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a journal of undergraduate nonfiction



2022

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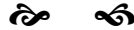
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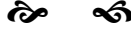
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MEDIA AND SOCIETY





MEDIA DEHUMANIZATION OF IMMIGRANTS

by Liam Done

Immigration and immigration policies are a flashpoint of American politics that always seems to generate a strong opinion one way or the other. The media and communications professionals in this country have taken advantage of the sensitivity of this issue to generate sensationalist headlines to draw in readers and sell newspapers. Journalism is a public trust and responsible journalism should strive not for sensationalism, but instead to portray the crisis from the point of view of the people involved by telling their stories. Dehumanizing immigrants, making them ‘alien’ and ‘illegal’, does nothing to resolve the crisis and instead sets them apart as inhuman and not worth our time. Many scholars have performed research that draws a definitive line between media word choice, photo framing techniques, and overall story tone to public opinion on immigration. The media does dehumanize immigrants through both text and images and this does affect how Americans feel about immigration. This blatant dehumanization poses a huge problem as it negatively affects policies towards immigrants and, in turn, immigrant attitudes toward society.

In her essay on the treatment of undocumented children, *Tell Me How It Ends*, Valeria Luiselli denounces the media’s portrayal of immigrants and the dehumanizing

words they use to describe undocumented children. Luiselli starts early in her essay criticizing media coverage and their terrible depictions of immigrant children. As the child migrant crisis starts to unfold she talks of gathering newspapers and searching radio stations for any news. According to Luiselli, “In varying degrees, some papers and webpages announce the arrival of undocumented children like a biblical plague” (15). As the story goes on, Luiselli begins to question why news coverage has boiled the crisis down to a political problem. She points out that “Few narratives have made the effort to turn things around and understand the crisis from the point of view of the children involved” (Luiselli 44). Instead they are viewed as a problem, a hindrance, an issue that our government must *suffer* through. The issue comes to a head for Luiselli near the end of the book when she analyzes the news headlines and looks at the individual words they are using in the headlines and editorials to describe the crisis. She is suitably disgusted. “The italics are mine, of course, but they underscore the less-than-subtle bias in the portrait of the children: children *caught* while crossing illegally, laws that *permit* their deportation, children who come from the *poor and violent towns*. In short: barbarians who deserve subhuman treatment” (Luiselli 84). Note the negative words *caught*, *poor*, and *violent* in reference to the children and the place from which they came, but the positive word *permit* when talking about deportation laws. This is just a small example of the power of words when it comes to conveying implicit bias about child immigration. In fact, Luiselli even dislikes the word “immigrants” as much as she dislikes the words “illegals” or “undocumented minors” when it comes to describing these children. Instead, Luiselli reminds us that they are actually “refugees of a war,” a global war on drugs that has fueled this level of hemispheric instability (86-90). In short, word choice is important as are labels. Journalists should carefully study the word choice in their articles and make sure they are not applying dehumanizing labels or negative words to immigrant populations in fact-based pieces. Luiselli encourages media professionals and the government to “...rethink the very language surrounding

the problem and, in doing so, imagine potential directions for combined policies” (86-87).

Athanasia Batziou takes a related path and focuses on photojournalism and the negative framing techniques media and communications professionals use for immigrant photos. Like Luiselli, she found that “Media representations play a crucial role in the way media users construct a sense of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, ‘foreigners’ and ‘citizens’, ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’, ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Batziou 42). It is interesting how she, like Luiselli, also notices the use of key words that are negative versus positive when describing the citizen population in-group and the immigrant population out-group. One interesting and far reaching discovery of Batziou’s literature review is that most of the population she surveyed in Greece and Spain had never had any personal experience with immigrant groups. Yet, they had very negative attitudes towards immigrant groups blaming them for crime, unemployment, and other social problems. The extent of their exposure to immigrants, in fact, was through the negative portrayals in the media (Batziou 42). Batziou went on to perform a photo study that looked at framing techniques used by photojournalists. She found that the majority of immigrants appear without any expression, making them appear distant and less human. In most of the photographs no attempt is made to create a relationship between the subject and the viewer, allowing the audience to study the subject from a safe distance. The preponderance of the photographs show the immigrants in groups. This makes the reader think of them as a collective out group and not individuals. Many of the photographs are taken from further away. This makes them look distant and alien. The majority of the photographs only show the immigrants with other immigrants. Whenever anyone else is in the picture it is an authority figure like a policeman. This frames them like they are not part of society (Batziou 47-55). In short, photojournalists are also to blame for spreading negative immigrant stereotypes. Batziou finds this reprehensible as visual depictions of immigrants in news sources are more likely to be accepted as factual and undoctored (42). Also, images are more often ‘read’ than the

text as many people quickly skim the news. Responsible journalists should take a moment to think about what the photos that accompany their articles are telling the reader.

The research of Esses et al. pulls this together and draws a definitive line between dehumanizing media coverage of immigrants, public opinion, and government policies regarding immigration. During their literature review they found that “Over the course of the past 10 to 15 years, portrayals of immigrants and refugees in many Western countries have become increasingly negative, with the media focusing on the threats that immigrants and refugees pose to members of host societies” (Esses et al. 520). In fact, they found that 71% of all stories on immigration that they analyzed during their literature review were negatively focused on problems (Esses et al. 520). In order to show the causal effects of these negative media portrayals they performed laboratory research to show how these stereotypical portrayals affect public opinion. They modified editorials and political cartoons so that one was fact-based and one contained negative immigrant stereotypes: they carry disease, are trying to cheat the system, and may be harboring terrorists. They discovered that participants responded with contempt and a dehumanizing view of immigrants after they viewed the editorials and cartoons that contained the immigrant stereotypes. In short, yes, media portrayals do change public opinion. The researchers concluded by issuing a call to arms for governments to “do a better job of communicating with the media about immigration, providing information that reduces uncertainty and countering potential public perceptions of threat that are currently prevalent in the public discourse” (Esses et al. 532). This highlights the role of both the government and the media in promoting responsible discourse about immigration and shows a potential solution for ending the vicious cycle of dehumanization.

Having proven through multiple studies that negative media portrayals of immigrant populations does lead to their dehumanization, the research done by Kteily and Bruneau takes this one step further and highlights how

the vicious cycle of immigrant dehumanization leads to more negative outcomes. This expands on the findings of the previously discussed research and looks into not only the negative impact of dehumanization on public opinion and policy, but also the negative impact of how the dehumanized immigrants view their oppressors. They performed four studies. The first two studies of Muslim and Latino populations found that Americans do dehumanize immigrants with their support of aggressive policies against immigrants like the Muslim travel ban, mass deportation, and the building of the wall at the southern border. Two additional studies performed by Kteily and Bruneau show that this dehumanization is felt by immigrant populations and in turn makes them feel like they are not a part of society, more emotionally hostile, more likely to support violent collective action, and less likely to cooperate with law enforcement. In other words, they are likely to hold more negative views against their oppressors and do not feel invested in society. The conclusion of the researchers is that, "...dehumanization has dual and mutually enforcing consequences for the prospects of intergroup conflict: Those who dehumanize are more likely to support hostile policies, and those who are dehumanized feel less integrated into society and are more likely to support exactly the type of aggressive responses that may accentuate existing dehumanization perceptions" (Kteily & Bruneau 102). Dehumanization of immigrants and the policies generated to support that dehumanization actively increase issues of intergroup conflict vice leading to greater safety. This reveals that the policies that are being promoted to make America safer, and the accompanying dehumanization used to promote them, actually have the net effect of making us less safe.

As evident in these vivid examples and extensive laboratory research, the link between media dehumanization of immigrant populations, negative public opinions, and oppressive government immigration policies is clear. Luiselli, Batzou, Esses et al., Kteily, and Bruneau highlight a problem that is not even close to being resolved. Though Luiselli's daughter asks her repeatedly, "Tell me how it

ends, Mamma,” there is no ending yet (Luiselli 90). The least that responsible media and communication professionals can do is remember that they hold the public trust. Words matter. Images matter. The overall tone of an article matters. Cast a critical eye on common government and media portrayals of immigrant populations, challenge labels and stereotypes, and strive for a more balanced personal view of the situation. Tell immigrant stories. Frame their photos in a way that they connect with the audience, smiling or laughing, their face visible. Take time to humanize them and show them integrated with other members of society. As Luiselli says, “Telling stories doesn’t solve anything, doesn’t reassemble broken lives. But perhaps it is a way of understanding the unthinkable” (69). Perhaps it is a way to change the course of public opinion, humanize the immigrants in question, and find ways to include balanced policies on immigration in our system that benefit rather than harm our society.

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RACE AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE

by TJ Arnold

Racism in the United States not only exists, but it persists. Despite the best efforts of those trying to quell this problem in our society, there are still outlets in existence for it to thrive, in both the individual and structural level. In fact, they present in a cyclical nature, where the existence of structural racism encourages the behavior from individual racism, and the behavior from individual racism enforces the pre-existing structural racism. It is a dark cycle that feels impossible to break, and one that affects people of color harshly and dangerously.

Structural racism deeply affects most parts of society. From jobs to education to housing, it has a longstanding grasp on America. Ta-Nehisi Coates, a journalist with a focus on cultural, social, and political issues, talks intensively about the reparations Americans can make to repay the years of structural racism that African Americans have faced. One specific instance he details is the problem with housing and redlining. In the development of cities and loans, banks often felt as though it was a higher risk to give loans to people of color, and so they were often left out of the housing market and forced to find other, more predatory ways to gain a home (Coates, 2014: par. 18). One of these predatory tactics that many African Americans fell victim to was housing contracts,

which was similar to renting, but with all the struggles and responsibilities of home-ownership. This was the result of structural racism relating to housing and finances in America. There were barriers set up to prevent them from advancing with the rest of society that have been reinforced continually. Housing, however, is not the only barrier that people of color are facing in terms of structural racism.

Angela Davis also talks about structural racism with regard to the prison system in the United States. Davis is a political advocate who focused her life on speaking out against racism in the US. Built off of decades of history, the prison system has been effectively called the ‘prison industrial complex’ due to the relationships formed between governments and people in positions of wealth and power (Davis, 2003). The longtime targets of the prison industrial complex— people of color. Due to the length of time that the prison system has existed in the United States, and the laws that it has lived through, there are many spaces for structural racism to exist: the war on drugs, ‘race-blind’ laws, and suspect profiling (Davis, 2003: 245). None of these structures exist in a bubble. Rather, they feed off of one another, encouraging the persistence of individual racism as well.

The structural racism within the prison system is fed by the forced poverty of African Americans, a result of structural racism within financial fields and housing limitations. Poor communities of people of color exist due to the job inequalities. Job inequalities focus on stereotypes of people of color thanks to the structurally racist profiles of criminals from the prison system. It is a cycle that feeds itself. As individuals, we do no better in resolving it.

Robert Merton, an American sociologist, presents two types of individuals that enforce racism in different ways: the fair-weather liberal and the all-weather illiberal (Merton, 1976: 122-123). The fair-weather liberal is an individual who does not hold any prejudices towards people of color, but might not have the footing to enforce those beliefs, and rather, conforms to the structural racism set out in front of them (Merton, 1976). For example, following the housing situations previously mentioned, a fair-weather

liberal working in a bank might not allow a person of color to receive a loan, despite meeting all qualifications, simply because of the structures set in place. While this is an act of individual racism, it feeds directly from the structural racism set out for it.

The all-weather illiberal, however, is the perfect combination of individual racism and structural racism (Merton). No matter the structures set in place, they will enforce racist ideals and beliefs, stemming both from what is in place in the structures they are involved in as well as their own personal biases and prejudices. This individual is the prime subject for the continuation of the racist cycle in America.

Like a terribly perfect recipe, all of these aforementioned facets come together to create the experiences we face today. As a white person, I am fortunate enough to say that I have not had to face the worst ends of these structures and systems. In fact, structural and individual racism combined tend to favor white people, offering them the opportunities and experiences that they are actively denying others. I have been able to go to higher education schools, experience internships, jobs, gifted education programs, to the benefit of my skin color as well as my abilities. Unfortunately, people of color with equal—or even greater—abilities, tend to be denied these experiences simply because of the structures set in place to force their struggles (Coates, 2014). Despite the seeming impossibility of dismantling structural racism, and by proxy, the allowance of individual racism, learning about these instances over the course of my life has pushed me to change my behaviors and advocate for others when possible. This system listens to my voice. I am a white person with the privilege of a voice in society, and though I alone am not a catalyst for change, I can uplift the voices of those that matter in an effort to dismantle this system of structural and individual racism.

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THE DIET OF DEVASTATION

by Isabella Ochalik

Boredom, loneliness, isolation: these feelings are unpleasant to experience, but generally do not last long. However, during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, such discomfort persisted for months without any indication of return to normalcy. Hopelessness and detachment lead to psychological distress, amplifying feelings of loneliness and boredom. Prolonged exposure to such a gloomy and adverse environment promotes the development of eating disorders (ED), most commonly anorexia nervosa (AN) (Phillipou *et al.*, 2020). Anorexia nervosa is a physical and mental disorder associated with deliberate weight loss that stems from anxiety and distorted body image (National Eating Disorder Association [NEDA], 2021). Increasing evidence indicates that the pandemic environment negatively impacts mental health, which translates to a rise in AN cases.

The interruption of daily functions causes loneliness and boredom, which are triggers for ED behaviors (Cooper *et al.*, 2020). The lockdown's uncertain environment not only forced individuals to spend time with themselves, but also to observe the routines of their family members. With time to pay attention to little details, people noticed body differences, which provoked anxiety over appearance and triggered ED cognitions. Post-pandemic

studies show that 65.9% of participants struggled with obsessive ED thoughts during lockdown (Phillipou *et al.*, 2020). As the days in isolation grew longer, these ruminations changed into anorexic behaviors.

In periods of loneliness and boredom, when individuals are left to their own thoughts, people often look to social media for social interactions, especially during times of crisis. However, there is a direct relationship between social media usage and ED symptoms (Cooper *et al.*, 2020). Social media users emphasized that pictures of thin, athletic bodies made them self-conscious, and that the “Quarantine-15,” gaining fifteen pounds during the lockdown, provoked fear (Nutley *et al.*, 2021). Scrolling through pages of model-like men and women, users began to check, compare, and criticize their bodies. Because people linked discomfort, negative body image, and fatphobia to their eating habits, individuals engaged in compensatory behaviors (Nutley *et al.*, 2021). These behaviors can be seen as food restriction, dieting, and overexercising, some of the most common signs of AN, which have increased by 27.6% during the pandemic (Phillipou *et al.*, 2020).

Individuals predisposed to ED risk factors, such as history of dieting, perfectionism, body image dissatisfaction, and anxiety disorders took doctors’ suggestion of maintaining a healthy exercise routine to the extremes. With gym closures and athletic competition cancellations, excessive exercise became a method for earning food (Matthews *et al.*, 2021; Nutley *et al.*, 2021). One-third of AN adolescents identified pursuing health goals, getting out-of-shape, and fear of gaining weight as the primary reasons for dietary restriction (Matthews *et al.*, 2021). Patients specifically reported that lack of organized activities prompted them to get stronger and healthier. Overall, the general population increased exercise by 34.8% compared to pre-pandemic times (Phillipou *et al.*, 2020).

Boredom, isolation, and anxiety fueled the increase in AN cases during the pandemic. Social media’s promotion of the perfect body provoked negative body image, and AN victims resorted to dieting and excessive exercise to manage

their weight-related worries. Little did they know that the modified routines would develop into a severe disorder. The nutrient deprived body copes with AN behaviors and appears to function normally (NEDA, 2021). However, the deprivation ultimately slows body processes, which may cause serious medical consequences. As society emerges from the pandemic state, accumulating data will provide more insight into the long-term effects. Studying AN in the scope of the pandemic sheds light on the biological, psychological, and social risk factors discussed thus far. This understanding contributes to not only the current understanding of EDs, but also the approach of managing these physical and mental disorders.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY ON TWITTER DURING MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

by B. Antonia Delawie

Abstract

Scholarship on the role of social media in mental health advocacy generally agrees that social media plays a big role in mental health advocacy these days. But scholars have yet to extensively explore how effective mental health advocacy on social media really is. This essay addresses this gap in the literature by looking at the correlation between Twitter data and Google searches related to mental health. I demonstrate that there isn't a significant correlation because there was a slight increase in word usage on Twitter, but Google search data didn't show any significant increase in the month of May that could have been caused by the Twitter advocacy.

Introduction

Scholars have speculated about the role of social media in mental health advocacy ever since the first emergence of the phenomenon. Social media can seem like a powerful advocacy tool since it gives a voice to the everyday person to get their thoughts out to millions of people. Tweets go viral every single day, but the real question is not about how many people a tweet reaches, but

how seeing that tweet affects their behavior. My research aims to provide some insight into this question by looking at the correlation between the frequency of Twitter word usage and the frequency of Google searches related to mental health in Mental Health Awareness Month compared to the rest of the year. This correlation isn't a certain indicator of people's behaviors, but it could lend us some interesting insight into the question.

Research questions and Thesis statement

My main research question focuses on the effectiveness of mental health advocacy during Mental Health Awareness month.

- RQ1: How effective is Twitter advocacy at raising awareness during Mental Health Awareness month?

My other research questions help me further develop how I will be able to get an answer to my main research question.

- RQ2: How much more are people using mental health/ mental health advocacy related words on Twitter during mental health month?
- RQ3: How much more are people searching for mental health related words/ terms on Google (e.g. 'therapist near me')?
- RQ4: What is the correlation between these two things?
- RQ5: What are these two data points telling us?
- RQ6: What is the significance of Twitter in mental health advocacy?
- RQ7: What are the limitations of this method?
- RQ8: What factors could have an effect on the results?

My thesis statement is that the correlation between Twitter word usage and Google searches related to mental health could indicate the effectiveness of social media advocacy on affecting people's actual behaviors.

Method

I have requested and was granted access to Twitter Application Programming Interface (API) for academic research purposes. Unfortunately, this version of the program did not provide full access to all of the Twitter data that I needed so I needed to slightly modify my search words. I used Twitter API with the help of Python programming language to get data about the frequency of the use of mental health related words/phrases in Mental Health Awareness Month (May) compared to the rest of the year.

My original mental health related words/phrases were: mental health, mental illness, mental health awareness month, anxiety, depression, bipolar, schizophrenia and dementia. I chose these specific mental health disorders because they are the five most common ones (DuBois-Maahs, 2018). But because of the limitations of my access to Twitter API I needed to shorten this list to just two words. The two phrases I chose are ‘mental health’ and ‘anxiety’, since they seemed like the most relevant ones.

