



Analysis and the elements of the lifespan of memes from
the scope of Semiotics and Darwinian Theory

by

Noubar Ounjian

Presented to the
Department of English & Communications
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

American University of Armenia
Yerevan, Armenia

May 18, 2018

Abstract:

This research is based on analysis of memes since multiple factors include in engaging with a meme, that we fail to realize while we perceive. There are numerous factors such as semiotics, and the study of genes as memes (proposed by Dawkins) played a huge role in answering most of the questions in my research, and its importance relies on not looking at a meme just as a joke, but more to understand what are the factors that make a meme so successful compared to others. In General, I wanted to implement Darwinian theory to understand how successful memes have succeeded because on his proposed theory which is adapting and self – replicating, whereas others failed because they did not meet the criteria of survival of the fittest in the meme pool. Although semiotics was only used to analyze if there was a successful object-interpreter relationship in order to connect the dots for the lifespan of a meme since if a meme is not interpreted as it should, it fails and is highly vulnerable to go extinct. I analyzed different contemporary kinds of memes, both long-lived and short-lived to understand what were the factors that contributed to its lifespan. In the end, I realized that there are more than multiple criteria that a meme needs to follow in order to survive and assert its longevity.

Introduction

Social media usage has been popularized amongst most digital device users on an everyday basis. Everyone employs the usage of social media for various purposes to communicate with one another with friends and family, inquire daily news regarding politics or/about celebrities, and most importantly, share their ideas and thoughts in a social platform to encounter reviews or start a discussion. The different patterns that employed to post a social media post are in-text posts, pictures, YouTube videos, polls and memes, which incorporates a combination of images and text, contextualizing an idea which can serve for fun, political cause, or hatred. For that matter, it is not easy to neither understand nor interpret the concept behind an expression, which in my research will heavily focus on internet memes.

Recently, in the last decade, the utilization of internet memes have been popularized in order to express an ideology or a simple expression thus convey a message to the surroundings or a community. However, it is not simple to understand a meme through having a primitive observation towards an idea. Therefore, the implementation of semiotics can help us understand and interpret an internet meme which has been enriched through the settling foundation of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce.

The introduction of signs as living entities and their relationship with the interpreter and the object has helped not only the interpretation of internet memes but as well the interpretation of icons and mostly in the field of linguistics. Furthermore, memes which in this case is taken from the perspective of signs, have dealt with a variety of changes, implementation and also mimic, that kept their survival rate high in our community. The idea of memes imitating to increase its survival rate has been introduced by famous Biologist Richard Dawkins and has helped modern semioticians to incorporate his theory of memes into those of Saussure's to

analyze and understand internet memes from a theoretical perspective rather than a primitive one. Hence subsuming the theories of Saussure, Peirce, and Dawkins, I will interpret and analyze the contextual, i.e., what are the ideas that a meme is conveying through the perspective of relationships of signs, in order to establish the longevity of the memes if either the meme is vulnerable to go extinct, progress or stay platued.

Literature Review

The most important question that comes forward is how to understand memes and what is it intended for. The meme itself is a symbol contextualizing an idea through the medium of perception of human eyes and brain. Thus the implication of semiotics is brought in my research paper to dissect a meme and understand the interpretation and analysis of various types of memes that exist in our digital community. At the present moment, the availability of the sources are relatively small since not so much research and studies have been conducted on my topic, but that would not hinder my progress in completing my research. This review will not explore 20th-century memes but more in the last seven-year time phrase. In that matter, mostly this research paper will concentrate on the semiotic aspects of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce with the implementation of Dawkins' memetic structure.

Therefore to understand the structure of semiotics which is the backbone of this research, we should emphasize our research on Ferdinand de Saussure, who was a prominent figure in developing semiotics. Saussure asserted that signs are an entity with a combination of acoustic image and a mental representation of reality, although the interpretation of the message heavily depends on the context of the sign and not the sign itself, according to Baicchi (2009). Moreover, Baicchi's, research was emphasized on Saussure; it thoroughly and chronologically showed the transition of the development of semiotics which has contributed tremendously to the

implementation of linguistics. Although Saussure unfolded the science of how signs incorporated a relationship between an acoustic image and mental representations, according to Mukařovský (1976), Saussure's work opened new paths not only in the field of linguistics but also for the theory of literature. Many contemporary studies have utilized Saussure's framework of semiotics to develop a theory on its own. However, not everyone has been proponents of Saussure's theory of semiotics since some anti-Saussureans do not agree with the notion of Saussure's thought of the relationship between elements of the sign being arbitrary when it is applied on iconic and indexical signs. Nevertheless, Saussure was willing to find a firm connection between concept and the literal reality of the word. Here he developed a theory that signs are considered as a dyadic entity with a combination of acoustic image and a mental representation of reality. Although, the interpretation of the message is crucial depending on its context since the sign itself does not contain the meaning.

Forming Ferdinand de Saussure's framework as a basis of the study, Charles Peirce developed Saussure's theory into his theory of Peircean theoretical framework of semiotics asserting that the interpretant, the sign, and its object are heavily interdependent on one another. Since then, eventually, Charles Peirce divided semiotics into 3 philosophical logic, where (1) the relationship between object sign and interpretant, that how signs signify in relation to its objects and its interpretant, so therefore, the combination has resulted in how some signs personify or include others within. (2) The logical critic on modes of deduction (inference), and finally, (3) Peircean form of pragmatism is its own article's subject. Furthermore, the Peircean theory is prevalent with Dawkins' description of memes which I intend to introduce in my capstone. ‘

Richard Dawkins states memes are self-replicating and traveling from human brain to another brain in an altered form, putting a heavy emphasis on the interpretant's decoding

approach causing an alteration in interpretation. Dawkins' "Selfish Gene" alluded the similarity of memes to genes and was viewed as the founding father of memes in 1976. His model has shaped the foundation of a new area of study, which looks at the self-replicating factors in culture. Although he ceased from the study of memetics, his discovery of memes has been projected that just as memes are analogous to genes, correspondingly memetics is analogous to genetics. As a matter of fact, the modern development of memetics initiated back in 1983 by Hofstadter in his famous column "*Metamagical Themas*" which he recast the correspondence of memetics to that of genetics. Forming Dawkins' work as a foundation, it has attracted the attention of different intellectual backgrounds, which have used Dawkins' contrast of memes to genes in their research. In Dawkins' essay "*Viruses of the mind*" (1991), he used memetics to explain the occurrence of religious belief and diverse features of institutional religions. Although Dawkins' work in memetics had a significant impact for further research, indisputably it was on the front lines of critics by Jenkins, Green, and Ford in their book of "*Spreadable media*" (2013). They criticized stating, "while the idea of the meme is a compelling one, it may not adequately account for how content circulates through participatory culture" (Jenkins, Green, & Ford, 2013). The three authors denounced the interpretation of memetics of being "self-replicating," since they disregard the fact that culture is manufactured by human and it keeps on replicating through human agency.

About semiotics, Stuart Hall stated that semiotics delivers a method to analyze how the meanings and visual representations are delivered, (Scannell,2007). Moreover, Barthes (1967), stated Saussure's linguistic models were improved and extended through the application in fields of signs and a collection of broad representations (marketing, photography, travel, advertising, etc.). Furthermore, in a discussion about signs, Barthes denied to use the word signified/signifier

relationship and preferred to use neutral terms such as “binds or “acts.” He did not highlight the aspect of the signifier in pointing signified, rather the connection from both of them. The idea of signification is important to be remembered in the semiotic analysis, since in seeking the functioning system of signification, sometimes first we have to find signified, because signifier is recognized while the signified is unclear or vague, and vice versa. Moreover, Barthes developed Saussure’s theory by assessing that a feature of a sign is based upon a relationship between two views, a form (which is a signifier that he named as an expression) and content (which is signified that he designated as *contenu*). This phenomenon displays the relationship between the name and the meaning. Although Peirce asserted that signs experience unlimited semiotic process, however, Barthes saw it further, that a sign is a continuous cultural element that in fact earns connotation. Therefore, the relationship between signifier and signified, meanings, shape, content, or/and the relationship between object and representaman is determined from the outside, by proponents who see them and named as sign users. Such process can happen in the cognition of the sign users that can perceive them. What is stimulating is the relationship can be modified, in any way they wish.

“Internet memes as internet signs: A semiotic view of digital culture Sign Systems Studies” (2016), has incorporated a mixture of Dawkins’ *“Selfish Gene”* (1976) and Peircean semiotics to further examine media communication in the 21st century through communication of memes. Her findings have contributed to the field of examination of memes through semiotics and biosemiotics scope, which deliberately have been used as the framework of memetic studies in most of academic and research papers. Furthermore, she utilized Peircean findings to further delve into the field of semiotics, and explore the analogy of signs and icons in the digital world. Her written work has been viewed to be up to date and relevant compared to most published

academic papers about semiotics and media studies. In addition, some academic researchers, who are advocates of her analysis of memes have urged that her analogy is remarkable since she has utilized Peircean interpretation of semiotics which is more efficient and seminal, compared to those who have published academic papers only citing and using Saussure's theology. This is considered to be insufficient and less relevant compared to Peircean semiotics.

The impact of memes can subsume humor or dark jokes, but the impact of wholesome memes have arguably raised critics and also support in the way they can impact society. Eadicicco (2017) encompasses the introduction of wholesome memes which conveys supportive and inspirational memes thus reversing the effect of the dark joke of memes into a motivational one. This analytical article has been derived from Jonathan Sun's revolutionary overturn of meme's narrative. Sun, who was a doctoral student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was struggling with depression and anxiety, which was one of his motivations was to challenge his 400,000 twitter followers to turn a punchline into a symbol of hope. He got massive responses of uplifting, positive memes instead of traditional dark humor memes, that made him look at life more positively. The wholesome memes revolution has reverted the conventional discourse of meme culture into new hybrid memes containing motivational and funny meanings. Eadicicco's article concludes that wholesome memes continue to spread on a rapid scale since everyone wants to get along and we do not need to be angry all the time. Moreover, in the meantime, wholesome memes have advocated hard work, self-respect, balanced diets and healthy relationships. Nevertheless, the impact of wholesome memes in the article shows numerous results. However, the article is deprived of statistics and focus group questions about the impact of the wholesome memes, which would have legitimized the author's argument. Furthermore, psychologists have viewed the impact of wholesome memes to be good for

unmotivated people who deal with anxiety and stress that can trigger an abundance secretion of Dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins, which are neurotransmitters responsible for happiness.

To sum up the pinpoints of semiotics, it is evident for us that the implementation of semiotics through Saussurean and Peircean methods can help us analyze Relevant, irrelevant and wholesome memes, which has been introduced by Dawkins.

Research Question

Forming theories of Saussure, Peirce, and Dawkins as a framework, I will be inclined to interpret and analyze the contextual meaning and the lifespan of the memes (Pepe the frog, Crying Jordan, Kermit the frog, Drake, Phelps' face, Cash me ouside howbow dah, wholesome memes, and 2016, US presidential memes) i.e. what are the ideas that a meme is conveying through the perspective of relationships of signs, in order to establish its meaning if either the meme is tend to extinct, keep its logevity, or stay plateud. I decided to formulate the aforementioned research question because as I was researching in the topic of internet meme's, I understood that to understand signs in image macro (memes) format, I needed to go back to the foundation of semiotics which in this case is Saussure's and Peirce's theories, to interpret memes as what is the discourse that the meme is conveying to the observer whether that can be hate, motivation or political propaganda. Although I would've used more recent theories of semiotics, there has not been any actual studies done in the last couple of decades in the field of semiotics, which would have ultimately benefited my research.

Methodology

In order to elucidate on the contributing factors, I collected books and scholarly articles about internet memes which included a book on "*Signs & Semiotics*", "*Selfish Gene*", an article

on “*Memes, Myself and I: The Internet Lets Us All Run the Campaign*”, “*Memes, Myself and I: The Internet Lets Us All Run the Campaign*” and other scholarly articles that discussed about types of internet memes, and the language used by internet memes to communicate with viewers.

