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THOMAS MANSOUR

Connected but Alone: The Paradox of Social Media and Social Support

ABSTRACT

Technology has been integrated seamlessly with the lives of college students, making the effects that technology has on their mental health an important topic of study. This paper discusses the use of smartphones, social media, and technology's impact on student stress using Social Support Theory. After analyzing multiple studies on the topic, it was found that increasing smartphone use has a negative impact on social support resources. Additionally, social norms on college campuses promote the use of smartphones. Relationship quality was also analyzed in regard to social support, noting that the decreased intimacy in online relationships leads to a decreased amount of social support received. Increased phone use is also associated with an increased risk in internet addiction, which drives a cycle of increased phone use and decreased social support. Lastly, academic performance is found to be closely related to self-control, which is also affected by social support. Decreased social support from online relationships decreases self-control resources and limits academic achievement in college students.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is at the forefront of the latest generation of college students, so much so that it's hard for them to imagine making it through school without smartphones or laptops. Smartphones make it easy to access information that can aid with coursework, and social media networks keep students in constant connection with one another. Even with endless resources available, technology is contributing to the rising levels of stress of students everywhere. This paper aims to focus on the stress levels of current college students through the lens of social support and how social media and smartphones have impacted social support.

Social support has been well-researched and known to reduce the amount and physiological response to stress through the combination of two models. In the Stress-buffering model, social support can act as a buffer to stress by altering an individual's perception of stress and re-evaluating their cognitive appraisals. Cognitive appraisal theory is closely related to social support, as it relates to an individual's subjective perception of their stressors. Social support acts as a buffer between the individual and their stressors, making the stressors seem less intense and more manageable to deal with. This re-evaluation of their cognitive appraisal promotes better coping mechanisms for the individual, directly leading to a decreased response to stress (Li et al., 2016). Alternatively, in the main-effect model, social support has been found to promote more beneficial behaviors between individuals that will directly lower their stress levels (Pilcher & Bryant, 2016).

Social support can be divided into three general categories: instrumental, informational, and emotional(Wu et al., 2016). Instrumental support consists of providing physical or material aid along with behavioral assistance. Informational support involves guidance, advice, or a solution to a problem. Emotional support is derived from caring, loving, sympathy, and trusting feelings toward the individual in need of support (Wu et al., 2016). These aspects of social support make it increasingly relevant, especially in relation to technology use.

However, with the immense expansion of technology use and social media, it is relatively unknown if social support from virtual relationships offers the same benefits as in-person social support. Research has shown that using smartphones in inappropriate social environments can deteriorate in-person relationships (Hong et al., 2021). The use of smartphones in face-to-face communication may cause the formation of unintentional avoidance in relationships. Current college students are a prime group to examine as they have been exposed to technology for most of their lives. The trend of increasing stress found in college students may be attributed to their excessive use of technology affecting their social relationships. Thus, the use of smartphones and social media can change the dynamics of social support in student relations.

The shift to primarily online forms of communication in college students seems to play a significant role in the general increase in stress, primarily due to the decrease in social support available to them. Social norms drive smartphone use in student relations. When paired with the decreased relationship quality and support of online relationships, students increase their risk of developing internet addiction through excessive phone use.

SOCIAL NORMS FRIVE SMARTPHONE USAGE IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Social factors embedded in student lifestyles require them to maintain an online presence, driving smartphone use as a social norm in colleges. Alotaibi et al. conducted qualitative interviews to identify possible factors that have increased smartphone use on college campuses. Among them, Alotaibi identified that "students indicated that peer pressure was the leading cause of smartphone overuse (using it everywhere has become fashionable (Student N-5), Fear of being called outdated (Staff N-1), and mimicking others (Staff N-6) lead to smartphone overuse" (Alotaibi et al. 2022).Today, college students feel that smartphones are required not just to benefit their education but because of the social pressure to have and use smartphones. Peer pressure and other social factors promoting smartphone use become stressors for students unless they comply with these social norms. As a result, students cope by using their smartphones more to appear on trend with others. Moreover, Hong et al. relate that phone use is governed by the social norms associated with either online or offline communication. Through their statistical analysis, Hong et al. identified a "significant and negative correlation among the co-present descriptive social norms, daily time spent on interactions in smartphone-based social media" (Hong et al. 2021). The co-present norms refer to social norms associated with in-person interactions, such as maintaining eye contact. The strength and enforcement of norms like this can decrease phone use among college students. However, in a world becoming more and more accepting and reliant on technology, these social norms may no longer be enforced. Instead, new social norms regarding online communications have developed, such as fast responses to messages and phone calls. Now there are two social governing bodies an individual has to follow in regard to social interactions. The normalization of phone use among college students reinforces online communication.

Online communication can form a disconnect between self-control and social support in offline communication. College students rely on self-control to keep themselves on track with coursework and enable themselves to take the next steps toward their future careers. Pilcher & Bryant's review article on the implications of social support as a self-control resource explains a model to maintain self-control based on a "metaphorical 'muscle' that is capable of fatigue and failure if it is pushed too far" (Pilcher & Bryant 2016). Essentially, individuals have a limited capacity for self-control and can be exhausted of resources. In their review, Pilcher & Bryant mentioned that "social support could be one method to better manage and replenish resources needed for self-control, especially under stress-inducing situations" (Pilcher & Bryant 2016). With its connection to self-control, individuals with higher social support may be able to preserve their resources of self-control and maintain goal-achieving behaviors like completing their coursework. Hong et al. studied the impact of social norms on smartphone use. Interestingly, they found that for online communication, "interactions with peers coincide with smartphone-based entertainment" (Hong et al. 2021). In this day and age, technology and social media have become an integral part of the college student's lifestyle, even becoming an essential aspect for face-to-face communication. With so much news and content being spread around online, being disconnected from social media can leave people in the dark while engaging in face-to-face conversation. The desire to keep up with trends online is a powerful force that distracts individuals and forces them to use their self-control resources. If using smartphones to consume media is expected going into social interactions, individuals will be more likely to increase their phone use to consume said media. Since online media is very rewarding and offers instant gratification, it is very difficult for individuals to delay using their smartphones to consume media in favor of completing their daily tasks. A contradiction can be seen between social support and self-control once technology has become integrated into the relationship. Pilcher states that social support preserves self-control resources, yet students are met with social norms that are pressuring them to constantly be online and increase their phone use. To combat this, they must actually use their self-control resources to maintain connection with others and receive social support. This disconnect may be important in separating online vs offline communication. On the internet, individuals are pressured into giving into looking at entertainment rather than focusing on goal-achieving behaviors, which will have negative impacts on them and disconnect social support from self-control.

RELATIONSHIP QUALITY ONLINE VS OFFLINE

Intimacy is a key part of many relationships, but with the addition of technology, it shifts social support both on and offline. Lomanowska's review paper delves into the topic of online intimacy and well-being as communication shifts into a digital age. In this review, Lomanoska finds that self-disclosure was found to mediate the benefits of social support on stress. Lomanowska found that "preserving anonymity in online contexts can promote the disclosure of personal information, opinions, and feelings much more readily than in face-to-face interactions" (Lomanowska et al. 2016). These individuals have no ties or connections to their physical bodies on the platform. They can freely share their thoughts and have more intimate conversations with others online. The lack of characteristics associated with each online account can also eliminate potentially awkward in-person interactions that cause an online connection to die out. Lomanowska identifies these as "gating features" which are physical features attributed to an individual such as skin color, sex, race, etc (Lomanowska et al. 2016). These features could be susceptible to stigma when faced with offline face-to-face interactions. The anonymity and lack of a physical representation of social networking users allow them to be more uninhibited on these social platforms, allowing them to be more personal in their conversations and "accelerate intimacy formation in comparison to offline contexts" (Lomanowska et al. 2016). The accelerated intimacy involved with these online relationships can be used as a resource for social support, and act as a buffer to a person's stress levels. Theoretically, social media would allow the formation of many relationships through the enabled "accelerated intimacy," however, this does not seem to be the case. Xinwei Li's review regarding loneliness and mobile phone use indicated that "loneliness was significantly and positively correlated with mobile phone addiction" (Li et al. 2021). This is further supported in Jiayu Li's cross-sectional study on students during the COVID-19 pandemic: "Loneliness was significantly and positively associated with PMPU [problematic mobile phone use] during the COVID-19 pandemic" (Li et al. 2021). There is significant evidence supporting the notion that increasing mobile phone use leads to stronger feelings of loneliness. This contradicts the concept of "accelerated intimacy" found in Lomanowska's paper. If the benefits of social media were enough to form meaningful relationships over social media, users would not be left feeling lonely. It is important to understand that accelerated intimacy is found when anonymity is preserved online when there is no connection between the physical person and the virtual user in the online conversation. These individuals are disclosing personal information and feelings to each other but do not even know who is on the other side of the screen. This lack of a connection could be counteractive to the effects of accelerated intimacy. Individuals fail to feel an intimate connection with other online users due to a lack of a personal connection to the physical person. Furthermore, revealing each other's identity may stunt the accelerated intimacy as each user must pay more attention to what they disclose to one another now that their physical identity is linked to the virtual account, but this may not actually be a problem if a relationship has already formed online. Facilitating these online relationships with some offline/in-person interaction may create a stronger foundation for the relationship after it has been established, allowing each user to have a connection to the physical user while concurrently benefitting from the effects of accelerated intimacy. Overall, online relationships on their own may fail to provide users with strong, meaningful relationships unless coupled with offline interactions to form personal relations with the people behind the screen.

Along with accelerated intimacy, screens are preventing people from including physical contact in their relationships, leading to decreased intimacy and social support. Lomanowska et al. analyzed multiple sources and came to the general conclusion that "physical contact has also been shown to mediate some of the health benefits of intimate interactions. [...] For instance, warm physical contact has been shown to reduce stress reactivity among romantic partners" (Lowmanoska et al. 2016). Decreasing stress reactivity is vital for dealing with and managing stress in day-to-day life. This is the main feature of the stress-buffering model, where social support acts as a buffer between the stressor and the individual, which allows people to perceive a stressor as less of a threat and incorporate better coping mechanisms. The reduced "stress reactivity" that Lomanowska mentions seems to be the result of a buffer that is generated from social support theory, as physical contact is able to mediate the effects of social support on stress. Physical contact between individuals increases intimacy between them and further increases the effects of social support, proving to be a vital component of relationships. Lomanowska also mentions that Maintaining online relationships, although supporting the emotional connection needs of humans, lacks the human need for physical contact. Furthermore, since physical contact is proven to mediate the effects of social support, individuals with primarily online relationships will have decreased social support available to them. As a result the body will experience negative effects on their perceptions of stress. Pilcher's article builds off of this idea by providing a biological explanation for the effects of physical contact on social support:

“Perceived social support may also be highly correlated with the release of oxytocin. Oxytocin is a neuropeptide that relaxes individuals and is released when they are interacting with others. The amount of oxytocin released is positively correlated with the closeness of the individuals interacting and creates a calming response for individuals, especially when they are under stress” (Pilcher et al. 2016). Social support’s effects can be explained through the function of oxytocin. During the release of this hormone, the body becomes calmer and more relaxed. The response given is positively correlated with the closeness of individuals which can also be interpreted as intimacy. More intimate relationships offer more benefits to the individual by increasing their release of oxytocin, enabling their buffer to stress. In online relationships, the lack of physical touch lowers the intimacy in the relationship, which subsequently will decrease the amount of oxytocin the individuals have and destroy their buffer.

PREVALENCE AND EFFECTS OF INTERNET ADDICTION

The integration of technology in students’ daily lives provides limitless contact with their support systems, while at the same time leading to an over-reliance on phones for support instead of in-person interactions. Tang’s study on the causes for Facebook addiction notes that one of the main reasons that individuals use social media is to “maintain existing relationships and to expand personal social networks” (Tang et al. 2016). Social media is beneficial for not only keeping long-distance friends connected but strengthening new in-person friendships. With the workload of classes and the busy daily lives of college students, it is not always easy to plan time and accommodate a friend in one’s schedule for social support, especially in times of unpredicted stress where a student needs urgent support. During these times, connecting and communicating with each other over social media can provide a more convenient way to access social support resources. These relationships are then able to be used as social support resources that can be accessed almost instantaneously through the connection and integration of social media. This notion is supported by Alotaiba’s qualitative study, where one college student wrote that “There is no doubt that the smartphone has a prominent role in our daily lives by keeping us in touch with others, keeping us informed about the cultures around us, and informing us about the most important news” (Alotaiba et al. 2022). The smartphone has become one of the most powerful tools a college student could have. Granting users immediate access to information and a medium for rapid communication between friends, other students, and professors makes smartphones a massive convenience. Unfortunately, this dependence on smartphones may come with negative consequences. Zhao et al. introduce the notion that "relying heavily on online social support may increase the risk of dependence on the Internet, leading to Internet addiction" (Zhao et al. 2022). By being a great convenience, individuals are more inclined to use smartphones for most tasks that benefit from their use. As a result, they find themselves relying on and spending the bulk of their time on these devices. This was confirmed in Haug's review that "a longer duration of smartphone use, [...] and indicating that social networking is the most personally relevant smartphone function was positively associated with smartphone addiction" (Haug et al. 2015). The variety of factors that draw college students to smartphones drastically increases their smartphone usage daily. With high rates of smartphone usage, these studies come to the same conclusion that students are unknowingly at risk for developing an internet addiction.

Once someone is addicted to the internet, they likely will be stuck in a cycle of decreased social support. Wu's paper further explains the correlation between internet addiction and social support using a cross-sectional study. Addicted adolescents preferred using the Internet to gain the needed social relationships and supports whilst going through difficult times in their lives (Wu & Cheng, 2007). A study by Wang et al. showed online social support is positively associated with Internet addiction, whereas offline social support ties is negatively associated with Internet (Wang & Wang, 2013). Individuals who do not have a strong offline support system tend to search for it online via social media. Subsequently, these individuals begin to spend more time online, putting them at greater risk of developing an internet addiction, compared to those who have a solid in-person support system. Another study conducted by Herrero et al. investigating the social support of internet-addicted users 12 months after diagnosis. It was found that "higher levels of smartphone addiction in Wave 1 [initial diagnosis] were predictive of lower levels of social support in Wave 3 [after 12 months]" (Herrero et al. 2019). As individuals become more addicted to the internet, their social support resources start to deteriorate and even dip lower than the initial amount of social support they had before relying on the internet. Individuals who continuously turn to the internet for validation instead of looking only increase their phone dependency. Over-reliance on online social support through social media creates a negative cycle of internet addiction, reinforcing the notion that online relationships and communication fail to provide users with valid social support that provides benefits on their own. They must be used in moderation and as a supplement to offline communication to prevent an over-reliance on technology and internet addiction.

Academic achievement can be easily affected by internet addiction and one way to maintain an academic standard is by utilizing self-control. Previous studies from various sources have already identified a correlation between internet addiction and academic achievement. Zhang et al. build off this known correlation by exploring possible mediating factors that cause the decrease in academic performance. Specifically, they found that "the decrease in academic achievement was related to academic engagement and disaffection, an outward form of motivation" (Zhang et al. 2018). Students' engagement in coursework decreases as they become addicted to the internet. Their lack of engagement is found to be due to their lack of motivation to finish and participate in the coursework. College students are becoming distracted using technology during class which is affecting their performance in class. For instance, a student in class describes the actions of an internet-addicted student while in a lecture: "I see many of them (students overusing smartphones) busy during the lectures with their smartphones. Today in the lecture, I saw one of them chatting via smartphone, during the lecture" (Alotaibi et al. 2022). These students are found to be actively not participating in class, even going to the extent of using their smartphones for inappropriate activities during class time. Their lack of motivation to participate in class may be due to their smartphone since their addiction makes it hard for them to put it down. In this case, self-control may be the cause of the lack of motivation in these students. Self-control is connected to social support, so when it is lacking, these individuals experience an impaired sense of self-control resources. Pilcher & Bryant describes the concept of "ego depletion," which occurs when these self-control resources are depleted: "Following ego depletion, decision making becomes less efficient, control of emotions is diminished, impulsivity increases, perseverant behavior decreases, and goal achievement becomes less important" (Pilcher & Bryant 2016). Individuals with ego depletion are characterized by very impulsive behavior and a decrease in goal-achieving behaviors. Students with an internet addiction inevitably lose their self-control resources due to the deterioration of social support. They may initially use the internet to gather more social support resources, but because of their initial low level of self-control to begin with, they are drawn to the addictive nature of the internet, featuring activities that offer instant gratification. As their addiction develops, they lose all of their self-control and enter a state of ego depletion, in which they lose their motivation to perform academically and suffer from the increasing stresses associated with low academic performance.

Strengthening in-person social support may be a method of reducing internet addiction in college students. Wu further mentions that "Addicted adolescents may also have weak social, personal, and familial relationships, which may lead to social isolation, loneliness, depression, familial discord, and academic failure" (Wu et al. 2016). These addicted individuals begin to develop psychological distress symptoms after forming an internet addiction. Presumably, the lack of social support resources in their lives leaves no buffer to defend against stress. With no buffer to stress, stressors that normal individuals perceive as minor may induce a significant stress response in internet-addicted individuals. These individuals continue to search online for their desperately needed social support but unknowingly feed the cycle that continues to decrease their social support. Wen Li builds on the topic by providing a qualitative interview with an internet-addicted individual: "I think it makes me feel like blah after being on the Internet a long time, just like I feel like I wasted a lot of time. I think even sometimes I don't have social interactions with people during long periods of the day, I got more irritable." (Li et al. 2016). This individual begins to feel stressed after using the internet, noting that they feel like they have wasted the day, and the lack of social interactions and social support cause them to become irritable. The exhaustion of the student feeling "blah" could be due to the negative long-term effects associated with stress, and attempting to manage all of this stress with no buffer causes a lower quality of life for these individuals. Since internet addiction leaves such negative impacts on the lives of affected individuals, prevention and intervention are essential to stop others from developing this addiction. Wu mentioned previously that "addicted adolescents may also have weak social, personal, and familial relationships" which may be the source of the affected individual's problems (Wu et al. 2016). Inherently, these individuals do not have enough offline social support, for which they try to compensate for by pursuing the internet for social support and beginning the never-ending cycle of addiction. Their weak physical interpersonal relationships should be targeted instead of compensating and using the internet to form more connections. Treatment and therapy should be encouraged and given to individuals lacking in offline social support, which will allow them to reconsider using the Internet for all their social interactions. By strengthening offline interactions rather than creating new online ones, individuals can break the cycle of addiction and begin to rebuild their buffer to stress without increasing their smartphone usage or being at risk for addiction. In this cycle, self-control is not only mediating poor academic performance but is also fueling the formation and strengthening of internet addiction.

CONCLUSION

Through the lens of Social Support theory, increasing smartphone use, and social media decreases the available social support for college students and consequently increases their stress. The buffer that social support creates is not as strong when using online forms of communication. Intimacy generated in these relationships may be accelerated due to increased self-disclosure over online media, but ultimately not strong enough to form powerful bonds between individuals due to a lack of other factors such as physical contact.

Current social norms and societal standards surrounding college campuses expect students to have and use smartphones. These norms are driving and increasing smartphone use for college students, paired with the decreased social support received from these relationships, creating a loop that drives individuals closer to internet addiction and social isolation. Finally, the correlation between social support and self-control can be the cause of decreased academic performance for college students, which is a significant stressor in their daily lives. Increasing student's stress and decreasing their support to deal with stress are fundamental reasons that college students today are facing this increasing trend of stress.

Possible ways to manage this increase in stress are to increase awareness in college students, allowing them to create more in-person relationships that will offer them more support to deal with their stressful lives. Changing social norms and perceptions about social media can be an effective way to decrease smartphone use in college students. Therapy for internet addiction can also be considered helpful to allow individuals a path toward developing more offline relationships and interactions.

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JANET JOHNSON

Disparities in Pain Management: A Gendered Examination

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a thorough examination of the disparities present between men and women when it comes to pain management by healthcare professionals. It explores how the prevalence of prejudices among healthcare professionals and within medical literature leads to women's pain complaints not being taken seriously, due to women being perceived as "hysterical" or "emotional," and even cited towards psychogenic causation when the pain can be biologically explained, leading to treatments that fail to alleviate this pain. It also finds that even when pain is believed to be present, it is diminished due to how women's pain has become regarded as "normal," also leading to inadequate treatment. It then delves deeper into this topic by exploring the widespread lack of representation of women in pain studies, and how this could also lead to women receiving incorrect or delayed diagnoses, along with treatment that is ineffective or not effective enough to treat their pain, since their exclusive experience is not taken into account. The significance of this underrepresentation is emphasized when the many biological and inherent differences between how women and men experience pain is explored. Overall, it urges the importance of improving gender equality in healthcare, and more specifically pain management, and advises achieving this through educating healthcare providers on gender bias, reviewing outdated medical literature and clinical studies to ensure they are accurate in assessing and treating women's pain, and ensuring the inclusion of women in future pain research studies.

INTRODUCTION

Women have suffered many inequalities throughout history, and though considerable progress has been made, many differences persist in the way women are treated compared to men, across many fields. One of these fields is healthcare, where women often experience less effective and less helpful treatment due to not being taken seriously, or due to being misunderstood. This disparate treatment often stems from prejudices people carry against women, such as them being "dramatic" or "emotional" in relation to their male counterparts. Many healthcare workers also lack an understanding of how the female body differs from the male body, which may result in improper or less effective treatment. The personal experiences of many women make this issue essential to understand and resolve, as women commonly encounter issues related to misdiagnosis or maltreatment across the many different fields of healthcare.

This interest prompts the question: How is pain managed differently by healthcare professionals from men to women? This question will investigate how differently women have their complaints of pain managed as compared to men, and examine the reasons for this. Throughout this investigation, a variety of different frames and ideas will be explored, the most essential being the feminist frame, as the inequality women face whilst receiving medical treatment will be delved into. This investigation of the disparities between men's and women's pain management leads to the conclusion that inequality in pain management from health professionals spans a variety of different fields of medicine, and the main issues that leads to these disparities in the treatment of pain is a lack of representation of women in pain research studies and prejudices that medical literature and healthcare professionals may carry towards women that may lead to an improper diagnosis or treatment path.

PREVALENCE OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN PAIN TREATMENT

Women have consistently struggled to receive proper treatment for pain, regardless of location or reasoning. This trend of medical negligence was expressed by Amy M. Miller, Ph.D, who is the CEO and president for the Society for Women's Health Research, as she states that "she heard from many women that their suffering wasn't initially taken seriously by medical providers" (Thomas Jefferson University Online, 2019). As supported by a prominent figure in the field of women's health research, women often have claimed they do not have their pain properly understood and taken care of by health providers. From this, it can be concluded that commonly held prejudices against women, such as that they are "too emotional," lead to them often not being taken seriously at first by their healthcare providers. Women often receive misdiagnoses for pain, and thus improper treatment as a result. This disparity is exhibited throughout various studies, such as one study where pain treatment received by patients going to the Emergency Department for acute abdominal pain was studied according to gender. This prospective cohort study was done by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania, where they concluded that men were more likely than women to receive opioid analgesia, a powerful pain medication, when reporting similar self-reported scores of pain intensity, and that this disparity persisted across both residents and attending physicians (Chen et al., 2008). These results affirm that there may be an unconscious gender bias widespread within the field of healthcare when it comes to the administration of medication for pain management, from observing this disparity in the issuing opioid analgesia in real patient cases. Furthermore, this noteworthy study was remarkable in the fact that it found that gender bias was present regardless of the healthcare provider treating the patient, resident or attending. This indicates that doctors who are still in training (residents), and who may even be new and inexperienced in treating patients, could exhibit this unconscious bias as well. This would imply that the effects of gender bias within healthcare are more pervasive than originally thought, as many physicians across different ranges of experience may carry this unconscious bias within them that would inhibit them from providing proper diagnoses and treatments to female patients. Considering this significant issue in the field of healthcare, there may be a multitude of reasons that contribute to gender bias in pain treatment.

PREJUDICES CARRIED AGAINST WOMEN

The stereotypical view carried against women, such as that they are too "dramatic" or "emotionally unstable" is likely one of the main contributing factors to this widespread issue. These stereotypes are unfortunately carried unconsciously within many health professionals, and are passed down through medical literature. Researchers Diane Hoffmann and Anita Tarzian found this within their study of how gender discrimination shapes pain treatment, when they addressed that a "bias toward psychogenic causation for disorders in women has occurred even in well defined painful biological processes" and support this by describing how therapeutic literature unscientifically resources to psychogenic causation, even with the presence of well-documented organic etiologic factors, or measurable biological changes, that may cause the disease symptoms (Hoffman & Tarzian, 2001). As the passage discussed, medical literature has tended to irrationally cite a psychological cause for women's pain, rather than physical, even when their pain could be biologically explained, thus leading to ineffective treatments based on these false diagnoses. The fact that this stereotype of women being emotional or hysterical exists within medical literature, which is used for the education of healthcare professionals, allows for it to be passed on to many more healthcare providers, after already instilling this bias in so many. A prime example of this mistreatment is the prescription of sedatives rather than opioid pain medication, which would be an attempt to calm the patient's behavior rather than relieve the pain that leads to the distressed behavior the patient would likely be experiencing. Researchers have stated this as consistent with studies that test whether female and male patients are treated equally, where the results concluded that female patients are less likely to be taken seriously for pain complaints than male patients, and are also "more likely to receive sedatives than opioids for the treatment of their pain" (Hoffman & Tarzian, 2001). This disparity between the perception of men and women's pain conditions, and thus their treatment, results largely from gender stereotypes about women's behavior being seen as "hysterical," even if they are behaving in the same way as men. These differences in how men and women's behavior are perceived are due to the continued ignorance of society, specifically men, on how gender stereotypes affect how we perceive others. A research study by the Pew Research Center surveying people across the U.S. found that a majority of Americans said men and women were fundamentally different in how they expressed their feelings, physical abilities, personal interests, and approaches to parenting. While men and women agreed on this for the most part, they had different ideas of the reason for this, where while women attributed these differences to societal expectations, men believed these differences to be biological (Parker et al., 2017). Women are aware of how society expects them to act and how this affects how they behave, and this encompasses how they express their feelings, their physical abilities, their approach to parenting, and their personal interests. Men, however, attribute these differences in behavior to biology, as if these differences in behavior and expression are and always have been innate. Taking this widely held misconception into account, it may be argued that the derisive diagnoses and treatments to women's pain relative to men's could be due to harmful stereotypes about women and how they behave, and this disparate treatment continues to persist because women's behavior is often perceived as "hysterical" and innate by men.

When a woman's pain is finally addressed, it is then often minimized because of how women's pain has been normalized in comparison to men's pain, due to the prevalence and normalization of debilitating pain. This is examined in an article published in the *Social Science & Medicine* journal, where women were interviewed in studies that addressed the issue of endometriosis and how women experience it. Researchers found that these women believed "doctors trivialized or normalized their pain complaints by suggesting that menstrual pain was a normal and non-pathological process" (Seear, 2009). This passage suggests that there is a trend of women not being taken seriously for the condition of endometriosis, which causes abnormal and severe period pain due to the growth of tissue similar to that of the inner uterus lining the outside of the uterus (Mayo Clinic, 2023). It also argues that this is due to how normalized it is, even if it causes severe pain. This negligence can lead to a delayed or incorrect diagnosis and treatment, which could lead to women having to deal with agonizing pain to the point of being incapacitated. The serious consequences of this are shown in a study by the U.S. National Health Interview Survey, where researchers found that "half of the women who reported suffering from endometriosis were bedridden because of the condition for an average of 17.8 days during the twelve months before the survey" (Seear, 2009). Even though many women in the U.S. who suffer from endometriosis are able to receive treatment to help relieve this debilitating condition, they are unable to access these treatment options because of incorrect/delayed diagnoses, since severe period pain has been wrongly normalized in the field of medicine. Moreover, Mary Lou Ballweg, President and Executive Director of the Endometriosis Association, suggests that this normalization of pain from conditions that affect women contrasts greatly with how pain from conditions that affect men are handled, where she described that even though primary dysmenorrhea - more commonly known as painful menstrual cramps - diminished women's productivity and disrupted girls' academics, there is "a tendency to regard it as normal" due to how common it is. She juxtaposed this by stating that prevalent problems that cause pain among men, such as enlarged prostates or heart disease, are not regarded as normal even when they are common (Ballweg, 2020). Taking this into consideration, it can be concluded that pain from conditions that only affect women, such as primary dysmenorrhea and endometriosis, tend to not be taken seriously because of how society has chosen to normalize this pain, even when it gets to the point where women are incapacitated due to it. Conversely, men may exhibit similar measures of pain due to a condition that targets men, such as an enlarged prostate, receive proper attention, and thus diagnosis and treatment, for their pain and condition.

All in all, even though there has been evidence that pain women exclusively experience, whether from primary dysmenorrhea or endometriosis, could be so debilitating to the point where it leaves them bedridden and disrupts their everyday life, this pain is still normalized compared to when men feel similar measures of pain, and is thus not properly treated or diagnosed as men's pain is.

LACK OF REPRESENTATION

The gender disparity present in the diagnosis and treatment of pain by healthcare professionals may also be attributed to the failure to represent women in research related to pain. An article published by Harvard Health asserts this point with the fact that even though 70% of those affected by chronic pain are women, 80% of pain studies have been conducted on either male participants or male mice. Furthermore, "one of the few studies to research gender differences in the experience of pain found that women tend to feel it more of the time and more intensely than men" (Kiesel, 2017). Even though women experience chronic pain more often and much differently than men do, there are few pain studies that incorporate female participants or female mice into them. In turn, this would create a misunderstanding by medical professionals of what chronic pain looks like, where it may come from, and how it should be treated in women, since men's and women's health and physiology differ greatly due to both biological and societal factors. This lack of inclusion of women in research has already shown some devastating effects, one of the most apparent being women not receiving proper diagnosis or treatment for heart attacks, thus leading to a poorer outcome. As discussed in the medical journal *The Lancet*, while 50% of heart disease cases occur in women, many guidelines for the treatment of this are extrapolated from studies that used mostly male participants. A key example of this is the Harvard Physicians Health Study, where the participants consisted of 22,000 men, and the results of the study led to the use of aspirin as one of the most common treatments for the prevention of heart attacks (*The Lancet*, 2019). The management of heart disease, according to this passage, is thus tailored only for the male body, demonstrated in the study mentioned above where aspirin became a basis for heart attack prevention after only being tested for its effectiveness on men. This failure of representation would lead to women receiving an improper diagnosis and treatment due to doctors being unaware of how heart disease affects women, and what treatment would be effective for them. This disparity in the effectiveness of heart disease treatments can be seen in how, according to Harvard Health Publishing, women often have different heart disease symptoms than men, and that clot-busting drugs or certain heart-related medical procedures are not as effective treatment options for women as they are for men. Due to these different factors, a woman is far more likely to die in the year following a heart attack than a man is ("Gender matters: Heart disease", 2017). As discussed, women exhibit different symptoms than men, demonstrating the need for heart disease research to focus on women because of how they exhibit symptoms differently. Even when these women are successfully diagnosed, which is made more difficult by the fact that doctors have been trained to look for symptoms men exhibit, they receive less effective treatment because their treatment options have only been tested to see if they were effective in treating men. This leads to women being more likely to die from heart disease than men, illustrating how a lack of representation of women in clinical research could lead to improper diagnoses and treatments, which in turn have devastating effects.

The infamous example of how the lack of female representation in heart disease research leads to disparities in clinical outcomes helps to demonstrate the importance of involving women in research. Moreover, the vital importance of including women in pain research is shown through how differently men and women experience pain. From the study "Sex Differences in Reported Pain Across 11,000 Patients Captured in Electronic Medical Records" in the Journal of Pain, the researchers confirmed, through their results, that women reported higher pain intensity when it came to musculoskeletal diseases, and due to this, urged clinicians to pay increased attention to the sex differences that certainly exist (Ruau, 2012). They also conveyed the idea that sex differences in pain experienced may be due to hormonal, psychological, or genetic factors, all of which differ greatly from men to women. Taking into account how this clinical study argues that there are sex differences between pain experienced between men and women, and that this may be due to very apparent biological differences, such as hormonal, genetic and psychological differences, it is clearly very important for researchers to understand the importance of studying pain in both men and women, and to include women in more research studies. Delving deeper into how sex differences influence pain, we are able to observe that the differences in hormonal factors affect the pain one may experience, as it was found in a study that “gonadal hormones can substantially affect nociceptive responses, and this may contribute to sex differences in the experience of pain” (Fillingim, 2000). In this article, the author discusses how the hormones produced by reproductive organs influence the amount of pain one may feel, stated as nociceptive responses. This finding contributes a biological and inherent difference in how pain is felt between sexes, and gives further reason as to why it is crucial to acknowledge and consider the differences in how pain is felt between sexes. This study also provides evidence of how genetics influence the prevalence of pain among females through revealing that many of the chronic pain disorders that are more prevalent among women involve genetic influences, with the chronic pain disorders including rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and migraine headaches. Considering this, there may be the possibility that the genetic contributions of these common conditions are sex-linked (Fillingim, 2000). Considering how common chronic pain disorders may be more prevalent among women through the genes they inherit, a wider gap between how men and women feel pain can be established. Fillingim goes on further to write about how animal studies performed by J.S. Mogil found that genetic factors influenced the experimental pain sensitivity, with some of these genetic factors being sex-related (Fillingim, 2000). This only further proves how there is an integral difference between sexes in how pain is felt, and stresses the importance of acknowledging the genetic differences, and biological differences as a whole, that influence how pain is experienced differently from women to men. However, since many pain studies fail to include female participants, women’s exclusive experience of how they feel pain will be overlooked, leading to a higher likelihood of misdiagnosis or less effective treatment for conditions that cause chronic pain.

Even though it’s highly important to represent women in pain studies, it is commonly argued that women should not be included in research about pain because of their variability due to hormonal changes. This point was discussed in the article mentioned earlier, where Fillingim found that women’s pain responses in experiments varied across the menstrual cycle, with the highest sensitivity to painful stimuli occurring in the premenstrual phase, or luteal phase, of the menstrual cycle (Fillingim, 2000). Taking this into account, it could be concluded that women should not be involved in clinical trials for the research of pain because of how their results could vary greatly based on their menstrual cycle, leading to variation only amongst women. However, a study performed to study pain levels across men and women using noxious pain stimulation debunked this through finding that pain tolerance results were significantly more reliable in female participants than they were in male participants, along with similar patterns of this for "threshold and temperature-pain associations" (Amir et al., 2022). This delineates how women received more consistent results across multiple measurements of pain when introduced to noxious thermal stimulation, including pain tolerance, pain threshold (the point to where the stimulus was deemed painful), and pain sensitivity (the association between pain experienced and the intensity of the stimulus), which can be extrapolated from to represent how women tend to express more consistent responses to pain than men across pain research studies. This would counteract the idea that women's results in pain studies would be more unreliable than men's and that they therefore should not be utilized in pain studies. This only further asserts the importance of including women in pain studies, and the fact that there is no reason to not give women proper representation, which has unfortunately not been achieved in clinical pain studies and may continue not to be if this misinformation of women being less reliable for pain-related research persists.