After this I used Google Trends (trends.google.com) to get data about the frequency of searches for words/phrases related to mental health seeking behaviors in Mental Health Awareness Month (May) compared to the rest of the year. My words/phrases related to mental health seeking behaviors are:

- Therapist near me
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Dementia
- Do I have anxiety?
- Do I have depression?
- Do I have bipolar disorder?
- Do I have schizophrenia?
- Do I have dementia?

I chose to continue with my original set of words for this search instead of narrowing down this search too to get

more accurate results.

Originally, I was going to look at both of these datasets between January 1st, 2014 and December 31st, 2019. The plan was to use the span of five years, so that the events of a particular year will be less likely to affect the results I get. The year of 2020 was also going to be excluded from my dataset because the unprecedented world-wide pandemic had an effect on people's mental health that is different from just a usual year, so including it would interfere with the results too much. But I had to change this method too because of the limitations of my API access.

I choose to look at only the year of 2019 and instead of looking at the full dataset, I will be looking at the frequency of the word usage on Twitter based on specific intervals of time within each month. I needed to find a date that doesn't have any holiday that affects people's social media usage in any of the months (e.g. people use social media less during Christmas since they are spending time with their families). I chose the first Friday of every month, which is:

- January 4th, 2019
- February 1st, 2019
- March 1st, 2019
- April 5th, 2019
- May 3rd, 2019
- June 7th, 2019
- July 5th, 2019
- August 2nd, 2019
- September 6th, 2019
- October 4th, 2019
- November 1st, 2019
- December 6th 2019

None of these days are national holidays. I looked at this same dataset on Google.

After I had all of this data I analyzed them and determined if the dataset has any outlying areas unrelated to my research questions that I have to correct for. After that I compared the two datasets to determine how effective mental health advocacy in the month of May is at getting people to start looking into their mental health and getting

help for it compared to the rest of the year based on the correlation between these two datasets.

After this, based on the results, I applied the theories of Lazarsfeld's Two-Step-Hypothesis, Baudrillard's theory of Simulation and the Effects Tradition to my findings to theorize why the results are what they are.

Lazarsfeld's Two-Step-Hypothesis was first proposed by Paul Lazarsfeld in 1940 in Elmira, New York (Littlejohn, 2017). It says that people are affected by opinion leaders who are affected by mass media instead of being directly affected by mass media (Littlejohn, 2017). Twitter is opinion leaders talking about and sharing news articles/ research papers, etc. Lots of people only rely on those interpretations instead of going out to directly find information from professionals themselves. My theory is that this would make Twitter advocacy effective.

Baudrillard's theory of simulation was proposed by Jean Baudrillard in 1981 in France (Littlejohn, 2017). It says that symbols and symbols of symbols are replacing the real thing when people think about things (Littlejohn, 2017). My theory is that if mental health advocacy on Twitter in mental health month is not effective then it is because the tweets are about mental health month and not about mental health.

The effects tradition was proposed by Raymond Bauer in the 1960s (Littlejohn, 2017). It says that mass media doesn't have as much of an effect on people as scholars have previously thought (Littlejohn, 2017). Does social media messaging about mental health awareness not work because people are not affected by media anymore when they are being bombarded with ads that they try to ignore all day?

Literature review

In recent years mental health acceptance has been on the rise according to many studies. According to Robinson and Henderson (2019) there was significant improvement between 2009 and 2017 in knowledge about mental health, attitudes toward mentally ill people and desired social distance from people with mental illness.

Schomerus et al. (2012) also found that there was greater mental health literacy and better acceptance of seeking professional help than before. Rhydderch et al. (2016) also found that there have been significantly more articles published about destigmatizing mental illness in 2014 than in 2008. Poreddi, Thimmaiah & Math (2015) talk about how even medical students tend to have negative opinions about people with mental illness. This means that these trends towards a more accepting public and less stigma around mental health could impact more than just mentally ill people's personal relationships. The stigma could even keep them from getting adequate health care services. But there is still a long way to go to entirely get rid of stigma around mental illness. For example, Walkden, Rogerson & Kola-Palmer (2021) found that the public still desires social distance from offenders with mental illnesses. Both Alsubaie et al. (2020) and Abi Doumit (2019) found that people who have been exposed to mentally ill people are more likely to have positive attitudes towards mental health. This shows that mental health advocacy on platforms like Twitter, where anyone can share their first hand experiences with mental illness and where people can feel a personal connection to these people, is very important.

There have been many studies on the effectiveness of mental health advocacy in general. Stonski et al. (2017) found that mental health advocates play a very important role, since many mentally ill people are marginalized, so they need people to fight for their rights. Morisson et al. (2018) also found that mental health advocates play an important role, since mentally ill people can contact them to help them achieve successful communication with mental health professionals. The study also found that this is a service that mentally ill people often need. They also found that these interactions generally achieved the mentally ill person's desired outcome (Morrison et al. 2018). Ma and Nan (2018) also found that personal narratives helped promote mental health acceptance, which means that the form of advocacy that the Twitter platform provides could prove even more effective than these traditional mental health advocacy efforts.

Twitter and other social media apps in today's world are being used for many mental health related conversations. According to Mishra and Triaphty (2019) Twitter can be used successfully to raise awareness about mental health related issues. Robinson et al. (2019) also talks about how Twitter is being used for conversations about mental illnesses. Smith-Frigerio (2020) found that even mental health organizations are using social media to raise awareness and fight stigma. Zhao et al. (2020) found that Twitter is also a good platform for the mental health advocacy of gender and sexual minorities, since they are a twicely marginalized group. Francis (2021) similarly found that it can be helpful for mental health advocacy for black men too for similar reasons. Parrott et al. (2020) and Hoffner (2020) both found that these social media sites can also be a place for people to engage with the mental health advocacy of famous people.

Findings

I used the following python code to search Twitter

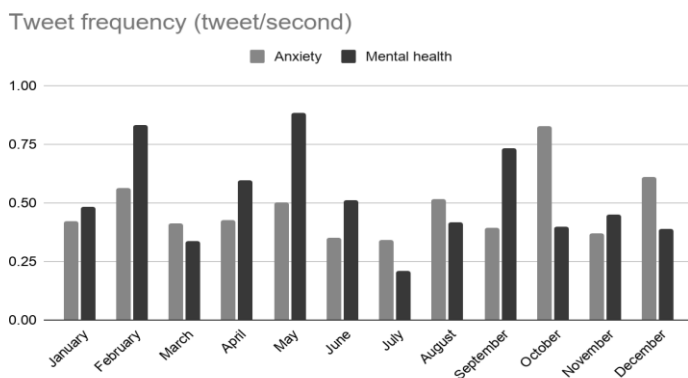
API:

```
1 import os
2 import tweepy as tw
3 import pandas as pd
4 consumer_key=
5 consumer_secret=
6 access_token=
7 access_token_secret=
8 auth = tw.OAuthHandler(consumer_key, consumer_secret)
9 auth.set_access_token(access_token, access_token_secret)
10 api = tw.API(auth, wait_on_rate_limit=True)
11 # Define the search term and the date_since date as
    variables
12 search_words = "anxiety"
13 date_since = "201902010000"
14 date_until = "2019020100"
15 # Collect tweets
16 tweets = tw.Cursor(api.search_full_archive,
17                     environment_name='testing',
18                     query=search_words,
19                     fromDate=date_since,
20                     toDate=date_until).items(99)
21
22 for tweet in tweets:
23
24     print(tweet.created_at)
25
26
27
```

The above code is just one example, some of the variables- like the time range or the search word- had to be changed with every search. The variables called “consumer_key”, “consumer_secret”, “access_token” and “access_token_secret” are blacked out because those were provided to me with my Twitter API access and I am not allowed to share them with other people.

In the code, I first had to import the corresponding python libraries that I needed to access, then I provided the keys that identified me and gave me access to search Twitter. After this I needed to define the variables for the search term and the date range. Once that was established I could start collecting tweets by calling up all the tweets corresponding to my variables from the full Twitter archive. After this I needed to print the exact time and date of the tweets so I could analyze their frequency.

The search on Twitter API turned up the following results:

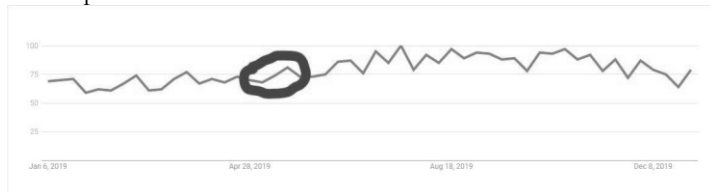


The above chart shows the amount of tweets using the phrases “anxiety” and “mental health” per second on the dates mentioned in the method section. Looking at the anxiety graph, the month of May is above average, but doesn’t immediately stand out. This could be because there are many other awareness days/weeks/months and other life events that prompt people to talk about their anxiety more than average. On the other hand, on the mental health

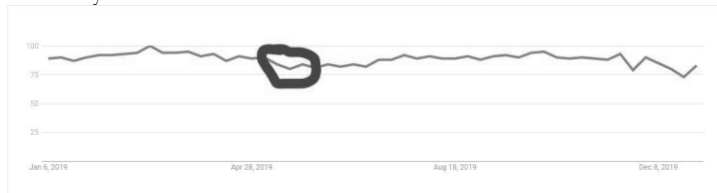
graph, May is clearly the month where people most frequently use the phrase. Based on this small dataset, the answer is inconclusive, but it does suggest that people's use of mental health related words increases in May.

The search on Google Trends turned up the following results:

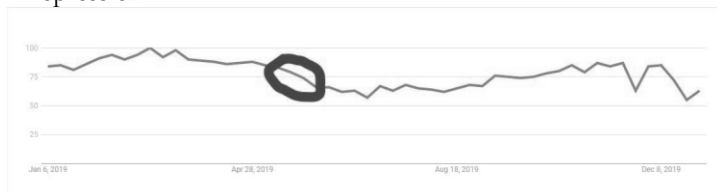
“Therapist near me”:



“Anxiety”:



“Depression”:



“Bipolar Disorder”:



“Schizophrenia”:



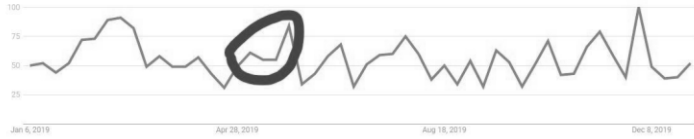
“Dementia”:



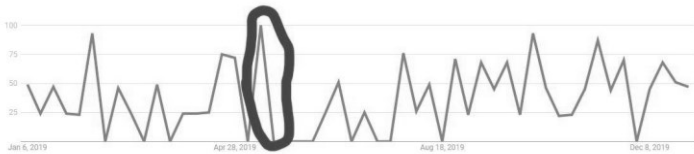
“Do I have anxiety?”:



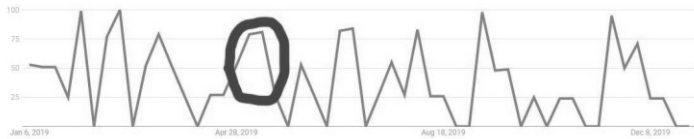
“Do I have depression?”:



“Do I have bipolar disorder?”:



“Do I have schizophrenia?”:



“Do I have dementia?”:



The line charts represent interest over time so they range from 0 to 100 based on the interest in the word/phrase compared to the highest point on the chart. The approximate location of the month of May is circled in red on all of the charts, although for my analysis I looked at the specific dates detailed in my method section for my analysis, highlighting the month of May is just to get a clearer visual

demonstration of the data. Some of the data—including “Do I have dementia?”, “Do I have schizophrenia?” and “Do I have bipolar disorder?”—are noisy, so I disregarded those when looking at the data. The rest of the data doesn’t conclusively show that people search for these terms indicating mental health seeking behaviour more in the month of May than they do the rest of the year, even though some of them do show a slight increase.

Comparing these two things, we can see that there doesn’t seem to be a correlation between the increase in the number of mental health related tweets in Mental Health Awareness Month and people searching for mental health services and advice. This could suggest that the mental health advocacy happening on Twitter is not very effective at getting people to take action on bettering their mental health.

If we apply the aforementioned theories to my findings, we can immediately see that the effects tradition theory seems to apply to these findings the most easily. People’s Google searches about mental health seeking do seem to be affected by lots of things, since the charts have lots of ups and downs, but Twitter advocacy does not immediately seem like one of these affecting factors. This confirms the effects tradition theory, which states that people these days are bombarded with too many messages on social media and otherwise easily swayed from their previous beliefs by social media advocacy.

My findings seem to entirely contradict Lazarsfeld’s Two-Step-Hypothesis since the opinion leaders of Twitter did not actually seem to affect the behaviors of people. On the other hand, just because it does not confirm the theory, it also might not entirely contradict it, since people might be even less affected by professionals than they are by Twitter advocates in their mental health seeking behaviors.

In order to assess if Baudrillard’s theory of simulation has anything to do with why my results are the way they are, I needed to look at the text of some of the actual tweets. Here are some examples of Tweets that I analyzed:



Abdool Moh
@abdool_moh



You are allowed to be selfish in some situations, you need put ur mental health above every other thing and put people's opinion where they belong, surround yourself with people that add value to your life and keep toxic people away.

1:53 AM · Nov 7, 2019



Crisis Text Line
@CrisisTextLine



IDK who needs to hear this but: your anxiety is lying to you. You are capable and loved. You can and will make it through this.



2:20 PM · Nov 6, 2019



SPACECADET @CadetSupreme · May 29, 2019

Mental health awareness month isn't over yet! Reminder to check in on yourself, as well as those you love! Sometimes we're so caught up in our day that we don't notice ourselves slipping ❤️

8 Warning Signs You're Mentally and Emotionally Exhausted

1. You're easily irritated.
2. You feel completely unmotivated- even to do things you normally enjoy.
3. You're experiencing anxiety or panic attacks.



1



199



275





Looking at these tweets, it is clear that just like the tweets that were written in other months, the tweets in May are actually about mental health and raising awareness instead of being only about Mental Health Awareness Month, so

Baudrillard's theory of simulation doesn't explain why I got the results that I did.

Limitations

The biggest limitation of this study was the restricted access to Twitter data. In the future, this study could be redone with the full dataset that I outlined in my research method section to get more accurate results.

Another limitation of this study is the limited search terms and Twitter words that I analyzed. The research could be done on a wider range of words related to Mental Health Awareness Month to get more accurate results.

Another limitation of this research is that I only looked at social media data from Twitter and internet search data from Google, even though people use different social media sites and search engines too, like Instagram and Bing. The research could be redone on a wider range of social media sites and search engines to get more data.

Another limitation of the study is that it doesn't consider the intention of the people writing the tweets or searching on Google aside from the few Tweets that I looked at to see if Baudrillard's theory of simulation applied to my research. This limitation is very hard to overcome because no matter how big a research team is it would be incredibly difficult to find all the people who wrote tweets and searched on Google and interview them about their intentions. On a lower level, researchers could at least look at all the tweets themselves and determine which of the tweets are actually relevant to the research question and exclude all the ones that aren't.

Another possible limitation of this study is that I did not exclude retweets. I decided to include them because they are still getting the mental health related message to more people, but they could easily be excluded, since they are not adding anything of their own to the conversation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my research shows that there is no correlation between the amount of tweets about mental health in the month of May and people looking for mental health services and information online. This means that maybe mental health advocates should find a more effective method of getting their message about mental health out to people. But my findings could also mean that the main agenda of mental health advocacy on Twitter isn't to encourage people to get help and information, but just to tell personal stories or raise awareness. In that case, the lack of an upward trend in Google searches could still be surprising since many people realize that they are dealing with a mental illness based on personal accounts or get the motivation to reach out for help based on more awareness of what a specific mental illness actually looks like.

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PORTRAYAL OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN *JOKER*
by Charles Soffel

Mental illness has played a significant role in many of our favorite movies over the course of the film industry's history. Some of our favorite characters in the most popular films suffered from some sort of mental disease that entertained us to no end. We laughed hysterically at Jim Carrey's schizophrenic character in *Me, Myself and Irene*, we were terrified at the edge of our seat when Michael Myers escaped from the mental hospital to go on a gory killing spree in the *Halloween* series, and we rooted for Batman to lock up our favorite (mentally ill) super-villains back into Arkham Asylum. These films and characters brought us entertainment, but how their mental illness was portrayed is a different story. We will ask the question, how is mental illness portrayed in the film industry?

In this essay I will be making the argument that mental illness is not only portrayed negatively but also as a societal issue rather than an individualistic one. More specifically, we will be taking an in-depth analysis of the 2019 film *Joker*, written and directed by Todd Phillips, as to how these negative portrayals apply. We will first take a look at how mental illness is historically portrayed throughout the film industry and what negative stigmas the

film industry created about mental illness, what effect these have on our perception of people with mental illness in the real world, and how mental illness is connected with violent behavior in film.

We will then specifically look into the film *Joker* and see how mental illness is portrayed negatively in this film as well. I will be making the argument that people with mental illness in *Joker* are portrayed as poor or lower class, they are portrayed as weak, and are portrayed as being betrayed by the society surrounding them. The purpose of this research will bring us the realization of how these cinematic stigmas affect our perceptions of mental illness in the real world, like how we view people with mental illness, how our relationships with them are affected, as well as how they view themselves and their unwillingness to seek help because of these perceptions.

Literature Review

To begin we will look at how the film industry has negatively portrayed mental illness throughout its long history. We will examine what negative stigmas the film industry created about mental illness, what effect these have on our perception of people with mental illness in the real world, and how mental illness is connected with violent behavior in film.

Stigmas in Film

Firstly, the film industry has created many stigmas about people with mental illness. Bhugra (2005) grouped these stereotypes into categories: the “rebellious-free spirit, homicidal maniac, female as seductress, enlightened member of society, narcissistic parasite and zoo specimen” (p. 251). The article goes on to explain how these stereotypes are not only dangerous to the perception of people with mental illnesses, but also to people that work in that particular field. Psychiatrists, for example, should “be aware of how their profession is depicted in films, as this is how patients and their families form their images of psychiatry and psychiatrists” (2005, p. 251). As we can see,

film depictions can have real world consequences on their viewers.

Pirkis et al. (2006) takes these stigmas a step further by adding a few additional stereotypes that aren't as common, the simpleton and the failure or victim. Pirkis et al. (2006) goes on to explain how "Several studies have shown that people with mental illness are more likely than other characters to be portrayed as victims, as having few skills, as being unemployed, or as having a poor quality of life" (2006, p. 530). We can see that these stereotypes or stigmas do not paint people with mental illness in a positive light, and as we will see can affect the way we perceive them in the real world.