For assembling these scholarly articles and books, I resorted to AUA Papazian Library’s E-resources database that connected me to JSTORE, where most of the scholarly articles were found here. Also, EBSCOhost database was used to detect several books on internet memes. Mostly I was focused on typing keywords in the databases, such as “Internet memes as signs,” “Internet memes,” “Memes,” “Meme Language,” “Memetics,” and “Impact of memes.” Mostly, these Keywords did not direct me to the searched keywords but instead brought up the aforementioned scholarly articles which also are helpful and efficient in the conducted research.

The following memes that I chose which will be analyzed in the below sections have intrigued me for having relevance to the theories of Semiotics and Darwinian. For instance, the long lived memes had the characteristics of adaptability and self-replicating into forms that would suit to the environment, which Dawkins proposed this theory in his *Selfish Gene* Book (1976). Similarly the short lived memes failed to configure their features to adapt and be more dynamic and flexible to adapt and create that everlasting relevance to its audience. Not to mention that the object and the interpretant combination failed to establish because of unexpected change in narratives. However, wholesome memes can be a prominent example for accumulation of most famous memes and turning it into a new hybrid positive intended, which I chose stimulated positive emotions within the process interpreting the wholesome meme. Last but not least 2016 U.S. Presidential memes were interesting to look at since the reappropriation of insults which were used as a tool to turn the tables on the initial insulter, catalyzed the process of mind games and political rhetoric in favor to win the election as any way possible.

Google trends came into a very useful tool to evaluate the longevity and the lifespan of a meme, which helped to cope with the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest. Most of the memes correlated with their life or death status, firmly on graph projected on Google Trends. Even though it might seem complexed tool to use, but it has very simple navigating tools and primitive visuals projecting if a given meme is, crashing, growing, plateauing, or trending on a consistent line.

Mainly, I used textual analysis in order to explain my findings such as context conveyed of internet memes, the elements of the lifespan of a meme through Google Trends, and also the impact of wholesome memes in the internet community. However, my analysis is done from the perspective of Peircean, Saussurean, Dawkins', theories in order to explain its contextual meanings on the basis of the relationship of signs with its interpreter.

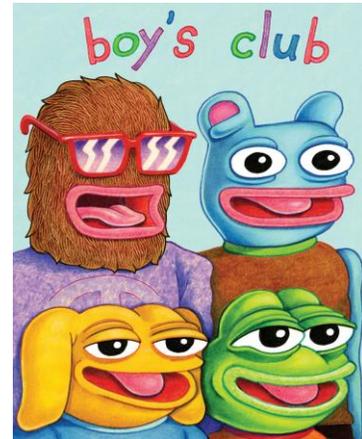
Analysis of Case studies on memes:

1. Pepe the Frog



Pepe the frog has been viewed as one of the most influential memes that have been available in the meme pool for its adaptability, humor, and modification. To delve in Pepe meme, it has originated in 2005 in “Boy’s Club” comic book but has come to awareness and

used up as a reaction expression in 2008 as “Feels good man” meme. The creator of Pepe the frog meme Matt Furie, according to *The Daily Dot*, (Khan, 2015), Furie contrasts the philosophy of Pepe the frog to joyfulness, happiness and the feeling of comfort. In his words, he describes Pepe the frog as *“I find complete joy in physically, emotionally, and spiritually serving Pepe and his friends through comics. Each comic is sacred, and the compassion of my readers transcends any differences, the pain, and fear of “feeling good.”*



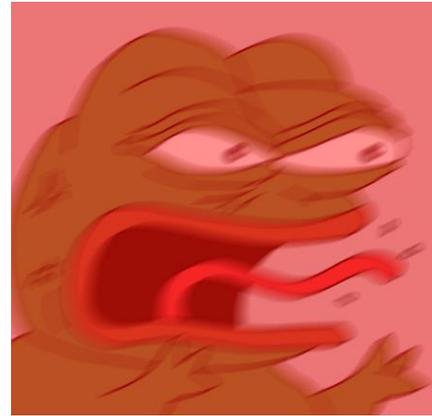
Although the turning point of Pepe the frog from all of the above “Boy’s Club” characters, relies upon its hilarious action in the comic book where he pulls down his pants and starts urinating (peeing) while expressing his feelings “Feels good man.” Its absurdity has risen millions of funny reaction to his performed actions, that is why the name Pepe has been derived from “going pee pee”. Altogether in 2008, the author released other subsets of Pepe the frog memes in altered form into other forms of expressions such as Feels Good Man, Sad Frog, Angry Pepe, Smug Frog and Well Meme’d and many more.



Sad Pepe



Smug frog



Angry Pepe

Furthermore, based on the characteristics of its modification model, many celebrities such as Katy Perry, Nicki Minaj, Donald Trump, Wendy's have been portrayed through the usage of pepe.



Katy Perry's Tweet in 2014

Me on Instagram for the next few weeks trying to get my followers back up.



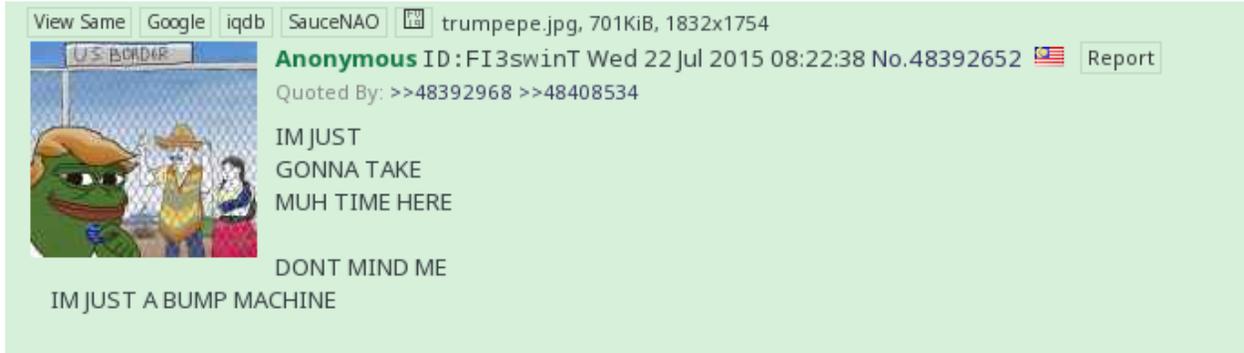
Nicki Minaj’s Instagram post in 2014



Donald Trump’s tweet in 2015

Formally, leading up to 2016 US presidential election, on July 22nd, 2015 the foundation of Pepe the frog’s narrative had reversed when a meme was posted on 4chan from an anonymous

Malaysian creator, of Trump overlooking over the fence of US-Mexico border:



This trend has led to multiple articles such as the Daily beast’s “How Pepe the Frog Became a Nazi Trump Supporter and Alt-Right Symbol”. Which resulted in sustaining Pepe the frog as an alt-right movement icon and led to the usage of Pepe the frog by Donald Trump on September 9th 2016, when Hillary Clinton called Trump’s supporters supporters “Basket of Deplorables”:





The whole process which escalated Pepe the frog into a hate meme was also part of Trump's white supremacist supporters actions, self-proclaimed with the twitter name @JaredTSwift. According to (Nuzzi, 2016), speaking of @JaredSwift, claims "He told me there is "an actual campaign to reclaim Pepe from normies." Not only the usage of meme proves the mutation and blending is occurring solitary, but also simultaneously been used as an ideologicistic symbol to portray or convey their message. Here we can say that there is an unnatural human interference coherent with meme mutation which adds up to the model of how memes can also have human interference that can change the pattern or the nature of the meme itself.

Furthermore, @JaredSwift asserted that following up the creation of a so-called platform for memes called r9k, similar to 4chan; commenters derived and converted from a harmless populous normie (people that used superficially and for fun) into a Nazi Propaganda symbol. Additionally, r9k took on twitter since, it is a global platform and an easy network to reach Trump. It resulted in a chaotic media chaos when Republican consultant Cheri Jacobus, on January 7, sued Trump for defamation which resulted a huge Twitter backlash on her from Trump supporters overwhelmed her with Trump and Pepe memes, mostly incorporating explicit and sexually harrassment memes. The sanctity that white supremacists have turned the page on

Pepe goes beyond when @JaredSwif said. *“Most memes are ephemeral by nature, but Pepe is not,” @JaredTSwift told me. “He’s a reflection of our souls, to most of us. It’s disgusting to see people (‘normies,’ if you will) use him so trivially. He belongs to us. And we’ll make him toxic if we have to.”*

With accordance to the originality of Pepe the Frog face being traditionally relaxed and happy as seen in in the Boy’s club comic book, it is astonishing how the alt right movement chose the Smug pepe the frog face instead of its relaxed faced “Feels good man”. The selection of smug frog can be derived with the alt right movement motive of changing the narrative of the original Pepe the Frog’s narrative into smugness, with the intention of insinuating to the public the feeling of smugness, i.e. showing



excessive pride in their ideology and movement. From this point on, the narrative of and the context of Pepe the frog has changed which lead to be considered as hate icon from opposition’s side.

According to the elements of adaptation Dawkins’ (1976), Pepe the frog has self-replicated in altered form. These portrayed examples have signified the utilization of the Pepe the frog meme in an altered form because it has high adaptability and survival rate. Just as Dawkins (1976), stated the importance of rapid rate of cultural transmission, “Language seems to ‘evolve’ by non-genetic means and at a rate which is orders of magnitude faster than genetic evolution” (p.189). Here we can comprehend the importance of seeing Pepe the frog as a ‘Cultural Mutation’ going back and reflecting on Dawkins’ theory of memes. Relating genetic evolution to cultural evolution, in this case, memes like Pepe the frog, can self-replicate through

imitation (Dawkins, 1976). It is not only dependent on transmission. During propagation and self-replication, Pepe the frog has been subjected to blending into other memes such as Kermit the frog and has resulted in Kermit the frog to overtake Pepe the frog's populous throne since, Pepe the frog during the 2016 US election was viewed and declared as an official hate-symbol by the Anti-Defamation League.

#ImWithKer hashtag was trending throughout the social media to fight against the white racist Pepe the frog. In compliance with (2016, Nuzzi), Josh Marshall, the editor, and publisher of *Talking Points Memo* has stated (Tweet, 2016), *"I feel like the rest of us need to get behind a canonical pluralism frog to turn back the tide, re-appropriate what's been lost."*

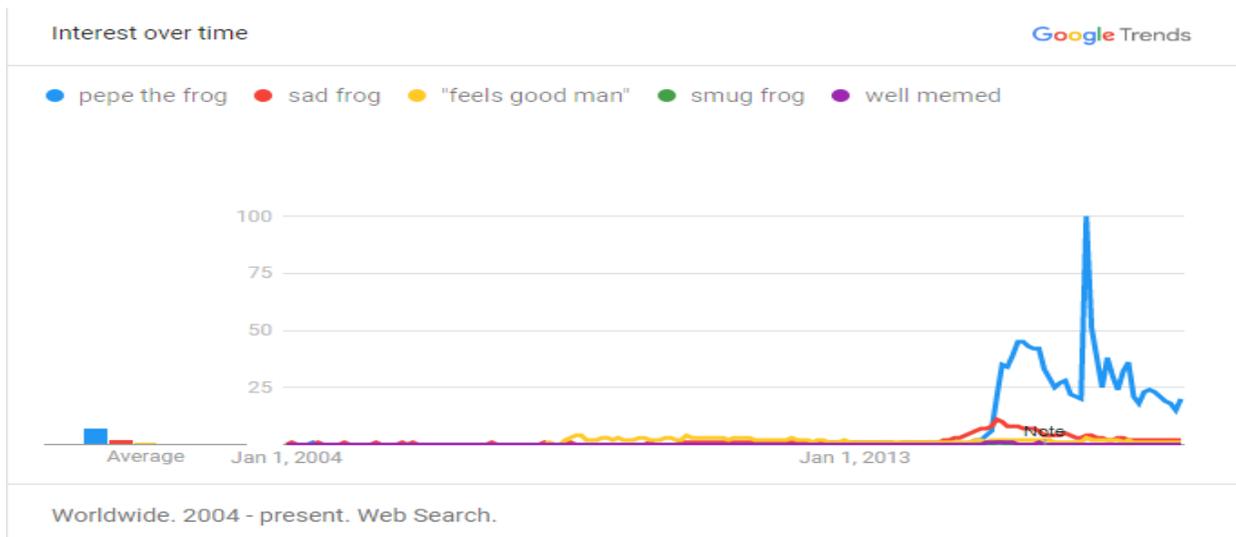
Marshall's viewpoint was to re-narrate the message from spreading hate symbol to love and fun.