CONCLUSION

All in all, women fail to receive proper diagnoses and treatments for pain due to gender bias and a lack of representation in pain research studies. Gender biases lead to misconceptions about how women express their pain, specifically to stereotypes that women are "hysterical" or "too emotional" with their pain expression, and to flawed ideas of how, to an extent, pain in women is normal, such as abnormal period pain and pain caused by endometriosis. These inaccurate beliefs and ideas thus lead to women and their pain not being taken seriously by healthcare professionals, both new and experienced in the field of medicine. These prejudices have even been found to permeate the realm of medical literature that is still used to this day to guide doctors in diagnosing and treating pain in their patients. Women also lack representation in pain studies, which is due to a misunderstanding on how significant the differences are between how men and women experience pain, and the misconception that women's results in pain studies have more variability, and thus less reliability, than men's results. These issues all lead to women receiving incorrect or delayed diagnoses, and thus improper treatment for their pain. This would then force many women to bear the unnecessary burden of pain, which would limit them in what they are able to pursue in day-to-day life. However, with this grim reality, there is hope in the fact that solutions exist to solve these issues. One of which is to educate health professionals on gender bias, how to recognize it, and how to counteract it through providing timely and accurate information. This holds true for both doctors who are still training, and experienced doctors, as they may hold outdated prejudices against women that may inhibit their ability to provide proper diagnoses and treatments, which could then be passed on to medical students and residents. More representation in pain research studies is also essential for women's equality in pain management, as this would allow healthcare professionals to properly assess and treat women's pain, which is experienced and expressed much differently than men's pain. Fortunately, with recent discoveries of how detrimental women's lack of representation is in pain studies, women are receiving more inclusion in studies, though this does not discount the many pain studies with only male participants that are currently being used to form diagnoses and treat female patients. Outdated medical literature and clinical studies that only include male participants should also be examined to determine their accuracy in diagnosing and treating women's pain, in order to minimize incorrect diagnosis and treatment. Taking these solutions into account, we are able to promote health equality in the realm of pain management, and help the lives of many women who experience maltreatment in the search of alleviation to their pain.

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ZOYA AKHTAR

The Doubtful Ability of Physical Illnesses to Draw Sympathy

ABSTRACT

It is not uncommon for a character's physical illness to act as the driving force of a film's plot. These portrayals can be positive or negative, and have the ability to influence an audience's opinion on those in society who live with an illness. Seeing dynamic characters in a film, their unfiltered story of living with illness, and their willpower throughout, has the potential to spark a realization among viewers that stereotypes against the ill and physically disabled are incorrect and harmful. This paper will evaluate the potential that two films, Amour (2012) and Five Feet Apart (2019), have in evoking viewer sympathy for characters who have a physical illness, and whether this sympathy extends to real people who are physically ill or disabled. These films can be evaluated through spectatorship theory and disability studies.

INTRODUCTION

Living with a physical illness today is much more manageable than years past, thanks to the advancement of medical technologies. Whether compassion and understanding between people has advanced as well is questionable. In her article, "Disease as a Movie Theme: Media and Genological Analysis," Polish researcher Małgorzata Bożek explains the way an audience interacts with a film depends on current social values and the intentions of the film's creators. Different societies across the world portray physical illness in different lights and film genres. For example, *Amour* (2012) is a European documentary film directed by Michael Haneke that depicts how Anne and her husband Georges handle her physical illness, and *Five Feet Apart* (2019) is an American romantic drama showing characters Stella and Will who struggle with cystic fibrosis. Both scholarly and professional literature assert that the depictions of illness in film reflect how (any) society or culture regards illness. This paper will question how authentically audiences can connect to the characters who have physical illnesses in films of different genres and cultures, such as *Amour* (2012) and *Five Feet Apart* (2019). Sub-topics to be addressed include the effects of social class on this ability to sympathize. Are there any societal factors that hinder or facilitate sympathy toward the characters? Does sympathy come from mostly one social class/group or is it more widespread? How deeply can feelings of sympathy affect spectators' attitudes toward real people? The answers to these questions allude to how societies will function in the future. If a spectator finds it challenging to sympathize with a character who has a physical illness, it may indicate that societal tensions, unfair treatment, and alienation will continue to fester. Analyzing these films through the frameworks of spectatorship theory and disability studies will display how well an audience can connect to characters in a film who face challenges as a result of their illness. This paper supports the claim that *Amour* (2012) and *Five Feet Apart* (2019), films from different genres and countries, create dynamic characters who have to bear losing the things/people they hold close. Their heartbreak causes spectators to feel sympathy for those living with illness. However, the films also lack in their representation of illness because of social stigmas against women, lower social classes, the disabled community, and certain other groups that exist across country borders.

AMOUR (2012) & FIVE FEET APART (2019) AS CHAOS NARRATIVES

Both *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* are examples of "chaos narratives" (Gonzalez-Polledo and Tarr 1457), and this characteristic helps the reader sympathize with the chronically ill characters. Elena Gonzalez-Polledo and Jen Tarr of the London School of Economics and Political Science authored "The Thing about Pain: The Remaking of Illness Narratives in Chronic Pain Expressions on Social Media," which analyzes how patients with chronic illnesses express the pain they feel online. The article explores the "narrative paradigm" (Gonzalez-Polledo and Tarr 1456), which is the concept of verbally describing one's life with illness. This narrative telling of illness can communicate some aspects of someone's experiences, but describing the emotional turmoil one goes through cannot always be done with words. Arthur Frank's book *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics* explains the term "chaos narratives;" (Gonzalez-Polledo and Tarr 1457) "[chaos is] the hole in the narrative that cannot be filled in, or to use Lacan's metaphor, cannot be sutured" (Frank 98). Since there is a "hole" (Frank 98) in this experience, basic illness narratives that try to objectify pain are not completely effective– a narrative about illness can never be whole. Both *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* can be considered chaos narratives because they attempt to display illness in nonverbal ways along with traditional storytelling. *Amour* utilizes silence, while *Five Feet Apart* displays personality changes that bring out emotion from the audience.

AMOUR THROUGH THE LENS OF COMMUNICATION AND LOVE

Therefore, films that refute the "narrative paradigm" (Gonzalez-Polledo and Tarr 1456) have an authentic representation of illness that can evoke emotion from the audience. Frank further states that chaos narratives trace "the edges of a wound that can only be told around" (Frank 98). At the beginning of *Amour*, before main character Anne gets sick, she and her husband Georges plan on buying their former student Alexandre's new musical CD. By the time they obtain the CD however, Anne has already had her first stroke, which paralyzed the right side of her body. Georges plays the CD in their living room and reads aloud from a letter Alexandre wrote to them, where he says that he hopes "'with all [his] heart that everything works out'" (*Amour* 59:09-1:00:31). After Georges finishes reading the letter Anne abruptly asks him to turn the music off. They spend the rest of the scene in silence; Anne not making any eye contact with him. Anne is saddened to hear comforting words because in that moment she realizes her physical health will only spiral downwards. The music playing from the CD is now a symbol of hope that Anne does not want to entertain. Thus, she chooses to sit in silence.. The silence traces "the edges of a wound" (Frank 98), an emotional wound. It is also an example of "excommunication" (Galloway et al. 16), communication that occurs without the use of words as described in Alexander R. Galloway's book, *Excommunication: Three Enquiries in Media and Mediation*. The silence, a major component in *Amour*'s "chaos [narrative]" (Gonzalez-Polledo and Tarr 1457), can be uncomfortable to sit through, especially for American audiences, whose films are often packed with constant dialogue. Silence draws attention to characters' actions, eye movements, body language, and other aspects of the scene that might otherwise go unnoticed. It focuses on key messages the film is projecting; Anne can no longer find joy in her passion (music) and tries her best to soldier through emotional pain alone. The silence makes the audience understand those unsaid feelings better than if Anne voiced them. There is a universal discomfort in seeing a loved one drift away and not being able to stop it, which triggers sympathy among viewers. Silence itself can be considered a "verbal code" (Bożek 17) in this film, a quality that points readers to its theme (that illness can weaken a person's understanding of others and themselves). This scene is shot in Anne and Georges' living room (see Fig. 1). An ordinary setting, such as a living room, is described by Mark Gallagher as "realist mise-en-scène" (Gallagher 217) in his article "'Be Patient, Dear Mother ... Wait For Me': The Neo-Infirmity Film, Female Illness and Contemporary Cinema,". This framing can be used to analyze neo-infirmity films (films that depict a female side character with an illness), as the use of realist mise-en-scene via ordinary locations reveals that their own home is not safe from the effects of illness.

Fig 1. Haneke, Amour (1:00:19)

Personality changes in *Amour* also facilitate sympathy. George displays a personality change when he murders a bedridden Anne at the end of the film. Anne is therefore a "[catalyst] for male psychological transformation occurring through grief, action, or both in combination" (Gallagher 210). Georges' murder of Anne on her deathbed can shock viewers, unsettling them and evoking sympathy for their situation, as Georges kills Anne to alleviate her from the illness that ruined her physical and emotional health. Whether Georges' actions are morally acceptable is a different matter, but it is clear that he does care for Anne throughout the film. Bożek emphasizes how the "filmmaker does not delude viewers with a vision of the world in the rhythm of words: and they lived together happily ever after," (Bożek 19), *Amour* reflects this sentiment and purposefully takes a shocking turn. This dramatic ending demands the audience either justify or condemn Georges' actions in order to move on from that scene, and to understand how he feels watching Anne become sicker every passing day. *Amour* therefore suggests that illness and love can coexist. One can love another person, but simultaneously see him/her in a different light and behave differently for that person's sake. This ending elicits a barrage of emotions from the audience. Even though Georges does his best to care for Anne throughout the film, he is unsuccessful and eventually changes his stance on whether death is worse than living with a debilitating illness.

FIVE FEET APART THROUGH THE LENS OF COMMUNICATION AND LOVE

The romantic drama *Five Feet Apart* is capable of drawing sympathy as well, but in different ways that target American audiences. Instead of being an idealistic story about a hero who conquers challenges, which is common in American cinema, it is instead a realistic story of how sometimes determination and love cannot change one's life. Nina Zeldis, PhD, a rehabilitative specialist writes in her article "To Be or Not to Be: Terminal Illness in Film and in Life," that there "is a common denial among men in the international community that they will be sick, that they will be old, that they will die," (Zeldis 129). *Five Feet Apart* tries to remind spectators of how close death hovers to reality. The scene where Will realizes Stella is choosing not to get the lung transplant she has waited years for is emotionally charged, and gives the audience a chance to connect to both of them. Stella ignores texts from the hospital nurse that new lungs are available for her, but when Will finds out about the situation he immediately tells Stella to go back to the hospital and asks her if she knows about the lungs. Stella does not respond for a few seconds and when asked again says, "I haven't seen the lights yet," (*Five Feet Apart* 1:32:56), the holiday lights that she originally set out to see with Will. Stella, like Anne, chooses not to communicate because she realizes that her relationship with Will has changed. She influenced him to be more responsible, and he influenced her to be more courageous. The audience gets a chance to see this situation from two perspectives: Will's, who wants the person he loves to live longer, and Stella's, who just realized what it means to live. Will gets up from his seat and starts to walk away from Stella towards the hospital, assuming she will follow. The fact that Stella falls off the bridge instead symbolizes a coming split between the characters via mise-en-scène (see Fig. 2). The quietness of the outdoors draws the audience's attention to their argument.

Fig 2. Baldoni, Five Feet Apart (1:33:08)

Similar to *Amour*, personality changes also facilitate sympathy and some level of understanding from the audience in *Five Feet Apart*. According to Melanie Anne Phillip's and Chris Huntley's Dramatica, A New Theory of Story and "Personality Traits and Personal Values: A Meta Analysis" by Laura Parks-Leduc, Anat Bardi, and Gilad Feldman, Stella and Will's initial opposite personality types justify Stella as a "Protagonist," (Phillips and Huntley 28) and Will as an "Antagonist," (Phillips and Huntley 29). The clash between these characters' opinions and the fact that they changed each other's minds, yet still cannot have a successful relationship, evokes audience sympathy. Even though they have developed as individuals, their cystic fibrosis will always separate them. Parks Leduc, Bardi, and Feldman further explain the "Five-Factor Model of Personality" (Parks-Leduc, et al. 4), which contains five pairs of traits seen in humans: Openness to experience vs. shallowness, agreeableness vs. unkindness, extraversion vs. reservedness, conscientiousness v. irresponsibility, and emotional stability vs. neurosis (Parks-Leduc, et al. 4). In general, at the beginning of the film (not unanimously) Will is more irresponsible and closed-minded than Stella. He does not take his medications, believing he is going to die anyway from his *B. Cepacia* infection. Will embodies everything that Stella is trying to fight– the idea of surrendering to cystic fibrosis. In the article, "CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF STELLA IN FIVE FEET APART MOVIE," by Dini Noviani Ginting and Lilis Suryani, Stella's personality is evaluated via quote analysis. They conclude that Stella is "7% Steadfast, she's a girl who everyday… must take various types of medicine and perform various treatments for her recovery without complaining since she was in middle school," (Ginting and Suryani 22). Love's ability to change personality is remarkable, but the fact that Will must leave Stella at the end of the film because of this love draws on the audience's emotions. While heartbreaking, these changes in character function to draw out sympathy from viewers because no matter how much Will loves Stella, he has to accept the reality that his love could kill her. Therefore, unlike *Amour*, *Five Feet Apart* claims that illness and love cannot coexist, because illness almost always pushes love to the side. The story of Stella's best friend Poe also displays this concept. Poe dies after celebrating Will's birthday, and is the only character to die in the film. Poe tells Stella in a previous scene "'I am afraid. You know what someone gets for loving me? They get to pay for all my care. And then they get to watch me die. Deductibles, meds, hospital stays, surgeries. When I turn 18, there's no more full coverage. Who should I put that on? Michael or my family?" (*Five Feet Apart* 53:45-54:06). Poe's worries are something that many people in America can relate to and therefore sympathize with, as he has an even worse chance at living a fulfilling life than his other friends because of money. To an audience member, Poe may symbolize a loved one who is going through a similar situation. This connection makes Poe more than just a character, he represents a group of Americans who are suffering in silence and cannot truly live life because they feel like a burden to others. Making illness triumph over love, both the love of a relationship and friendship, introduces American audiences to the harsh, lonely reality that people with physical illnesses sometimes go through. Witnessing how physical illness causes these characters to lose each other triggers some level of frustration and anger in the audience, sparking sympathy for those who go through these struggles in real life.

SYMPATHY THROUGH THE LENS OF SPECTATORSHIP THEORY AND DISABILITY STUDIES

Amour and *Five Feet Apart* are films with powerful messages about love and dedication, but they are biased in certain aspects. The choice to have a woman as the ill character in *Amour* follows the suit of many earlier films whose similar plots associate women with frailty. This film includes several scenes in which Georges helps Anne walk around their apartment, as Anne has severe difficulty moving one foot in front of the other. Without Georges, Anne cannot move herself very far and this loss of independence is synonymous to a loss of her personhood. Her disability prevents her from being an equal in her relationship and leaves her heavily dependent on her husband. In *Five Feet Apart* Stella is devastated after Poe's death and cries out "I never hugged him! I never hugged him! He's my best friend and I never… hugged him!" (*Five Feet Apart* 1:21:18-1:21:25). These lines can deeply affect the audience. The fact that Stella and Poe are neighbors in the hospital and have known each other since childhood but have never hugged emphasizes how isolated the disabled body is. Basic forms of connection such as a hug are not allowed between two people with cystic fibrosis, when they are the ones who understand each other the most. Bożek writes that film "is made up of the creators' competences, their maturity and their own filmic language as well as the recipient's language and the time of presenting the work (circumstances), i.e. the pragmatic aspect," (Bożek 17). Abled actors playing disabled characters in *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* highlight this "pragmatic aspect" that the films create and reinforce within society: the idea that disabled individuals are too weak to play roles of disabled characters, and that abled actors are more desirable for the job even though they have a lesser understanding of what it means to be disabled.

The "pragmatic aspect" (Bożek 17) given off by *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* negatively affects the other messages the films try to portray about love, closeness, dedication, and illness. Disability theorist Paul Longmore claims that "ableist culture relies on such sentimental representations of disability to produce in the person watching a sublime pleasure of looking on from afar at suffering and helplessness," (Longmore 19) in the article "Telethons: Spectacle, Disability, and the Business of Charity." Author Zoe Beenstock references the piece in her article, "Looking at Sympathy in Wordsworth's Disability Poetry." Longmore's quote complicates the concept of sympathy. Spectators may feel sympathy while watching a film, but sympathy itself is not always enough to truly allow spectators to understand the troubles faced by characters. There are levels of sympathy and even though *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* are produced in different continents, there is a common stigma against the disabled community because of societal tendencies to measure potential off physical appearance. This conclusion agrees with the fact that throughout history, women and minority groups have been given less status than the "one type of man who does not have to be ashamed of anything" (Goffman 35). This man is white, athletic, healthy, and employed, as described in American researcher Erwing Goffman's article "Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity." This discriminatory mindset is shown in films like *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart*, particularly towards those who identify with Anne and/or Poe.

Suffering can be considered another "verbal code" (Bożek 17) in both films, and the way that Beenstock frames the concept is relevant to the topic of this paper. Beenstock references Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which she posits that Smith suggests "suffering is not caused by idiocy itself… Social factors impact levels of functioning for people with impairments, so that major aspects of idiocy are socially constructed and formed by exclusionary attitudes," (Beenstock 8). Those with disabilities are put through more pain because of society than their actual disability. Therefore, while films like *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* highlight the disabled community to the rest of society, they also frustrate these individuals by portraying characters with illness predictably. Since the social factors that Smith mentions are man-made they can be molded to art forms like film in ways that audiences will easily absorb. For example, the teenage romance between Stella and Will appeals to younger audiences while Anne's story impacts more adult audiences. Goffman further writes, "you cannot show illness because even if there is, it does not exist," (Goffman 35). Seemingly contradictory, this idea explains why filmmakers add romance and family matters into films about illness. Audiences are less likely to engage with a film about illness without another storyline that adds lightheartedness or a sense of security that the pain associated with illness will never reach them.

CONCLUSION

The fact that *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* manage to draw sympathy, but not sympathy that always results in social awareness, is reflective of how deeply negative social attitudes about physical illnesses and disabilities run. These films do contain complex characters and are proof of progress in the film industry regarding representation of physical illness and disability. However, they do fall short in some ways. For example, the writing of these films often sidelines ill protagonists and their dynamics with other characters, making them an unmemorable part of the film. Spectatorship theory supports the stance that *Amour* and *Five Feet Apart* are powerful films that can connect spectators to the physically ill characters as concepts that the film is trying to teach them about. Meanwhile, disability studies highlight how the films still negatively portray the disabled community, perhaps intentionally, because societies taint the representation of disabled individuals. Further research on whether recent films about illness are more positively received than Amour and *Five Feet Apart* can indicate whether stigmas about disability and physical illnesses are being challenged or supported by audiences.

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JESSICA DEMONTE

Children Guilty of Violent Sadisti Crimes: Is Rehabilitation Possible?

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the controversies of rehabilitation justification of a child guilty of extremely sadistic crimes who shows no remorse. The controversies of rehabilitation are regarding the length of the sentence and anonymity given to the child. This paper will address why rehabilitating children who committed heinous crimes is controversial and why this controversy is valid. The cases of Mary Bell, the Edlington brothers, Jon Venables, and Robert Thompson will be analyzed, as they are prime examples of children who committed sadistic crimes including murder, sexual assault, and torture, and have received a form of rehabilitation that is argued to be unethical and unjust. The ideas of ethical philosophy, criminal psychopathy, law and jurisprudence, and the testimonies of the victim's families and the public are drawn on in this paper to explain the emotional nature of these controversies and the flawed logic behind the decisions made in the judicial system.

INTRODUCTION

Sentencing in children can be complicated. Because they are not fully developed or mature individuals, the conventional judicial system cannot be used. In order to overcome this, western justice systems established a separate juvenile system that claims to not only protect both the child and the community but also "save" a child from recidivism (Moon et al. 39). However, there are extreme cases where a child commits a crime that is so severe that it often leads to another person's death or leaves them close to death where the way this system addresses a case involving a child, rehabilitation, will not be an appropriate response. With cases like this, it causes legal and ethical questions and opinions to arise as these children pose a danger to society. It is challenging to deal with these specific types of cases as there is much to consider. Is it ethical to sentence a young child to life in prison, especially when they commit a senseless crime involving murder and torture, and is it ethical to release these children back into society when they lack morality and remorse? Nevertheless, the judicial system tends to favor the idea that these children cannot be held responsible for their actions and often choose to rehabilitate them. Additionally, children are not held to the same accountability as adult offenders who are charged with crimes of the same severity, "cases in which the court has held that young offenders are not as morally culpable as their adult counterparts and should therefore not be subjected to the most severe punishments even if they commit the most serious offenses," (Malkani). Even if a child commits the most severe crime, the court will rule against a harsher punishment as they feel like there is an explanation for their action and it could be addressed by rehabilitating the child. However, it is also argued by the public that there have been rare horrendous crimes where a child murders or seriously injures another person, where it is not possible to rehabilitate that child as it could be seen as unethical (Smallheer). This causes the demand for harsher punishments to ensure public safety and justice (McNulty), thereby challenging the methods of the justice system.

THE CASE OF THE EDLINGTON BROTHERS

In April 2009, two brothers, ages 10 and 11, subjected a pair of boys to 90 minutes of torture. On Saturday morning in a playground in Edlington, South Yorkshire, these brothers, referred to as the Edlington Brothers, lured their two victims, an uncle, age 11, and his nephew, age 9, to a secluded area by persuading them to see a dead fox. Once they were alone, the Edlington Brothers told their new companions that they would die (Wilkins). The victims were robbed, punched, stomped, kicked, hit with bricks and sticks, burned, cut with glass, and forced to perform sexual acts. The victims had cigarettes stuck in wounds; the nine-year-old victim had a clothing line wrapped around his head, pulled by the older brother, while the younger brother dropped a ceramic sink onto the 11-year-old boy's head from a height that left him close to death (Wilkins). The 11-year-old begged the brothers as well in the hope for them to stop the torture, stating, "Leave me, I can't see. Leave me to die" (Walker, "Doncaster torture case"). The nine-year-old was able to leave once the brothers stopped and left his uncle after the uncle told him, "I can't move my body…you go, I'll just die here" (Walker, "Brothers stopped attack"). The boys did survive; they had to undergo multiple operations that helped them recover physically; however, they still suffered from trauma (Walker, "Doncaster torture case"). The aftermath of this attack by the brothers affects both their victims and the parents as they must deal with the guilt over something over which they had no control.

The conviction made by the court is unjust and unethical based on the premises of this case. The brothers were sentenced to a minimum of five years and received thirty hours of education in a detention facility. After six years in prison, they were released, however, just twenty weeks after the release, the younger brother was found with a blade and was rearrested, and the older brother started to act out (Sims and Wells). The reason why the length of the sentence is unjust and unethical is that it did not allow justice to be served. Prosecutors argued that the minimum sentence was not long enough. Attorney General Baroness Scotland claimed the sentence to be "unduly lenient" after reviewing the case (Attorney General review torture brothers' sentence). This is a lenient punishment because the brothers had intentions of murdering their two victims and showed no remorse or guilt. Nicholas Campbell, a prosecutor, interviewed the Edlington brothers asking how close they were to killing the two boys; the older brother stated that on a scale of one to ten, a nine, while the younger brother stated that if his arms did not start hurting, he would have killed them, (qtd. in Walker, "Brothers stopped attack"). Campbell had also asked the younger brothers how he felt after being shown the video of the event his brother recorded; the younger brother said he felt all right and only felt bad because he did not know his brother had taken the video (Walker, "Brothers stopped attack"). The fact that the younger brother felt "all right" after being shown a torture video reveals his character. He was not fazed by the violence but has grown to tolerate and numb toward it. It further supports the idea that these brothers exhibit emotional detachment and psychopathic behavior. They lack morality, allowing them to inflict pain and harm on two strangers. This behavior will be challenging to reverse. It is unethical to sentence a child who exhibits these behaviors to a treatment program, not only because it does not provide justice, but because these children are not provided with services that would benefit them. "It seems to be generally believed that psychopaths are difficult to treat because… psychopaths have biological causes which cannot be changed by psychosocial interventions; and the lying conning, and manipulativeness of psychopaths make them treatment resistant," (Farrington 495). Putting a child who displays psychopathic behavior in a rehabilitation program is unfair to the child and the victims. Justice is not being served because there are no consequences for these children as these children are put in a program where that does not hold them accountable for their actions. The juvenile justice system needs to recognize that there are children who will not change using treatment, a child's behavior is complex, and some factors that contribute to this behavior are irreversible. A child's behavior is partly influenced by the type of environment they were exposed to and a child growing up in a negative environment is associated with them developing psychiatric disturbances (Tottenham et al.). The Edlington Brothers experienced a childhood with parents who were abusive and allowed them to smoke, drink, and watch explicit material (Wilkins). Prolonged exposure to this type of environment results in psychotic issues that will be hard to reverse as the behavior that was witnessed and inflicted onto them is imprinted and influences their psychological development. No change is being made with the rehabilitation method; it is a waste of time if the child does not learn and benefit from it.

Another significant aspect of the issue involving the length of the sentence is the quick release. The brothers only served six years which is not long based on the severity of the crime. The brothers were released after six years because the judge claimed they were on the path of rehabilitation. The rehabilitation method involves releasing a child once it is determined that this child's treatment was successful; this method aims to help these children become "law abiding citizens" (Smallheer). However, that was not the case for the Edlington Brothers, as the younger brother was arrested just twenty weeks after his release. Rehabilitation should not be used to determine if a child is eligible for release. There is no way of knowing that a child has learned their lesson through treatment. As a matter of fact, the judges in the juvenile court support the idea of retribution as they feel it is an appropriate way to deal with a child who commits a crime. "The juvenile court judges evidenced such strong support for punishment as a morally justified function of the juvenile court. He found this to be a most interesting and surprising response for judges in an ostensibly treatment-oriented system" (Springer 408). The judges who are a part of the juvenile court support the idea of punishment. However, they continue to abide by the law's judicial system, which focuses on treatment. Since these judges continue to support a system they do not believe in, no changes will be made in how a child is sentenced. This change is essential because when a child is found guilty of a severe crime, they would not be faced with punishment or consequences, but rather just education and treatment. Rehabilitation cannot be the primary method when dealing with these children; a child does need to learn and understand why the crime they committed is wrong, but it is not a reliable way of ensuring a child would not commit a crime again. A child may not benefit from treatment, especially if they show no remorse or feel guilty about their actions, which is why there should be a form of punishment to show the child that there are consequences to their actions, this could be done by lengthening the sentence and ensuring that the full sentence is severed even after a child completed their treatment. Judges of the juvenile court agree that punishment is justified. However, their failure to punish will only increase the chance of releasing a child back into society, where they could be harmful. This happened with the Edlington Brothers; the judge's failure to give consequences for their action and rely on rehabilitation led to their early release, only for them to act out again. Once again, this should not have been the case as rehabilitation is not a reliable way of ensuring a child would not re-offend, especially those who commit a sexual crime like the Edlington Brothers. Michael P. Hagan and associates studied the recidivism rates of youth who performed sexual assaults against a child and underwent a treatment program. The results reveal that out of 50 subjects, 23 were reinvolved in criminal behavior, 4 of the subjects committed sexual offenses upon release, and 54% of juvenile sex offenders reoffended just two years after their release, (Hagan 134). This study, although it did have a smaller sample group due to the specifics of the research, still reveals how over half of the juvenile sexual offenders had reoffended after undergoing a treatment program, which demonstrates the high possibility that when releasing a child who committed such crimes will end up arrested and back in jail. The juvenile justice system should not have this philosophy that all children who go through rehabilitation will be successfully changed when most of the children who commit sexual crimes will re-offend. Judges should also not follow this philosophy if they feel it is not a proper punishment for the crimes. Rehabilitation is not a logical way of determining when a child should be released. In the case of the Edlington brothers, these brothers exhibited psychopathic behavior. They performed a sadistic act that consisted of more than sexual assault; however, due to the flawed philosophy and law of the court that put these brothers on the path of rehabilitation, they are now released back into society with the same mentality they had before they were found guilty. This will result in fear in the public as their safety is at risk.

Another controversy that arises with this case is the issue of anonymity. Both brothers were granted full anonymity, preventing their original identity, new identity, and images from being released. They were granted anonymity until the age of eighteen. However, when the younger brother approached eighteen, they fought and extended their anonymity because of Act 3 of the Human Rights Act in British law. Act 3 of the Human Rights Act protects a person from torture (mental or physical) and inhuman and degrading treatment (equality and human rights commission). Ironically, the brothers were granted protection against the same thing they were found guilty of. The brothers will continue to be protected throughout their adulthood as well. The courts also continued to grant the youngest brother protection after his rearrest. The public, especially those who live in Edlington, was outraged about the results of this case as they felt that the brothers were undeserving of the protection they were granted. The father of the older victim was incredulous that the brothers were using Act 3 of the Human Rights Act to support their appeal for lifetime anonymity; the father even stated, "It is inhuman, what they did. Nobody would do that to another person unless there was something seriously wrong with their heads. People want to know who is living next to them – if they have maniacs down the road," (qtd in Osborne, we must know where these monsters live). Derek Wright, who found the victims, stated, "They were animals, and I have already told police I'm worried they'll do it again. Why should they have their identities protected?" (Walker "Doncaster Torture Case"). The idea that a person who committed such a severe crime could be living in a neighborhood can make a person feel unsafe because of the lack of knowledge; people should have the right to know if they are at risk. Dr. Kathleen M. Heide states that the public's fear of juvenile violent crimes is justified. She then explains how young people are more likely than adults to kill strangers, so they are a risk to innocent bystanders (Heide 21). Children who commit crimes, including murder and torture, are dangerous as they are more likely to harm a person they do not know. The Edlington Brothers tortured two boys who had no relation to them, so what is preventing them from hurting more strangers upon release, especially since the rehabilitation efforts failed? The lack of knowledge given to the public only adds to the fear. The court's law and philosophy to protect the child make sense when the child has proven to be changed and is not a risk to the public. However, this philosophy should not be put into place when the child is a risk to public safety. The court's priority should not be protecting the child but instead protecting the public.

In addition, it is also important to point out the court process in ordering lifelong anonymity. Section 45A of the Youth Justice and

Criminal Evidence Act, which is the section that a court must use when considering granting lifelong anonymity for a child under eighteen, states that the court must consider the public interest when the court makes an order for lifetime anonymity (Reporting Restriction). The court must consider the public desire to know what case information is when determining if a child receives anonymity throughout adulthood. If the youth has committed a severe crime, the prosecutor should put in an application to try to lift the order; one of the principles for the application is a strong public interest in open justice, the public wanting to know as much as possible in court including the identity of the defendants, (Reporting Restriction). In this case, there is an intense desire for the identities of the Edlington Brothers. The victims' families and a newspaper called Sheffield Star fought to lift the Restriction to allow the brothers to be identified, but the judge denied this motion. The judge stated this as his reasoning "The case has been regarded as raising important issues about the way children from dysfunctional families can go off the rails and about the lack of intervention at critical stages by the local authority social services department and other child protection agencies," (Yorkshire Post). The judge continued to protect these children because of guilt. These children were brought up in an environment that is not acceptable for a child to grow up in. The judicial systems and social services did not act appropriately to ensure these children were growing up in a suitable environment. The court feels they are to blame for these children's actions as they did not intervene before the crime occurred. That may be true, but that does change the fact that the brothers are past the point of redemption; they commit one of the worst crimes. Trying to correct the issues that occurred in the past would not change what happened in the present. Making a child go through rehabilitation to show that the court recognized their mistakes is not the reason a child should go through rehabilitation; it is not ethical. They were using this as an excuse to continue to protect the child after reoffending is also unethical. If the purpose of rehabilitation is saving a child and anonymity is used to prevent an adverse effect of rehabilitation, then why are the courts still protecting a child who reoffends? The toxic family the brothers grew up in is not a reason to continue to protect them; you cannot change their past. The judge cares more about establishing a good image of the judicial system by mentioning the problems in the brothers' family life than forcing on the present and how this choice to keep the identities hidden will have a negative impact on the public. Allowing anonymity after eighteen is unjust as they are still being given protection after reoffending, which is against the public interest.

THE CASE OF JON VENABLES & ROBERT THOMAS

On February 12, 1993, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, age ten, kidnapped two-year-old James Bulger. Jon's idea was to approach James at the TJ Hughes store in England. They abducted James Bulger and led him outside of the mall. During this time, James's mother, Denise, was panicking as she thought her son was close by; after reporting her son to mall security and still not finding him, the police were called. While this was occurring, James Bulger was led out of the mall to a secluded area near a canal, where he would call his mother for help. At the canal, they dropped Bulger on his head and left him crying; A woman passed by noticing but did nothing to help. The boys continue to walk, trying to cover James's head injury with a hood, still those who passed and saw James's injury and tears still did nothing. A witness also saw Thompson punch Bugler and shake him but closed her curtains to block out the scene. James was almost saved two separate times by two women concerned for James, who told Jon and Robert to take James to the police. Of course, Jon and Robert did not, but took James to a deserted railway; this is where they tortured and murdered James Bulger. Jon and Robert splashed blue paint on James's eye, kicked, hit him with bricks and stones, and stuffed batteries in his mouth. They finally used a 22-pound iron bar to hit Bulger over the head. Bulger suffered 10 skull fractures and 42 injuries to his face, head, and body. Jon and Robert then placed their body on the train track to make it look like an accident. (Rennie).

This ca se received much attention as it was devastating, and the public was outraged by the case itself and the trial. The case has a lot of similar controversies to the Edlington Brothers, as this case happened before the brothers and paved the path of the court process for the brothers. Like the brothers, the sentence length was criticized. Jon and Robert were found guilty of murder, were sentenced to a minimum of eight years, and were to be rehabilitated. Denise Fergus, the mother of James, said, "I finally thought these murderers had got what they deserved, especially when the Guardian reported the following day that they were expecting to be locked up for at least 20 years. So, imagine my heartbreak when we found out how little time they would have to serve, it was like James being murdered all over again" (Fergus). She then went on to say how Judge Morland promised that they would be detained for "very many years."

However, Thompson and Venables were each given a minimum of eight years even though the courts determined they were a danger to society. If they were considered a danger to society, then why did they only receive eight years? This is being argued by the public, as the majority support Denise Fergus's campaign to raise the sentence; some people even supported the idea of a life sentence for the boys. However, is sending a child to prison for life ethical if they commit a violent crime? Charles Patrick Ewing explains, "The assumption is that juveniles who pose no danger or minimal danger to society may safely be treated as juveniles, while those who are more dangerous require longer and more secure incarceration for the protection of the public," (Ewing 116). While it may be challenging to sentence a child to life in prison, they should receive a harsher and longer punishment if they are a danger to public safety. It is unreasonable to declare a child a danger but then give them a short sentence. Suppose a child poses a threat to society that should accurately be reflected in the sentence. The court's law is flawed, as they allow these dangerous children to return to society quickly when they risk people's safety. When it comes to Venables and Thompson, they are not children who robbed a store or committed a petty crime; these are children who committed a sadistic crime that involved the murder and torture of a random two-year-old boy. They should not be treated as any other juvenile who commits a crime. Michael Howard, the judge in this case, considered this and raised the sentence to 15 years, but it was overruled. Michael Howard later went on to say, "It may well be that the parole board had no alternative, but I think Lord Woolf was wrong to decide that eight years was sufficient time for Thompson and Venables to spend in custody in the light of the uniquely dreadful circumstances of their crime." (The Guardian) The idea that Venables and Thompson's sentence was not enough was supported by the public and one of the judges who worked on this case. The parole board completely ignored the plea made by the people. Why? Because they felt that, as children, it is the government's responsibility to correct their behavior. This connects back to the ideas presented in the Edlington Brother's case, having the government taking responsibility for these children's actions and putting them on the path of rehabilitation because the courts want to be perceived that they care for these children's well-being when in reality it is not benefiting the child or the public if anything it causes more harm.