Effect on Perception

Now that we have explored the stigmas of mentally ill people in film, we can begin to see how these stereotypes affect the way we view them in the world as well as how they view themselves. Kimmerle and Cress (2013) discuss many different studies that showed how people's perspectives on the mentally ill were skewed based on the movies and television they watched. The first study by Wahl and Lefkowitz (1989) found that people who watched a movie with a mentally ill violent person perceived people with an illness more negatively than when the movie's violent character did not have an illness. Also, in another study by Granello and Pauley (2000), the results found that the more people watched television the more they found mentally ill people as inferior to people without an illness. Finally, one last study by Angermeyer, Dietrich, Pott, and Matschinger (2005) found that people preferred to stay socially distant from people suffering from schizophrenia based on what they saw on television.

Besides affecting people's perceptions of mentally ill people, these stigmas also take a toll on how mentally ill people view themselves. Goodwin and Tajudin (2016) found that negative depictions in the media, such as being violent or dangerous, can be a main cause of stigma and can result in people with mental illness to enter social isolation. This can also result in mentally ill people avoiding seeking

employment opportunities or even refusing to receive treatment for their illness.

Violent Behavior

Finally, the last and most frequent theme is how mentally illness is connected to violence in film. Violent behavior is the most popular stigma about mentally ill people in movies and television. We see it all the time as the killer in horror movies or the crazy super-villain trying to kill the hero and take over the world. Swaminath and Bide (2009) explained a survey that found over 50% of the participants noted seeing mentally ill characters as violent in tv, film, or documentary, and an additional 29% said they read about violent mentally ill people in newspapers. Furthermore, when the participants were asked what characteristics define a character with a mental illness, the responses were violent, abnormal, and likely to kill violently.

Kondo (2008) also goes into how mentally ill characters have been portrayed dangerously as violent. As someone who suffers from mental illness herself her take on the issue is an interesting and personal one. She goes on to explain how in her thoughts “the greatest fallacy of mental illness purported by the film industry is that there is a direct link between mental illness and violence” (Kondo, 2008, p. 250). Kondo explains that from her own personal experience, there are only a low percentage of people with mental illness that are actually violent. She references the movie *Psycho* and how his actions are explained by his mental illness by a “psychiatrist” at the end of the film. This was just one example of many of the “homicidal maniac” stigma in film, as it is the most popular portrayal of mental illness in the media.

The film industry has created many stigmas about the mentally ill, and we can see how these stigmas affect our perception as well as how people with mental illness perceive themselves based on what we watch. Also, we can see the most used stigma of the mentally ill is that of the violent type. All of these themes can be found in the analysis of the 2019 film *Joker*. However, I will be taking it a step farther by also analyzing how the mentally ill are also

represented by the poor class, portrayed as weak, and betrayed by society.

Method

Next, for the analysis of *Joker*, the method I will be using is narrative criticism. I chose Narrative Criticism because the film follows the four key features according to Foss. The first characteristic being that “it is comprised of at least two events, so the world referred to in the story must undergo a change of state” (Foss, p. 320). There is a clear change of state from the beginning of the film to the end, not only from Arthur’s state of mind, but the state of Gotham City itself.

The second characteristic is that “the events in it are organized by time order” (Foss, p.320). There is a sequence of events that takes place in *Joker* as Arthur’s interactions with society gradually contribute to his mental instability ultimately resulting in his final violent outbursts. The third characteristic is that “it must include some kind of causal or contributing relationship among events in a story” (Foss, p. 320). The film in this case definitely has a relationship between earlier and later events through Arthur’s mental state. Early events shape Arthur’s actions later on in the film. The last characteristic is that “it must be about a unified subject” (Foss, p. 320). *Joker* does follow a unified subject about the life of Arthur Fleck and his downward spiral into becoming the Joker.

Artifact

The movie *Joker*, written and directed by Todd Phillips, is the origin story of one of the most infamous comic book super villains of all time. Rather than have him running around battling Batman, *Joker* dissects the whys and how the clown prince became the notorious evil character we all know him as. The story follows Arthur Fleck, a man trying to follow his dream of making it as a stand-up comedian in an unforgiving city while trying to overcome his status in the lower-class, a dead-end job with co-workers that isolate themselves from him, bullies that appear around

every corner, all while battling his own mental illness and responsibilities of taking care of his ill mother. As things get worse, Arthur's mental state deteriorates farther and farther until he begins to spiral into a dark descent of deviance and violence there is no returning from.

Joker was a box office smash grossing over one-billion dollars worldwide. It was also celebrated winning 111 awards and 227 nominations. Most notably, *Joker* won 2 Academy Awards for Best Performance by an Actor in a leading role (Joaquin Phoenix), and Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures (Original Score). It was also nominated for nine other Academy Awards including Best Motion Picture of the Year. *Joker* also won 2 Golden Globes for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture (Joaquin Phoenix) as well as Best Original Score – Motion Picture. It was also nominated for 2 other Golden Globes for Best Motion Picture – Drama and Best Director – Motion Picture (Todd Phillips) (IMDB, 2021).

Analysis

After exploring some of the more common portrayals of mental illness in the film industry we can dive into the analysis of *Joker* and see what other negative themes surrounding mental illness are present in the film. As mentioned earlier, the main claims I will be making surrounding this film are that mentally ill people are viewed as poor or lower class, they are portrayed as weak, and they are portrayed as betrayed by society.

Portrayed as Low/Poor Class

The first claim that mentally ill people in the film are portrayed as lower class or poor is prevalent in the film. We can notice this distinction early in the movie in the first few scenes. After seeing his therapist, the main character Arthur, takes a crowded bus home. As soon as he gets off the bus, we can see the type of neighborhood that he lives in. As the bus pulls away, he starts walking down a street that has a wall covered in graffiti, homeless people on the sidewalk and piles of trash stacked so high they are almost as tall as Arthur himself. Arthur then approaches his local

pharmacy to pick up his prescriptions for his condition which we can see has bars covering all of the windows. As he continues his walk back to his apartment, he has to climb a long staircase. When he reaches the top, it's covered in even more stacks of trash.

Finally, Arthur is able to reach his apartment complex. Here we can see more evidence of his economic status as he enters the building; it is again covered in graffiti with paint peeling off the walls and ceilings. He stops at the apartment's mail area which is covered in metal bars. The door to his apartment is also in bad shape as we can see the paint peeling off of that as well, and we are then introduced to the fact that Arthur is living with his mother in what appears to be a one bedroom apartment.

The next piece of evidence that Arthur is in a poor economic class is his employment. Arthur works as a clown-for-hire, doing odd-end jobs around town. The actual facility where his locker is and where he gets dressed up is in rough condition. Also, we can see from Arthur's clothes that they are raggedy and have patches. In the scene right after we see his apartment, he is back at work attending to his shoes, which look like they are falling apart. Arthur also has his shirt off and we can see how skinny and malnourished he looks.

In the same scene, Arthur is called in to talk to his boss. The conversation is about a client complaint on Arthur that he disappeared with the client's sign because a group of kids stole it from Arthur and then broke it. His boss tells Arthur that if he doesn't return the sign, he will have to take it out of his paycheck. We can see that money is very frustrating for Arthur as he is seen angrily kicking a bunch of trash bags outside of the building because he knows he cannot return the sign.

The last piece of evidence that Arthur is portrayed as a poor lower-class individual is his mode of transportation. Arthur takes public transportation everywhere that he goes. In the first scene on his way to his apartment he is on a crowded bus with a very diverse group of people, none of whom look happy. Later Arthur ends up losing his job because of an incident that happened at one

of his gigs. He takes the subway back home and again we can see the type of condition that it is in. The seat he is sitting on has graffiti drawn all over it as well as all of the walls of the subway car he is in. The lights of the subway are also going in and out for most of the trip that he is on.

We can see just from these three instances that Arthur who has a mental illness is portrayed as being poor or lower class. We can see this through the conditions he is living with, the job he holds and lack of money that it generates, as well as his mode of transportation and the condition of the vessels of his transportation.

Portrayed as Weak

The next claim is that mentally ill people are portrayed as weak. We can see evidence of this throughout the majority of the film and he is constantly the victim of bullying and abuse. The first example of this is the beginning scene where Arthur is working at his clown job, twirling a sign outside of a local business. A group of kids approach him and knock the sign out of his hands. The kids then proceed to pick the sign up and run off with it, prompting Arthur to chase after them while yelling “stop them,” to which of course no one does. The kids run into an alley and look like they have finally given up luring Arthur into the alley. He is then struck in the face with the sign and then kicked and beaten while he is lying on the ground (Phillips, 2019). In this instance Arthur can be seen as weak first by being targeted by the group of kids, and then when he is unable to protect himself against this group of young children.

The second instance that Arthur appears weak is at his job. While he is getting ready for work we can see the massive bruise on his shoulder from the attack. One of his co-workers appears to feel bad for him and gives him a gun in a paper bag. This gives us the impression that Arthur is clearly incapable of defending himself and needs the assistance of a weapon. In the same scene he can be seen speaking with his boss. We can tell by the way his boss talks to him that he doesn't view Arthur very highly. He first stops Arthur from sitting in a chair in his office because

“this won’t be long,” and then tells Arthur that “some of the others think he’s a freak” (Phillips, 2019).

Later on Arthur is fired from his job because the gun his co-worker gave to him fell out of his pocket during a gig. Arthur’s boss refers to him as a “fuck up” and “a liar” and fires him over the phone. He also says that the co-worker who gave him the gun claims that Arthur tried to buy it from him the week prior. We can see that his co-worker was planning on setting him up to get him fired from the beginning and wasn’t helping Arthur defend himself at all (Phillips, 2019). Arthur’s weakness is shown through his inability to defend himself to his boss, as he yells over Arthur, and also that he is seen as the weak link when his co-worker attempts to get rid of him.

The next piece of evidence that shows that Arthur is portrayed as a weak person is during a confrontation on the subway following his termination from his job. Arthur is riding the subway home when three men dressed in suits, who appear to be inebriated, are picking on a young lady sitting in the same car. Due to a mental condition that Arthur has he uncontrollably laughs when he gets nervous, so he starts laughing gaining the attention of the three men. The men begin picking on Arthur because of his laugh and the fact he’s dressed like a clown with one of them asking “is something funny asshole?” (Phillips, 2019)

One of the men begins singing the song “send in the clowns” as one of the other men takes off his headpiece to his costume. The men then proceed to take Arthurs bag from him and elbow him in the stomach. One of the other men holds his arms and Arthur does his best to defend himself by weakly kicking at one of them. Arthur is then punched in the face and falls to the ground on the subway where they start kicking him just like the kids at the beginning were doing (Phillips, 2019).

We can see from these scenes that Arthur is looked down upon by his boss, co-workers and even complete strangers. He is constantly bullied, made fun of, and beaten up because of his appearance and his mental condition. We can also see that the more it happens the more it affects

Arthur's psyche and his progression towards becoming violent.

Betrayed by Society

The final claim is that the mentally ill are portrayed as betrayed by society. This is a large factor in Arthur's descent into complete madness. The first betrayal of Arthur comes from his state-provided therapy sessions, where he also receives his medication from. During his session he is beginning to open up to his therapist stating how he doesn't feel like he even exists, when she interrupts to tell him that the state cut their funding and Arthur will no longer have his therapy or meds. Arthur then tells her that she doesn't listen and never truly listened as he is trying to open up about finally being noticed after committing a murder. His therapist finishes telling that they won't be meeting any longer and that "they don't give a shit about people like you Arthur" (Phillips, 2019).

The second betrayal of Arthur comes from his television idol Murray Franklin, played by Robert DeNiro. Arthur does not know who his father is and fantasizes about meeting Murray and Murray saying he would give up the show biz if he "had a kid like you." In a scene where Arthur is visiting his mother in the hospital the Murray Franklin show comes on and starts showing a clip of one of Arthur's stand-up comedy routines. At first Arthur is excited that he is on the show until he realizes that they are just making fun of him on national television. Murray even refers to Arthur as "this Joker" setting up Arthur's future persona. Arthur's demeanor is completely changed and we see he is cut very deeply by this (Phillips, 2019).

The final betrayal is done by his mother. As we stated earlier Arthur does not know who his father is and is led on by his mother to believe that millionaire Thomas Wayne is. Arthur confronts Wayne at a theater where he is told that Arthur was adopted and that his mother is crazy. Arthur is able to steal a file from the asylum his mother was a patient at to find out that Wayne was telling the truth, and he also finds out that he was abused as a child by his mother's boyfriend where he was found tied to a radiator

with severe trauma to his head. While Arthur is reading this file we can see him slip farther and farther into insanity.

Arthur has clearly been dealt a bad hand, but the little comfort and hope that he did have was from three sources: Murray Franklin, his mother, and his therapy/medication. When all three of these things betray Arthur's trust he no longer has anything to hold on to and slips deeper into his insanity. From this point forward Arthur turns into his persona *The Joker*.

Conclusion

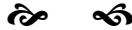
The movie *Joker* has many negative stigmas and portrayals of mental illness. As discussed earlier, it holds the same negative stigmas and violent behavior discussed at the beginning of this essay. However, the film goes even further to portray mentally ill people as poor, weak, and betrayed by society. One difference I see from this film about the perception of mental illness is that it represents mental illness as more of a societal issue rather than an individual one. The perception of mental illness can be looked at mainly as a singular person's problem to deal with. This film, however, shows how there can be multiple causations to a person's condition improving or deteriorating. What if Arthur had a different living situation? What if Arthur had a supportive work environment that provided him a chance to succeed rather than throw him out and torment him? What if Arthur had a better support system at home? What if Arthur was able to receive medical treatment that was designed to help him? Would Arthur have ever become the Joker? Perhaps the big takeaway from analyzing this film is that we as a society can help if we listen and not turn our back to those in need.

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GENDER AND IDENTITY





CONTRADICTION IN *JANE EYRE*: CONVERSATIONS OF
19TH CENTURY FEMINISM
by Audrey Clement

Introduction

As a staple in classic feminist literature, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* plunges readers into the 19th century feminine sphere. Brontë's narrator, Jane, is a delightfully complex heroine who exemplifies the successes and limitations of 19th century feminist philosophy. At times, Jane is a stellar example of the independent Victorian woman struggling against a hostile patriarchal society. Other times, she is an active participant in patriarchal society, directing hostility towards other women and prioritizing male comfort and desires. For some, especially those who know and love *Jane Eyre* as feminist literature, the polarity inherent in Jane's character may be difficult to interpret. As readers and scholars, I posit we can approach the issue in two ways. First and foremost, we can praise Brontë for her success in creating a character who so eloquently personifies the feminine psyche, which has been trained to always hate or criticize femininity over masculinity (which often escapes critique entirely). We can use these very contradictions to explore the progress of feminist philosophy since the novel was published.

Contradictions often peacefully coexist in our world, but that does not necessarily make them easier to

understand. Deconstructionist theory attempts to do so; thus, it is helpful to our understanding of Jane to adopt a deconstructionist approach. Throughout the novel, readers become aware of a duality in Jane's subconscious—she never addresses it herself, but her contradictory actions confirm its existence. Readers may initially process these contradictions as symptoms of a flawed character, but I believe it is more rewarding to consider these contradictions as naturally occurring psychic duality, created by a feminine mind at war with the mandates of her culture. Lois Tyson, author of *Critical Theory Today*, calls this phenomenon the multiple and fragmented self. She states that “we [consist] of any number of conflicting beliefs, desires, fears, anxieties, and intentions” (Tyson 257). Tyson claims that human identity is shaped by “an unstable, ambiguous force-field of competing ideologies” inherent to human existence, meaning that people will naturally contradict themselves (Tyson 249, 257). Jane is no exception, as her innate, human inclination towards intellectual and physical freedom competes with patriarchal norms for space in her psyche. Opposing perspectives are represented within a single character. The theory of a multiplicity of selves offers a solution to the confusion readers may feel—Jane's contradictory actions do not have to be a problem. Contradictions in the fictional often reflect contradictions in the real world. Jane's fractured character provides us an opportunity to explore a patriarchal feminist psyche that is continually at odds with itself. This fracture reveals itself most often in the ways Jane interacts with other characters in the novel.

Jane, the Halfway Feminist: How does Jane interact with other women?

A patriarchal feminist psyche is characterized by the desire for one's personal advancement as a woman accompanied by the refusal to advocate for the advancement of all women, either consciously or unconsciously. In other words, the patriarchal feminist is unfamiliar with solidarity; she sees other women as

competition rather than allies. In her book on the marginalization of feminism, bell hooks says that perceiving other women as threats is a direct result of patriarchal indoctrination: "We are taught that our relationships with one another diminish rather than enrich our experience. We are taught that women are "natural enemies," that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another" (hooks 43). Indeed, for feminine identifying feminists, analyzing how we perceive and interact with women may reveal our patriarchal biases more effectively than our interactions with men precisely because society indoctrinates women to oppose one another. Such is the case with Jane.

As the novel progresses and Jane transitions into womanhood, she increasingly interacts with women who are unlike herself in status and appearance. It is towards these women that Jane directs her ire. These emotions range from outright disparagement to quiet condescension. Her criticism often seems motivated by patriarchal expectations, where no matter how women present themselves, they are subjected to disapproval. hooks states that "[S]exism is perpetuated by the victims themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo" (43). Jane, as a member of patriarchal society, may subconsciously criticize other women by measuring them against an unrealistic patriarchal standard. For example, Jane's scathing internal monologue criticizes Miss Ingram for her defects:

She was very showy, but she was not genuine: she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature: nothing bloomed spontaneously on that soil; no unforced natural fruit delighted by its freshness. She was not good; she was not original: she used to repeat sounding phrases from books: she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own. (Brontë 199).

While Jane's assessment of Miss Ingram's character may not be inaccurate, the manner in which she criticizes her is fueled by the patriarchy. Jane begins to dislike Miss Ingram because of her insults aimed towards governesses and lower classes of women, but rather than criticizing Miss Ingram on the quality of her arguments (or lack thereof), Jane attacks her personality and her intelligence; thus, the criticism falls flat. Additionally, Jane's internal outburst seems motivated by jealousy, not simply moral principle—she is intently aware that Miss Ingram is chasing the attention of Mr. Rochester, whose attention she wishes for herself. Jane remarks that “Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling” (Brontë 199), yet spends pages denouncing her character. She also admits to being “irresistibly attracted” to Rochester and Miss Ingram's interactions, and watching them carefully:

I see Mr. Rochester turn to Miss Ingram, and Miss Ingram to him; I see her incline her head towards him, till the jetty curls almost touch his shoulder and wave against his cheek; I hear their mutual whisperings; I recall their interchanged glances... I saw all his attentions appropriated by a great lady, who scored to touch me with the hem of her robes as she passed (Brontë 199).