7:02 PM - 2 Oct 2016



In the remaining part of my paper, I will elaborate more on the #ImWithKer in the Kermit case study part.



Compared to its other subsets of memes such as “sad frog,” “feel good man”, “smug frog,” and “well memed,” Pepe the frog meme has manifested its relevance in the meme pool even though it might seem that it is fluctuating at the end of the graph. It might not be visible into the eye, but according to the graph, the search interest peaked in September 2016 following up with the upcoming months of the elections.

Identically, Pepe the frog meme has instituted quite a Peircean triadic relation in its embedded meme pool by setting up the representamen, object and interpretant mode. However,

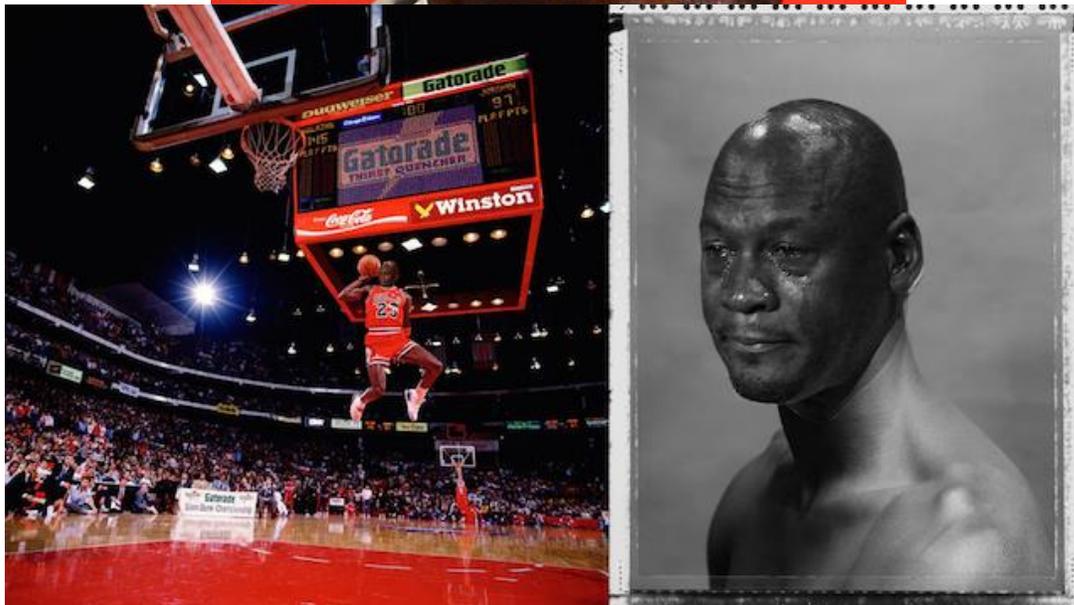
as Peirce stated that even an interpretant is a sign itself, thus it can lead to the creation of an endless number of memes which in this case are “sad frog”, “feel good man,” “smug frog,” and “well memed”, and inverted narrative Nazi meme which symbolizes antisemitism and alliance to Trump. Ultimately, Darwinian model heavily emphasizes on the importance of the interpretant since it is capable of mutating and reshaping the meme in any way it wishes and transmits it to the other host. The ongoing linkage between the interpreter and the meme can go for years, which in the case of Pepe the frog, we are witnessing how “interpreters” have changed the narrative of Pepe the frog through multiple platforms such as 4chan, r9k and many more. On the other spectrum, It is inarguably true that The implanted foundation as Pepe the frog has lodged its existence in the meme pool results back to the Darwinian theory of memes as genes which are always in the battle of survival of the fittest, if and only if it is capable of adapting and self-replicating. In order to prove its evidence of being self-replicatory, we saw in the examples as mentioned earlier of different sets of Pepe the frog incorporating with its implicit narratives.

2. Crying Jordan



Like manner, as we saw above the importance and impact of Pepe the frog on the internet, the next big moment to be captured happened to occur on September 11, 2009, during Michael Jordan’s speech during his Basketball Hall of Fame induction in Springfield,

Massachusetts. At that time, thoughtful gestures were portrayed on the internet until, April 23, 2012, when an Image macro, i.e., meme was created and titled “Sad Michael Jordan” was submitted by a meme creation generator called MemeCrunch, changed the sympathetic picture into a joke. Firstly, the narrative was changed into a reaction “to convey sadness in reaction to the defeat of their favorite team.” Subsequently, on November 7th, 2014, At30wecashout a member of the Coli Forums, submitted multiple crying Jordan memes infamously the “why did I buy the Bobcats”



In response from Michael Jordan to his own meme, his both sons Marcus and Jeffrey expressed their pleasurable reaction.

 **Marcus Jordan**
@HEIRMJ

I see the crying meme of my Dad is here to stay for **2016** 🙏

RETWEETS **2,129** LIKES **1,691**

6:46 PM - 24 Jan 2016

 **Jeffrey M. Jordan**
@HeirJordan13 Follow

😞😭😭😭😭 .@HEIRMJ

Marcus Jordan @HEIRMJ
I see the crying meme of my Dad is here to stay for **2016** 🙏

3:47 PM - 24 Jan 2016

90 Retweets 76 Likes

🗨️ 90 ❤️ 76

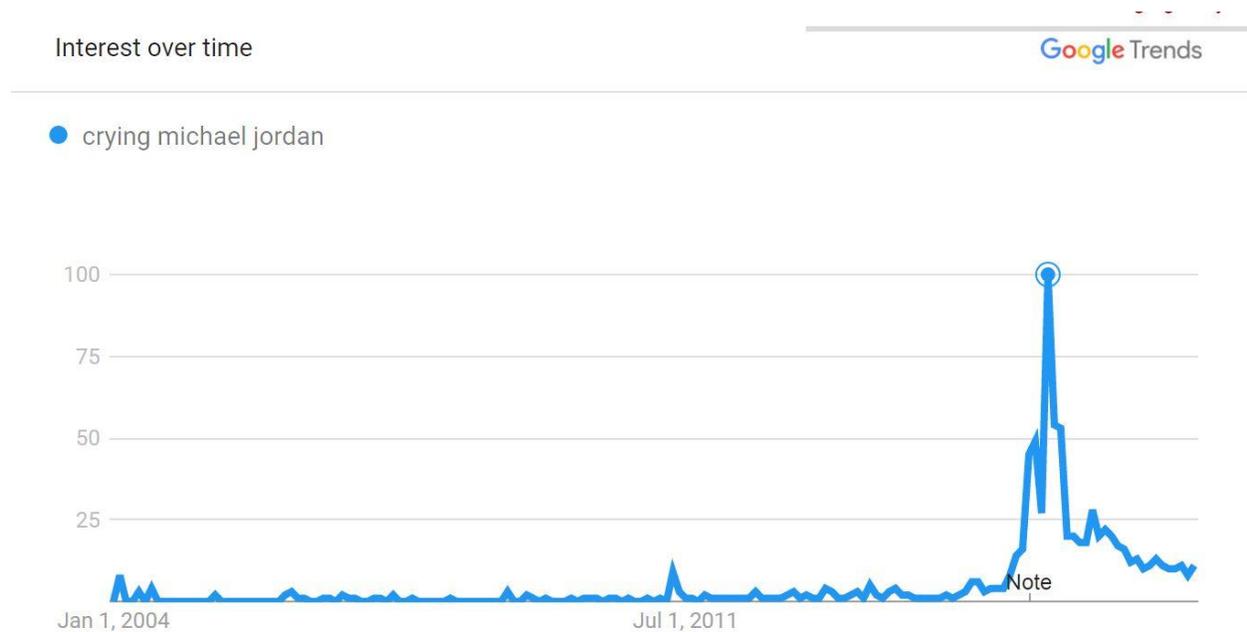
Although Michael Jordan himself did not mind seeing his memes as long as it is not used for commercial purposes according to (TMZ.2016), “Everyone seems to be having fun with the meme... We haven’t seen anyone using it to promote their commercial interests, which is

something that we're monitoring." However, according to an article published by The Washington Post, Michael Jordan has restated his opinion that he does not like the meme anymore (Boren, 2016). Yet again, the reason was not stated precisely, but probably it is because Michael Jordan pondered the meme is there to stay forever.

On the other spectrum, there is another side of the crying Jordan meme which dates back to 1984 summer Olympics. According to his previous Chicago Bulls teammate and former NBA player Sam Perkins, (Pandian, 2016), "*The original Crying Jordan meme happened during the 1984 Summer Olympics.*" Perkins elaborates the story of how their previous national basketball coach Bobby Knight, who is known for his vigilant, ruthless, and finding opportunities to belittle his players, can somehow legitimize the story. His comments made Jordan cry because of his bad performance during a game, but after all, he outperformed in the next games and contributed in bringing gold medals to his country.

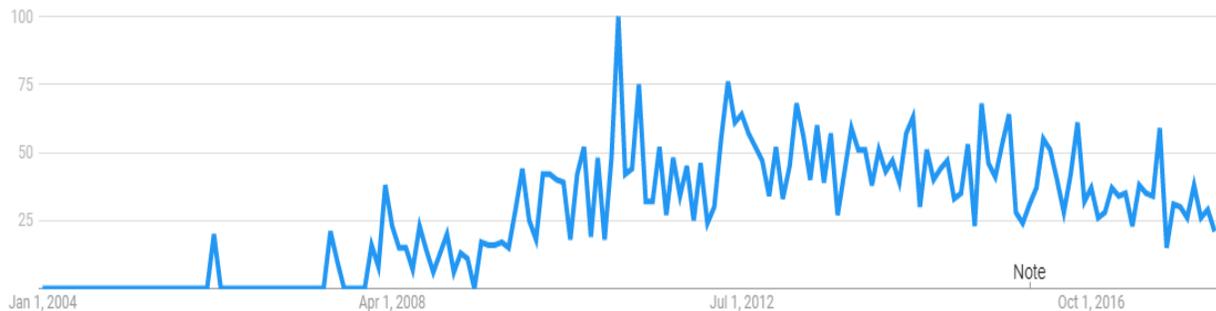
As much as the crying Jordan meme might seem overwhelming to Michael Jordan, just as (Dawkins, 1976) stated, if it has fought for the survival for the fittest, it is there to stay forever because of its high adaptability rate. There are multiple variables why Crying Jordan meme can be popular such as being funny, corny, relevant, and reflective. Although the most influential factor that made crying Jordan meme popular and replicative is because of its element of adapting several narratives that can reflect or relate to the facial expression that Jordan in the meme portrays. In this case, disappointing, pessimistic narratives can be applied on Crying

Jordan being that it is adaptable if it survived through time (Dawkins 1976).



The graph displays how the search rate was fluctuating in the beginning of 2004, due to the fact that Michael Jordan also had a similar crying incident during the 1984 summer Olympics. Furthermore, it was at the brink to peak in 2011 when the Crying Jordan meme got created. Alternatively, it peaked in April 2016, but kept declining and plateaued to 10-15 margin at the end of 2017 preserving its relevance. Not to mention we emphasized that it had templatic features where people can add and change the narrative of the meme. Thus it is still searched to be used for intended memetic purposes. Likewise, a similar meme “Dawson Crying” also kept a high relevancy rate in the past decade since multiple factors such as, the emotional sympathy

feeling makes the scene more reflecting to the observer, similar to the Jordan meme.



