

Capstone Portfolio:
NARRATIVE AS A
FORCE OF
COMMUNICATION

The Agenda:

01 about me

GABBY PICCIRILLI

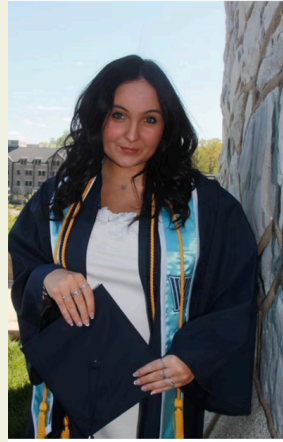
I am driven by illuminating the stories within people and organizations so that everyday audiences can understand, trust, and feel inspired by them.

That's my why, and it drives everything I do, professionally and academically.

I'm a creative and strategic communicator pursuing my Master of Arts in Communication and a graduate certificate in Strategic Communication at Villanova University, where I also earned my Bachelor of Public Relations & Advertising, *summa cum laude*, with minors in Creative Writing and Writing & Rhetoric.

I'm passionate about narrative in all its forms, whether I'm shaping brand stories, crafting press materials, or writing fiction. Across my experiences in agency, nonprofit and consumer focused workplaces, I have brought a detail-oriented, thoughtful approach to every project, balancing creativity with clarity and purpose, and look forward to continuing to do so in new contexts.

My goals include establishing a career in public relations or advertising while continuing to build my body of creative work and pursuing my long-term dream of becoming a published novelist.



PERSONAL STATEMENT

I never thought of myself as a "communicator." I was always a writer, comfortable in private, alone with the page and my thoughts. I could never picture myself delivering a compelling pitch or serving as the spokesperson for a company. Growing up, every teacher I'd ever had, or any adult who spoke to me long enough, told me the same thing: slow down. I spoke too fast, so nervously, too much.

So when I was named valedictorian of the Class of 2021 and asked to deliver our commencement address, I felt more exposed than honored. I wrote the speech obsessively, line by line, breath by breath, trying to control the very thing I had always struggled with: being heard. My class had missed so much of high school, and we were graduating in caps, gowns and blue surgical masks. I had to speak for all of us. I had to make us believe we would be okay.

But when I stepped up to the podium and began, something shifted. I wasn't just reciting words, I was connecting. I spoke with conviction, with emotion. When I finished, I looked out at a crowd visibly moved. Strangers approached me afterward to say the speech had made them cry, that it had captured something they hadn't been able to articulate themselves.

That moment redefined communication for me. I had thought I belonged to people who spoke slowly, confidently, perfectly, or those who always knew what to say aloud without writing it down first. But standing there, I realized it belongs to anyone willing to make meaning public. Communication is about translating experience into something others can feel, understand, and carry with them, much like the creative writing I've always felt comfortable with. Since then, my academic and professional work has been guided by a clear purpose: to illuminate the stories within people and



02 thematic essay

Informed by the belief that narrative is power, I approach my work as a communication scholar and practitioner, and stories as both creative acts and forces that shape public meaning. Throughout my M.A. program, I moved from writing privately to critically examining how stories circulate publicly, shape perception, and carry meaning. Viewing communication as inherently world-shaping, I examine how it constructs relationships, identities, and understanding, bridging my passions for public relations and creative writing.

Through my graduate coursework, my artifacts trace the life cycle of narrative, from the moment a story is conceived to how it circulates among audiences, to how it is transformed, commodified, or contested in public culture. Each artifact discussed below examines a different stage of this cycle, revealing how narrative shapes communication through interpersonal relationships, media environments, and organizational reputation.

In my qualitative research project, "An Author's Voice and the 'Wounds That Speak': Creative Writing as Emotional Labor and Public Communication," begins at the point of creation. Through interviews, ethnographic fieldwork in Northern Ireland, and phonetic iterative analysis, I explored how authors articulate their motivations for emotional labor, and negotiate the ethical stakes of transforming private experiences into public narrative. The project taught me to design and execute original research, engage interpretive paradigms, and write for a broad, viewed publication. Most importantly, it revealed how deeply narrative is tied to identity, vulnerability, and communication.