One wonders if Jane truly escapes the jealousy she claims Miss Ingram is incapable of inspiring. Indeed, it seems more likely that Jane views Miss Ingram as a threat to Jane's access to Rochester, which causes Jane to internally reject her.

Jane has a similar reaction to Miss Oliver later in the novel, although their interactions are not characterized by the bitterness Jane feels for Miss Ingram. The similarity in Jane's reactions to these women lies primarily in her propensity to unfairly evaluate and criticize them. For example, even though Jane does not outright dislike Miss Oliver, she clearly looks down on her for her giddy and flirtatious nature. Jane describes Miss Oliver as “coquettish... not worthlessly selfish...indulged since

birth... hasty... vain... unthinking... not profoundly interesting or thoroughly impressive" (Brontë 400). Jane, self admittedly a "cool observer of her own sex," counteracts every positive quality of Miss Oliver's with something inherently negative or "wrong" with her character. Her interactions with these women are characterized by a sense of personal superiority. This ingrained patriarchal perspective affects how she thinks about other women, to such an extent that she cannot form lasting bonds with women different from herself. Jane does experience lasting relationships with women in the novel, which is why prominent scholars like Adrienne Rich praise the novel for its depiction of female solidarity. We see Jane extend financial support to Mary and Diana, potentially allowing them to move more freely in society, as well as form lasting friendships with both. In her early life, she bonds with Helen Burns and Miss Temple, who support one another through numerous difficulties. These achievements are not diminished if we recognize that *Jane Eyre* does not depict solidarity between *all* women.

I am not claiming that the responsibility for developing solidarity that crosses social boundaries lands solely on Jane's shoulders. In fact, as members of the upper echelon, it is logical to assume that socialites like Miss Ingram and Miss Oliver could more easily make the first move on that front (as Miss Oliver does!). I do believe that Jane's hostile interactions with women of other social classes reveal the limitations of *Jane Eyre* as a feminist manifesto, and reveal Jane's inability to escape patriarchal thinking. hooks says that "[w]omen are divided by sexist attitudes, racism, class privilege, and a host of other prejudices... unless... barriers separating women can be eliminated... we cannot hope to change and transform society as a whole" (44). Through Jane, Brontë strengthens established societal boundaries by eliminating the possibility for women of different social classes to bond, revealing the limitation of her feminist thought. Jane is only open to sisterhood with specific types of women—granted, it is unlikely that Ms. Ingram would be open to sisterhood with Jane, but the author's choice to draw that socio-economic

boundary with such rigidity says something about the quality of woman Brontë believes is deserving of total liberation. Indeed, the women Jane does bond with are all eerily like her, both in their socio-economic standing and philosophy (Diana, Mary, Helen, Miss Temple, etc.). Although there are plenty of criticisms to be had about how socially privileged white women (like Blanche Ingram) do little to nothing to dismantle patriarchal ideals, praising one kind of woman while disparaging another does little to change hierarchical structures; it is not productive. By pitting readers against certain women to support Jane, Brontë undermines the effective feminist advocacy of *Jane Eyre* from a modern perspective.

The Patriarchal Feminist: Seeking Male Approval and Denying Male Accountability

The contradictions within Jane's patriarchal feminist psyche manifest in her interactions with men as well. Although Jane is always the focal point of these interactions, it is fascinating how Jane continually seeks the approval of men. A patriarchal society tells women that they have no value outside of their relationships to men. In the words of bell hooks, "Male supremacist ideology encourages women to believe we are valueless and obtain value only by relating to or bonding with men" (hooks 44). A patriarchal society pushes Jane towards the approval of men rather than bonds with women, as evidenced by her relationship with St. John. Although Jane is not interested in St. John romantically, she still seeks to please him, even when it is unpleasant for her. She learns "Hindo-stanee" instead of German at his behest, while Mary and Diana "agreed that St. John should never have persuaded them to such a step" (Brontë 433). As time progresses, Jane states that: "I... wished more to please him: but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature... it racked me hourly to aspire to the standard he uplifted" (Brontë 434). Jane sacrifices her personal comfort as well as quality time with Mary and Diana (with whom she was learning German) in favor of St. John's approval of her. She

prioritizes male attention over herself and other women, perhaps subconsciously, indicating society's indoctrination which tells her to be submissive and agreeable to men's desires.

Although Jane does seek St. John's approval frequently, their relationship also provides her ample opportunity to assert her independence and personal agency, creating contradiction. There are limits to Jane's prioritization of St. John's wants; at a point, she insists on prioritizing herself and her wants. Jane's reaction to St. John's proposal even demonstrates progressive feminist ideas for the time period—she attempts to bond with St. John platonically, stating: "I regard you as a brother—you, me as a sister." The society in which Jane operates only allows women and men to bond intimately through marriage and romantic relationships (an exception could be made for siblings). St. John's reaction makes this clear, as he immediately refuses the potential connection, implying impropriety: "We cannot—we cannot... it would not do" (Brontë 442). Contrary to her earlier acquiescence to St. John's wishes, Jane firmly establishes herself her own personal agent; she makes decisions for herself, regardless of outside approval or disapproval. She also aligns herself with femininity here, as her main reasoning for refusing St. John is quite romantic; they "did not love each other as man and wife should" (Brontë 442). It is clear in her interactions with St. John that Jane is often torn between patriarchal societal norms and her feminist values—they are symptomatic of her fractured self.

Jane's relationship with Rochester carries the same confusing contradictions. Many scholars have criticized Jane and Rochester's relationship on the basis of romantic love; they argue that Jane's choice to enter into a romantic relationship is a betrayal of herself. In her essay "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman," Adrienne Rich characterizes their initial relationship as a patriarchal "temptation" (Rich 474). Rich argues that Jane must refuse traditional Gothic understandings of romance, which she does by leaving Rochester a first time. Rich also believes that Rochester and Jane's marriage is inherently practical

and unromantic (Rich 482). I agree with Rich that there are problems in Jane and Rochester's relationship; however, I do not believe the problem is the fact they love one another. Jane's romantic feelings are not the cause of the inequality in this relationship. Rochester's problematic actions are. Additionally, Jane's inability (or refusal) to hold Rochester accountable for his condescending, misogynist, or abusive actions shows how she has been trained by a patriarchal society to sympathize with Mr. Rochester over the women he is hurting. There are many examples of Mr. Rochester hurting women verbally, psychologically, and physically, and Jane dismissing (and therefore accepting) his behavior. Even Adèle, a small child, does not escape maltreatment; Mr. Rochester often speaks negatively of her and insults her to her face, like when he claims "She is not bright, she has no talents" (Brontë 130). Jane never addresses this with Rochester, yet she rightfully criticizes Ms. Ingram for the same behavior, showing how she aligns with Mr. Rochester over other women (Brontë 200). Mr. Rochester also psychologically manipulates Jane, which is played off as a poor attempt at romance (when he masquerades as a fortune teller to get information). Of course, the most serious of Mr. Rochester's infractions is his abuse of Bertha.

Scholars in the past have argued that Bertha's character is not meant to be viewed realistically, that her primary function is metaphorical. In their book, "The Madwoman in the Attic," Gilbert and Gubar state: "Most important, her [Jane's] confrontation, not with Rochester but with Rochester's mad wife Bertha, is the book's central confrontation, an encounter ... not with her own sexuality but with her own imprisoned 'hunger, rebellion, and rage'" (339). Early feminist scholars like Gilbert and Gubar popularized the interpretation of Bertha as a mere representation of Jane's imprisoned psyche, that Bertha is all the anger Jane is unable to express. While I find the concept intriguing, assuming Bertha is only a function of the novel erases her humanity and dismisses the abuse she has experienced. More specifically, it dismisses the abuse she has experienced *at the hands of Rochester*. Indeed, at no

point does Brontë address the issue of Rochester's character. When Jane learns about Bertha, she does not mention a problem with his behavior, other than the fact that he "[speaks] of her [Bertha] with hate—with vindictive antipathy," and that "the attribute of stainless truth was gone from his idea" (Brontë 326, 321). She is upset that he lied, and that he speaks of Bertha derogatorily, but she does not blame him for his actual actions, which should be inexcusable. Jane even states that she "would not ascribe vice to him" (Brontë 321). Jane's silence and her refusal to acknowledge his faults are indicative of the patriarchal side of her psyche as she grants him leniency when he should be challenged.

The way Jane aligns with Rochester even in his worst moments are contradicted by her ability to assert her personal agency in spite of him, similarly to the way she opposes St. John. She exerts her autonomy when she chooses to leave Rochester, saying that it would be wicked "to obey" him, that she will care for herself (Brontë 343, 344). She insists on plain clothes despite Rochester's wish for extravagant outfits. Earlier in the novel, before their romantic relationship is established, she debates with him about her rate of pay and insists her salary be on her terms, not his (Brontë 243). These instances create duality, where we simultaneously see Jane as a feminist and a product of the patriarchy. It seems Jane is a feminist for herself, but struggles when it comes to advocating for others or defining herself outside of male approval (although these struggles are not all-encompassing). However positive and inspiring Jane's moments of clarity may be, her dismissal of the suffering of other women significantly limits the novel's ability to serve as a feminist work.

Conclusion

Analyzing the failures of dated works may seem pessimistic to some; however, I do not believe the intent of this kind of analysis is to disqualify or discount works that have been important to so many readers. The purpose of deconstructive analysis is to highlight where a text is revolutionary, and to point out areas where texts no longer

serve or represent us. It is a celebration of its successes and our progress.

The issues of feminine independence and women's rights portrayed in *Jane Eyre* still resonate with modern-day readers, as equality is still a work in progress. Women are still confined through a lack of opportunity, unequal pay, and countless other areas, and these women are searching for solutions just like Jane. Analyzing the failures of Jane's feminism teaches us that the solution will never be harming other women or perceiving them as threats, even if we are acting through silent complicity. Perhaps, like Jane, we are not aware of how our own patriarchal indoctrination blinds us to the everyday harm we do. I hope this analysis can serve as a reminder to others (as it did to me) that we are all peddlers of patriarchal oppression when we lack self-awareness. We are all capable of self-reflection and growth; this is the true heart of feminism.

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WHAT SORTS OF IDENTITY, OR IDENTITIES, DOES
KATE BUSH EXPLORE IN HER SONGS, AND HOW ARE
THESE EXPRESSED MUSICALLY, TEXTUALLY, AND
VISUALLY?

by Stef Socher

Kate Bush is an English singer and songwriter. She was discovered at a very young age by Pink Floyd.¹ Based on Bush's experience in the media industry that her body was a sex object and that she would be sexualised in the music industry to become a "product" that will sell well, she eventually became independent in writing her lyrics and performing her songs, so that the audience could see her as the artist who had a message to share.² Due to her experiences Bush's work is influenced by many topics, including sexuality, gender, and spirituality.³ While each album is devoted to one or two of those important topics,

¹ Sheila Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 69.

² Ky Fuller, "Let's exchange the experience': Kate Bush's Bodily Metamorphoses in Lyric and Voice," (2021), pp. 1 ff.; Ian Ravendale, "Kate Bush (1978)," *Rock's Backpages Audio*, 1978, <https://www.rocksbbackpages.com/Library/Article/kate-bush-1978>.

³ Deborah M. Withers, *Adventures in Kate Bush and Theory* (Bristol: Hammer on Press, 2010), p. 8.

the albums also seem to build on each other. Starting with *The Kick Inside* in 1978, the story of a character's advancement from one life stage to another is evident throughout the albums. Who is this character and what are the character's different identities the listener gets to 'meet' in Bush's songs? How do Bush's music, text, and visuals immerse the audience into those different identities?

Analysing Kate Bush's music, it is important to first understand that while she is writing about herself and performing her own music, she is representing a different Kate through her music. She creates a whole new reality in which she transforms herself into multiple different identities through a variety of songs. Deborah Withers terms Bush's created self within her music as the "Bushian Feminine Subject" (BFS).⁴ The BFS is fluid throughout their experience told through the songs and takes on multiple identities.

One of those identities is a queer identity. Bush's inclusion of queer identity in her music is not surprising considering that she once mentioned in an interview "I like to think I'm a man [...] in the areas that they explore. [...] I just think I identify more with male musicians than female musicians, because I tend to think of females musicians as...ah... females."⁵ Her statement shows that Bush does not want to be limited in her music by what people would consider to be appropriate for a female. She wants to explore on her own terms. This identity exploration is expressed in the album *Lionheart* from 1978. The cover of *Lionheart* is the first sign that the Bushian Feminine Subject has undergone a change. Bush is portrayed in a lion costume which creates gender ambiguity.⁶ Her hair is long, but her staring fiercely at the 'audience' who sees the cover, with make-up that is suggestive of the individual being male, creates confusion and ambiguity.

⁴ Withers, *Adventures in Kate Bush and Theory*, p. 7.

⁵ Harry Doherty, "Kate Bush: The Kick Outside," *Melody Maker*, 1978, http://gaffa.org/reaching/i78_mm2.html; Fuller, "Let's exchange the experience," p. 2.

⁶ Withers, *Adventures in Kate Bush and Theory*, p. 104.

The song 'In Search of Peter Pan' from the album *Lionheart* provides an opportunity to analyse the BFS's exploration of queer identity. In the opening verse, the BFS seems to be a child or at least of younger age because they are told "when I get older / That I'll understand it all."⁷ Their high pitched and somewhat "squeaky" sounding singing voice supports the child identity.⁸ The high pitch creates a feeling of discomfort in the listener which might reflect how the BFS is feeling as a child being told they are "too sensitive." Withers points out how being too sensitive is a common stereotype applied to females.⁹ This stereotype is juxtaposed with the BFS feeling "like an old man."¹⁰ As Withers notes, this juxtaposition causes confusion in the listener¹¹ but also clearly contrasts the BFS from the stereotypical societal female they do not want to become.

The chorus highlights a true wish and frustration about societal standards at the same time. The BFS wishes to be a man. At the same time, the BFS makes us aware that in our cliché-based society, they would have to be a man in order to become an astronaut.¹² Them, trying to "find Peter Pan" (an androgynous figure) expresses the wish for freedom and self-actualisation in a world where they feel like this is only granted to men. Their shift to a lower voice for the pre-chorus "They took the game right out of it," indicates a change of lyrical content which is emphasised with the lowest voice thus far on "out of it" in the second line of the pre-chorus.¹³ Following right after is the chorus starting with "When I am a man" for which the pitch increases again. Particularly on the word "astronaut," the

⁷ Kate Bush, *How To Be Invisible*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2018), p. 163.

⁸ Kate Bush, "In Search of Peter Pan," in *Lionheart* (November 1978), Amazon Music, <https://music.amazon.de/albums/B00QNWU90K>.

⁹ Withers, p. 109.

¹⁰ Bush, *How To Be Invisible*, p. 163.

¹¹ Withers, p. 109.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bush, "In Search of Peter Pan," Amazon Music.

BSF returns to an uncomfortable high pitch which could highlight the metaphor of the astronaut by opposing the male-gendered astronaut with a female voice.

With the identities Bush explores through her music, a pattern of death and rebirth is discernible within her songs. One identity must metaphorically die in order for another identity to come to life. Through this exploration of identity, the BFS also suffers from an identity crisis. The collection of multiple songs in her album *Hounds of Love* – ‘The Ninth Wave’ – is an example of an identity crisis she goes through. The first song, ‘And Dream of Sheep,’ is an example of how an identity crisis is a critical part of the expression of identities. The identity crisis is resolved in the last song of ‘The Ninth Wave,’ ‘The Morning Fog,’ as Bush describes. The character is rescued and gains back their perspective to be grateful for the little things in life.¹⁴

Focusing on ‘And Dream of Sheep,’ an analysis will shed light on how the Bushian Feminine Subject experiences a crisis. The song exhibits multiple elements of an identity crisis, both textually and visually. Throughout the whole music video, Bush as the BFS is floating on water with a life vest on that has a blinking light.¹⁵ The blinking light in the video supports the opening lines of the song “Little light shining / Little light will guide them to me.”¹⁶ Bush herself describes that the character in the song is struggling with not falling asleep because this would cause death.¹⁷ The lines “Let me be weak, let me sleep and dream of sheep” express their wish to let go. On the other hand, they are trying to stay awake which is described in the lines ‘I can’t keep my eyes open / Wish I had my radio.’ These

¹⁴ Richard Skinner, “Classic Albums interview: Hounds of Love,” *Radio 1*, 1985, http://gaffa.org/reaching/ir85_r1.html.

¹⁵ Kate Bush, *And Dream of Sheep*, (November 2016), YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_256xd9N27o.

¹⁶ Bush, *How To Be Invisible*, p. 176.

¹⁷ Skinner, “Classic Albums interview,” 1985.

lines pertain to a physical and mental struggle of the BFS to stay alive while barely afloat on the water.

However, those lines do not only support the idea of the real struggle to stay alive but also the metaphorical struggle. The described wish to die and let go can be interpreted as the wish to take on a new identity. The line “Let me be weak...” is the short chorus and follows the first two verses. They imagine white horses toward the end of the first verse. White horses can be used as a symbol for death, which expresses their first wish to die that is then magnified by the one-line chorus. In verse two they seem to want to hold on to life—or their old identity—again, hoping for distractions to keep them awake. However, the one-line chorus then indicates that they are dying a second time anew. This is supported in the music video by Bush closing her eyes after every metaphorical death.¹⁸ In the last verse it is unclear what the character imagines. Bush sings ‘...their breath is warm,’ but it is left open to the listener who “they” are. Nonetheless, the character finally decides to let go, ‘They take me deeper and deeper...’ The music video makes clear that the character has given up because they are not floating anymore but, despite the life vest, are drowning in the water.

Besides a transformation of identities and the discussion of social issues, in one of her most recent albums, *Aerial*, Bush creates an “invisible identity.” Contrary to previous albums in which Bush used her music, text, and body to immerse the Bushian Feminine Subject into a different identity or even reality, her songs in *Aerial* have the effect of disconnecting her body not only from the text¹⁹ but also from herself. With *How To Be Invisible*, Bush creates a space to exist, not for the body but rather for the mind or soul. The BFS’s identity remains spiritually and metaphorically, but not physically.

The BFS’s explanation of how to become invisible is described almost only through metaphors which seems to be one of Bush’s most prominently used textual tools in her

¹⁸ Bush, *And Dream of Sheep*.

