFit organization through their website and the community of CrossFitters able to respond on CrossFit social media. CrossFit culture has become a tour-de-force in the health and fitness industry over recent years, where individuals come together from all walks of life to connect to others through a fitness-centric focused community. The high-quality promotional media produced by CrossFit HQ offers a glimpse into what the organization promotes and values, and the official webpage is the main starting point for potential new members to engage with the CrossFit organization. Likewise, the CrossFit Facebook page offers insight into how individuals in the CrossFit community engage with promoted material, as well as how they may shape their identity or understanding as a result. Fantasy theme analysis (FTA) is useful for analyzing the way CrossFitters define their identity through membership in CrossFit culture. FTA can help explain how both the CrossFit website and Facebook posts present the "CrossFit way of life" as an ideal fitness community and its implications for members. Using Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) as a lens, this research will utilize fantasy theme rhetorical criticism as the methodology with which these CrossFit artifacts (both organizational website and corresponding Facebook posts) are analyzed in order to develop a better understanding of the fantasy themes found within the CrossFit community, as well as how members develop a sense of shared reality and identity.

Justification

CrossFit is one of the fastest growing fitness institutions in the world, yet the development of fantasy themes for the culture and development of shared identity among members has not been analyzed. While CrossFit has been looked at from an exercise perspective and as a business model, there is a gap in the literature surrounding how CrossFit encourages

members to develop communities and create a shared reality. A communication analytical approach can offer insight into the analysis of CrossFit culture and identity development, and this study intends to fill part of that gap. Utilizing Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), I can better understand the fantasy themes found on the CrossFit website and Facebook page.

Likewise, I can better understand what those themes suggest about CrossFit culture through FTA in order to contribute to the overall conversation about CrossFit and its connection to community and identity development. In the following section, the context and purpose of CrossFit will be explained in order to provide a background for understanding the rhetoric surrounding it.

Background of CrossFit

CrossFit is an athletic exercise program created by Greg Glassman in 2000. Focused on high-intensity movements with lots of variation, the workout program emphasizes functionality and community (Pickett, Goldsmith, Damon, and Walker, 2016). High intensity interval training is a form of fitness exercise in which movements are repeated in succession with little rest time, and CrossFit relies on high-intensity movements but switches the movements themselves day-by-day. Utilizing a workout structure called the Workout of the Day (WOD), CrossFit athletes all over the world are able to create a global community by doing the same set of movements in their daily workout. The workout itself is completed in a group setting, often in a “Box”, which refers to a CrossFit affiliate gym space. The class structure follows a model where the CrossFit instructor leads the group through the workout, from warm-up to the WOD. Part of CrossFit culture is an unspoken expectation that individuals will put forth their maximum effort in each WOD.

In describing his creation, Glassman emphasized CrossFit as not only an exercise program, but also a sport; “the sport of fitness,” measuring fitness as a whole rather than through

one strict game movement (Glassman, 2007). This would suggest that CrossFit exists as the litmus test for fitness as a whole, judging their members physically and mentally to produce the “fittest on earth.” Glassman has commented that CrossFit was created to help improve health issues, encourage weight loss, and encourage healthy lifestyle changes (Glassman, 2007). They aim to define fitness broadly, covering a variety of physical skill sets, and inclusive, available to anybody who may want to improve.

The focus on community in CrossFit is strong, as they suggest that community is the core of their organization; athletes support one another in their fitness goals and encourage others to join the CrossFit lifestyle. Pickett, Goldsmith, Damon, and Walker (2016) suggested that when considering the social aspect of fitness, studies have shown that “the explicitly stated mantra of community building” that CrossFit relies on led to greater feelings of sense of community than similar fitness programs and routines (p. 210). Rather than split workouts across gender lines or by athletic ability, all workouts could be completed by every member at the same time. One can see the popularity of the organization simply through the numbers: CrossFit boasts a fast boom in popularity, moving from just one location in 2007 to having over 13,000 across the globe in 2017 (Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017).

CrossFit maintains measurements of physical activity, often in the form of a whiteboard; head coaches will record scores from each workout publicly, for everyone in the gym to see and analyze. While all led by the same workouts, each individual CrossFit location is independently owned and therefore forms its own norms. Members may feel a need to publicly prove themselves in order to receive respect, particularly from more experienced CrossFitters. Just because an individual did well in one workout does not mean it would translate to the next workout. The emphasis on public performance of strength is evident, as judging others helps

unite CrossFitters in a Box. There is an almost rejoicing in the fact that success in CrossFit is fleeting, and it takes endurance to stand the test of time.

Considering the physical space in which CrossFit emerged can also help explain the community itself: the Box was never intended to be a fitness center; rather, they are housed in more industrial spaces, often warehouses. Keeping these more gritty, industrial details meant that the spaces themselves were not inherently for CrossFit; rather they were open spaces that could be utilized in a variety of ways, for a variety of movements. Reclaiming a space for primitive movements, rather than relying on more sterilized gyms designed for comfort, means that CrossFit can attract a wide variety of individuals. The article described the Box as “a way for members, many of whom came from a workforce that is well-educated, wealthy, and increasingly sedentary and technologically dependent, to achieve the marks of menial labor without the drudgery or low wages” (Crockett and Butryn, 2018, p.102).

Socioeconomic status plays a role in who gets to be a CrossFitter; membership at a Box normally begins at about \$200 a month, which excludes a large number of people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Crockett and Butryn, 2018). The irony that industrial spaces are not accessible to lower classes is not lost on researchers. Crockett and Butryn (2018) suggested that requiring a larger paycheck in order to participate in a fitness organization with no specifically expensive spaces or equipment, people are “paying a premium for the privilege of an hour of faux menial labor in a dusty industrial warehouse in a seedier area of town” (p. 102). Well-educated individuals with careers that come with a paycheck large enough to fund a CrossFit membership are coming to a typically low-income location in order to feel like they are engaging in manual work without the actual pressure of being in a manual job. The body becomes a tool for work, and workouts are to hone your tool.

One of the main tenets of CrossFit is the workout structure: the WOD is completed by every member at the same time within the Box, regardless of an individual's fitness level. This forces CrossFit members to interact socially, providing instant accountability by giving members the ability to self-govern the space. Crockett and Butryn, (2018) found that a CrossFitter used the word "cult" to describe the gym itself, finding that CrossFit holds its members to a certain standard in their exercise movements, referred to as "Rx", like a prescription from a doctor. Likewise, the researchers found a shift from comparing performances in one's head to comparing them physically in person through the use of the "leaderboard," a white board where the instructor would write members' times for each WOD (Crockett and Butryn, 2018). Instead of having to rely on memory, CrossFitters now had the ability to compare abilities in time and will often gravitate toward the board once the workout is over, analyzing their scores and comparing to others. The pressure to complete workouts, complete them fully to the "Rx Standard" and complete them faster than everyone else led to competitive and collaborative behaviors. The competitive nature of the workout can be either embarrassing or encouraging, depending on how the individual views it.

CrossFit offers members the opportunity to improve not only their physical health and wellbeing, but also their personal identity; in this way, authors suggest that to be a CrossFitter brings with it a certain sense of responsibility that ranges into both physical and mental commitment to the culture (Dawson, 2015). While many other fitness organizations start and end at the gym, CrossFit culture seems to permeate the lives of its members, incorporating a sense of CrossFit identity into their everyday lives (Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017). A Box's culture speaks not only to what the organization cares about, but also what the members identify with.

The organization has taken fitness from simply exercise to a form of sport, creating with it a culture of collaboration, competition, and community. While competition can refer to simply trying to get better standing on the leaderboard, there are also more professional venues in which CrossFit enthusiasts can show off their skills. The Reebok CrossFit games is an annual event in which the 40 most elite athletes from across the world come together to compete in a competition to discover who among them is the “fittest on earth” (Reebok CrossFit Games, nd). Winners of the grueling games can take home hundreds of thousands of dollars in prize money if they make it to the top of the podium, and the exposure has led to the development of a few fan favorites among the regular competitors. While there is a huge spotlight on elite CrossFitters (who can be seen training throughout the year on CrossFit’s YouTube channel, promoting products on their Instagram pages, or featured CrossFit’s annual documentaries that depict the games), the average CrossFitter is not trying to achieve this level of athleticism. Rather, their form of competition is within their own Box, trying to beat their personal record as well as be the strongest among the group.

CrossFitters can connect in a variety of ways: in person at the Box, at CrossFit sanctioned events, and through social media platforms. The official CrossFit Facebook page has 3,092,310 likes and 3,011,901 people following the page at the time of this study, and continues to grow (CrossFit, Dec 1, 2018). The ability to connect through computer mediated communication offers CrossFitters the opportunity to move their “real life” passion to online platforms and therefore connect to others in a new way. Due to the fact that CrossFit is so impactful in today’s fitness society and the sheer amount of interaction between the CrossFit community and the official Facebook, it is worth researching further to see how members chain out ideas in a rhetorical vision. With the context and background of CrossFit established, I will now move

forward to a review of literature on research concerning CrossFit, Symbolic Convergence Theory, and Fantasy Theme analysis.

Literature Review

CrossFit

Current academic research and examinations of CrossFit have been focused more within the fields of sport and fitness, as seen by the journals that publish CrossFit studies, such as the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, the *Sociology of Sport Journal*, and the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (Dawson, 2017; Crockett and Butryn, 2018; Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017). Pickett, Goldsmith, Damon, & Walker (2016) studied how attending a CrossFit Box was related to an individual's perceived sense of community, comparing data from individuals involved in either CrossFit, a more traditional group fitness class, or members of gyms who worked out alone, a multiple regression analysis suggested that the more committed the members are to community building, the higher they valued their fitness organization. Since CrossFit prides itself in developing the individual perception of community, it makes sense that they have such a loyal fanbase. This insight into the way that individuals measure their commitment to a gym gives a good basis on which to analyze the development of community, particularly through a communication lens.

The culture of CrossFit lies in part in its inception. As discussed, the primary goal of CrossFit as designed by Glassman was to offer individuals the ability to combat health problems with a fitness regime (Glassman, 2007). These core values have carried on into 2018, with participants reporting that the common beliefs among members help to connect them. In particular, the goal of personal betterment in health and fitness is what drives a lot of people to CrossFit, and the shared experience of working out together, doing the exact same workouts at

the same time, bonds members further (Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017). Individuals who enjoy themselves at the Box are more likely to return to the Box to further challenge their abilities in the future. CrossFit's slogan, "Forging elite fitness," is representative of the group's values; in order to develop better functional movement, they suggest placing an emphasis on ten areas: cardiovascular and respiratory endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy (Glassman, 2002). While the physical form can be honed for visual appeal, CrossFit focuses more on the development of a body that can complete tasks.

Comparing CrossFit to other workout programs and gyms, some members consider other gym structures to be individualized and not a good indicator of progress. Theirs boasts a program with easily measurable results, utilizing the leaderboard to help members track progress over time. Functionality is emphasized heavily, a focus being placed on movements that are useful in daily life, i.e. moving heavy objects over spaces, over time. Crockett and Butryn (2018) found during their study that the CrossFit instructor even wore clothing that mocked other gyms, such as "a caricature of a person using an elliptical machine" with derogatory words underneath, describing it as lackluster (p. 104).

By contrasting experiences at other fitness institutions, CrossFitters suggest that the sense of community in the Box and the integration of various body movements (weightlifting combined with group training, etc.) set them apart from other gyms (Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017). Individuals with otherwise sedentary lifestyles can utilize the WOD as an outlet for manual labor, creating community with others from backgrounds different from their own. In this way, they are developing relationships with people who, under normal circumstances, would not be working out together. The old and young, physically fit and new-to-exercise, male and

female, all come together in the Box to work out together, create relationships, and push their bodies past the usual limits in order to make progress on the leaderboard and compete with other members. Since the Box has such an open layout, people can form friendships across various backgrounds while still maintaining a hierarchy based in the leaderboard standing. In this way, physical ability is the only important factor, with no mercy given based on extenuating circumstances. The community, in this way, is inviting without being dismissive. This helps to further connect members to the sense of cultural identity within a CrossFit Box, however the emphasis that is placed on challenging oneself and competing with others can sometimes come back to hurt CrossFitters. Members of Boxes sometimes report that they will exercise past the point of what is safe for their body, focusing so much on pushing themselves to the limit that they sometimes surpass the limit and move into injury territory (Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017).

This can be explained, in part, by the sense of community itself; a strong sense of membership within the organization can push individuals to feel the need to adapt to the social identity of the group, especially when everybody is being viewed as an equal. In large part, the sense of pride in the group is based on the “lack of power and status differences between members.” (Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017, p. 10). If everyone is on the same playing field, the sense of equality can be both reassuring and a sense of pressure to do better on the next workout. By personally exerting themselves past the point of comfort, CrossFitters are buying into the challenge and competition in the Box. This not only helps people to connect to the group (and get their name on the leaderboard), but it also can help individuals get through personal barriers and self-placed limitations. Yet, the fine line between pushing oneself and hurting oneself has led

some to be skeptical of CrossFit, and opinions on the organization tend to vary greatly across the fitness world.

Some researchers have gone as far as to compare the mentality of a CrossFitter to that of an attendee at church; the levels of trust, acceptance, cooperation, and blind faith (as well as factors like guilt as a motivation) that go into working out at a Box can mirror religious institutions (Dawson, 2015). Various books offer personal narratives to explain the way CrossFit has pushed back from traditional gym structure and encouraged results, offering commentary on the impact human connection personal narratives (Belger, 2012; Murphy, 2012). Language such as “If we are open to the idea of being in a community where people may look different, come from different backgrounds, and have different interests, as it tends to happen in a CrossFit community, then there’s the possibility that a CrossFit affiliate can offer a similar function that a church does” (Murphy, 2012, p. 91). Comparisons to cults can come from feeling like other CrossFitters are “family”, the “habit-forming” nature of the workouts, to the development of a shared language, such as “The Box” and “WOD.” Likewise, the structure of CrossFit suggests incorporating a day of rest into the exercise routine one day of the week, not unlike many religions’ form of sabbath.

By relying on one another, there is an expectation of performance and consistency that keeps members coming back. There are specific aspects of CrossFit that mirror organizations that display cult-like behavior, including “devotion to the leader (coach), assumption of an exalted status, censure of dissent, gradual inability to relate to outsiders” and attitudes such as “do whatever it takes to achieve the goal” (Dawson, 2015). These behaviors encourage members to push themselves past comfort in various ways, and likewise there is an underlying expectation that they will invite others to the CrossFit way of life. Some have even compared CrossFit to a

cult based on a set of expectations, such as the common meeting place (the Box), the promotion of a specific diet or way of eating, the phenomena of CrossFitters adapting to a certain way of dressing (a sort of unofficial CrossFit uniform), and the creation and acceptance of specific jargon (Herz, 2014).

The CrossFit way of life extends beyond the Box itself. In one study, a workout led out into the street, and a CrossFit coach went as far as to spray paint the ground in order to set boundaries for members (Crockett and Butryn, 2018). Likewise, authors emphasize that lifestyle changes are sometimes expected of members, even if just through social norms and expectations. These studies found that CrossFit media and affiliates support the idea that the WOD, the Box, and the overall structure of the workouts help people to become the best versions of themselves, and therefore some individuals will take on significant changes in lifestyle.

Dawson (2015) crafted critical theoretical essays to reframe the way that researchers looked at CrossFit when conducting studies. She suggests that rather than simply falling into the typical format of a “cult”, CrossFit is a reinventive institution. As defined by Scott (2010), a reinventive institution is “a material, discursive, or symbolic structure through which voluntary members actively seek to cultivate a new social identity, role, or status.” (p. 226). This shapes research to view CrossFit as a voluntary form of reinvention, in which members react positively to their own transformation. It happens not only in formal, institutional forms of rhetoric, but also through performative means. The study relied on personal testimony and lived experience to develop a better understanding of CrossFit as a connecting force. She found that community building is developed in part through the participation of supportive messages during workouts. In addition to cheering one another along as individuals complete the WOD, the personal interaction with others is integral to the success of a Box. Dawson (2015) refers to this as

“performative regulation,” in which individuals model their behavior and adapt it based on what they see from other members. Therefore, if somebody notices that it is the norm to loudly cheer others on during a workout, that individual will incorporate that into their own habits.

Dawson (2015) analyzed specific CrossFit affiliates, finding that some Boxes have incorporated religious aspects into their Boxes. CrossFit FMS (which stands for “For My Savior”) uses a motto that reads “I CrossFit for my Savior, because my Savior was fit for the cross” (Dawson, 2015). This study suggests that incorporating aspects of faith into a workout may not seem as far-fetched when considering how CrossFit operates as a community and support system. This focus on social behaviors leads to questions about communication practices within the Box, as well as the media that CrossFit produces to recruit.

Other researchers have relied on a more personalized experience of the fitness community; in an ethnography titled “Chasing Rx,” Crockett and Butryn (2018) joined a Box for five months in order to “experience the lifecycle of CrossFit membership,” specifically how social acceptance interacts with a subcultural space (p. 100). The authors analyzed social behaviors within the gym, including how members feel the need to earn acceptance from other members of the CrossFit Box. By analyzing how established members of the Box to new members with subtle intimidation tactics, the study helped explain the displays of dominance within the CrossFit community. They also examined how the development of a hierarchy within the group leads to individuals sizing one another up in order to evaluate technique and skill, leading to a power struggle as “one’s perceived social standing in the gym depended largely on the demonstration of athletic skill, regardless of other characteristics such as years of membership, attractiveness, or visible muscularity” (Crockett and Butryn, 2018, p. 101).