03 artifacts

Author's Voice and the "Wounds That Speak": Creative Writing as Emotional Labor and Public Communication

the Piccirilli

Abstract
This study examines the wounds that speak, and the voices that carry them into the world, through writing that is at once personal and public. It explores how creative writers use the writing process as a form of emotional processing, their motivations for writing, and understanding of themselves as public communicators. Through qualitative methodologies...

thead: ROMANCE NOVELS ON RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION 1

ARTIFACT #1:

This artifact, an original qualitative research study titled "An Author's Voice and the 'Wounds That Speak'..."

[Read full contextualizing statement.](#)

ABOUT ME

PERSONAL STATEMENT

THEMATIC ESSAY

ARTIFACTS



About Me

My Why:

I AM DRIVEN BY ILLUMINATING THE STORIES WITHIN PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS SO THAT EVERYDAY AUDIENCES CAN UNDERSTAND, TRUST, AND FEEL INSPIRED BY THEM.





GROWTH

ROVE JOHN PAUL II
SCHOOL

Public Relations JOE MARCONI
CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS 4TH EDITION FEARN-BANK
WOMEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS
ETHICS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS Patricia J. Parsons
Flistead QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY Markham
PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY Sandra Oll

My Philosophy:

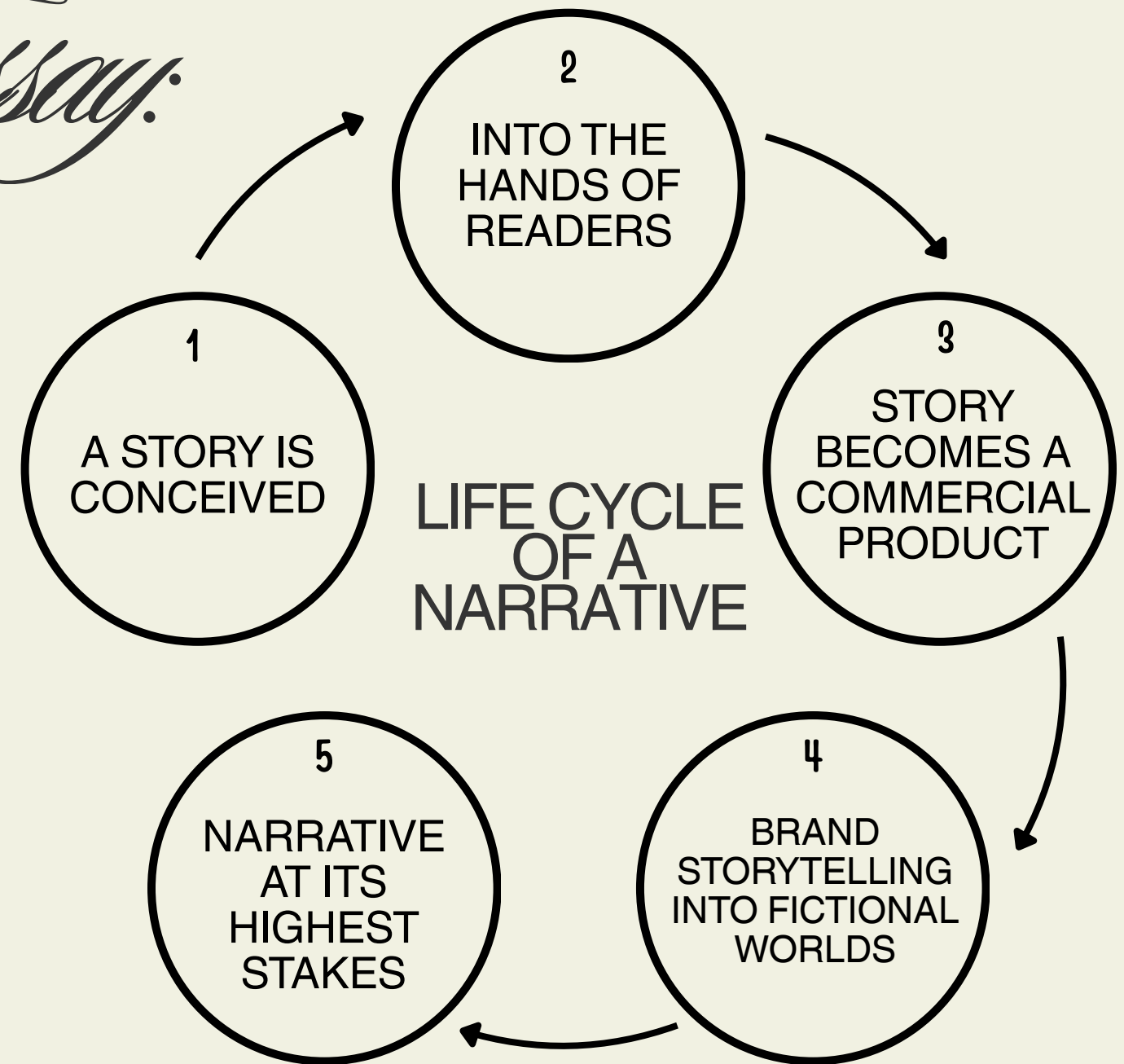
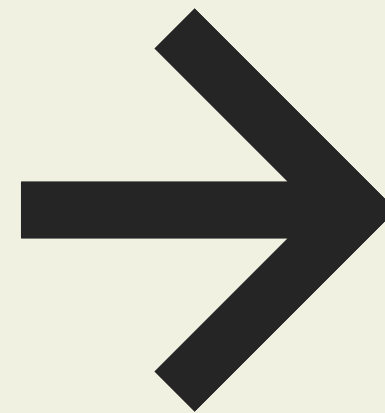
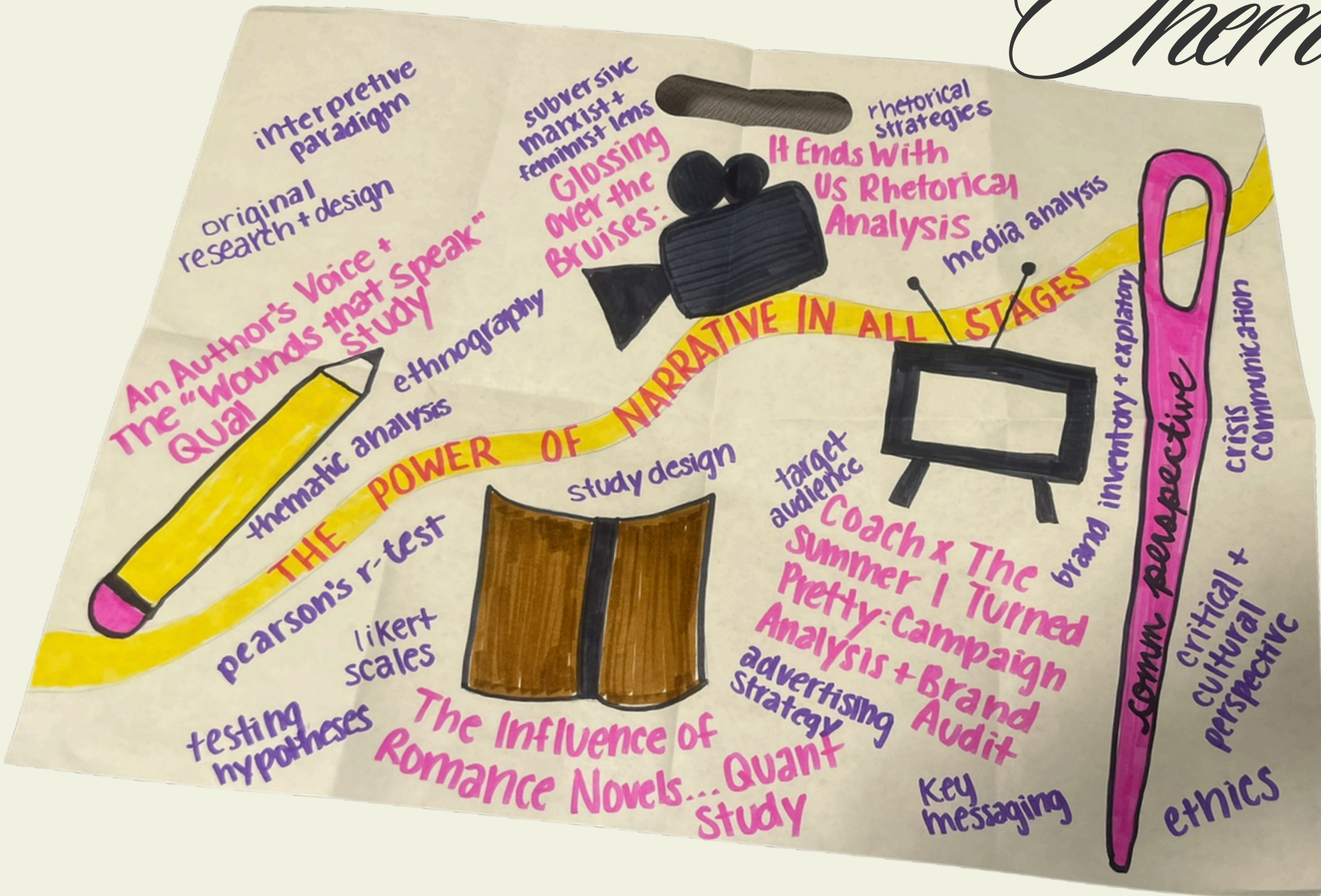
STORIES DON'T JUST DESCRIBE THE WORLD. THEY ACTIVELY BUILD IT. WHETHER IN PR, ADVERTISING, OR CREATIVE WRITING, NARRATIVES SHAPE WHAT PEOPLE SEE AS REAL, IMPORTANT, AND POSSIBLE.