Let us now consider issues involving the government ideology that all children can be saved and change their behavior. Ian Sparks, the chief executive of the Children's Society, stated, "We believe that all children are capable of both good and bad actions but that no child is evil.... with the belief that rehabilitation is not only possible but that it must be the goal we strive to achieve," (The Guardian). From the court's perspective, these children should have the right to change and be given another chance as they are young and still growing and may not fully understand the nature behind their crime. The juvenile system's goal is to rehabilitate; in their eyes, a child is not fully mature and developed, so they cannot be held accountable (McNulty). However, this ideology that rehabilitation is possible for all children can change is an assumption that is not true. The first issue comes with trusting these children that they are being honest about changing and feeling remorse. Dr. Heide states, "Clinicians who assess individuals in prisons and jails, unlike those who treat patients in a therapist office or hospital, or clinic, cannot assume the patients are honestly reporting their histories, current levels of functioning, and symptomatology. A murder defendant possibility facing a death sentence, life in prison, or incarceration for 20 or 30 years certainly has reason to lie," (Heide 67). A juvenile on the path of rehabilitation is released once it is determined they have been changed for the better. So, what stops a child from saying what the court and therapist want to hear? A child can easily fake remorse or empathy if that means they get released early. The idea that all children can be saved is not valid; as stated previously, the child's behavior is sometimes irreversible due to certain biological factors. The child's ability to manipulate and lie is another reason rehabilitation should not be the court's goal. As previously stated, the child's release depends on whether they should have remorse or a behavior change; a child can lie to the court, making this not a dependable method. There has to be a system in place that proves a child feels remorse after therapy, as the courts should not just rely on the child's words. This system could include a psychiatric test that determines the level of remorse a child feels and close monitoring of the child's behavior when interacting with others. Even after a child is released, monitoring the behavior should continue to make sure the child's behavior is changed and that they are not lying. Another issue regarding rehabilitation is the lack of maturity and the child not knowing why the crime was wrong. However, Dr. Eileen Vizard, a child psychiatrist, determined that Thompson and Venables knew the difference between right and wrong and knew what they did to James was wrong (Fergus). It was determined that these brothers had the understanding that what they did to James was wrong, but they still decided to kill him. It does not seem like they did not understand the nature behind their crime because if they did not, then it would be a reasonable choice to educate them, but that was not the case for Jon Venables and Robert Thompson. The idea that the court allowed a shorter sentence based on the hope that rehabilitation is effective is not correct or fair to James's family and the public. The juvenile justice system has too much faith in the method of rehabilitation, resulting in children going on this path that would not affect them in any way.

Another controversy that arises, in this case, is anonymity. Like in the Edlington Brother's case, people were outraged by the Venables and Thompson receiving lifelong anonymity. This outrage grew once it was determined that Jon Venables would be given a new identity after reoffending four times after his release; one of the charges was the highest level of child pornography. It should be considered unethical to allow a person over eighteen to continue being protected even after he reoffends with a severe crime like child pornography. Norman Brennan, the director of the Victims of Crime Trust, said, "As children, one can understand them being given some protection, what right have they got to be given special treatment as adults as well?" (Barr). Norman brings up an excellent point, it is one thing for a child to be granted protection since they are minors, but as an adult, it is not just. It is not fair to the James family, who must live knowing that their sons' killers are being given multiple new identities that allow him a clean slate and be protected. The court reasoning behind Venables's protection is that Jon Venables and Robert Thompson face a severe risk of attacks from members of the public and relatives and friends of James's family (Barr). However, people deserve the right to know the identities of these criminals as the public is less of a threat than these criminals are when it comes to safety. In fact, it is British law to allow the child's identity if it is in the public interest. "The youth court can allow the name of the young offender to be published if it is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so, (Spencer 2). As stated previously, the law in England allows the publication of the juvenile offender if the public wishes. However, this is not being done; there is a strong interest to have the identities revealed, but the courts seem to ignore this plea. If the court abides by the law when it comes to putting a child on the path of rehabilitation even though there is a chance that it might not work, they are not abiding by the law to allow the publicization of the name of the child. The court cannot pick and choose when they follow the law; there is enough evidence that supports the public's want to have this information published, and the courts are not doing anything about it. The people feel like they are not receiving the information they have a right to.

The information about the identities is something that people feel entitled to. The events that occurred in the case are the only thing available to the public, so without the information about what happened to the boys after their release makes people question whether they are still a threat. “Too often, the public hears of some terrible crime committed by some unidentified juveniles and never hears anything about it. The public is entitled to vindication in cases of the commission of a serious crime by anyone, whatever the age of the criminal” (Springer 403). The public seems to be in the dark about cases involving children as they are limited in the information they receive. This can cause problems as the public is unaware of what happens to a child. The public should have the right to this information as it also affects them since their safety is a risk. Publicizing this information can also ensure that the child who committed these terrible crimes faces consequences. The public is against the idea that these criminals are only being met with treatment and rehabilitation. The lack of knowledge is more harmful than good as the public fear is causing them to take action to find out the information, they feel they have the right to know. This involves discovering the children’s identity once adults, and if they reoffended, this would lead to falsely accusing a person and putting innocent people at risk. This would not occur if this information were public. Yes, these children who commit a sadistic crime and are now adults are receiving hate from the public, but rarely does this hate turn physical. Venables and Thompson having their identity protected will make things more problematic as it only makes people try to find them more. Tina McGuire is one of those people. She revealed Venables’s current identity, the prison where he is being held, and his picture. McGuire was sentenced to eight months in prison, suspended for 15 months, and had to pay 3,000 pounds in legal fees (Jon Venables: women posted picture). This was not the first time she did this; she wanted her post to be shared so people recognized Venables as an adult. However, the justice system is more concerned about Venables’s safety than the public. Her post is considered a risk of serious harm to Venables and those falsely accused (Jon Venables: women posted picture). Actress Tina Malone was given an eight-month suspended sentence, as well as Richard McKeag, Natalie Barker, and Anthony John Wixted. (O’Leary). There is a reason why people are trying to find and share the identity of Jon Venables, and that is because he is a danger to society. He was not only convicted for child pornography but convicted for it twice as well as possession of cocaine. Since he was convicted numerous times after his first crime it would be suitable to expose his identity, he is now an adult and should lose the privileges given as a child. It is one thing to protect the identity of a child, however, it is not a suitable punishment to protect the identity of an adult. The courts should focus on the risk and danger he is to the public rather than trying to protect a convicted murderer. The dissatisfaction with the sentence is causing people to devote their time to revealing the boy's identity and be punished for it. It could also be argued that being punished for informing people about Venables is against people's right to freedom of speech; however, releasing this information does increase the risk of an innocent person being mistaken for Venables or Thompson, which would be an issue. In the case of an innocent person being mistaken, it is suitable for the person who releases that information to be punished as it can cause harmful effects on an innocent person's life. This would not be an issue if their identities were released, and they received a proper punishment. Ralph Bulger's attorney, Robin Makin, stated, "If there were adequate punishment, the furor would die down, and society would feel less unhappy about the situation" (Burr). If the court decided to listen to the public plea from the beginning and raised the sentence, then this would not be an ongoing issue for the court. It is unjust that people are being punished for exposing Venables, as they only try to keep people safe. There would not be any risk of harm toward people who were misidentified as Venables if his identity was exposed after he turned 18 and reoffended.

THE CASE OF MARY BELL

Mary Bell always was obsessed with death, as she had attempted to choke other children before her first killing. On May 25, 1968, the day before her eleventh birthday, Mary Bell strangled four-year-old Martian Brown in an abandoned house in Scotswood, England. At first, the police ruled the death an accident as they found empty pill bottles beside the body. After Martian's death, Mary appeared at his parents' doorstep, asking to see his body. Not long after, Mary and her friend Norma broke into the nursery and vandalized it with notes stating they were responsible for *Martin* Brown's Murder. At the same time, she confessed to her classmates that she murdered Martian, but no one believed her. Two months later, on July 31, Mary Bell killed three-year-old Brian Howe by strangulation and mutilated his body with scissors. Mary also offered to help Brian's sister look for him and pointed out the concrete block where she hid his body. Mary's interest in this case and her behavior caused her to become a suspect as she was caught laughing and rubbing her hands together when she saw Brain's coffin at his funeral. She would later confess a detail only known to investigators that led to her arrest. (Farley).

Mary Bell, like the previous two cases, had similar controversies. Mary Bell was also put under protection to protect herself and her family. However, one of the main issues of this case happened around thirty years later when the book *Cries Unheard* by Gitta Sereny came out in 1999. In this book, Gitta goes straight to the source, interviewing Mary Bell, and getting her opinion on the case now that she is older. What is controversial about this book is that Gitta Sereny paid Mary Bell. Gitta states in her book, "…Money I would propose she receives if she decided to go ahead [with the interviews] hopefully to put in trust for her daughter" (Gitta 18). It is undetermined how much Mary was paid, but reports say around 50,000 pounds. The parents of the victims, the Prime Minister, and the public feel it is not justified for a person to make money off their crime. The question becomes if it is justified for the court to allow Mary Bell to receive money for telling her story, and is it legal for Mary to be paid? Even though it is unjust and unethical that Mary received money, it would not have been easy to convince the High Court to order Mary to give back the money (Harding). People find it appalling that she could benefit from her crimes (Harding). Martian's sister also said, "It takes us no further forward. I would just like some restrictions on her that she cannot make money" (The Scotsman). The idea that Mary Bell received money caused another issue about her anonymity as the book being published created a loophole where newspapers could track her down and reveal her identity. Despite the controversy Mary and Gitta caused when publishing the book, the court is still trying to protect Mary Bell. Mary is now in protective custody, and arrangements are being made with the media to prevent this information from being leaked; the court is trying to close the loophole that allowed the media to release this information (Harding). Mary is still being protected after all these years because she is at high risk of harm. Mary Bell put herself into a situation where she was at risk when she decided to do the book. Since it was Mary's choice, it was not the government's job to fix Mary's problems; she must face the consequences. The government should not be on the side of the perpetrator.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to sentencing a child who committed a heinous crime can be difficult. There is no set law put into place that will help the court determine the appropriate sentence for the child; this results in a shorter sentence and being put on the path of rehabilitation. The controversy about the rehabilitation method used to deal with children who are guilty of sadistic crimes involving murder, torture, and sexual assault is the children who commit these crimes are unlikely to change their behavior through treatment alone. This results in releasing children back into society with a clean slate when there is still a risk to public safety. There needs to be a change in the law and philosophy of the Western juvenile justice system to help ensure that these children are still facing the consequences of their actions. The idea of rehabilitation can still be implemented as some children might benefit from treatment, but it is unreliable; it should not be the justice system's focus. There needs to be a form of retribution for these children, as they must face the consequences of their actions and be held accountable. Also, this idea is supported by juvenile judges; they feel it is a justified way to address these children. Most children who commit sadistic crimes understand what they did, so they should be responsible for their actions. Overall, there needs to be a balance between treatment and punishment; it does not have to be one or the other. However, the courts need to consider the defendant's emotional state, the crime, its nature and severity, and the public's interest when sentencing a child. This could be the first step in addressing the issues and controversies of rehabilitating a child who is guilty of a heinous crime.

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KIRA MUZAFAROV

Intuitive Eating: The Alternative Approach to Dieting and its Potential in Replacing Restrictive Dieting Practices

ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into intuitive eating as an alternative to traditional diets and investigates its potential to replace restrictive dieting; "restrictive" refers to diets that limit not only the quantity but can also pertain to the type of food consumed. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the history and principles of intuitive eating and compares intuitive eating methods to restrictive methods. The paper investigates the drawbacks of restrictive diets, including their inefficiency and potential to cause severe health complications. It explicitly encompasses how intuitive eating is not the best solution for individuals who desire weight loss or aim to eat nutritionally. It also highlights the lurking variables in how effective intuitive eating can be for an individual in their pursuit of fulfilling their health goals. Gender, BMI, and race are studied to understand how intuitive eating affects different individuals. While the paper concludes that the effectiveness of intuitive eating varies depending on the individual's demographics and health-related goals, it emphasizes the need for further research to better understand its potential to improve health outcomes, especially for weight loss and nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely believed that dieting, a method for intentional weight loss that involves limiting food consumption by opting out of certain foods or restricting calories, is the only way to lose weight or maintain healthy eating habits. Following diets can prove to be taxing, as they create an all-or-nothing mentality that increases the likelihood of setbacks (Parker-Pope, 2022). The restrictive rules that come with diets can make people feel deprived, leading them to eventually break the rules and abandon the diet altogether. Research by Keirns et al. (2019) reveals that approximately 46% of the weight lost during the diet is regained post-completion, even if the diet is adhered to through its duration. Not only do most struggle to achieve the desired outcomes of their diet, but they put themselves at a high risk of developing eating disorders, emotional distress, and depression (Denny et al., 2017). In response to these dieting pitfalls, a new style of eating called intuitive eating has risen in popularity in the media over the past twenty years. Intuitive eating claims that it can help individuals listen to their body's needs to achieve health-related goals while eliminating the unhealthy practices commonly associated with dieting. It relies on internal hunger and fullness cues and eating without following food rules or restrictions. As a result, many health professionals contend that intuitive eating can replace dieting and help foster a healthy relationship with food. Despite how healthy intuitive eating may sound, it is not easy to discern if intuitive eating is the solution everyone should seek to achieve their health goals. Although most evidence supports the benefits of intuitive eating, it also suggests that the effects of intuitive eating may vary based on individuals' demographics and emphasize the need for further research to determine generalizability. Some healthcare professionals also argue that intuitive eating is better suited for maintaining a healthy weight and food intake instead of helping individuals achieve weight loss and healthy eating habits, as it involves eating until feeling full and selecting foods based on personal preference rather than nutritional value.

I aim to establish whether or not intuitive eating practices can replace traditional dieting practices. This paper will examine the root causes of why chronic dieting has been linked to mental health issues, eating disorders, and hormone imbalances. In contrast, it explains why intuitive eating has been associated with a lower BMI, improved self-image, and better adherence to the practice itself. Then, I will assess the conclusions drawn on intuitive eating from the various sources, taking into consideration the impact lurking factors such as culture, gender, race, and food preferences can have on the results of studies. By analyzing the data on intuitive eating while accounting for complex factors, this paper will determine if there is an overall positive relationship between intuitive eating and key health indicators, or if further research must be conducted. While intuitive eating presents itself as a healthier alternative to dieting that can help people reach their health goals, it remains uncertain whether it truly allows individuals to avoid the negative consequences often associated with dieting.

BACKGROUND

The concept of dieting did not initially evolve from the idea of achieving weight loss or physical transformation. In ancient Greece, a "diaita," or diet, was seen as a means of living "encompassing food, drink, lifestyle, and exercise" (Twilley & Graber, 2018, para.1). However, the definition of a diet has significantly changed in the past 120 years. Diet culture now prioritizes physical appearance over all other health factors. This shift has increased the desire to conform to a particular appearance. Various diets, specifically restrictive ones which limit food quantities or types, have risen in popularity. While these diets may offer short-term weight loss benefits and claim to be beneficial to health, they tend to be challenging to sustain. They also fail to account for individual needs, with one diet being suitable for one person but not another. The negative consequences of restrictive diets are varied and far-reaching, including metabolic damage, mental health issues, and eating disorders.

The term intuitive eating, or 'adaptive' eating, was coined in 1995 at the start of the 'obesity epidemic' and first appeared in a peer-reviewed journal in 1998 (Van Dyke & Drinkwater, 2014). Although intuitive eating has existed for over 20 years, it has only recently gained mainstream popularity. Intuitive eating can be considered the most primitive and innate way of eating: eating when hungry, eating until satiated, and not restricting food type or quantity to fulfill such cues. Even though this method seems engrained in humans, outside pressures greatly influence how much people eat. Advertising on billboards, the large portions of restaurants, the popularity behind dieting, and the social rules around food are hard to avoid in everyday life and influence people to overconsume. For instance, learned behaviors like finishing the entire plate, even when feeling full, can easily disrupt the natural perception of hunger and satiety, especially if ingrained from a young age. "Since children learn how to eat from their parents, this disregard for innate hunger and satiety signals is taught to the next generation" (Van Dyke & Drinkwater, 2014, p. 1758). Intuitive eating can inhibit behaviors that outside pressures promote by encouraging eating in reasonable amounts, which is supposed to be associated with weight loss and better health. Overall, the popularity of intuitive eating has grown due to the increasing need for awareness regarding the external pressures that influence eating behaviors, coupled with the prevalence of harmful dieting in the modern world.

The 'dieting paradox', which occurs when an individual on a diet ultimately experiences weight gain, is an important term that can frame why intuitive eating has the potential to be an alternative to dieting. An article in *Holistic Nursing Practice*, "Intuitive Eating: A Holistic Approach to Weight Control," states, "The fact that more people are dieting in the United States than ever before, while simultaneously more people are overweight than ever before has created a 'dieting paradox'" (Outland, 2010, p. 38). This is important as a significant aspect of this paper examines the habits of dieting that often lead to weight gain and compares them to the alternative habits of intuitive eating associated with healthy weight and habits.

THE DRAWBACKS OF DIETING

Diets tend to contribute to negative associations with food and body image as diets fluctuate in popularity. Therefore, it can be hard to determine which diet is ideal for achieving specific health goals and if they would even do so. For example, the popular high-fat keto and low-calorie cabbage soup diets are opposites in the dieting realm, but both claim to lead to substantial weight loss in any individual. The portrayal of diets as trends in the media tend to leave out the negatives that can come with following them. The popularity of dieting and its associated issues primarily stem from the emphasis on weight loss, which often promotes achieving the ideal of thinness as the ultimate goal. 'Diet culture' also communicates that improving physical appearance is something everyone should strive for, even at the expense of their physical and mental health and overall well-being (Sigman-Grant, 2020). Therefore, dieting, which is often presented as a restrictive practice, tends to overlook the importance of holistic well-being in eating habits. This can lead to negative associations with body image and food, potentially triggering the development of eating disorders. An article published in the Journal of Public Health Nutrition that investigates the relationship between health markers and intuitive eating writes, "There is also research indicating that rates of eating disorders, which may have their genesis in low-energy diets, appear to be increasing in recent times" (Van Dyke & Drinkwater, 2014, p. 1757). An article published in the *British Journal of Health Psychology* writes, "...both restrained and emotional eating [are] linked with body dissatisfaction and compromised mental and physical health" (Markey et al., 2022, p.138). Additionally, individuals can be misled into thinking that adherence to a particular diet will produce promised results, but this may not be the case for everyone. Underlying health conditions, medications, and allergies to food can prevent one individual from losing weight through a specific diet, but can help another.

Aside from increasing the risk factors of developing depression and eating disorders, the idea that decreasing calories would result in absolute weight loss is a common misconception held by most dieters and can create more harm than good. Living day to day counting calories or avoiding certain foods and going hungry can increase psychological stress and cortisol, the stress hormone in the body (Tomiyama et al. 2010). A 2010 article in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine* revealed that dieting can trigger high cortisol levels, which are linked to weight gain and conditions like heart disease and diabetes (Tomiyama et al. 2010). Caloric restriction might not be the best way to lose weight, and attempting to do so might increase other health factors and risks that can be deadly. The idea that "a calorie is a calorie" no matter what food it comes from is a common belief that dieters have and may lead people to malnutrition. Many people are unaware of how various micronutrients, which are the vitamins and minerals critical for health, are metabolized in the body. The thermic effect of food, the amount of energy the body requires to metabolize food after eating, is often overlooked in dieting. Kris Gunnars, in his *Healthline* article, highlights the efficiency of metabolic pathways: "The more efficient a metabolic pathway is, the more of the food's energy is used for work and less is dissipated as heat" (Gunnars, 2018, para. 15). The article also states that protein is the least efficient macronutrient in terms of metabolism, but it offers the highest metabolic advantage because when protein is metabolized, 25 to 30% of its calories are lost as heat, which is a significantly higher amount compared to 2-3% for fat and 6-8% for carbohydrates (Gunnars, 2018). Whole foods like proteins require more energy to digest and provide more micronutrients than processed options. For example, 200 calories of egg whites ultimately nets only 150 calories for the body after digestion, while the same 200 calories from cake results in around 190 absorbed calories. Simply decreasing calories or avoiding certain foods may not provide the full benefits of prioritizing overall nutrition for better health.

Following restrictive diets is also difficult due to the interaction between the hunger hormones leptin and ghrelin, which are responsible for hunger and impact the effectiveness of diets. Leptin is produced in fat cells, while ghrelin is produced in stomach cells. Ghrelin acts as the "primary orexigenic or 'hunger' hormone," and leptin "suppresses appetite in part by decreasing … ghrelin," (Outland, 2010, p. 37). Once these hormones are ignored, the body looks to find 'homeostasis,' or balance, from ignoring the signals, and the individual ends up binge or emotional eating. These reactions to food restriction are one of the main reasons why the 'dieting paradox' exists, which is highlighted in an article in the journal, *Obesity Science & Practice*, stating that "Although the current obesity treatment approach often leads to initial losses of weight, approximately 46% of lost weight is regained" (Keirns et al., 2019, p. 408). Furthermore, ghrelin is not just involved in hunger. It also "promotes restorative sleep and cardiac function" (Outland, 2010, p. 37), which are critical health factors that could be disrupted by attempts to suppress ghrelin through restrictive dieting. A study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* by Denny et al. (2017) also supports how following the restrictive behaviors of ignoring hunger can lead to unintended repercussions, stating:

> [T]he replacement of these internal signals with external cues, or motivators, has been shown to be related to weight gain and several unhealthy eating practices, such as dietary restraint, eating in the absence of hunger, and eating in response to emotions. (p. 14)

Although weight can be lost through dietary restriction, it seems as though it is not the best approach as it can interfere with complex hormone systems in the body, which can regulate multiple functions. It can also trigger behaviors that prevent weight loss. Because of these factors, an alternate way of dieting to achieve weight loss that does not interfere with hormone function should be focused on.

WHY INTUITIVE EATING IS CONSIDERED A HEALTHIER ALTERNATIVE TO DIETING

One reason intuitive eating is better than dieting in terms of overall health and potentially aiding in weight loss is that it is considered easier to follow in the long term. Chronic dieting is not sustainable in the long term. According to an article on intuitive eating published in *Holistic Nursing Practice*, dieting can lead to emotional distress including shame, guilt, and as a result, weight gain (Outland, 2010). This highlights the irony that chronic dieting's intense focus on calorie restriction can worsen emotional states if expected weight loss goals are unmet. Failing to achieve such goals undermines the original intent of dieting—to improve wellbeing or lose weight. These resulting negative emotions inflict a psychological toll, as chronic dieting's rigid rules erode mental wellbeing over time. Diminished mental wellbeing then makes it harder to keep adhering to restrictive diets long-term. Given the adherence challenges of chronic dieting highlighted thus far, the article goes on to suggest intuitive eating as an alternative solution. It provides the case study of a woman who overcame her struggles with weight maintenance through chronic dieting by adopting intuitive eating habits. This approach helped her successfully lose weight and sustain positive results over time. The article states, "She believes she is eating only when ideally hungry and stopping when ideally full. She says she is closer than ever to finally 'taking the need to control' her eating 'off the table'" (Outland, 2010, p. 41). Intuitive eating breaks the dieting cycle which keeps a person in the same place they were before they even started to diet by encouraging overeating by ignoring internal cues. The woman presented in the case study was stuck in an "all or nothing" mentality that chronic dieting often promotes, which can lead to the breakdown of dieting efforts and perpetuate the dieting cycle. This rigid thinking, where one "forbidden" food can trigger binge behaviors and lead to abandoning the diet entirely, is an important factor in understanding poor adherence to diets. A New York Times article focusing on intuitive eating even coins this common phenomenon as the "what the hell effect" (Parker-Pope, 2022, para. 10), noting how the inability to sustain perfectionistic dieting rules can quickly spiral into overeating and failure to stay on the diet. Unlike in dieting, intuitive eating has no rigid restrictions and individuals are encouraged to abide by their natural hunger cues, so it may be better at facilitating consistency and adherence over time.

Intuitive eating can create a positive relationship with food and foster a positive association between the body and mind to achieve desired results. In the summary of a book review on Intuitive eating by Christy Harrison, Sigman-Grant (2020) highlights how diets may sabotage the efforts of achieving wellness, writing, "The author (a registered dietitian and journalist) thoughtfully critiques how diets (whether focused on weight loss, health, or wellness) paradoxically result in undermining efforts to achieve a life worth living" (p. 1171). By promoting a positive association between the body and mind, intuitive eating aligns with the idea that overall well-being encompasses more than just physical health. It recognizes the importance of mental and emotional health in achieving a truly fulfilling life. Recent global research shows that intuitive eaters often feel better about themselves and their bodies. The study conducted by Markey et al. (2022) puts it simply: "Individuals who eat more intuitively, by definition, are able to enjoy food and allow themselves to eat when they feel hungry or desire a par-ticular food" (p. 151). This ties into how satisfaction is reported while eating intuitively. For example, in a study analyzing fruit and vegetable intake in adults, "The degree to which physiological needs were met with appropriate food choices (ie, B-FCC subscale score) was positively associated with fruit and vegetable intake in all participants (P < .001)" (Barad et al., 2019, p. 760). This suggests that when people select foods that meet their body's requirements or cravings, they tend to intuitively eat more fruits and vegetables. In line with these findings, it is evident that intuitive eating empowers individuals to develop a healthier and more harmonious relationship with food, which helps people shift their focus away from results and towards the joy they derive from eating and the journey involved in achieving their goals, if they desire. Intuitive eating appears to be a personalized approach that promotes a healthy mindset and does not inflict harm on the individual. Research suggests that listening to one's hunger and fullness cues to guide eating is associated with better mental and physical well-being than traditional dieting methods.

Intuitive eating's prioritization of overall well-being over weight loss is especially beneficial, as diets tend to focus heavily on weight loss and cause negative side effects. Nevertheless, weight loss can still be considered an outcome of this approach. The concept of 'body liberation,' as explained by a review of the book, "Anti-Diet: Reclaim Your Time, Money, Well-Being, and Happiness through Intuitive Eating" separates the notion that thinness or weight loss equates to health (Sigman-Grant, 2020). This separation is a means of freeing individuals from societal norms that assign greater value to certain body types over others. By prioritizing well-being over weight through intuitive eating practices, individuals can shift their focus towards accepting and respecting their bodies by listening to their hunger cues, instead of constantly pursuing weight loss.

Not focusing on weight loss does not mean that it can not occur by following intuitive eating practices. Multiple studies have shown a correlation between intuitive eating and lower BMI, including a cross-sectional study done on intuitive eating, which states that "Ten out of the eleven cross-sectional studies find that intuitive eaters have significantly lower BMI than non-intuitive eaters" (Van Dyke & Drinkwater, 2014, pp. 1759-1762). This study illustrates that the negative association between BMI and intuitive eating may lead to a healthy BMI without the stress and obsession commonly associated with traditional dieting. However, it is crucial to recognize that various individual factors can significantly impact how well someone takes to intuitive eating and whether they experience weight loss as a byproduct. Therefore, it is only in a broader context that intuitive eating, by encouraging body acceptance and respect, redirects one's focus toward adopting a healthier lifestyle, possibly resulting in natural weight loss as a positive outcome.

LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON INTUITIVE EATING

A question raised about intuitive eating is whether eating based on internal cues leads to optimal nutrition. The term 'body wisdom' is closely connected to intuitive eating and suggests that the human body instinctively craves certain foods to fulfill its nutritional needs to maintain good health (Van Dyke & Drinkwater, 2014). However, this claim, as it pertains to intuitive eating, has been shown to be inaccurate in multiple studies, as factors, mostly personal and gender-oriented food preferences, heavily influence dietary intake. According to a 2019 study on dietary behaviors and intuitive eating, societal pressures may contribute to gender differences in eating habits. The researchers found that males are generally less likely to exhibit dieting behaviors compared to females, who more commonly express a desire to make healthy food choices (Barad et al. 2019). The fact that women tend to make healthier food choices than men, coupled with the idea that men are more likely to gravitate towards foods that satisfy their cravings, suggests that men may be more inclined to adhere to intuitive eating practices. This preference may come at the expense of their overall nutrition. Unhealthy food choices are not stated to be avoided while following intuitive eating, and personal preferences can play a large role in the impact of nutrition. Outland's article (2010) promotes intuitive eating as a holistic approach to weight control and suggests that nurses should implement programs to encourage intuitive eating. She writes, "Clients should be counseled to have a variety of healthy and delicious food available whenever they get hungry" (p. 41). This call for guidance in promoting nutrition through intuitive eating reveals a contradictory point. Merely allowing individuals to eat what they want without any external input, as intuitive eating promotes, may not ensure optimal nutrition. Some may need additional support to meet their nutritional needs, even if they listen to their body's cues. While intuitive eating may benefit some individuals, personal and gender-oriented food preferences can heavily impact nutrition. Even those who adhere to intuitive eating may require additional support to meet their nutritional needs.

For individuals who are obese and aiming to reap the health benefits of achieving a healthy BMI, relying solely on intuitive eating may not be adequate. Although intuitive eating does not prioritize weight loss, it is frequently promoted as a substitute for dieting, which typically centers on weight loss. As a result, weight loss is an essential point to consider. As previously mentioned, intuitive eating is associated with a lower BMI; however, this correlation cannot be solely attributed to intuitive eating. The individual's pre-existing BMI can be seen as the most significant factor in determining the relationship between intuitive eating and weight loss. The term 'weight homeostasis,' which is defined by Outland (2010) as the resistance "to interventions aimed at decreasing energy stores" (p. 36), highlights that people's hunger cues generally help them maintain their current weight. If an obese person follows their hunger cues, which are generally more demanding than those of a person with a normal BMI, weight loss is unlikely to occur. Therefore, intuitive eating is often linked with weight maintenance or modest weight reduction, unlike conventional dieting methods that can lead to significant weight loss. A study focusing on BMI and intuitive eating found that "significant, cross-sectional IE–physical health relationships are only observed when other relevant factors (i.e. BMI and demographics) are not considered…" (Keirns et al., 2019, p. 413), indicating that the correlation between intuitive eating and physical health weakens when factors such as BMI and demographics are considered. This suggests that underlying factors such as weight can alter an individual's health outcomes more than intuitive eating. Prioritizing weight loss to achieve a healthy BMI is crucial for obese individuals in establishing overall health, and weight loss is not given much importance nor is it seen as a common result when following intuitive eating. Overall, relying solely on internal cues does not aid with weight loss. This is especially important for obese individuals, since not experiencing weight loss through intuitive eating can potentially allow the progression of damaging health factors linked with obesity.

The lack of generalizability in the findings on intuitive eating highlights how intuitive eating only works for some. Studies tend to pool from a homogenous population and ignore factors that can influence eating behaviors, such as culture, gender, and race. Many studies on intuitive eating suffer from a recruitment bias that limits generalizability, as highlighted in a 2014 literature review. The authors note that while Caucasian women may be easier to recruit, obesity and related health issues significantly affect other demographics who may respond differently to intuitive eating interventions (Van Dyke & Drinkwater, 2014). This recruitment bias limits the generalizability of findings to other populations, particularly non-Caucasians and men, who also experience significant health-related issues that intuitive eating aims to address. A more recent study that focuses on intuitive eating and its correlation with body mass index (BMI), self-esteem, and body image across eight countries notes that "Some cultural contexts may support and encourage certain approaches to eating more than others as the correlates of these eating styles differ somewhat from country to country" (Markey et al., 2022, p. 52). Despite the fact that studies on intuitive eating have been conducted in various countries with differing cultures, the role of culture in shaping intuitive eating practices has not been thoroughly examined. An individual study that focuses on the consumption of fruits and vegetables and their link to intuitive eating in college students also shows such limitations, as the author writes, "Another limitation is the lack of data collection involving ethnicity or race, which was shown to be associated with intuitive eating behaviors" (Barad et al., 2019, p. 761). The lack of external factors, particularly demographics, can potentially skew the results of intuitive eating on many different aspects of health in one direction, which would not represent most people. Thus, it is crucial to conduct further research that considers diverse populations in order to completely understand the effectiveness of intuitive eating.

Intuitive eating's practicality is hindered by external factors such as food availability and time constraints as well as social and environmental structures. This makes implementing it in actual use and as a potential public health policy challenging. The practicality of intuitive eating for students and working people is often challenged by external factors, as highlighted in the quote, "However, if they are not able to honor their body's cues due to environmental structures, they might eat what and when they can, whether they are hungry or not, leading to weight gain over time" (Denny et al., 2017, p. 17). Individuals who lack access to food or have limited time to eat may resort to eating when food is available rather than responding to hunger cues. Such behavior appears to be common and demonstrates that intuitive eating practices can be hard to follow for most people. This notion of intuitive eating being impractical is further explored in an intuitive eating literature review, which states that "Even if intuitive eating is successful in improving health, it has little value as a public health policy if, like traditional dieting, it is difficult to implement and maintain" (Van Dyke & Drinkwater, 2014, pp. 1763-1764). This quote highlights an important consideration when promoting intuitive eating as a public health policy. While it appears likely that intuitive eating can improve health outcomes, if it is difficult to implement and sustain, it may not be a practical solution for public health policies, as is currently observed with traditional dieting methods. This suggests that challenges must be overcome to make intuitive eating feasible. Since eating is often driven by various physical, environmental, social, or emotional factors, relying solely on hunger cues to guide eating behavior can be difficult to reinforce. As a result, transforming typical eating behaviors into those based solely on hunger and satiety cues, as intuitive eating suggests, appears to be impractical.

CONCLUSION

Overall, intuitive eating can be a great way to reach health goals while avoiding the negative impacts of traditional dieting. It offers a more sustainable and flexible approach to healthy eating, which can improve overall well-being and mental health outcomes. While further research is needed to fully understand the outcomes of intuitive eating, it still appears to offer many potential benefits. Unlike traditional diets, which can lead to hormone issues, unsustainable weight loss, and mental health problems, intuitive eating offers a more sustainable approach to healthy eating that emphasizes flexibility and autonomy in food choices. It also does not interfere with hunger hormones, which can alter multiple functions of the body. Intuitive eating appears to be easier to adhere to than dieting in the long run. The most notable difference is in its ability to help individuals develop a more positive and healthy relationship with food, which can lead to better mental health outcomes and overall well-being.

It is important to note that intuitive eating may not be suitable for everyone. While intuitive eating offers many potential benefits, it may not be the best approach for individuals who are looking to achieve specific weight loss goals and, hence, those who desire to cure health concerns that stem from obesity. Issues of generalizability arise with determining the outcomes of intuitive eating on various factors, as many studies do not pool from populations that are diverse in gender, race, and culture. This problem appears to grow in size in systematic reviews rather than diminish. Generalizing or applying intuitive eating findings to weight loss and making food choices is not always straightforward due to conflicting perspectives on its impacts, with both sides supported by research. The implementation of intuitive eating into the common person's lifestyle does not seem very practical as intuitive eating solely relies on internal cues, which might not be aligned with eternal cues. Therefore, it's important to consider individual needs, demographics, and preferences when deciding whether or not intuitive eating is an appropriate approach to achieving health goals.

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AMY HEERY

Does Mental Health Pull the Trigger?