Bailey, Benson, & Bruner (2017) focused on the social aspects of CrossFit in the form of “artifacts, espoused beliefs, values, and basic underlying assumptions.” The authors conducted a series of focus groups with CrossFit members from a variety of fitness backgrounds, ranging from former varsity athletes to individuals with minimal sporting experience, in order to develop understanding of the organization’s structures (p. 3). They found that visual structures such as the gym and “CrossFit style” offered members the ability to adapt to a distinctive style, including the actual appearance of the Box itself and the way that members dress. Suggesting that the culture is “characterized by a rugged, stripped-down workout environment, distinctive gym outfits, and a friendly atmosphere,” this study offered personal expression about what the organization believes in and values (Bailey, Benson, & Bruner, 2017, p. 9). This analysis of observable behaviors within the Box setting is beneficial to developing a better understanding of social norms within the fitness organization. This provides a basis for the visual component of my study, in which I will use videos as an understanding of the kind of content CrossFit wants to promote. While the majority of CrossFit academic literature focuses on physical performance or social behaviors within the gym, some studies have instead tried to understand the visual aspects of CrossFit. One study suggested that CrossFit’s rise to popularity relied heavily on digital media and the ability of an individual to feel immersed in the sport culture through visuals. Heywood (2015) suggested that “CrossFit's simultaneous insistence on the importance of a communal experience as more important than individual achievement invokes a more immanent, immersive model of sport that appropriates the instrumentality of conventional sport and uses it towards the ends of embodied experience and community building,” essentially inviting individuals to move from taking part in the virtual communities online via the CrossFit website, YouTube page, etc., toward taking part in the community in “real life” (p. 31). Other studies analyzed the visual

messages within the CrossFit gym itself, suggesting that posters and graphics in the gym have attempts at humor that may actually be subtle jabs at women participating at the Box, reinforcing gender stereotypes and hegemonic masculinity within the organization (Kerry, 2017). Both of these studies emphasized the use of an ideal body in visual media and suggest further research on visual aspects of CrossFit.

Identity

In order to understand why fitness groups like CrossFit may have become so popular, it is important to understand the role that social identity plays in the formation of thoughts and behaviors. A term coined by Barnes in 1954, *social network* is a phrase used to describe the various social relationships and patterns in human culture (Barnes, 1954). Social identity theory suggests that individuals develop a sense of self based on the groups they interact with and consider themselves to be a part of (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These perceived group memberships offer individuals a support system which provides them with a strong sense of self and security.

There are obvious links between social networks and health behaviors; social support creates a sort of buffer between stressors and reactionary behaviors. That is to say, the function of a social network is to provide support and protect the emotional and mental state of the members when undergoing particular stressors, like major life changes. In addition to providing emotional support during difficult times, social groups also create a sense of belonging among members. In this way, “who you are” becomes irrevocably linked with “what you do” and “whom you associate with.” Individuals create their own sense of identity based on who they are spending time with, what activities they are participating in, and what groups they join.

Tajfel & Turner (1979) suggested that social identity with a group occurs through the following: categorization, in which individuals may start to recognize and differentiate between

members of groups, identification, or perceiving the need or benefit of belonging to a group, and intergroup comparison, engaging in “in” vs. “out” group thinking. It therefore stands to reason that group identification and the subsequent social support from group members is an integral part of health communication and the development of identity within fitness groups. While *social network* refers to the ties between people, *social support* refers to the relational actions that one takes to further interpersonal relationships and communication practices. (Berkman, 2000). Feelings of being cared about and cared for lead to positive associations; for example, when a person feels properly supported in a workout, they she attributes her feelings to that support group. These positive feelings then affirm the group, and the cycle continues.

Self-efficacy is also important when considering behaviors specific to decisions about health and wellness. Bandura described self-efficacy as a person’s beliefs and judgments about her own ability to enact a particular behavior (Bandura, 1977). His research suggested that by observing others enacting a particular behavior (such as attending a morning workout class regularly), an individual is more likely to believe that she has have the ability to complete this behavior as well. Likewise, if an individual identifies strongly with a group, she is more likely to conform to the group’s social norms and appropriate behaviors (Terry, Hogg & White, 1999). Individuals partake in social identity creation through social support networks using both in-person and mediated communication. The following section will provide some background on the social media platform Facebook.

Facebook

Individuals engaging in fitness groups may turn to the Internet as a way of connecting with others who share their interests and experiences. With 1.49 billion daily active users, Facebook is a form of social media that has a large scope and following (Facebook Newsroom,

2018). Offering users the ability to interact personally with friends, family, and organizations of interest, Facebook lets companies create their own sense of self online. Members engaging in computer mediated communication on Facebook have the ability to craft their content in a way that they can promote the best version of themselves, their ideal social identity, to others, disclosing only information they want to share (Qiu, Lin, Leung, & Tov, 2012).

Social media also provides a space for individuals to support one another in health-related behaviors; with the rise of new media, the opportunity to join specific groups and receive support online has become easier than ever. Facebook users can engage in self-disclosure ranging from status updates to uploading their own photos and videos, as well as commenting on others' content (Qiu, Lin, Leung, & Tov, 2012). In this way, individuals now have the ability to create their own unique content online, and by sharing their experiences in this new medium, they are able to ask questions and receive answers to their own inquiries, all the while fostering a sense of community and mutual understanding. Facebook can offer individuals space for self-expression that can improve perceptions of self and overall attitude; Gonzales and Hancock (2011) found that "selective self-presentation, afforded by digitally mediated environments can have a positive influence on self-esteem" (p. 81).

Facebook can bring people from different walks of life and different geographical locations together to talk about a common experience or interest; research by Hajli et. al, (2015) found that having a community to help provide a sense of understanding during a relational or medical crisis is beneficial to stress levels, and can lead to higher reports of satisfaction; the immediate access that online communities provide is a welcome addition to the lives of people suffering from stressors related to health and fitness, as they can have instant support from a

variety of people. This evidence of social support can provide individuals that sense of belonging that many are searching for online.

While research into online support via social media is relatively new, platforms like Facebook add to the health communication field, giving a space for individuals experiencing anything from eating disorder groups to individuals with mental illness. In addition to the ability to connect with others previously unavailable, Mehta & Atreja (2015) found that these groups provide an extra sense of anonymity by eliminating nonverbal behaviors from the situation. In this way, even shy individuals can gather to talk about their favorite workout or their experience at their fitness class. Facebook gives individuals unbridled access to different interest group web pages and groups, providing people with the opportunity to connect online to express their thoughts and feelings about their fitness experiences. Mehta and Atreja (2015) suggest that the ideal online support-focused social group would include “right balance between flexibility and security, anonymity and authenticity, openness and moderation, and be patient-centered and patient-powered while encouraging appropriate participation by healthcare providers” (p. 122).

With the rise of new technological advances, particularly the booming use of social media, some researchers feel that health professionals may be able to use these new mediums to their advantage. Hajli et. al (2015) discovered that there are many people who join various health communities online; in sharing their experiences, they receive social support through the online medium, specifically informational and emotional support. Beck et. al (2016) suggested that certain online support groups focus primarily on emotional support, yet most communication centered on “task messages ” or how to solve a specific problem. Emotional support in particular may fill a void in which an individual does not have the proper self-efficacy to enact healthy fitness behaviors without support. In this way, computer-mediated communication on a platform

like Facebook can fill the void even if an individual is geographically separated from their support system. When trying specifically to receive support from others, shared experiences were the leading choice online (Eichhorn, 2017). By acknowledging a shared experience, individuals can develop a sense of trust and mutual understanding, strengthening the relational bond, and once there is a strong sense of trust, communication can extend beyond the initial topics individuals had in common. McCormack's (2010) research on the use of online social support group for eating disorders found that computer mediated communication on these forums is often anonymous, cost-effective, and the community is full of like-minded individuals.

Some research shows the negative effects of engaging in social media when considering self-efficacy; a study by Chou and Edge (2012) found that social media's continuous "highlight reel" of others' lives and experiences can lead some individuals to feel more negatively about their own lives. Blackstone and Herrmann (2018) analyzed the messages of individuals who engaged in extreme fitness and nutrition program groups on Facebook, and found that "these social media groups, though intended to be a sort of online support forum, actually provide an open space for body negativity and promotion of extreme behaviors for the sake of thinness" (p. 6). Likewise, even advertisements can promote unhealthy behaviors; Villiard and Moreno (2012) conducted an analysis of fitness advertisements on Facebook and found an emphasis on fitness and weight loss, with "over 70 percent of evaluated profiles referenced fitness behaviors on Facebook, with most referencing physical activity" (p. 567).

Regardless of the responses to social media, these pages for fitness groups like CrossFit can provide members the opportunity to connect on a subject they are passionate about. Naslund et. al (2018) conducted a study of Facebook groups for individuals with mental illness and found "posts involving personal sharing of successes and challenges related to adopting a healthy

lifestyle generated greater response from other participants in the form of more likes and comments when compared to posts containing program reminders, motivational messages, and healthy eating content,” which provides a basis for further studies about the content on fitness-based Facebook pages (p. 91). Online groups offer people a chance to receive support, advice, and practical information about their health without having to pay exorbitant amounts of money. Finally, one of the most attractive aspects of online support groups is the immediate access to a community full of people who truly understand what it is like to have the same lifestyle; CrossFitters may be able to use the Facebook page as a place to engage in conversations about those shared experiences and beliefs, boosting their sense of identity by using a social support network to boost a certain sense of self. With a base understanding of social media and its connection to CrossFit, I will now provide an overview of Symbolic Convergence Theory as the basis of my study.

Symbolic Convergence Theory

Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) offers a theoretical lens through which dramatized narratives are contextualized and understood. It provides an explanation for how groups create and maintain their shared identity, developing a clear sense of what it means to be “one of us” within that group. In order to understand SCT, the origins of the theory are instructive. The theory is rooted in quantitative work, significantly impacted by Robert Bales’ research on small-group communication. Bales’ (1970) book *Personality and Interpersonal Behavior* offered the idea that groups create a common fantasy for two reasons: a group shares an interest in a topic or a group is dealing with tension from a shared problem and are looking to resolve it. For example, a group could connect over a shared love of a cult classic television show, while another group may form due to shared frustrations over the restrictive policies placed on a college campus.

Bales (1950) found that, when in groups, individuals will discuss events and topics that others may not have personally experienced and others will feel comfortable adding in their own similar experience to the conversation. Bormann (1985c) explained that when people start to relate to one another in their experience, they add details of their own and often become excited by the conversation. This is referred to as a fantasy chain, or “the moments when communicators are caught up in the sympathetic participation of a common drama” (p. 51). By all agreeing on a shared meaning, this convergence offers connection for the group that moves beyond the symbols themselves to the creation of a shared identity. In this sense, a fantasy is not the traditional definition of a fairy tale or story, but rather a shared understanding, a message that dramatizes an experience for a group. In this way, fantasies can meet the needs of a group and put individual experiences into context with the overarching beliefs of the group.

For example, imagine a group of individuals that play a popular online game; these players may start to use shared language, such as abbreviations of fictional locations and creatures that one would only know if they were a part of the multiplayer universe (“I’m heading over to fight the orcs on the rocky shores and collect some gold!”). Other players would immediately have a clear picture of the monstrous orcs, know where the rocky shores are situated on the gameplay map, and think of how much gold they have in their own account at the moment. The connection over these shared meanings helps shape group perception, and when one player mentions a certain phrase or character name, it can bring every member into a common understanding of what part of the game the player is at. From here, players can start offering their own experiences with that section of the game (“Last time I went over to the rocky shores, it was totally unguarded!), laughing or venting to one another over their shared

experience within the online world. Individuals can offer their own narratives, make jokes, and engage in wordplay within the shared world.

Moving from Bales' research on small groups, Bormann (1972) applied the assumptions about shared group beliefs to rhetoric, developing a connection between the way that groups converge in their thinking and the way that they communicate. He argued that shared fantasies are not just for small corporate groups, but also for large, informal groups. Bormann (1972) suggested communication among a group can create a specific shared reality and that the words and images that a group uses can impact the way that they perceive their world. This shared reality is convergence, which can shape beliefs as well as eventually motivate a group to action. By discussing these common meanings, symbols, and experiences, a shared meaning is developed within the group. Just as perceptions can change over time, a group's shared consciousness surrounding a particular subject can shift with the use of language and understanding of group experience. If the aforementioned gamers suddenly found a part of the game had changed, they could come together to lament the change to the game map, or the phrase "orc" might move from being a descriptor of a monster to a descriptor of the electronic company that changed the game design.

A main assumption of the theory is that symbolic convergence is inherently dramatic; that is, dramatization refers to the group communication that engages certain fantasy themes, or some type of word or phrase that connects members of a community to fantasize about an event. The way that a group engages in dramatization can result in the social construction of perceived reality. Bormann (1972) described it as follows:

The tempo of the conversation would pick up. People would grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, laugh, forget their self-consciousness. The tone of the meeting, often quiet

and tense immediately prior to the dramatizing, would become lively, animated, and boisterous, the chaining process, involving both verbal and nonverbal communication, indicating participation in the drama (p. 397).

Essentially, members of a group will interact with one another and their versions of reality, thereby affecting further communication; this can range from the tempo of the conversation increasing as members get excited, to the expression of emotional responses to the topic at hand. Individuals who adopt the group's fantasy respond with the appropriate responses; for example, if the fantasy theme is an inside joke about animal medicine that only veterinarians would understand as a result of their work experience, other vets in a group may respond to that joke with laughter and offering their own, similar stories. On the other hand, if the fantasy theme is one related to a shared experience of tragedy, such as losing a loved one in an automobile accident, other individuals who engage in the dramatization may respond with tears and words of support. Individuals dramatize stories, making them their own and communicating through this process. This shared reality offers a sense of community to group members, strengthening bonds among members. From large speeches to the masses to the utilization of media to spread messages, dramatizations can increase a sense of community and "provide them with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions and attitudes", and the narratives that bring people into a shared reality are "rhetorical vision[s]" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398).

Since its origins in the 1970s, SCT has grown and evolved "as part of a general movement in communication studies to recover and stress the importance of imaginative language (and the imagination) in nonverbal and verbal transactions" (Bormann, Cragan, & Shields, 1994, p. 263-264). The theory has moved from being a way to explain small group

behaviors to a much larger scope; researchers can utilize the theory to help understand the shared themes and identity development of a variety of groups. Bormann (1972) suggested that rhetoric does not always have to be a traditional public speech but can instead appear in different modes (online forums, informal gatherings, etc.); the sharing of a fantasy among a group creates an overlap in individuals' perceptions, thereby creating the convergence. This convergence is what establishes a group's consensus on values and appropriate actions, as well as any attitudes they share. From online gamers to members of a political party, the theory is general enough to apply to a wide variety of groups, since dramatized storytelling is a large part of life. From individual relationships to social norms, stories have the ability to connect people across their differences to a common understanding of what is a group's stance on certain issues, as stories offer real life application that individuals can apply to their own lives.

Symbolic Convergence Theory operates under some base assumptions about human nature and the nature of communication. Bormann (1982c) defined communication within the theory as "the human social processes by which human beings create, raise, and sustain consciousness", and that the "processes are symbolic and shared" (p. 50). SCT suggests that messages can motivate individuals to action through their meaning and emotion; this is to say that rhetoric makes audiences feel something, and in response those individuals act in a certain way. After all, human beings want to develop communities with one another and can do so by communicating these messages through verbal or nonverbal means. Likewise, it is assumed that reality is constructed through symbols and symbolic language, as human beings naturally interpret signs and symbols, thereby creating meaning and importance. Bormann (1982c) suggests that "norms, reminiscences, stories, rites, and rituals" all offer individuals the ability to meet on "a unique symbolic common ground" (p. 50).

Bormann (1972) emphasized that both humanistic and social-scientific perspectives have importance within the theory. This convergence of ideas offers a common consciousness, a basis on which groups can make collective decisions on topics that are important to them. Persuasive claims that encourage participation in a shared fantasy can give an individual a sense of belonging, and this need to feel included can be a driving force by which people accept dramatic stories. The theory offers a critic the ability to theorize how a community develops through changes and adapts their version of reality over time. Shields (2000) said that two main assumptions of SCT suggest that reality is established through communication and meanings for symbols can converge, creating an agreed-upon, shared reality among various individuals. When experiencing something, a person has a personal understanding of what those symbols mean. These individual perceptions create, develop, and color experience. Individual frames impact the way that people see symbols; therefore, everybody has her own understanding of reality. Convergence refers to the process in which these individual meanings for symbols come together and combine to create a shared understanding (Shields, 2000). The group eventually agrees upon a meaning, sharing individual personal experiences with one another until everyone can look at a subjective experience or symbol and develop a group consensus. People will “pick up and use the proffered symbolic facts. They reiterate and reconfigure, repeat and embellish, and take the themes as their own” (Shields, 2000, p. 398).

By agreeing upon a certain set of beliefs or on a shared reality, people in a particular group adopt a common consciousness with which to understand communication within that group. This creation of a sense of community among individuals leads to a shared understanding of certain phrases, feelings, and experiences. In this way, individuals develop the ability to hear certain phrases and immediately relate to the experience of the group. By experiencing similar

emotions, individuals eventually are able to interpret their own experiences in the same way that another member of the group would. Bormann (1972) suggests that “motives do not exist to be expressed in communication but rather arise in the expression itself and come to be embedded in the drama of the fantasy themes that generated and serve to sustain them” (p. 406).

Theoretical concepts.

The base unit in SCT analysis is that of a *fantasy theme*. Foss (1996) defines the fantasy theme as “a word, phrase, or statement that interprets events in the past, envisions events in the future, or depicts current events that are removed in time and/or space from the actual activities from the group” (p. 123). It serves as a depiction of the common beliefs and experiences among a group that form into collective knowledge. For example, a group of elementary school teachers may say something like “the school board is more concerned with its reputation with local businesses than providing funding for classroom essentials.” This would be a fantasy theme representation within that community that makes up a larger shared reality among the teachers. When a fantasy theme is created, others are then invited to share this specific point of view in order to join the in-group through the dissemination of information from those who already have adopted the group’s beliefs. Fantasy themes can be anything from a phrase to a collection of words that refer to something in the group’s collective knowledge of the past, present, or future. These themes then help to further construct reality for the members of the group, developing a type of shared language that only they know the meanings for. These understandings of words, images, and phrases all provide members with a thread of connection, tying them to a specific, creative interpretation of specific events.

Fantasy themes can be broken down into three distinct types: setting themes, character themes, and action themes. *Setting themes* are those which depict the location where something

is taking place; this can refer to a physical location or even a location within a certain time period. These themes provide a context in which an action is taking place, the background for the event. *Character themes* offer an understanding of the tropes used to describe the players in the event- are they a hero, or are they a villain? Is this person the main focus of the event, or somebody in the background? Character themes also provide better understanding of characteristics, beliefs, and motives of the characters themselves. *Action themes* refer to the plot itself, the timeline in which the characters act. What are they doing, and why? These themes provide a better understanding of what is happening within a particular context.