STORYTELLING AS
A CREATIVE
PRACTICE & A SITE
OF CULTURAL
POWER

WORDS AS
RECOGNITION
OR
REDUCTION

AWARENESS OF
ETHICAL
RESPONSIBILITY

Thematic Essay:



Artifact 1

Piccirilli 1

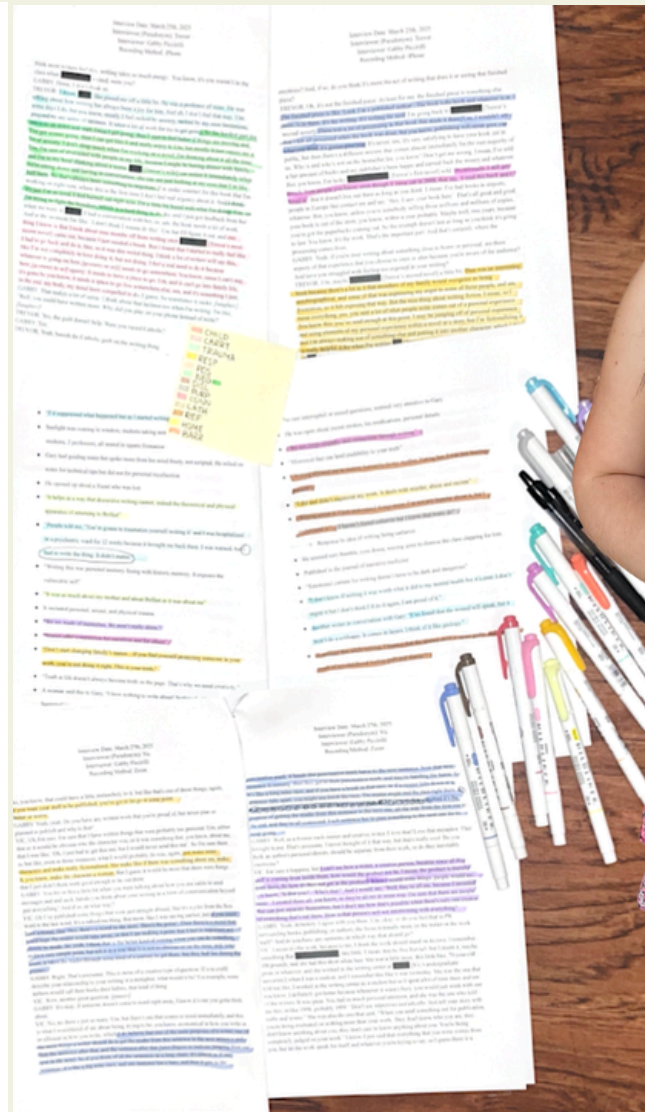
An Author's Voice and the "Wounds That Speak": Creative Writing as Emotional Processing and Public Communication

Gabrielle Piccirilli

Abstract

This study examines the wounds that speak, and the voices that carry them into the world, often through writing that is at once personal and public. It explores how creative writers describe the writing process as a form of emotional processing, their motivations for writing, and their understanding of themselves as public communicators. Through qualitative methodologies of embodied participant observation, semi-structured mediated interviews, and thematic analysis, this study expands the scope of the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing (Flower & Hayes, 2004) beyond academic writing to creative writing, offering insights into the emotional aspects of the craft often overlooked by composition studies. Findings reveal that the writing process is both healing and vulnerable, offering a space to confront and reframe trauma, assert voice in the face of sociocultural barriers and political turmoil, and navigate the tension between private creation and public communication. While motivations and emotional outcomes varied, one truth remained consistent: writing is an act of meaning-making that carries profound personal and social significance. These insights highlight the need for scholarly models of writing to better account for the emotional labor embedded in creative work. This study also emphasizes the importance of building compassionate support structures for writers across education, publishing, and mental health fields. Ultimately, this study reframes creative writing not only as a craft but as an intimate, transformative, and ethically complex act of public communication.

Key Words: creative writing, trauma narratives, writing as healing, public communication, emotional processing



Competencies:

- ✓ DRAW CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CURRICULA AND CONTEXT
- ✓ ARTICULATE COMMUNICATION AS CONSTITUTIVE
- ✓ DEMONSTRATE TECHNICAL COMPETENCY
- ✓ ENGAGE WITH ETHICS AND (IN)EQUITY IN COMMUNICATION
- ✓ ENGAGE IN CRITIQUE AND CONTRIBUTION

Artifact 2

ROMANCE NOVELS ON RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION

2

The Influence of Romance Novels on Communication in Romantic Relationships: A Proposed Study

Gabrielle Piccirilli

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between romance novel consumption and romantic relationship communication, focusing on idealistic expectations, romantic communication satisfaction, and online perceptions of healthy romantic communication. Drawing on cultivation theory and uses and gratifications theory, this study hypothesizes that higher romance novel consumption is associated with more idealistic expectations (H1) and lower communication satisfaction (H2). Additionally, it proposes that TikTok engagement under the #BookTok hashtag reflects distorted perceptions of romantic communication (H3). Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines a 41-question online survey of 300-500 U.S.-residing participants in long-term partnerships who engage in reading as a hobby and a computational content analysis of TikTok activity. Data will be analyzed using Pearson's correlation for H1, independent t-tests for H2, and thematic coding for H3. Limitations include the exclusion of readers without internet access and a lack of cross-cultural analysis. This study deepens an understanding of how romance novels influence interpersonal communication and relationship satisfaction, addressing gaps in the media's role in shaping relational communication. Its findings have implications for media literacy, relationship counseling, and fostering healthier communication and reading habits.