ABSTRACT

Mental health and gun violence have had a long-standing correlation to one another as the mentally ill population is often targeted in public conversations regarding mass shootings. Gun violence has been discussed in high magnitudes across the country, including devastating shootings from university campuses to grocery stores. These conversations often blame those who are mentally ill or unstable, putting a target on these individuals as the cause of this widespread violence. As the priority of gun control increases continuously for the legislators of America, some have put in concentrated efforts to eliminate the amount of gun violence occurring in the country, often utilizing this common belief that blames mental illness as the root cause. Contemporary solutions that have arisen include the Gun Violence Restraining Orders law, which was approved in 2016 by California, to ensure that those who might pose a danger to themselves or others are barred from access to guns. The success rate of laws similar to GVROs, such as the Tarasoff Law and the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, has been contested by other parts of the population that do not consider the mentally ill responsible for gun-related crimes. That being said, finding a way to limit the violence seen within the US remains a top priority of policymakers and constituents alike, regardless of which demographic is seen as the root cause. More recently, GVROs, or Red Flag Laws, and the National Instant Criminal Background Checks have been implemented throughout the US as a continued effort to stop gun violence. Overall, policies like these target the mentally ill to limit gun violence, but their overall effectiveness is questioned by both mental health and gun restriction advocates. This paper will delve into the commonly-held belief that mental illness causes gun violence by analyzing different research studies and surveys, as well as taking a closer look at the history behind the stigmatization of mentally ill individuals.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is one of the most commonly used scapegoats for any conversation about gun violence, including mass shootings, homicides, and overall danger, but is this an accurate correlation? The culmination of these targeted legislative efforts has become known as “Red Flag

Laws", or Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVROs). These laws aim to alert gun sellers when prospective gun buyers have been reported in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. This will prevent anyone flagged from acquiring a gun until they have justified that they can carry a firearm within a court of law. Other related legislation that targets the mentally ill include the Tarasoff Law, which emphasizes the duty of mental health professionals to warn others who may be in danger from their patients, as well as the National Instant Background Check. A consistent argument among many Americans is that people with mental health issues are more likely to commit violent acts. With this unfair assumption in mind, most individuals approve of these Red Flag Laws. As gun violence becomes a more prominently discussed topic throughout all media platforms, the already highly stigmatized group of the mentally ill is becoming targeted at a greater speed as politicians and other highly regarded members of society begin sharing their factually unsupported views. Not only is this detrimental to Americans due to the spread of misinformation but the mentally ill are targeted at an even higher rate as information condemning them is seen in a much more widespread regard.

Biases often mold the information Americans receive and play a considerable role in shaping public opinion. The narratives surrounding gun regulation and mental health are riddled with "salience bias". Salience bias refers to the fear invoked around an improbable event, but equally as concerning and dangerous. For example, a mentally ill individual causing a mass shooting tomorrow is an unlikely event, even though it is spoken about in significant amounts and thus invokes great amounts of fear, creating an almost expectant feeling for the event to occur. Aaron Kivisito's "Gun Violence Following Inpatient Psychiatric Treatment: Offense Characteristics, Sources of Guns, and Number of Victims" states, "One consequence of a focus on statistically rare acts of gun violence, such as mass shootings of strangers perpetrated by individuals with mental illness, is that current policy priorities targeting the broad issue of gun violence appear to miss the mark by targeting the relatively narrow issue of mass homicides perpetrated by individuals with serious mental illness" (Kivisto). By failing to recognize the real risk factors when it comes to gun violence, a sense of immense fear is created to target the wrong demographic, further putting the mentally ill at risk. Reform within legislation and proper advocacy for more prominent forms of gun violence regarding mental health is necessary to end its stigma and adequately address the gun violence crisis in America. By analyzing data among different demographics, reviewing legislation, dissecting more probable causes of gun violence, and pointing out media bias, this essay will address why laws targeting the mentally ill are ideologically flawed and ineffective in stopping US gun violence.

BACKGROUND

America has maintained its position as a country with one of the highest rates of gun violence, including suicides, homicides, death among women, and death of children under 14 and between 15 and 24 (Kivisto). Red Flag Laws, also called Gun Violence Restraining Orders, were introduced to flag gun owners who have shown signs of aggression and anger towards themselves or others by allowing family members to contact authorities for proper intervention (Frattaroli et al.). The National Instant Background Check System has been widely implemented with these Red Flag Laws to track people with mental illness or who have posed a threat to themselves or others. This system prevents people who have been deemed high risk from purchasing a firearm until they prove in a court of law, that they are capable (Honberg). Kivisto also emphasizes that since 1968, policies have been implemented that align people who are mentally ill with "presumptively dangerous persons," and the policy "prohibits the purchase of firearms for several reasons related to mental health" (Kivisto).

Previously, other policies like the Tarasoff Law, which resulted in psychotherapists having a duty to report unusual behavior, and the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act in 1993, which required background checks and waiting periods when purchasing handguns, were introduced, and mainly targeted the mentally ill, ultimately trying to prevent further gun violence (Hall and Friedman). Following the implementation of these policies came Gun Violence Restraining Orders, which called for the use of the previously mentioned NICS system. Within the last ten years, more states have enacted policies that allow guns to be revoked, with the earliest being in Connecticut in 1999 (Frattaroli et al.). These previous laws kickstarted what Americans now know as the Red Flag Laws implemented nationwide.

Public figures and mass media have added significantly to the attention these shootings receive and often support the argument that the mentally ill are at the root of the cause (Kivisto). The National Rifle Association, a notoriously right organization, one subscribed to the belief that the mentally ill are “lunatics” and “monsters”, pushed for a national database that would log these individuals (Vicaro). Similarly, Obama has also issued policies that emphasize nationwide recognition of mental health, encouraging the use of the federal background check system (Vicaro). Overall, public policy within the US has aimed to minimize gun violence, but while doing so they unfairly and overwhelmingly target the mentally ill– regardless of the argument of mental illness being factually unsupported.

THE MISCONCEPTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ITS HAND IN GUN VIOLENCE

In recent years, a specific focus on mental health in correlation to gun violence has become ever-present in American society. This remains a highly contested issue seen on both ends of the political spectrum within America, with one end citing it as a misconception, and the other hailing it as the sole reason for this gun violence. Vicaro states, “By virtue of their terrifying frequency, nature, and outcomes, mass shootings generate intense media scrutiny, public dialogue, and political response. However, many experts agree that ‘“a multiple-casualty shooting by a disturbed individual is a statistically rare and virtually unpredictable event”’ (qtd. in Vicaro). As explained earlier, this disproportionate focus on a relatively uncommon event exemplifies salience bias. Salience bias is one of the most prominent ways misinformation is shared, and political figures capitalize on the paranoia it produces to implement their ideologies into policies. Immense fear is created around incidents far more unlikely than other forms of gun violence, taking away from acknowledging gun violence scenarios that are more common, like suicide.

Implications from past and present political leaders have furthered the dangerous mental health narrative that has cascaded through American homes. More recently, former presidents Donald Trump and Barack Obama have created policies and curated narratives that target the mentally ill as the root cause of gun violence. During his tenure, Obama presented a rule stating that those receiving welfare checks for mental illness would be flagged within the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) system. Once in office, Trump rolled back the regulation and deemed the rule unnecessary but continued to blame the mentally ill for gun-related issues. The rule was not passed, but proponents of the rhetoric, like the NRA, stated that they “[welcome] the President’s call to address the root causes of the horrific acts of violence that have occurred in our country" (Siemaszko). In some of the most recent accounts of mass shootings, like Michigan State's, the GOP has emphasized mental health as the problem once again. Reporter Anna Gustafson noted that after the 2023 Michigan State University shooting, "Michigan Republicans issued a flurry of press releases citing mental health as one of the main issues that need to be addressed". The urge to push mental health issues as a leading cause comes to fruition at the site of each mass shooting, both past and present. Since lawmakers highly regard messages like these at times of widespread fear, it is received among citizens as the leading cause of gun violence, which is another symptom of salience bias.

Opponents of the emphasis on mental health, such as psychologist Jeff Temple, have advocated for mental health care but also denounce its use as a "politically expedient" method of evading gun reform laws that will lower access for all people (qtd. in Gustafson). Reporter Corky Siemaszko writes that mental health experts had "accused Trump of focusing on mental illness to avoid taking politically risky steps like banning high-powered weapons like those used in the El Paso and Dayton massacres" (Siemaszko). References have been made to Jared Lee Loughner and Eagan Holmes, who presented mental health concerns before committing acts of gun violence, fueling the mental health stigma of elevated risk in the arguments of many (Hall et al.). Since mental health may have played a more significant role in certain circumstances, a blanket assumption is made about all acts of gun violence, allowing legislators to push their narratives through policy reform while ignoring the more significant threats still present. Gustafson quotes Dr. Amy Barnhorst, who states, "'As a psychiatrist, I say I'm a traitor to my people if I cast aspersions on people who want to fund mental health — please do — but it's unlikely to affect mass shootings,'" (Gustafson). Increasing the quality and access to mental health care remains a problem, but it is a problem that can exist separately from gun violence and should be treated as such.

Furthermore, areas like critical race theory, marijuana use, and even single parents are being pinned as the cause of increased gun violence and mental health (Gustafson). These are yet another symptom of legislators' attempts to avoid admitting the core issue of gun control, which is access to dangerous weapons. As stated by Linda Teplin in Corky Siemaszko's article, these ill individuals "must have the weapons, not only the inclination. We are complicit because we make rifles with high-capacity magazines available to all" (qtd. in Siemaszko). Teplin's words emphasize that regardless of who the person is, their inclination can only be more easily pursued with access to high-magnitude weapons in the first place, and Trump had enabled this by reversing his predecessor's executive order. Taking away these highly lethal weapons and disabling them to fall into the hands of the wrong people is the first step to significantly lowering gun violence. These actions will not be able to be enforced if legislators continue to avoid acknowledging the core issue of gun violence.

Looking through the results of a study that observed 1,041 victims of gun violence, only 3% of them were threatened by a person with a history of hospitalization for mental illness (Kivisto). These results concluded that there was no further likelihood of a violent gun offense taking place by a person who was mentally ill. That being said, these findings still only constituted a small group of people that did not result in a standout any more likely than a non-mentally ill person. Furthermore, this data shows that substances, including drugs, have more of a hand in gun violence than the salient causes more frequently discussed (Kivisto).

ARE THERE BETTER PREDICTORS OF GUN VIOLENCE?

As previously stated, the predictors of gun violence are often misconstrued through the media and political messaging, disallowing Red Flag Laws to be adequately implemented. This leads to the question of what the prominent predictors of gun violence are if mental health is not a driving factor. It is essential to focus on more prominent predictors of violence, such as substance use and abuse, social acclamations, and other aspects of the individual that contest a higher possibility of a risk of gun violence (Rowan et al.). A study conducted by Rowan et al. researched levels of hostility, outlook on the future, alcohol use, the impact reward for a crime has, witness to violence unrelated to guns, gang involvement, and time in ungainful activity, such as not going to school or working at least a part-time job, as possible factors that predict gun violence. One significant result was how an individual witnessing non-gun-related violence had a 2.63 times greater chance of committing gun violence. Another discovery showed that those with a poor outlook on the future and those who would gain reward from their crime were around the same probability at 1.45 and 1.42 times higher likelihood. Those who remained out of school or work fell roughly within those parameters at 1.47 times more likely (Rowan et al.).

In each of the findings above, mental illness was not a determining factor. The study was done on male youth ages sixteen to nineteen to document the results of those in their most pivotal time of societal development (Rowan et al.). If anything, these statistical findings from the study show that many factors play into someone's risk factors, which are not screened or accounted for when aspects of Red Flag Laws are implemented. Within the screened youth, many were driven by the idea of receiving a reward for their actions, resulting in an increased probability of committing gun violence. This factor is not affected by mental illness and shows that other societal factors, like monetary or street-credit benefits, encourage a person to commit violent acts. Another aspect of the study showed that someone with a poor outlook on the future is likely to commit acts of gun violence. Although easy to misinterpret, this does not refer to a lack of positivity towards the future due to a diagnosed mental illness such as clinical depression or anxiety. Instead, it indicates an individual who is not concerned with the consequences of immediate actions, separate from mental illness. Rowan defines this poor outlook through the Future Outlook Inventory, which "includes 15 items that participants rank from 1 (never true) to 4 (always true; a= .68 at baseline) how strongly statements reflect how they usually are (e.g., "Before making a decision, I weigh the good vs. the bad")" (Rowan 253). Since the outlook inventory was performed excluding mental health as a factor, it is apparent that mental health is not the sole factor in the increased risk of overall gun violence, and modern conversations often deviate from this point.

SELF-INFLICTED HARM AS A MORE PROBABLE FORM OF GUN VIOLENCE

What often goes underrepresented in American media is the prevalence of suicide rates among all instances of gun violence. Suicide accounts for 61% of gun violence, which is higher than all other forms of gun-related violence (Lu et al.). In older adults, suicide by firearm occurs at a much higher rate than the rest of the population due to cognitive decline, like dementia, which can lead to depression, agitation, confusion, and paranoia. Still, these are only a handful of reasons why someone may commit suicide (Saadi et al.). In this regard, GVROs have a good chance of preventing a person from committing suicide by firearm, which has proven to be far more lethal than non-firearm-related attempted suicides (Saadi et al.). A study that observed firearm-related suicides between the years 2012 and 2016 showed a positive correlation between GVRO laws and a reduction in firearm-related suicides. However, there was a slight increase in non-firearm-related suicide, meaning some people continued to resort to less lethal methods. The mental health crisis remained regardless of the method used (Saadi et al.). Lewiecki et al. state that "according to this view, a person determined to commit suicide is likely to substitute one method for another ("means substitution") or delay suicide until a time when a means is readily available". Nonetheless, when and if these means are substituted, it is often replaced with less lethal forms, allowing for a better chance of survival.

The risk of gun homicide is especially prevalent in spaces where children and teenagers are near guns. Looking into specific data, 94% of pediatric firearm deaths are by homicide and suicide, and they are almost equal in rural areas in America (Dodson). From a sample of 10,000 teens, 29% lived in a home with a gun; after surveying this group, 40% said they felt they could easily access and shoot the gun in their household "right now" (Dodson). These findings are significant as impulsivity is a factor that goes hand in hand with deadly acts of self-harm; therefore, access to lethal weapons accompanied by an impulsive person who is having suicidal ideations is more likely to result in the action being committed, especially when the gun is readily available (Lewiecki et al.).

Lack of mental health care is another leading issue in gun-related suicides that connects to impulsivity. The CDC found that 21- 44% of suicide victims had identified mental health problems, and only one-third received treatment for them (Dodson). This data showed that over half of the mentally ill population, then, did not receive a diagnosis and subsequent treatment for their illnesses, putting them at increased risk of committing an impulsive act like self-inflicted harm. Another statistic shows that 90% of victims who died by suicide had psychiatric disorders present, but more than 80% were untreated at the time of their death. Finally, multiple data points have proven that most people who commit suicide often do not think about it for more than an hour before committing the act (Lewiecki et al.). Not only do these findings emphasize the need for suicide prevention, but they also bring to light the need for legislators and everyday Americans to advocate for overall better mental health awareness. In this light, Red Flag Laws cannot be utilized to fully benefit Americans if over half of them do not have diagnosed mental illness or are not receiving treatment in the first place. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that in this way mental health and gun violence can be relevant to one another, but not in a way that threatens others. Salience bias of this topic has consistently reinforced the idea that the mentally ill are a significant threat to others when in reality they are more likely to hurt themselves due to lack of intervention.

ADVOCACY TO ADDRESS THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AND GUN VIOLENCE

A direct symptom of the misuse of Red Flag Laws and lack of acknowledgment of the actual predictors of gun violence is the subsequent absence of beneficial solutions to both the mental health crisis and gun violence issues plaguing Americans. The first step in successfully limiting gun violence discussed previously is screening for more probable predictors of gun violence. Aside from this, restricting gun access can prove highly beneficial in stopping both suicides and other forms of gun violence. Lewiecki et al. provide examples of areas in which most states falter in their screening processes such as requiring a waiting period, obtaining a gun safety training permit, or requirement of safe storage areas of guns in households, particularly with purchases of handguns, which are the most used gun in suicides. Amid the Michigan shooting in 2023, writer Gustafson suggests limiting the amount of ammunition magazines that can be purchased as well as lowering the number of military-style guns that can be purchased while advocating for waiting periods for all gun purchases.

Allowing light to be shed on suicide is another extremely important aspect of properly assessing the gun issue within America, as it is one of the most common forms of gun violence as well as self-harming methods. Often unseen are how many factors play into someone's possibility of committing such a lethal act of self-harm. Mental health illnesses among other problems like family turmoil, hopelessness about the future, bullying by peers, issues with romantic partners, and social isolation are all suicide factors (Dodson). In these cases, reviewing these possibilities and assessing treatment plans for depression and other mental health disorders can be another leading factor in preventing suicide (Lewiecki et al.). Acknowledging these aspects of suicide allows for better access to preventative programs for people with and without diagnosable mental illness through hospital-run programs and youth prevention programs, to name a few (Prevention Institute). Also noted specifically in these cases are the use of risk protection orders which are an aspect of Red Flag

Laws. In circumstances where a person has expressed the desire to hurt themselves, these efforts can be an effective method in removing possible threats from the person (Prevention Institute). Therefore, creating more recognition around probable forms of gun violence accompanied by advocacy for treatment of mental health issues and proper gun use are all effective ways that together can create safer conditions for the mentally ill, Americans, and also allow for reform of legislation in place to better suit all people.

Furthermore, because gun violence affects adolescents at an increased rate, pediatricians can prove to be another form of advocacy to properly expose parents to risks and gun violence in general on a more local front. Physicians can familiarize themselves with the violence most prominent in their communities and aid their patients in accessing information about campaigns and organizations that fight against gun violence and advocate for proper use and safety, such as Everytown for Gun Safety. Similarly, as a result of the communal collaboration of New Hampshire gun rights groups and suicide prevention advocates, suicide prevention materials are now being incorporated in firearm dealing stores. This allows both gun sellers and purchasers to familiarize themselves with suicide prevention and safe keeping of guns. Not only does advocacy from pediatricians expose young adults to the risks, but it also allows parents to see the importance of gun safety measures within their own homes (Dodson).

In landslide amounts, suggestions to restrict access to lethal weapons as a means to limit overall gun violence surmounts other suggestions. The Michigan University shooting researchers confirmed that the way to decrease gun violence is to "reduce the number of firearms in the country. The less access people have to guns, the less gun violence there will be" (Gustafson). Additionally, Gustafson provides comparisons to other countries like Canada, which has not cured mental illness but has implemented stricter gun laws that restrict access for all people, therefore resulting in reduced gun violence. Further criticism of the lack of gun control compares America's legislation to "people control" rather than taking the initiative of limiting guns through manufacturing and distribution changes (Vicaro). While Americans possess great access to guns, studies have found that states and regions of America with more restrictions on guns had fewer suicide-related deaths, particularly in males. Implementing waiting periods, requiring safe storage areas, and other forms of precautionary measures as means to limit immediate access to guns can prevent deadly situations that result in the taking of vulnerable lives (Lewiecki).

CONCLUSION

In recent years, countless forms of gun violence have plagued Americans at alarming rates. These tragedies and the messaging surrounding them have contributed to the stigma that targets the mentally ill as the reason for the violence, resulting in the implementation of various forms of preventative Red Flag Laws. While addressing a prominent issue in the U.S., these laws target the mentally ill at high rates without considering the extent of their hand in overall gun violence. After reviewing modern data, legislation, and statements from political pundits, it is apparent that the mentally ill are overrepresented as the main causes of gun violence in public conversations about the issue. Therefore, proper steps must be taken in reviewing accurate and supported findings as well as acknowledging more common causes of gun violence. Additionally, allowing research to be done on more viable predictors of gun violence is another leading step in properly assessing the gun violence crisis in America. Although salience bias plays a prominent role in the information that circulates about issues in America, misinformation can be counteracted by proper acknowledgment and advocacy regarding such issues. Enacting stricter laws around access to guns, advocating for mental health services for those suffering from suicidal ideations, and working locally are all ways to counter the effects of misinformation regarding gun violence. Not only will this provide care to the mentally ill who are more affected by gun violence through suicide, but it will also deter further stigmatization of an already susceptible group of people.

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FATIMA SYED

Climate Clubs: A New Approach to Climate Mitigation

ABSTRACT

Many nations attend climate change conferences yearly and sign international treaties to show that they are making the necessary efforts to mitigate climate change. However, these treaties do not make significant progress in terms of reducing emissions, leading scholars to propose the idea of a "climate club", a different type of international institution that could make the change necessary to stop climate change. This paper explores how climate clubs can be used to enhance the effectiveness of current multilateral agreements. It first considers why climate clubs could pose a threat to international treaties by analyzing conflictive fragmentation and presenting examples of how it negatively impacts treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol. Then, it rebuts this notion by introducing the G system and studying how the G20 Hamburg summit in 2017 strengthened the Paris Agreement. Then, it explains how climate clubs establish normative legitimacy by functioning as dialogue forums and using economic sanctions against noncompliant nations. Finally, it examines how club goods can be used to motivate countries to join the climate club and take part in its activities, increasing participation in the overall fight against climate change. The paper concludes that the unique characteristics of climate clubs enable them to improve upon current multilateral agreements.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of climate change is increasing in severity every year, and many international climate organizations are struggling to take sufficient action to tackle this problem. When the world first started taking notice of the increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the rise in global temperatures, they confronted these issues through multilateral agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC was signed by 198 countries and came into effect in 1994 when global emissions had risen to 22 billion tons being produced every year (Kolbert). Rather than an enforceable agreement that pushed countries to reduce emissions, the UNFCCC set up a goal for all the nations that signed the treaty to reduce global emissions. The Kyoto Protocol was added to the UNFCCC in 1997 and, unlike the original treaty, was legally binding and quantified emission reduction goals. Despite the stricter requirements set in the Kyoto Protocol, GHG emissions continue to rise and had reached 35 billion tons a year by 2015 (Kolbert). To address the lack of progress being made, 195 countries came together at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) and signed the Paris Agreement, which sets into place several goals that these nations are expected to fulfill (Davenport et al). The Agreement prompts countries to reduce the world's net carbon emissions enough so that the rise in the Earth's temperature will remain under 2°C and to establish policies that prevent deforestation (Davenport et al). However, nations struggled to follow through with either of these goals. A recent study on global temperatures reveals that the world will likely reach 1.5 °C by the early 2030s, almost 10 years earlier than previously predicted (Diffenbaugh & Barnes).

The Democratic Republic of Congo, a country that promised to protect its rainforest at a different climate summit, announced in 2022 that the nation will be selling parts of that same land to oil companies (Maclean & Searcey). In short, multilateral agreements are not making the change promised, and the world continues to see global temperatures and emissions rise.

Seeing the severity of this issue, how can an approach different from the current multilateral one allow countries to effectively work together to mitigate GHG emissions? Some scholars propose that the concept of "climate clubs" should be established to resolve this issue (Faulkner). A climate club is defined as a volunteer-based group of countries that come together for the shared purpose of mitigating the effects of climate change (Hovi et al). Moreover, the club would be made up of a smaller number of countries than traditional multilateral organizations, and meetings would take place outside of traditional multilateral stages. A debate has risen over whether climate clubs are a feasible approach to climate change and if they allow countries to successfully collaborate and reduce emissions. Proponents of climate clubs claim that these clubs improve the international response to climate change by facilitating negotiations between nations and effectively motivating countries to take action. Other scholars, however, believe that climate clubs are not a practical alternative to multilateral agreements and will not be conducive to international collaboration as smaller, volunteer-based organizations lack the same legitimacy the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement have (van

Asselt).

To properly examine this topic, several aspects of climate clubs must be studied and explained. The concept of club goods introduced by Hovi et al. in Climate change mitigation: A role for climate clubs? is especially important to understand how climate clubs garner membership. Club goods are benefits exclusively given to members of the club to motivate other countries to join the club, therefore increasing the number of participating actors (Hovi et al). Club goods work as an effective method to increase active participation in the club and, therefore, climate mitigation. Another crucial concept that must be examined is normative legitimacy, which is used to measure the validity of an organization and considers various requirements, such as active participation and accountability (Bäckstrand et al). Lastly, it is important to understand the framing concept of conflictive fragmentation, which describes how an international problem can be dealt with by numerous groups, with each group differing in various aspects, such as negotiation process and membership (Biermann et al). Together, these frameworks describe what makes a climate club successful in international negotiations. Seeing how multilateralism has struggled to reach emission reduction targets in the past few years, climate clubs can be used as a constructive medium through which countries can collaborate on climate change mitigation. These organizations have the potential to strengthen the normative legitimacy of the international approach to climate change and increase the level of active participation among countries by implementing economic incentives. Furthermore, climate clubs can use conflictive fragmentation to mitigate climate change by acting as external forums that countries can take part in, therefore enhancing the effectiveness of current multilateral agreements.

In this paper, I will examine several concepts from the fields of international relations and economics to frame the potential success climate clubs possess to improve the world's response to climate change. In the first section, 'Impact on Current Multilateral Agreements', I analyze the framework of conflictive fragmentation to explain the position held by critics of climate clubs such as in Biermann's essay. I utilize the case study of the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate to show how conflictive fragmentation can be harmful to multilateral agreements. In the next section, 'Establishing Normative Legitimacy through Forums and Sanctions', I describe the framing concept of normative legitimacy and explain how climate clubs can demonstrate it by utilizing penalties, such as sanctions. In my final section, 'Using Club Goods to Promote Participation', I introduce the framing concept of club goods, as presented by Hovi et al. (2016), to illustrate how climate clubs incentivize countries to join and participate in climate change mitigation. I use economic models by Sælen (2015) and Paroussos et al. (2019) to show the effectiveness of using club goods, specifically side payments and technology.

IMPACT ON CURRENT MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS

Critics of climate clubs argue that climate clubs will be detrimental to the current progress being made against climate change because they will reduce the effectiveness of current multilateral agreements. Climate clubs represent a departure from the traditional approach to mitigating climate change, which is when all countries work together to establish treaties and goals for emissions reduction. The implementation of clubs could weaken multilateral approaches by causing "conflictive fragmentation." This occurs when "…an issue area is marked by different institutions that (a) are hardly connected and/or have different, unrelated decision-making procedures, (b) have conflicting sets of principles, norms, and rules, and (c) have different memberships…" (Biermann et al). If clubs are established, climate change would be an "issue" that is taken on by multiple groups: multilateral coalitions, such as the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and various climate clubs. The approach to climate change would therefore be "fragmented" as a single group tackling the issue is joined by other smaller groups. An example of conflictive fragmentation and its effects on international efforts against climate change is the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (AP6). The AP6 was a group of six countries who chose to tackle climate change outside of the Kyoto Protocol, which was the primary multilateral climate treaty at the time (van Asselt, 2007, pp. 20-21). The AP6 was not legally binding and did not set specific emission targets for its members, which made the organization "…an attractive alternative for countries with targets under the Protocol…" In fact, "…the Partnership provided an additional incentive for the Canadian government to express its intention not to comply with the Kyoto targets due to excessive economic costs" (van Asselt). The negative impacts of conflictive fragmentation can be seen in how the more lenient rules of the AP6 make the institution a more appealing option for countries, such as Canada, that do not wish to meet the strict requirements of the Kyoto Protocol. This could prompt countries to stop complying with multilateral agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol because they can join climate clubs such as the AP6, which did not demand countries to make big commitments. The existence of climate clubs such as the AP6 could ultimately undermine existing multilateral treaties like the Kyoto Protocol by providing countries with alternative paths to mitigating climate change, giving these nations the option to not follow through with the promises made in previous agreements.

It may be true that conflictive fragmentation and climate clubs pose a threat to the effectiveness of multilateral treaties by drawing countries away from these larger agreements. However, climate clubs can also enhance the performance of these same treaties by functioning as dialogue forums through which nations can negotiate world issues at a much smaller scale. This can be seen by the "G system", an example of conflictive fragmentation that comprises a series of forums that take place outside of multilateral settings. The G system involves small groups of countries that host annual summits with leaders from each nation and other important international organizations. At these summits, nations negotiate and work together to "… coordinate international responses to urgent global economic problems…", with the results from these meetings having a significant impact on larger organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank (Slaughter). The groups of countries that comprise the G system function as dialogue forums in which leaders discuss pressing global issues and come to decisions that guide what occurs in broader settings, such as the United Nations or the World Bank. The effects these groups have on large-scale international treaties was seen during the 2017 G20 Hamburg summit, where the G20, a group in the G system, debated on a variety of issues, including climate change. The 20 members of the G20 released a joint statement that stated that 19 of the members "… reaffirm our strong commitment to the Paris Agreement, moving swiftly towards its full implementation in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities… and, to this end, we agree to the G20 Hamburg Climate and Energy Action Plan for Growth as set out in the Annex" (University of Toronto). The discussions that occurred during the summit resulted in the strengthening of the Paris Agreement as 19 nations confirmed that they will continue to follow through with the promises made in the Paris Agreement. The summit even produced a program that details the different actions the members of the G20 are planning on undertaking to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, further increasing the effectiveness of the treaty. By acting as a dialogue forum, the G20 was able to enhance the effectiveness of the Paris Agreement, showing how conflictive fragmentation can improve the performance of multilateral treaties.

ESTABLISHING NORMATIVE LEGITIMACY THROUGH FORUMS AND SANCTIONS

Climate clubs enhance the world's current approach to climate change by establishing normative legitimacy. The clubs act as external forums, which provide a setting for discussions to take place, and the implementation of economic sanctions, which punish noncompliant members of the club. Normative legitimacy is a way of assessing the validity of an institution and can be used to see whether climate clubs are credible climate organizations or not. In order to be established, normative legitimacy "... requires a normative theory of legitimate rule-making. Such a theory needs to specify and justify standards against which real-world arrangements can be assessed and evaluated, for instance in terms of their effectiveness or fairness" (Bäckstrand et al). When discussing global institutions, these "standards" are "centred around criteria and values such as deliberation, accountability, participation…" (Bäckstrand). When assessing whether climate clubs have normative legitimacy or not, one must consider if members of the club are actively participating and if they are held accountable for their actions. One must also consider if clubs allow for thoughtful discussions to take place. This requirement is known as "deliberation". Climate clubs, due to their smaller size, allow for deliberation to occur, as seen during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009. The conference was expected to produce a climate treaty but was unable to do so even after weeks of negotiating. In fact, after the conference had taken place, a smaller group of nations gathered in a more casual setting, outside of the strict meeting environment of the UNFCCC. There, the leaders of each nation were able to outline the Copenhagen Accord, a document that was later included in the UNFCCC (Faulkner). Although this situation does not describe an actual climate club, it holds the same characteristics of one, as a small number of countries came together outside of a conventional multilateral setting to discuss and resolve an issue regarding climate change. These unique features facilitated the process of devising a treaty and even helped produce real results, as seen by the introduction of the Copenhagen Accord. This is because a smaller number of actors and a more relaxed atmosphere to consider the issue at hand created an environment that was more conducive to deliberation than the original multilateral setting. Therefore, climate clubs, due to their smaller size and more casual environment for discussions, have the potential to demonstrate normative legitimacy by allowing for deliberation to take place.

Climate clubs further show normative legitimacy by implementing economic sanctions against non compliant countries, therefore incentivizing them to participate in the club's activities. Economic sanctions are penalties applied against members that are not contributing to the club's activities or countries that are not yet part of the clubIn either scenario, "…the sanctions need to be costly enough to alter the target country's interest calculation, which usually requires trade restrictions in one form or the other," (Faulkner). Sanctions are used against countries that are inactive in the club or are not yet members, causing these nations to join and participate in the club's activities to avoid facing a penalty. However, the penalty needs to have a large enough financial impact on the country in order to be successful, meaning nations must view the sanction as an actual threat. An effective penalty could take the form of a trade sanction, where "a uniform tariff on all goods and services imposed by participants on the imports from nonparticipants," is implemented (Nordhaus). A climate club model developed by Nordhaus (2015), called the Coalition-DICE (C DICE) model, illustrates the economic impacts of trade sanctions on participation. The model showed that at carbon prices of $12.5 and $25 per ton of emissions released, the club "…captures all of the potential gains for tariff rates of 3 percent or more," (Nordhaus). The model further illustrates that at these same carbon prices, when the carbon tariff imposed on noncompliant members was 0%, not a single country participated in the climate club, but when the carbon tariff ranged from 3-10%, every member of the club participated (Nordhaus, Figure 3).

Imposing a penalty, such as a universal tariff, serves as a financial incentive for countries to get involved in a club as they stand to gain income from imposing economic sanctions on other nations. Not imposing a sanction would give nations little incentive to participate, as they would not experience any monetary benefits, leading to a 0% participation rate. Seeing how participation is a requirement of establishing norma-

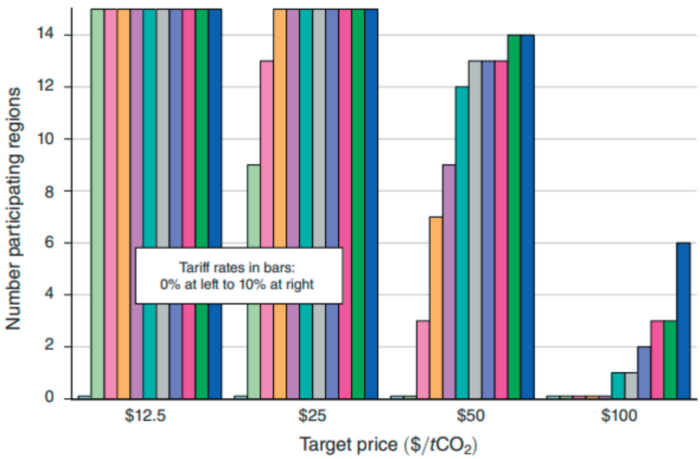

Fig. 3

tive legitimacy, it can be concluded that the implementation of sanctions in climate clubs help demonstrate normative legitimacy by increasing involvement in the club.

Economic sanctions further contribute to normative legitimacy by helping climate clubs hold members accountable for not taking an active part in the club. Although accountability is closely related to participation, it differs in that it involves penalizing those who do not participate. Accountability, in the context of normative legitimacy, "…implies that some actors have the right to hold other actors accountable to a set of standards, to judge whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in light of these standards, and to impose sanctions if they determine that these responsibilities have not been met'" (Bäckstrand et al). In order to show accountability, climate clubs must equip its members with a way to penalize those that are noncompliant and are not taking an active role in the club. The "sanctions" mentioned can take many forms, but economic sanctions can effectively motivate members to participate. The C-DICE model developed by Nordhaus (2015) shows the impact of economic sanctions on compliant and non-compliant countries. For example, if the U.S. were to be an active participant of a climate club that implements a 4% tariff on all goods made by noncompliant nations, the U.S. would earn $35.5 billion annually in "net climate-related benefits" (Nordhaus). This includes the cost of reducing emissions, the gains earned from reduced climate induced damages, and the gains earned in trade. However, if the

U.S. were to stop participating in the same climate club scenario, they would face the 4% tariff, causing them to incur a loss of $8.6 billion annually (Nordhaus). The economic sanction used in this climate club model effectively holds its members accountable because it causes a substantial financial loss for those that do not participate. If a country becomes inactive, participating members of the club can impose the tariff on the noncompliant member, causing the nation to lose billions of dollars. This will incentivize the nation to once again take an active role in the club. Thus, economic sanctions, such as the trade tariff used in this example, help establish normative legitimacy by enabling club members to hold noncompliant nations accountable for their inactivity.

USING CLUB GOODS TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATION

Climate clubs improve the world's response to climate change because they effectively motivate countries to take an active role in mitigating the effects of climate change by using member benefits, such as side payments and technological innovations, as incentives to participate in the club. By using club goods to entice non-member countries to join, climate clubs increase the number of nations working towards the goal of stopping climate change. Members of the club receive member benefits, or "club goods", after joining. These club goods are "… excludable benefits for encouraging membership and for inducing members to contribute more to the production of a public good (or some other benefit that entails a positive externality) than they would do as non-members" (Hovi et al). Furthermore, in a climate club, distributing club goods to active participants gives them the motivation to continue to partake in the club's ventures (Hovi et al). Receiving club goods motivates members to participate in the club's activities and produce a "public good", a non-rivalrous and non-excludable good that can be enjoyed by anyone. For climate clubs, this public good could be the mitigation of global emissions. Moreover, the offered member benefits will motivate other countries to join, therefore bringing more nations together to fight climate change. The effectiveness of clubs such as these in assembling countries to work towards a common goal is demonstrated by how the GATT, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, functioned in the past. The GATT reduced trade tariffs through trade liberalization agreements and, "…the gradual expansion of free trade through GATT rounds ended up producing side benefits for non-members and the global economy as a whole, the discrete benefits to individual countries arising from GATT membership were large enough to incentivize a growing number to join the club and abide by its rules" (Faulkner). Not only did the GATT's rewards for members motivate other nations to join the club, but the GATT's goal of establishing free trade ended up benefiting the rest of the world. Climate clubs function similarly to the GATT in that both groups use exclusive benefits to motivate members to join the club. The GATT's success as a club reveals the potential climate clubs have to bring countries together to fight climate change. By increasing the number of nations working on the problem of climate change and motivating them to participate in climate-related activities, climate clubs improve the world's response to the problem.