Symbolic cues are words, phrases, nonverbal cues, and other signs that signal shared understanding. Simple phrases can bring common understanding to a reader; for example, students on religious college campuses may be familiar with the phrase “ring before spring,” referring to the high population of students that get engaged before graduation. Outside of this experience, however, one may not understand the phrase, so it would not trigger shared fantasies like it would for those who take part in the experience of many college seniors getting engaged.

Fantasy types, on the other hand, are fantasy themes that are widely understood across a variety of groups. Rather than be limited to the specific population that shares a specific fantasy, a fantasy type offers a reference that helps an individual make sense of a new situation or experience by offering context. For example, referring to a situation as “the new Bernie Madoff scandal” will automatically trigger a connection to Ponzi schemes, so when another big Ponzi scheme story breaks, a person does not have to explain the concept in depth each time. Instead, she can simply refer to it being “like the Madoff scandal,” and that gives the listener the ability to understand the new situation.

A *saga* refers to a story or narrative that is commonly repeated within communities, emphasizing the journey and achievements of a certain person or group. Cragan & Shields (1992) suggested that these are often referenced within the frame of nations, such as “the spirit of entrepreneurship” as an American saga that references how Americans value hard work and success (p. 201). Organizations and interest groups all have sagas that help express stories and values that are important to them, and the telling and subsequent retelling of a saga furthers its significance to the group.

Rhetorical vision is the main structural concept within SCT. Cragan & Shields (1992) suggested that a rhetorical vision is a “composite drama that catches up people into a common symbolic reality”, and these can often be referenced with a symbolic cue (p. 201). Rhetorical visions are constructed through five elements: *dramatis personae*, plotline, scene, sanctioning agent, master analogue (Appendix A).

The *dramatis personae* is also commonly referred to as the actor who gives life to the specific vision. Characters within the vision may commonly act a certain way or emit certain values and beliefs in their actions, and they can fall within various tropes. From heroes and villains to main characters and supporting characters, the *dramatis personae* vary depending on the rhetorical vision’s goals. For example, in the earlier elementary school teacher example, the teachers may portray the school board officer as a villain for taking away funding for resources, while other board members may portray him as a hero for developing a positive connection with an investor. Depending on the rhetorical vision, the *dramatis personae* can be portrayed certain ways to fit the vision. The plotline refers to the vision’s course of action. Much like a book has a plot, so do rhetorical visions; while some fantasy themes may focus more on characters, other focus on the actions that the characters are taking. For the teachers, the school board deal is a

journey of pushing back against an oppressor, fighting for the good of their students. On the other hand, for the board, the plotline is that of developing connection between schools and businesses, thereby improving community relations and boosting recognition for the district. The quests that happen within a rhetorical vision will vary, but the plotline is integral to understanding the shared consciousness of individuals who buy into the vision.

A rhetorical vision also is set within a *scene*, which focuses on the location or setting in which the actions take place. Scenes can range in significance to the rhetorical vision; for example, if the teachers fighting the school board happened during school segregation, the scene may be much more significant than if it happened in the 2000s, as it could influence the qualities within the vision. A sanctioning agent “legitimizes the rhetorical vision” as it references some sort of position of power within the vision- examples could include district court, a school honor code, or even God (Cragan & Shields, 1992, p. 202). *Master analogue* references the reflection of deeper structures within the vision itself, how the vision emphasizes larger social commentary based on the content of the vision and what it is supporting. Three main types of master analogues are righteous, social, or pragmatic. Righteous visions focus on moral justice and what is right, social visions focus on the social communication and interactions, and pragmatic visions rely on a practical base in order for their vision to succeed. Looking at the teachers and school board dilemma through a righteous master analogue, the emphasis would be placed on things like what is the “right” thing to do and furthering justice within a situation. Considering these five elements, a critic can analyze a rhetorical vision in order to develop a deeper understanding of the characters involved, the story and context, who the players answer to, and its greater social implications.

Cragan & Shields (1992) explained that “for a fantasy theme to chain out, a rhetorical vision to evolve, a saga to exist, or a symbolic cue to convey meaning, there must be shared group consciousness within a rhetorical community” (p. 202). This shared group consciousness is what makes the rhetorical vision, as the group needs to clearly have convergence in their thinking and beliefs in order to engage in dramatization of those fantasies. Rhetorical vision reality links are what enables rhetorical visions of a group to connect to what is actually happening. That is to say, reality links offer authentic representation of events with tangible evidence. Without solid reality links, some may rely on informal information such as gossip and rumors. Likewise, individuals may come to a consensus on an issue by relying on opinions, rather than any observable data. Reality links keep rhetorical visions from spiraling into conspiracies and paranoia. Fantasy theme artistry refers to the specific ability needed to present events in a way that people will want to then share them with others. Connecting to a group and their shared beliefs, an individual can use fantasy theme artistry to makes his rhetorical fantasy attractive to potential new members who will then want to share it.

SCT criticism.

Symbolic Convergence Theory is a general theory that has existed for some time and has been used to study a variety of groups, but SCT is not without its critics. Mohrmann (1982) suggested that the main criticisms of the theory are that it does not offer anything new, lacks rigor, and relies too heavily on Freud. He suggested that the language used in the theory could be confusing, and others agreed. Likewise, Underation (2012) suggested that “the original sense of how meaning is seeded and how that meaning grows within communities has perhaps become too narrow over the years” (p. 286). One major critic of the theory was Gunn (2003a), who suggested that Bormann and those who agree with SCT “refused to relinquish the romantic,

creative, productive imagination” (p. 50). Gunn also agreed with Mohrmann that SCT is ultimately grown from Freudian theory and therefore cannot inherently predict any behaviors or identify specific motives for those behaviors. He found that SCT failed “in responding to the charge that the Freudian roots of the theory preclude its predictive value” (Gunn, 2003a, p. 51).

Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (1994) responded to these concerns about the theory and provided clarification about its purpose and applications. They identified four main criticisms: (1) a lack of clarification on SCT’s basic presuppositions, (2) SCT is only applicable to small group communication, (3) SCT is dependent on researcher rather than theory, and (4) SCT is simply a relabeling of old concepts with new jargon. In response to the first concern, raised by Mohrmann (1982), they provided clarification by outlining four clear presuppositions of SCT. Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (1994) offered “that a grounded approach to theory building can result in a good general theory of communication” (p. 263). They explained that the theory was built on the work of others, developing concepts further, rather than creating a concept and going out to look for some sort of evidence. The second presupposition was that SCT is “an empirically based study of the sharing of imagination can provide a viable account of the rhetorical relationship between the rational and the irrational” (Bormann, Cragan, & Shields, 1994, p. 263-264). They highlighted the assumption that the audience is integral to the rhetorical paradigm within SCT, suggesting that “the concept of rhetorical community and consciousness as related to consciousness creating, raising, and sustaining is a major finding of subsequent research in the symbolic convergence theory”, and therefore the audience is integral to the practice of SCT (p. 267-268). Finally, authors reinforced the final presupposition of SCT, that making generalizations based on the findings of previous studies is not only possible, it is important to

the field because generalizability is beneficial to a unified approach to rhetorical criticism (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, 1994).

Addressing the second concern, Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (1994) reminded critics that Freudian terms are not used within SCT studies and that there was not an influence from Freudism within the work, as “psychoanalytic interpretation is based on an entirely different set of central concepts” (p.270). By combining social scientific and humanistic perspectives, the theory is applicable to the sharing of fantasies small groups, large groups, and any in between. Again, generalizability is beneficial to the field as the theory can be applied to a variety of communication practices, rather than be limited to one type. In responding to the third concern of SCT as researcher-dependent, Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (1994) suggested that SCT “provides a clear technical vocabulary for the general analysis of imaginative language”, thereby letting a researcher craft an analysis of shared consciousness within a particular community (p 276). The theory helps researchers understand the development of a community consciousness by analyzing the fantasy themes that brought new people in and sustained the belief of group members over time. In this way, it is clear that the theory is not researcher-dependent but rather a theory that gives researchers a basis on which to craft an analysis by utilizing theoretical assumptions rather than just personal expertise.

Finally, Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (1994) rejected the idea that SCT is simply a rehashing of old ideas with confusing new language by explaining the necessity for technical terms within the theory. While constructive criticism is beneficial to the development of new theories, many of SCT’s criticisms have been addressed, and it is clear that the theory has a grounded epistemology and is beneficial to the study of how groups create a shared consciousness. Gunn (2003b) pushed back against defenses of SCT, but not many other critics

have spoken out against the theory and it is widely accepted and used in the rhetoric community. Therefore, I selected this theory for my study. The next section will show how others have used the theory in their own research

Previous SCT Studies.

SCT is useful for its ability to explain how certain fantasies succeed and grow, while others die down over time. Individuals in a position of power or people trying to further a specific point of view will better be able to craft their messages in order to sustain consciousness for their vision by understanding what works and what doesn't. Specifically considering organizations, the recruitment and retention of members is heavily dependent on how engaged the members are. Understanding the development and sustaining of convergence within a group can be key to keeping a movement or business alive. Likewise, fantasy themes that can stand the test of time may be useful in future campaigns and efforts, so leaders of groups need to understand how rhetorical visions thrive. SCT offers critics the ability to understand how persuasive claims grow within a group, as well as the development and evolution of relationships within the group. Once individuals have "bought in" to the fantasies of the group, they are more likely to go along with the decisions that the group makes collectively.

The theory has grown from a way to explain small group behaviors to a much larger scope; researchers can utilize the theory to help understand the shared themes and identity development of a variety of groups. Considering methodology, fantasy theme analysis is the basic method with which SCT operates. Studies have used SCT to study political affiliations, religion, Internet-based groups, and more. Politically, SCT can help explain how political parties develop a shared identity based on the perceived group values as well as the different ways political messages are received- nationalism being one example. Puspita (2017) analyzed an

Indonesian marine retiree group and found recurring themes of political heroes and villains in the narratives of group members, as well as an emphasis on the theme of pride. This connected the dramatized message (“a marine is proud of his country”) with the adopters of the message, leading the retirees to share their vision with one another and spread it. Sharing this symbolic ground connected one marine to the other, as they were able to share an interpretation of reality through their shared experiences and beliefs. Researchers in China completed a fantasy theme analysis of Chinese media, finding themes such as the “China’s great rejuvenation” and “shame of Nobel Prize”, which were then narrowed to values such as nationalism, moralism, and orientalism (Wu & Zhu, 2017). Again, the desire to share these themes comes from the visions themselves; the rhetorical vision is a motive for action, suggesting if an individual really believes that China experiences a great rejuvenation, she should share that experience and point of view with others. In this way, nationalism connects citizens through a shared understanding of Chinese sagas, stories that connect individuals together through shared narratives.

Some researchers even found evidence of fantasies that connected nationalism to religion; analysis of communication surrounding a visit by Pope Francis to Cuba found that media could further themes, such as the idea that Cuba is the ultimate model of Catholicism today (Thompson, Perreault, & Duffy, 2018). Although not every individual who adopted the vision may have been present for the Pope’s visit itself, fantasy themes can depict an event separate from the actual time and space, so people who were not physically present can still connect with others based on stories that create a shared experience and construction of reality.

Religious movements, as well as their defectors, are a topic of research utilizing Symbolic Convergence Theory. A study by Simmons (2014) analyzed the online narratives of ex-Christians, finding that websites can cater to specific rhetorical visions in order to invite

potential new members and make them feel welcome. This offered individuals in a specific group, such as those who have experienced deconversion, a place to espouse their shared beliefs in order to encourage others to adopt the specific vision. There is evidence of close relationships between the fantasy themes within the online forums and the arguments that the group is making, as the themes that the group shares are the foundation for the arguments they are making, such as arguments against religious conversion. Their common assumptions about religion, religious experiences, and connections between the two provide further explanation for their own experiences, and help the group develop one shared vision of what it is like to be an ex-Christian.

Research into other types of online groups can develop a better understanding of the way that Internet-based communities form, recruit, and retain members through a shared vision. Looking at the way that members engage in conversation while online gaming, for example, offers a better understanding of the use of narratives to dispel tensions when gaming (Anderson, 2018). Members of the popular gaming community Dungeons and Dragons have also developed shared meanings, as researchers found that discussion on platforms like Facebook can lead to themes of friendship maintenance and the classic “good-vs-evil” (Adams, 2013). A study by McCabe (2009) found that fantasy themes appear within eating disorder groups to develop a shared worldview, and that these were primarily constructed through positive and negative fantasy types. For positive types, individuals who are proponents of disordered eating behaviors relied heavily on humorous personifications of eating disorders, validating feelings that the disease is normal and acceptable. On the other hand, negative fantasy types identified included the struggle of living with the disease, elaborating on “times in normal society where members experience guilt and rejection” (McCabe, 2009, p. 7). McCabe (2009) emphasized that these fantasy themes let individuals who supported their eating disorders the ability “to engage others

in what would be otherwise considered socially unacceptable conversation while maintaining a high level of anonymity” (p. 13). This research supports the idea that actions and beliefs that others would not be able to understand make perfect sense to those who adopt the rhetorical vision. In this group, individuals with eating disorders consider their actions to be normal, while society’s view of their behavior is the abnormal and oppressive.

Since fantasy theme analysis is malleable to a variety of group types, some researchers have used it to study communities such as hate groups, and how they operate online. Zickmund (1997) suggested that Neo-Nazis were able to develop their own culture through engaging in web-based communication. Likewise, Duffy (2003) analyzed members of organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazis in their online groups in order to identify what fantasy themes are common on hate group websites. In trying to understand how groups develop a shared identity, researchers may use this theory to guide their analysis of a group’s narratives.

However, it is not only ostracized groups that can have rhetorical visions; Bishop (2003) looked at the way that newspaper coverage and broadcast news journalism promoted the idealized vision of Mr. Rogers, specifically that reporters at the time were “unified in their framing of Rogers as a calm, steady voice rising above the violence and packaged repetition of commercial television” (p. 27). In this way, fantasy theme analysis can highlight the ways that different groups come together to agree on a shared vision of an individual and then promote that image in the media, identifying Mr. Rogers as the hero of the story and his opponents as villains.

While there is literature surrounding how SCT and FTA appear in politics, religious groups, and online communities, I was unable to discover literature surrounding convergence specifically within a fitness institution like CrossFit. Since the theory operates under the assumption that people create communities around shared symbols, SCT is an ideal fit for the

theoretical framework of the proposed analysis on CrossFit; this fantasy theme analysis will study the use of language, signs, and symbols from the CrossFit website and their Facebook platform. This will provide a foundation on which to build understanding of the process by which a group of individuals transforms from single beings into a cohesive group within the fitness world, with common beliefs and values that connect them all to a shared rhetorical vision.

Method

Fantasy theme analysis is a wide-ranging method that fits for this study, since CrossFit is a group that calls itself a community and has the trademarks of it. As discussed, a fantasy theme is the basic unit of analysis within social convergence theory. Fantasy themes represent a group's worldview, or how they think collectively about a certain topic. Individuals communicate their common understanding to others through their own interpretation and an agreed upon value. Fantasy themes are the synthesis of the entire group's experience, forming into one shared meaning called a rhetorical vision.

CrossFit is a fitness culture that is pervasive in a variety of mediums, from the official website and social media platforms to individual blogs and platforms for self-expression. Considering the sheer scope of media available for analysis, I narrowed down the artifacts to those found on the official CrossFit website homepage, CrossFit.org. CrossFit headquarters promote their Boxes and memberships through their website, in the form of text, video, and photographs of members working out, before-and-afters, the Boxes themselves, and notable figures within the CrossFit community (viewed by both organizational and reader responses). This analysis is pertinent as it provides a glimpse into the media curated, approved, and promoted by the organization in order to encourage a certain way of thinking about CrossFit.

The purpose of this thesis is to utilize Bormann’s fantasy theme analysis in order to answer three main questions: What fantasy themes can be identified on the CrossFit website and Facebook posts? Are there any rhetorical visions constructed as a result of these fantasy themes? What do the fantasies and/or rhetorical visions say about CrossFit culture?

Selection of Artifacts

First, I collected the rhetorical artifacts for the study. I examined the official CrossFit website, Crossfit.com, and selected the main “about me” section of the website for analysis. The top of the web page lists ten subheadings that direct the user throughout the website’s content: Get Started, WODs, Courses, Certifications, Exercise & Demos, Games, Journal, Affiliates, Foundation, and Shop. Of these ten sections, I selected the “Get Started” tab, specifically the drop-Box section, “What is CrossFit?”, in order to solidify an official representation of the values of the company through their own words. The other tabs offer logistic information for individuals who already engage with CrossFit and therefore are not beneficial to this study. The “What is CrossFit” web page includes a text introduction as well as a YouTube video introducing CrossFit, both of which will be examined (What is CrossFit?, n.d.).

I selected the contents of the official CrossFit website subpage, “What is CrossFit”, as a representation of the organization’s projected values. I downloaded an archived version of the website on December 1, 2018, for analysis to ensure that all content from the time I was collecting artifacts was saved in case of future changes. This way, the Facebook posts collected and the website will be a reflection of the time period, and the description of the website’s video and text were saved for future analysis (See Appendix B and Appendix C).

The second artifact is a collection of Facebook posts and their comment section, selected from the official CrossFit Facebook page (CrossFit. (n.d.)). Between the time span of August 1,

2018, and November 30, 2018, I collected every Facebook post with an embedded video on the official CrossFit Facebook page by saving each comment thread as a PDF. This gives four months of content outside of the “CrossFit Games” season, in which most content is focused around the professional athletes that compete at Reebok CrossFit Games. These four off-season months provide a comprehensive look at the typical content shared on the Facebook page as well as interaction with the public.

The posts were then narrowed to posts that included an embedded video and at least 50 comments but no more than 300 comments from user profiles. This is beneficial because including a video provides a visual component, showing what the official CrossFit page finds important to share on their page. Since they have the power over what content is shown, including a video gives insight into the content they find promotable as well as what videos spark conversations and connect with audiences. However, visual analysis of the videos is not necessary for this particular study in order to analyze the conversations between users on the Facebook page. Having at least 50 comments provides space for analysis of the conversations between users, as well as having enough content to find themes in the topics covered, while cutting it off at 300 is beneficial because it is a more manageable collection of typical conversation. Therefore, I was able to analyze conversations, speech patterns, common phrases, and more within the conversations on the Facebook posts, as well as the content of the videos in the posts.