The graph has similarities to that of crying Jordan graph since it still has affirmed and kept its fluctuating trend over the years for having similar features as the crying Jordan meme.

3. Drake



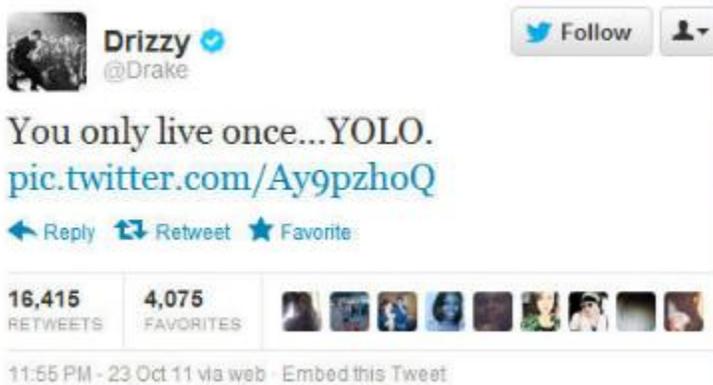
Notably, while discussing memes, it is undeniable to not explain Drake as a meme which can be aligned at the top relevant chart such as Pepe the frog. Unlike the aforementioned memes, Drake stands on its own when it comes down to the spread of his memes. Initially, there was not any drake meme in the beginning when he started his rap career in 2009. The turning point of his rap career into a “meme career” occurred when his music started perceiving as lame and sensitive which according to (Downs’, 2014), “*Drake's persona is incredibly corny.*”



It genuinely seems paradoxical, when it is a matter of asking yourself of why would I like this rapper when more and more memes are made of his famous music. Just like “Hold on We’re Going Home” where sad looking drake is sitting in a basket and folded like E.T. and says “ Just hold on we’re going home? Drake did not become meme-worthy, he took absolute advantage of him being a walking viral marketing campaign for the idea of being a “soft guy.” Realizing the social value of being a piece of content, Drake started and positioned him as an easy target for memes, where he began creating moments and situations to be captured that would ultimately attract the social media. An example of his actions can be justified by the lint rolling at the Toronto Raptors game (Desus, 2014).

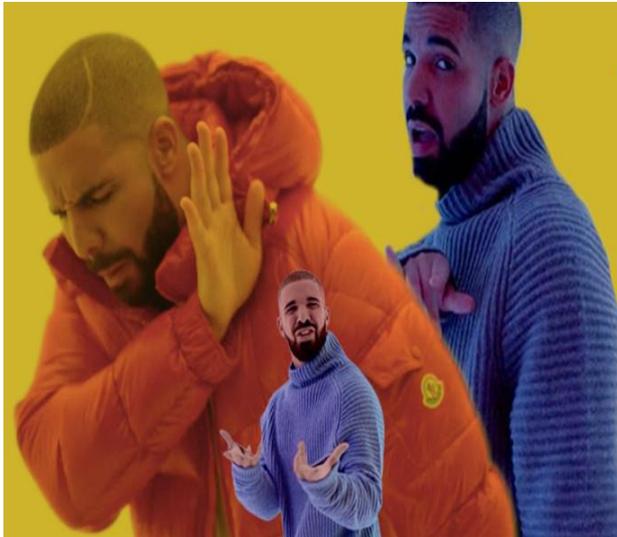


As a result, putting aside Drake’s self-promotion tactics, he’s meme nature comes down to him being famous of being a dork in expressing his feelings in most of his music while trying to establish a place in the hip-hop community. In the meantime, his songs seem “soft” and “relentless” compared to most hip-hop music. Certainly, his lyrics can be helpful in making him a meme character, but his notable “YOLO” phrase that was tweeted in 2011 sparked up as a very famous phrase for irresponsible actions or exciting scenes.



As shown above, we can understand the influence of Drake himself as generating himself into a meme can conclude that human interference is also a variable in making a meme go viral, despite the Darwinian theory where memes only propagate through self-replication and mimic.

Although Darwinian theory can be applicable in some of Drake's cases, where we can observe in "Drakeposting" memes:



The Drakeposting memes were spread on 4chan in January 2016 by a user called, after the release of the video "Hotline Bling" in 2015. Moreover, as the meme itself is going through a

cycle of editing and re-editing, Drake's influence from now on considering the same meme can be null since the Darwinian theory takes over as memes self-replicate to survive.

On the contrary, coming back to the notion that Drake everytime turns himself into a meme intentionally, is not always applicable when he posted a tweet on April 24th, 2016 of him dropping his album "Views from the 6 Cover Parodies", wherein return (since he is seen as meme), a Twitter user named "HeadphoneJones_" that morning created a meme of drake in an Ant-Man advertisement.



Adjacent to Drake's interference in becoming a meme, he is still devoted to becoming all-time meme figure just as his recent meme "God's Plan Starts Playing" which is a little catchphrase in

the song about the act of kindness. On February 24th, 2018, Twitter user

“@deliberatedaily” created a meme of drake hugging a person with a caption:

chipotle worker: "your change will be
\$2.25"

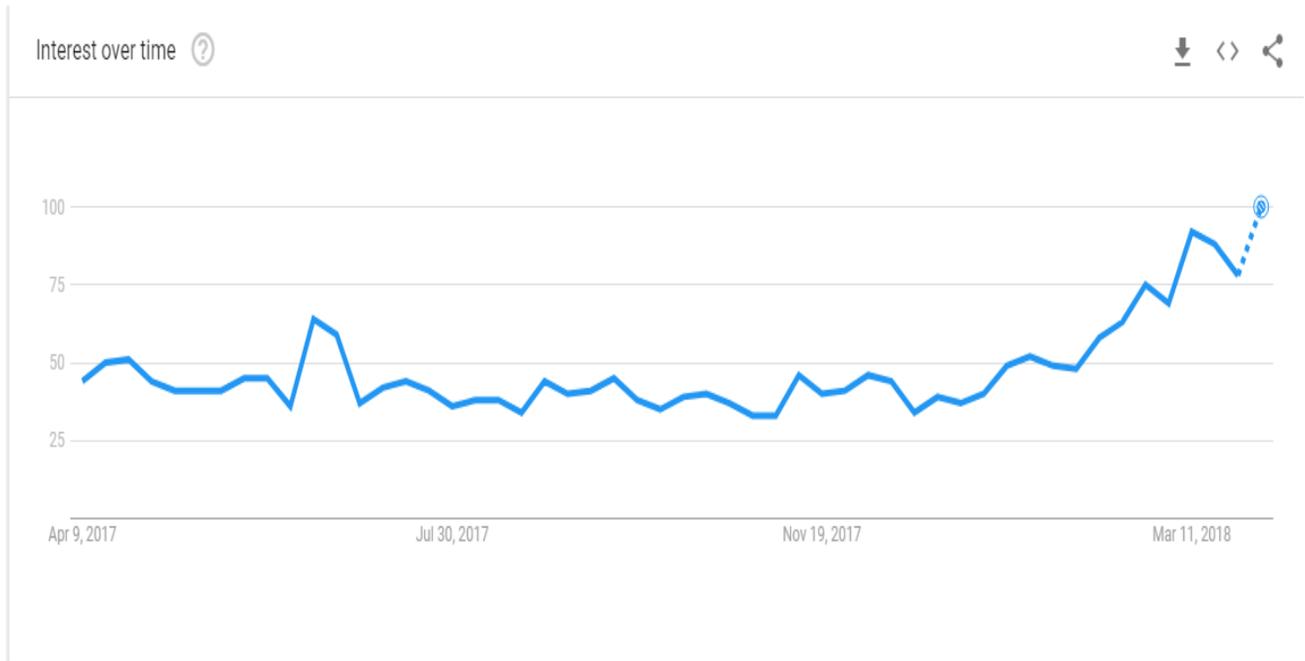
me: "you can keep it"

God's Plan starts playing



Consequently, As can be seen, the systematic progression of Drake’s input of self-promoting to becoming a popular figure changed him into a random narrative joke persona which is a result of

human interference at the beginning and spread through the Darwinian self-replicatory theory.



As seen in the graph of search interest of Drake memes, the graph has fluctuated during the year of 2017 but now it is projected to keep peaking until May 2018, during which in the beginning of 2018, he released the music video “God’s Plan” that increased his search rate. This all comes down to the fact that how drake himself can act as a virus that transmits into a new altered meme everytime. (Dawkin,1976), “*Memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically but technically. When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell...*”

4. Kermit The Frog

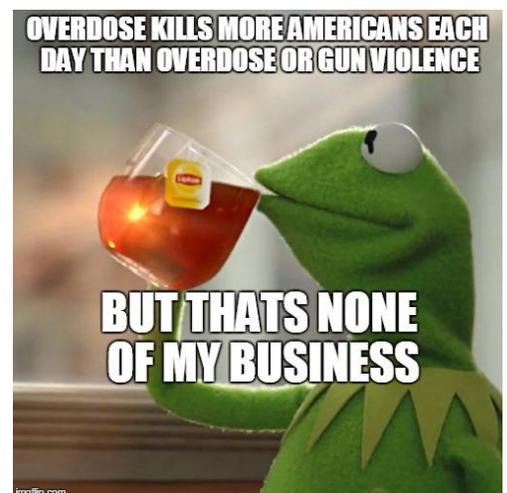


Discussing various relevant memes, Kermit the frog cannot be excluded in this section because of its attributes of dark humor and incorporating similarities with Pepe the frog. Kermit the frog was created by a puppeteer Jim Henson, for the American tv series “Sam and Friends” in 1955. Notably, the kermit the frog in another tv series “Sesame Street” was given the role of a news reporter. Since then Kermit the frog was appeared in 2011 “The Muppets.” However, in the meantime, Kermit the frog firstly got widely spread in 2007 as a reaction figure to “two girls one cup” YouTube video uploaded by AdamRayComedy and gained over 6 million views. Building up unto its hilarious, charismatic reaction figure thus it has been edited and self-replicated into

the creation of other memes featuring Kermit the frog such as the “ But That’s None of My Business”



Created on 17th of June, 2014, by an Instagram user @kermitbelikeWhere Kermit the Frog is sipping tea and not showing any intention of interest to any issues but still addressing the issue in a sarcastic manner. Such as the following picture displayed on the right. Of Course, the internet would not hinder the trend and came up with a hashtag #NoneOfMyBusiness in the following first four days that reached over 19,000 hits.



Additionally, another famous meme was created by a tweeter user @aaannnyyyyaaaa on November 6, 2016 which gained over 31,800 likes featuring Kermit the frog “Evil kermit” where Kermit the frog is “*talking with his nemesis Constantine dressed as a Sith Lord from Star Wars*” instructing him to commit unethical and selfish actions.

Me: "I'm sure there's a logical explanation for this"

Me to me: "Overreact."



From this point on, it got mutated into other forms of character with the same narrative featuring “Evil Miss Piggy” which was created by @meme.w0rld on November 17th.