Side payments are an example of a club good that can effectively motivate countries to join climate clubs. Side payments are a form of financial compensation given to countries that join a club. In a climate club that utilizes side payments, called a "side payment system", "… all countries contribute to side payments proportional to their private benefits from emissions reduction and receive side payments covering their costs of implementing the socially optimal level of emission abatement" (Harris). In this system, countries will receive side payments that compensate them for their individual efforts in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Nations are also expected to donate to the club's fund for side payments that are given to prospective members. Their donations should be equal to the profits they gained from their own efforts to mitigate climate change. The future success of using side payments as a club good has been predicted by a model developed by Sælen (2015). The model runs several simulations with different club versions, each version consisting of a different global damage value. Global damage value is defined as the difference in damage caused by climate change between no club scenarios and scenarios where each club member spends 1% of their GDP towards the club's efforts to mitigate emissions (Sælen, 2015, Table 2). In one simulation, the global damage value is 2, which is fairly low, and a climate club is initially formed by China, the United States, and the European Union, whose emissions make up 50% of global emissions. The club offered side payments worth 0.26% of the three founding members' GDP, which garnered 85 new members, altogether accounting for 35% of global emissions (Sælen). The three original members of the club, China, the U.S. and the EU, would offer side payments worth a total of 0.26% of their overall GDP. These side payments were able to convince a large number of countries, over eighty, to join the hypothetical climate club, showing how successful the use of side payments as a club good can be in drawing new members. Not only that, but the combined percentage of global emissions that the founding members and new members cover is approximately 85%, making up the majority of emissions produced. This increases the club's ability to mitigate global emissions because the club consists of nations that have a significant impact on the amount of global emissions released. Although this is just a simulation of a potential climate club that uses side payments, it reveals the possible success of using monetary incentives such as side payments as a club good.

Technological innovation, another type of club good, could successfully incentivize countries to join climate clubs because of the financial benefits it produces for club members. Climate clubs that offer technology as a member benefit are referred to as "technology-sharing clubs" (Hovi et al). These clubs motivate other countries to join by allowing its members to work together on the development of clean technology and giving them access to "…low greenhouse-gas technologies by risk-sharing, pooling and common rules concerning intellectual property rights" (Hovi et al). Technology-sharing clubs provide a space for its members to collaborate on technological innovation and clean energy through business strategies such as "pooling" and "risk sharing". Not only do members gain access to new technology, but they also acquire the monetary benefits associated with using technology as a club good. An economic model developed by Paroussos et al. (2019) demonstrates this by running simulations of different climate clubs with varied combinations of club goods and showing the impact each club has on countries' GDP. The "mitigation-only club" was a type of club that simply required its members to reduce emissions without offering any benefits (Paroussos et al).

The "finance and technology club" offered club goods that involved lifting "intellectual property restrictions" on "low-carbon technologies" and establishing an "active policy of technological transfers" (Paroussos). The simulation ran over a period of 35 years and revealed that the "finance club" increased the overall GDP of club members by over 0.2% relative to the mitigation-only club, while the finance and technology model raised the overall GDP by over 0.8% (Paroussos et al, Figure 2).

The finance and technology club caused a much higher increase in club members' GDP than the finance club did, showing how utilizing

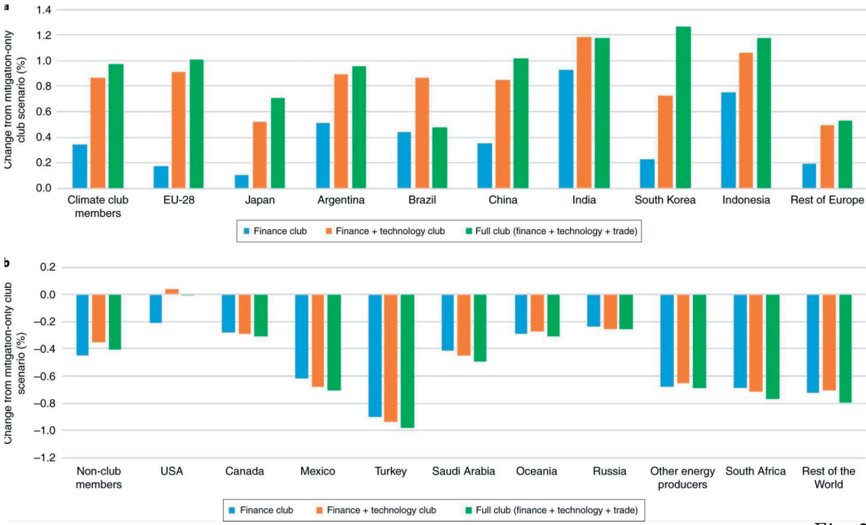

Fig. 2

technology as club good has a greater economic impact than finance alone. And seeing that side payments, a type of financial incentive, are predicted to be strong motivators for countries to join climate clubs, the increase in GDP caused by technological innovation could also potentially draw many new members. The technology-sharing club introduced by Hovi et al. (2016) and the technology-sharing club and the finance and technology club offer similar club goods, such as collaborating on sustainable technologies and enabling technology transfers. Therefore, the monetary benefits associated with the finance and technology club can be applied to the technology-sharing club. Because of the economic advantages caused by using technology as a club good, it can be concluded that technology can be successfully used as a way to draw new members to the club.

CONCLUSION

The research has shown that climate clubs have the potential to make significant progress in the fight against climate change by strengthening the normative legitimacy of current international approaches and increasing participation through the use of club goods. Climate clubs push countries to actively participate in climate change mitigation by offering club goods to participating members and potential new members. These club goods, especially those that produce financial benefits such as technology transfers and side payments, increase the number of actors working on climate change and motivate them to take an active role in the club. Climate clubs further aid the world's efforts in stopping climate change by establishing normative legitimacy. Demonstrating normative legitimacy involves increasing participation, enabling accountability, and allowing for deliberation to occur. Clubs achieve this by using economic sanctions to penalize noncompliance among members and acting as external forums for countries to discuss important matters. Establishing normative legitimacy not only marks these clubs as valid institutions capable of effectively mitigating climate change but also allows them to push nations to be more proactive in stopping climate change. Overall, the research shows that climate clubs can increase the efficiency of the current approach to climate change by promoting active participation and hosting successful negotiations.

However, the existence of climate clubs alongside multilateral agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, could result in the conflictive fragmentation of the world's response to climate change. This is because climate mitigation would be undertaken by multiple institutions that have very different structures and membership commitments. Conflictive fragmentation's negative impacts on current international treaties are evidenced by how joining the AP6 acted as an alternative to working towards meeting the Kyoto Protocol's emission reduction goals. However, these clubs also have the characteristics necessary to enhance the effectiveness of these same agreements. This can be seen by the use of the G system as a dialogue forum through which countries can make decisions that go on to impact the world on a larger scale.

Overall, the research has shown that climate clubs have the potential to push the world's current efforts out of stagnancy and enable nations to make significant progress in reaching their mitigation targets. By implementing club goods and economic sanctions, climate clubs will be able to motivate countries to start taking real action and meet the emissions reduction targets set in multilateral agreements such as the Paris Agreement. Other characteristics of climate clubs, such as their small size and casual meeting settings, will also increase the efficiency of negotiations between nations and allow these meetings to produce results that will actually help the overall effort to mitigate climate change, as evidenced by the G20 Hamburg Climate and Energy Action Plan for Growth produced during the G20 summit in 2017.

In short, although climate clubs are a new approach to climate change that have yet to be officially implemented, they can prove to be extremely useful by pushing nations to start treating climate change as a serious issue and produce real, quantifiable results in terms of carbon emissions. Climate clubs' membership and structure show that they have the potential to make the change multilateral agreements have not yet made and should therefore be seriously considered in the near future as a viable option for countries to mitigate climate change.

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KAREN ESKANDER

Creative Resistance and Agency: How Iranian Women Improve Old Resistance Tactics

ABSTRACT

The history of resistance is often adorned with tales of triumph against oppressive regimes. However, the aftermath of such victories is a narrative that is often obscured by the saccharine taste of success. This paper delves into the complex dynamics of resistance in contemporary Iran, particularly focusing on the plight of Iranian women seeking autonomy in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The study examines the evolution of resistance strategies employed by successive generations of activists, and highlights the lethal consequences faced by those who challenge the status quo. While past movements have faced brutal government crackdowns, a new wave of Iranian activists, particularly women, has emerged. Alongside their emergence, has brought the rise of modernized tactics under the banner of creative resistance. This paper aims to answer the question of "How can these modern Iranian women undermine the oppressive government, and utilize improved creative protest strategies, to fight for their fundamental rights?" Employing a sociological framework, the research explores the impact of gender subordination on Iranian women, and analyzes how creative resistance strategies mobilize communities toward common goals. The paper examines this notion, beginning with an exploration of the rise to power of the Islamist regime in 1979, and the creative strategies that facilitated their ascent. It then delves into the legal, economic, and social discrimination faced by Iranian women under the regime's interpretation of Islamic Sharia Law. Drawing comparisons between old and new protest strategies, the research highlights the effectiveness of the new creative resistance strategies in evading police custody. Furthermore, it highlights how these tactics are used to prevent government crackdowns, with the end goal of achieving gender equality. Through examining cases like Mahsa Amini's murder, and Vida Movahed's hijab protest, the paper analyzes how these events sparked social dissent, and gave rise to new movements. The study concludes with a critical examination of the drawbacks of relying solely on creative resistance, addressing issues of shallow engagement, short-lived impact, and the influence of financial and social privilege within the women's rights

movement. At its core, this paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical context, present challenges, and potential future trajectory of the Iranian women's movement, shedding light on the intricate dance between resistance, oppression, and the quest for autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

The pages of history books are coated with stories of resistances and revolutions that have toppled dictatorships, ended colonial rule, and brought about civil rights for the marginalized groups of patriarchal societies. As the public ventured into celebrating the stories of those victories and triumphs, and after one too many retellings, the lethal backlash of the resistance was slowly forgotten; death and grief were covered by the saccharine taste of victory. The fatal sacrifices made by activists were once critical for the success of resistance. However, a new generation of Iranian activists has proposed modernized tactics to minimize collateral damage. Living in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, contemporary Iranian women, while having been too young at the time to actively participate in the political fervor of the rebellion, are now old enough to be subjected to the reality of oppression and gender subordination that resulted in the aftermath of the new regime (Butt 7). While past generations of Iranian activists have led several movements in the past decades, their retaliation was often met with government repression. By resisting the structures of power and challenging the dominant narrative, resistance movements were able to establish a pivotal role in disintegrating oppressive systems and promoting social justice—but it does not come without losses. Resistance movements are threatened by the dire consequences of violent repression and retaliation, from political systems that use their power to subdue movements by mass arresting activists and assaulting protesters (Mahdavi 4). The increased death toll of resistance eventually leads to the death of the movement itself. All morale had been drained due to the complete exhaustion of financial and social resources. This continued cycle of oppression and injustice causes a public uproar that eventually leads to mass resistance movements that are put to an end by those in power, so long as the protests can be subdued by violence (Beyerle 43). This oppression cycle, however, can be halted with the introduction of a new element: creative resistance. Creative resistance provides a loophole that allows for the continuation of protests while minimizing the damages from the status quo. This is achieved through finding new protest and movement strategies that cannot be demolished with violent resources. This includes protests through social media, art, fashion, music, and other everyday acts that can not be easily targeted by oppressive forces (Bayat 14). Creative resistance has been weaponized by contemporary Iranian women, not only as a survival tool, but as a safe medium of protest that allows for the expression of dissent towards the oppressive forces of the Islamic regime, following the 1979 revolution. Despite the regime's corrupt governing scheme, the Iranian government's stability faces continuous threats as "even the most powerful cannot rule without the cooperation of the ruled" (Beyerle 41). This lack of "cooperation" goes back to past generations of Iranian activists who relied on traditional mass movements for protest before they were shut down by the Iranian government that arrested activists and assaulted protestors. However, this lack of "cooperation" can still be observed by the new generation of Iranian activists who upgraded old strategies and came up with new creative forms of resistance to get past the regime's violent crackdown: "Instead of activists taking part in mass protests by engaging in civil society, they opt to participate in non-movements as a form of resistance instead" (Butt 2). This "non-movement" utilizes new creative forms of protest that combine social dissent, and organizational creativity, to outpace the regime's oppression.

The question my research will be answering is "How can modern Iranian women use improved creative protest strategies to undermine the Iranian government, which is founded on oppression and gender subordination, to achieve their fundamental rights and advocate for their bodily autonomy?" This question encapsulates the oppression faced by Iranian women under the Iranian regime. It also analyzes their fight for equal rights across generations, using strategies that vary from traditional mass movements, to more creative resistance tactics. This research question also addresses the struggles that Iranian activists face in their fight for equity, including getting arrested and possibly dying in police custody. Using a sociological framework to answer this question will allow me to analyze how the sexism and gender subordination, that are subjected by the Iranian regime, affect the way Irani women function in their society. A sociological lens could be further utilized to understand how the new creative resistance strategies, used by modern Irani women, help to mobilize communities towards a common goal. This lens will also allow me to explore how the injustice experienced by one individual can resonate with a whole marginalized group, resulting in a revolution on the individual's behalf. It is also important to note that oppression is not the only thing affecting the social lives of Irani women; protests and revolutions are equally as likely to affect how a society functions, especially during political tension. As such, the sociological lens would allow me to explore how both oppression and protest affect the lives of Iranian women, and how this effect can be further harnessed to support the cause. Commencing with an examination of the 1979 revolution, I will delve into the creative strategies deployed by the Islamist regime during their ascent to power, discussed under the thematic heading "Rise to Power." Subsequently, I will illuminate the persistent challenges faced by Iranian women under the regime's skewed interpretation of Islamic Sharia Law. This will be encapsulated in the section titled, "From Subject to Object," which will address issues of legal, economic, and social discrimination. Moving beyond historical narratives, I will survey the evolution of resistance strategies employed by previous generations of Iranian activists, scrutinizing their effectiveness and shortcomings, in the section labeled, "Roads from the Past." This exploration sets the stage for an analysis of contemporary resistance efforts. Specifically, I will investigate the innovative protest strategies adopted by modern Iranian activists in sections such as "Strike a Pose, Strike a Nerve," "From Hashtags to Revolutions," "Rewriting History," "Art as Ammunition," and "Language Barrier." These sections will provide insights into how these new tactics navigate challenges such as evading police custody and circumventing complete government crackdowns. Furthermore, I will contemplate the potential expansion of these creative strategies to garner international support and recognition for the Iranian women's cause. This aspect will be examined in the context of achieving bodily autonomy and amplifying the movement on a global scale. In addressing potential counterarguments, the paper will explore the limitations of relying only on creative movement strategies, encompassing social media, art, and fashion, as vehicles for political statements. The "Counter-Argument" section will shed light on the drawbacks, emphasizing the potential for shallow engagement, and short-lived impact, as trends may overshadow substantive commitment to the cause. In addition, this paper will scrutinize the impact of financial and social privilege within the women's rights movement, examining key cases such as Mahsa Amini's murder, which catalyzed a surge in social dissent, leading to the emergence of a new movement. Another case under scrutiny is that of Vida Movahed, an Iranian activist arrested for defiantly waving her hijab atop a utility box in Tehran—an illustrative example of the innovative strategies employed by the new movement. Furthermore, a detailed analysis of young Iranian protestors, including Nika Azari, utilizing *Tiktok* as a platform to circumvent government censors, will elucidate how the new generation builds momentum and expands on past movements. This paper seeks to delineate the genesis of the Islamist regime in Iran, exploring the ensuing consequences faced by Iranian women. It will then assess how the contemporary generation of Iranian activists advances the fight for women's rights and autonomy through refining resistance strategies. As a counter-argument, the paper will delve into the challenges the new movement encounters in sustaining long-term activism and the impacts of financial and social privilege on civil movements.

THE ISLAMIST REGIME'S RISE TO POWER

Before we dive into how resistance movements have changed over the years, an understanding of how the new government took control in Iran is critical when considering how the new generation of activists is able to undermine the Iranian system. The Islamist regime first came to power, following the 1979 Islamic revolution, by creatively manipulating the Iranian citizens into overthrowing their past government (Beyerle 42). Before the revolution, Iranian citizens criticized the monarchy for being "overly deferential to the United States," and were frustrated with the widespread Western influence that took away from their Iranian culture (Mahdavi 4). The Islamist Revolution was able to creatively manipulate the distaste towards the West to its advantage. The campaign was used as a way to critique Westernization and promised to re-center Iranian culture, claiming that the West led Iranians morally astray, violating the Islamic tenets. The Islamist regime's creativity of operation "juxtaposed its rule with everything that it believed to be wrong about the West" (Mahdavi 6). Examples of what the regime viewed to be "wrong with the West," included alcohol consumption, heavy makeup, and mini skirts. With that, the regime replaced the old police with a new unit currently referred to as the "morality police." Iranian women face various accounts of legal, social, and economic discrimination as a result of the regime's false interpretation of the Islamic Sharia Law. This includes ideas such as a woman's inheritance being half that of a man's, women being required by law to obey their husband's commands, to the extent that they aren't allowed to obtain passports without permission, divorce only being initiated by the man, with the father gaining custody over the children, the hijab mandate, and state-sanctioned domestic violence (Beyerle 42). Furthermore, women are also not allowed to sing, dance, or ride bicycles in public.

The social theory of intersectionality, which states that individuals hold multiple social identities that intersect with one another and shape their experiences of oppression and privilege, can be used to understand the complex ways in which different forms of oppression intersect to shape Iranian women's experiences after the Islamic Revolution. For example, Iranian women who belonged to minority, ethnic, or religious groups, often faced discrimination based on both their gender and minority status. Additionally, women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to face economic barriers that limited their access to education and employment. The Islamist regime was able to send Iran onto a knee-jerk path to religious conservatism, away from Western modernization, by the entrenchment of a dogma that painted opposing forces as enemies of Islam, and by extension, overthrew Iran's Western-backed leader. This Islamist extremism "hijacked a religion of billions for their own political and ideological ends," and promoted a totalitarian and divisive worldview (Aarabi 4). Despite the bloody image and the heavy use of violence that followed the revolution, the overthrow by the Islamist regime in 1979 was strategically focused on a peaceful, pacifist, approach: "There was a clear commitment to keeping the actual insurrection unarmed. Protestors were told by the leadership of the resistance to try to win over the troops rather than attack them" (Zunes 7). This creative strategy of appearing non-violent allowed the regime to paint themselves as peaceful representatives of Islam, successfully winning over traditional Iranian citizens who felt like they were being "good Muslims" by supporting the regime.

FROM SUBJECT TO OBJECT: HOW IRANIAN WOMEN LOST THEIR AUTONOMY

Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iranian women suffered various accounts of legal, economic, and social discrimination, under the regime's false interpretation of the Islamic Sharia Law. Iranian women found themselves in a second-class citizenship status as the state set out to reverse the legal and social rights women have won in past movements. One month following the establishment of the new government, Iran's new Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, decreed that all women had to wear the veil —regardless of religion or nationality

(Mahdavi 4). Women are mandated to wear the hijab and dress modestly in loose-fitting garments “in accordance with the interpretation of the Islamic teachings” (Butt 4). For Iranian Women, failure to abide by the compulsory hijab is punishable by imprisonment, and sometimes flogging. For tourists, they face an international travel ban, along with a fine. Iran’s “morality police” heavily monitors the dress code by driving around the city and stopping women to analyze their appearance. This can be as extreme as examining how many strands of hair are showing underneath their hijab, or measuring the length of their coats. Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman, was beaten to death in police custody after not wearing her hijab in accordance with Iranian laws. Law enforcement officials asserted that Mahsa Amini suffered a heart attack while in police custody, subsequently collapsing and entering a coma, before being transported to a hospital. However, firsthand accounts from witnesses, notably women detained alongside Amini, paint a starkly different picture. According to these witnesses, Amini experienced severe physical abuse, leading to her demise as a direct consequence of police brutality. This stark contrast between official statements and eyewitness reports underscores the contested nature of Amini’s tragic death (Maloney 3). The murder of Mahsa Amini represents a prime example of how Iranian women are treated in a social context, getting stripped away from any humanity and completely reduced to objects manipulated by men in a patriarchal society. Iranian women also face various accounts of discrimination when it comes to the legal system, including their testimony being weighed only “half as credible as that of a man’s” (Homa 17). Women are only entitled to half of what their male family members get in inheritance, and very rarely ever get child custody in the case of a divorce. They also are unable to file for a divorce as it has to be initiated by the man (Beyerle 44). Iranian women are also limited in their everyday activities. They are not allowed to sing, dance, or ride bicycles in public —actions that are all deemed illegal. Women in Iran are trapped in a cycle of continued oppression, as any attempt at ‘escaping’ an abusive pattern, requires the permission of the oppressor (Tohidi 78). Iran’s state-sanctioned domestic violence allows husbands to safely abuse their wives and daughters into compliance with Islamist laws without legal consequences. As such, the theory of social constructionism —which suggests that oppression is not simply an individual or isolated act, but a social phenomenon that is created and sustained through social structures and institutions—can be used to understand how the cycle of oppression operates in Iran. Iranian law enforcement, education, and public media outlets are all examples of the "social structures and institutions" that reflect and reinforce the dominant norms that marginalize and oppress women. The government, the institution in this case, has constructed a rhetoric that reinforces the dominant patriarchal values and beliefs of Iranian society. This includes emphasizing that women are inferior and submissive to men, and painting women's roles in Iranian society as wives and mothers. This rhetoric emphasized by social structures (the government) has deeply influenced social norms. In this, a "social phenomenon" of oppression is created, resulting in the normalization of oppressive policies like the compulsory hijab, which eventually led to Mahsa Amini's murder. Mahsa Amini was a victim of rhetoric backed by the government that supported the second-class citizenship status of women.

ROADS FROM THE PAST

The fight for women's rights and equality in Iran has been going on for decades. While some of the past generation's resistance strategies proved to be effective, there are many other areas where the movement fell short. This close analysis of past resistance strategies—in what areas they were successful and in what others did they fail— will provide an understanding of how the new generation of Iranian women can improve their tactics. One of Iran's most popular social movements was the Green Movement following the disputed presidential election of 2009. In a youthful desire for expression and reform, hundreds of thousands of Iranian citizens rushed to the streets calling for legal and political transformation (Abbas 6). The movement's strategies were characterized by peaceful mass demonstrations, notably exemplified by the "Demonstration of Silence," wherein thousands of protestors marched silently while raising their hands in protest. However, these non-violent efforts faced severe government crackdowns. Shaazka Beyerle, in her work "Courage, Creativity, and Capacity in Iran: Mobilizing for Women's Rights and Gender Equality," provides insight into the movement's challenges, stating, "the movement failed as the government's crackdown on the movement was severe, with thousands of protesters arrested, beaten, and even killed" (Beyerle 46). This quote from Beyerle underscores the magnitude of the government's repressive actions and their impact on the movement's outcome. The government also launched a campaign of intimidation and censorship against journalists and bloggers who were reporting on the protests. One strategy, however, that proved to be effective was "re-politicizing the color green." The color green already held political significance prior to the movement, as it signified Shia Muslims' opposition to the dominant religion (Sunni Muslims). In the Green Movement, Tehran's streets, cars, and its people were covered in green. Even online, Iranian bloggers demonstrated their support of the Movement by covering their websites in green. The old movement's strategy of redefining the color green created a new space of protest that the government couldn't strip away. Iranian women were able to display their protests in acts as simple as wearing a green wristband. In the One Million Signatures campaign of 2006, protesters sought to collect one million signatures in support of changes to Iran's discriminatory laws against women. The strategies used in the campaign involved a collection of signatures through door-to-door contact, and the implementation of seminars in events where women gather. The campaign was unfortunately unsuccessful, as the police arrested the campaign's organizers claiming that the women were "spreading propaganda against the system and acting against national security" (Passanante 21). The campaign also lacked access to media as the government controls most of the mainstream media outlets in Iran. As a result of this, it was difficult for the campaign to get its message out to a wider audience. The Social Movement Theory, which seeks to explain the conditions that give rise to collective action, the strategies and tactics used by activists to achieve their goals, and the factors that influence the success or failure of social movements, can be used to analyze why the Green Movement and the One Million Signatures campaign have failed in the past. Three major factors influence the Social Movement Theory: framing, resource mobilization, and collective action. "Framing" refers to the way in which activists and movements construct and communicate their goals, values, and identities to potential supporters and the broader public (Dornschneider-Elkink 7). The "framing" of the Green Movement and the One Million Signatures campaign challenged deeply-rooted patriarchal traditions and norms and led to social stigma and ostracization for many of its supporters. Women's rights activists have struggled to create a compelling narrative that resonates with the broader public, particularly in conservative and religiously oriented communities. Women who participated in the campaign were often subjected to verbal abuse, physical violence, and social isolation from their families and communities. This caused the movement to struggle with the "collective action" part of the theory, as large-scale collective action wasn't easily generated due to the risks of social isolation. Both movements also struggled with “resource mobilization,” as these movements largely relied on public mass demonstrations, and protests that required a lot of financial funding that wasn’t available. Finally, the two movements struggled to mobilize “collective action,” due to the limitations on freedom of assembly and association in Iran. With this, the police would shut down any organizational gatherings and public meetings. Despite the severe government crackdown, and the ultimate failure of these movements, there are glimpses of effective strategies, such as the symbolic use of the color green, which created a resilient space for protest that the authorities couldn’t easily suppress. As contemporary Iranian women strive for improved tactics, the lessons from the past serve as a guide for navigating the complexities of societal resistance and advancing the cause of gender equality.

STRIKE A POSE, STRIKE A NERVE

The aforementioned conventional social movements deployed strategies practiced mostly in democratic countries and have come to frame our ideas of what a ‘women’s movement’ looks like. However, these movements render themselves futile under non-democratic settings, like those faced by women in Iran. Instead, contemporary Iranian women have shifted to a ‘non-movement’ type of resistance that utilizes deviance in the daily practices of life, in order to continue protesting under these non-democratic settings (Butt 4). The “women’s non-movement” is characterized by a decentralized and leaderless structure that explores activism in the daily practices of life, such as engaging in sports, running, singing, or running for public offices—actions that are deemed illegal for women (Beyerle 42). The Everyday Resistance Social Theory, developed by James Scott, can be used to explain why the women’s non-movement is effective. According to Scott, everyday resistance is seen in small acts of subversion that may not be overtly political or organized but can still have significant effects

Figure 1. Yasin Akgul//Getty Images

in shifting power relations and creating cultural change. These small, subtle acts of resistance are important because they create cracks in the foundation of power, and create space for larger, more overt forms of resistance to emerge (Scott 119). In the case of the non-movement, the 'subtle acts of resistance' can be seen in wearing clothes considered to be immodest, dancing in public, or participating in any 'illegal' practice for women. More "overt forms of resistance," as mentioned by Scott, can be seen in the non-movement, in the form of a ripple effect. This is generated when more Iranian women choose to participate in the deviant act that was initiated by one individual. The widespread participation in these small acts of resistance generates more momentum for the 'non-movement' movement, which is able to cause larger social and political changes. There are many instances when contemporary Iranian women have actively participated in the non-movement. After Mahsa Amini was murdered for not wearing her hijab 'properly,' an Iranian journalist took her hijab off in public and started cutting chunks of her hair off as a 'subtle act of resistance' (see figure 1). Soon enough, a 'ripple effect' was generated as hundreds of Iranian women started cutting their hair off in solidarity with Amini and it soon became a sign of dissent (Kazemi 2). Similarly, after news spread of an Iranian woman getting arrested for riding her bike in public after the Islamic Revolution declared women cycling a threat to morality, groups of Iranian women would organize themselves to ride bicycles in public in the streets of Tehran as a form of protest (see figure 2). One of the most prominent applications of Scott's Everyday Resistance theory is the widespread use of 'resistance selfies' on social media that show Iranian women capturing photos of themselves participating

Figure 2. 2018 Center for Human Rights in Iran

Figure 3. AFP - Getty Images

in these acts of deviance (see figure 3). In posting these images to their social media platforms, they attempt to cause a 'ripple effect' that encourages other women to join them in their fight for bodily autonomy. An example of this was when two young women posted a picture of themselves on Facebook standing on top of a police car in Tehran without their hijab. As the photo went viral, hundreds of Iranian women started taking selfies of themselves without their hijabs in public. Furthermore, many women started filming lifestyle vlogs on *Tiktok* that show them going in public without a hijab. In conclusion, the "women's non-movement" in Iran, characterized by its decentralized and leaderless structure, engages in everyday acts of resistance that challenge oppressive norms. Grounded in James Scott's Everyday Resistance Social Theory, this approach reveals the power of subtle acts, such as immodest dressing, or cycling in public, to create fissures in the foundation of power. The ripple effect generated by these acts, illustrated through instances like the solidarity movement sparked by Mahsa Amini's tragic death, and the widespread sharing of "resistance selfies," demonstrates the transformative potential of these seemingly 'small' acts. As Iranian women embrace deviance in their daily lives, they not only resist oppressive practices, but also contribute to a larger movement that aims to bring about significant social and political changes in the pursuit of bodily autonomy.

FROM HASHTAGS TO REVOLUTIONS

Conventional social movements sought to establish communicative public spaces to create alternative narratives that challenge the prevailing norms regarding women's political claims. Since the new non-movement does not rely on mass demonstrations, these "communicative public places" become unavailable by default. Asgari explains, however, that by crossing the worlds between offline and online expression of resistance, Iranian women are able to generate new platforms of communication using social media. Since mainstream media outlets like TV channels are heavily dominated by male extremist hosts who work closely with the Iranian government to ensure that all news related to the women's rights movement remains censored from the public, the use of social media essentially becomes the only line of communication available between the non-movement and the general public (Babakhani 8). Asgari sheds light on the transformative role of the internet in amplifying the voices of women from minority and marginalized communities. She asserts that "The internet allows the development of diverse expression of identity especially for women as minorities and marginalized groups, who have no place and voice in mainstream media" (244). The theory of the Public Sphere introduced by Jürgen Habermas can be used to understand why using social media platforms as a communicative space is more effective than the communicative public spaces used in past movements. Habermas defines a 'public sphere' as a "domain of social life that is open to all citizens and where public opinion can be formed" (Habermas 398). The use of social media as a "public sphere" in the non-movement, is more accessible and more inclusive to lower-income citizens, people from different age groups, and people with no direct access to political engagement, other than the "public sphere" used in mass demonstrations. Not only is social media as a "public sphere" open to all citizens, but it is also a safer medium of protest; specifically to those who might risk social isolation from their families if they publicly participate in resistance movements. Another recommendation for the use of social media that might be helpful is using it to 'bridge the diaspora'—that is establishing lines of communication between contemporary Iranian activists and older generations of activists who might have had to flee the country for safety reasons. Amidst the political upheavals in Iran, a noteworthy consequence has been the substantial emigration of Iranians, constituting a significant intellectual loss for the country: "The massive exodus of Iranians, mostly due to political reasons, has entailed a drastic brain drain for the country. Yet, it has also resulted in the formation of many diasporic communities of Iranians that include thousands of highly educated and accomplished professionals, many of them still devoted to the cause of human rights and democracy for Iran" (Tohidi 76). When a group of teenage boys and girls were arrested for dancing to a song in public, Iranian activists opted to use Twitter to spread viral hashtags like "#dance_to_freedom," which helped

Figure 4. Photograph by Salampix / Sipa / AP

bring more attention to the movement. Some activists, however, chose to cause a 'ripple effect,' following Scott's Everyday Resistance theory, by dancing to the same song in public, on the same street, and posting it on *Tiktok*. While some activists were not able to participate in the 'ripple effect' due to social constraints (including strict family members/ husbands that the women couldn't get around), they were still able to participate in the non-movement by simply tweeting the hashtag "#dance_to_freedom." Similarly, after the ban of women in sports stadiums, activists were able to participate in the non-movement in two ways: following Scott's Everyday Resistance theory, or following Habermas' Public Sphere theory. For the former, Iranian women stormed the barricade at Iran's nationally broadcasted World Cup match, which women were banned from attending. For the latter, women who were not able to show up to the stadium were still able to participate in the resistance by causing an uproar on social media as activists and spreading viral tweets like: "Going to stadiums is a common activity for the rest of the world and is a dream for Iranian women," and "women should not go to stadiums because men are insulting. If the reason is this, do not allow men to go to stadiums" (Kazemi 7).

REWRITING HISTORY

One of the main challenges that faced past resistance movements was the violent government crackdown that made it exceptionally difficult for the movements to have sustained activism. This is because as the government continued arresting activists and dismantling gatherings, the resistance eventually died down. With no one to keep the message going, the movement was forgotten (Dornschneider 132). While the non-movement employs different strategies that make it harder for the government to completely shut down the campaign, the most critical strategy the non-movement has to maintain sustained activism is to redefine public places. The first activist to have attempted "redefining public places," was Vida Movahed when she stood on top of a utility box

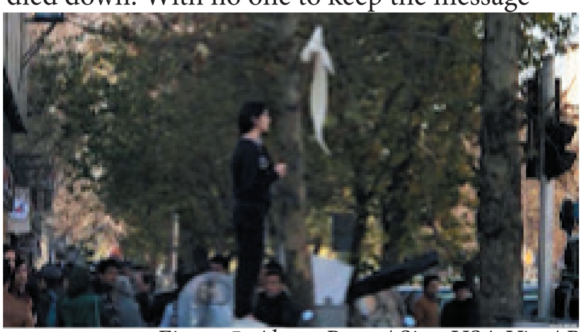

Figure 5. Abaca Press / Sipa USA Via AP

on Revolution Street in Tehran and waved her hijab on a stick like a flag for three hours before her arrest (Asgari 4). Following Movahed's arrest, groups of women would organize daily to go stand on the same utility box with their hijab on a flag, reenacting the same actions that got Movahed arrested as a form of solidarity (see figure 4). According to Scott's Everyday Resistance theory, the utility box incident was sparked by one individual's "subtle act of resistance," that is Vida Movahed. This individual action was able to start a "ripple effect" of a more overt resistance that is able to cause cultural change. More importantly, the social theory of symbolic interactionism can be used to understand why Vida Movahed's actions are even more effective than what was already established with Scott's theory. According to Herbert Blumer, the Symbolic Interactionism theory posits that individuals create and maintain their identities and social realities, through their interactions with others and the meanings they attach to symbols and objects in their environment. In other words, the meaning of a symbol is not inherent, but is rather constructed through social interaction and communication. In the case of Vida Movahed, the utility box she stood on was on a street that sparked the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and as such the street was called "Revolution Street." This street, since 1979, has been a "symbol" of the oppression and gender subordination faced daily by Iranian women. When activists kept reenacting Movahed's actions on the same utility box, a new meaning was attached to this "symbol," according to Blumer's theory. Instead of "Revolution Street", this street is currently referred to as "Girls of Revolution Street," as activists were able to successfully tie a feminist connotation to a street that otherwise marked the start of their oppression (see figure 5). Eventually, the Iranian government had to physically alter the utility box so that no one else was able to stand on top of it. Despite the Iranian government putting an end to the "ripple effect" of the non-movement, they were not able to erase the legacy now associated with the street. Instead, this legacy marked a new "symbol" of Iranian women's fight for equality. This strategy of "redefining public places" is quite effective in maintaining sustained activism when compared to past movements. This ensures that public places remain a landmark and a constant reminder of the movement even if activists get arrested.