I collected a total of 49 posts that contained a video and comments from the public. Of these 49 posts, 12 had over 300 comments. Because of the sheer amount of comments, most of which were just individuals tagging others to look at the post, these 12 posts were cut from the analysis pool because they did not offer sufficient content for analysis of rhetorical vision. This

left 37 posts with ample content. I catalogued the posts by date posted, and pulled the first of each month. Of the remaining 33 posts, I pulled the first of every six videos, resulting in 10 posts representing at least two posts from each month for final analysis. The posts selected were as follows:

Table 1

Title of Post	Date Uploaded to Facebook
Post 1	August 1
Post 2	August 5
Post 3	August 26
Post 4	September 4
Post 5	September 16
Post 6	September 23
Post 7	October 2
Post 8	October 17
Post 9	November 7
Post 10	November 14

I collected information from each post, including the date, the title of the video, the origin of the video (CrossFit created, affiliate Box created, or individually created), the length of the

video, how many comments the post has, how many views the post has, how many shares the post has, and the content of the video (See Appendix C). I then listened to the videos twice to identify which videos would not need transcription due to lack of speech, which would need minimal transcription for discernable dialogue in background speech, and which would need word-by-word transcriptions to provide analysis of consistent speech in the video. From there, each post was transcribed twice, then reviewed three times for accuracy.

Next, I catalogued each of the comments in the posts for study. I looked for fantasy themes present in the artifacts, analyzed the artifact for symbolic cues such as *dramatis personae* (the characters), plotline (the actions), scene (the setting), sanctioning agents, and master analogue. Next, I looked for fantasy types present, in which several fantasy themes are connected to one another. Combining these themes, I identified any dramatization that occurred.

Next, I developed the rhetorical vision, a collection of fantasy types and themes that develop the shared sense of reality and symbolic convergence among the group. After collecting information from the artifacts, I constructed a rhetorical vision of the artifact by identifying patterns in the fantasy themes discovered. Looking for patterns, I identified recurring character types, storylines, and settings. These may follow one of the three aforementioned archetypal master analogues (righteous, social, pragmatic). The setting themes will evaluate where the actions took place as well as the general characteristics of the location, time, and context of the setting. The character themes will identify the actors in the fantasies, their characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors. Some may be coded as “heroes”, “villains”, etc. The action themes will describe what took place in the fantasy, as well as the ramifications of these actions. The master analogue will provide a wider social commentary on the group convergence. The rhetorical

vision will act as a general understanding of the convergence of the group, and their resulting worldview.

Analysis

Website

From the homepage of CrossFit, I selected the “Get Started” tab and observed the drop-Box section, “What is CrossFit?.” This webpage represented the content that CrossFit HQ feels is an accurate representation of corporate values and allows the organization to introduce themselves in their own words and video production. The “What is CrossFit” web page includes provides a YouTube video to the left of the screen, and a block of text to the right of the screen. This next section will present the organizations’ fantasy themes that they use in attempts to guide their members.

On the website, the text provided character themes and action themes (See Table 2) . The main character theme was that of Greg Glassman being framed as the father of CrossFit, the reason that it exists today. Action themes included the focus on functional movement as the basis of CrossFit, as well as the emphasis placed on the words throughout the text, growth of the organization as a whole, and focus on collecting data and using data in the fitness world.

Table 2 References Organizational Website Text

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Greg Glassman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “CrossFit's Founder and CEO, was the first person in history to define fitness in a meaningful, measurable way” - “He then created a program specifically designed to improve fitness and health” - Readers referred to articles “What is Fitness”, “The Garage Gym”, and “Foundations”, all of which were written by Greg Glassman.
Action Themes	Functional movement is the basis of CrossFit, emphasized heavily throughout the website text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Functional movements” and “intensity” were used various times, as well as the sentence “functional movements and intensity lead to dramatic gains in fitness” - “The world’s fittest” - “Overall, the aim of CrossFit is to forge a broad, general and inclusive fitness supported by measurable, observable and repeatable results”
	The organization has grown exponentially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis is placed on a sense of community as the reason that it is growing and more affiliates are showing up in new places. - “Community”, “effective”, “give birth to a global network”, “natural camaraderie, competition, and fun” - “Universal scalability”, “perfect application for any committed individual, regardless of experience” - “The needs of olympic athletes and out grandparents differ by degree, not kind” - “The program prepares trainees for any physical contingency” - “Our specialty is not specializing”
	Focus on data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Driven by data”, “keeping accurate scores and records”, “precisely defining the rules and standards for performance” - “derive both relative and absolute metrics at every workout” - “data has important value well beyond motivation”

In the YouTube video, character themes, action themes, and setting themes were identified (See Table 3). The character theme was that of individual CrossFitters; nobody was explicitly named throughout the video, so while many different people were interviewed, they

represented one comprehensive, holistic version of the average CrossFitter. Action themes included boosting the sense of community, challenging oneself in the gym, CrossFit's distinction from other forms of gyms, and CrossFit as a lifestyle and form of motivation. Setting theme was that of the Box, a distinctive type of gym specifically for CrossFit.

The video opens to the words "CrossFit" with the byline "Making People Better." From there, it switches to various footage of people working out in different CrossFit Boxes. It shows people working out in Boxes, as well as running outside and engaging in fitness with others in their Box. All different body types can be seen, but a majority of individuals featured are physically fit. Shots of people lifting weights, running, doing sit-ups, carrying weights on their backs, walking handstands, rows, rope climbs, etc. Some individuals have Australian or Icelandic accents, but the majority of those interviewed had American accents. In certain shots, you can see a crowd of other CrossFitters cheering on an individual working to complete a workout. During certain scenes, audio of clapping and cheering can be heard as well. Some of the individuals in the video are CrossFit Games athletes, but nobody is actually identified by name. In this way, everyone is kept on a level playing field and shown as equals. If a person who knows certain CrossFit athletes, such as Annie Thorisdottir, she may be recognized in the interview, but others will just think she is another person working out in the Box. Near the end of the video, the "functional fitness" aspect is emphasized with shots of individuals engaging in fitness movements in their daily lives, such as surfing, snowboarding, or playing a game of basketball. The final shot is a man lying on the ground, exhausted from his workout as the CrossFit logo is splayed across the screen. The video also contained spoken words that contained fantasy themes, as described in Table 3. The organization's goal was to project a certain view of CrossFit, as well as what it means to be a member of CrossFit. Promoting the specific

eccentricities and expectations of the culture supports the vision that the organization is forwarding through their website. Their choices are intentional, representing the culture they want others to engage in within their own Boxes.

Table 3 References Organizational Website Video

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Individuals in the gym as “one unit”	Seen throughout video by use of individual interviews with no identification provided
Action Themes	CrossFit is a Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The last person finishing is the just as important as the first one” - “team atmosphere”, “camaraderie”, “community” - “family that you end up building” - “everybody knows your name, everybody loves you and you're a part of something bigger than just getting a workout” - “I felt accountable to my class” - “Everyone is welcoming, everyone is cheering you on” - “We all share this experience, which is emotional.”
	Challenge/ Pushing yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “reach your fitness goals” - “challenge, I compete with myself, I'm healthier, I am stronger” - “having to work really dang hard”, “goal” - They don't let you quit even if you wanna quit. - “A high level of intensity”
	Different from other gyms, it's a lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the workout's different everyday - CrossFit gave me that something extra - People walk through the door and say, 'Hey, where's all the machines?' We're the machines! - CrossFit is a lifestyle in which you are prioritizing your health. - raw, it's intense, it's incredible, it's freakin' awesome - it's making me happy. - It's my outlet, I love it. It's my passion. It's commitment. CrossFit is a sport now

Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Various Boxes shown throughout video - “You come to a CrossFit gym”
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Post 1

The first organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on August 1, 2018 at 3:54PM. Titled “Tia and the CrossFit Total”, the 13 second video had approximated around 77,000 views, 70 comments, 229 shares, and 2,000 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The first post caption and video content provided character themes, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.1) Character themes included Greg Glassman being framed as the father of CrossFit and Tia-Clair Toomey as being a modern hero of CrossFit. Action themes included describing CrossFit as a community, CrossFit as the best way to measure fitness due to its complexities, and CrossFit having grown to where it is today from humble beginnings. The setting theme is the CrossFit Games open field, in which crowds of fans can watch their CrossFit heroes complete workouts to try and win the title of “Fittest on Earth”.

Table 4.1 References Organizational Post 1

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Greg Glassman as Father of CrossFit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He is cited in the caption, “wrote CrossFit Founder Greg Glassman in “Understanding CrossFit,” published in the CrossFit Journal in 2007”
	Tia-Clair Toomey as a modern hero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tia-Clair is framed as the reigning champion of the CrossFit total - Footage of her celebration is shown visually
Action Themes	CrossFit is a Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “evolved into a community”
	CrossFit is best measure of fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “human performance is measured and publicly recorded against multiple, diverse and fixed workloads” - “CrossFit is an open-source engine where inputs from any quarter can be publicly given to demonstrate fitness and fitness programming” - “coaches, trainers and athletes can collectively advance the art and science of optimizing human performance”
	CrossFit has humble beginnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The modest start of publicly posting our daily workouts on the internet beginning” - “Now, eleven years later. . .”
Setting Theme	CrossFit Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The video is set in the open field of the 2018 CrossFit Game - From caption text: “The CrossFit Total—the sum of the best of three attempts at the squat, press and deadlift—was tested at the inaugural @CrossFitGames in 2007 where Nichole Dehart won the event with a total of 530 lb”

Post 2

The second organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on August 5, 2018 at 3:52 PM. The untitled, 19 second video had approximated around 109,000 views, 86 comments, 237 shares, and 2,100 reactions at time of collection.

Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, an action theme, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.2)

The main character theme was that of Greg Glassman as the Father of CrossFit, describing the basics of what CrossFit is composed of. An action themes included CrossFit as a superior measure of fitness, the value of hard work, and the community of CrossFit, even at the Games level. The setting theme is at the CrossFit Games competition, this time held indoors.

Table 4.2 References Organizational Post 2

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Greg Glassman as Father of CrossFit	- He is cited in the caption, “ “Gymnastics and Tumbling” by CrossFit Founder Greg Glassman: journal.crossfit.com/article/gymnastics-and-tumbling-2 ”
Action Themes	CrossFit is best measure of fitness	- “Essential to the CrossFit concept is balanced competency in the ten general physical skills: cardiovascular/ respiratory endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy.” - “Gymnastics has no peer among training modalities for developing the four neurological components of the ten skills— coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy”
	Value of hard work	- The individual is shown completing a complicated CrossFit workout in which he must combine balance and speed. - Every individual at the CrossFit Games level of competition has been expected to put in hard work, which is rewarded by success
	CrossFit is a community	- The crowds of CrossFit fans can be seen and heard cheering in the background of the video
Setting Theme	CrossFit Games	- The video is set in the indoor arena for CrossFit games qualifying competition

Post 3

The third organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on August 26, 2018 at 12:00PM. Titled “World Record Attempt: 950 Kettlebell Swings in 60 Minutes”, the 13 minute and 1 second video had approximated around 78,000

views, 120 comments, 186 shares, and 1,100 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.3) The main character theme was that of the annual CrossFit Games and the various Games Athletes as heroes in the field. Action themes included CrossFit is best measure of fitness, CrossFit parallel to military service, the inherent value of hard work, intensity, and pushing through pain, CrossFit as a supportive community, and the duality of both confidence and self-reflection. The setting theme is the Box at Carlsbad CrossFit.

Table 4.3

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	CrossFit Games & Games Athletes as heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “standards, then let’s say, used in the Games” - Using the Games as a standard → “How many Regional-level CrossFit Games athletes could, could do this right now?” - “Games-level athletes” - “ those are professional athletes” - Comparing Steven to the current champion of the CrossFit Games → “What about Mat Fraser?”, and “He’s, he’s pretty impressive, so I wouldn’t put it past him to be able to, uh, challenge Steve on this record here” - Referencing other CrossFit workouts → “the day I did MURPH”
Action	CrossFit is best	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Been doing CrossFit about ten years”

Themes	measure of fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technicality of the functional movements → “I’m going to be looking for three things: one, extension of the legs. Two, full extension of the arms. And three, that the kettlebell is over his head.” - “functional fitness” - CO: “I was in the marines, all my sergeant majors were 30 years older than me” / RG: “they were 30 years older and they were broken, and battered. He, uh, he’s an anomaly.” / CO: He’s uh- / “RG: He’s CrossFit.” and “That’s CrossFit, right there” - I’ve just done so many repetitions that I know exactly how it feels when I have 500 repetitions in at race pace. - Showcasing how Steven’s journey through CrossFit shows the difference between CrossFit and other fitness programs → “We have a lot of people that say, I’m gonna do this, I’m gonna, I’m gonna start a diet, I’m gonna start uh, uh fitness plan. I’m gonna lift every day. Or I’m, I’m gonna go and read a book every day, right? And then, when they get 2, 3 weeks into it, they don’t do it.” - It’s like anything in CrossFit, if you have efficient form, you can do so many more - my form’s on point. - That’s smart training
	CrossFit parallel to military service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listed twice in the video → “Sergeant major is the ninth and highest enlisted rank in the United States Marine Corps.” - He’s gonna make it. He’s got the marine corps tattoo, he’s got the dedication, he’s got an “all reps matter” shirt. I mean, jeez, what more can you ask for? - “I got this idea when I was going on deployment” - Camera operator asked him, “So, all this training- the 9,000 you said, took place-” and he responded, “In Iraq”
	Value of hard work / intensity / pushing through pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Been doing 300 to 500 kettlebell swings every single day for a total of over 9,000 swings in the last eight and a half months “ - “At the end of the day, we’re going to be able to say that no human being in recorded history has swung a kettlebell over their head more times than I did” - I think it’s pretty intense. Like, it’s a really aggressive challenge - Describing his advancements using CrossFit training → “ It would take me a long time to do the 300 kettlebell swings, and eventually I started doing them quicker and quicker and quicker. Eventually, 300 wasn’t enough so I started doing 400, 500 a day. Finally, it culminated in me doing 500 swings during a workout in under 30 minutes, and it just made me curious. - He is asked, “So when you’re trying this why not just do 885”, and he responded “Because I could do more”, and “to break the world record, I really don’t wanna just break it by one, I wanna smash it by like 60 reps”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I guess if it was easy to do a lot more people would do it. It just goes to show no matter what caliber athlete you are, if you do specialized training and you really focus in on the goal, whether it be um, a specific workout, a weight you wanna hit, on a deadlift or a squat, or 900 kettlebell swings in an hour, you’re gonna have to train for it.” - “I know I’m gonna have to put myself into a dark place to break the record.” - “Strategizing” - “Um, I really don’t wanna get into my rep scheme, it’s proprietary information. I think anybody else, if they really use my rep scheme, maybe in a couple months they would be able to do it, so I think somebody else should just do 9,000 reps on their own and figure out their own rep scheme.” - He’s digging deep to fight through that pain so early - “RG: Did you miss a day of kettlebell swings?” / SB: “No” - moments where you have to dig deep and you have to rip your hands
	<p>CrossFit is a community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Let’s go, baby!” - Come on Steve! Pick it up! Let’s go! You got it! Come on! Hey! Pick it up! Let’s go!” - Off camera spectators: “Come on Steve!” / SB: “I’m sorry, everybody. I have nothing left.” / Off camera spectators: “No! Get back up there! Come on!” / SB: “I’m behind the pace I need to do, I’m not gonna make it.” / Off camera spectators: “Don’t give up” / SB: “I’m sorry! I let everybody down” - You’re still inspiring, though. Somebody’s gonna pick up a kettlebell because they watched this. That’s what matters - Pick it up! Right here! Pick it up! Pick it up! Come on! - “I’m embarrassed, a little bit, that people came out here and watched it and I didn’t make it, but you know what? I kept on going to the end, and-” - “No, it, it was very inspiring. Like, he got really down on himself for a moment, and the whole community came together. Everyone just cheered him on, clapping” - “Yeah you guys did make me finish, I’m glad I did finish, I would have felt like crap” - “I mean, that’s what this is about, right? That’s what CrossFit is, everybody just coming together, um, and cheering each other on for a good cause”
	<p>Confidence and Reflection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unless something catastrophic happens, like I rip my hand open, or I get injured, I would say 99.9% chance I’m going to smash the record today. - And I’m more determined than ever that this record is going down - I was dominating the sets, I’m not making excuses, I didn’t make it today, and I think everybody who’s competed before realizes, uh, the

		things I dealt with today. My weak hands that ripped. And, um, they're not gonna rip next time. And I'm gonna dominate it
Setting Theme	The Box	- The Box at Carlsbad CrossFit, industrial setting with lots of people in attendance to watch the world record attempt.

Post 4

The fourth organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on August 1, 2018 at 3:54PM. Titled “Deadlifts at 82 Years Old”, the 40 second video had approximated around 90,000 views, 106 comments, 549 shares, and 1,800 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.4)

The main character theme was that of Greg Glassman as the Father of CrossFit, he is often cited in the captions. Action themes included CrossFit as a community, CrossFit being suitable for anyone, and CrossFit being the superior way of working out and measuring fitness, for any age. The setting theme is the Box.

Table 4.4 References Organizational Post 4

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Greg Glassman as Father of CrossFit	- He is cited in the caption, “ From “Seniors and Kids” by CrossFit Founder Greg Glassman, published in the CrossFit Journal in February 2003”
Action Themes	CrossFit is a Community	- “CrossFit endeavors to train for capacities that are valued regardless of age, gender, or sport.”
	CrossFit is for everyone	- The post originated from a Box in South America, showing how widespread CrossFit is. - There is a focus on the elderly woman as capable and just as important to CrossFit as any other member.

		- “The bottom line is that everyone is very different and yet again strikingly similar. Often the genius is to know where to look for similarities and where to look for differences.”
	CrossFit is best measure of fitness	- We have in large part designed our concept around chasing capacities that are in near universal demand.
Setting Theme	The Box	- The Box in this video is very similar to other Boxes- minimal, dark, and industrial.

Post 5

The fifth organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on September 16, 2018 at 1:00PM. Titled “Paradiso CrossFit: Scaling a Chipper While Pregnant”, the 7 minute and 54 second video had approximated around 63,000 views, 76 comments, 127 shares, and 566 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.5) The main character theme was that of pregnant women who still do CrossFit as athletic heroes, bucking typical stereotypes. Action themes included CrossFit as a community, CrossFit being for everyone, CrossFit is the best measure of fitness, etc. The setting theme is the Box.