Key Words: romance novels, media influence, romantic relationships, idealistic expectations, communication satisfaction

Please check the appropriate box after each of the following statements (#6-32) that best reflects your feelings or experiences. This series of statements will assess reading habits, romantic expectations and communication satisfaction. Please try to answer based on your feelings and experiences with your current long-term partner.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree or disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
6. If I sit down to read a book, I am likely to select a book from the romance genre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I read almost daily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. If I have free time, I am likely to read a book.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I actively seek recommendations for romance novels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I often purchase or borrow books from the romance genre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I read 3 or more romance novels a month.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. A romantic relationship should always feel exciting and passionate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Conflict in a romantic relationship is a sign that the relationship is not meant to last.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. In a strong romantic relationship, grand gestures are more important than everyday actions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I believe true love should overcome obstacles effortlessly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. My partner should prioritize my happiness over everything else.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I believe in love at first sight.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. My partner should know how to make me feel specific without guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Competencies:



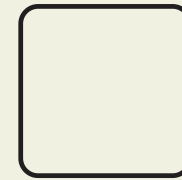
DRAW CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CURRICULA AND CONTEXT



ARTICULATE COMMUNICATION AS CONSTITUTIVE



DEMONSTRATE TECHNICAL COMPETENCY



ENGAGE WITH ETHICS AND (IN)EQUITY IN COMMUNICATION



ENGAGE IN CRITIQUE AND CONTRIBUTION

Artifact 3



Rhetorical Criticism
Glossing Over the Bruises: *It Ends With Us*, the Commodification of Trauma and the Sanitization of Survivor Stories for Mass Consumption

 Discussion of Domestic Violence

Subversive Marxist Position

Media and branding reduce lived experiences into products for profit, reinforcing **capitalist ideologies** and separating audiences from authentic emotional engagement.

- Experiences stripped of their emotional/political weight, repackaged into marketable content, & sold back to audiences under the **guise of empowerment**.
- By focusing on shallow symbols of femininity, the merchandise **distracts from the core message** of the original novel (survival, strength, and generational healing).

& A Feminist Criticism

Women as objects, rather than subjects/subject-object distinction (Brumett, 1994, 173)

Reducing womanhood to objects used *by* women (i.e., beauty tools) rather than allowing women to stand in as themselves and have their own voices is disempowering.