ART AS AMMUNITION

The women's non-movement drew its power from what Bayat, the author of "A Women's Non-Movement: What It Means to Be a Woman Activist in an Islamic State, defines as the "power of presence"— the ability to assert collective will in spite of all odds by utilizing what exists and discovering new spaces of freedom to make oneself heard, seen, and felt (Bayat 167). One of the "new spaces of freedom" Iranian women have utilized in the non-movement is art. Iranian artists have been fighting for their freedom one brush stroke at a time. Through the use of pigments and canvas, they aim to use their art to tell their stories. The art coming out of Iran has a radical and rebellious zeal, as they show "brave works with layered meanings, appropriate concepts, and imagery from earlier periods, especially those familiar to Iranians" (Karimi 4). One artist shared a poster of a defenseless young woman, unveiled, raising her fist to rows of armed soldiers. Other artists painted two 16-year-old girls, Nika Shahkarami and Sarina Esmailzadeh, who were beaten to death during protests, as saints with halos over their heads. The artist's portraits draw the attention of the public to the bravery of these girls. Iranian artists would usually juxtapose their art with poetic lamentations like "Woman. Life. Freedom," over portraits that depict police brutality (Karimi 6). After the Iranian government altered Vida Movahed's utility box, so that no one else could stand on top of it, Iranian artists painted a picture of Movahed on the utility box. The art on the utility box shows Movahed holding her hijab on a stick like a flag, as she did when she stood on top of it. Again, the theory of symbolic interactionism, which examines the role of symbols, meanings, and interactions in shaping human behavior and social structures, can be used to understand why art creates an effective medium of communication for the non-movement. By using art to

Figure 6. Beth LaBerge / KQED

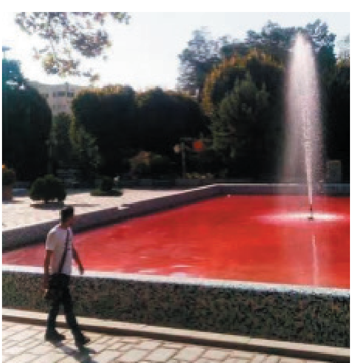

Figure 7. Image Posted anonymously to Twitter on Oct. 7 2022

construct new symbols, Iranian women are creating new narratives that


Figure 7. Image posted on Instagram via @1500tasvir

can be tied to these symbols— in this case, the paintings. The art serves as a symbol that narrates the grievances of Iranian women and is a constant reminder of the movement that the government can't strip away by arresting protestors. Traditional paintings, however, are not the only forms of art used by Iranian activists. Many artists have adopted an anonymous expression of political views through graffiti and ephemeral installations (see figure 6). For example, an anonymous artist created a piece called "Tehran in Blood" by dyeing public fountains in Tehran blood red during protests to resemble the blood of the murdered activists (see figure 7). Similarly, after an attack on demonstrators at Tehran's University, two anonymous artists animated trees on campus by hanging red nooses from the branches (see figure 8). Even though police forces quickly removed the installations, pictures of the display had already gone viral on social media creating a new "symbol" of dissent associated with the tree. The same idea can be applied to the fountains, while the red dye eventually faded, these fountains still represent a powerful symbol for the movement.

OVERCOMING LANGUAGE & RELIGIOUS BARRIERS

While previous non-movements have proven successful in spreading their message to like-minded Iranian citizens, they have often struggled to establish an effective line of communication between them and more 'traditional' Iranian citizens. This is because the government has often accused activists of pushing a "Western agenda" on Iranian culture. Due to this, traditionalist Iranian citizens have often felt a distaste towards women's rights movements (Kazemi 7). Tohidi explains how the feminist movement in Iran has presented a "critique of the androcentric and unjust aspects of modernity." Because modernity in Iran has been associated with Western imperialism and intrusion, the patriarchal authorities have "accused and blamed Iranian feminists and any quest for women's emancipation as an exogenous idea" (Tohidi 77). As a result, Iranian activists often found themselves in a defensive position as they attempted to prove their patriotism while fighting for equal rights, emphasizing that the quest for equity is not incompatible with modern understandings of Islamic tradition. One of the biggest challenges that faced the feminist movement in Iran, was the nationalism and anti-colonial sentiments that blurred the line between women's rights and imperialism. Iranian citizens were compelled to prove their distaste to the activists whom they thought were "imperialist outsiders" in an attempt to stick to Iranian and Islamic traditions (Beyerle 46). The new non-movement, however, has been able to get past the issue by using a strategy that allowed feminist activists to "frame their demands in the language of Islamic teachings and the Iranian constitution, arguing that gender equality is consistent with Islamic values and that discriminatory laws and practices are in fact contrary to Islamic principles" (Tohidi 84). When modern activists "frame their demands in the words of the Islamic Teachings," they are able to dismantle the falsified ideologies and misconceptions on what the Islamic religion "demands" from women. This will allow them to communicate with traditional Iranian citizens in a language they understand, proving that they have an understanding of the religion and not just another outsider seeking to impose their Western ideals on Iranian culture. The Social Movement Theory can be used to explain why the non-movement strategy was effective. As previously mentioned, three factors influence the Social Movement Theory: framing, resource mobilization, and collective action. "Framing" refers to how activists and movements construct and communicate their goals, values, and identities to potential supporters and the broader public. The non-movement was able to "frame" their agenda in a narrative that is able to resonate with the broader public and that is the language of Islamic teachings. Past resistance movements "framed" their agendas in a language most commonly used in Western movements like 'social justice,' and 'gender equality,' which might have sounded ambiguous to some citizens.

THE SOCIOECONOMIC DIVIDE

While the strategies used in the non-movement have proved to be effective in generating more sustained activism and less government crackdown, when examining the underlying effects of financial and social privilege in civil movements, it becomes apparent that a counter-argument can emerge. While Scott's Everyday Resistance theory allows for a more accessible form of resistance, it does not make this resistance equally safe across varying financial and social classes (Zunes 6). This is because activists with financial and social privilege are able to participate in these "small acts of deviance," like taking their hijab off or riding bicycles in public, more safely as they are less likely to face the same risks. For example, individuals with financial privilege are able to get bailed out of jail, in case of their arrest, and hire legal representation. In the case of social privilege, activists with legal connections are guaranteed a level of protection not available to others. A prime example of this was when the daughter of Iran's supreme leader submitted an application for the presidency as an act of dissent when women were not allowed to run for political positions in Iran (Butt 9). While Iran's supreme leader's daughter participating in the non-movement was a very helpful sign of solidarity with Iranian women, it exemplifies how Social privilege plays a critical role in civil movements. It is likely that if any other woman attempted the same stunt, she would have been arrested. The theory of intersectionality can be used to further understand how financial and Social privilege shapes how women of different backgrounds would have varying accessibility to activism. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that recognizes the complexity of individuals' experiences of oppression and privilege, and how multiple social identities (such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and others) intersect and shape these experiences (Samuels 4). In the context of the Iranian women's rights movement, individuals who hold multiple privileged identities (such as wealth, education, and social status) may have greater access to resources and networks that will help keep them in a safer environment to protest. In the case of Iran's supreme leader's daughter, she was able to perform an illegal act safely knowing that she had her father's protection. Conversely, individuals who hold multiple marginalized identities (such as poor, uneducated, and minority groups) may face greater consequences when attempting to participate in the non-movement, as they lack the added layer of protection that comes with these privileges.

CONCLUSION

Women's social movements are typically associated with images of marches, banners, lobbying, and the like. While these tactics proved to be effective in Western countries under democratic conditions, these same strategies render themselves futile under non-democratic settings in authoritarian states like Iran. As such, a different approach has been adopted by contemporary Iranian activists in an attempt to fight back against forced veiling, gender segregation, and widespread surveillance. Contemporary Iranian women have adopted a "non-movement" strategy that is the "collective action of non-collective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations" (Bayat14). Under the non-movement, Iranian women have started participating in subtle acts of deviance in an attempt to trigger a ripple effect among other Iranian women. The widespread participation of small resistance acts by multiple women in return triggers a cultural change, whether it is by tying a feminist connotation to public spaces or generally gaining more bodily autonomy. Throughout the non-movement, social media has proved to be a helpful tool in establishing new mediums of communication between activists and Iranian citizens. Activists have previously used social media in an attempt to spread viral hashtags, ignite protests, or even share their political art. Through my research, a compelling inquiry arises: How does the definition of 'activism' diverge for women activists within Iran compared to their counterparts who have sought refuge abroad? Delving deeper, the examination extends to understanding the nuances in their roles shaped by the distinctive challenges posed by their respective contexts. As these distinctions come to light, a critical question emerges: In what ways can these diverse groups of activists collaborate synergistically to pursue a shared objective? This reflection encapsulates the evolving dimensions of activism within the Iranian women's movement, offering a contemplative lens on the complexities and potential unity inherent in their collective pursuit of common goals. The answers to these questions involve the use of social media to 'bridge the diaspora' and establish a line of communication between national and international Iranian activists. The divergent definitions of activism for women within Iran and those who have sought refuge abroad highlight the contextual intricacies that influence their roles. Yet, amidst these variations, a common thread emerges—the unwavering determination to challenge oppressive norms and secure essential rights. As I reflect on this journey through the pages of resistance, it becomes evident that collaboration between these distinct groups of activists is not merely an aspiration but a strategic imperative. As the new generation builds upon the older generation's fight for women's rights, the concluding sections grapple with the complexities of sustaining activism in the face of entrenched power structures, and the potential ramifications of financial and social privilege. However, it is undeniable that the future of the Iranian women's movement hinges on a unified front, where resilience and diversity converge in the pursuit of lasting change.

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BLISS LEE

The Freedom of Imagination in Wilderness: Heightened Imagination in Children and its Decrease Within Adults

ABSTRACT

Children and adults alike are capable of using their imagination to form new ideas beyond the physical world. As children grow older and mature into adulthood, they lose their ability to use imagination to their highest capability, which further isolates them from their surroundings, whether this takes the shape of the natural environment or beyond it. This paper will look into the relationship between imagination and growing up as well as studying components pertaining to increased education and cognitive development. This paper will highlight the negatively impacted evolving relationship between wilderness and children that they inevitably grow into as a result of the changing maturity and experiences they are exposed to by observing this issue through the lens of Plato's Theory of Forms and Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. Additionally, this paper delves into how and why the decrease in imagination is attributed to the acquisition of knowledge. The following discussion surrounds the different points of view of a child and an adult, as well as how children's development into adolescence demonstrates how their minds use imagination to perceive the world. This paper will highlight the negatively impacted evolving relationship between wilderness and children that they inevitably grow into as a result of the changing maturity and experiences they are exposed to.

INTRODUCTION

The drive to utilize imagination and creativity within children begins to decrease as they grow older, especially when confronted with obtaining an abundance of new information as they age. This becomes an issue when this lack of imagination within adults results in a duller reality, which then results in fewer opportunities and a lessened outlook on life. Imagination serves a purpose beyond serving the whims of childhood as it helps track cognitive development (Diachenko 24). The loss of this aspect in an individual's life not only signifies transitioning into adulthood but also the negative shift of relationship with their physical environment, specifically the wilderness. In the context of this paper and the studies that it utilizes, wilderness is defined as "the place where we can confront the radical otherness of the nonhuman world, as well as find our home in it" (Johnson 78) that has allowed for a greater sense of imagination and spiritual fulfillment. Wilderness is parallel to the concept of freedom in an abstract sense. The abstract world consists of intangible ideas and metaphysical concepts that go beyond the physical human senses. Ideas or imagination, which are categorized as part of the metaphysical world, will have no limitations when it comes to creating new concepts, so long as it has the freedom to do so. In terms of freedom, wilderness is to Earth as imagination is to the abstract, metaphysical realm, but without wilderness or imagination, there is no freedom; which is to say that there are no limits to these aspects. This freedom of the abstract world gives rise to the expansive imagination a person can have. As children age into adults, their relationships with the wilderness become limited, and as a result, these adults do not experience much freedom of abstract thought or imagination. This paper will attempt to answer why this is, as well as raise the question of how the presence of more science could impact the ability of imagination within the metaphysical world.

The relationship between imagination and wilderness, in addition to how youth relate to these topics, forms a foundation that can then address the issue of decreased imagination within adults. The cases that will be observed include two seminal poems by William Wordsworth, best known for his romantic poems, and a Disney Pixar movie, both of which focus on adolescence. Using William Wordsworth's work, "We Are Seven" (2006) and "Ode: Intimation of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (2023), will serve as a seminal source that provides significant perspectives and comparisons of wilderness and knowledge, which parallels the growth into adulthood. The Pixar film "Inside Out" (Docter 2015) will be discussed in conversation with the previous sources because of its focus on a young girl's growth and how it depicts the link between her mind as a metaphysical realm and adolescent development. The frameworks incorporated in this paper are Plato's Theory of Forms and Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, both of which provide insight into the connection between the physical and metaphysical or imaginative world, as well as offer a psychological understanding of how people think. I argue that children's relationship with wilderness becomes impaired as they grow older as it results in a more complex and mature cognition and allows for more logical thought. This logical thought process inhibits the use of imagination, which can be viewed as the freedom for creativity, as well as being connected to wilderness.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PLATO AND PIAGET'S THEORIES

Wilderness is a concept that fosters a sense of freedom through imagination, as environmentalist Edward Abbey notes "we cannot have freedom without wilderness" (Abbey 338). As for imagination, this abstract form of reasoning within the metaphysical world utilizes creativity to form mental images beyond the five senses for individuals and incorporate these creations into the physical world (Chapter 28: Form, 528-530). Plato's Theory of Forms relates the concept of wilderness to imagination, as his theory states that the physical world is made from the foundation of timeless ideas that originate from the metaphysical world. Forms, or Ideas, are "immutable objects of our highest knowledge" (Chapter 28: Form, 528), and imitation of these Forms and Ideas is what allows us to have sensible objects in the physical world. For example, any physical object in the world was once an Idea or Form; an art piece was once an Idea that was copied into a physical object but does not portray the full trueness of the Idea as it is but exists as a copy or a mere manifestation translated to the limits of the physical world. Metaphysics is defined as the abstract concept of ideas beyond the reality of human perception, which philosopher Catherine Pickstock integrates into her work to make the claim that language is a bridge that translates metaphysical ideas into something that can be processed in the physical world (Pickstock 248).

With Plato's theory setting the foundation of the intangible realms within individuals, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development suggests that the change in imaginative outlook is due to how the brain develops at different ages throughout childhood. His theory is broken up into different stages, two of which will be focused on the Concrete Operational Stage (ages 7-11) and Formal Operational Stage (ages 11 and up) as the Pixar characters of this paper's case studies are within this vital age range. In the Concrete Operational Stage, adolescents tend to focus on their own needs and concerns before considering others. This can be seen by the way they imagine the environment they live in, which is one that accommodates them often with no negative consequences (Muuss 295). In the Formal Operational Stage, the adolescent is able to logically resolve problems by assessing the situation, determining possible outcomes, and rejecting other ideas (Piaget & Inhelder 14). When looking into the characters of the case studies, the scope of view being focused on these developmental years will be significant in delving deeper into the connections between imagination, adulthood, and wilderness.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND: POSITIVE EFFECTS OF WILDERNESS

Many individuals in their adulthood often look back to remember a childhood that seemed more magical, with life colored by youth and little responsibilities. Another aspect belonging to this time is the readiness of children in absorbing new information. In a study done by UC Berkeley psychologists, an experiment compared the correlation between age and learning flexibility. The results showed that the younger the individual was, the better they performed regarding "abstract social and physical causal learning problems" (Gopnik et al. 7893), such as hypothesizing scenarios. This correlation determined that older people are "less flexible" and "less likely to adopt an initially unfamiliar hypothesis" (Gopnik et al. 7892) as they have their own knowledge to take a stand against the new information. Even so, in a series of interviews conducted by Gaëlle Moal-Ulvoas in 2017, findings showed a positive relationship between nature and older adults as it improved individuals' spiritual characters, pointing out humans' "awe of natural beauty and Man's harmonious relationship with nature, awe of manmade heritage and artistic beauty, and admiration of other people and appreciation of kindness" (Moal-Ulvoas 152). This study of qualitative evidence from interviews found that positive emotions can be derived from traveling, specifically in natural areas. The result of traveling allows for spiritual gain and finding the "meaning of life" (Moal-Ulvoas 152), especially as people grow older. The want for exposure to these natural areas can be seen in these interviews, as well as in Jon Krakauer's magazine, "Death of an Innocent", as it serves as a source of freedom and relief for the soul. After contacting those close to him, reading his journal, and observing pictures moments before his death, it was evident that Chris McCandless, an American adventurer who pushed his limits when going into the wild and changed the way people view their relationship with wilderness, felt free in the wilderness and sought some sort of freedom from society each time he went into the wild (Krakauer 15). The ubiquitous topic of mind serves as a signifier that the condition of the surrounding environment is critical, mainly when it comes to the state of a person's metaphysical state.

CASE STUDIES: LOOKING INTO INSIDE OUT AND WORDSWORTH'S POEMS

CASE STUDY 1: INSIDE OUT

Inside Out is a 2015 Pixar movie that focuses on the emotions and growth of an 11-year-old girl, Riley (Docter 2015). The main emotions–Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust–are responsible for Riley's reactions to different scenarios. The problems begin when Riley and her parents move to San Francisco. This initial problem cascades into an even bigger issue as Joy tries to suppress Sadness, which eventually leads to Riley losing her core memories and part of herself. Throughout the movie, Joy and Sadness travel through Riley's mind in hopes of returning core memories that make up Riley's personality and the islands of personality in her mind. Without these core memories or emotions, Riley is confronted with the issue of not being able to feel sadness or happiness, nor be true to who she was prior to such loss in emotions. She slowly loses parts of herself, as well as the islands of personality, but once she regains the ability to feel joy and sadness, Riley can create new core memories and aspects of herself, although different than what was previously present, as she continues to grow. This case demonstrates how growing up exposed to the reality and knowledge of the world is detrimental to children's imagination and that there is a change in how they see the world around them. Riley, who was once a persistently happy girl, was able to grow up into someone who realizes many aspects of herself including emotions beyond the simplicity of happy or sad. This character growth illustrates how a child who once saw the world in great positivity later sees it with a more complex perspective as they become an adult.

HOW THE MIND CHANGES AS CHILDREN GROW UP

Throughout the movie, changes in 11-year-old Riley's life cause her to challenge and overcome struggles that emerge, resulting in a change in her ultimate mindset. The setting in the movie takes place in both the physical and the metaphysical world, Riley's mind. This allows for the comparison of the effects one world has on the other. In a series of changes and struggles that led to Riley's maturity, facing her new home was the first of many challenges. Before the reality of her new house, she had imagined the plethora of fun possibilities that the house would hold for her, only to be disappointed in its rundown appearance (Docter, 00:08:30). At this point, her imagination and physical reality are juxtaposed, with her imagination being just that: an intangible set of expectations that did not mirror her reality. When interpreting this scenario through Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, Riley would be around the age range where she transitions from the concrete operational stage into the formal operational stage, at this point holding an egocentric outlook, yet still developing a more logical mindset. Although this first problem can be overlooked, it cascades into more setbacks that lead to major changes in her mind. As she begins to face challenges that she cannot resolve, she begins to lose herself, which is evident in the collapse of her islands of personality. The first island of personality to go is Goofball Island (00:30:30), which can be described as the most childish of the islands of personality and is a source of her silly antics. This island allows her to pull pranks and laugh at jokes, and without it, she loses the humorous aspect of herself. The loss of this childish personality trait signifies the start of the loss of Riley's idealized adolescence, and in turn, her imagination. This loss is followed by the Imagination Island in her mind being destroyed (00:47:00). As the painful events in her life, as well as her cognitive development, cause her to mature, her imagination deteriorates. This can be seen when Bing-Bong, her imaginary friend, is lost in the depths of nothingness and is forgotten (01:12:30). His introduction in her long-term memory suggests his significance in Riley's childhood and his journey to eventually "end up where everything is permanently forgotten" (Manninen 16) illustrates the loss of her imagination as she transitions from a child to young adult. When Riley comes to terms with her emotions of feeling pain and sadness, new core memories are made and the island of personalities appears more complex (01:23:20), representing the maturity she has grown into. The figures below help visualize how much Riley has grown since the beginning of the movie. It shows how her Family Island at the end of the movie

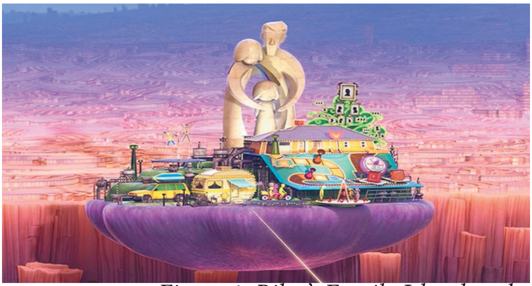

Figure 1. Riley's Family Island at the beginning of the movie


Figure 2. Riley's Family Island at the end of the movie

is vaster and has more parts to it in comparison to her Family Island at the beginning of the movie.

Language can be used to communicate emotions from the mind to others in the physical world. This applies Plato's Theory of Forms as Riley's expression of the abstract concept of emotions through words, and although it may not fully convey how she is truly feeling (Pickstock), it still provides examples of ideas into the physical world. Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development allows a deeper understanding as to why Riley's mind and imagination have changed so much throughout the movie. Since Riley is 11, Piaget's theory implies that she is in the formal operational stage of cognitive development, where "the adolescent becomes increasingly capable of reasoning abstractly and mastering the formal thought operations" (Muuss 299). Riley's ability to reason scientific concepts in the physical world inhibits her imagination as she can no longer make the world what she wants it to be as she understands that the world she lives in is what it is. As she grows up and matures, it indicates the development of a more complex mind rather than a simple one. This allows her to interpret different parts of the world scientifically, altering her imaginative outlook to a logical, scientific one.

CASE STUDY 2: WE ARE SEVEN

In William Wordsworth's poem "We Are Seven", the Man's point of view is expressed through a dialogue between him and another character little Maid, where they discuss how many siblings the Maid has (Wordsworth 13-14), displays the disparity between realities due to different perspectives. Although originally seven, even after two had passed away, the Maid still insists that there are seven siblings, while the Man rejects that idea and claims there are now only five siblings. The juxtaposition of what the child believes and what the man believes in this case shows the difference between how the world is viewed by different people. This is a seminal example of the open-mindedness of the children compared to older people in terms of imagination, especially in the presence of wilderness, and interprets the metaphysical world and relates it to the physical world. The Man's reluctance to accept any new ideas that go against what he already knows, compared to the Maid's examination that there may be more than what meets the eye, demonstrates that freedom of imagination is more present in younger people.

COMPARING THE POINT OF VIEW OF A CHILD COMPARED TO AN ADULT

The dialogue begins with the narrator describing the little Maid as a "Simple Child" who is ignorant of death (Wordsworth 1-4). The capitonym, a word capitalized to change or emphasize its meaning, used when referring to the child throughout the poem suggests the divine qualities she possesses. The little Maid has a vaster imagination in comparison to the narrator, which establishes an association between being a child and divinity; those who possess divine characteristics are more connected to the metaphysical and abstract world, allowing for more imagination. Having applied capitonym to the word "Simple" indicates that simplicity is a factor and quality necessary for a more expansive imagination. By the end of the poem, despite their disagreements and reasoning, the narrator sees that "The little Maid would have her will" (Wordsworth 68) and discerns that the two have different outlooks on the world. Because of the difference in their imaginative capacity, the little Maid can see and think of the world however she wants whereas the narrator has a fixed point of view of how the world should be, including the fact that the little Maid's deceased siblings should no longer be accounted for in existence.

This component of the poem relates to Plato's Theory of Forms as it demonstrates how ideas and forms cannot truly be translated and interpreted in the physical realm. While the little Maid can view the world with imagination and with an abstract outlook because of the close connection she has with the divine quality of the metaphysical world being a child, the narrator is only limited to the physical realm outlook. The little Maid's abstract ideology that her deceased siblings are still in existence where she can "sing a song to them" and interact with them does not translate to completion when she shares her point of view with the narrator, who is grounded to the physical world. Plato's Theory of Forms supports that the little Maid's translated ideas are not as true compared to the true and timeless ideas from which they are derived. Although Plato's theory provides reasoning as to why the narrator cannot accept the little Maid's idea, this section of the case is not fully supported by Piaget's

Theory of Cognitive Development. The little Maid is said to be 8 years old, and according to Piaget's theory, this is the age when the child is at the concrete operational stage of development. At this point, the child can begin thinking logically. They begin to develop an awareness of scientific concepts and apply reasoning in their lives (Muuss 294-296). This part of Piaget's theory disagrees with the representation of the 8-year-old Girl in the poem, stating that at this age, her cognitive development should be more advanced than how it is portrayed; her mindset is too simple and not scientifically complex enough. However, this theory states that from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage (ages 7-8 to 11 and up), it is more common to see people in this age range have an egocentric outlook. This causes them to form a reality for themselves rather than changing themselves for the reality they live in, which leads to the use of their imagination. As the little Maid falls within this age range, it may be argued that she uses her imagination unrestrictedly to satisfy her egocentric perspective.

METAPHYSICAL IDEAS IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD

As mentioned in the previous section, the little Maid character represents the metaphysical world, and the narrator, Man, represents the physical world. As a result, the two characters have differing perspectives where the narrator argues that "ye are only five" (Wordsworth 36), while the little Maid insists that "we are seven" (69). Through their dialogue, it suggests that the physical world is bound to just 5 senses, as represented by the narrator, whereas the little Maid implies that there are more than what we know of with the five senses in the metaphysical world. Their differing perspectives on the world lead them to have different interpretations of death. The narrator sees death as the end of life with no other place for the soul to go after. This aligns with the five senses outlook as the soul cannot be described with the available senses and there is no explanation for what happens after death. The little Maid expands beyond the 5 senses and argues that even after death, her siblings are still alive. She begins by describing their graves as "green" (37), which symbolizes grass and life. She goes on to describe that death is a cycle, just as "when the grass was dry…And when the ground was white with snow" (54-57). Just as the seasons cycle throughout the year, death is part of a cycle and there is more than just the end of life. Because there is more beyond death, she makes it known that death shouldn't be feared by using the word “released” (51) when describing the death of her sister as the word choice suggests that by dying, her sister was set free from her pain.

The narrator’s inability to comprehend the little Maid’s ideas can be attributed to the reasoning of Plato’s Theory of Forms, which expresses that aspects of the metaphysical world are not well understood in the physical world. While the “combination of sensory information” is “mimetic” (Pickstone 249) of the abstract concept, these ideas in the physical realm are just copies. These “sensory information” concepts are equivalent to the five senses on Earth; sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing (Archer-Hind 182). While each can be used to imitate and copy ideas through art or music, or even combine them in the form of language to express ideas, it is still not enough to translate the vast concepts from the metaphysical realm. This further compromises its true definition when the translated idea is translated once again when shared. In the poem, the little Maid tries to share her vast imagination with the narrator, but because of the lack of senses and ways to share her ideas, it is never conveyed or processed by the narrator. The narrator, having lived in the physical world for longer, has been accustomed to the sciences from that world and the five senses. As a result, his imagination is weakened, and he can no longer imagine the world as he wants it since he was taught that it is meant to be a certain way. This demonstrates Plato’s Theory as it serves as an example where there are not enough senses in the physical world to express abstract concepts from the imagination.

CASE STUDY 3: ODE: INTIMATION OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

The second work of Wordsworth confronts the commonly-held belief that the years of childhood hold more wonder and magic than the reality of adulthood. “Ode: Intimation of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” follows the various thoughts of a man who is troubled by the fact that he can no longer perceive the world like how he was once able to (Wordsworth 18). He makes it clear that the dull, yet still beautiful world he lives in was once a place where it shined brightly, even on the most common things. This outlook on the world began to change as he became an adult. As he grew up into adulthood, he realized that something was missing when he viewed nature, more specifically the sanctitude of nature. The narrator suggests the idea that while people are mortal, children are immortal, which allows them to have the ability to see the true beauty of nature. This case will serve to support the idea that children's relationship with wilderness and the metaphysical realm allows them to view the world more vastly compared to adults.

WHY CHILDREN ARE CORRELATED FOR HAVING MORE IMAGINATION

In multiple of Wordsworth's works, he associates children with nature, as well as having more imagination. In his poem, the narrator recalls a time when "every common sight" was "aparalleled celestial light" (Wordsworth 2-4). In this recollection of a time when he was a kid, the narrator claims that everything, even the most ordinary things, looked heavenly as a child as compared to an adult. The narrator explains the reason why is because of the link between children and the metaphysical world. It is said that the "soul that rises with us, our life's Star, Hath had elsewhere its setting…Not in entire forgetfulness" (58-61), which explains the divine characteristics children have, as well as nature. Comparing the "Soul" to the "life's Star," or the sun, shows the parallels between the two, as when the sun sets, it does not disappear from existence, but rather, goes to a place that just cannot be seen, which the same could be said about the soul after death. After death, the soul would go to a world that cannot be seen from the physical world, which the narrator claims would be "Heaven" (65). From here, children would be born "not in entire forgetfulness" (61), which means that children remember some parts of their existence in Heaven before their existence on Earth. The capitonym used for every reference to a child suggests divine characteristics they have since before they were born, their souls existed in Heaven and "from God, who is [their] home" (64). Since they are children and do not know much about the sciences of the physical world, their outlook on the world is based on what they know from the metaphysical world in Heaven, which explains why everything looks more glorious and dreamlike as a child. This lack of knowledge of the sciences and their Heavenly outlook on the world allows children to see and create the world however they want and so results in a more freeing use of their imagination.

Plato's Theory of Forms relates the soul and Forms, or abstract ideas, being associated with one another at some point. This poem relates to Plato's idea of recollection because it supports the idea that there is a place of previous existence before existing in the physical world. The "recollection of the forms" (Pickstock 243), according to Plato, allows for existence to be "intimated." This idea of the suggestion of the previous abstract existence of the soul through recollection supports Wordsworth's argument that children's imaginations are more vast compared to adults because of their ability to remember some parts of this previous existence before life on Earth. Recollection of the Forms allows for a better understanding of the abstract concepts of the metaphysical world without the explanation from "copies of the forms" (243). Copies of such ideas would not fully express the true nature of the idea, so children's ability to recollect the Forms and previous existence gives them the ability to see the world with a Heavenly outlook and with an overall greater imagination.

DISCUSSION: WORDSWORTH AND PIXAR

The cases chosen for this research paper help to answer the question of why children have more imagination in comparison to when they grow into adults. The first case is Disney/Pixar's *Inside Out*, which analyzes how a child's mind changes as a result of different environmental, emotional, and cognitive developmental factors. The struggles a person must go through cause them to mature mentally and gain a more complex perspective of the world. The second case, "We Are Seven" sheds light on the differences between how a child sees the world compared to an adult, as well as associating children to be closer to the metaphysical world. Children possess divine characteristics that link them to abstract concepts, which is only possible due to their simple-mindedness. Compared to adults, who observe the world with scientific and rational concepts and are well-educated on the world they live in, children's egocentric and simple mindsets allow them to create the world they want through their imagination. The last case, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," explains why it is plausible for children to be associated with having more imagination than adults. It was reasoned that the place souls go after death and before birth is Heaven, a metaphysical realm. Upon entering the physical world, children still remember aspects of their existence before life on Earth, which leads them to see the world in a Heavenly manner, so long as they are ignorant. The second and third cases support the idea that death is a cycle in which after, the soul enters a divine metaphysical realm and the children born are a result of this divine realm. The first case focuses more on the psychological aspects of why children have more imagination than adults but can connect with the second source in terms of simplicity and a more expansive imagination.

Riley's new, complex islands of personalities were indicative of her maturing, but also becoming less imaginative compared to when her islands of personalities were simple, yet she still had a vast imagination, just more complex. In all these cases, the introduction to knowledge in the children leads to a different outlook on the world. During the stage of cognitive development between ages 7-11, children within this age group would have more creativity as they create a world for themselves, rather than living to conform to the world already made; this causes them to use their imagination to create their world. However, as they advance to higher education and undergo more cognitive development, they lose creativity as the educational system forms the foundation for the adulthood versions of creativity later on (Kupers, et al. 104), with the "creativity" referred to as different than the creativity related to freedom of imagination. Education instructs children in a way that has them thinking in a more logical way, which couples well with their cognitive development, where they "[begin] by thinking of all logical possibilities and then [considering] them in a systematic fashion" (Muuss 299). Education follows the cognitive development track and adjusts to the cognitive stages the children are undergoing. The more advanced, theoretical outlook children gain naturally, along with the standardized education system, leads them to think less creatively and more logically.

In terms of improving imagination, the act of reading enhances the use of imagination and sparks new ideas and creativity (World Literacy Foundation). For a person to be able to read, they must be educated, and an adult would have higher education and more of an ability to read complex literature. This reading of complex literature with a deeper understanding of the text can induce greater imagination compared to a child who is given the same reading. This use of imagination from reading can be seen as a closer connection to wilderness or spiritual freedom. However, a rebuttal to this idea is that Plato's Theory of Forms would state that the text from the book is a copy of Forms. This would suggest that the imagination formed is not as true as the original idea. Children, on the other hand, create original ideas from their ignorant and naive minds in their imagination; this could be seen as a truer version of the idea as it is not from copies. This would mean that children are more closely connected with wilderness as their imagination is genuine to Forms in comparison to adults.

CONCLUSION

Children are more closely connected with wilderness, in terms of freedom of imagination, as their brains are less developed and are more closely connected to Plato's metaphysical Forms compared to adults. This freedom can be attributed to the simplicity of the child's brain and overall character, which explains their relatively self-centered and egotistical outlook on the world. This outlook causes them to create a world for themselves in which they please, having them use their imagination more consistently and constantly. As they grow older, their brain develops in a way where they become more aware of their surroundings and begin to adjust themselves internally rather than their environment through external efforts; this could be recognized as maturity and would require less use of imagination. From this research, it can be concluded that the main reasons why children have a more heightened imagination compared to adults are their simplistic nature and lack of education. The main issue I looked into for this research was that children's relationship with wilderness is negatively affected as they grow older, with their loss of imagination being most evident. I initially thought that this was an issue that needed to be resolved, as it could relieve either mental or societal pressures, given that they are trying to fit in and live in a world with a certain status quo. The awareness of living in a society strips away the full freedom for a person to be themselves and live in a world they are truly comfortable in. However, I think the solution to this problem is to do nothing. If people were to live purely relying on their imagination, there would be no harmony within the community, especially in the society we live in today. The world would not be able to function, and education and maturity are the aspects of life that keep people grounded. A proposed solution to improve the relationship between people and wilderness is suggesting older people go on hikes, which can bring adults closer to finding the meaning of life. These adults find freedom in the wilderness as it is a setting outside of their busy, civilian lifestyle. The wilderness is to them how the world is to children; new and full of potential. While these adults are already influenced by their knowledge of the world, with an egotistical outlook, they seek freedom from the society they live in in hopes of pursuing a life they can be at one with.

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ZAYNA BAJWA

"So Bad, I'm Not Even a Girl Anymore": The Emergence of the Posthuman Monster in EDM

ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the argument that electronic music has profoundly changed from previous decades into the 2000's. The perspective through which the lyrics of electronica songs are told has changed to that of an outcast from culture whose identity has diverged from that of a normal "human." In the electronica of earlier ages, the protagonist in the music was a nonaggressive being who has since evolved into a posthuman monster. This monster proactively criticizes the culture that birthed it and exposes all its desires and grievances. Using theories of online identity reconstruction, script theory, and monster theory, this paper uncovers the process through which the electronic musicians of generation Z create these posthuman monsters starting with an exploration of the freedom and malleability of identity provided by the space the Internet offers. Songs, visuals, and lyrics by electronic duo Machine Girl and Vocaloid producer UtsuP are analyzed in this paper using the aforementioned theories. This paper proves the connection between the Internet and the changes seen in EDM, while addressing the lack of research regarding modern electronica and its reflection of culture.