Table 4.5

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Pregnant women as strong heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “three pregnant and badass Paradiso CrossFit Staff: Katie Plummer, Emma D'Alessandro and Chelsea McKinney” - beloved moms-to-be - “Katie chose sumo DL’s to give her bump some room” - Speaking about CrossFit in the first trimester it helped a lot with morning sickness for me.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when I got pregnant a lot of things had to change for sure. Um, definitely scaling back the workouts, scaling back how much I was working out, going from like two to three hours of working out, to just hopping into group class - Um, I have been CrossFitting for eight years, um I got pre and post-natal certified before I got pregnant, so I've actually been able to be my own experiment - part of it, is cool sometimes because there's a lot of women who are saying that the three of us are, like, still moving. And that's very, like, inspirational. So that's a really cool side of it. - I am perfectly healthy to be in here.
Action Themes	CrossFit is a Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I guess I've been doing CrossFit for- before I was pregnant, I guess at that time it was about four years - one of the big things was like, mental um wellness. I just feel a lot better when I work out - it's nice having Emma and Katie a couple months ahead of me so I can see what they are doing and how they modify things - have a really good support system at the gym and the community and everything so it's been really helpful, just seeking the positive - I continue to CrossFit because it makes me feel like myself, - t's been really nice to have somebody to bounce ideas off of and understand exactly what we're going through - I think without CrossFit, we'd all feel a little lost.
	CrossFit can be adapted for anybody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they're going to be scaling a lot of these movements. And i think it's important as we often scale in classes as well, to see how they scale and that you can really do the workout at any point, with any issues, or injuries, uh, there's always something that you can do. - that's something we should all take in, that, you know, if we're having a hard day, or if we're feeling like some of the movements are too hard, too heavy, anything for us, that we can also scale those things too - it's so nice to just have the option to go to group class and modify whatever you need to when you need to
	CrossFit is best measure of fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 800 meter run, 60 deadlifts, 40 front squats, 20 hang power cleans, and 10 ring muscle ups. - Standards are just as important during pregnancy. - I've been doing CrossFit for nine years now, um I did it pretty competitively for six years
Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Box at Paradiso CrossFit

Post 6

The sixth organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on September 23, 2018 at 9:09AM. The untitled, 41 second video had approximated around 272,000 views, 190 comments, 1,223 shares, and 8,100 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.6) The main character theme was that of Janet, an adaptive athlete, being a hero for others with different abilities in CrossFit. Action themes included CrossFit being for everyone regardless of ability, CrossFit being the best measure of fitness, CrossFit as a community, and hard work leading to success. The setting theme is the Box.

Table 4.6 References Organizational Post 6

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Janet as a hero for adaptive athletes	- The caption highlights Janet’s abilities, “Janet (an adaptive athlete with cerebral palsy) killing it per usual! Great session today.”

Action Themes	CrossFit is for everyone	- Since Janet is an adaptive athlete, it is emphasized that CrossFit is for anyone and everyone, including those of varying physical abilities.
	Crossfit is a community	- As Janet pushes to complete her workout, her coach cheers her on with phrases like “push!”, “last one!” and “nice!” reinforcing her and cheering her on throughout the workout.
	Hard work pays off	- Although Janet has cerebral palsy, her involvement and hard work put into CrossFit is implied to have helped her maintain some level of control and autonomy over her body. In this way, it is implied that working hard in the Box at CrossFit can be beneficial for adaptive athletes.
Setting Theme	The Box	- A Box at Adaptive CrossFit

Post 7

The seventh organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on October 2, 2018 at 11:00AM. Titled “The Overhead Lifts”, the 49 second video had approximated around 210,000 views, 170 comments, 1,036 shares, and 3,400 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.7) The main character theme was that of a CrossFit instructor as an “expert” in the field, and therefore worthy of emulation. The action theme was CrossFit as ideal form of fitness, and the setting theme is a plain background to lead focus to the form.

Table 4.7 References Organizational Post 7

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Instructor as expert	- The individual demonstrating the overhead lifts is viewed as an expert because she has been chosen to showcase the “ideal” form of each of these lifts.

Action Themes	CrossFit is best measure of form and fitness	- The video is instructional in nature, providing a tutorial for shoulder presses, push presses, and push jerks. It is implied that proper form is integral to the workout, and CrossFit standards are the ideal.
Setting Theme	Instructional video backdrop	- The video is set to a white backdrop so the focus is on the form, not anything else.

Post 8

The eighth organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on October 17, 2018 at 11:00AM. Titled “Rope Climb J Hook”, the 2 minute and 1 second video had approximated around 279,000 views, 66 comments, 240 shares, and 844 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.8)

The main character theme was that of the coach being an expert in the field. Action themes included focus on functional fitness as leading to success, the value of form and hard work, and CrossFit as a learning community. The setting theme is the Box.

Table 4.8 References Organizational Post 8

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Coach framed as the “expert” in the room	- The coach, Matt Chan, commands the attention of those in the room to share his expertise with them. Although he is not the one completing the workout, he is viewed as the person “in charge” of the Box. He exists as the position of authority.

Action Themes	Functional fitness and form are integral to success	- Chan explains the reality of the movement itself- “People think of this movement, often times, as a pulling exercise. But in reality, this is a squatting exercise.”
	Value of form and hard work	- “we’re seeing this again a lot of competitions”, therefore the CrossFitters want to be able to do it the best and be rewarded for their success.
	CrossFit is a learning community	- Chan interacts with the crowd, even as he is in a position of authority. He asks them, “What is keeping him on the rope then?”, and the crowd responds “His feet”, to which Chan affirms their response. The interactions are supportive, rather than talking down to the crowd.
Setting Theme	The Box	- A CrossFit Box

Post 9

The ninth organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on November 7, 2018 at 7:50PM. The untitled, one minute video focused on the implementation of a competition titled the CrossFit Commander’s Cup, in which members of the Armed Forces would be able to compete in CrossFit workouts to win the title. It had approximated around 89,000 views, 63 comments, 272 shares, and 815 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.9) The main character theme was that of framing individuals who serve in the military as heroes, for their service and for their valuing CrossFit in physical preparation. Action themes included the value of hard work, comparing CrossFit culture and military culture, and viewing CrossFit as a community. The setting theme is set on base, where the Box is more imagined than a physical space.

Table 4.9 References Organizational Post 9

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Military service individuals as heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The individual being interviewed, identified as Brig. Gen. Kristin Goodwin, Commandant of Cadets at the United States Air Force Academy, “speaks to the importance of being combat ready and how physical competition among the Service Academies can aid in building leadership qualities”
Action Themes	Value of hard work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The competition itself is shown as valuing hard work, with the winners being “rewarded” for their work and ability to push through pain by being crowned the victors of the CrossFit Commander’s Cup - “It, it helps challenge us, not only physically, but mentally to the boundaries that we can push”
	CrossFit parallel to military service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I think that health and wellness, and also fitness, are integral to being an, an outstanding leader, if it’s in the community, but also especially in the military” - “we need to make sure every day that we show up so we can make the best decisions, and I think part of that it making sure we’re physically fit”
	CrossFit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “it brings us together as, as teammates” - “What, what’s really great is you see the competition between the two services, but you know what? When it’s time to get out there and do our mission, we’re side-by-side as teammates, and we’re, and we’re making sure, we’re working together, uh, for our nation”
Setting Theme	On base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals are completing the workout on base rather than a traditional Box, reinforcing the ties between military culture and CrossFit culture.

Post 10

The tenth organizational post pulled for analysis was posted to CrossFit’s official Facebook page on November 14, 2018 at 9:21AM. Titled “CrossFit helps Adam keep his body “more under control””, the one minute and 30 second video had approximated around 70,000 views, 67 comments, 226 shares, and 1,100 reactions at time of collection. Description of the video, as well as the caption, can be found in Appendix C.

The post caption and video content provided a character theme, action themes, and a setting theme. (See Table 4.10) The main character theme was that of the teenager in the video, Alex, as a hero in his own story. Action themes included CrossFit being for everyone, CrossFit as the best measure of fitness (particularly focusing on functional fitness), and CrossFit as a community. The setting theme is the Box.

Table 4.10 References Organizational Post 10

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Adam Morgan as hero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam is the hero of this CrossFit story, showing how any body type and any ability can use CrossFit to succeed and thrive. - His YouTube channel is plugged in the video caption “Video via Adam’s YouTube Channel, “Tech Talk With Adam Morgan” (http://bit.ly/2z8B2XA) <u>Adaptive CrossFit</u>”
Action Themes	CrossFit is for everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “He has autism and has been working with Stephanie Hoffman, a teacher at the Center for Autism and a CrossFit trainer who works with children with autism at <u>CrossFit O’Fallon.</u>” - Adam is also a younger CrossFitter, at 16 years old. This shows that even children and teens can get involved.
	CrossFit best measure of fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus is on functional fitness. Adam discussing why CrossFit is great for him- “CrossFit is helping me get my body to follow directions that it doesn’t want to follow.”
	Crossfit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam described his coach: “Stephanie is awesome. She treats me like an adult and pushes me. I hope I’m making her proud.” - The video shows how Stephanie follows along with Adam, cheering him on and helping him through the movements.
Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam is seen working out in a Box that works with individuals with autism, identified in the caption as <u>CrossFit O’Fallon.</u>

In summary, the organization’s messages focused on a variety of fantasy themes. With an understanding of the fantasy themes and symbolic cues present in the organizational post content, it is now important to look at the fantasy themes and symbolic cues found in the Facebook comments created by the CrossFit community.

Facebook Comments

The following tables provide examples of chaining out for the comment section for each of the Facebook posts. Chaining, the moments when an individual relates to an experience and is inspired to include her own details, is important to convergence because it encourages participation in the overall drama of a rhetorical vision. Each of these tables offers examples of symbolic cues, specific statements from individual community members that reflect agreement and integration of the organization’s fantasy themes. Collectively, all of the posts included individuals tagging others in the videos to show them the content and, at times, engaging in conversations about them. This shows how the community accepts content from the organization and feels inspired to respond, therefore recognizing the symbolic cues and chaining out the present fantasy themes. Below, in Table 5.1, I detail the examples found in the Facebook comments as well as their connection to the organization’s provided content.

Table 5.1 References Organizational Post 1 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Games athletes as heroes/ideals for comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Referencing Tia-Clair, one commenter said “Not surprised. Incredible athlete. She also represented Australia in the Olympics a couple weeks after the crossfit games in weightlifting” ● One commenter mentions Kara Webber, another Australian CrossFit Games competitor that many in the community viewed as competition. “Still going for Kara” and then they tag a friend who agrees, “absolutely” ● “My prs would just give me 1st at the games, not with a 12 min cap though”, and “I’m basically Mat Fraser right??”, to which their tagged friend responds “you and Fraser are basically related now” ● Mentions of “vellner” and “annie”, referring to Patrick Vellner and Annie Thorisdottir ● Referring to Tia as “the pride of Australia”
Action Themes	best measure of fitness /	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “crazy what the athletes are capable of now in this sport” ● “I can’t speak for other sports”

	CrossFit is a sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An individual says “I heard that crossfit isn’t a sport tho.” Another person comments “It’s not a sport,” but then after watching the video says “I’ve changed my tune. It is a sport”.
	Value of hard work / being inspired by the footage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many marveled at the feat and other CrossFit Games events, one commenting “I did watch the row and I think I died watching it” ● “impressive!”, “wow, incredible”, “insane”, “awesomeness”, “monstrous”, “awesome”, “fire”, “beast”, “brutal” ● “unbelievable warrior” ● “off to a brilliant start” ● “this is Sparta!” ● “fucking insane totals” ● “full dedication, full passion-mega emotions I’d like to have it more often” ● “these numbers a superb for a non-specialist!” ● “I’m watching this before every work out. What a warrior!” ● “I needed to save this video for future when I feel like I can’t do it. Yes, I can. Yes, I can, and yes, I can!!!! There, I feel better now”
	CrossFit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many individuals tagged friends to introduce them to the post. ● One individual mentioned watching “it before the 5am this morning”, referring to their own CrossFit workouts. ● One individual tagged three people can commented “this is what I was talking about ... that’s 396kgs....WTF?????” Her friends then respond with encouragement “that will be you one day” and saying that one of the friends “is our Tia!!” ● One individual tagged a friend asking what their total pounds was, and then they discuss him compared to Tia-Clair. ● Another person tagged a friend and said the video could be “reference for your dead lifting technique” ● One individual asks a friend to help explain what is happening in the video, to which their friend responds “deadlift weight + squat weight + shoulder press weight = total score”, explaining the Games rules to her
	Pushback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An individual commented “Drugs help!” which sparked a conversation. Others pushed back against the criticism with comments mentioning drug testing “They are tested before and after almost every event. They aren’t even allowed to use the bathroom between walking off the floor and getting tested”. ● One individual offers Lance Armstrong as an example “most drug tested athlete...never failed” ● The original commenter responded to the drug-testing comments with “yes just for the games..... don’t be fool !!!! They all do drugs (or something they not allowed to) the rest of the year but

		<p>they just don't get cut To reach a certain level they have no choice. It's my opinion..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New commenters then joined the conversation, mentioning that Tia-Clair had competed in the Olympics as well so she had likely been tested then too, all generally defending the athletes.
Setting Theme	CrossFit Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CrossFit Games

Table 5.1 focused on individuals responding to the footage of Tia-Clair Toomey winning an event. Largely, the response was positive and filled with admiration for the athlete and her successes. The fantasy themes that arose mirrored some of those seen in the organizational post, such as the athletes being seen as heroes and CrossFit as a community. While organizational post 1 only focused on Toomey and Greg Glassman, the creator of CrossFit, members of the community chained out from these example to include other athletes in the CrossFit games, such as Kara Webber and Patrick Vellner. This shows how chaining out occurs, when one mention of a hero in the narrative inspires comments about other CrossFit athletes. CrossFit is framed as the best measure of fitness in the comments as well, suggesting that it is a sport and the athletes are on a different level of fitness.

Table 5.2 References Organizational Post 2 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Games athletes as heroes/ideals for comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "this one blew me away, amazing athletes!" • "if you like to watch the crossfit game focus at Netflix", referring to the documentary about the CrossFit Games that profiles the athletes

Action Themes	CrossFit is best measure of fitness / CrossFit is a sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “it’s insane what they can do!” ● “that is some technical stuff” ● “through the crossfit games first noticed how cool the mixture between power and endurance is” ● “functional movements” ● “this is a sport”
	Value of hard work / being inspired by the footage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tagging a friend, then saying “that’s what you want to do”, to which they respond “someday someday” ● “freaking amazing!! Goals right there” ● “this is totally my main goal, to handstand walk Jedi style like that!” ● “awesome” ● “challenge accepted!” ● “hats off!”
	CrossFit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many comments consisted of individuals tagging others ● One individual referenced their own Box workouts, saying “aww fuck, please don’t introduce this on Friday” ● “I miss my crossfit addiction!!”, with a response saying “I miss it too much” and “miss the company too” ● One person tagged a friend and said “next work out we will try this” ● Someone commented “we should make this our next project to work on”, and their friend responded “see you tomorrow so we can start” ● Someone mentioned a reference to their own Box workouts “we had them tonight”, and “need to figure out how we can make this in the Box”
	Pushback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One person tagged a friend and said “I’m stopping crossfit” ● “I love crossfit as a whole but what’s next technical playing the drums is pretty physical where do we stop.” This got a few responses, with one person explaining that the movements are basic gymnastics, while another agreed with the comment saying “this cirque des soleil shit has to go” ● “This year it felt like the games really lived up to that ideal. Except accuracy. Still waiting on accuracy” ● One mocked the event itself, saying, “He walks on his hands he must be the fittest on the planet”
Setting Theme	CrossFit Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The CrossFit Games handstand walk event

Table 5.2 focused on individuals responding to the footage of a CrossFit Games event.

The comments mostly focused on framing the athletes as heroes in the CrossFit story and suggesting that CrossFit is the best way to measure fitness and calling it a sport. Likewise, the

value of hard work brought up in the organizational post is mirrored here in the comments, showing that the community is agreeing with the image CrossFit is putting into the world online. There were few negative comments, only a few complaining about how technical the Games have become. However, these were not looking down on CrossFit as a program, but rather the representation of the athletes. Again, the theme of CrossFit as a community is shown through individuals tagging friends and referring to CrossFit as an addiction.

Table 5.3 References Organizational Post 3 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	CrossFit Games & Games Athletes as heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “impressive but he is sort of a dick” ● “he did break the world record for loudest scream washing one’s hands after a WOD. Dude is still a beast” ● “beast” and “what a beast” ● “beyond human” and “badass” ● “cocky bastard but yeah he’s a beast” ● “the mas cross fit guy” ● “He’s a monster!”
Action Themes	CrossFit is best measure of fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ““look at form” ● “major props on flawless reps thru the end. Very impressive!!”
	CrossFit parallel to military service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “oorah!” ● “HUA, Sgt Major!” ● “big props to the SGM and the USMC. Th Army needs to pick up their game ● “maybe there will be a challenge for you and everyone at the battalion in the coming year from Sergeant Major”
	Value of hard work / intensity / pushing through pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “next goal!” ● Amazing ● Awesome ● “still impressive” ● “crazy how many kettlebell swings he did in preparation” ● “is this taking it too far?” ● “very motivating!!! Great effort” ● “freaking awesome. So impressive” ● “fantastic achievement”

	CrossFit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tagging individuals with comments such as “maybe something for you guys to try”, and “next weekend what to do?” ● “nice idea for a lesson ● One person thinks they have figured out a rep scheme, and a friend comments “let me know when you’re doing it... come cheer you on... No doubt in my mind you could!” ● Multiple conversations between individuals talking about getting together to try and train for a similar goal ● One individual tagged a friend with the comment “this sounds like your kind of crazy”
	Confidence and Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “such a pity he couldn’t make it” ● “motivator”, and “strength is never a weakness” ● “it’s a worthy attempt” ● “it’s inspiring to watch”
Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Box at Carlsbad CrossFit

Table 5.3 focused on individuals responding to the footage of a CrossFit member attempting to break a world record. This content mirrored themes found in the organizational post, one being that CrossFit as parallel to military service community and work ethic. There seems to be a certain number of veterans that get involved in CrossFit, and the Facebook comments reinforced this with support for the Sergeant Major. Again, CrossFit as the best form of fitness comes up with conversations about specific form and how the Sergeant Major was completing his reps. This shows how the community accepts CrossFit standards as the ultimate goal, and they praise those that live up to these standards of functional fitness.