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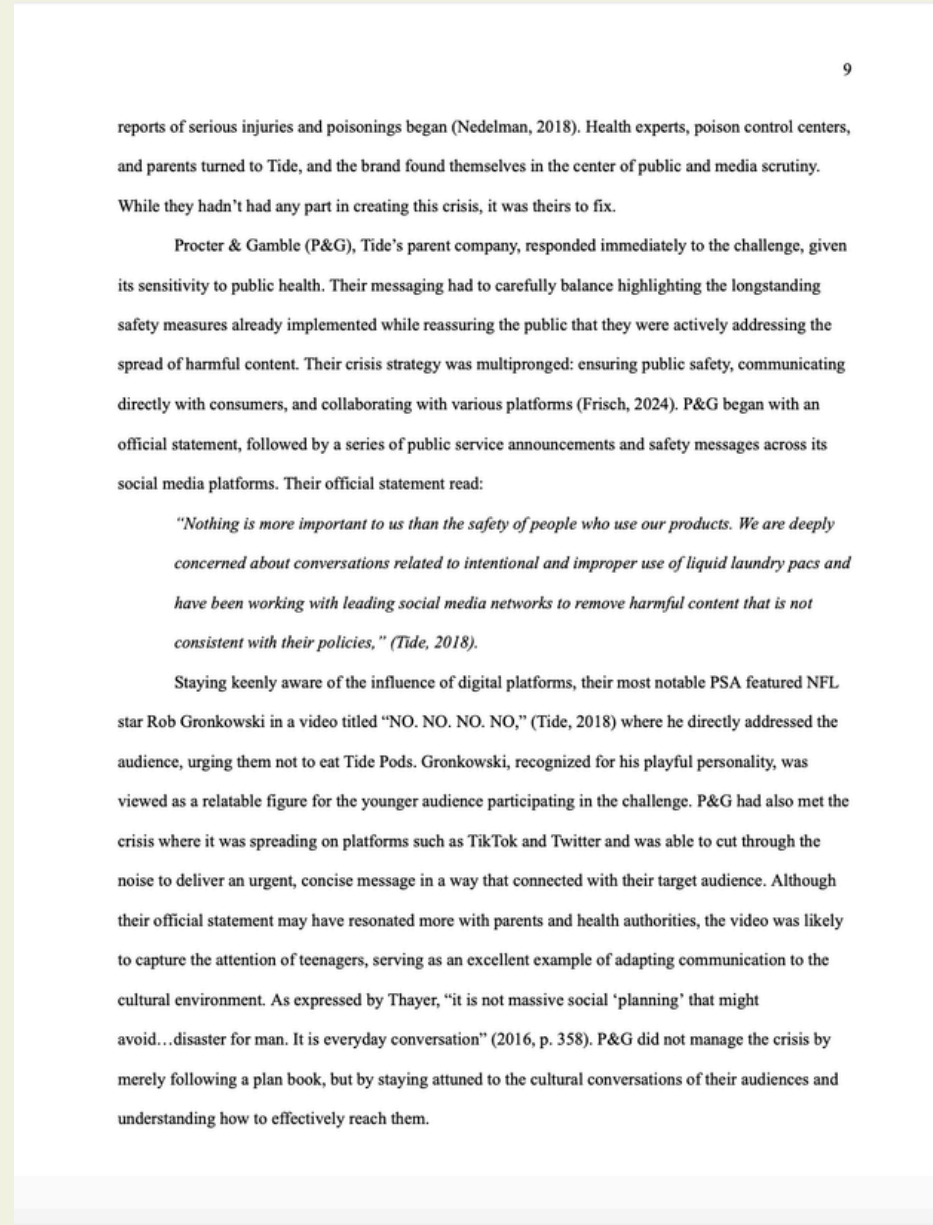