¹⁹ Fuller, “Let’s exchange the experience,” p. 11.

songs. The almost one-minute-long musical intro before the lyrics set in builds suspense in the listener. It is soon clear that “tak[ing] a pinch of keyhole / And fold yourself up / You cut along the dotted line” is not a straightforward explanation but rather abstract.²⁰ The abstract textual description supports the abstract state of identity the BFS is reaching. A state you cannot grasp is described through metaphorical language that one cannot grasp.

The mysterious and untouchable identity of the BFS is reinforced through the musical accompaniment. In general, *How To Be Invisible* has a simple base beat provided by bass and drum, which allows for an emphasis on the electric guitar as the main instrument, including the application of specific techniques such as employing echo and offbeat reggae strokes. Emerging from surroundings, the echo amplifies the elusive quality of the Bushian Feminine Subject’s identity which emphasises disembodiment. Ron Moy describes the rhythm of the piece as “jolly” which helps the listener to not lose interest in an over five-minute-long track.²¹ The relatively mundane bass beat throughout the intro and the first verse allows for emphasis of the electric guitar which builds up suspense and induces mysteriousness right before the chorus. The chorus is then sung very quietly with a mystical touch in Bush’s voice, potentially to create a sense of invisibility to embrace the BFS invisible identity. Right after the chorus, the mundane, simple beat with a steady rhythm returns.²²

The chorus stands out musically and might thus be of high importance in understanding how to become invisible. As quiet and simple the accompaniment might be, the more complicated are the metaphors used and how to interpret them. The BFS compares four contradicting elements in the chorus, “Eye of Braille / Hem of Anorak /

²⁰ Bush, *How To Be Invisible*, p. 188.

²¹ Ron Moy, *Kate Bush and Hounds of Love*, (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), p. 126.

²² Kate Bush, “How To Be Invisible,” in *Aerial (2018 Remaster)* (November 2005), Amazon Music, <https://music.amazon.de/albums/B07KSNPHN3>.

Stem of Wallflower / Hair of Doormat.”²³ Braille is the writing system that blind people use in order to read with their fingers since they cannot see. If they cannot see, then why does the Braille need an eye? “Stem of Wallflower” is just as contradicting. Since wallflowers, as the name indicates, grow on walls, they do not have a stem. So, what would the stem of the wallflower be? Taking a closer look, the solution might lie in the contradiction. Possibly, those metaphors indicate that the solution to becoming invisible lies “in-between,” in-between what we understand and do not understand, what we can comprehend and not comprehend, in-between the possible and impossible. Thus, the “invisible identity” is created in a space that is removed from our physical world and body, existing in each listener’s mind according to their own discretion and interpretation of the metaphors applied in text. A safe space, where both the listener and the Bushian Feminine Subject become untouchable.

Bush’s lyrical, musical, and visual exploration of herself as a surreal character within her music is fascinating. The issues she assimilates in the 70s and 80s are still omnipresent topics around the world today. It is astounding that even though her music discusses similar, if not the same, topics as other very commonly known pop music nowadays, her media presence is so low. Other musicians receive praise for their works that raise awareness about the LGBTQ community, women’s rights, or other political issues. Billy Joel’s “We Didn’t Start the Fire” is a very commonly known and popular song that summarises the positive as well as negative political events of the modern western past in four minutes. So do most people know Katy Perry’s “I Kissed A Girl” which destigmatises homosexual attraction. While Bush’s works seem to fall through the cracks of today’s popular show business, I do think her works have had a lasting impact. I wonder how many artists have been inspired by Kate Bush’s self-determination and authenticity as a woman in show business.

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²³ Bush, *How To Be Invisible*, p. 188.

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BOYS DON'T CRY: THE PROBLEM OF ENFORCING TRADITIONAL GENDER NORMS ON CHILDREN

by TJ Arnold

Introduction

All throughout our lives, it seems as if we are constantly being fed gender stereotypes. 'Women belong in the kitchen. Men should do hard labor. Little girls should play with baby dolls. Little boys should like cars and fighting.' These stereotypes are so deeply ingrained in US society that women are strongly encouraged to go into healthcare, early education, and domestic (HEED) fields, while men are encouraged to go into science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. This gender stereotyping goes further than the workforce, though. Men are shunned from expressing emotions and showing vulnerability, while women are pushed away from showing strength or confidence (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). This kind of emphasis on certain gender stereotypes stems from traditional gender norms in which women are submissive, vulnerable types, while men are strong, unemotional boulders. One meta-analysis conducted by Koenig (2018) actually found that the gender roles enforced on children are dynamic to the behaviors shown in early childhood, meaning that young children will have gender roles enforced on them according to their play styles and physical

appearances. This highlights how deeply gender stereotypes are enforced within society.

Young children are especially susceptible to being shaped by enforced gender stereotypes. Looking from a view of developmental psychology, it is a main form of socialization in their very early developmental stages. Even before birth, gender stereotypes like the colors for their rooms, clothes, and decor are already decided. Children as young as two years old are able to notice these previously-mentioned traditional gender norms and use them to shape their understanding of identity and are even able to identify their own gender from their shaped understandings (Wang, Fong, & Meltzoff, 2021). They often shape these views of gender off of their primary caregivers and closest relationships, even understanding their gender group before they can vocalize or label what their gender is. Young children then use this group to mirror their behaviors and perceptions and correct others that do not align with their shaped understandings (Hughes & Seta, 2003). In a society where traditional, and possibly harmful, gender stereotypes are enforced as early as toddler years, it begs the question of why they are so easily accepted and enforced.

The inherent acceptance of these stereotypes can be illustrated in the book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, written by John Gray in 1992. This book outlined the ‘differences’ between men and women in order to better communicate between the two genders. It suggested that men should be cold, domineering, providers, while women are takers, vulnerable and volatile in their emotions (Gray, 1992). This is an outdated perception of gender in society, and social psychology surrounding gender has grown past these ideas. In *Doing Gender*, by Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987), they suggest an alternative as to why these behaviors exist. The main idea pushed in this book is ‘obliged heterosexuality’, a claim that gender perceptions and structures are laid out the way that they are under the pretense that femininity is lesser, and seen as homosexual behavior when males engage with it (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Though this book is older than Gray’s, it provides a more empirical background to why people behave the way

they do and suggests that rather than being a gender, people perform a behavior to get by in life.

These gender stereotypes that have been so normalized in US society have become a social schema to many. In social psychology, a social schema is defined as a structure that helps individuals to organize information about the world around them (Clemans & Graber, 2013). They can be considered shortcuts that the brain takes in order to understand and process the world faster. Hughes and Seta (2003) found that memory is better when these gender stereotypes are performed, as they are usually seen as a social schema. Social schemas are heavily enforced, so much so that going against one will place someone in an out-group from the rest of their social settings, meaning that they will be more easily identified as 'other' or 'different'. Wang, Fong, and Meltzoff (2021) found that young children categorize people in these in-groups and out-groups, especially in relation to their gender, when structuring their lives and developing their understanding of the world. They even prefer their own gender in-groups, learning from them and understanding themselves more relationally through the actions of the group.

In attempts to break through gender norms that classify in-groups and out-groups, one US study found that a sample of 75 thirty-year old women tended to feel more comfortable in their assigned gender norms when primed with images of women in traditionally feminine jobs. However, when shown pictures of women in non-traditionally feminine roles, such as doctors and CEOs, the women in the study felt decreased feelings of leadership within themselves, relative to the control groups (Rudman & Phelan, 2021). This may seem like a strange reaction, but it suggests that these gender norms and stereotypes are so tightly weaved into society that being faced with people breaking them makes individuals uncomfortable, and less likely to break the norms themselves. Rather, seeing a break of a norm will cause these women to retreat back into the safety of the current gender norms enforced on them.

It is not only adult women that feel more likely to confine themselves to their assigned gender norms within

their career aspirations. One study examined the ways that being shown non-traditional gender roles (such as women in the workplace) affected the beliefs and future career aspirations of young girls between the ages of eight and ten. The researchers determined that they could only temporarily shift the views of young girls, but it was difficult to have them internalize these counter-norms (Olsson & Martiny, 2018). Just like the Rudman and Phelan (2021) study on adult women, children do not wish to break the social norms and leave their assigned in-groups to explore the alternative options available to them.

Straying away from career aspirations, the way that young children regard other people in life is also swayed by these social norms. Thanks in part to the efforts that women have made in feminism to fight for gender equality, children do not expect ‘compensatory behavior’ from a woman that does not align herself with traditionally feminine behavior. Compensatory behavior, as defined by Hughes and Seta (2003), is a corrective action to realign with the gender in-group after performing an action outside of it. Children, however, expect men to perform this compensatory behavior after acting outside of the traditionally masculine behavior. This study suggests that young girls are not exclusively confined to their gender roles, but men are, and children have internalized this fact and hold others to that standard, even by the age of ten years old.

The lessened expectations of women to perform their gender roles might be due in part to the history of feminism. Women have made remarkable efforts in fighting the patriarchy and paving a path of rights and freedoms. Womens’ right to vote was established in 1920, thanks to the works of first-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism brought women’s rights in the workplace, and third-wave feminism is still fighting for positions of equal power within workplaces (Rampton, 2008). Efforts in fighting traditional gender norms for men have been slower, and less documented, though there has been some acknowledgement in recent years of the way that traditional gender and social norms are harming men’s mental health.

Even from the aforementioned articles, we have seen some progress in looking at the way that gender stereotyping affects the future aspirations of children. However, there is still a missing category in the fight for gender equality: young children and their mental health.

There is a mental toll to enduring the enforcement of traditional gender norms. For those that do not conform to traditional gender norms, the toll negatively impacts their lives and mental health (Thorne & Luria, 2003). However, there is little research available on these impacts in children. We know that young children internalize concepts far quicker than adults, so there is some unknown consequence to enforcing gender roles on a young child that must be examined. However, there is little research done on the mental effects of enforcing these gender roles. One of the drawbacks noted in the Olsson and Martiny (2018) study was the inability to examine internalized gender norms in early childhood and conduct testing at that point in life. This highlights the need for research to be conducted on young children from the ages of three to eleven to examine this specific area of social and developmental psychology. This thesis will review relevant literature to the main themes of this topic, and based on the literature review, propose an applied research study on young children to examine their perceptions of self-worth based on primed gender stereotypes, especially examining the mental health of those that do not conform to traditional gender norms versus those that do.

Literature Review

Introduction

The current research that has been conducted allows us to look at the ways in which we reinforce gender stereotypes at both the individual and structural levels. From these, we can also see how the perceptions individuals have of themselves or others is affected by gender stereotypes. This research is important in creating a foundation of knowledge to better look at the way that

gender stereotypes affect the mental health and self-perceptions that individuals hold. With regard to the self-perceptions and mental health of young children who have traditional gender stereotypes enforced on them, this research (Hughes & Seta, 2003; Blakemore, 2003; Arrighi, 2001) is immensely helpful in determining a plan to enact a research study.

Reinforcement of Gender at the Individual Level

We see gender reinforcement most prominently at the individual level in society. It may seem sometimes that all interactions have some underlying gender expectations. West and Zimmerman (1987) have posed the notion that people internalize and enforce gender stereotypes in a dynamic way over the course of life. Gender is not a ‘thing’, but rather, a daily task that shifts and progresses as we do, that we must work to achieve socially. Because of this, everyone is upholding the reinforcement of gender against those in their lives (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

On a relational basis, gender is most often seen reinforced by peers and family. Thorne and Luria (2003) explore the ways in which elementary age children (ages 8-11 approximately) reinforce gender with their peers. This study, though short term—only taking place during a few school days, monitored the interactions that children had between genders, as well as the way that gender was reinforced by their teachers. It was found that behaviorally, key differences emerge very early in development. Young girls interact in smaller groups, focusing on emotions and intimacy, while young boys interact in large groups, developing a hierarchy and sharing power roles (Thorne & Luria, 2003). Teachers also seemed to not enforce rules as strictly for boys because of their group dynamics. Thorne and Luria (2003) suggested that adults tended to find groups of boys less likely to assign blame within their group and more likely to argue punishments as compared to girls, who believed in rules more strongly and would hold their friends accountable. This justification on the part of the teachers reinforces the gender stereotype that boys are

rowdy and unable to be managed, while girls are expected to maintain standards.

In a similar vein, Hughes and Seta (2003) argue that gender stereotype reinforcement on an individual level allows for our social environments to seem stable and predictable. Our memory of events is better when stereotypes are followed, and these stereotypes are highly resistant to change. When the stereotype that boys cannot follow the rule is enforced by a teacher, the child will learn it and have a difficult time unlearning it over the course of their life. The street is not one way, however. Hughes and Seta (2003) also suggest that once a child learns gender stereotypes, they will enforce it on adults as well. In fact, they observed that children will expect compensatory behavior from an adult that does not behave in line with their gender stereotypes and will reinforce the stereotypes that they learned. However, this observation was most noted in men, and women were not expected to perform compensatory behaviors (Hughes & Seta, 2003). Jackson, Bussey, and Myers (2021) also noted that young girls feel a pressure for gender nonconformity, which suggests that there is little reinforcement of feminine gender roles at the individual level. This may be due to the common linkage between gender and social status, and the belief that women are *lesser* than men.

Arrighi (2001) also examined this concept through interviewing elementary through high school-age boys and suggested that the reinforcement of gender at an individual level is closely linked to status. Arrighi states, “by chastising boys for engaging in female-identified behaviors, both girls and boys become cognizant of the second class status of females in society” (2001, p. 157). At the individual level, we reinforce these beliefs through both our actions and reactions to others. We have far stricter expectations for men because their nonconformance to gender signifies a drop in social status.

At the individual level, gender reinforcement is seen from family, peers, and teachers in a two-way exchange. Once gender stereotypes are learned, they are enforced on everyone in a person’s social circle. While we

do enforce gender stereotypes to both men and women, we see enforcement on women less often because of the lower social status of femininity. When a woman behaves masculinely, they are behaving above their social status, and when a man behaves femininely, they are behaving below their social status, resulting in harsher repercussions.

Reinforcement of Gender at the Structural Level

At the structural level, gender is enforced on a more subliminal frame. These structures can be more tangible, like workplaces and education, or more intangible, like general concepts that society follows. Career fields, a basic structure, tend to be the most common instance in which gender is reinforced. Rudman and Phelan (2010) examined the ways in which women perceived their self worth and career aspirations after viewing primed images of women in traditionally feminine jobs versus non-traditionally feminine jobs. The researchers discussed the ways in which gender reinforcement was affecting career aspirations and feelings of leadership in the self. Women, who have been systematically removed from positions of power and pushed out of the workforce, feel less inclined to work in a position of leadership, even if they see other women doing it (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). This phenomenon might occur because of how heavily gender stereotypes are ingrained in our lives. When a woman sees another woman behaving in a gender non-conforming manner, they react negatively and secure themselves deeper in their own gender stereotypes and beliefs.

This idea is not just present in adults. In a similar study, Olsson and Martiny (2018), found that young girls have similar feelings when presented with images of women in the workplace and asked what kinds of jobs they want to have in the future. Some girls were able to reach a temporary shift in their gender perceptions, but a notable limitation of this study was that there were no identifiable long-term effects on young girls' gender perceptions. Despite these limitations, we are able to identify the effect that structural gender stereotyping has on eight to ten-year old girls.

While Thorne and Luria (2003) looked closely at the individual level of gender reinforcement, there was an acknowledgement that there was some structural enforcement as well. In schools, the structure of education is based on the concept that women are better at childcare, so they often get hired as early education providers (Thorne & Luria, 2003). Thorne and Luria (2003) also present the concept of the 'institution of heterosexuality' as a driving factor in the reinforcement of gendered behaviors. The institution of heterosexuality combines the designation of a status to the genders with the belief that straying from gender stereotypes implies homosexuality, which is lesser than both genders (Thorne & Luria, 2003, West & Zimmerman, 1987). Just as careers and education are structures that enforce gender reinforcement, society is driven by the concept of institutional heterosexuality. While not a tangible structure, heterosexuality is the pushed and enforced driver for our gender interactions (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Perceptions of Self and Others

How do these reinforcements of gender at the individual and structural level affect our self-perceptions and perceptions of others? Rudman and Phelan (2010) found from the responses that women had to seeing women in non-traditionally feminine jobs, that non-traditional primers lead to decreased feelings of self-perceived leadership. This translates over time to a general decrease in self-perception. While seeing women in traditionally feminine jobs led to increased implicit gender stereotypes, there was really no preferred option for decreasing gender stereotypes and increasing leadership self-perception (Rudman & Phelan, 2010).

There is a very fine line that women struggle with in terms of self-perception. Because of the designation of female as lesser than male, women feel discouraged from embracing femininity, and some young girls even feel more push to behave in a gender non-conforming manner (Jackson, Bussey, & Myers, 2021).

Struggles with self perception are not limited to girls. Boys, in their highly restrictive gender stereotypes, also struggle with their feelings of self-perception with regard to gender. As an added disadvantage, boys tend to view the disclosure of their emotions to others as weakness (Thorne & Luria, 2003), which discourages them from talking about what they are feeling and managing their emotions in a healthy manner. This leads to a more internalized struggle with identity and feelings of self-perception, an issue that has yet to be addressed in the present research. Blakemore (2003) agrees with the concept that boys' self-perceptions are heavily affected by the idea that feminine behavior is rated more negatively.

With regard to perceptions of others, Koenig (2018) found that our gender perceptions and expectations of others are dynamic and shift over the span of our lives. Koenig (2018) examined the perceptions of toddlers, adolescents, adults, and older individuals. It was found that toddlers are perceived in a gendered manner and are expected to behave according to their gendered groups, while old people have the most leniency in their gender perceptions, possibly due to their experience with gender over the course of their life. Clemans and Graber (2013) also found that children tend to perceive their peers differently if they do not adhere to gender stereotypes.

Conclusions

From these articles, it is safe to say that the reinforcement of traditional gender stereotypes leads to a more negative self-perception and perception of others (Koenig, 2018; Jackson, Bussy & Myers, 2021; Rudman & Phelan, 2010). We struggle to feel positively about ourselves when we are struggling to adhere to the gender stereotypes that are enforced on us. When we also consider the structural creation of a hierarchy in gender, women are disadvantaged to always feel inadequate for their gender, while men are disadvantaged in not being allowed any freedom in their expression or behaviors. It is a lose-lose on all fronts.

The reinforcement of gender stereotypes happens at all ages, and once a stereotype is learned, it is incredibly difficult to alter that belief. This leads to a gap in our research, however. There is yet no research looking at the long term effects of shifting gender reinforcement on children.