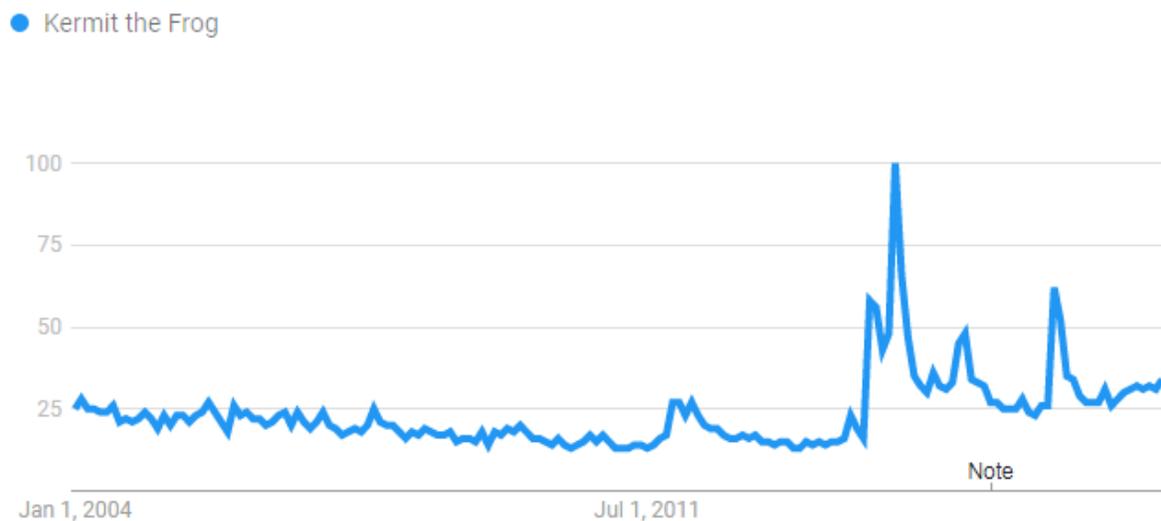
This mutation that we are observing concerning Kermit the frog similarly to the memes mentioned above has flexible attributes in being used in different narratives for each image. Dawkins (1976), stated “*The memes are being passed on to you in altered form...It looks as*

Me: Time for some self care this weekend.

Also me: Tequila shots.



though meme transmission is subject to continuous mutation, and also to blending” (p.195) This statement goes on to prove the impact of the original meme that propagates into other mutated memes and involves in creation in other memes which we can see for example, in this case, Little Miss Piggy Meme. In addition to Kermit the Frog’s memes, #ImWithKer was used as an alternative tool instead of Pepe the frog because Pepe the frog was considered to represent alt-right ideologies and semantics such as the image of Pepe being smuggy, representing their pride in their own alt right ideology that revolutionized the propagation of newer memes of Kermit such as Joel’s dad, Sad kermit and many more.



Worldwide. 2004 - present. Web Search.

Here in the above graph we can observe that even though it kept its consistency between 2004 and 2011, it ultimately peaked in 2014 when “ But That’s None of My Business” got created, However fluctuated till the present day at kept its relevance fairly consistent.

Other famous Kermit the frog memes:



“Sad Kermit”



“Confused kermit”

5. Distracted Boyfriend



Coming back to the series of recent memes, Distracted Boyfriend has taken over the meme world with its humorous and realistic elements, that more often nowadays. The Distracted boyfriend projects a man, checking out another girl while walking with his girlfriend, while the girlfriend notices and gives a disapproving facial expression. This meme is classified as an image stock, and was uploaded on iStock database on November 2, 2015. Although there is a huge dilemma where the picture was adapted as a meme. According to KnowYourMeme, the meme was spread on February 23rd, 2017 by a Turkish Instagram user named “@_dekhbai_”. However, a Tumblr article (August, 2017), “On the origins of the man checking out another woman meme; or, please

stop saying it originates from that Instagram post” debunked the falseness data of KnowYourMeme and proved that the meme was created way back in January 30th, 2017 by a Turkish Facebook group called “Siyasettin” which literally translates into “your politics” because the first original meme that was used by this stock photo was the below attached image



macro:

By the name of the Facebook group it is clearly obvious that the photo has political narrative which also corresponds to its Facebook group's name; "Your Politics". Furthermore, Distracted Boyfriend meme, or others call it "Man Looking at Other Woman" having its simplicity elements of having obvious facial expressions from both the boyfriend and the girlfriend empowers the meme to be simple and easily comprehensible, got mutated into a second famous meme, created by a Facebook User "Kaan" which was posted on January 31st, 2017, of Phil collins showing more interest in Pop music (which in this case is the woman walking by) while

his original genre which is prog music is disappointed at him (the girlfriend).



In addition, the instance that the Distracted boyfriend congregated mass attention was in February 23rd, 2017, when an instagram user “@_dekhbai_” remutated the photo into a different narrative “Tag That Friend / Who Falls in Love Every Month”, Which received over 28,500 Likes. Correspondingly, the ultimate mass attention that Distracted Boyfriend generated more attention than the “Tag That Friend / Who Falls in Love Every Month” narrative, was in August the publishment of two different image macros one submitted by twitter user “@n1m161” displaying how youth(which the signifier is the boyfriend) is more interested in socialism (which is



the passing woman) rather than capitalism (which the signifier is the girlfriend).

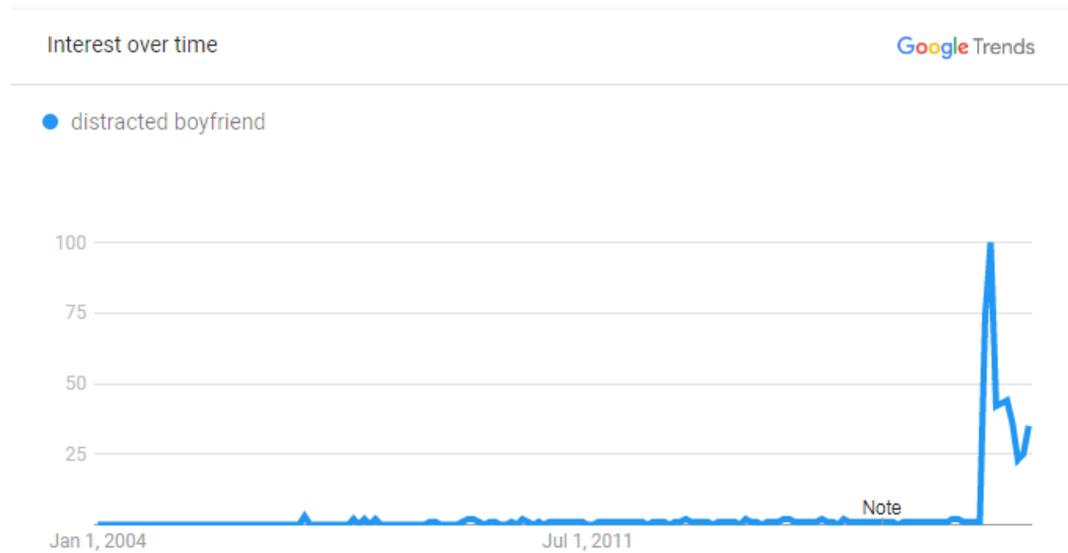


Whilst in the same month of August the second narrative which was adopted on this stock photo was the “2017 solar eclipse”, submitted by a Reddit user “danikger” in late August 21st, 2017.



Since the two memes “Tag That Friend / Who Falls in Love Every Month” and “2017 solar eclipse” were both published on August, thus rapidly increased the search interest of the

Distracted boyfriend meme.



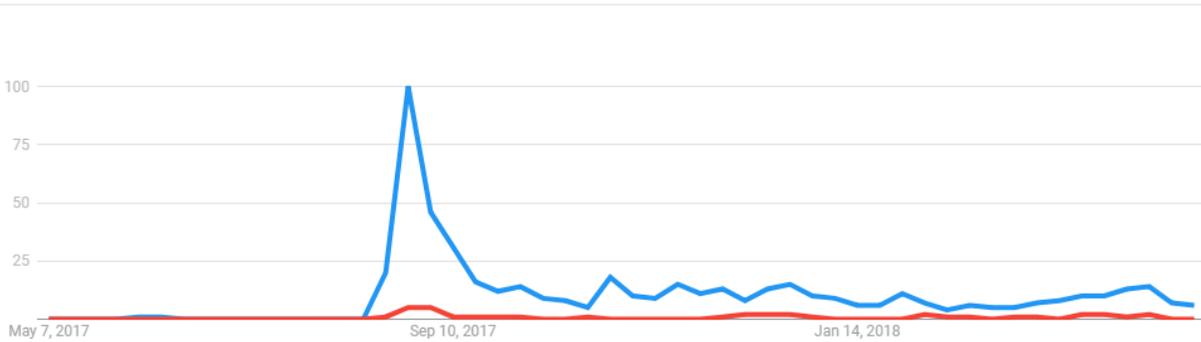
The peak, As displayed on the graph, was on August 2018 (because of “Tag That Friend / Who Falls in Love Every Month”, and “2017 solar eclipse”), although we can observe the fluctuation of the graph between August 2017 and April 2018, since the fluctuation occurred because of reversed and mutated narrative of a whole new meme into a newer one that was published on October 29th, 2017 (That is where the fluctuation happened in the graph) by Redditor named “toastr”. The meme incorporated a stock picture taken from Shutterstock database of reversed roles where the girlfriend shows interest to another guy while his boyfriend



shows his disapproval. Within 24 hours, this meme generated 92% upvotes on reddit.

However, as shown in the graph below, the Distracted girlfriend meme did not keep its longevity unlike the distracted boyfriend since the gender factor, played a huge role in signifying the message to the interpreter. As adopted by the society and by our common knowledge, we subconsciously have programmed to think that the male is the one who is the hunter-gatherer/breadwinner in nature, who is out to collect and as socially contractually known that women easily manipulate men. Therefore, by putting the female gender in the hunter-gatherer's position in the distracted boyfriend meme the narrative would not be clear, which resulted in not going viral like distracted boyfriend. In that matter, the distracted girlfriend lost its relevance in

the meme pool.



Furthermore, The distracted boyfriend meme has plateaued and kept its relevance as viewed in the graph, whereas the distracted girlfriend meme (in red line) only peaked by a fraction during the peak of distracted boyfriend but lost its relevance to a point where it is almost extinct. Also, another mutated meme was created showing a painting from 1800's, where a man shows his interest to another girl and his girlfriend or presumably wife, drags him away. The

I've found the 18th century equivalent to the distracted boyfriend meme



meme was called "18th-century equivalent" submitted on April 16th, 2016 by twitter user @ELXGANZA. All in all, the distracted boyfriend has affirmed its presence in the contemporary meme pool my succeeding in delivering its narrative concisely and evidently with having the proper facial

gesture, and the established gender roles to deliver the message.

6. Phelps Face



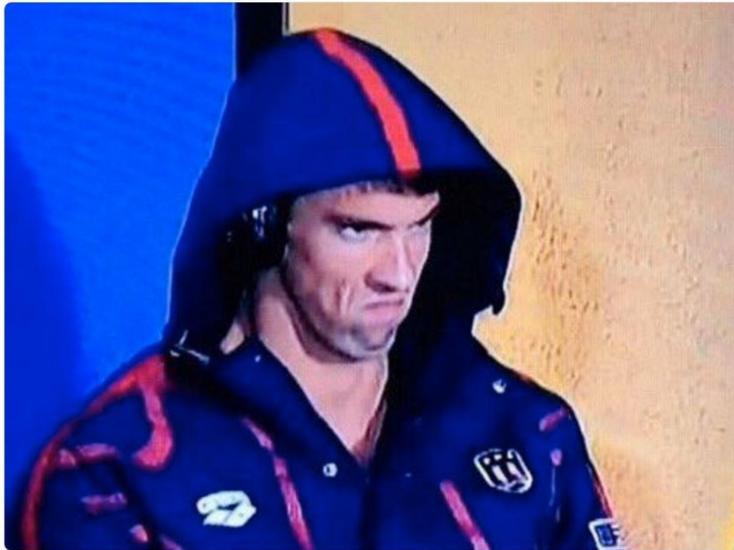
Sooner or later, after discussing the aforementioned relevant memes, the irrelevant memes also had an input in the meme pool with incorporating multiple factors on why they went extinct or did not have longevity like the other famous memes such as Pepe the Frog, Crying Jordan and others. Phelps Face is one of the prominent examples of an irrelevant meme. It was not that while ago that this moment took place. It was during 2016 summer Olympics, when Olympic gold medalist swimmer Michael Phelps during his preparation for the competition, looked somehow aggravated, which launched on twitter from that point, multiple image macros that incorporated feelings about being aggravated, sullenness, and resentment. For example,

@Emo_Anakin added a tagline, referencing star wars movie:



Emo Anakin
@Emo_Anakin

when obi wan and padme betray you
[#phelpsface](#)



Also, @xmasape took it to Twitter to share his piece of interpretation of the meme with referencing American-Canadian animated series Arthur:



Mike Tunison
@xmasape



Follow

ENHANCE



Of Course, for any viewer, Phelps' face seems agitated, but the truth has been spoken by Michael

Phelps' himself when he stated, (Hoffman,2016), *"I just had music going on in my head. I had*

thoughts going on in my head, spitting water a little bit all over the place, so I was in my own zone, i was not intentionally mean mugging him or giving him a dirty look”. Based on the reality behind his facial expression, which did not meet people expectation (which they thought he was angry or mad), Michael Phelps’ meme virality crashed upon his released statement because the viewers’ perception of the context came out false. There were some elements to the image of phelp’s face, such as the hood, covering up his head. Conveying the vibe of smugness and shadiness, which in result, contributed a huge factor in establishing it narrative, which in this case was being angry or mad.