Table 5.4 References Organizational Post 4 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
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Character Theme	Elderly CrossFitters as inspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “a genius that you want to get like this at your age” ● “Yassss mama!!! Get it!!” ● “she is my hero” ● “All my respects for this great lady” ● “love this!! Get it girl!!” ● One individual tagged a family member and said “seeeee could get you moving! Be able to play with those kids easier!”
Action Themes	CrossFit is a Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Thank you for sharing my grandmother’s story. I am very proud of her and how the crossfit has changed our lives” ● “awaits us may years of Crossfit” ● “I’m 65 and love doing crossfit” ● Tagging a friend and saying “you have no excuse the lady is 82!!!” ● One referencing their own Box workouts “I miss those routines together” ● “no one is there pissed that she’s holding up their work out!” and “now I really can’t cause she would be better than me lol”
	Value of hard work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “now I feel shame” ● “fight frailty!” ● “respect!” ● “ugh! Is she deadlifting more than me?! Lol” and “she’s better than me” ● “she just keeps on repping! Drop, wipe sweat,adjst feet, flex fingers, take a drink, then do next lift rookie!”
	CrossFit is inspiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “does it better than us” ● “I love this so much!!!!!! Seeing people later in life do CrossFit gives me hope that age definitely doesn’t define how you life your life fitness-wise” ● “Great example, there are no limits or excuses” ● “awesome”, “fabulous”, “impressive”, and “beautiful” ● “I want to be like her!” ● “what a champion” ● “yeah! Go granny!” ● “This is awesome, so much benefits for the elderly! Thank you so much for someone who pays for the course”
Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Box

Table 5.4 focused on individuals responding to footage of an elderly woman completing a CrossFit workout. The response here was overwhelmingly positive, full of affirmations and

support for the woman in her completion of the workout. Some suggested that she was an inspiration to their own fitness journey, and the examples of CrossFit as a community are evident through the support shown in the comment sections and how others shared it online. The elderly woman's granddaughter even commented on the post, connecting her to the online community from all over the world. This reflects the action theme found in the organizational content, valuing CrossFit no matter the age or ability (See Table 4.4).

Table 5.5 References Organizational Post 5 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Pregnant women as strong heroes / motivating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “love this so much!” ● “definitely gave me more motivation for the week!” ● “proud of you for keeping at it!” ● “I wish I’d been involved with CrossFit during my four pregnancies. I think it would have made a positive difference both physically and above all mentally. Get it girls...looking fabulous” ● “keep rocking it ladies!” ● “so inspirational!! Thanks for the post, ladies!” ● “amazing strong Mummas to be”
Action Themes	CrossFit is a Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many individuals tagging others ● “Absolutely love this! I follow a crossfit program from a group on fb on my own as I’m not a part of a Box (hopefully one day but small town means limited options). I’ve been doing it for about a year now. Still a beginner in a lot of things but I do love lifting! I’m 16 weeks with my first child and love how adaptable crossfit is. I have had to modify a few things or lower weights occasionally but I still feel strong and active. The support of this community is amazing. I had lost over 100lbs before getting pregnant so I’m just hoping to maintain my fitness regimen as long as possible so I can stay strong and healthy for us both. Thanks for the extra encouragement ladies! You are amazingly inspirational” ● “Oh goodness! Thanks for sharing.. so inspriaional. It’s been such a blessing to have found Crossfit and to have such great support in staying fit through this pregnancy”
	CrossFit can be adapted for anybody, even pregnant women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I like how they modify the ring muscle ups. Might help some of our athletes!” ● “I’m currently a week away from my due date and have been so thankful for the scaling and also the support, knowledge, and al are for safety first I’ve had from my coaches”
Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Box at Paradiso CrossFit

Table 5.5 focused on individuals reacting to footage of three pregnant women completing a CrossFit workout altered to their abilities. The comments were positive, supportive, and empathetic in nature. Some women compared it to their own experience, while others suggested that the content was inspirational and proved that CrossFit is for everyone. This reflected the

representation of pregnant women as heroes seen in the organizational content, and the sense of community is clear though the comments thanking CrossFit for sharing the content.

Table 4.6 References Organizational Post 6 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Janet as an inspirational figure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “She’s awesome! I follow her on instagram @able.body really inspiring #cpwarrior #cpstrong” ● “A lot of hope for the future” ● “This makes my heart smile. I’m also a CrossFitter with cerebral Palsy!! Everyday is a new obstacle however we always get through it. Way to go Janet!! You are truly an inspiration!! ● You are an inspiration Janet. Keep up the great work! ● So awesome!! You go girl! ● “When you know what it feels like to be trapped in a body that cannot do what you want it do, you learn to appreciate everything you can do. You go Janet!!! Inspiration.” ● Incredible, great work Janet! ● “Way to go Janet!” ● “I said out loud come on Janet when I saw the climb start, so amazing” ● This is truly amazing, what a massive inspiration you are Janet to the world of Crossfit keep up your great work ● “So inspiring janet !!!” ● “That’s awesome! As an athlete and coach with MS, I love and embrace her dedication!!! Never quit always keep moving!” ● “What a role model for us all!!!” ● “Look at her! Ouf beast!” ● Many variations of “respect” and admiration ● “JANET IS KILLIN’ IT!” ● “Massive respect” ● “Keep at it! You’re killin’ it!” ● “Absolutely fantastic” ● “Way to go!!!!” ● “What an amazing inspiration” ● “Queen!” ● “Inspiring as all hell! I’ll think of this lady when I’m lazy and don’t want to put the work in!!!” ● “True warrior” & “what an amazing warrior” & “champion” ● “One hell of an athlete” ● Many, many variations of “awesome” and “amazing” ● “I admire her for not letting her disability define her or slow her down”

Action Themes	CrossFit is for everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I just love this so much! CrossFit is for all...all you need is the will and the rest will take care of itself” • “Love this video!!! It shows that crossfit really is for everyone!!!” • “Her burpees look better than mine. So happy she’s not letting her circumstances hold her back” • “Crossfit is for everyone”
	Crossfit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This makes me happy”” • Thanks for the support guys. • “Welcome to the temple of CrossFit, where miracles happen every single day.”, to which another individual responded with “amen!” • This is why I coach and why I love crossfit • “this looks exactly like me! Thanks for being so encouraging and training me though! I do appreciate it!” • “Crossfit strong” • One individual tagged a friend with the comment “what did you say you don’t have time?” • “Always reach for the highest heights!” • “Love this! I know a little girl who could come with me and would crush it!”
	Hard work pays off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This is why I push myself with you guys. • “Nothing is impossible!” • “Everything is possible. We give up nothing” • Another example of why “can’t” should be erased from your vocabulary!! • One person tagged a friend and said “I really have no excuses not to be there!” • Look at the determination on the rope climbs! • “Such determination” • “I can’t doesn’t exist in our vocabulary!” • “No excuses for my lazy ass! She is an awesome example!” • “The faces she pulls show her determination... love it” • “This is awesome and the next time burpees are programmed I will watch this before I complain about them” • “Watching this, I will never say that I can’t make it through a WOD again” • “No excuses for those that say they can’t. Love this!!” • “Sport can defeat everything... bravo” • “Kicking major ass!” • “We have no excuses” multiple times • “Lots of willpower” • “Yas girl! Look at all that fight in your eyes!” • “Kudos” • “Wow! So much willpower”
	Pushback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No full extension on top of the Box...no rep” • “Freak!”

Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Box, Adaptive CrossFit • Mention of the CrossFit Games Open: “I first saw her go after it in the Open. I love her drive and determination. Truly inspiring”
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Table 5.6 focused on individual responses to footage of an adaptive athlete with cerebral palsy completing a CrossFit workout. This post in particular had a lot of engagement, with many people expressing support, admiration, and feelings of inspiration after viewing the video. Just as seen in the organizational content, emphasis is placed on supportive community and working hard to push one’s limits. The Box as a setting reinforces the idea that it is an open, accepting place for anyone regardless of physical ability. Many individuals tagged friends and offered their own interpretations of the video, finding it to be inspiring and full of determination.

Table 5.7 References Organizational Post 7 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Instructor as expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many instances of people referencing the video to help others understand the difference between the exercises • One reference to a Games athlete- “Camille clearly had a bounce on that in the Games!”
Action Themes	CrossFit is best measure of form and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One individual tagged a friend to look at the example, “so you can see the difference” • One individual tagged a friend and said “For the next vocabulary test”, suggesting their local Box • “Thanks for posting this, it shows really good form”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Her form is amazing!” • “Great demonstration” • “This is the progression how i tach the jerk to my clients
	CrossFit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many individuals tagging others • “Start reminding you some exercise” • One individual tagged a friend and said “Do you see the difference?” • “Thanks for posting...people get these 3 mixed up all the time” • One person said “why can’t I do the last one?”, to which their tagged friend responded “you can! #dontoverthink” • “We could’ve done with this for last nights class • One person tagged a friend and asked opinions on which they liked vs didnt like, with various responses • One individual tagged a friend with the caption “little memo for your crossfit lexicon” • A few mentions of working on these moves in their own Boxes • “You’ll get better at it! You’re already getting there”
	Pushback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Y’all are going to hell” • “This is so confusing”
Setting Theme	Instructional video backdrop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A good example of all three together” • “Save the video and then study it!”

Table 5.7 focused on individuals responding to footage of a tutorial on how to complete a rope climb. As seen in the organizational post content, individuals agreed with the CrossFit coach being seen as the expert on the technique, and as the CrossFitter in the video simulates the workouts, individuals in the audience are responding with grateful messages of support for helping them to improve their own form. Likewise, some used it as motivation for their own workouts, tagging friends and extending the content further online.

Table 5.8 References Organizational Post 8 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Coach framed as the “expert” in the room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Good tutorial” • “Very well explained!” • “Thanks for this”

Action Themes	Functional fitness and form are integral to success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Practiced this hook and I finally got it. Next goal, to climb up!” • “Ok i need to get this technique down!!!” • “Wish I’d have learned this the first time. Work in progress”
	Value of form and hard work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This is one of my goals is to master the rope” • Thank you- I will practice practice practice
	CrossFit is a learning community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance from others- “well done u go girl!!” • Many individuals tagging others to show as an example • “We will have to try this • One person tagged multiple friends- “thought of you guys” • “Now i have to try” • One tagged a friend- “this is the foot think I was talking about”, and “this is what I was poorly attempting to explain yesterday! • “I am going to practice on Friday!” • Two individuals having a conversation about trying the technique, one says “you were doing pretty good last time I saw you do it” • “I was just about to tag you in this!”
	Pushback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person tagged the CrossFit page and asked “why u posting this like once every month”
Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A CrossFit Box

Table 5.8 focused on individuals responding to footage of an instructional example of how to complete a rope climb. As seen in the organizational post content, individuals agreed with the CrossFit coach being seen as the expert on the technique. The comments were appreciative of informational content, and many tagged friends with suggestions that they watch the video to better understand how to complete a rope climb in their own gym. This shows how the vision is chaining out from online content to an understanding of how to complete something in one’s own Box.

Table 5.9 References Organizational Post 9 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Military service individuals as heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Wow, thank you for your service” • Semper Fi to you Marine • Go Air Force!!! Fly! Fight! Win!

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GO ARMY! (multiple instances) • “This sounds legit!” • “Uh hell year” • “Go army!” • “She seems to be an excellent commandant. Bravo” • “Great work! Proud of all who serve!” • “Kristen, Crossfit Old Town misses you!”
Action Themes	Value of hard work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Killing it” • “Not a Crossfit fan, but enjoyed seeing this amazing leader in the gym at 0430 am daily” • Heck YA!!! Solid WORK!!!
	CrossFit parallel to military service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long conversation thread discussing Military branches, suggesting “just have Army, Air-Force, & Navy complete Marine Corp-Boot Camp”, which yielded a response of “are we really going to have a military pissing contest here? Everyone does their part. Quit the BS” • “it’s not a pissing contest. Just because everyone in the military is not sending bullets does not mean they are worthless” • I’m a CrossFit Level-1 Trainer & I used the methodology to train my Recruit to be a badass Marine. To this day, he maintains his perfect scores on his PFT & CFT. • This conversation also included some memes mocking overweight individuals. • “Does this mean the Air Force is going to stop giving CrossFit the cold shoulder and calling it tactical fitness?” • “ You don’t need to be a marine to be strong, you can actually be in any branch or exercise by your own. And this "crossfit campaign" it is a really good idea.” • so the AF is hosting an army vs navy throw down?? Smart move, Air Force.
	CrossFit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many individuals tagging others • “I was just going to tag you to make sure you saw this” • “We need to spin up competitors from the unit, brother.”, with a response of “sounds like a plan!!!”
	Pushback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Maybe just refer to it as ‘inaugural’ (instead of First Annual)” • “Air Force, or any other branch for that matter, can’t use the word CrossFit without legal action from CrossFit. Marines have been doing CF for years and Army I believe too. Most bases have it in some form but CF is pretty aggressive if you use their name and haven’t paid for it lol. CF charges a pretty penny for use of their name lol”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yep, all while they promote "The Murph" which is a physical workout routine developed by a now-deceased Navy SEAL (May he forever backstroke in peace). Oh the irony!! LOL” • “I guess the Coast Guard isn’t included? The PFT doesn’t prepare you for the unexpected like Crossfit does...” • “Have fun trying to get an LOD when tendinitis sets in.”
Setting Theme	On base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One conversation surrounding deployments and volunteering for missions • “That’s actually west point in the background despite having the AF comm.”

Table 5.9 focused on the CrossFit Commander’s Cup series, in which military members complete various workouts to claim the top prize. There is an emphasis in the comments on the connection between military service and CrossFit community. Just as there is competition between the branches of the armed forces, there is competition within the Box as members of one community come together to try and best one another. This video had a small number of negative comments, some focused on military service and what branches are included in the competition. Many veterans tagged one another in the video in order to share their thoughts and extend the military content.

Table 5.10 References Organizational Post 10 Facebook Comments

Theme	Example	Symbolic Cues / Chaining Out
Character Theme	Adam and trainer Stephanie as hero/inspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trainer commented “Thank you CrossFit for sharing this! It’s hard to put into words how special it has been being apart of Adams fitness journey!” • “ this video made my day as a mom of a child on the spectrum. Kudos to u” • “ this is amazing! I’m a social worker and love crossfit. Have always felt crossfit would benefit the sensory needs of people with Autism. Would love to know more!” • “Special guy doing big things!” • “How amazing I love this way to go Adam and Stephanie how encouraging!!!” • “This is so awesome”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So amazing” • “Way to go Adam! Keep up the great work” • Many variations of “way to go Adam”, and praise for Stephanie • “I love this so much!!!”
Action Themes	CrossFit is for everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer commented” Adam is really enjoying it! It’s a dream come true when fitness can be fun!!” • One individual tagged a friend, who responded “I totally can see how this would help Ricky regulate. He needs resistance and doing heavy work to slow down his overloaded sensory system.” • Love this! I have a son with autism, he has been doing home CrossFit workouts for almost a year. Have seen a difference in his regulation and moods
	CrossFit best measure of fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I have a child on the autism spectrum. This made my day to watch this child with a big smile on his face killing his workout. It’s functional fitness”
	Crossfit is a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many individuals tagging others in the comments • The trainer is tagged in the comments, and she responds “I think I’ve learned more from these athletes than I’ve taught them” • “We will have to look into this! Thanks for sharing!” • “I’m not crying you’re crying” • “I can always count on the Crossfit FB page for some daily motivation and good news.
Setting Theme	The Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam is seen working out in a Box that works with individuals with autism, identified in the caption as <u>CrossFit O’Fallon</u>.

Table 5.10 focused on an adaptive athlete, Adam, who has autism. Footage of him working out in the Box prompted a lot of engagement online, with the message of adaptive athletes as heroes and CrossFit being a community for everyone. The trainer herself even engaged in the comment thread, thanking the CrossFitters for their support online. Again, the Box serves as the setting as a blank slate where others can achieve goals.

Considering all of the posts and their comments, it is evident that there is evidence of symbolic convergence. Fantasy types, or fantasy themes that are widely understood across a

variety of audiences, include various CrossFit values. From a focus on working hard to achieve maximum results to building a supportive community, the content found in CrossFit media suggests the creation of rhetorical visions and strong symbolic understanding. In the following discussion, I will attempt to identify the rhetorical vision with the content found in analysis. With the fantasy themes found in the analysis I will place these rhetorical visions in context and provide an analysis of how the rhetorical visions reflect the values and beliefs of CrossFit.

Discussion

Now that the fantasy themes present in the CrossFit organizational website, its corresponding Facebook posts, and the community responses have been identified in analysis, it is important to look at how rhetorical visions were constructed as a result of the fantasy themes. The fantasies all come together to create the rhetorical vision, suggesting an overall picture of what CrossFit culture values and how it establishes reality.

In the case of CrossFit's home page corresponding Facebook posts, there were three main rhetorical visions that were coordinated through official media and chained out by community members. The various fantasy themes and types converged into a common symbolic reality called the rhetorical vision. The rhetorical vision, as discussed earlier, is the ultimate goal of discourse within a community. The goal is to create a symbolic convergence, an understanding of how to view the world through that vision. When the organization and community members combine their messages, they create "a composite drama that catches up people into a common symbolic reality" (Cragan & Shields, 1992, p. 201). The five elements of a rhetorical vision are *dramatis personae*, plotline, scene, sanctioning agent, and master analogue.

For the CrossFit community, the rhetorical vision can be referenced by the various symbolic cues. While sagas revolve primarily around the CrossFit Games and the heroes at the

event, what appeared in some of the comments but did not play a significant role. The rhetorical visions are as follows: CrossFit is the superior measure of fitness and unique from other fitness programs; CrossFit values intensity and hard work; and CrossFit offers a place of community and accountability. An overarching sanctioning agent, or element that legitimizes the rhetorical vision by referencing a position of power in the vision, was identified. The sanctioning agent serves as the ultimate authority, and since CrossFit is largely focused on the self and functional self-improvement, their sanctioning agents are the self and the Box. Each of these aspects of the rhetorical vision are elaborated upon below.