Applied Research Proposal

As mentioned in the introduction and literature review, there is a gap in the research surrounding the self-perception of children with regard to gender enforcement. There have been short-term studies conducted that examine the self-perception of young children after being primed with stereotypical and counter stereotypical gender roles (Olsson & Martiny, 2018), but one of the notable limitations of the study was that there was no way to measure the long-term changes to the participants' feelings of self-worth based on their primed groups. In order to truly measure how priming children with certain gender stereotypes or counter stereotypes affects their feelings of self, a longitudinal study is needed, which has yet to be conducted.

We can attribute the need for a longitudinal study in this field to developmental psychology. It has been found that childhood experiences strongly influence the development of the child into adolescence and adulthood (Codd, 2022). However, longitudinal studies are very involved, requiring great amounts of research, work with participants, materials, time, and money, in order to be effective. Because of these factors, there have been very few longitudinal studies focusing on gender, especially with children. This research proposal aims to conduct a longitudinal study.

The proposed applied research study is modeled on a longitudinal test conducted by McCurdy (2022). McCurdy examined 733 families with children, beginning when they were 4.5 years old, and testing them at 1st grade, 3rd grade, and 5th grade for levels of anxiety based on their family dynamics and age. The children were interviewed to rate their anxiety scores, and the results were gathered to

test for differences between the years (McCurdy, 2022). A latent change score model was used to assess the anxiety levels of children in each grade level, and a multigroup analysis was conducted to analyze any differences between boys and girls during testing.

The main aim of this proposed research study is to follow 140 families with three year old children, conducting regular testing yearly until the children reach eleven years of age. The decision to work with children in this age range is due to the previous readings and the development of social skills throughout this time frame (Wang, Fong, & Meltzoff, 2021; Hughes & Seta, 2003). The children will be gathered from daycares all over the country, by reaching out to the parents with an incentive to encourage participation. The parents that agree to participate will receive a stipend of \$1,500 a year, to go toward childcare and education. Participants will be assigned to one of two groups; the first group will follow stereotypic conditions, and the second group will follow counterstereotypic conditions. For the rest of this paper, I will refer to these groups as group A for the stereotypic conditions, and group B for the counterstereotypic conditions. To assign families to groups, they will be asked to fill out a census-like survey to identify key traits of the household, such as family dynamics and feelings about gender stereotypes. They will also be given the informed consent and risks and benefits of the study at this point, which will allow them to opt out if they choose to. From the results of these surveys sent out nationwide, we will gather 70 families that best fit group A and group B, for a total of 140 families participating in the study.

Group A will consist of the traditional families that are participating: those that can be considered nuclear families, or families with a working father and stay-at-home mother. This group will be composed of the families that identified that they aligned more with traditional gender norms, including in how they raised their children. They will continue to raise their children with these mindsets, without the influence of the researcher.

Group B will consist of non-nuclear families: working mothers, stay-at-home fathers, two mothers

households, two father households, or any other circumstances in which the child might be exposed to something other than a working father and stay-at-home mother. This group, as with group A, will be composed of families that self-identified as aligning with the counterstereotypic gender norms. This group will also not receive any sort of intervention or influence from the researcher.

Since both groups will be identified through their already-held beliefs, this research proposal will be a quasi-experimental design. This is because there are too many ethical implications to consider by forcing individuals to adhere to either a stereotypic or a counterstereotypic gendered atmosphere. To avoid this ethical implication, we will simply stick to the already-held beliefs of individuals.

There is little ability to control gendered environments outside of home, therefore this study will focus exclusively on how children feel about gender and self-perception when at home. While it is impossible to remove them from school or shape their schooling and social life around whichever group they have been assigned to, only engaging with them while they are at home might focus their attention on their feelings while in a home environment. This is not to say that their experiences in school will not affect their outcomes during testing, but it might alleviate some of the effects.

To test their self-perception, feelings of self-worth, and beliefs about gender, I will interview the parents at the end of every year they are participating in the study. I will conduct interviews with the families, asking likert-scale questions to rate their children. The questions are inspired by three tests, all of which ask participants to self-rate their feelings to certain prompts regarding self-worth, gender, sexuality, and self-perception (Crocker et al., 2003; Hentschel, Heilman, & Peus, 2019; Gebhard et al., 2018). Since these tests used self-reporting to gather results, and the children involved in this study will be beginning at the age of three, they are not yet at the mental capacity to self-report complicated feelings. Therefore, we will ask the parents to report on behalf of their children until the age of

seven. By the age of seven, the children will receive a simplified version of the self-reporting test, and will have a tester available to explain things if they need additional support during the interview. They will use a smiley-face version of the likert scale (Fig 1) to assist with their understanding of how to respond. Their parents will continue to report on behalf of the children as well, and the results will be collated for each participant.



Figure 1: smiley-face style likert chart

Similar to McCurdy (2022), results will be analyzed yearly against the previous data, as well as between-groups. Group A and group B will be analyzed against one another yearly, but the most important data groups will be the preliminary testing at the beginning of the first year, and the final test when all children are eleven years of age. These two groups of data will showcase the difference in self-perception before and after being placed in either group.

The importance of this longitudinal study lies in filling in the gaps mentioned in the literature review for a more in-depth understanding of how gender stereotypes affect children in US society. Young children are easily influenced and learn gender norms as early as two years old (Wang, Fong, & Meltzoff, 2021). By intercepting children at the age of three and influencing their perceptions of gender norms in society throughout their formative years, we can gather a better understanding of the true long-term effects that gender stereotyping has on children, and introduce the potential for life-long studies about gender perception in individuals.

One of the biggest strengths of this applied research study is the in-depth analysis that can be garnered from these families. We can analyze various facets of home life and gender enforcement, looking at how any number of variables can shape a child's self-perception. Another strength of this study is the potential for children in group

B to learn a counterstereotypic view of gender and apply it positively to their own lives.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, one of the main limitations is that children in group A will only be able to learn stereotypic gender norms and will not get the opportunity to explore counterstereotypic gender norms. As mentioned in the introduction, this may pose a threat to the well-being of children's mental health, and can lead to a more negative self-perception and feeling of leadership in adulthood (Koenig, 2018). However, the benefits of learning about how gender stereotyping can affect the mental health of children all across the US is great, so the risk is outweighed.

The results and information gained from this applied research study will be disseminated to other developmental and social psychologists. Notably, this information should be shared to individuals who work with young children. It is anticipated that children in group B will develop a better self-perception than those that are in group A, which would support the principle of educating children on counterstereotypic gender norms in society. This information can also be shared to upper-level educators, such as middle and high school teachers. While children in these age ranges are not developing an understanding of gender anymore, they are still enforcing the ideas and norms that they have been taught. By educating them on the importance of understanding a counterstereotypic gender norm, they might learn that enforcing what they have previously been taught and enforced could be detrimental to others, and slowly start to shift their perspectives on gender norms in the United States.

Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to discuss the current problem of enforcing gender norms on children in the United States. While social psychology and developmental psychology seem to fall under the radar for many individuals, they are a crucial aspect to understanding why

individuals behave the way they do. This includes the ways that gender norms and enforcement in society affect our behavior, perceptions, and attitudes toward both ourselves and others.

The focus on gender has long been focused on women and feminism in America. The feminist movements, starting in the 1800s with early feminist movements, and continuing even today, have made extensive leaps in the rights of women in America (Rampton, 2008). However, these historical movements focus on mostly adult women. There has been a very recent acknowledgement of the importance of masculinity and the mental health of men in society, as well as a new focus on educating children on gender in a more counterstereotypic manner, but there have not been enough strides in the particular focus on young children and their mental health surrounding these gendered enforcements. This thesis aimed to focus on this aspect and research it further.

One of the main themes derived from the literature is the enforcement of gender at both the individual and structural level. At the individual level, it was found that gender is most commonly enforced by peers and family members (Thorne & Luria, 2003). Children, especially elementary-aged children, tend to more heavily enforce gender norms that they have been taught, and do not hesitate to point out when other children, or even adults, are not adhering to the norms (Hughes & Seta, 2003). This could be in part due to the fact that they witness this enforcement on a smaller scale from family members and guardians, as well as their early exposure to gender norms that causes it to feel almost inherent (Wang, Fong, & Meltzoff, 2020).

At the structural level, we concluded that gender tends to be most heavily reinforced in careers, schools, and overarching societal standards (Rudman & Phelan, 2010; Olsson & Martiny, 2018; Thorne & Luria, 2003). These structures of society that everyone must face at some point in their life designate how a specific gender should act, what actions are acceptable, and what actions will result in the loss of social status. On a more abstract level, West and

Zimmerman (1987) argued that the structure of heterosexuality was the basis for stereotypic gendered behavior and that gender is a daily performance or task that individuals are encouraged to achieve if they wish to maintain their status in society. This kind of structural enforcement of gender pushes the notion that 'female' is lesser than 'male' (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Jackson, Bussey, & Myers, 2021).

These kinds of beliefs and enforcements of gender at the structural level led to the final main theme from the literature review: the perceptions of selves and others. It was determined that the continual enforcement of gender stereotypes led to the dismissal of femininity in both men and women (Jackson, Bussey, & Myers, 2021; Thorne & Luria, 2003; Blakemore, 2013). It also forced the enforcement of gender into a cycle: individuals reinforced the structural level, and the structural enforcement of gender encouraged the enforcement at the individual level. This cycle is daunting, and leads to individuals not wishing to break these norms, as it is so heavily followed and natural to what they have been taught (Rudman & Phelan, 2010).

There were notable gaps in the literature, however. One of the most prevalent gaps was the lack of longitudinal research in this area. While there had been some studies conducted to see if being exposed to counterstereotypic images of women in the workplace would affect the self perception of women and children (Rudman & Phelan, 2010; Olsson & Martiny, 2018), there were no long-term studies found that examined how prolonged exposure to these kinds of prompts would affect the mental health or self-perceptions of individuals.

My applied research proposal aimed to fill this gap. I proposed conducting a longitudinal quasi-experimental study that would follow children from the ages of three to eleven in two distinct groups: those that are being taught stereotypic gender norms, and those that are being taught counterstereotypic gender norms. The main strength of this study lies in how it fills the gap: such a long-term study would provide masses of information and variables to examine against one another in looking at the results of the

data gathered. This is also a unique factor to this study—longitudinal studies are rare, due to the amount of resources they consume and the unpredictability of the sample size.

This study is not free of limitations, however. One of the biggest limitations of this study, and possibly an ethical consideration, is that one group will be limited to only the stereotypic gender norms. Though this will be based on pre-existing beliefs that their parents hold, this might limit the children in what they are able to learn about gender. Another limitation of the study is that it is limited to US children, though there might be societal differences in the way gender is taught and enforced in other countries. A final limitation is the cost of the study. Though this is a hypothetical proposal, it is still a costly and resource-consuming one. This limits the chance to enact this study.

This applied research proposal opens the door for future developmental and social psychologists to extend information to schools on how to better educate children about gender. If significant results are found, this information can be shared with the public to hopefully reinforce more counterstereotypic beliefs about gender and shift the US perspective on men and women. There are further research opportunities as well, looking at the differences in gender education in boys and girls, or examining the way that cisgender children perceive themselves when taught gender norms versus the way that gender non-conforming or transgender children perceive themselves when taught gender norms. This field is vast and mostly unexplored, all it requires is a dedicated researcher to start exploring.

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THE DIVINE ENERGIES

by Pierre Ramon Thomas

Backstory

Four days after I had sex with *him*, two days after he sent me a text saying, ‘*hey man whats up*’, I called him to ask if we could just be friends (without the having sex part).

Six words. Six words he had waiting for me, sitting on the tip of his tongue. Although I couldn’t see his face, his next six words were bouncing excitedly inside his mouth as if they were dogs in a kennel and he was rushing to unlock the kennel door.

“Well. . . I was thinking. . . you were too feminine for me,” he responded.

Silence. I fell silent for about 20 seconds.

“Um. . . do you want to talk about it?” he asked, not to comfort me but to ease his own awkwardness.

“Nope. I’m good. I’ll go then.” I said, trying to recoup any amount of dignity I had left, and trying to hide how embarrassed I was. Before those six words, I had never—*never*—given any thought to my femininity. I simply *existed*. I was myself. And happily so.

The mental descent happened soon after. ‘*If he thinks I’m too feminine,*’ I would think to myself from time to time, ‘*what other man would think I was too feminine for him?*’ I wish I could say his six words were an isolated event. They weren’t. When I went *a*-perusing on dating and hook-up apps, many of the men whom I was attracted to, whose

profiles I clicked on, stated very clearly, “NO FEMS”. (Yes, sometimes in all caps.) On a dating website—a *real* dating site, not Grindr—a man whom I was attracted to (and it was evident I was attracted to him because I clicked on his profile) used his profile to sermonize: “Why do gay men act so feminine? Are they trying to be like women? Or are they trying to outdo women? If I wanted to be with a woman, I’d just be with a woman.” Seeing men write ‘NO FEMS’ on their profiles, reminded me of the signs racist, white businesses used to put on their storefronts, saying things like, ‘NO COLOREDS’ or ‘NEGROES NOT WELCOME HERE’. But instead of the sentiment being, ‘Your black presence and your black money is not wanted here!’, the sentiment was, ‘Feminine men are not worthy of love—barely even worthy of sex—and this *especially* applies to feminine blacks!’ Because when I found black or white men on dating or hook-up sites who *were* interested in feminine men, they specified, ‘whites only’ or ‘white or Latino only’. It wasn’t long before I got the picture: Generally, femininity among gay men isn’t desired, but when it is, it’s only wanted in a white or Latino man.

Because I wanted to fall in love, get married, and build a life with a man someday, I tried to masculinize myself. I thought, ‘*I’ll never attract a man being as feminine as I am.*’ I trained my wrists not to be so limp. I hardened my walk. All of the feminine idiosyncrasies in my manner of speech, and the way I moved my hands—my hands were *always* a dead giveaway—I purposely weaned from myself. I became like Miss Trunchbull from *Matilda*: I was grossly harsh and unnecessarily punitive to how I carried myself.

* * * * *

The Lay of the Land

“Men are supposed to be masculine.” “Women are supposed to be feminine.” These social rules are codified into western society. The western view of sex, gender, and gender expression is defined by a static, rigid, *this-or-that* binary: a consequence of white supremacy, by way of Eurocentrism, Judeo-Christianity, and a patriarchal societal

framework. Deviations from the norm (i.e., a masculine woman or a feminine man, gender non-conforming people), warrants outrage and elicits cries of a collapsing society.

But what if I told you that there is a principle that rejects this type of thinking? What if I told you that there is a universal, spiritual law that rebuts this erroneous simplicity of viewing human expression?

The principle is known as *The Divine Energies*. Well. . . actually, it's not. If you were to Google the term 'The Divine Energies', the search results will present information about a theo-philosophical discussion about the distinction between divine essence and energies. I came upon the concept of The Divine Energies years ago, arbitrarily, when I was perusing blogs and Tumblr pages with no significant purpose. A woman made an audio slideshow talking about The Divine Energies from the perspective of the Adam and Eve myth. It must be said though that The Divine Energies are typically referred to singularly: the Divine Feminine and the Divine Masculine. For the purpose of this essay, when I refer to both of Them at once, I will use the term, *The Divine Energies*.

When it comes to this principle, it must be said that those who speak on it—myself included—are speaking from speculation, theory, or belief. The Divine Energies is a spiritual principle in which I am not the final nor the ultimate authority—no one is. It's similar to the concept of 'love': Everybody's definitions are slightly different but our definitions should run around the same orbit. If what I say makes sense and speaks to your spirit (if you believe in such matters), then only consider what I say. If what I say sounds like poppycock and balderdash, simply toss what I say in a pile of cow manure. The concept of The Divine Energies is not a visible, tangible thing that can be studied, scientifically examined or measured. The most one can do is extrapolate their take on the Divine Masculine and the Divine Feminine by observing human behavior and comparing it to and studying different beliefs, religions, and spiritualities.

The Fundamentals

There was once a time when the words *sex* and *gender* were used interchangeably. And if a person was born male, it followed that they must identify as ‘man’, and if they were a man, they had to be masculine. *Very masculine*. If a person was born female, it followed that they must identify as ‘woman’, and if they were a woman, they had to be feminine. Anything outside of this binary was disregarded or left to their own devices. Please refer to **fig. 1**, a visual aid I produced to help readers understand what scholars mean when they say *gender binary*.

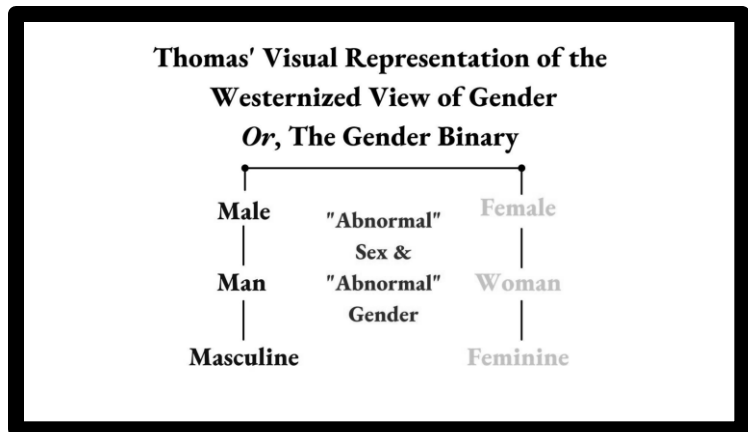


Fig. 1. The Visual Representation of the Westernized View of Gender, Or, The Gender Binary. Graphic created and conceptualized by Pi  re Ramon Thomas

Advancements in gender education teaches us that *sex* and *gender* denote two different things. *Sex*, also known as *biological sex*:

refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that determine if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include both primary and secondary sex characteristics, including genitalia, gonads, hormone levels,

hormone receptors, chromosomes, and genes (PFLAG).

Based on this understanding of sex, I produced **fig. 2** to help us visualize or conceptualize how we *should* look at sex.

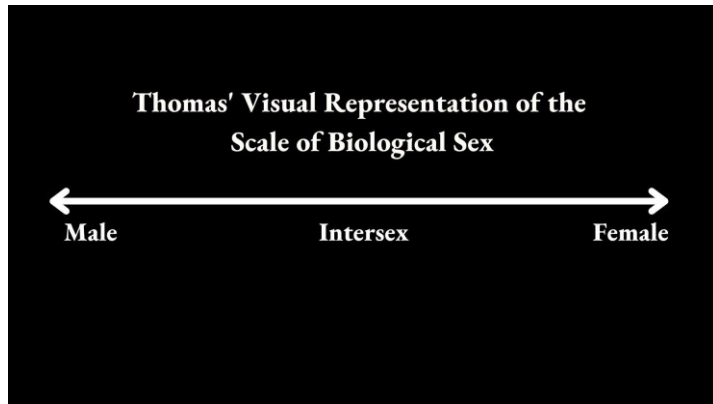


Fig. 2. The Visual Representation of the Scale of Biological Sex. Graphic created and conceptualized by Pierre Ramon Thomas

Gender, on the other hand, is a social construct (Kari). What does that mean? A *social construct* is “an idea that has been created and accepted by the people in a society” (“Social construct”). PFLAG explains *gender* as that which determines the set of expectations of attitudes, roles, behaviors, and activities of people (PFLAG).