Although the narrative was not what people thought it was, as seen in the graph, Phelps’ face meme peaked in August 2016 during 2016 summer Olympics and crashed instantly within a month as he spilled the beans about the reality behind his facial expression. Therefore, as we can perceive, by applying Saussure’s theory of signification (Baicchi, 2009), there was a distortion between the link of signifier and the signified, i.e. Michael Phelps face did not signify any smugness or sorrowness. From here we can conclude that because there was not a strong signification of the sign, the phelps’ face meme which in this case is the sign, lost its relevance entirely at a fast pace.

7. Cash Me Ousside / Howbow Dah



It is inevitable to not mention about Danielle Bregoli's epic moment during Dr. Phil Show that occurred on September 15, 2016, which went viral for only concise period, when her famous catchphrase, “Cash Me Ousside Howbow Dah” was verbally and memetically rephrased. Danielle, who was 13, during the show, was invited to Dr. Phil's show by her mom because of her misbehavior and rude attitude towards her and misconduct of stealing her car keys and money. Because of her unethical acts and referring the audience as “hoes,” the audience could not stop laughing about her ridiculous act for a 13-year-old. Followed Danielle to tell the audience to catch her outside after the show, presumably to fight with the audience. However, because of her thick accent, it came out as “cash me ousside howbow dah”, that made all the viewers to snigger and mimic her for the way she talks, as well as her ridiculous, rude act. Short after the broadcasting of the given Dr. Phil’s show, on October 2nd, 2016, Memecrunch posted an image macro of Danielle’s face with a tagline “Cash Me Ousside Howbow Dah.” Following until the beginning of 2017, this meme was still on the route of going viral but did not summit in popularity until when Danielle’s meme began to spread on Instagram and Facebook platforms. From that point on, there were other screenshots taken from Dr. Phil’s show which was the most

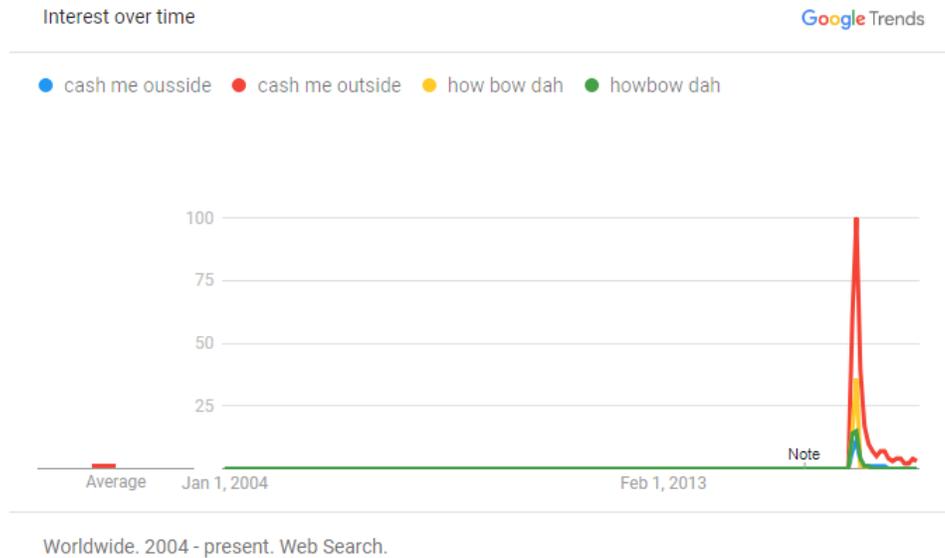
popular post got published on January 5th, 2017:

When somebody says "How about you save some Pizza for the rest of the group"

Facebook Memes



This mutated meme got over 75,000 shares and 14,000 likes. Beyond this meme, there were not any more mutated memes referring to the same image macro because the projected message and background image limit the mutation of the meme. Moreover, the phrase “CASH ME OUSSIDE HOWBOW DAH” was used overly by most millennials that it reached to a certain point that it was not funny anymore, since once a joke is used excessive its humor gets lost through time. According to (Jackson, 2017), “*when memes go mainstream it means they’re not funny anymore. Memes are just in-jokes between people on the internet, and everyone knows jokes are much less funny one you’ve explained them.*” Here in the published article by *The Atlantic*, we can see how memes labeled as jokes can get less funny when they go mainstream, which we can apply on Danielle’s case, where her meme got popular by its catchphrase which was constantly used as a joke, and by the analysis made by the Atlantic, a joke gets less funny and funny when it’s repeatedly used and explained since the catchphrase is hard to understand for some encounters. This excessive use of the catchphrase as joke caused a crash leading up to July 2017. Thus people lost interest in the catchphrase.



The trending graph of the meme justifies the short-lived meme of Danielle's catchphrase in the course of 5 months as the catchphrase “CASH ME OUSSIDE HOWBOWDAH” got somehow, lame. Here in an article Published by the Atlantic of how memes are similar to jokes explains the cycle that a meme goes through, once the context is gone. It's dead. *“Like jokes, memes are often asserted to be hollow, devoid of depth, but it would be foolish to believe that. Memes capture and maintain people’s attention in a given moment because something about that moment provides a context that makes that meme attractive. This might provide a more satisfying, but also more expansive, answer than simple boredom for why memes fall out of immediate favor. The context that makes a meme, once gone, breaks it”* (Jackson,2017). Likewise, any meme that generates popularity, (as we saw with Phelps’ face) is on the brink to crash once its context is gone since the context (signified) is the engine that drives empathy towards the meme rather than the icon or the symbol itself. Although, in some cases, we saw how the image played a huge role in preserving the longevity of the meme, such as Pepe the frog’s several memes of “That's none of my business” and “smug frog.” Once the link between the context and the image is embedded, from that point on, the meme is plausible to self-replicate

and preserve its relevance throughout time. It is evident that in the meme pool, the application of adapt or die is fundamental element to the existence of the any meme, but in Danielle’s case, which there were massive memes circulating around her and competing for existence, failed to survive and adapt to the meme pool. Furthermore, the extinction of Danielle’s catchphrase did not reduced her popularity as a character since, after all her dramatic act on Dr. Phil’s show, she continued to be in the center of public’s eye with causing multiple scenes such as her fight on an airplane and her getting into a fight with a girl on the street.

Following up with her dramatic acts, and the rising controversial popularity, she started a rap career, calling herself “BHAD BHABIE”, somehow signifying herself as a herocious little teenager that is bound to be the next hit with multiple Youtube rap videos such as “Hi Bich”, “Mama Don’t Worry,” and “Gucci Flip Flops”.

8. Wholesome Memes



Wholesome memes are not anything close to our known memes that reflect jokes associating with its template. Whereas wholesome memes, or in other words as some call it Empowering memes are subgenre of image macro in which the creators of these memes subverts

the audience's suppositions by using well known established meme templates and publishing them as supportive and caring sentiments instead of making the joke of the image associated with it.

This reverse in the narrative of the meme emerged on December 16, 2016. From Jonathan Sun, a doctoral student from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was purposive of changing the narrative of a traditional meme that we all know of. Sun, who was relatively suffering from anxiety and depression, who saw himself as the "sad Kermit" and realized that some might share his feelings too. With the intention of reversing the narrative, Sun challenged his 400,000 Twitter followers to turn a virtual punchline into a symbol of hope (Eadicicco,2017). Quickly, his followers starting tweeting, "When you remember how much someone loves you," "When you're so proud of how far you have come and excited for how far you have to go" and much more. Sun realized that his challenge resonated mass audience and said, "I make memes to explain my own feelings...And the fact that [this challenge] resonated with other people—I think it made all of us feel a little less lonely." Some examples of Wholesome memes:

Before and after you came into my life



When the light is green and the car in front is sitting there but you in a good mood



when you come home and you see your dog and they see you

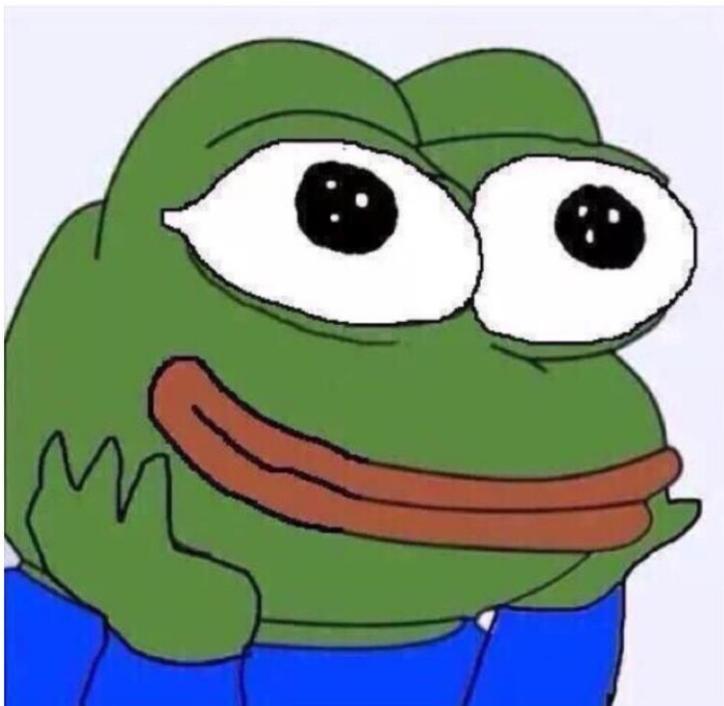


me when my friends need me vs my friends when i need them



Most of the Wholesome memes' spread kicked off after Sun's tweet having one of the most

When your crush posts a new picture.



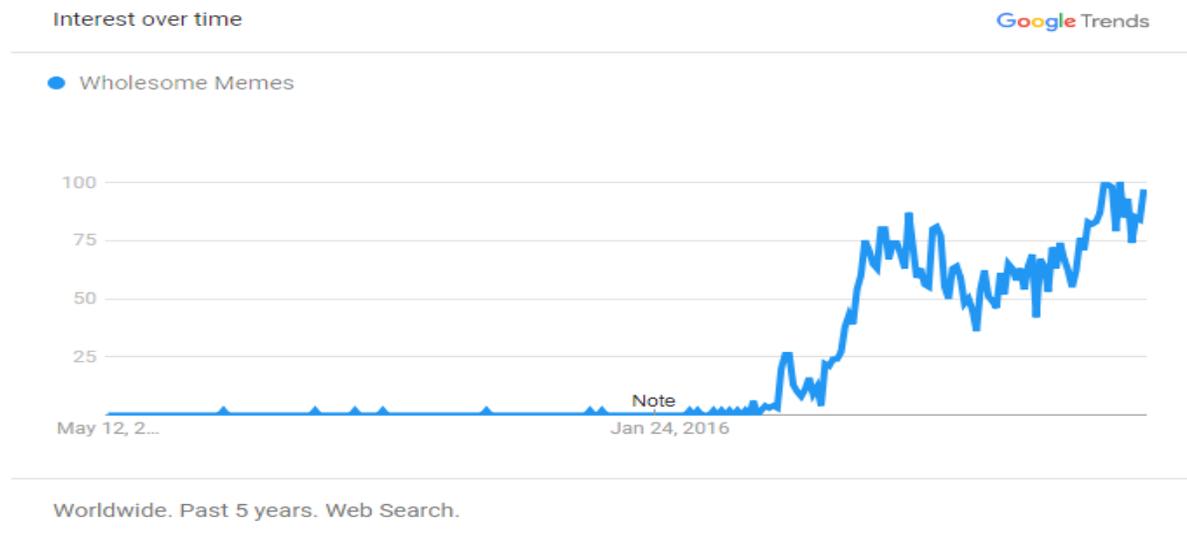
popular featuring Pepe the frog smiling with a tagline. "when your crush posts a new picture," the post generated over 144,000 notes:

According to (Eadicicco,2017), the emerge of wholesome memes was not only the spark given by Jonathan Sun, but these "uplifting memes is a direct response to the negativity of the 2016 presidential election, much of which played out online. For most of the past year, many people's social-media

feeds have been filled with vicious—and often misleading—commentary about partisan politics. "A lot of that has made the consumption of more positive emotions desirable," stated bt Dr. Pamela Rutledge, director of the nonprofit Media Psychology Research Center.