CrossFit is the superior measure of fitness

The first rhetorical vision identified was that of CrossFit as signifying the superior measure of fitness and unique from other fitness programs. Emphasis is placed on “functional fitness” as the building block for the program, in which individuals become stronger doing movements that they may use in their daily lives. The term “functional fitness” leans into logical appeals, suggesting that since the movement is for function, it is therefore worth investing time and money into attending a Box. The sanctioning agents, therefore, are the self and the Box.

The scene would be that of the Box, which refers specifically to a CrossFit gym. While these Boxes may seem relatively simple or empty compared to more high-tech facilities, CrossFitters seem to pride themselves in their unique location for attaining fitness, particularly because the gym itself as a Box suggests it is minimalistic. One CrossFitter remarked in the website’s embedded YouTube video, “people walk through the door and say, 'Hey, where's all the machines?' We're the machines!” (See Video Transcriptions, Website Video). This shows not only that there is pride their scene (the Box) in being “different” from other gyms, but also it is implied that CrossFit’s method is inherently superior. CrossFit is personified into an us-vs-them

mentality, a plotline with CrossFitters as the hero and outsiders as villains, because they don't understand what it means to be a CrossFitter. CrossFitters serve as the dramatis personae, the heroes in the quest to achieve true functional fitness. Examples of this rhetorical vision were found in website, videos, and Facebook for posts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10.

CrossFit values intensity and hard work

The second rhetorical vision identified were the values of intensity and hard work. Frequent use of the term “intensity” in organizational media emphasized a value on putting in the hard work in order to see the results. There is a sense that the dramatis personae, the CrossFitters who follow the plotline of working hard and never giving up on their goals, will receive support from others in the Box. Intensity is prized and lauded. Likewise, it appeared common to view particular members of the CrossFit community almost as heroes. Greg Glassman, the founder, serves as the father of CrossFit and the functional fitness movement, sowing the seeds of the “intensity” push that the organization holds today. Individuals like Tia Clair-Toomey and Matt Fraser serve as heroes of the CrossFit Games, the official competition that others use as a source of inspiration to work harder. They represent what anybody could be, if only they work hard enough. This supports Dawson's (2015) findings of performative regulation, and encourages hard work as a norm in the Box.

Crossfitters like the Sergeant, Janet, Adam, etc. are all “regular” people who have worked hard to achieve their own fitness goals and are celebrated. Those who are not willing to work hard are undeserving, so they are seen by audiences as the “other.” The plotline includes focusing on intensity in movements, never giving up, and always trying harder. The Sergeant even suggested that someone else should do the work to find their own rep scheme, as he was unwilling to share his secrets of success with those who have not put in the work. In this way,

intensity is a sanctioning agent as it leans into the value of hard work and being willing to sacrifice to create results. Just as Terry, Hogg & White's research suggested, strong identification with a group leads to adoption of norms such as valuing hard work (Terry, Hogg & White, 1999). The scene is the Box, in which all of the hard work takes place. Examples were found in videos and comments for posts 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and the website.

CrossFit is a community

The third rhetorical vision was a sense of community and accountability within CrossFit. Again, the scene of the Box as a place of connection and support was prevalent in the discourse, with an emphasis on openness and that CrossFit is for anyone and everyone. The website explained that all workouts could be customized to individual skill level, and the pregnancy video spoke to the community that women can feel in the Box by saying that their workouts are inspirations and examples of succeeding despite circumstance. This can also be seen through support for adaptive and elderly athletes as well.

Dramatis personae here focused on coach/mentor relationships, the sense of teamwork, and individual CrossFitters taking on one identity together through the WOD. The Box workouts are where the connections happen and where people feel most themselves, the scene in which CrossFitters follow the plotline of developing those relationships. These can range from daily workouts to cheering each other on.

The sanctioning agent is, once again, the self and the Box. The Box as a community and a space offers a sense of connectedness and social identification (Terry, Hogg & White, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). individuals used language describing CrossFit as "emotional", and "just what I needed", some going as far as to say that CrossFit is their "family." In this way, both self-expectations of having a certain level of intensity and the Box serve as a way to legitimize the

rhetorical vision. As seen in Bailey, Benson, & Bruner's research (2017), community serves as a sense of pride for the group through connection. Examples found in videos and comments for posts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and the website.

Rhetorical Visions

The master analogue of the rhetorical visions was demonstrated in the organizational videos. As a reminder, master analogue refers to the overall structure that the vision resides in. The organizational videos focused on two types of master analogues: pragmatic or social in nature. Pragmatic master analogues rely on practicality to be accepted for success of a rhetorical vision, and these are demonstrated in instructional videos. Social master analogues focus more on interaction and communication, shown in inspirational videos and aspirational videos. Instructional videos include organizational posts 7 and 8, as each of these videos included specific instruction on how to complete a CrossFit move to organizational expectations. These exist as examples of CrossFit's standards, and the comment sections were filled with individuals tagging friends to show them the proper form of a move. The pragmatic concept of what must be done in order to achieve success is clearly articulated.

Organizational videos representing the inspirational aspect of the social analogue included posts 4, 5, 6, and 10, as each of these videos showcased individuals overcoming obstacles in order to reach their CrossFit goals. From completing workouts while pregnant to working in the Box, regardless of a physical or mental disability, all of these videos served as inspirational material for the CrossFit community. The Facebook comments were full of support from the community, as well as many comments about feeling inspired and the general sense of "no excuses" after viewing the footage. As seen in the Belger (2012) and Murphy (2012) research, personal experiences and narratives impact the sense of human connection. These

videos are not only inspiration for working harder at CrossFit, but also proof that hard work should “overcome” issues in ability. Regardless of how realistic these standards may be for others in the community, the stories in the videos provide a space for support and admiration.

Organizational videos supporting the aspirational aspect of the social master analogue included posts 1, 2, 3, and 9, as these videos are largely examples of what individuals in the CrossFit community can strive to be like and can work to emulate. Just as Tajfel & Turner (1979) suggested, the idea of an “in” vs “out” group comes into play here, with CrossFitters as an “us”, and everyone else as the “other.”

Tia-Clair Toomey is one of the “Fittest On Earth,” a champion of the Reebok CrossFit Games, so her video serves as a visual representation of a CrossFit hero. Watching her succeed can give “regular” CrossFitters (that is, CrossFitters who are not trying to become professional CrossFit athletes) motivation to work harder in the Box. These videos serve a different purpose than the inspirational videos in that they are less about overcoming obstacles and more about pushing yourself harder towards a personal goal. The idea is not that you are pushing through a disadvantage to succeed, but that you are pushing towards the goal of improving your base physical performance. The Facebook comments often expressed awe and a sense of pride for the success of CrossFitters and an aspiration to be more like those who were thriving in the community.

Symbolic cues are the words, phrases, and nonverbals that have special meaning for a group, offering a shortcut to the rhetorical vision as a whole by immediately putting an individual in the CrossFit mindset. CrossFit key symbolic cues included the following: fitness, Box, intensity, community, accountability, and WOD., These cues also serve as an instigator for action, inviting the audience to participate in CrossFit culture through reality construction,

helping to explain how members develop a sense of shared reality and identity through CrossFit membership. Symbolic cues are essential for the rhetorical vision as they instigate a mindset and convergence.

Considering all of the content studied, the overall picture of what it means to be a CrossFitter comes into focus. The symbolic convergence represented both on the organization's website and CrossFitters' responding messages reveal a community that celebrates itself for what they consider a superior form of fitness for those who are dedicated to hard work. An individual creates their identity based on their community in the Box. They believe in the value of the individual who intensely strives for self-improvement, who is pragmatic and social in approaching achievement. They take pride in their sense of place, which defines the community within the Box and WOD but doesn't limit it within fitness norms of gyms, equipment, etc. They can connect remotely with community members through online forums. They value efficiency and accountability yet put a premium on encouraging others, as in a family. They know who they are and what others like them value. While they define themselves as fitness seekers who are unique and elite in methods, they aren't elitist, because they believe that anyone can achieve goals through hard daily work.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to utilize symbolic convergence theory and fantasy theme rhetorical criticism to analyze CrossFit artifacts to develop a better understanding of its culture and to answer three main questions: What fantasy themes can be identified on the CrossFit website and Facebook posts? Are there any rhetorical visions constructed as a result of these fantasy themes? What do the fantasies and/or rhetorical visions say about CrossFit culture? My

analysis focused on these fantasy themes that could be identified on the CrossFit website and Facebook posts. McCabe (2009) suggested that the beliefs and values others would not be able to understand make perfect sense to those who have adopted a group's rhetorical visions, and my findings supported this.

I found that themes focused on self-improvement, exertion of the body, viewing the community as unique, and providing commentary in support of others. While content may have varied slightly over the ten organizational posts, as a whole the themes had clear narratives leading CrossFitters to a unique point of view. Those themes then led to three rhetorical visions that could be identified: CrossFit is the superior measure of fitness; CrossFit values intensity and hard work; and CrossFit is a community. The assumption of symbolic convergence theory is that certain messages can motivate the audience to some sort of action through interpreted shared meaning. Since these messages make the individual feel an emotional response, this prompts reaction. The development of a community through verbal and nonverbal cues suggests that reality is symbolically constructed, and that individuals have the power to interpret messages as best fits their understanding. This understanding provides a common ground for a group of people. Considering these assumptions, this analysis supports this point of view. I found common ground in the CrossFit community through shared symbolism and agreed-upon meaning for various terms. This helps CrossFitters to construct their own comprehensive, symbolic reality.

I also discovered the value of the online platform in extending the opportunity for community-building and promoting a rhetorical vision, as access to a physical Box may not be available to every CrossFitter. As suggested by prior research, Facebook is a platform that encourages self-disclosure (Qiu, Lin, Leung, & Tov, 2012). Those who engage online may be

using the platform as a social network because they do not have access to a Box locally. As such, the Facebook platform fills the void that sometimes occurs in real life; even if somebody does not have a lot of friends that go to a Box close by, she can connect with other CrossFit fans online through the Facebook comments. Seen in the variety of languages represented in the Facebook comments, CrossFit is a global organization with converts from Spain to Mexico, Italy to America. Although CrossFitters are separated geographically, their interests and passion for CrossFit can bring people from across the world to the same space. Just as Heywood's (2015) research suggested, digital media plays a significant role in CrossFit's successful connection to the community. As anticipated, CrossFit puts forth a certain image through the content that they promote on their website, encouraging conversation from their publics.

Computer-mediated communication can act as a CrossFit support system for these individuals as they share stories, experiences, and opinions. In this way, the Box can be represented online by the various individuals engaging in and sharing the themes that establish CrossFit vision. While CrossFit physically centers itself in the Box, symbolically it extends far beyond that, and social media facilitates the opportunity for the rhetorical vision to spread beyond the physicality of the Box. My research echoes that of others regarding the impact of social media to provide social support and to join groups of mutual interest (Gonzales and Hancock, 2011; Hajli et. al, 2015; Qiu, Lin, Leung, & Tov, 2012).

While CrossFit is open to a diverse audience, it is not for everybody in terms of pricing. The sheer cost of the program is a hindrance to certain people, and it establishes a very specific community. Largely, individuals who engage in workouts at a Box have the time and funds to complete the Rx, the workout as "prescribed" by the CrossFit coaches. As a result, while people may see CrossFit and be intrigued, the financial aspect may be a hurdle that some cannot

overcome. In this way, the online communities exist to offer individuals the sense of diversity and connection to others that they may not get to experience in reality. Due to these online opportunities, people can still live the CrossFit lifestyle because the rhetorical vision plays out online as well as in person. As supported by the Crockett and Butryn (2018) research described previously, the Box is a high cost environment, so this may shift the perceived notion that the Box is conceived as essential. In fact, the cost and time commitment might hinder those who need the added accountability of the Box, but it does not necessarily deter an individual willing to do the hard work to join the community. This shows again the feelings of inspiration to do better, and aspirations for future success. In sharing CrossFit values and vision, the online community offers everyone the chance to live the CrossFit lifestyle, because the rhetorical vision plays out on line as well as in person. In this way, the Facebook posts about affirmations and inspirations also reflect Berkman's definition of social support (Berkman, 2000).

With the conclusion of this project brings an illumination on certain aspects that can be approved upon in the future. One limitation of the study is that fantasy theme analysis has numerous, sometimes confusing, terms. Evidence of this was found during the review of previous literature and was evident in this paper as well. The language of the method can be confusing to many, as there is a distinction between fantasy theme vs. fantasy type, for example. All of these terms may be difficult not only for the researcher to clearly communicate, but also for the reader to track them and their hierarchy. Other methods may provide further insight into the culture of CrossFit and its creation of reality; however, the method chosen was successful in offering insight into how group consciousness was created.

Secondly, in the time between the collection of the Facebook posts and comments and completion of the analysis, CrossFit revealed a rebrand of their official website. This new

website removed the previous introductory page, including some content that was included in analysis. In order to circumvent this issue, I used my own screenshots of the content as well as a backup of the original website. In the future, it would be beneficial to analyze the new CrossFit website in comparison to the old website to see how the content may have changed.

Other than one video, there was a small amount of pushback in the comments for several of CrossFit's Facebook posts (see Table 4.1, 4.2, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9). These posts all allowed a little bit of pushback to happen, but there was little direct hostility towards CrossFit as an organization. Only in Post 5.1 do arguments appear in the comment section, concerning drug use. This can either suggest that the comment section is simply largely composed of individuals who love and support CrossFit, or the page is monitored and this thread was left in because the "criticism" is more focused on individuals rather than at CrossFit as an organization.

Finally, the sheer amount of content surrounding CrossFit was overwhelming. From their own website to the dozens of Facebook posts and comment threads, there were thousands of examples to choose from. In the future, other methodologies may benefit by looking for overarching themes in consistency of certain content, while this thesis serves as a more in-depth analysis of specific examples representing a holistic view.

When these messages motivate individuals to feel a certain way, such as the adaptive athlete videos "inspiring" the viewer, the audience is moved to act in response to these perceived meanings. In this way, the fantasy theme chains out as individuals watch the video and feel compelled to comment on the Facebook page about their own experiences and feelings of motivation and inspiration. Likewise, the videos and stories may inspire a viewer to feel that the program is worth the cost after all. Through multiple messages that represent key fantasy themes, people come together to participate symbolically in a commonly shared reality called the

rhetorical vision. CrossFit is a worldwide phenomena, and with its growth will come more opportunities for community members to engage in symbolic convergence and create their own unique CrossFit culture.

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Appendix A – Elements of a Rhetorical Vision

Elements of a Rhetorical Vision

Element	Definition	Identifying Questions
Dramatis Personae	The actor or character that gives life to the rhetorical vision	What characters are present? Who is the hero or villain of the story?
Plotline	Similar to the plot of a book, the plot line acts as the story of the vision	What is the vision's specific course of action over time?
Scene	The location, setting, or time in which the actions take place	Where is the vision taking place? When is the vision taking place? In what context?
Sanctioning Vision	The legitimizing power of the vision, the position of power that keeps the actions in check.	Who is in power in the vision- God? A governing organization? The individual?
Master Analogue	The big picture social commentary of the vision's content	What is the deeper meaning of the vision? Is it righteous, social, or pragmatic?

Appendix B - Website

Website

“CrossFit is a fitness regimen developed by Greg Glassman over several decades. Glassman, CrossFit's Founder and CEO, was the first person in history to define fitness in a meaningful, measurable way: increased work capacity across broad time and modal domains. He then created a program specifically designed to improve fitness and health.

CrossFit is constantly varied functional movements performed at high intensity. All CrossFit workouts are based on functional movements, and these movements reflect the best aspects of gymnastics, weightlifting, running, rowing and more. These are the core movements of life. They move the largest loads the longest distances, so they are ideal for maximizing the amount of work done in the shortest time. Intensity is essential for results and is measurable as work divided by time—or power. The more work you do in less time, or the higher the power output, the more intense the effort. By employing a constantly varied approach to training, functional movements and intensity lead to dramatic gains in fitness.

The community that spontaneously arises when people do these workouts together is a key component of why CrossFit is so effective, and it gave birth to a global network of CrossFit affiliates that number over 13,000. Harnessing the natural camaraderie, competition and fun of sport or game yields an intensity that cannot be matched by other means.

The CrossFit program is driven by data. Using whiteboards as scoreboards, keeping accurate scores and records, running a clock, and precisely defining the rules and standards for

performance, we not only motivate unprecedented output but derive both relative and absolute metrics at every workout. This data has important value well beyond motivation.

Overall, the aim of CrossFit is to forge a broad, general and inclusive fitness supported by measurable, observable and repeatable results. The program prepares trainees for any physical contingency—not only for the unknown but for the unknowable, too. Our specialty is not specializing.

While CrossFit challenges the world's fittest, the program is designed for universal scalability, making it the perfect application for any committed individual, regardless of experience. We scale load and intensity; we don't change the program. The needs of Olympic athletes and our grandparents differ by degree, not kind.

For more information we suggest reading [What is Fitness](#), [The Garage Gym](#), and [Foundations](#).”

YouTube Video

Account: CrossFit@

Published: Sep 12, 2012

Subscribers: 1.4 Million

Category: Sports

The following is a transcript of YouTube video embedded on the official website, the transcript is provided in the YouTube video description Box. No individuals are named or identified in the video. The video contains footage of individuals working out in various Boxes, and completing interviews.

“You haven't heard of CrossFit? Let me tell you about CrossFit. CrossFit is a lifestyle in which you are prioritizing your health. The ability to do many different things at a high level of intensity. I think it's the absolute best way to help you reach your fitness goals. For me, it's making me happy. A fun way to get fit with a lot of people. The last person finishing is the just as important as the first one. It's this team atmosphere that ends up making you better as an individual. It's camaraderie, that family that you end up building and the energy that you get back from it yourself, that's CrossFit to me. You come to a CrossFit gym everybody knows your name, everybody loves you and you're a part of something bigger than just getting a workout. CrossFit gave me that something extra that I kinda needed in life. It's my outlet, I love it. It's my passion. It's commitment. CrossFit is a sport now. I like the challenge, I compete with myself, I'm healthier, I am stronger. Even though I was sore, I was, you know, getting a little discouraged, you know ... I felt accountable because my community, or I felt accountable to my class because they were looking for me there. Finding CrossFit and then having to work really dang hard for whatever your goal is ... whether it's to compete or just get a damn pull-up. I love it 'cause the workout's different everyday, I can come in and I don't know what I'm doing. Everyone is welcoming, everyone is cheering you on. They don't let you quit even if you wanna quit. We all share this experience, which is emotional. It doesn't look emotional, it looks like people working out ... but it's emotional. I mean it's raw, it's intense, it's incredible, it's freakin' awesome. I'm gonna keep doing it for a long time, I hope. CrossFit, to me, is a fitness program where the reward for doing well is the ability to express your fitness in

everyday life in as many different planes or as many different activities that you can possibly imagine. People walk through the door and say, 'Hey, where's all the machines?' We're the machines!