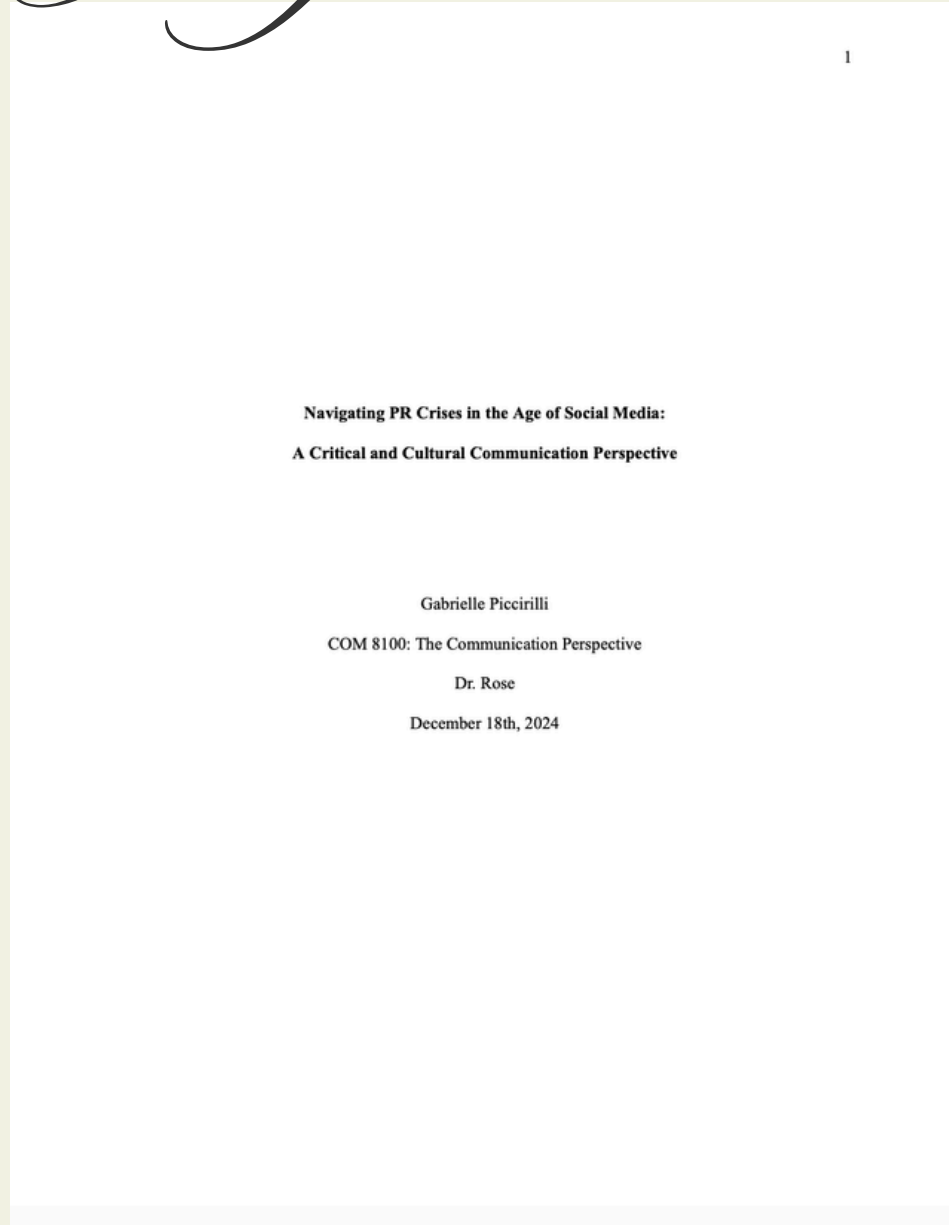
Artifact 4