By looking at the graph situated below, we can understand how tremendously the increase of interest in wholesome memes is continuing to rise because just as Huffman, the CEO

of Reddit stated (2017), “Most people just want to get along, we don’t have to be angry all the time.”



Equally important to the projected narrative by the wholesome memes, with being situated now on the same level with most traditional memes, Cannizzaro (2016), asserts that “this transference is evidence that internet memes have been incorporated into a commercial culture associated with mass communication and broadcast media” (p.563). As for now, with having the graph as a proof with also Cannizzaro’s statement, even wholesome memes are getting popularized amongst online platforms and communities because it stimulates happiness with along promoting meme culture in general. Moreover, if seen from a Dawkinian perspective wholesome memes are viable for its self-replicate element and is keep mutating, but its also important to keep in mind that even if a meme is on its rise its always vulnerable to go extinct just as our genes, “*But as each generation passes, the contribution of your gene is halved. It does not take long to reach negligible proportions. Our genes may be immortal, but the collection of genes that is any one of us is bound to crumble away.*” According to Dawkins (1976, p.199). It has not proved yet that Wholesome memes are on the edge of going extinct because the graph shows otherwise. However, the same narrative that is projected is repetitive and might lose

interest of viewers over time. Since we are assuming that it might lose its relevance over time due to repetition of the same narrative, compared to the entire meme pool, it is comprised of almost 87.5% of entire memes because in the aforementioned graph, we can see it is peaking and fluctuates between 100 and 75 on a consistent trend, thus establishing its area in the meme pool.

9. 2016, US presidential memes

One of the most peculiar moments in US presidential election took place in 2016, where memes played a huge role in reshaping the views and the image of a candidate on a fast pace. There were multiple moments such as “Ken Bone,” “Trump Lurking Behind Clinton,” “Birdie Sanders” and many more, but in this section, I will only focus on these three memes that were part of 2016, US presidential election. In this case, the power that these memes generated was massive in the digitized world because everyone witnessed and got influenced by it. Furthermore, election memes were always intended to damage the image of a candidate but instead in (Ken Bone case) they found a way to cope with the overwhelming psychological torture that everyone is going through.

Ken Bone:



Ken Bone, who was classified as an undecided voter during the second debate of 2016 presidential elections came to the center of attention when he asked a question and directly to one of the candidates. It was not because of the question he asked which presupposed was about energy policies, but was more about his name and his appearance. Instantly he became very popular on social media and people started joking about Ken Bone, and he simply became a popular icon. As the debate finished, *New York Magazine* shared an article “*Meet Kenneth Bone: the Red-Sweater-Wearing Star of the Presidential Debate*” stating “A man named Kenneth Bone, whose vibrant red sweater, pure and earnest face, and enthusiastically delivered question about energy sources have boosted him to internet-celebrity status.” (Kircher, 2016) Putting a heavy emphasis on the sweater and the “earnest face,” resulted in trafficking mass amounts of popularity on his side. Furthermore, also CNN suggested that it is because of his red sweater glasses grew his popularity (Ahmed, 2016) whereas, Daily Dot theorized that it is because of “*his suggestive last name, mustache, and gentle aura*” (klee, 2016).

Massive popularity grew after the debate, resulted in creation and mutation of new memes such as: “We are all the crossroads” by tweeter user @Reflog_18



McNeil
@Reflog_18



Follow

We are all at the crossroads. #KenBone



Other mutated memes such as tweeted by @girlreallyrule:



Girls Really Rule.
@girlsreallyrule



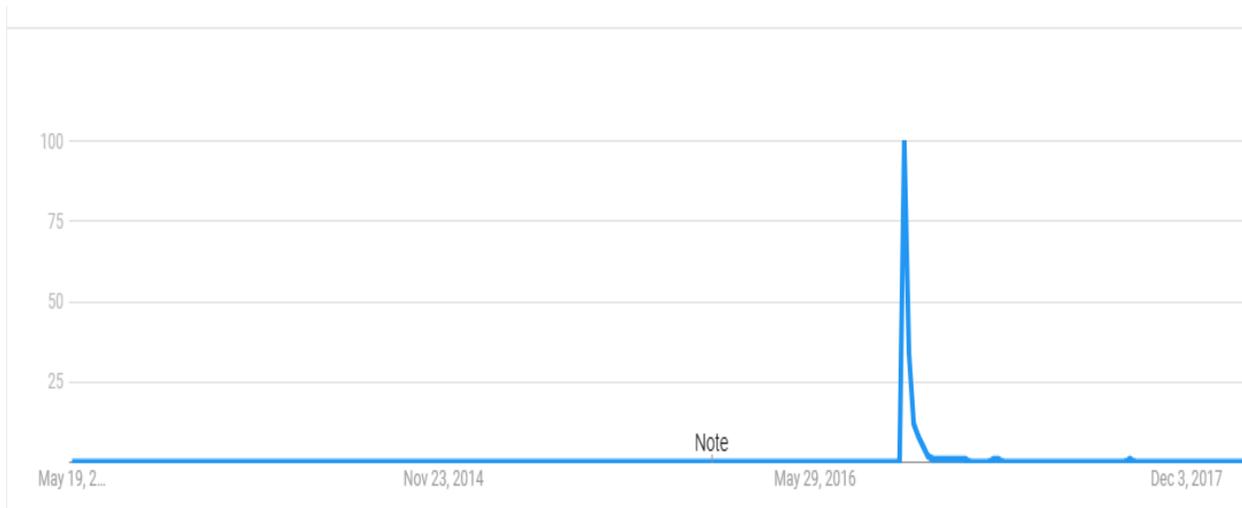
Follow

Watching #KenBone snap pics of a #debate 🗣️
set on his disposable
camera...#BetterAlternativesToDebates



These mutated, self-replicated as Dawkins claims, somehow transmitted from one to another as a parasitic virus, and parasitized the host's brain as an embryo into creating newer memes as we see above. Now the most crucial question is what was the reason of Ken Bone's instant spike of popularity? Is it because of his sweater, or because of his sweet facial expression? Just as CNN and the Daily Dot reported that both could have been a factor in escalating his fame status, I would say that everything around in the picture contributed a lot in

influencing on its popularity. If you were watching the second debate, the atmosphere inside the town hall was very stressful because of the heated debate between Trump and Hillary. As Ken Bone rose from his seat and wearing that eye-catching red sweater with a signified positive facial expression, he uplifted the tense mood that was already situated in the country. All his projected characteristics such as the red sweater, the 80's mustache, and being a bit chubby contributed to the rise of his popularity.



The graph itself displays how it only spiked during the night of the debate on October 16, but crashed within three weeks as November came, and the presidential elections finished. Eventually, it was apparent that the longevity of this meme was highly dependent on the time phrase which in this case, was the Presidential election, regardless the positives of the meme.

Just as I mentioned earlier, people found a way to cope with the overwhelming psychological torture that everyone is going through during the tense period of the elections, which in this case, was the memefication of Ken Bone.

Trump Lurking Behind Clinton



Sharing a common setting with Ken Bone's moment, during the Town hall debate, this captured image from the debate, as seen, it might signify that trump is lurking or stalking Hillary with his creepy staring eyes. During the debate, Twitter user @darth twitted a photoshopped parody image, of a horror movie "It Follows" with having Donald Trump Standing behind Hillary Clinton:



Subsequently, the next day, The Huffington Post, posted a short clip known as Supercuts, of Trump standing behind Clinton and in the background playing Jaw's movie (1992) Theme song:



Trump lurking Hillary meme is obviously not directed to belittle Trump for propaganda purposes, but more it's a way to create a humorous vibe to take everyone out of the tense moments of the elections. Just as (Hess,2016) stated, *“Not that memers have that thought in mind — they're more likely coping with the psychological torture of the campaign cycle with some comic relief, or just scanning the political landscape looking for a joke that will rack up followers and likes. It seems likely that debate prep will soon adapt to take memeability into account.”* Thereby, the memefication of the scenes by internet users, especially in this case, did not opt to criticize the other candidate.

Moreover, the meme obviously signifies lurky vibes if even if the scene wasn't converted into an image macro. Trump's stance and his facial expression, to most viewers, signifies horrific glance and ready to lurk at any moment. Hence the symbol, object, interpreter combination is established and resulted in a successful meme during the 2016 presidential election. Apparently, Google Trends does not have any data concerning this meme, but from my expectations, Trump

Lurking Hillary Meme lost its relevance due to not having high adaptability rate (not having templatic elements to customize the narrative however you want) and, just losing relevance by the time the election time phrase was finished. So just similar to Ken Bone's case, Trump lurking Hillary meme was just a temporary meme, but on the other hand did not have adaptability elements within.

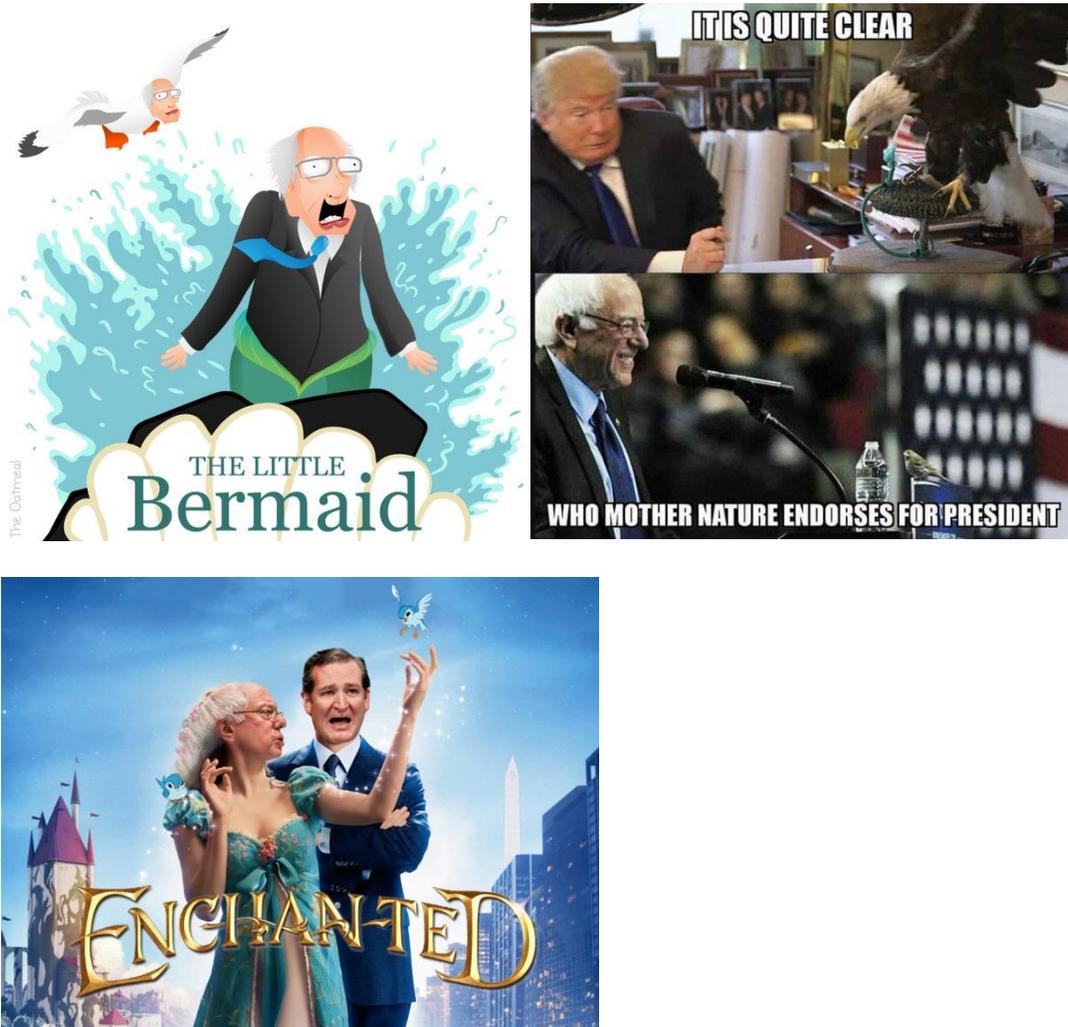
Birdie Sanders



Birdie Sanders meme, firstly went on the internet by a tweet made by Politico:



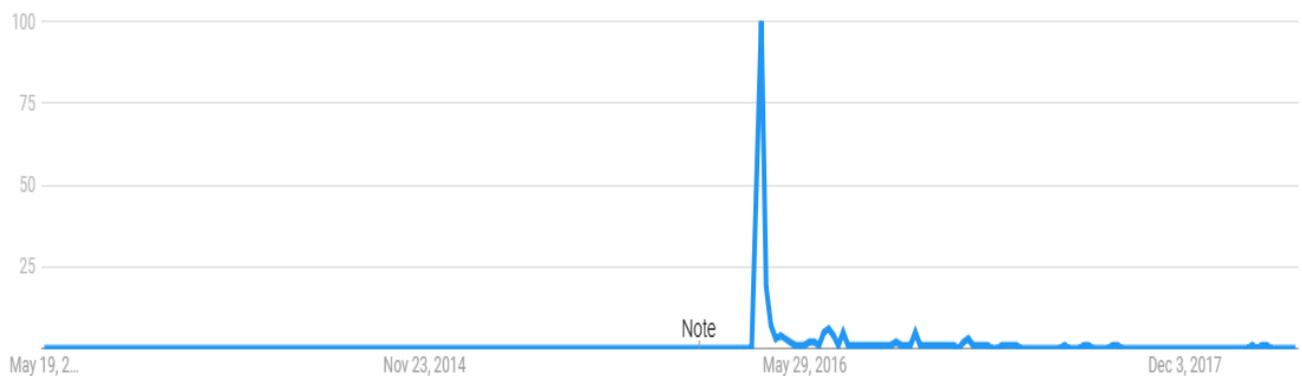
On March 25, 2016, moments later the bird came and sat on the podium facing Bernie Sanders. This video gained over 36,000 retweets and 45,000 likes in 2 days, by also trending a hashtag called #BirdieSanders. However this meme does not have specific original image macro because various users created a mutated version of this moment. Such as listed below:



Unlike the all mentioned memes that had static one image macro, while having mutated versions of it, Birdie Sanders just had multiple inputs of memes from various users which resulted different memes with different narratives. The bird itself played significant role in having different roles in each listed above memes. In the first one with the caption “THE LITTLE Bermaid” the bird is iconized as birdie sanders. Following up with the second meme where

Trump almost gets attacked by the eagle, whereas with Sanders, the bird simply stands there peacefully, insinuating that even Mother Nature knows who is fit to be president. And lastly in the third one, Enchanted movie cover was used and replaced with Ted Cruze's and Bernie sanders while Sanders holding the bird, and freaking out Ted Cruz who was a candidate for the opposition party. Thereby here we can realize the different channels that the message is being narrated to the observer but not losing its track on endorsing sanders' legitimacy for becoming a president.

Similarly to the other 2016 Presidential memes, it lost its relevance very fast as the month of elections got closer.



All in all during the 2016 US Presidential election, the spectators themselves performed as well as a mechanism of sharing overwhelmed feelings during the tense moments, such as we saw how they grasped on Ken Bone's moment, similarly the lurking trump meme with both not having any political narrative, just humorous and entertaining act instead of propaganda, and PR. Although in Birdie Sander's case, we saw a different outcome which was highly politicized and used to push his political agenda forward, unlike the remaining aforementioned memes. It is

evident that Bernie Sanders used that instance to promote himself, with an official campaign poster launched after that instance:



In Sanders' case, since that instance did not have any original meme, he was successful in executing it in his favor to promote himself. Despite the fact that Bernie Sanders was not included in the debate memes, according to (Hess, 2016), "Debate memes were campaign opportunities." Hence both Trump and Hillary got some sort of empowerment but keeping in mind on how people's reaction to the memes narrative as funny and humorous played the more significant role than just granting the candidates the chance to promote themselves.

Conclusion:

As a final point, after conducting my everlasting research about memes, which till the present day are continuing to mutate and change their structures, have proved a focal point from both semiotics and Darwinian perspectives that most memes at the end of the day are vulnerable to be transient. Even though delving deep into memes such as Pepe the frog and Kermit the frog, they proved that their survivability status is highly dependent on their adaptability rate and based

on their several narratives, unlike Phelps' face where the signified narrative came out false. Thereby we can conclude that the memes that did not meet their signified narrative according to their projected symbol failed to adapt to the meme pool. But even so having templatic elements within them is essential, we understood that it is as important the signification of the symbol parallel to the narrative where we saw the case of the distracted boyfriend of how gender roles can have a significant impact on the longevity of the meme. As has been noted, the happy emotions that wholesome memes created same as the US presidential memes, are viable to exist to some extent in case of us presidential memes, but for wholesome memes are succeeding compared to any other aforementioned memes, but as I stated before, there is a high chance of crashing. Although CASH ME OUUSIDE meme lost its humor in a short period, but in case of Drake as we see him as a meme himself, he positioned himself as an easy target for memes, to ultimately attract social media. Lastly, I want to note that not everything is eternal because there are always contributing factors in any kind of meme to effect on its longevity. Without saying that I have come to the end of my research, I would leave room for further research to build upon my capstone, since everything in life is inconsistent and vulnerable to change drastically, especially, in this case, which is memes.

Bibliography

Adam (2016), Know Your Meme, Ken Bone

Retrieved from: <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/ken-bone#fn3>

Adam, (2017), Know Your Meme, *Wholesome Memes*

Retrieved from: <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/wholesome-memes#fn2>

Ahmed, S., (October 10, 2016), CNN, *And the winner of the presidential debate is... Ken Bone,*

Retrieved from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/10/politics/debate-ken-bone-staring-man-trnd/index.html>

Baicchi, A. (2009). SIGNS AND SEMIOTICS. In Chapman S. & Routledge C. (Eds.), *Key Ideas in Linguistics and the Philosophy of Language* (pp. 205-209). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g09vvm.75>

Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of Semiology*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang

Boren, C., (May 12, 2016), The Washington Post, *Know who doesn't like the Crying Jordan meme? Michael Jordan.*

Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2016/05/12/know-who-doesnt-like-the-crying-jordan-meme-michael-jordan/?utm_term=.be12d065df6c

Cannizzaro, S. (2016). Internet memes as internet signs: A semiotic view of digital culture *Sign Systems Studies*

Davison, P. (2012). The Language of Internet Memes. In Mandiberg M. (Ed.), *The Social Media Reader* (pp. 120-134). NYU Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzq5m.13>

Dawkins, R., (1976). Memes: the new replicators, *Selfish Gene*. New York: Oxford University Press

Diverse, (April 23, 2016), Crying Jordan, *Know Your Meme*

References:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/crying-michael-jordan#fn6>

Don, (2016), Know Your Meme, *Evil Kermit*,

Retrieved from:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/evil-kermit>

Downs, R., (May 4,2014), Noisy, *Understanding Drake's Meme Appeal*, VICE

Retrieved from:

https://noisy.vice.com/en_us/article/rq5e7r/understanding-drakes-meme-appeal

Eadicicco, L. (2017). *How the Internet Is Getting a Little Nicer, One Meme at a Time*. Time, 189(23), 19-20.

Edwards, P. (July 26, 2015). The reason every meme uses that one font, *Vox*.

Retrieved from: <https://www.vox.com/2015/7/26/9036993/meme-font-impact>

F., Y, (2007), Know your Meme, *Drake*

Retrieved from:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/people/drake>

Hess, A., (November 4, 2016) Memes, Myself and I: The Internet Lets Us All Run the Campaign, *The New York Times*

Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/arts/memes-myself-and-i-the-internet-lets-us-all-run-the-campaign.html>

Hoffman, A., (August 16, 2016), TIME, *Michael Phelps Explains What Was Really Going on With His Iconic Phelps Game Face*,

Retrieved from:

<http://time.com/4455032/rio-2016-olympics-michael-phelps-face-2/>

Klee, M., (October 10, 2016), *The Daily Dot*, *The real winners of the 2nd presidential debate: Ken Bone and the Fly*

Retrieved from: <https://www.dailydot.com/unclick/kenneth-bone-and-fly-win-second-debate/>

Kim, B., (2017), Know Your Meme, *Birdie Sanders*

Retrieved from: <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/birdie-sanders#fn2>

Jackson, M., (December 7, 2017), The Atlantic, *A Unified Theory of Meme Death*

Retrieved from:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/12/a-unified-theory-of-meme-death/546866/>

Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable media: i media tra condivisione, circolazione, partecipazione*. SantArcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli.

Khan, I., (April 12,2015), 4chan's Pepe the Frog is bigger than ever—and his creator feels good, man, *The Daily Dot*

References:

<https://www.dailydot.com/unclick/4chan-pepe-the-frog-renaissance/>

Kim, B., (2017), Know your Meme, *#PhelpsFace/Angry Michael Phelps*,

Retrieved from:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/phelpsface-angry-michael-phelps>

Mukarovsky, J. (1976). *On Poetic language*. Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press.

Manson, R., (August,2017), Tumblr, *On the origins of the man checking out another woman meme; or, please stop saying it originates from that Instagram post*,

Retrieved from: <https://memedocumentation.tumblr.com/post/164625266690/on-the-origins-of-the-man-checking-out-another>

Nuzzi, O., (May 26,2016), How Pepe the Frog Became a Nazi Trump Supporter and Alt-Right Symbol, *Daily Beast*,

Retrieved from:

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-pepe-the-frog-became-a-nazi-trump-supporter-and-alt-right-symbol>

Pandian, A., (August 11, 2016), The real truth behind Michael's 'Crying Jordan' meme is finally revealed, *CBS SPORTS*,

Retrieved from:

<https://www.cbssports.com/nba/news/the-real-truth-behind-michaels-crying-jordan-meme-finally-revealed/>

Peacock, R., (2014), Know Your Meme, *Kermit The Frog*,

Retrieved from:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/kermit-the-frog>

QuesoFrogger, (2014), Know Your Meme, *But That's None of My Business*,

Retrieved from:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/but-thats-none-of-my-business>

Scannell, P. (2007). *Media and communication*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Zed, T., (2015), Pepe The Frog, *Know Your Meme*,

References:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/pepe-the-frog>

Schimkowitz, M., (2017), Know your Meme, *Distracted Boyfriend*,

Retrieved from: <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/distracted-boyfriend#fn1>

Schimkowitz, M., (2017), Know Your Meme, *Cash Me Ousside / Howbow Dah*

Retrieved from:

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/cash-me-ousside-howbow-dah>

Smith, I. (2017). Conclusion: Reflections on the Hollywood Meme. In *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema* (pp. 143-149). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g04zqr.10>