Gender, or gender identity, exists on a continuum (Ourisman): an arrangement in which related topics, ideas, subjects or concepts within a given field exist, naturally and objectively, within a range in which they relate to each other and the varying degrees that exist between different points. Thomas’s Visual Representation of the Continuum of Gender Identities recognizes 4 main poles: man, woman, bigender, and agender. However, infinite gender possibilities can be conceived. People can situate themselves wheresoever on the continuum they feel comfortable and, if they so choose, can relocate themselves as often as they

deem necessary. Why? Because every human being possesses agency of self—*or should*. And, as Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus declared, life is flux (Mark); almost never is any aspect of life static. Despite what western ideologies claim, man and woman are *not* the only gender possibilities. I've produced an illustration (**fig. 3**) to help us conceptualize or visualize the gender possibilities.

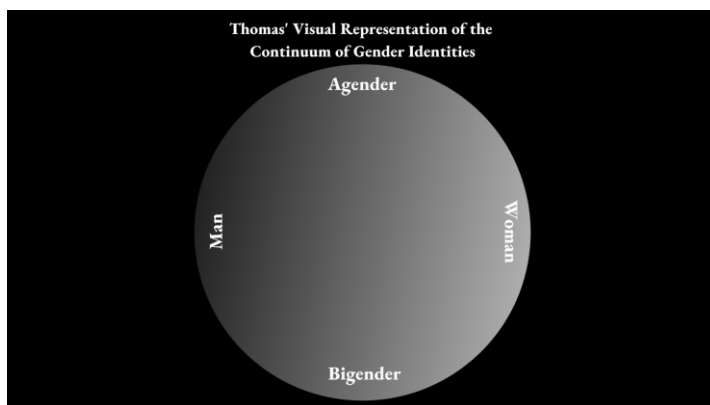


Fig. 3. The Visual Representation of the Continuum of Gender Identities. Graphic created and conceptualized by Pierre Ramon Thomas

So, what brings on gender identities? *Gender expression*. And what is gender expression? It is the acceptance or rejection (or an individualized mixture of the two) of social or—most importantly—*self*-expectations of how one is supposed to dress, behave, talk, walk, and present one's self. PFLAG asserts that gender expression may be “conscious and subconscious” and relates to “countless combinations of masculine and feminine expressions” (PFLAG). People can identify mostly one with one expression, mostly with the other, a near-perfect blend of the two, or they can oscillate at will between the two.

Plato's Realm of Forms

The principle of The Divine Energies is not regarded as a philosophical topic, but to understand The Divine Energies, a brief, simplified overview of Plato's Realm of Forms is, in my opinion, a perfect foundation to understand Them. Plato's Theory of Forms goes a little something like this: The physical realm in which we dwell is temporary, imperfect and in a constant state of change, and logically, it follows, there is a spiritual, invisible, and permanent realm. In this spiritual realm, there exists perfect representations, or Forms, of abstract and concrete things that exist in our physical realm (Macintosh).

The Divine Energies

Theoretically, The Divine Energies are spiritual representations, forms, or prototypes. They are archetypes (Ourisman; Regan), that some say are based on Gods and Goddesses from differing beliefs (Khu-Akaru; Regan). The Masculine and the Feminine don't exist in the spiritual realm *because* they exist in the physical realm. The Masculine and the Feminine manifest in the physical realm because they exist preeminently in the spiritual realm, objectively and independently from their existence in the physical realm. What makes young girls want to play football, or gives her that wild, outdoorsy nature, or makes her feel more comfortable hanging "with the bros" and "acting like one of the bros" is a manifestation of the Divine Masculine. What makes young boys want to play with Barbies and doll babies, or inspires him to want to wear make-up, or makes him feel more comfortable jumping rope and playing Double Dutch with the girls is a manifestation of the Divine Feminine.

For a brief and noncomprehensive list of behavioral traits that is expressed by the Masculine and the Feminine, please refer to **Table 1**. (The manifestation of the Energies goes beyond behavioral traits to include Their existence within the universe itself, but that lies outside of the scope of this conversation.)

Table 1	
The Divine Energies	
Divine Masculine	Divine Feminine
hardened bodily movements	soft or softened bodily movements
tendency to be hardy, solid, rigid	tendency to be delicate/sensitive/dainty
aggressive	passive
combative (as a defensive reaction)	peaceful/pacifistic/diplomatic/concerned with healing
drawn to the wild or outdoors	drawn to the domestic space or indoors
marked by roughness, rough-and-tumbleness	marked by gentility
prefers a more athletic, high-energy, rowdy atmosphere	prefers a more social, intimate atmosphere
associated with logical thinking	associated with emotional feeling
insertive	receptive
doing	being
external-focused	internal-focused
Adapted from: A synthetization based on information from articles such as “What The Divine Masculine Is All About (And How To Balance It With The Divine Feminine)”, “Here’s The Difference Between The Divine Feminine And The Divine Masculine”, “Dating and the divine masculine and feminine energies”, the YouTube video “African Spirituality: The Divine Masculine And Divine Feminine Explained”, and self-observation.	

Some who believe in the Divine Feminine and the Divine Masculine, believe the Source of the Energies might be one of many things. Some believe that one God

embodies both the Masculine and the Feminine, or that the main Gods and Goddesses of their respective religions embody the Masculine and the Feminine, and thus, those Gods and/or Goddesses serve as models for masculinity and femininity. Some claim that we exist in the spiritual realm before we're born. If that's true, maybe our expressions of the Energies are predetermined before we emerge in the physical realm. Some, like energy healer Amy Parmar, suggest that our past lives influence which Energy we "lead with" (Parmar).

Balance or "Tempering"

The beauty about the Energies and what is believed to be Their inherent inseparability, is how they can manifest or be expressed in an individual. The Masculine is not another word for males or men, and the Feminine is not another word for females or women; anyone can express both Energies in individualized proportions. Uniquely. Another way of saying that is, The Divine Energies are not exclusive to any one sex nor any one gender (Davenport; Khu-Akaru; Mitchell; Ourisman; Regan). Twitter user @__Divineskye said as much in a tweet she published on December 29, 2020, "We have both energies within us. Divine masculine and divine feminine. Nothings [sic] gender specific. You can be a female and be in your masculine energy you can be a man and be in your feminine energy" (Divine Skye Tweet). Anyone who wants to embrace the Energies in Their fullness, must unsubscribe from the western doctrine that says "masculinity is exclusive to men, and femininity is exclusive to women".

Many spiritualists who profess that everyone possesses both Energies, advise people to balance one Energy with the other (Davenport; Mitchell; Ourisman; Parmar; Regan). Balance, however, shouldn't be the only word used when talking about the Energies because it connotes "having weight spread equally", "having an even distribution of weight on each side", and "equality between the totals of the two sides of an account" ("Balance"). Balance evokes images of equal parts of two things or a 1:1 ratio, when, regarding the Energies however, we all don't

express the same measure of the Masculine or Feminine. The term *tempering* should be added to the conversation because tempering denotes “to dilute, qualify, or soften by the addition or influence of something else: to moderate (“Temper”). If a person is mostly masculine or mostly feminine, they should temper their primary Energy with the Other.

One of the sad things about western, American society is that, in our culture, we don’t teach nor emphasize the concept of *balance* or *tempering*. Our culture conditions us to think, act, and indulge in the excessive, the superfluous, the over-the-top, and the extreme. We are unfamiliar with concepts like *measured*. A feminine woman who tempers her femininity with the Masculine, sets clear, healthy boundaries in *all* of her relationships, be they familial, romantic, social or professional. A masculine man who tempers his masculinity with the Feminine, has emotional maturity, knows to inflict no harm on another unprovoked, and doesn’t consider cooking and cleaning as “a woman’s job”—it’s the man who washes dishes when his wife cooks, or the man who cooks fried chicken and black-eyed peas for Family Night on Sundays. Why should we strive to reach some state of equilibrium between the Energies? We’ve all heard the adage: Too much of anything is never a good thing. This applies to masculinity and femininity as well. Spiritual imbalance of the Energies leads to toxic masculinity and toxic femininity (**fig. 4**).

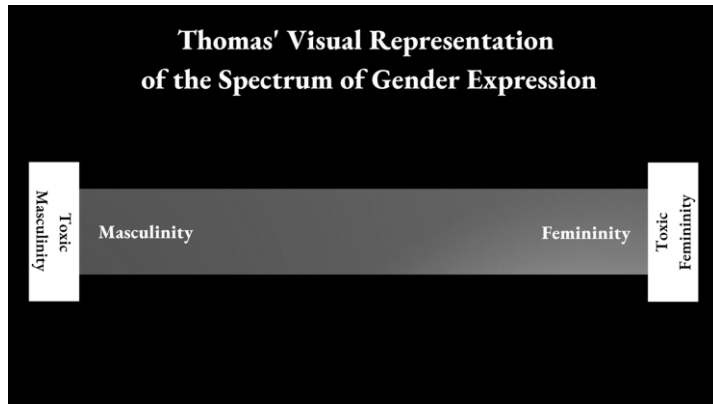


Fig. 4. The Visual Representation of the Spectrum of Gender Expression. Graphic created by Pierre Ramon Thomas

Toxic Masculinity & Toxic Femininity

Residing on the outskirts of the Visual Representation of the Spectrum of Gender Expression, are many, *many* men (and some women) who subscribe to a radical version of masculinity called *toxic masculinity*. Toxic masculinity is a grotesque view and enactment of masculinity that is a result of denying traits, qualities or behaviors traditionally associated with femininity (Johnson; Salam; White). Spiritually speaking, toxic masculinity results from denying the expression of the Divine Feminine. It would be irresponsible of me if I didn't explicitly say: Toxic masculinity has absolutely nothing to do with healthy or positive masculinity. Masculinity is *not* inherently toxic. Twitter user @BeeBalan explains toxic masculinity best, stating:

Lmao “toxic masculinity” does not mean masculinity is inherently toxic. It is referring to a specific TYPE of masculinity that has been skewed and warped into something harmful.

Poison apple = a specific apple that has been poisoned. Poison apple \neq apples are always poison (Doh Nyawen Tweet).

Masculinity, just like femininity, *has the ability* to become toxic if a person doesn't temper their Energy with the Other, thus causing a spiritual imbalance within themselves. It is within human nature to take any good thing, abstract or concrete, and distort it. Toxic masculinity looks like:

- The belief and endorsement that “men aren't allowed to express feelings or emotions” (unless anger or apathy)
- The belief that, as a man, if you've experienced trauma, you don't need therapy nor do you need to seek healing because you can drown yourself in alcohol, drugs, sex, and other dangerous, high-adrenaline activities (activities that anesthetize mental and emotional sufferings)
- The attempt to enforce one's beliefs onto others
- The evangelization and indoctrination of gender roles, especially towards women
- The policing of women, men, and people in the way they're supposed to dress, behave, walk, talk, act (their mannerisms), etc.
- The use of violence (in the offensive) and use of abuse as the preferred, and oftentimes, initial way of interacting with others, especially towards women
- Restricting one's self and others from acting within the parameters of their own self-agency especially if it does no harm to self or others
- Misogyny, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia: hatred of anything that exists outside of heteronormativity
- The objectification of women: regarding women as or comparing women to objects (e.g., cars) and disregarding their humanity and self-agency
- Subscribing to the belief that women must submit or be subservient to men (because that is “their

place” in relation to men), instead of seeing women as equals or partners; the belief that “men are supposed to dominate women”

On the opposite end of the spectrum, sitting also at the outskirts, are women who enact *toxic femininity*. Granted, toxic femininity is not as known nor as validated in public opinion as toxic masculinity is (Singh). That probably has to do with the fact that women tend to be more mature than men and are more willing to seek healing from trauma. Toxic femininity is using female characteristics or extreme emotional actions to manipulate others, or subscription to the view that feminine individuals (mainly women) must be passive and allow the exploitation or degradation of themselves and others (Singh; Shi; Savin-Williams). Toxic femininity upholds, supports, and furthers toxic masculinity; it provides the undergirding for toxic masculinity to be perpetuated (Gilmore; Price). Spiritually speaking, toxic femininity results from denying the expression of the Divine Masculine. Dr. Ritch C. Savin-Williams asserted that one of the many ways toxic femininity manifests is when women are overly passive to the point of being consumed with taking care of others; it’s the woman who overexerts and exhausts herself taking care of others, while neglecting her own self-care and well-being (Savin-Williams). Some people use their femininity or their female characteristics (i.e., breasts, buttocks, shape, etc.) as a means to manipulate or to “play” men. (I’m *not* talking about the sugar daddy/sugar baby relationship; the terms and conditions of that type of relationship are very clear and defined.) I used to have a friend who told me that she would use men (her words, not mine) to take her out to eat at fancy restaurants. She would purposely order lobster, filet mignon, premium steak, caviar, champagne or whatever was the most expensive food item on the menu. She did this *knowing* that she wasn’t attracted to them, and expressed that she would drop them as soon as they were no longer useful. Now this certainly is not indicative of the majority of women, as toxic masculinity is in the case with men, but we can’t ignore that there are a number of women who behave

like this; who know that because they have certain features, they can use those features to manipulate and take advantage of men. White women using real, believable tears or screams to intentionally cause undue harm to black people, especially black men, is a perfect example of manipulative toxic femininity. (Let's never forget New York City's Amy Cooper whose remarkably believable screeches were caught on camera by black bird-watcher, Christian Cooper [Radford]. Or Carolyn Bryant Donham, who, according to The New York Times, admitted to lying about 14-year-old Emmett Till [Perez-Peña; Shi].) These examples do not account for all the ways toxic femininity manifests itself in individuals. Social psychologist, Dr. Devon Price, said in an article on Medium that toxic femininity "like toxic masculinity. . .comprises countless idiosyncratic rules and manipulative insecurities" (Price). In an article published on Vice, Dr. Price continued to explain how, culturally or societally, toxic femininity imposes restrictive standards on individuals regarding how they're supposed to express their femininity, especially their womanhood (Alao).

So What?

So what? What does this all mean?

Universal principles are: For light, there is dark; for good, there is evil; for positive, there is negative; for the sun, there is the moon; and for the Divine Masculine, there is the Divine Feminine.

Western ideologies such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and Christianity have institutionalized a static view of sex, gender, and gender expression. Yet, many indigenous peoples around the world, prior to European colonization, held fluid, culture- and religion-based views of The Divine Energies. Look at the Samoans, for example. Prior to the introduction of Christianity and presently, they have recognized four genders: men, women, *fa'afafines* ("in the manner of women"), and *fa'afatamas* ("in the manner of man") (Samuels). Fa'afafines and fa'afatamas are genderfluid individuals "who move between male and female worlds" (*Beyond Gender*.) Some Native American and some African ethnic groups, despite being separated by the

Atlantic Ocean, recognized dual- or two-spirited people and assigned *some* to spiritual leadership positions within their communities (Asanti; Sweet; *Two-Spirit*). But, as Dr. James H. Sweet, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison said, African and Native Americans groups didn't share cultural practices; there were cultural similarities in how they viewed gender and gender expression (192). Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health, describes a two-spirit, Native American person as an individual who has "[combined] activities of both men and women with traits unique to their status as a two-spirit person, and in some cases [aren't] considered as men or women but as third and/or fourth genders" (*Two-Spirit*). Prior to European interference, a number of African tribes or ethnic groups not only affirmed masculine females and feminine males in their communities (Asanti 25), but some African groups did not assign gender identities (i.e., boy or girl) to their children, but waited until later in their lives, or they assigned a gender identity to children based on their dominant Energy rather than their sex (Buckle). Despite being called savages and backwards, it appears that indigenous peoples around the world held more complex and more fluid ways of looking at gender and gender expression.

Speaking of gender expression, if feminine *men* are trying to "be like women" or trying to "outdo women", how does one explain feminine little boys or masculine little girls? Could it be?—Is it possible that there exists in the spiritual realm Energies that children are generally drawn towards? Feminine boys have nothing to do with the presence of a father, or the lack thereof. Many feminine boys and men exist even *with* the presence of a father—even the presence of a loving, involved father. Masculine girls have nothing to do with. . .what? *Motherlessness*? Growing up around all boys doesn't make a little girl masculine. Maybe, just maybe, gravitation towards the Energies lie somewhere between predetermined and self-determined.

Western, American attitudes towards femininity (and women) need to be reexamined. I say this, not because

a man rejected me because of my femininity, but because *femininity itself*—not my character, not an unattraction to me, not something I’ve said—but femininity itself was the insult. Dr. Leigh Johnson, coordinator of the Gender Studies minor at Marymount University, asserted that this attitude exists in the west’s patriarchal culture because it stems from the denigration of the feminine. (And since there is a denigration of the feminine within patriarchy, there is a celebration of the masculine.) Prevailing attitudes are, “Of course a woman wants to be like a man! Society and patriarchy understand that women want to be like men because a man is always ascribed more value.” She cited Freud’s Penis Envy Theory to support her claim. “Why wouldn’t women try to be masculine since masculinity is rewarded?” Femininity is disrespected because people—not just men—believe that the emulation of men is the goal: power, wealth, status, privilege, behavior, etc. “It also goes back to early language acquisition,” Dr. Johnson continued, “The word for girls who behave in boyish ways—as problematic as that construction is—is *tomboy*. It’s not a great word but people are willing to accept that label. Often, college-aged women would say, ‘I was a tomboy as a kid.’ Whereas *sissy*, our word for a boy who adopts girlish behavior, is much worse. Almost no young man would say, ‘I was a sissy as a child.’” Dr. Johnson explained the reason why femininity in boys and men is reprimanded while masculinity in girls and women is allowed. While personifying the patriarchal consciousness, Dr. Johnson answered, “Since masculinity is the desired norm, we can excuse girls for trying to model masculinity even though they’ll never succeed at it. We can understand why they would want to. Whereas for boys, we can’t understand why they would willingly give up their claims to masculinity.” Finally, she didn’t highlight any one power structure as the reason people believe that masculinity is exclusive to men and femininity to women; Dr. Johnson argues that white supremacy, patriarchy, Christianity, and Eurocentrism are all dependent upon and reinforce each other.