Appendix C- Facebook

Post 1:

Date posted: August 1, 2018 at 3:54PM

Title: Tia and the CrossFit Total

Origin of vid: CrossFit HQ created

Length of vid: 0:13 seconds

Approx # views: 77,000

comments: 70

shares: 229

reactions: 2,000

Caption:

The CrossFit Total—the sum of the best of three attempts at the squat, press and deadlift—was tested at the inaugural @CrossFitGames in 2007 where Nichole Dehart won the event with a total of 530 lb.

Now, eleven years later, we witnessed the reigning champ @tiaclair1 total 875 lb., winning the event.

“The modest start of publicly posting our daily workouts on the internet beginning ... years ago has evolved into a community where human performance is measured and publicly recorded against multiple, diverse and fixed workloads,” wrote CrossFit Founder Greg Glassman in “Understanding CrossFit,” published in the CrossFit Journal in 2007.

“CrossFit is an open-source engine where inputs from any quarter can be publicly given to demonstrate fitness and fitness programming, and where coaches, trainers and athletes can collectively advance the art and science of optimizing human performance.”

Video Content: Instrumental music plays over footage of a woman, identified in the post caption as Tia Toomey, completes a deadlift at the weight of 875 lb to win an event at the CrossFit games. She is wearing a blue jersey with her name on the front, black compression shorts, and her hair is in a bun on top of her head. As she completes the lift, she yells in celebration and then throws the weights to the ground, followed by more celebration. As there is no speaking audio, there is no transcription of speech for this video.

Post 2:

Date posted: August 5, 2018 at 3:52 PM

Title: No Title for video
Origin of vid: CrossFit HQ
Length of vid: 0:19 seconds
views: 109,000
comments: 86
shares: 237
reactions: 2,100
Caption:

Essential to the CrossFit concept is balanced competency in the ten general physical skills: cardiovascular/ respiratory endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy. Gymnastics has no peer among training modalities for developing the four neurological components of the ten skills— coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy.

“Gymnastics and Tumbling” by CrossFit Founder Greg Glassman:
journal.crossfit.com/article/gymnastics-and-tumbling-2

Video Content:

A man wearing a blue jersey shirt and light color shorts competes at the CrossFit games, completing an event called the handstand walk. He walks on his hands over a ramp across two horizontal bars, and back down the ramp, crossing the finish line to complete the event before clapping his hands and celebrating. As there is no speaking audio clearly discernible over the loud cheering, there is no transcription of specific speech for this video.

Post 3:

Date posted: August 26, 2018 at 12:00PM
Title: World Record Attempt: 950 Kettlebell Swings in 60 Minutes
Origin of vid: CrossFit HQ- “The CrossFit Journal”
Length of vid: 13:01
views: 78,000
comments: 120
shares: 186
reactions: 1,100
Caption:

Sgt. Maj. Steven Burkett goes all in and attempts to break a world record by doing 950 kettlebell swings in an hour.

Video Content: The video begins with a graphic from the CrossFit Journal, which is a publication for CrossFit content, while a man shouts a countdown “3, 2, 1” in the background before a starting pitch is heard. The video then changes to a shot of Steven Burkett, with a byline introducing him as a Sergeant Major in the US Marine Corp and 41 years old. Someone behind the camera asks him what he is doing today, and he responds that he is trying to break the world record for most kettlebell swings in one hour. Then it shows shots of him doing kettlebell swings with music playing before flashing back to tin interview, with a byline informing the audience “Sergeant major is the ninth and highest enlisted rank in the United States Marine Corps.” Burkett informs the audience that it is by weight, with the prior record equating to 884.3 swings with a 53 lb lb kettlebell, and that he is attempting 945 kettlebell

swings in an hour. He informs the audience that he has completed between 300 to 500 kettlebell swings every day for 90,000 swings over the past 8 and a half months. The camera interviews a woman who is there to watch and she suggests she does not believe it is possible. Some people set up cameras in order to send the footage to reviewers to break the Guinness Book of World Records. Sgt. Maj. Burkett informs the audience that the application number is 1707. He talks about the semantics of kettlebell swing reps as far as what counts, and introduces that Jacob Clayton, Major in USMC, is a Level 1 coach who will judge his swings based on: Full extension of the leg, full extension of the arms, and that the kettlebell is over the head. Footage begins. The countdown audio from the beginning of the video plays again as Burkett begins his challenge, and Mark, of Carlsbad CrossFit, suggests that Burkett will “absolutely” break the world record. The camera interviews more people, two women say that he will “totally” beat the record. They interview other members of USMC and members of Carlsbad CrossFit that are in attendance, getting their opinion on the event and Burkett’s chances.

Burkett suggests that he got the idea when he was going on deployment and wasn’t sure if there would be adequate gear to do his regular functional fitness, so he packed a kettlebell with him. Then, he came across a site “300 swings a day” that encourages that many kettlebell swings each day. He then increased to 500 a day, then 500 in under 30 minutes. From there, he googled the record and started training to beat the record. The majority of his training happened in Iraq. There is a shot of the Carlsbad CrossFit sign, with the logo “no more excuses”, followed by an interview with a co owner, Rick Gonzalez. When asked why he doesn’t just try to beat the record with 885, he offers “Because I could do more” and that he wants to do as many as he can do, and he wants to “smash [the record] by like 60 reps.” In the interview, the camera operator suggests that he has the right to not be so humble about his abilities, and Burkett offers back that he could be, only after breaking the record.

The woman who previously said she did not believe he could complete it has now changed her mind with 33 minutes left in the challenge. Rick Gonzalez is asked “what about Matt Fraser”, referring to the two-time world champion of the crossfit games, lauded as the “fittest man on earth.” Rick offers that Matt could give Burkett “a run for his money”, even without training. When asked how many other Sgt. Maj. would be able to complete the challenge, Burkett immediately responds “zero.” Rick and the cameraman compare how Burkett is “an anomaly” compared to other sergeant majors, as far as how fit he is. Rick offers: “That’s CrossFit”.

From there, the video emphasizes how difficult it is through interviews and talks strategy for the challenge. Burkett explains rest times and active times for his strategy. He does not walk to talk about his rep scheme as it is “proprietary information”, and that anyone else with his rep scheme may also be able to complete the challenge in a few months. He suggests someone else wanting to do it should “do 90,000 reps and figure out their own rep scheme.” The camera then moves to shots of Burkett completing kettlebell swings, shots of hand towels with blood on them, the kettlebell with blood on it, the countdown clock, and interviews with individuals watching. Periodically, the video includes countdown of time such as “15 minutes remaining.”

Members of the Box are cheering him on, clapping, and encouraging him throughout. With 12 minutes left, he is 174 reps away from the record. He announces “I’m sorry everybody, I’ve got nothing left”, to which a spectator responds “No! Get back up!” Burkett apologizes for “letting everybody down.” The coach Rick starts talking to him about timing

and Burkett starts back up. There are shots of him bent over, visibly exhausted. Rick gives another interview talking about how individuals often say they are going to start something or attempt a goal but never completing the challenge.

Burkett offers that he is “more pissed than anything” about not breaking the challenge. He says that he will break the record next time, and the camera man offers that even with failing the challenge, Burkett has inspired others to pick up a kettlebell and start working out. In the last minutes of the workout, members of the Box start yelling “Pick it up! Pick it up!” The camera shows a shot of Burkett’s hands ripped open from the sets completed. Box members cheer him on until the end of the challenge, where he then collapses to the ground with 816 kettlebell swings- 68 short of the record. Interviews suggest the event was inspiring overall, even with the ending. “That’s what CrossFit is, everyone coming together”.

Post 4:

Date posted: September 4, 2018 at 2:32PM

Title: Deadlifts at 82 Years Old

Origin of vid: CrossFit Drakkar Hondarribia & CrossFit Espana

Length of vid: 0:40 seconds

views: 90,000

comments: 106

shares: 549

reactions: 1,800

Caption:

"The bottom line is that everyone is very different and yet again strikingly similar. Often the genius is to know where to look for similarities and where to look for differences.

"Everyone needs to deadlift—in that regard we are similar, but not at the same weight—in this regard we are different. We have in large part designed our concept around chasing capacities that are in near universal demand. CrossFit endeavors to train for capacities that are valued regardless of age, gender, or sport."

From “Seniors and Kids” by CrossFit Founder Greg Glassman, published in the CrossFit Journal in February 2003.

via Juanjo Mateos of [Crossfit Drakkar Hondarribia](#) | [CrossFit España #82yearsold](#)

Video Content:

An elderly woman, identified at 82 years old in the caption, is doing deadlifts in a CrossFit Box. She is wearing a blue shirt and black cropped pants and white sneakers. A man is crouched next to her as she completes the deadlifts, presumably her CrossFit coach. After completing her deadlifts, the coach stands by her as she does sprints from one yellow cone to another, touching the top as she reaches each one. The video ends as she reaches the first cone again. As there is no speaking audio clearly discernible over the music playing in the Box, there is no transcription of specific speech for this video.

Post 5:

Date posted: September 16, 2018 at 1:00PM

Title: Paradiso CrossFit: Scaling a Chipper While Pregnant

Origin of vid: Paradiso CrossFit Venice

Length of vid: 7:54 minutes

views: 63,000

comments: 76

shares: 127

reactions: 566

Caption:

Via [Paradiso CrossFit Venice](#): "Check out our very special WOD Demo this week, including three pregnant and badass Paradiso CrossFit Staff: Katie Plummer, Emma D'Alessandro and Chelsea McKinney!"

Video Content:

A woman in a "Venice Barbell Club" tank top introduces a workout for pregnant women to complete. She is identified by text on the screen as Jessica Suver, Head Programmer, "Lady Boss" and "Bear om." The pregnant mothers will be completing a chipper workout identified in text on the side of the video as "Push It", with 800m run, 60 deadlifts, 40 front squats, 20 hang power cleans, 10 muscle ups, and RX:115/75. Jessica lets the audience know that the women will scale- or adjust the workout- individually. The next text on the screen says "each athlete will scale depending on the trimester they are in, comfort level, and doctor's recommendations", then "please make sure to consult a physician to choose an appropriate exercise program during your pregnancy." Jessica emphasizes that the movements can be personalized for their comfort and fitness levels so everyone can work out. Upbeat music plays as the three mothers are introduced- Katie at 32 weeks, Emma at 31 weeks, and Chelsea at 24 weeks. It also provides the exact workout stats that each woman is going to complete.

The video then shows snippets of the workouts each of the women are completing, with text at the bottom of the screen providing more context. For example, as Katie is on the standing cardio machine the text below says "Katie stopped running at the beginning of her pregnancy. She'll take any excuse she can not to run", while Emma is on a rowing machine with the text "Emma stopped running at 30 weeks due to discomfort. She rows like molasses", and Chelsea completes a run with the text "Chelsea is still running when she feels up to it, though she doesn't feel as spry." The overall mood of the video is fun and upbeat and a bit tongue-in-cheek. The women are encouraging each other throughout the video.

After showing more clips of the workout, the three women sit down to interview about their experiences. They bump bellies and then introduce themselves. Next, they talk about their experience with CrossFit, why they continue doing it in their pregnancy, and the benefits they have found in their pregnant workouts. They discuss having to adjust and scale the workouts as the pregnancy progresses, the benefit of community and a support system by having other pregnant women working out at the Box with them. The tone is conversational and very CrossFit-positive. They emphasize discomfort with others commenting on their changing bodies and their involvement with exercise during pregnancy. They talk about how people have offered concern at them working out while pregnant, but they talk about advocating for themselves and the benefits of working out for their own health and the health of their babies. The video ends with the women laughing together.

Post 6:

Date posted: September 23, 2018 at 9:09AM

Title: No Title on video

Origin of vid: From Jamie Hagiya at Adaptive CrossFit

Length of vid: 0:41 seconds

views: 272,000

comments: 190

shares: 1,223

reactions: 8,100

Caption:

“Janet (an adaptive athlete with cerebral palsy) killing it per usual! Great session today.” Via [Jamie Hagiya | Adaptive CrossFit](#)

Video Content: The video opens to a woman, identified in the caption as Janet, inside a CrossFit Box as hip-hop music plays in the background. She is an adaptive athlete with cerebral palsy, and is completing deadlifts. She is dressed in coral leggings and a matching sports bra top and her hair is in braids. There are three other women in the background of the video, two talking to one another and the third sitting down and checking her phone. A woman, presumably the CrossFit coach, is standing by for the deadlifts for Janet as music plays in the background. In this first section of footage, the coach says “Push! Last one! Nice.” Next, the video moves to a shot of Janet performing burpees with a Box jump. The woman sitting with her phone is seen again in the background. In this second section, the coach says, “There you go.” as Janet works out. The final shot is of Janet laying on a gym mat working on rope exercises- she pulls herself from the floor to a standing position. Next to her on the mat is a man who is also performing exercises- he pauses to watch Janet complete her exercise. In this third section, the coach says, “Pull, good. Keep going, there you go! Yeah Janet, oh, come on! Nice!” There is no discernable speaking audio over the music, aside from what is noted here.

Post 7:

Date posted: October 2, 2018 at 11:00AM

Title: The Overhead Lifts

Origin of vid: CrossFit HQ

Length of vid: 0:49 seconds

views: 210,000

comments: 170

shares: 1,036

reactions: 3,400

Caption: The Shoulder Press → The Push Press → The Push Jerk

Video Content: (NO TRANSCRIPTION)

This video is an instructional video. It shows a woman in a red tank top and black athletic shorts standing with a barbell with weights positioned at her shoulders. There are three frames in the shot, with the woman in each third of the screen. First, the third of the screen to the left plays an example of a shoulder press while the other two sections are frozen in starting position. Next, the second section performs a push press as the right and left frames are frozen. Finally, the section on the right performs a push jerk while the other two frames are frozen. There is electronic music in the background of the video. This video provides a visual tutorial

for performing the three exercises by showing the difference between the three side by side. As there is no speaking audio, there is no transcription of speech for this video.

Post 8:

Date posted: October 17, 2018 at 11:00AM

Title: Rope Climb J Hook

Origin of vid: CrossFit HQ

Length of vid: 2:01 minutes

views: 279,000

comments: 66

shares: 240

reactions: 844

Caption:

"This is a squatting exercise." Coach Matt Chan teaches a group the J-hook rope climb technique.

For more info and upcoming dates for the CrossFit Specialty Course: Competitors bit.ly/SME-competitor-course

Video Content:

The video opens with the CrossFit logo and a voiceover of a CrossFit coach talking about the exercise. Identified as Matt Chan in the caption, a man in a tan top and dark bottoms explains that the exercise can be completed very quickly, before a member of the Box jumps onto the rope and climbs up and slides down in a matter of seconds. After this quick example, Matt points out hand placement and asks questions about foot placement to emphasize proper form on the rope. He suggest the "J Hook" is a technique that is beneficial for rope climbs. Then, he has the Box member who did the tutorial sit on a Box as he shows how to practice the J hook. The video is instructional in nature, and he shows examples of wrapping the rope around the leg properly for a rope climb.

Post 9:

Date posted: November 7, 2018 at 7:50PM

Title: No Title on video

Origin of vid: CrossFit HQ, to promote series

Length of vid: 1:00 minute

views: 89,000

comments: 63

shares: 272

reactions: 815

Caption:

Brig. Gen. Kristin Goodwin, Commandant of Cadets at the United States Air Force Academy, speaks to the importance of being combat ready and how physical competition among the Service Academies can aid in building leadership qualities.

The series will culminate in Philadelphia on Dec. 7 with an Army vs. Navy showdown, and the winner of the series will hoist the first annual CrossFit Commander's Cup.

#CrossFit U.S. Army U.S. Marine Corps United States Air Force U.S. Navy

Video Content:

The video opens to an interview with a woman in an Air Force uniform talking about leadership and connection to the military. Different clips of individual military members completing various workouts play along to the voiceover of the women, identified as Brig. Gen. Kristin Goodwin, Commandant of Cadets for the USAFA. “It brings us together as teammates”, she offers of the competition between the branches of the armed forces. The video serves as a short plug for the CrossFit Commander’s Cup series.

Post 10:

Date posted: November 14, 2018 at 9:21AM

Title: CrossFit helps Adam keep his body “more under control”

Origin of vid: CrossFit HQ plugged CrossFit O’Fallon, and Adaptive CrossFit as sources for video

Length of vid: 1:30 minutes

views: 70,000

comments: 67

shares: 226

reactions: 1,100

Caption:

Adam Morgan is a 16-year-old student at Fort Zumwalt East High School in Saint Peters, Missouri. He has autism and has been working with Stephanie Hoffman, a teacher at the Center for Autism and a CrossFit trainer who works with children with autism at CrossFit O’Fallon.

Through his iPad, Adam shares his views on CrossFit and how it helps him with self-regulation.

Video via Adam’s YouTube Channel, “Tech Talk With Adam Morgan”

(<http://bit.ly/2z8B2XA>) Adaptive CrossFit

Video Content:

The video opens to footage of a young man in a green shirt and black workout shorts, identified in the caption as Alex Morgan, completing a workout. He does kettlebell walks as a voiceover plays- it is Adam speaking through assistive technology on his iPad, talking about how he feels about doing CrossFit and how it is beneficial for him. Adam is an adaptive athlete with autism, and completes his workouts with a CrossFit trainer that also teaches at the Center for Autism. Adam says “CrossFit is helping me get my body to follow directions that it doesn’t want to follow”, and “Stephanie is awesome . . . I hope I am making her proud.” After the initial workout footage and the voiceover end, a compilation of clips of Adam working out in the Box play with upbeat music in the background. Stephanie can be seen guiding him through the workouts in many of the videos.