

**Take-Home Midterm Exam**  
**Communication Studies 100**

Arianna Borsoni - 003776927

Section 1C

30

### **1. How persuasive is Jenkins's idea that new media use helps to bring about a participatory culture?**

Jenkins's idea of new media literacy bringing about a participatory culture is extremely persuasive. He makes the claim that new media literacy is very similar to folk culture, where "everyone who wants to join is accepted and everyone who has something to contribute is embraced" (Jenkins, 2). Folk culture comes from ordinary people at the bottom, instead of popular culture, which comes from culture industries and the media at the top. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, folk culture was replaced by popular culture and people became consumers rather than producers. However, this is now changing with new media. Jenkins' idea is that new media is a return to folk culture because ordinary people at the bottom are becoming producers again rather than consumers. New technologies "have brought cultural expression down to a human scale and have opened up a space where all of us can be welcomed and potential participants" (Jenkins, 2). I agree with Jenkins' view because the technology and new media of today makes it very easy for regular people to produce culture. For example, audiences of television shows are now able to comment on forums about what they liked and didn't like about a certain television shows, and thus they are becoming a part of the production process. Ordinary people are even able to produce and make their own videos and post them on to websites like YouTube. There have been several YouTube hits that have gone viral, such as "Ouch Charlie" and "DJ Kitty," and thus, we are producing and choosing our cultural artifacts. Our culture today is more like a participatory culture, which is similar to folk culture, because we are both producers and consumers. I feel like technology makes it so much easier to not only produce culture today, but also to spread it. Search engines and social networking help cultural artifacts spread to everyone and be easily accessible. Jenkins' definitely made a persuasive argument and makes it clear that new media is making it easier for everyone to participate in not only consuming, but also producing our culture today. 10

## **2. Can there be scientific understanding of human behavior or is the use of scientific method to study humans fundamentally misguided?**

I do not think that science could be used as the primary understanding of human behavior, and instead it is fundamentally flawed, because of several key factors. I tend to take the Interpretivist approach and I believe that since humans are social creatures, we have to examine their behavior from a social aspect rather than a scientific aspect. Science is not able to provide answers in the understanding of human behavior because humans are not objects. Instead, the knowledge of human behavior and “social life comes from understanding the experience of the individual and the meanings that are given to that experience.” Positivists believe that humans are influenced biologically and psychologically to behave in certain ways, but I agree with the Interpretivist view that humans can “give meaning to and transform their own lives and their environment” (Metatheoretical Perspectives, 5). I believe that humans’ choices and actions are voluntary and that it is not the outcome of hereditary and the environment (scientific factors). Human behavior is not predictable and people choose how they act. I also believe that knowledge of human behavior has to be looked at locally, instead of universally. The knowledge that we want of human beings is very particular and we want to understand things in their particularity and specificity so our knowledge should be local and not universal (which is what scientific methods try to achieve). Humans are complex social creatures and one universal truth cannot be applied to understand the way they behave. Positivists also believe that the scientific knowledge will cure the ills of the social world. I do not agree with this because I think that there are other ways to achieve social progress such as engaging in dialogue. Science is not the only or primary answer for social progress. Due to all of these reasons, I believe that the use of scientific knowledge to study humans is fundamentally misguided and that other factors need to be taken into account when studying human behavior.

**5. Part II—Do you agree with the author’s claim that evolutionary psychology’s explanations of gender phenomena are mistaken?**

I agree with the author’s claim that evolutionary psychology’s explanations of gender phenomena are mistaken because I don’t believe that biological and psychological factors create the differences between men and women. The author makes the claim that men and women are just social constructions and therefore we can decide to deconstruct these categories and come up with other ones. I believe this is true and that the differences between the two genders are not biologically based. Evolutionary psychology believes that gender roles will always be the same because they depend on nature, and since nature does not change, neither will the gender roles. I completely disagree with this and instead I view gender roles as able to change. The author makes a logical and persuasive argument that points out that gender roles are quickly changing. She points out that since we are now in a post-industrial information economy, women are fairing better and are much better suited to these economic conditions. There is now plenty of evidence pointing to the increasing success of women. For example, women now hold the majority of the nation’s jobs and earn 60% of all bachelor degrees (Rosin, 9). Since this is the case and women are rising above men, the evolutionary psychology view is proven wrong because it claims that gender roles are unchanging (since nature is unchanging). Men are falling behind women in the economy, in education, in leadership, and even in marriage. If evolutionary psychology explanations were correct, men would still be considered higher than women because of their innate characteristics that make them more favorable than women. But this is obviously not the case because of women’s rise to prominence in the last couple of decades. Male and female gender differences are changing and there is plenty of evidence to back up that claim. Evolutionary psychology’s explanations of the gender phenomena are simply wrong because women are now rising above men and the dominant gender is changing.