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

There is no genre better at embracing technology than electronic music. EDM, or electronic dance music, has generated the atmosphere of a futuristic dance floor for decades. Prior to the 2000s, electronic musicians like Daft Punk, Fatboy Slim, and Basement Jaxx dominated the genre with lyrics inviting listeners to dance and enjoy the new tech around them. The EDM of today has vastly changed, now often having elements of other electronic music genres like Dubstep, Noise, and Breakbeat. EDM has grown increasingly popular since the 2010s and the "new rave generation" it spawned continues to increase the genre's popularity and commercial success (Sherburne). Electronic music "has always taken advantage of its nonhuman elements" to experiment and express complicated emotions from the perspective of a machine (Bell 229). However, there is a growing trend in the electronica of today to express these emotions from a different, more twisted perspective. There is a lack of research covering this change in electronica, which has become the dominant genre for this generation. It just so happens this trend grew in parallel with the rise of the Internet.

After several decades with the Internet, much of modern life, culture, and social interaction has changed. The post-Internet is a new phenomenon describing the complete integration of digital networks into regular life. Generation Z, unlike any generation before, has grown up in a noisy, overstimulating environment provided by spaces on the Internet. The post-Internet meets the posthuman in modern electronic music. Music and cultural theorist Michael Waugh describes posthumanism as a "fusion of human and machine that enhances the humanity of the individual" (235). Posthuman identities can develop via the space offered by the Internet, where the mutability and anonymity of the web allow people to engage with different parts of their identity. The Internet has led to the creation of beings so deeply integrated with technology and imbued with "digital maximalism", that it is difficult to differentiate between online and offline versions of oneself (March 4). Of course, the identities presented online do not have to be truthful to a person's real-life identity. This paper begins with a discussion of online identity reconstruction and script theory to explain the motivations and performance of individuals who create new identities on the web. Using these theories in identity as a foundation, the paper seeks to explain the "corrupted" identities formed on the Internet via monster theory. Electronic musicians too use these principles of identity reconstruction and monster personas to vent their anxieties, fears, and fantasies. This culminates in the study of two electronica artists who write from the perspective of a posthuman monster: a being integrated with technology but harbors the flaws and resentment of the culture it was produced from. The term "protagonist" as used in this paper will refer to the perspective from which the electronic musicians write from. It is an individual who acts as the mouthpiece for the musician to express feelings and critiques of culture. EDM is undergoing a transformation from the perspective of the protagonist to that of the posthuman monster, a being born from the integration of the Internet into modern life.

ONLINE RECONSTRUCTION & SCRIPT THEORY: BEHAVIOR IS PROGRAMMED

Online, anyone can be who they say to be. The current human experience is much more fluid in terms of identity than it used to be. An individual can express any part of themselves and exaggerate different dimensions of their identity that they otherwise could not do offline. This concept is referred to as online identity reconstruction. Jiao Huang et al. explain this as the phenomenon "that people build an online identity that is partly or even completely different from their real identity by hiding or faking certain characteristics" (1). A person's online identity is thus determined by the information they choose to disclose. The construction of identity online is incredibly flexible, by virtue of the choice users have in presenting themselves. The flexibility in identity expression offered by online identity reconstruction has influenced the music of electronic artists. EDM artist ADR believes "carefully curated streams of images and bits of text' now constitute an artist's 'self-created context'" (Waugh 237). Artists can curate their identity and create a collage of personality traits, tastes, and actions. The information displayed on social media websites for an online profile like name, age, and personal interests among many other categories is enough to construct an identity. Electronic musicians need only this much, or these small bits of text as ADR describes, to create an entire context.

The next step of online identity reconstruction comes in the form of acting out the online persona created by the person. If a person fabricates their identity to be a 20-year-old lesbian woman, they act according to a script, or what they perceive that identity to behave like. Social script theory assumes "people follow internalized scripts when constructing meaning out of behavior, responses, and emotions" (Wiederman 496). In other words, people behave according to internalized concepts of situations that they have learned from observations of social settings and their previous experiences. When a person makes a new online identity, or even in circumstances for their real-life self, they behave in situations as if they are following a computer program. They execute what is expected of them, and thus, behavior is programmed. In modern electronica, musicians do not filter their lyrics. They write about their struggles, sexual fantasies, and violent desires. Online identity reconstruction meets script theory in electronica, where we see artists sing songs from various perspectives of different protagonists and sing according to what they believe to be that characters' script. Each character in electronica has an identity created from bits of the musician's own self, as seen in online identity reconstruction. These characters then act according to the script the musician believes they have, and thus they sing about the behaviors, sexual fantasies, and violence relevant to that character. The Internet influences how electronic musicians conceptualize their own identity through online reconstruction, and through script theory, artists fully realize their character to write behaviorally accurate lyrics.

CONSTRUCTING A MONSTER ONLINE

Online identity reconstruction allows for the possibility of the construction of identities that go beyond that of a human. In fact, there is potential "for the web to develop identities that are of a different 'species'" (Waugh 244). On the web, people can identify as monsters, which according to cultural theorist J.J. Cohen is motivated by the desire to express criticisms of culture. Cohen describes his theory of monsters with seven theses. His first explains how the shape monsters take is indicative of the culture that produced them. He states: "The monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment… the monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy …the monster signifies something other than itself" (4). The first part of this quote states that monsters are representations of a culture. It embodies a culture's fear and fantasy, but the monster itself physically is not the threat, but instead what it signifies. When electronic musicians create a monster-like identity in their art, the monster is usually a hybrid and cannot be systematically classified. The design of the monster is a mutated human or creature with wires attached. The monster is heavily scarred and branded with symbols of rebellion and anarchy. Like the collage of identity in online reconstruction, the monster too is an assembly of different provocative elements woven together into one monstrous identity. These elements just so happen to be the feral fantasy of this generation: to become a being with a mutated identity that can expose and broadcast their deepest desires in an unrestrained and chaotic manner.

In Figure 1, the album art of *U-Void Synthesizer* by the EDM duo Machine Girl is presented. The monster depicted is a mutated dog with horns, piercings, scars, multiple eyes, tubes connected to the neck, a radioactive symbol and barcode upon its forehead, and a badge saying "Born to Kill." This is not a "traditional" monster; it is one constructed from a multitude of fears, anxieties, fantasies, and desires, like how online reconstruction shapes an identity from multiple aspects of a person. This machinated, mutated dog is a symbol of the feral fantasy present in the EDM of today.

The art of EDM today features hybrid monsters that represent the fears of this post Internet generation. Dr. Christopher Ferguson who studies media effects and violence discusses how "social media can be used by some individuals as a mechanism to reinforce their a priori, beliefs, grievances, and animosity" (118). Just as Cohen states, monsters and people alike represent their culture by exposing their grievances, fears, and anxieties. Online identity reconstruction offers people the chance to piece together an identity for themselves as a monster, a being so frenzied and burdened with a belief that all they are consumed by the desire to only post about that. Shaped by the Internet, it is here where the monsters that live on machines become the posthuman monster. The posthuman monster is a new concept in cultural theory, and therefore it is poorly defined. In this paper, the posthuman monster is operationalized as one that reveals the fears, fantasies, desires, and anxieties of those whose online and offline selves have merged (Ribeiro 11). As social media theorist Nathan Jurgenson states, "There isn't a person and then an avatar, a real world and then an Internet. They're merged" (Jurgenson). If a posthuman is a being who has gone beyond the confines of the definition of a human, the "monster" form, ascribing to monster theory, is the tumultuous feelings around this integration and how it has become an "Other" being in society. The concept of being classified as Other is central to monster theory, in which representing the unaccepted parts of a culture results in a being that does not fit into the classic categories of the culture. Maria Beville, a researcher on postmodern phenomenons, describes "Otherness" for a monster's construction to be "a characterisation that counterpoints most aspects of 'mainstream' culture, history, and identity" (1). Something that is Other goes against society; it is an antisocial being that critiques the flaws it sees in society. The posthuman is not a normal human anymore, and it has taken a step beyond human limits via tech integration. The posthuman monster is an Other that critiques the

Figure 1. Machine Girl's Cover art for their full length album U-Void Synthesizer (2020)

behaviors and limitations of the normal human. While the term monster carries a negative connotation, it is important to realize the posthuman monster is not necessarily a "bad" or evil concept. It is a representation of the current culture's desire to express every aspect of itself and its grievances while still distinguishing itself as an existence outside that of the normal human.

Electronic musicians weaponize the posthuman monster as a perspective to outlet thoughts and critiques. The posthuman monster acts as the protagonist for these songs and as a mouthpiece for the artist. These songs focus on the artist's grievances with society. The next section interprets this phenomenon of a posthuman monster as seen in the latest works of Machine Girl and UtsuP, who write songs from the perspective of this being to represent their own feelings.

DEATH TO THE SORROW: ANALYZING WORKS OF MACHINE GIRL AND UTSUP

After constructing a monstrous identity, electronic musicians already have an idea of the script of this monster. In a Cyborgian voice, the monster of "Scroll of Sorrow" by Machine Girl sings about its lamentations against the Internet and influencer culture. The protagonist, or the monster, of this song only talks about its anger towards the web. Its anger is focused and showcases an identity specific to the artist's own grievances and their incendiary fantasy of getting rid of the toxic Internet presence in their life. Throughout the song, the monster's voice mutates to become more aggressive, less human sounding, and more distorted with the pitch shifting more frequently than at the beginning. In the outro of the song, as the protagonist's voice layers upon itself in multiple pitches, the monster sings: "I've been a very bad girl / Don't you see? / So bad that I'm not even a girl anymore / Just a pile of skin and bones with no string / You still wanna f*ck me right?" (2:43–2:59). The human aspect of this monster has fully dissolved, leaving behind something Other. This is an example of the posthuman monster who is a being beyond that of a human and no longer fits into classic categories, as the monster even states that

it has become so "bad" or corrupted that it is no longer even a girl. The more the monster interacts with its anger and the Internet, the less "organic" it becomes. Waugh explains that the effects and impacts of the Internet have "[dissolved] the binary between automaton and human" allowing for "ungraspable mutability" (44). The posthuman monster of the song is beyond that of a human or machine and has flexibility in its identity because of this. It mutates, hybridizes, and corrupts into another form all the while focusing on its rage against the Internet. The combination of the aggressive lyrics and the cacophony of the song conveys the posthuman monster's experience as an Other being.

After discussing the ways in which electronic musicians can manipulate their own personal identity in their music, one of the rising technologies prevalent to this idea is the use of Vocaloid libraries. This software uses synthesizing technology with recorded vocals by different singers or voice actors to enable users to synthesize "singing" by typing in melodies and speech. Surprisingly, this technology is much more commonly used than expected. Most people who have a passing interest in electronic music have probably heard a song featuring a Vocaloid, such as in Porter Robinson's 2014 album *Worlds* which greatly influenced EDM (Bell 237). The attraction of Vocaloids for fans can be examined in many different dimensions, from the characters, songs, to the loosely strung together lore. But for artists, the capability of the Vocaloid sound to go beyond human limits is the main allure. Sarah Bell, an expert in Vocaloid technologies, explains in her research that the "Vocaloid software allows users to create effects beyond the physical capabilities of biological human voices" (227). It is here where the Vocaloid software's potential as a posthuman instrument is established. It can vocalize anxieties, criticisms, and desires in ways the human voice never could. It can growl to monstrous low pitches or climb to high tones that a human could never capture in their range. Japanese Vocaloid producer UtsuP uses different Vocaloid libraries in his 2021 album *UNIQUE* to express his grievances and fantasies. By using Vocaloids, the posthuman monsters in his music are fully tech-integrated beings that serve as mouthpieces for his criticisms of culture. Each song on the album focuses on a different critique of society, sung by different Vocaloids, each given a script of how and what to express specific to their crafted identity. In his song "Death of the Law" sung by arguably the most popular Vocaloid library Hatsune Miku, he writes from the perspective of an "alien" species new to Earth who questions why humans hold onto their values and will not accept the newcomer alien, even though they are very similar beings. Miku sings in the chorus: "You feel like you know everything about the world / You mock the new values … Still ruminating on anachronistic thoughts / 'We' are the exception / 'We' are the new generation / When you meet 'us'/ how strange was it?" (2:27-3:06). Miku feels like an Other in this song, as she tells her tale of not being accepted as a human under the category restrictions of what defines a human in the society she has entered. She says that the society holds antiquated beliefs and values, and that new values are mocked. Towards the end of the song, her voice distorts and drops in pitch. She screams and growls "law is outdated, ideology is outdated" repeatedly as if her frustrations boiled over (3:10-3:31). Miku's uncanny electronic voice distorts and becomes something unlike that of any human voice. In this song, she shares the perspective of a posthuman monster, who has gone beyond that of a human but has yet to be accepted by the culture. This song offers a posthuman experience of a synthesized voice venting out concerns and critiques this culture shares.

In works by artists Machine Girl and UtsuP, the two write from the perspective of a posthuman monster. Oddly enough, both happen to write very similar lyrics regarding the identity of this being. Machine Girl writes, "My ugliness is not my fault / I know God just made me wrong" ("Scroll of Sorrow" 0:08-0:12). In UtsuP's song "I Thought I Was an Angel," sung by Hatsune Miku, he writes "I couldn't live correctly…I couldn't do the same thing as everyone else / A design mistake by God" (2:17-2:29). Both lyrics begin with a critique by the protagonist of themselves. They relate their insecurities and inability to fit in as a mistake on the part of God. They feel unaccepted and different to those around them, and that they are Others. They acknowledge a "correct" standard they should have existed by but are unable to. The posthuman monster grieves over its inability to be classified as a normal human through a machinated voice, whether it be a distorted Cyborgian voice or a computer-synthesized library. The monster resents its failure to be classified and reasons that this is due to their composition and being. Both songs, however, do not have the monster wish for a different identity or to be a "normal" human. Rather, they begin to accept their monstrous nature and critique the other beings around them. As posthuman monsters, these protagonists critique the culture that created them and acknowledge their existence as something different to that of a human. It is through this new perspective and identity construction tool in electronic music that musicians can share their fantasies, anxieties, and fears in a way never seen before.

HAS ELECTRONIC MUSIC ACTUALLY CHANGED?

Electronic music has been the genre that best models human progress, especially with regards to technology, for instance as seen with

UtsuP and the use of Vocaloid technology. It has been the genre where musicians create songs filled with sounds of the future, or so what they imagine the future to sound like. Yet, cultural theorist Mark Fisher sees electronica as an old creaky machine that churns out the same sound with every crank. Fisher sees the electronic music of the 2000s as indistinguishable from that of the 1990s, that is to say, he sees little progress and innovation in electronic music. The futuristic sound of electronica has "a settled set of concepts, affects, and associations" and thus the music created abides by these aesthetics of the future (Fisher 16). Fisher uses hauntology, which is the persistence of elements of the past, to describe modern electronica as nostalgic for lost futures. His argument is thus that electronic music has not changed, has become stagnant, and the future it seemingly promotes is one that has had no innovations made to its definition since the beginnings of the genre.

While this is a logical argument, the EDM revolution of the 2010s turns this claim on its head. Music Trades describes the EDM genre as "the fastest growing genre on the planet" and in today's EDM scene, artists are mixing elements of other electronic music genres like Noise, Glitch, and Breakbeat into the popular music scene ("Just How Big" 69). The sound of EDM has never been so diverse and chaotic. At the center of this change, Skrillex, Tiësto, Deadmau5, and many others stand at the center conducting the trends of EDM. Dubstep was not nearly as popular as it is today due to the influence of Skrillex on the genre and the success of his award winning 2010 EP *Scary Monsters and Nice Sprites*. Skrillex is, in part, "responsible for the influx of electronic music in mainstream pop music in the 2010's" (Rajan 76). Genres once considered too noisy and chaotic for the public are now dominating the popular electronic scene and beyond. The future electronica has always dreamed of is always bustling and noisy, and the electronica of today has never been noisier nor has it ever been this accepted by the public. The sound, aesthetics, and scene of electronica have changed, unlike what Fisher claims.

In addition to the sound, the lyrical content and perspective of the electronica protagonist has also changed quite dramatically. Electronica in the pre-2000s typically featured a friendly protagonist who wanted to dance or a flat-voiced protagonist talking in a robotic tone, as seen respectively in the songs "The Bomb!" by The Bucketheads and "The Robots" by Kraftwerk. The EDM of today features angry growls, lyrics that are litanies of criticisms about culture, and aggressive flirtations. This change parallels the rise in the prevalence of the Internet in modern life.

Cultural theorists are quick to point out though that the social media age "has not created a period of unique social problems for human societies" (Ferguson 130). The Internet has not created these aggressions, but it has facilitated the expression of them. This leaks into the lyrical content and has shifted the perspective of the protagonist that is seen in the electronica of today. As studied previously, the identity reconstruction process on the Internet has profoundly impacted electronica musician's approach to art and crafting musical identities. The different theories on identity previously discussed led to the identification of the posthuman monster perspective in electronica which rages and critiques like no other era of electronica protagonists.

CONCLUSION

This project has examined the modern-day electronica protagonist through multiple theories of identity including script theory, online identity reconstruction, and monster theory. Through multiple theories, this research paper analyzed the emerging posthuman monster in electronica and connected its origin to the Internet. An in-depth analysis of the works of popular EDM artists Machine Girl and UtsuP proved examples of the posthuman monster as a being that is aware of its own existence diverging from that of a human while critiquing the culture that produced it.

The posthuman monster is a new concept in social theory and has yet to be developed and used in multiple contexts. This concept in addition to monster theory is not typically used in research related to music, but the two together provided a nuanced perspective of a socio-cultural shift seen in the last twenty years, parallel to the integration of the Internet in everyday life. EDM is the music of this generation, and it is showing significant changes matching those of socialization post-Internet. Never has identity been so malleable, allowing people to express all parts of themselves openly on the Internet. Perhaps the best way to study the frustrations and fantasies of this generation is through the identities they construct and the art they produce.

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RACHEL SHRIVASTAVA

Can You Spell That Out For Me?: The Impact of Names on the Identity Formation of Asian-American Immigrants

ABSTRACT

"Can you spell that out for me?" is almost a default question after "What is your name?" for many Asian-American immigrants with first, middle, and last names derived from various languages. While this question may be expected for many people in this population, this paper seeks to explore the additional ramifications of ethnic names and the forced Anglicization of these names in American society on Asian immigrants. This paper will use statistical evidence, personal accounts, and various metrics to assess the deep impact this phenomenon has on immigrant identity. Through the examination of these sources, the ramifications of Anglicizing Asian-American immigrant names becomes clear including the oppressive nature of the failure to adopt these names, the role these names play in interpersonal communication, and the difficulty Asian immigrants have in integrating into American culture.

INTRODUCTION

"A name pronounced is the recognition of the individual to whom it belongs. He who can pronounce my name aright, he can call me, and is entitled to my love and service."
- Henry David Thoreau

Over the past twenty years, the number of Asian-Americans in the United States has grown at an astronomical rate, from 11 million in 2000 to over 22 million in 2019 (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). With this increase in population comes a plethora of diverse names of Asian origins, many of which have been derived from foreign languages such as Hindi, Arabic, and Mandarin. These names have proven difficult for many non-Asian-Americans to pronounce and adapt to in everyday life, thus affecting the way these populations interact with Asian immigrants and their children. As a result, many Asian-Americans have altered their names in terms of spelling and pronunciation or even completely forgoing their original name for an English one. This paper seeks to explore the following question: How does the practice of anglicizing immigrant names affect the identity of immigrants who undergo these name changes?

The frameworks used to explore this topic in this paper include the theory of symbolic interactionism, the concept of intersectionality, and the power-dynamics theory. In my first section, "The Oppressive Nature of the Failure to Adopt Ethnic Names," I argue that forced changes in names are used to marginalize immigrants by Americans. I will prove this by analyzing the reception of ethnic names by native members of society, and how Americans use their inherent societal power to force immigrants to adhere to certain name preferences. In "The Meaning of Names in Asian Society," I argue that names have deep cultural significance in Asian society. I will demonstrate this by showing how names play a complex role in interpersonal communication between members of one's culture and symbolize various values and beliefs of Asian families. In "The Asian-American Personal Identity Conflict," I will argue that the inability for immigrants to have a name that can function in both Asian and American society leads to personal identity conflict as a result of alienation from Asian cultural and family heritage and difficulty in being fully accepted by American society. To build this claim, I will explore several immigrant perspectives, including the works of scholars, opinion pieces, and statistical studies, reflecting on how their name affects their intersectional identity.

THE OPPRESSIVE NATURE OF THE FAILURE TO ADOPT ETHNIC NAMES

"'I'm so sorry. I can't pronounce [your name, Hasan Minhaj]. Meet my son, Higsby Witherthrottle III.'"
- Hasan Minhaj, The Ellen Show

The different nature of many Asian names has resulted in the limitations of opportunities afforded to Asian-Americans as well as discrimination in many public settings. Even before the influx of Asian-Americans, there were similar limitations placed on immigrants from Western countries in the early 1900s. A study published in The University of

Chicago Press Journal used various metrics from naturalization data of the twentieth century and concluded that, "The persistent payoff that we find is therefore consistent with employers, coworkers, customers, and neighbors having a taste for American names or employers using either prejudice or a form of statistical discrimination in their hiring decisions" (Biavaschi et al., 2017, p. 1109). The author suggests that the prejudice faced by immigrants extends past the hiring process, but also with anyone in America that they come into contact with, including "customers" and "neighbors." These native members of society use their positions of power and social influence to alienate these immigrants so that they are forced to change their names. The "taste" for American names implies that there is a preference for names that Americans are familiar with, as taste is something that develops as a result of repeated exposure, in this case repeated exposure to American names. That being said, many of these immigrants came from European origins when there was already a pre-existing connection between America and Europe. It could be argued that for Asian-Americans who do not have names of European origins, this lack of familiarity could be heightened. This type of discrimination is evident when looking at the economic data in a professional setting for Asian immigrants in Western countries. A study conducted in Canada noted that "job applicants in Canada with Asian names — names of Indian, Pakistani or Chinese origin — were 28 percent less likely to get called for an interview compared to applicants with Anglo names, even when all the qualifications were the same" (Chen, 2017, para. 2). The standardization of qualifications is an important aspect of this study since it demonstrates that this type of discrimination is not so much about questioning the capabilities of Asian immigrants, but rather a lack of comfort working with someone with an Asian name. Another study examining discrimination among Asian-Americans found that, "The general U.S. population has a dual view of Asian Americans. Although Asian Americans are seen as hardworking and economically prosperous, they are also viewed as untrustworthy and inscrutable" (Gee et al., 2007, para. 4). This study makes it apparent that names can be used to identify Asian-Americans and marginalize them based on these prejudiced beliefs.

There are also some instances of changing to a more anglicized name seemingly producing benefits for people of Asian backgrounds. For example, an article published in the Journal of Pragmatics in 1997 by David C.S. Li examines how Westernization has resulted in the adoption of English names by many citizens of Hong Kong, as well as the effect that has had on interpersonal communication. Li explains:

> As for reasons [why people adopt a Hong Kong name], the two options 'convenient' and 'easier to make friends with others' taken together account for the chief motivation (female 242; male 142). This confirms our analysis that the inventory of traditional Chinese address forms does not lend itself to smooth interpersonal communication on an egalitarian basis. (p. 508)

The way in which Chinese names are constructed, according to Li, are not necessarily for the same purpose of interpersonal communication as they are in English-speaking countries, which is why an English name may be more suited in Hong Kong for interpersonal communication. However, while this may seem like a clear-cut linguistic reason for why an English name is better suited, there is also a lot of influence exerted by Western connections to Hong Kong. Li states that:

> Probably the adoption of an English name is one way to encourage the student's interest toward English. At a more practical level, it is also conceivable that the pressure to code-switch back to Chinese in an English-medium lesson would be reduced if the students have got an English name. (Li, 1997, p. 508)

Influential people from these countries will encourage the adoption of English for their own economic benefit, and that can start by motivating Hong Kong citizens to take an English name. Many Hong Kong citizens are willing to adopt these English names to avoid "code-switching", which in this context refers to, " subtly, reflexively chang[ing]" ones speech mannerisms to better fit into the certain social or environmental standard (Demby, 2013, para. 5). However, switching to an English name could be seen as a form of metaphorical code switching as well by having to adopt an English-friendly persona in a Western speaking setting.

Some immigrants choose to keep their names despite this pressure, but are often met with resistance and shaming by non-immigrant Americans, demonstrating the lack of respect that immigrants are given by native residents of a country. Disrespect is a mechanism by which native residents extend the power they have over immigrants, as explained by the power dynamic theory. According to Simeonova, power can be defined in many ways, but one way is through the idea of "power as control" (Simeonova et al., 2021, Figure 1). This form of power "refers to power inscribed in systems, which manifest through rules, monitoring, surveillance, compliance, [and] information asymmetries" (Simeonova et al., 2021, p. 236). Evidence for this type of exerted power is seen in a survey on the names of Peruvian and Chinese immigrants who moved to Western countries by Ainciburu and Buttazzi (2019). As part of this survey, one immigrant explained how she was treated in her new country: "When they gave my passport to my lady employer so that her son could write down the information, the son told her 'it's Marïa de los Anjiles [aŋ 'xi les]', [only] Mary is easier. Mary like the previous maid."(p. 15). The subject in this case, Marïa, is called Mary by her employer because it is easier for her employer to remember. In this case, Marïa's employer has forcibly made her change her name, creating her own "rules" for Marïa to have to comply with in order to be allowed to work for her. The unnecessary rules and the forcible compliance can only be enforced because of the power Marïa's employer has over her both as her employer and as a native resident of the country Marïa is trying to assimilate into. Furthermore, the employer completely strips Marïa of her individuality and reduces her to an extension of the person who previously held the job. Refusing to use her real name furthers the power dynamic between the two of them as employer and employee, and shows the lack of respect the employer has for Marïa's culture and identity as a Peruvian immigrant. This phenomenon carries over to Asian-American immigrants as well. Vietnamese first-generation immigrant Beth Nguyen (2021) discusses this symbolic oppression in a piece for the New Yorker titled, "America Ruined My Name for Me". She writes:

> It is one of my historical facts that the name is steeped in shame, because living in the United States as a refugee and a child of refugees was steeped in shame. America made sure I knew that, felt that, from my earliest moments of awareness. (para. 6)

The disrespect given to Nguyen's name is a continuation of the dehumanization Marïa describes in the survey above. By taking away their right to be called by their own given name and getting away with it, native Westerners are showing how little they respect the heritage of immigrants and how much control they have over what is considered respectable in society. Furthermore, the mocking of an immigrant's name can be used to prevent immigrants from successfully integrating into their new country by making a point to show how immigrants must change who they are in order to fit into native citizens' standards. The shaming by the non-immigrant population is once again used to convey the message that these immigrant women are not worthy of being fully respected citizens. Thus, Americans whose name and identity fit the stereotypical image of an American are placed above these immigrant populations socially, giving them control over what names are allowed and who can be treated as a "real American". Through mockery and disrespect, Americans can control the way in which immigrants are perceived and allowed to integrate into society, which signifies the immense power these native citizens have compared to immigrant populations. This treatment is a severe consequence for Asian-Americans who keep their names, limiting not only their socioeconomic prospects but also their ability to ever feel accepted by their American peers.

That being said, because this type of discrimination is so deeply rooted, it could also be possible that changing one's name does not prevent the torment and shaming by other Americans. Instead, it could manifest in other ways. For example, a study looking into discrimination against Chinese-Americans found that, "About 13% of respondents indicated unfair treat-ment because of their language or accent in their lifetime" (Goto et al., 2002, p. 216). Therefore, while a name change could signal that an Asian immigrant has assimilated, it does not necessarily stop all types of discrimination that the immigrant may face as a result of other factors such as language and accent. While altering one's name may result in an advantage for Asian immigrants in terms of their ability to blend in with other Americans, there is significant meaning lost by name changes.

THE MEANING OF NAMES IN ASIAN SOCIETY

"'No,' said the cat. '[People] have names. That's because you don't know who you are. We know who we are, so we don't need names."

- Neil Gaiman, Coraline

In many Asian cultures, names hold symbolic meaning by having a large role in interpersonal interaction. Jayaraman (2005) delves into the practice of naming in Hindu culture, noting that:

> In both southern and northern India, the first question to be asked when one person meets another is his or her name. For example, in Tamilnadu, the question posed is, "What's your name?" (ungal perro ennai), and this is followed by another question, "What's your native

place?” (ungal poranda oor ennai). Similarly, in northern India, the question is, “What’s your good name?” (apka shubha nam kya hai). (p. 478)

In Hindu culture, names are a way of getting to know someone’s personal and family history from their first introduction in Indian society, since each name is tied to a specific region and social class within India. The tie of names to social background can lead to preconceived notions about an individual and initial discrimination towards them, or even a sense of familiarity and possible connection between two strangers. Regardless of the nature of the impact, the social influence of names can function as a symbolic means of communication in societies that are taught to recognize the cultural importance of a name. Symbolic meaning translated into interpersonal communication is a tenet of symbolic interactionism theory. Jeon states that, “Blumer (16) contends that the basic premises of symbolic interactionism that link these concepts are rooted in Mead’s (11) basic tenets of ‘I’, ‘Me’ and ‘self’ and the inner conversations continually occurring between them in the context of social interaction” (Jeon). In this case, there is an additional “conversation” happening when someone asks for your name. The additional conversation includes questions about where regionally a person is from, what family the person comes from, and the social standing of this person without directly asking. Furthermore, the name itself alters the way the individual is perceived as part of this conversation due to its added symbolic meaning. Additionally, the adjective “good” in front of names in the common northern Indian version of the question is a direct translation of the Hindi word *shubha*, which can also mean auspicious or fortunate. The word *shubha* brings attention to another point the author makes in the article: that names are meant to bring spiritual wellness and luck to the individual from their family when chosen according to Hindu Indian practices. An example of this is when Jayaraman (2005) mentions how different names also have ties to family history, writing “... in Tamilnadu, if a family has experienced a high child mortality, a surviving child may be named Pichi (gift of god) if male, and Pichiamma if female” (p. 487). Therefore, even outside purely socioeconomic meaning, names can celebrate a family’s triumph over life’s challenges, which is a common theme in Hinduism and Indian culture as a whole.

The deep meaning behind names is part of the reason why altering a name can be so difficult for Hindu Indians especially when they migrate to other countries. Bakshi (2015) explains the lost meaning of these names with an example name: Hardik. "Due to the inability of the American accent to pronounce the soft 'd' like it would be pronounced in Indian culture, this unfortunate individual will always be associated with images of porn movies when his name actually means 'from the bottom of my heart'" (para. 4). Therefore, not only is the original, culturally significant meaning of the name lost, but also there is new meaning brought about by American societal norms, which further diminishes the symbolic significance of the name.

The meaning of names in Asian cultures also extends past the literal meaning and ultimately is a reflection of the values of the family who gives the name. The family influence on names in Asian cultures is seen in the work of Ainciburu and Buttazzi (2019). From the results of the survey they conducted, Ainciburu and Buttazzi claim that, "... Chinese immigrants regard their name as a private gift, related to what the family was expecting for them… At no time do they feel free to say that their name is ugly or that they do not like it" (p. 13). Altering or voicing any strong opinions against one's name could be seen as disrespectful to not only their culture but also their family. This furthers the idea made in Jayaraman's (2005) article about names being tied to the values and beliefs of the families that give them. Families can also use names as a symbolic way of trying to mold their child to represent certain ideals. Jayaraman states, "[Hindu] gods and goddesses represented various qualities of nature that humans admired and respected. Today, Hindus use many of these Vedic/Sanskritic names of deities as personal names (corresponding in English to Christian names or first names)" (p. 481). Names are not just meant to represent a physical entity that is significant to the immigrant's culture, but also to shape their identity with the values that are important to a person's family and heritage. This concept is seen again in Ainciburu and Buttazzi's article (2019). When one of the interviewees, referred to as example 5, was asked about their name and meaning, they responded: "Jin Yin Hua is a flower. [A] very nice [one]. Not Italian, of Bach flowers 'honeysuckle'. Do you know? All women [are] flowers in China [laughs]" (p. 12). With this interviewee's response and others, Ainciburu and Buttazi conclude:

> [It] is not possible to ignore the meaning of the given name in Chinese because the name's formants have meaning in Mandarin ... The flower in example 5 is Lonicera caprifolium, which is used to

> manufacture the group of perfumes known as "Fiori di Bach", which the interviewee mentions. (p. 12)

Once again, the names given to Chinese immigrants follow a similar pattern of Hindu Indian immigrants by being connected to both a physical object that represents the values of a person's family and what the family hopes the child will become.

As a result of the linguistic and syllabic complexity of Mandarin, Chinese names can also reflect a wider range of meaning compared to English with the variation in characters that can be used. The increased complexity could imply that naming practices in English have a stronger influence on identity than in Chinese culture, since English names can only be made of so many letters and follow a specific pattern. However, Li (1997) explains:

> Since the entire stock of Chinese characters may be considered as resources, in principle there are thousands of conceivable combinations and permutations to choose from. In practice, however, Chinese parents tend to pick only those characters with good associations, and so the actual pool of characters commonly used for naming purposes is much smaller. (p. 493)

The use of "good associations" also reinforces the idea of a "good name" as seen in Jayaraman's (2005) article where names are meant to bring good fortune to the family of the child in hopes that their child will be the exact kind of person they hope for.

Names are a family's way of trying to symbolically define who their child is and the ideals they represent, whether it be the family's triumph, or the type of values they hope their child holds. Thus, when that individual communicates with the world, their name plays a large role in the way they interact with others who understand the cultural background of these names. However, when an individual alters their name in order to better fit into Western society, they lose that connection to the heritage they left behind as well as the values their families hold. The changing of one's name then presents a conflict of whether the assimilated Asian-American immigrant with an Americanized name can hold on to the cultural identity of their heritage. For an article in the New York Times, author Jami Nakamura Lin (2020) discusses her fear of how her daughter's anglicized first and last name could conflict with her Asian identity that Lin hopes to instill in her. Ultimately, she realized that "Underneath the question, 'Should we change her name' is the question, 'Can we control who she becomes?'" (para. 10). This conflict is the foundation for the identity confusion many Asian-Americans experience.

THE ASIAN-AMERICAN PERSONAL IDENTITY CONFLICT

"So let me reintroduce myself: My full name and complete byline is Marian Chia-Ming Liu. Chia is pronounced with a J, like Jiā. Liu like Leo. And yes, it includes all four words. I'm proud of it all, because it represents my complete self, Asian and American."

- Marian Chia-Ming Liu (柳家明 *) The Washington Post*

From the variety of surveys and studies conducted above, there is prevailing evidence that immigrants, both from Asian and other minority countries, are constantly battling with a complex push and pull of changing one's name to better fit in with American society at the risk of alienation from one's own culture. Name-driven personal conflict has inspired many different ways of reconciling the intersectional nature of immigrant and Western identities. In Hamamra and Abusamra's (2020) article about the works of Palestinian scholars Edward Said and Mamoud Darwish, they demonstrate how Said ultimately chose to adopt the name Edward to reflect his American environment when he came to the United States for university. However, in Said's own words, "it took me about fifty years to become accustomed to, or, more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with, 'Edward', a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said" (Hamamra & Abusamra, 2020, p. 1073). While adopting this anglicized name was beneficial in the sphere of Said's American academic world, there is an inherent disconnect between his assimilated identity and his true identity, which is far more complex than just American. He ended up deciding that the "Edward" side of him had to actively suppress the "Said" side in order to project a personality that was better suited for his new environment in America. The conflicting yet intertwined nature of his two names is representative of the intersectionality framework. Intersectionality was originally conceptualized as part of the Black feminist movement, and is defined as, "identities such as gender, race, sexuality, and other markers of difference intersect and reflect large social structures of oppression and privilege, such as sexism, racism, and heteronormativity" (Kelly et al., 2021, Abstract). Thus, with his

American and Palestinian names at odds with one another, he is unable to find his place in American society, representing the larger social issue at play: the inability for immigrants to exist fully in their American and immigrant identities. For example, when Lin (2020) reflects on her child's name, she explains, "Her first name honors my dead father, Charlie. Her first middle name is both Hebrew and Japanese, her second middle name is my Taiwanese last name, and her last name is my husband's Germanic last name" (para. 2). However, over time Lin has come to realize:

> Her first and last names, the most salient parts, look and sound as white as her features. This might seem like a benefit at a time when racism against Asian-Americans is rising again. To me it seems like a loss of the part of her that is me, of the part of her that is our history. (para. 3)

Not only is there a loss of symbolic cultural meaning with a Western name, but ultimately this name can affect the way an individual experiences their Asian identity and their ability to be fully connected to the heritage of their Asian families.