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Artifact 5



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Key Takeaways

1

HOW DEEPLY I VALUE RESEARCH WHEN IT INTERSECTS WITH MY CREATIVE & PROFESSIONAL PASSIONS & A DRIVE TO EXPAND THIS LINE OF RESEARCH, ADDRESSING A SIGNIFICANT GAP IN CREATIVE WRITING SCHOLARSHIP

2

AN EXPANSION OF MY SKILLSET AS A SCHOLAR, EXPOSING ME TO A TYPE OF RESEARCH I DON'T USUALLY ENGAGE WITH & INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION, AN AREA OF COMMUNICATION I HADN'T YET STUDIED

3

AS AN ASPIRING AUTHOR WHO OFTEN WRITES ABOUT SENSITIVE TOPICS, THIS PROJECT PROVIDED A VALUABLE CASE STUDY OF HOW COMPROMISING A STORY FOR COMMERCIAL APPEAL CAN UNDERMINE ITS ORIGINAL INTENT AND IMPACT

4

PREPARED ME TO CONTRIBUTE PROFESSIONALLY TO ADVERTISING & PR THROUGH DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHT, ESPECIALLY WHEN TARGETING NEW AUDIENCES

5

CRISIS COMMUNICATION IS NOT MERELY RESPONSIVE BUT ACTIVELY SHAPES HOW THOSE CRISES ARE REMEMBERED & MUST ALWAYS BE CONSIDERED ALONGSIDE BROADER HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXTS



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**NARRATIVE AS A
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*Questions, feedback &
discussion!*