I must admit that my impetus for writing this essay is mostly selfish. I am healing from what *he* said to me and

how I responded to *his* harshness. How unnecessarily cruel I was to myself. I am in the process of healing my wounded Feminine. I am deprogramming and decolonizing my mind from western ideologies and prior religious trauma. There *is* a part of me, however, that hopes that another feminine male might read this and reject the “you’re too feminine” insult. May they bask in their feminine glory!

Traditionally, pseudo-spiritualists and many half-informed people peddled the principle of The Divine Energies to men and women separately: exhorting men to awaken their Divine Masculine, and encouraging women to awaken their Divine Feminine. However, the Energies work together. A sound spiritualist will tell men to tap into their Divine Feminine *as* they awaken their Masculine—or, to temper their masculinity with the Feminine. A sound spiritualist will tell women to tap into their Divine Masculine *as* they awaken their Feminine—or, to temper their femininity with the Masculine. And, for far too long, I have observed spiritualists speak to two genders solely—men and women—about the Divine Masculine and the Divine Feminine, respectively, as if men can’t be feminine, women can’t be masculine, and as if there aren’t other genders. Any teachings about the Divine Feminine are relevant to men also and all other genders. Any teachings about the Divine Masculine are relevant to women also and all other genders. Since neither the Divine Feminine nor the Divine Masculine are gender-specific, that means that all genders have full rights and access to both femininity and masculinity. A man can be feminine and a woman can be masculine. Any gender may express both Energies according to the nature of their essences. And if we believe this is true, then, what *he* said to me, “You’re too feminine for me”, was unnecessary, and a flagrant display of toxic masculinity and what Dr. Johnson describes as “the denigration of the feminine”.

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HIGH SCHOOL CONTEST WINNERS





IN DEFENSE OF THE FEATURETTE: A CASE STUDY OF
LIVIA GERSHON
by Sophia Futrell

In the field of journalism, it is often said that “every word counts.” This expression must be taken seriously by those who write featurettes, which are pieces that reside within a strict 300-750-word limit. This specific type of article is often regarded as “filler,” as many publications use them to fill space with brief bits of information or reviews. Featurettes are helpful for readers who can only take a few minutes to read the news, but they are commonly overlooked when compared to longer editorials or in-depth news reports.

At first glance, readers may be under the impression that featurette journalists lack an individual voice—after all, they must let researchers speak for themselves on an article’s subjects of interest to save space. However, writers such as Livia Gershon manage to include nuanced perspectives in even their shortest articles, using fitting word choices and snippets of information to hook readers in a way that authors of longer articles may struggle to do.

According to her biography, Livia Gershon is a freelance journalist who has done work for *Vice*, *Salon*, and many other informational and left-leaning news sites in the past. This columnist’s largest projects include contributing

to the Good Men Project (a collection of essays following the changing gender roles of men in the 21st century) and an approximately 5,700-word piece for *Buzzfeed* about Chinatown's rich and complex history from the perspectives of the area's immigrant residents. These larger ventures are from five or more years ago, however—now, Gershon spends most of her time writing prolifically for *Smithsonian*, *History*, and *JSTOR*, focusing on scientific studies, historical mysteries, and technological advancements. These shorter pieces are 3 to 5-minute reads which highlight new findings that challenge preconceived notions about historical events and cultural phenomena.

While her current work is more factual than opinionated, Livia Gershon consciously uses clever commentary and detailed data to strengthen the arguments made by the credible researchers she cites from. Readers may not realize it initially, but these decisions that featurette journalists such as Gershon make when writing can truly influence their perceptions of the articles' topics.

Gershon, like many other featurette journalists, writes on a variety of subjects. "World's Longest Pedestrian Suspension Bridge Opens in Portugal," from *Smithsonian's* SmartNews section, features a modern tourist attraction, but the writer still includes plenty of historical background on this site. Even though Gershon introduces more factual information in this article, her word choices convey an informal tone: she describes how the bridge "wobbles" and "demands a bit of a head for heights;" and that a local "braved the trip across [it]." These word choices, along with atmospheric photo choices from the editors, allow the reader to picture themselves at this travel destination and stay engaged with the article despite Gershon's use of heavy data. Keeping the same trend of appealing to this piece's target audience (tourists), she notes the area that surrounds this bridge and compares it to other similar architecture around the world, as well as other nearby sites to see. When compared to an article from *People Magazine* about this same topic, Gershon uses the same testimonies from travelers, but gave more information about the structure's inspiration and location. Overall, Gershon conveys a lighter tone to

counteract the amount of heavier information she squeezes into her compact filler articles.

In contrast, since “Medieval Britain’s Cancer Rates Were Ten Times Higher Than Previously Thought” is a scientific piece written for *Smithsonian* magazine, Gershon begins by introducing previous theories regarding historic cancer rates in Europe for readers unfamiliar with the subject. She then establishes the names and credentials of the new study’s reporters, followed by detailed information about the experimental process that led to their breakthrough. Gershon uses quotes directly from the researchers to build the reader’s trust about the reliability of this study. She also adds commentary on their possible errors but simultaneously opens up discussion for a possible counterargument: “[one archeologist] says it’s possible they actually undercounted the number of cancer cases among the bodies studied [because t]hey did not analyze all of the bones in each skeleton, and... discounted bones with damage that could have been caused either by cancer or other sources.” By doing this, the author acknowledges how scientific studies can still have room for debate and lets the reader decide how to interpret the results.

Not only does she amplify the voices of other archeologists and their reactions to the study, Gershon also contextualizes the broader history of cancer (the disease being traced back to ancient Egypt) using information from a *Gizmodo* reporter. She also mentions a *CNN* reporter’s ideas of further studies: “looking at bones before and after smoking became popular in Europe” (later specifying Industrial era-Europe). Additionally, extra commentary surrounding the lack of Renaissance innovations with cancer is offered by a writer for the *International Journal of Cancer*. Both these testimonies and their accompanying visuals (photos of the excavation site and X-rays of the artifacts) help readers understand the topic even if they are completely foreign to something as obscure as European cancer rates.

Gershon adjusts her tone and style to match the subject matter she is covering. “How to Dress for Dystopia” caught my attention as a reader for its alliterative

title and its clever hook: “[s]ome nineteenth-century novelists predicted horrible futures, with perfectly horrible clothing to match.” Gershon opens the article by listing familiar outfits from popular sci-fi franchises, then delves into specific stories with details from a credible literary scholar. She uses evocative word choices to convey different ideas that people from the 19th century had on the future of clothing: “[Progressives]... targeted items like corsets and bustles as vain and impractical. But [traditionalists] mocked or shuddered at women dressing in simpler, more ‘masculine’ attire.” The author summarizes each book she is focusing on and takes on a thoughtful tone to match the scholar’s own words while acknowledging the playful side of this story. Even though this *JSTOR* article covers a very different, literature-centered topic than what she usually writes, Gershon’s cohesive use of language fits in with the main points that her speakers are trying to explain.

Gershon’s careful attention to tone and subject matter is clear in the article “How The Black Labor Movement Envisioned Liberty.” This is a typical historical piece, but it is one where Gershon uses more connotative language to argue the importance of African American voices during the Reconstruction era. Most notably, she uses words that evoke a sense of patriotism: “envisioned liberty” in the title and “preserving the country’s character” in the heading are some examples of this. She moves from contextualization from a white economist’s perspective to a political scientist’s writings on Black republicans from the same period. The journalist puts emphasis on how ideas of racial equality influenced how Black laborers “imagined a different kind of industrial production: worker owned cooperatives.” Although this article is very brief, Gershon outlines an often-underrepresented historical topic.

In fact, Gershon seems to purposefully write on subjects that have received little mainstream attention, such as Black historical figures whose beliefs were misinterpreted by the Western lens. For example, as seen in her piece “How Sculptor Meta Warrick Challenged White Supremacy,” the journalist uses the actual name of her

subject in the titles instead of describing them solely based on race, then paints a full picture of that person's life. She does not try to exclude information about anyone, no matter how little is known about them by the reader. After all, not knowing who an article is talking about can hook in curious readers who want to find out and educate themselves on the topic.

The average consumers of news don't tend to think much of reads falling under 750 words, as they are easy to get through and are not viewed as highly as longer opinion- or research-focused articles. However, it is worth bringing attention to Livia Gershon and other featurette writers for managing to fit both nuanced narratives and accurate information into such short pieces. The featurette should be seen as the noble effort it is to amplify underrepresented and unknown topics, not simply "filler" between two larger articles.

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HOW TEXTILE ARTS HAVE EMPOWERED WOMEN TO
EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGHOUT AMERICAN
HISTORY

by Julia Carey

The varied world of so-called “women’s work” has spanned centuries and evolved along with the roles of women in American society. Crafts such as sewing, quilting, embroidery, and knitting have always been an outlet for women to utilize their creativity in a way accepted by society. Additionally, these activities have evolved to create opportunities for political or societal commentary in the 21st century. Both in past and in present, “Needlework is the one art in which women controlled the education of their daughters, the production of the art, and were also the audience and critics” (Mainardi).

During Colonial times, women infrequently made quilts due to the lack of access to textiles (Breneman). Knitting was more practical since wool was easily available (Breneman). Some wealthier women made coverlets (Brick). Arguably, the most significant textile art during this time was embroidery. Wealthier families taught their daughters to embroider as part of their limited education. The samplers of 18th-century American women are often “all that remains to testify to the otherwise unrecorded lives of their makers” (Peck). These samplers recorded religious

messages, alphabets, and scenes of daily life. Women of this time became property of their husbands¹ and found little recognition or artistic allowance, but embroidery samplers were an exception: "Every sampler is a historical record of one girl's educational training and the type and value placed on that education. The overall design, materials used, and design motifs give evidence of her culture, religion, social class, and personal artistic accomplishments and abilities" (Davis). Samplers became a personal accomplishment in addition to a skill to attract suitors.

From the 1840s on, an expanded textile industry allowed a wider range of women to create pieced quilts with squares and rectangles of fabric forming designs (Brick). This resulted from the Industrial Revolution, as American factories produced cheap cottons in a variety of patterns (*Women's Work*). Pioneer women held quilting bees as a social but productive event, sitting around a large quilting frame (*Frontier Quilts*). Double Wedding ring quilts were used for weddings of loved ones, often made as gifts from mother to daughter (*Frontier Quilts*). Another type of sentimental quilt was the autograph quilt, often made up of blocks with plain fabric in the center so a quilting club or group of friends could bid farewell to a departing friend and remain in her memory each time she viewed the quilt (*Frontier Quilts*).

During the Civil War, women found ways to assist in the war effort using textile arts. They knit socks, gloves, and other items for utilitarian purposes. It is estimated that over 250,000 quilts and comforters had been made for soldiers by the end of the war (Breneman). Additionally,

¹ "Marriage and property laws, or "coverture," stipulated that a married woman did not have a separate legal existence from her husband. A married woman or *femme covert* was a dependent, like an underage child or a slave, and could not own property in her own name or control her own earnings" ("Women and the Law").

women made beautiful rather than functional pieces for sale. In the North, silk fabrics were pieced (stitched together, forming a hidden seam) to be sold at fairs to support Union war costs (Breneman). In the South, women appliqued (stitched a cut shape of fabric on top of another) floral cutouts to create elaborate quilts, raising money for three gunboats (Breneman).

As women pushed for suffrage and rights traditionally given to men, they utilized “women’s work.” Between 1908 and 1913 the Artists’ Suffrage League embroidered over 150 protest banners to support the women’s suffrage movement (McCracken). The use of a traditionally feminine craft to state messages about the rights of women appeared a powerful juxtaposition at the time. They “repurposed a craft associated with the private domestic sphere to make a public case for suffrage” (McCracken). Across the seas, embroidery carried just as much weight: After being arrested for protesting, British suffragette Janie Terrero embroidered a handkerchief to pass time in jail, referencing her membership in the WSPU² and naming other suffragettes who were fed by force³ (Wheeler). Similar themes would be reflected in 21st century American samplers carrying subversive feminist messages such as “Don’t tell me to smile” (McCracken). The association of embroidery with domesticity made it an ideal medium for women to express their political sentiments both subtly and boldly.

In the early 20th century a new wave of industrialization spurred creative dressmaking. The spread of the sewing machine made it possible to complete necessary sewing more quickly, leaving more time for artistic creations (Brick). Mass market patterns became popularized. Newspapers often had sections dedicated to clothes patterns. In 1926, despite the growing popularity of

² The Women’s Social and Political Union, a leading party for women’s suffrage in Britain (Wheeler).

³ Suffragettes often protested while in prison by going on hunger strikes, sometimes leading authorities to feed them by force (Cook).

ready-made garments, “98 percent of rural respondents and 92 percent of urban respondents owned a sewing machine. A contemporaneous survey by the Bureau of Home Economics (then part of the Department of Agriculture), found that at least 80 percent of women surveyed made at least some clothing for themselves and their children” (Gordon). Throughout the first decades of the 20th century, women continued to participate in the tradition of clothes-making to create customized and less expensive clothing for themselves and their families.

During the Great Depression, society relied on women’s skills as seamstresses, harkening back to a pre-Civil War time when pioneer women had to make all the clothes their families wore (Gordon). Although mass-manufactured clothing was available, it was an expense that most could not afford (Gordon). Many women made quilts and clothes from feed-sacks.⁴ “At a time when many people felt they had lost control, [choice in] details such as how they could dress themselves and their families was a great help” (Gordon). Creating clothes and bedding was an opportunity for creativity as well as a necessity.

From World War II on, the practice of quilting and other crafts generally decreased. Women entered the workplace in large numbers due to wartime necessity and industrialization, and therefore had less personal time. Though these crafts never disappeared, they were revitalized starting in the 1970s (Brick). One contributor to the renewal of interest in quilts was the American Bicentennial museum exhibit of quilts in 1976 (Knauer).

One of the most important quilting movements of the 20th century began in an isolated Alabama town. The African-American quilters of Gee’s Bend utilized scraps of old clothing to form minimalist geometric patterns out of clothing scraps beginning in the late 19th century (Wallach).

⁴ Feed sacks were patterned bags used for cotton. They were frequently repurposed during the 1930s for those lacking money as fabric and new clothes were too expensive (Brick).

Gee's Bend's "eye-poppingly gorgeous quilts turn out to be some of the most miraculous works of modern art America has produced" (Kimmelman). With solid colors and geometric patterns, they represent landmarks in the civil rights movement and important events such as the death of a loved one. Their significance has only recently become recognized (starting in the early 2000s), selling for thousands of dollars and being displayed in prominent museums (Wallach). The Gee's Bend quilts constitute an important piece of quilting innovation.

In recent years, the "women's work" passed down from mother to daughter has transformed into hobbies accessed through resources. Thousands of books, magazines, and programs on quilting, clothes sewing, crafts, embroidery, and more have been released (Brick). The internet has encouraged creative strides and increased in interest in these crafts, particularly during Covid-19 isolation (Meiling). Many Millennials and members of Gen-Z acquire these skills via YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, and similar platforms (Steinkopf-Frank). The internet and social media offer a dizzying display of possible patterns and inspiration (Meiling). For the beginner, there are plentiful how-tos. For all arts, blogs have become a popular way to spread ideas (Meiling). Such developments make these crafts far more accessible to those outside of the traditional crafter's stereotype: a grandmotherly American white woman with old-fashioned preferences (Steinkopf-Frank). The members of these new textile arts communities are far younger, more multicultural, and include men and the LGBTQ community (Knauer). Although individuals of different races and cultures have always participated in these crafts, there is now more exposure for multiculturally influenced crafts. Men in particular were restricted from participating in crafts that traditionally espoused feminine values. Additionally, "mainstream sewing companies have moved slowly to market to men. There might be many men who sew, but don't publicly share their creations, since the perception that this is 'women's work' has lingered" (Steinkopf-Frank). Despite remaining stigma, there are small but significant groups of men visibly participating in

these crafting communities. For example, Norris Dánta Ford is a home sewist and fashion designer who “is often the only man in a craft store” (Steinkopf-Frank). Finding that these establishments mostly catered towards women, he started a Facebook group of 200 male sewists (Steinkopf-Frank).

As the people involved in textile arts communities have shifted over the decades, so have the arts in which they create. Embroidery designs today are often characterized as “subversive,” containing curse words and feminist ideas (Kim). They espouse the idea that “there’s an undeniable satisfaction in pulling thread through the last letter-limb of an embroidered expletive or sewing up the image of a raised fist” (Kim). Current embroidery and cross stitch designs further their legacy of political use, juxtaposing ideas of delicacy and femininity with bold calls to action, echoing the era of suffrage.

Another textile art that has experienced a recent resurgence is the creation of clothing. Clothes-making can be a way for individuals to express their unique identities, creating gender-neutral pieces and personally tailored designs. Creating one’s own clothes offers a rebuke to the world of fast fashion (Bain). “Within the digital dressmaking community there is evidence that sewists use their blogs to critically consider their craft in a range of ways including its relationship to feminism, as well as undertaking practices that connect with the feminist goals of social justice and community-building” (Bain). For instance, “#vintagestylenotvintagevalues is a popular hashtag, with retro-style sewists disavowing regressive gender politics and racism” (Steinkopf-Frank). New members of the dressmaking community are eager to create more open communities while using their creative platforms to express social and political commentary.

Today, quilts are exhibited in major museums and quilt shows, especially in the United States (Brick).⁵ They are bold, bright, and modern, also offering a canvas for powerful messages. The organization Social-Justice Sewing Academy teaches young people to make quilts displaying or implying social messages important to them (Hough). “It is all about youth empowerment and agency,” Trail says. “At first glance, SJSA is an organization that seeks to empower youth to create social justice art, but beyond the art it is really about empowering youth to think about how they can create change that is bigger than themselves” (Hough).

Women’s work is now recognized for what it has always been: art. Textile arts should be acknowledged for their significant role in American history. At times when women were not regarded as true artists and were only allowed to contribute to society in narrow ways, women used these socially accepted skills to their fullest potential. The evolution of crafts such as sewing, embroidery, and quilting is directly related to significant events: wars, depressions, migrations. Building on this rich past, textile arts have become accessible and innovative forms of expression.

⁵ Quilt shows first began as 19th century country fairs, evolving into major competitions starting with the 1933 World’s Fair (Brick).

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AUTHOR AND EDITOR BIOGRAPHIES



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Julia Carey is an 11th grade student at Yorktown High School. She's been an avid quilter, seamstress, and crafter for most of her life, with detours into knitting and cross stitch/embroidery. She's a poet and writer, participating in her school's literary magazine. Her other interests include traveling, baking, history, genealogy, reading, and political activism. She also leads the Yorktown chapter of Key Club.

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