The duality of immigrant-American names is what leads Said to realize both names are part of how he identifies and part of who he is, even if they are often in conflict with one another. The ability to have both his American and Palestinian name exist to make up his identity is seen in Darwish's piece, in which he states, "And my name, though I mispronounce it over the coffin, is mine" (Hamamra & Abusamra, 2020, p. 1068). By acknowledging that he has let his name become more anglicized by mispronouncing it, he chooses to see his name as something that is wholly his and should not be defined by anyone else, despite its connections back to his heritage and family. This principle applies back to the experiences of Asian-Americans, who have found ways to stay tied to their cultural heritage and societal upbringing by keeping their ethnic names or only altering them how they see fit and not of anyone else's accord. The reclamation of their personal Asian-American identity through their name allows them to hold power over their individuality, instead of native citizens doing so, and still uphold the traditions of their family in their own unique way.

CONCLUSION

"Hanna began to reflect on her identity and the importance of her true name in the construction of her sense of self. With a clearer definition of her "personality" …the mispronunciations were therefore seen as a problem for others rather than for her."

– Pennesi

Americans continue to use their societal power to force immigrants to follow certain rules by altering ethnic names to assimilate into Western culture, which directly correlates with the power dynamic theory. This abuse of power prevents immigrants from being seen as individuals with unique names and cultural history, further extending the power dynamic between Americans and Asian immigrants that prevents immigrants from fully being accepted into American society. These changes of names are often challenging for immigrants as a result of the deep symbolic meaning behind their given names and the important role they play in interpersonal communication as per the symbolic interactionism theory. Changing one's name as an Asian immigrant results in losing the name that ties into their culture and their family's values and beliefs. The struggle of anglicizing ethnic names mirrors the difficulty immigrants have in expressing their intersectional identity. Many immigrants are often placed in a position where they must reclaim their identity but are unsure how to do so when their identity is both Asian and American.

The issue of forced name alteration is important to the protection of the individual identity of immigrants, but it is arguably an issue that can only be resolved with the cooperation of native residents. In a research survey done on minority immigrants in Canada, most people expressed that when they questioned the need to change their name, they were met with resistance. One of the survey participants, Tasneem, stated:

> I corrected [my teacher] and he's like "oh who are you to correct me?" kind of thing so … one day he just started calling me Taz… If I tell you my name is Tasneem and you say [Tasneem] right away like you haven't even tried so like why are you changing my name? (Pennesi, 2016, p. 54)

This pushback is once again a result of the existing power of native Westerners, which is continually exerted over immigrants, forcing them to come up with a solution to the difficulty native speakers have with saying their name. Pennesi, however, challenges this solution, arguing that people should not be forced to relinquish that part of their identity in order to better fit in. Instead, it is up to Westerners to put more effort into learning the names of their immigrant peers in order to help successfully integrate them into society. While it may be a more difficult route to not change one's name to fit into Western culture, Pennesi argues that it will be more beneficial in the long run as more and more people from different countries come into Western society, each with their own unique background and identity. Though some may be comfortable altering their name to fit in, it should not be expected of immigrants to have to change their name because successful integration of diverse populations requires acceptance of immigrants and their values from the native Western population.

There is still little research into the anglicizing of immigrant names, which leaves much room for this topic to be explored even further. Specifically, there are still many questions as to how children of immigrants feel about having a Western name versus a culturally derived one, given they might not have as strong of a connection to their heritage as an immigrant does. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to have more quantitative data about the struggles of name changing in order to back up the personal accounts used in my argument. The ability for Asian-American immigrants to be accepted fully for both their Asian and American identities is a challenge that America has not been able to solve. However, with a greater understanding and recognition of the importance of culturally significant symbols such as names, there is hope that the United States can be a country that truly values its growing diverse population.

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MICHAEL MENDEZ

QUEERPUNK: How Queer Punk Artists Scream Themselves Out as Sound

ABSTRACT

The art made by queer punks is often focused on a sense of aggressive unconcealedness toward the audience, but the unique interactions between their queerness and the intentions behind this tone of expression is rarely discussed. By clearly defining the concepts of intersectionality, gender performativity, and Foucault's parrhesia and applying them to a relevant case study involving a queer punk actor engaging with the theoretical frames, as well as exploring the methods through which communication within queer punk circles is articulated and circulated, this paper connects these concepts to how queer identity shapes and has been shaped by punk participation. In particular, the paper argues that a consistent experience of erasure and alienation in the queer punk community's identity has led to a broad tendency towards parrhesiastic expression in both their art and communication with others. This parrhesia is a method of reclaiming visibility for queer punks, an expression which truly enacts the founding myth of punk by authentically speaking truth to power through performance, as the unique identity of queer punks causes a marginalization across multiple intersectional axes, being outside of both mainstream queer culture and the broader punk culture.

INTRODUCTION

Punk rock, and its future variations, such as hardcore, emerged as a more aggressive, loud, and unrefined version of the rock music that was prevalent in the 1960s. This music and the counterculture that would come with it, directed its focus heavily on the authenticity of performance and a DIY attitude towards engaging with music. Punks felt that the curated and marketable appearances of mainstream music icons were a force of consumerism, and that uncompromised and unfiltered expressions were an avenue for fighting societal norms and expectations. Fans of punk hold big record labels and the mainstream music industry in incredibly low esteem, with many people who follow the genre deriding artists who sign with hegemonic producing companies as "sellouts" in an increasingly consumerist mainstream culture that markets to a mass audience. Though there is no broader political consensus among the punk movement, this stance against consumerism often lends itself to an anti-capitalist tendency within the counterculture. The punk subculture is also known for the popularization of zines as a method of combating the elitism of mainstream publishing and journalism in music. Zines are small, cheaply produced mock-up magazines made of folded up or stapled paper used as a means to write and communicate with a larger audience about whatever the author feels is important to them without the restrictions that come from a publishing company. These zines are a cheap, personal, artistic, and highly versatile method of communication that display the general anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist tendency within punk subculture and provide an open and accessible method for grassroots punk voices to circulate. They also demonstrate another key aspect to the appeal of the punk scene: the prevalence of unfiltered self-expression being integral to the work of punk artists and writers. An uncaring attitude towards the perception of mainstream society against the counterculture has become a defining feature of punk, which is emblematic of both the audiences that played a role in the creation of punk culture as well as the people who are drawn in by this form of free expression.

With the importance of resistance to the status quo and an emphasis on authentic expression, it is no surprise that the punk scene broadly appealed to youth who felt lost or dissatisfied with mainstream culture. In its opposition to the musical and cultural establishment, punk's urban genesis tightly connected to venues where outcasts could gather and were welcomed, and where hegemonic ideals were cast aside. In many cases, punk shows would take place in gay bars or clubs such as "the infamous mid-1970s English punk club The Roxy, which was simply the gay club Chaguaramas renamed" (Ensminger 50), and straight punks would often ape gay stylistic choices, such as the quintessential punk bands *Sex Pistols* and the *Ramones*. In fact, the connection between the *Ramones* and queerness in this era is further reinforced within the lyrics one of the their more popular songs "53 and 3rd," which writes of a straight teenage hustler, or male prostitute, who believes that the sex work and violence he engages in are what prove his attractiveness or masculinity (Trotman).

Despite many of the queer inclinations that punk has carried since its inception, the scene maintained a largely masculine and heteronormative bent due to many newcomers' gendered preconceptions of the often vulgar, radical and violent subject matter that punks expressed as it evolved. As David Ensminger asserts in his paper discussing the history of punk and hardcore's queer elements, "although hardcore seems to signify queer in some implicit or unconscious aspects, hardcore shows were not queer-friendly venues" (Ensminger 58). However, the punk scene was undeniably a space where many queer punks took a chance in using the general ethos of the genre to stake themselves out and perform in meaningful ways to shape the culture around them. The unique political and social experiences of these artists inform their performances in a myriad of ways. Their queerness, being both a common axis of repression by a heteronormative state and a barring factor from popular music scenes, punk and hardcore included, are both a meaningful aspect of their punk identity and a factor that informs their relationship to the punk community and its music. Key examples of the punk scene acting as a vessel through which progressive and queer politics were circulated can be seen in fanzines such as *Homocore*, as detailed in Mark Fenster's article "Queer Punk Fanzines: Identity, Community, and The Articulation of Homosexuality and Hardcore," as well as the fanzines of the punk feminist movement Riot Grrrl, whose writers include a diverse group of voices and perspectives ranging from rural and urban gays to lesbians of multiracial backgrounds. Feminist groups and movements in punk often overlap with queer punk, and although the groups are not directly analogous, they share a similar space in the political landscape of punk due to an overwhelming perception of mainstream aspects of the scene mirroring the gendered power dynamic of heteronormative and cisnormative societal structures that unites them more often than not. Cathlin Goulding's article, "The Spaces in Which We Appear to Each Other: The Pedagogy of Resistance Stories in Zines by Asian American Riot Grrrls," makes important note of the intersectional identities of the feminist punks who created zines for the Riot Grrrl movement, as the unique axes of identity which these writers lived heavily informed the political nature of their art.

The goal of this paper is to put a magnifying glass up to how queer punks challenge and fight against cis-centric and heteronormative societal expectations. More specifically, this paper will seek to provide insight and analysis into the ways in which queer identity, angst, and anger inform the expression and resistance of queer punks, as well as what functions these performances play in the punk scene and to broader society. To attempt to explain these, this paper will draw on the work of various queer theory and feminist scholars to form an analytical lens through which to view the expression of queer punks. Of these theories, emphasis will be placed upon theoretical frames from multiple disciplines, such as Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, by studying how the unique identities of queer punks oppositional to both heteronormative and queer mainstream culture while not meshing with the broader punk community affects their experiences and art. The feminist theory of gender as performance described by Judith Butler, which posits gender identity as nonexistent outside of the performance itself, is also a framework by which we can analyze the content of queer performances and how these artists choose to "do gender." This paper will also use the sociological concept of "parrhesia" as described by Foucault, as a form of truth-telling in which the speaker puts themselves at some sort of risk by speaking and committing themselves to this truth in an act of courage in order to further examine queer expression in both its purpose and the functions it serves in the broader punk community (Szpilka 126).

LENSES OF CLARITY: EXPLAINING THE THEORETICAL TOOLS BEING USED

Intersectionality as coined by Crenshaw in her 1989 article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," was a term she used to describe the ways in which black women are marginalized due to the multidimensional aspects of their race and gender, which was unaddressed by the traditional feminist and antiracist movements that often focused on single axes of oppression. This is what Crenshaw means when she states in her own words that "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (Crenshaw 140). More recently, the term has come to more broadly refer to the multidimensional angles of marginalization that can be experienced from varying forms of social categorization and the disadvantages and experiences generated from these intersecting identities, including race, gender, class, and nationality.

Rather than explaining the effects of marginalization produced by numerous types of social categorization, Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity attempts to explain the ways in which gender is socially constructed as a performance. In the simplest form of the argument, Butler is claiming that the idea of gender is an illusion that is reinforced by performances and perceptions of "feminine" and "masculine" actions, which are kept uniform by heterosexist expectations "maintained by prevalent power structures" (Mikkola). In the example of manhood, Butler argues that being gendered as a man is not an innate descriptor of an identity held by a man but instead a role filled with masculine performances. These may include simple presentational behaviors such as dressing in a suit and growing a beard, or it may involve fulfilling broader behavioral expectations and gender roles like becoming the provider for a family. By making the claim that gender is not "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is … instituted … through a *stylized repetition of* [habitual] *acts*" (Butler 179), Butler is rebuking the idea of gender essentialism, which argues that there can be normative claims of what attributes define womanhood. She argues that gender only truly exists in its performance and is not representative of an underlying essential category of being, and thus can only be understood as inventions of the self that are contextualized through societal normative views, which Butler believes should be deconstructed further in feminist critique.

With a similar context of only being possible in a situation where it can be socially witnessed, parrhesia is, as it is used in the later writings of Michel Foucault, "1) a particular mode of truth-telling that 2) puts the parrhesiastic subject at risk, in a state of danger and indeterminacy, in which 3) they commit themselves to the truth of what they are saying and to the way this truth is present in their expression, and finally 4) the parrhesiastic speech is an act of personal courage in speaking the truth and 'binding himself to the statement and enunciation of the truth'" (Szpilka 126). What is meant by this is that a parrhesiastic act is characterized by being internally consistent and understood to be an act of bravery by its potential to cause danger to the actor due to its trueness and its ability to incur risk by being spoken. Parrhesia is defined by this factor of risk in particular, rather than any effect it may produce.

LAURA JANE GRACE: "SELLING OUT" AND THE DOUBLE BINDS OF TRANS WOMEN IN PUNK

One of the foremost and contemporary examples of visible queerness in the punk scene is Laura Jane Grace, the transgender frontwoman of Against Me!, who publicly announced her transition in the *Rolling Stone* article, “The Secret Life of Transgender Rocker Tom Gabel,” in 2012. Laura Jane Grace is a prime case of how queer, particularly transgender punks, are resisting the status quo by the nature of their unfiltered performance. Since coming out, Grace has made various public displays of her gender transition a part of her performances, such as burning an old copy of her birth certificate during a May 2016 performance in Durham, North Carolina. She has also incorporated many themes of her transition and struggles with identity into her music since she went public, such as Against Me!’s 2014 album *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*, which contains multiple songs that loudly shout Grace’s own painful experiences with her gender dysphoria and the ways it colors her interactions with the world. The songs contained in *Transgender Dysphoria Blues* specifically, often a vulgar and uncensored expression of chaotic, heavy, and swirling emotions, serve as a sort of parrhesia in their bold and assured “personal unconcealedness” (Szpilka 126), in that they are a demand for Grace’s inner thoughts of her identity and anger to be heard by the audience. They are uncompromising and loud proclamations of herself, which force the audience to recognize Grace’s inner conflicts and struggles with dysphoria and self-identity without the repression she had been under; this repression being the heteronormative expectations which had torn into her. This is compounded by Grace’s unaltered singing voice, which belts out these proclamations in the same punkish, gritty, low pitch as she has had for all her performances. When asked about the lack of a change in her voice in a 2013 interview with radio host Kevin Ryder, who says that “a lot of people would be expecting you to sound more like a woman”, Grace replies, “Well, what does a woman sound like, you know? That’s all interpretive or opinion, but I mean my voice is my voice, I don’t feel ashamed of my voice in any way and especially with my singing voice” (Kelleher 54). In this response, the lack of shame is a key aspect of the parrhesiastic undercurrent of her songs and performances. Her voice is simply the voice of a woman, and this is something that she is unafraid of and uncompromising in declaring. Her harsh, deep tone is a part of the parrhesiastic gesture of these songs and adds another unfiltered element to her punk expression.

One of the major features of Grace’s struggles with her identity regarding both her punk and trans identities is her fear of “selling out.” In the punk scene, where authenticity is a key feature of expression, Grace’s expression before her transition had been one of pressured conformity to the expectations of the punk culture, as gender identity and transness remain a dangerous topic in punk due to heavily cis-heteronormative audiences retaining latent queerphobia. Grace would often play into many of the highly macho tendencies common in the scene as both a means of repression and as accepted practice as part of being a punk "frontman." At the same time, "upon [her] band's growing financial success, hardcore fans [would] turn against her, to the point of stalking her band at concerts, slashing tyres and yelling abuse from strategic positions in the front row" (Maya 1). The expectations of women in punk culture also creates a unique set of contradictory standards in which defying mainstream culture often means an equally restrictive role of rejecting femininity altogether. This can be especially tough for trans women in punk, whose gender identity are often not taken as genuine if they do not present feminine enough but are seen as posers for presenting too ordinarily feminine (Szpilka 125). When viewed through the lens of intersectionality, this double bind of expectations from the punk counterculture, Grace's experiences with repression and her transgender identity, as well as the expectations of broader society, create a complex and powerful set of experiences and angst to pull from when writing her songs. These range from politically charged statements of being left behind by your movement such as in "I Was a Teenage Anarchist" in the verses, "I was a teenage anarchist, But then the scene got too rigid, It was a mob mentality, They set their rifle sights on me, Narrow visions of autonomy, You want me to surrender my identity," with the last two lines taking on new meaning in regards to her transition in a scene which was not openly accepting of queerness in hindsight. To other verses of highly personal feelings of lifelong regret and suicidal ideation in "True Trans Soul Rebel," stated outwardly and unfiltered in the lines, "Yet to be born, you're already dead, You sleep with a gun beside you in bed, Follow it through to the obvious end, Slit your veins wide open, you bleed it out." Grace's intersecting identities play a key part in her expression in that they form an overlying theme of loneliness and a desperation to be seen by others despite the expression of anger and angst that overtly seeks confrontation throughout Against Me!'s discography. As Grace "does gender" on stage, her live performance mannerisms have largely gone unchanged from when she presented as male. Despite this lack of an adherence to conventionally feminine markers of performance, Grace's complex identity is heavily apparent in the styling, lyrics, and details of the music, and is incomplete in meaning without an intersectional understanding of said identity and the ways in which her gender overlaps with her own punk politics.

WRITING OUT IS SPEAKING OUT: UNFILTERED EXPRESSION IN QUEER PUNK ZINES

This subsection will attempt to analyze the defiance of social norms and rules that queer punks express in authoring zines, as well as the intent and functions of these challenges to the status quo. In particular, many queer punk fanzines serve as an example of how queer punks are in opposition not just to mainstream society's expectations, but also against more culturally assimilated and accepted queer groups. As the punk ethos is a highly critical one that rebels and constantly pushes norms, "becoming a queer punk forces one to problematize not only punk music practices but also the set of available, dominant practices and identities associated with dominant, adult gay and lesbian cultures-to question and challenge those periodicals and musical forms and practices that constitute the 'dominant' of gay and lesbian culture" (Fenster 77). In this respect, to many of the queer punks who would create works like *Homocore* or would write letters to be published in such zines, there is a clear image of what a more "dominant" gay and lesbian culture would be: the sanitized and assimilated images of homosexuality that upper-middle class adult gays and lesbians with access to more mainstream avenues of publicity would promote in their depictions of queerness. The attitude that queer punks would take to oppose to these images would be confrontational and uncompromising, with *Homocore* titling its sections with vulgar headings such as "What the Fuck is *Homocore*?", which maintains that the zine is not dedicated only to gay punks but any "social mutants" and "outcasts" who are not represented in the mainstream (Jennings 3). This intentionally shocking and evocative style of writing, combined with an attitude that reaches out to a broader disenfranchised group of outcasts is a strikingly punk form of outreach towards the broader queer community and likeminded outcasts, calling them to engage with a space where their expression can be unrestricted, loud, and heard. Furthermore, *Homocore* contributed to the broader queer punk culture in its sharing of the stories of folks in ways that can prod and discomfort those who might be unaware of these dissident experiences, increasing the visibility of both punks and more outcasted queer artists.

Queer punk zines, especially those who are orientated towards more feminist punk crowds such as Riot Grrrl, serve as both a means of fighting against a heteronormative status quo and increasing the visibility of queer punks in a confrontational and authentic manner. In this way, the feminist queer punk zine movement is not only a cultural force, but an ideological and political one. Zines function not only as personal expression but also as political messaging, where spreading self-expression and becoming more visible is also a statement on the resilience of queer punks in opposition to the status quo. In fact, the "shocks of awareness" that "shake us out of passivity" that these zines produce to prod and jab at what traditional norms would dictate (Goulding 167) aligns strongly with the punk tendency to evoke shock in and render the audience uncomfortable. In the case of punk music, where lyrics are often screamed instead of sung, like in Laura Jane Grace's song "Transgender Dysphoria Blues," the shocks of awareness delivered by queer artists are often experienced through an affective experience of directed anger aimed at mainstream culture, or at more assimilated gay and lesbian culture (Weidlack). Queer Riot Grrrl zines, or any other queer punk zines that carry this political tone, maintain this unfiltered and vulgar style of writing as a form of communicating the same anger that is conveyed through a scream in punk music, thus nudging the reader to feel what the writer feels and create an understanding between the two. This form of connection between the writer and reader is a way of outreach by which the writer can convey further information that can be understood more thoroughly as personal expression rather than a simple political message.

CONCLUSION

As this paper has demonstrated, the ways in which the identities of queer punks and their experiences of anger and angst inform the content of their performances by creating a tone in which the performance is a proclamation of unconcealedness to the audience. This gives many performances by queer punks, such as Laura Jane Grace of Against Me!, a parrhesiastic undertone that serves a purpose. This purpose is to draw attention to and combat the persistent experience of erasure that queer, and especially trans punks have been subjected to since the onset of the punk and hardcore genres, while also reifying the identities of the performers. This struggle to reclaim visibility and communicate truths which may be risky to the speaker is a form of punk expression that is distinctly shaped by the identities and experienced anger of queer punks. In conjunction with this, many queer punks who make visual forms of art such as zines like *Homocore* create and disseminate works that interpersonally communicate with readers, as well as form a more interconnected community with fellow authors and punks of different backgrounds. These zines have the potential to create "shocks of awareness" that inform readers of the possibilities of experiences which are not their own through an authentic and unfiltered lens, allowing the author to combat the erasure of queer punks and fight for visibility in more lasting and wide-reaching ways than if it were limited to the size of a crowd. This unique intention in the creation of punk art is a useful angle of analysis, and viewing punk performances through this lens may be useful in further analysis of the ways in which audiences understand performances such as these.

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CHRISTINE KIM

Marjorie Taylor Greene: The Power of Conspiracy Theories in Politics

ABSTRACT

The rise of conspiracy theories surrounding matters of our current system of government is a growing concern. This research seeks to explore the impact that conspiracy theories have on politics, while further examining their influence on political support. This paper analyzes Marjorie Taylor Greene and the role that her conspiracy beliefs play in maintaining and expanding her following. This analysis is done through the lens of 'conspiracy mentality,' an umbrella term used to describe ideas of in-group/out-group mentality, paranoia, parasocial relationships, and collective narcissism. In addition, it stresses the influence of social media within these ideas. This essay will conclude by highlighting the ongoing need to examine and understand conspiracy theories as long as people continue to believe in them.

INTRODUCTION

Why would anyone believe that the world is flat? Although it is difficult to understand why certain individuals may believe in such theories, it is essential to consider the psychology behind these ideologies, especially when examining why some people are more susceptible to having these thoughts than others. Conspiracy theory is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, under the fourth definition of conspiracy, as a belief that a higher power, specifically with political motivation, is responsible for unexplainable events. Exploring how conspiracy theories influence politics is important because politics govern the way we live. When politics gets mixed with conspiracy theories, the results can be dangerous. Most recently, the January 6th attack on Capitol Hill was initiated by conspiracies. The main theory was that the 2020 presidential election was rigged by the democratic party (Keppler 3). One way to examine conspiracy theories in politics is to analyze politicians who believe in them and spread them. Marjorie Taylor Greene is a far-right U.S. Representative for Georgia since 2020. She is a strong advocate for Donald Trump and is known for promoting extremist conspiracy theories such as QAnon, Pizzagate, 9/11, and more. She is also known for her extreme views, some of which include the support of political violence and the execution of top Democratic officials such as Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton (Steck 4). In addition, because she holds a place in the House of Representatives, she has the power to vote on federal laws, which affects the laws citizens must abide by. Both Democrats and Republicans understand the power that Greene holds and believe that because she spreads dangerous conspiracies, she should not bear the responsibility of leadership. However, because her fanbase is strong, they re-elect her, allowing her to maintain her position and continue to spread her conspiracies. Cases such as these highlight the importance of understanding how conspiracy theories spread and give individuals power through strong support systems. Likewise, understanding the psychology behind conspiracy theories allows for better methods to combat them and predict how they may affect the population.

A popular theory as to why some people are more susceptible to conspiracy theories than others is because it provides them with a sense of control and predictability (McCauley 638). Conspiracy mentality is correlated with paranoid thoughts (Darwin 1292), wariness of those in power (Imhoff 39), and collective narcissism (Cichocka 51). All of these instances can be explained through in-group/out-group mentality (de Zavala 1075). Parasocial relationships also come into play when looking at how these concepts are applied to politics (Cohen 503). By analyzing how these concepts interact with politics, new insights on the impact conspiracy mentality has on political figures come to light. Therefore, this paper will explore how Greene's in-group/outgroup mentality, collective narcissism, paranoia, parasocial relationships, and social media use, interact with conspiracy mentality to strengthen her political support system.

CONSPIRACY AND IN-GROUP/OUT-GROUP MENTALITY OF GREENE AND HER SUPPORTERS

An aspect of conspiracy mentality is collective narcissism, which can be described with in-group/out-group terminology. This idea is used to explain how Greene's conspiracy theories feed and enable her supporters' belief in in-group superiority. Collective narcissism is an intergroup extension of individual narcissism where an individual has "an excessive self-love or inflated, grandiose view of oneself that requires continual external validation" (de Zavala 1074). In addition, "because the need for social admiration is never fulfilled, collective narcissism should integrate high regard for the ingroup with a belief that others do not sufficiently acknowledge it" (de Zavala 1085). Since collective narcissism fosters beliefs of superiority, it is correlated with thoughts of out-group conspiratorial intentions where "collective narcissism significantly predicted only the endorsement of conspiracy theories about foreign governments" (Cichocka 51). Although it may seem contradictory, narcissists have low secure self-esteem, which is self-esteem without the narcissistic component that often involves being defensive (Cichocka 158; Horney 92; Zeigler-Hill 120). Self-esteem issues may explain why narcissism is characterized by the constant need for external validation (Raskin 890). To relate this to Greene, her actions and words seem to exhibit narcissistic tones, which would correspond to having low secure self-esteem. To compensate for this, she copes by following conspiracies that satisfy her desire for external validation of her in-group's superiority. Imhoff explains, "Blaming one's group's powerless position on the system of conspiracies (rather than oneself) is more advantageous for both personal and collective self-esteem…Conspiracy thinking may thus be an effective way to cope with a negative social identity when group boundaries are not permeable and individuals cannot just leave their in-group" (Imhoff 39). In Greene's case, her narcissistic tendencies prohibit her from seeing her in-group in a bad light, and as a consequence, she puts down other groups to create a sense of superiority for herself. This translates to using conspiracy theories to target specific groups to be the cause of an issue, such as Democrats, or people of color. For instance, Greene commented on Facebook that the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting was staged by anti-gun supporters (Hananoki, "Marjorie Greene Douglass Shooting" 1). Instead of trying to investigate probable causes behind the incident, she fabricated a lie that villainized Democratic ideas on gun control. By doing so, the issue of increased school shootings on an anti-gun organization allows Greene to protect Republicans' image and the probability that the push for looser gun laws potentially played a part in it. In addition, Greene herself is not the only party to fall into this category, her followers may also have low secure self-esteem through collective narcissism. They become dependent on the external validation that Greene provides them through conspiracy theories. When Greene's conspiracies explain that what they are arguing and fighting for is correct, the validation her followers desire is met, expanding their support for her. This baseless validation becomes especially dangerous when Greene's conspiracy theories involve in-group superiority and her supporters start ignoring, enabling, or justifying immoral actions such as racism, religious discrimination, and more. Conspiracy mentality, in the form of collective narcissism, disables one's ability to practice compassion and have an open mind.

Alongside collective narcissism, in-group and out-group mindsets can be used to explain why individuals with conspiracy mentality have elevated paranoia. Intergroup threat can be defined as "one group's actions, beliefs, or characteristics that challenge the goal attainment or well-being of another group" (Riek 336). In other words, when two opposing groups have a conflict with each other. This conflict occurs because when the goals of different groups are contradictory, in-group and out-group distinction increases, which heightens in-group solidarity and hostility (Sherif 178). To be more specific, "intergroup threats have a significant impact on out-group attitudes. Realistic threat, symbolic threat, intergroup anxiety, negative stereotypes, and group esteem threat all [display] significant relationships with outgroup attitudes" (Riek 349). The conclusion drawn by Riek shows that paranoia is interlaced with a conspiracy mentality. Paranoia is defined as delusions where one believes that people are watching or persecuting them (Freeman 428). Individuals who experience intergroup threats are more likely to experience paranoia and, in turn, believe conspiracy theories that implicate out-groups. Narcissists are also susceptible to paranoia, as they believe that others' actions are intentionally targeting them (Fenigstein 123). Greene's tendency to believe in and spread conspiracy theories lies within her narcissistic characteristics, specifically her desire to be at the center of attention. Although it is not known whether she believes that others intentionally target her, it is clear that she believes in conspiracies that the Democrats are targeting her in-group in ways that are known to be untrue. The feeling of being intentionally targeted fuels her belief in conspiracy theories which seem to provide an explanation and reinforcement to her hunches. Like Greene, her supporters are likely experiencing the same phenomenon. Their narcissism may sway them to believe that leaders outside of their group are targeting them or their in-group. As a result, this paranoia is intensified and increases their susceptibility to conspiracy theories. These supporters look to Greene's conspiracy theories to give them validation as to what they are feeling. Her followers will perceive her to be truthful because she is offering her supporters an explanation, therefore strengthening their admiration for her. In the end, Greene's supporters have heightened paranoia, which creates a loop where they only believe lies in explanations that validate in-group ideas.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSPIRACY MENTALITY

Skepticism of people with power is an aspect of conspiracy mentality, like paranoia, that can be used to explain how Greene's supporters view her as a friend. People who believe in conspiracy theories are known to be more suspicious of people with power. Imhoff explains that "Skepticism about those in power may not only motivate negatively biased views of powerful people and groups … but may also lead to specific attributions blaming negative incidents on such groups and trigger behavior aimed at challenging the status quo and its prevailing power relations" (Imhoff 39). This may happen because being inherently skeptical of powerful individuals causes people to view those individuals as distrustful. As a result, they feel the need to challenge the opposition to establish a system that they believe is just. One may wonder why Greene has so many supporters with a conspiracy mentality, despite being a person of power. A possibility for this is that her fans do not simply view her as a person of power. Instead, they likely view her as a friend. Cohen provides a plausible explanation for this contradiction. He explains that more people are relying on politicians' personalities compared to previously when they mostly relied on political stances (Cohen 503). One of his survey questions asked the participants to rate to what extent this statement applies to them, "When Donald Trump expresses how he feels about the news, it helps me make up my own mind about the media." (Cohen 250). This survey concluded that parasocial relationships are becoming increasingly important when determining support for politicians. Comparing this to Greene, it works to explain why someone who has developed a strong parasocial relationship with her may readily believe in the theories she supports. Since her fans already established her as trustworthy, they would not expect her to lie to them. For example, she had reshared her fan's anti-refugee, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic video stating that there is an Islamic invasion in the U.S. government (Hananoki, "Marjorie Greene Anti-Muslim Video" 1). In the video Greene is seen validating her supporter's views on anti-Islamic ideas. As a result, they are conditioned to believe that interactions with Greene provide validation and increased self-esteem. In addition, the validation she gives her followers strengthens the idea of in-group superiority, which they are constantly seeking. Greene develops her parasocial relationship with her supporters by interacting with them online, and the fans she interacts with closely get a sense of emotional connection, which deepens their support. Videos such as these build a community of like-minded individuals to which Greene is the leader and representative of their ideals.

Social media also plays a role in how its users view and digest information, twisting their perception of facts, and ultimately affecting the way Greene's supporters view her and the conspiracy theories she endorses. The perception of facts is due to news feed algorithms within social media platforms such as Facebook. Facebook explains that they determine what posts will show up on someone's timeline, through data collected by their algorithm on that specific media. For example, Facebook explains, in its article "How Facebook distributes content," that the algorithm considers "1. Likelihood to click. 2. Likelihood to spend time with this post. 3. Likelihood to like, comment, and share. 4. Likelihood that you'll find this informative. 5. Likelihood that this is clickbait. 6. Likelihood that this links to a low-quality webpage" (Meta Business Help Center 3). The first four points bring particular attention to how the algorithm targets users' preferences, based on the data they collect from the user. Points 5 and 6 give insight into how Facebook attempts to mitigate the spread of false information. Overall, it is clear that users see different media due to the control of social media algorithms. Digital algorithms play a role in confirmation bias since people actively seek out information that satisfies their predetermined thoughts. For example, someone who already believes in a conspiracy theory will seek out information that reaffirms the verity of the theory. Social media amplifies this search since users are more likely to interact with posts that they find agreeable.

However, there have been arguments over the role social media can play in manipulating the opinions of users. For instance, there is no doubt that social media is a revolutionary tool that can be used in sharing information and education, "However, with the aid of such a powerful tool, people may seek out specific information or ignore information in order to prevent other people from seeing the whole picture" (Alsaad 43). Social media can be used to show off different perspectives and claims as it can be a powerful tool to share new ideas and educate its users. The argument points to the fact that while social media has the potential to be a powerful tool, the problem lies within the users themselves, and unless changes are made to the algorithm, social media will continue to show the users what they want to see. Social media can be used to counteract confirmation bias which would mean manipulating human nature. Turning back to points 5 and 6 of the Facebook article, the difficulty in managing false information is clear since Facebook is trying to prevent misinformation, and yet, conspiracy theories are still present within the platform today.

EXPLORING GREENE & THE IMPLICATIONS OF HER ACTIONS

Although there are many mysteries surrounding the true nature of Greene and whether she truly believes the conspiracy theories she endorses, there are clues that point to her being two-faced. Much like a celebrity, politicians do not reveal all sides of themselves to the media. They must act in ways that fit their brand image to establish and strengthen the connection they have with their supporters. Representative Jeff Jackson explains in his *Tiktok* video that "most of the really angry voices on Congress are totally faking it… The same people who act like maniacs during the open meetings are suddenly calm and rational during the closed ones. Why? Because there aren't any cameras in the closed meetings, so their incentives are different" (@jeffjacksonnc, 2023). Although Jackson is part of the Democratic party and could have used this against his opposing team, he mentions that this applies to both the Democratic and Republican parties. While no specific name is given, many speculate that he was talking about Greene, as he is now known for being anti-Marjorie. Jacksons' video implies that Greene may be putting on an act to gain support from the public and bring attention to her political agenda. Looking back to when mask mandates were established, Greene compared House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's decision to maintain the mask mandate for all House members, to Nazi's control over the Jewish population. She said, "'You know, we can look back at a time in history where people were told to wear a gold star, and they were definitely treated like second-class citizens, so much so that they were put in trains and taken to gas chambers in Nazi Germany,' Greene said. 'And this is exactly the type of abuse that Nancy Pelosi is talking about'" (Nobles 2). Her comparison would have one assume that Greene would resist a mask mandate whenever possible, even inside the capitol building. However, she had been seen on an airplane with a mask on, sitting calmly without resistance (@TommyMacDC). In comparison, she had been fined $48,000 for not wearing a mask on the House Floor (Grayer 1). In both cases, mandates were being applied, yet she only showed resistance in the House. This shows that she purposely creates a persona for the public, in order to rile up her followers, rather than applying her proclaimed principles in other parts of her life. Whether Greene genuinely believes in conspiracy theories will never be known. However, little peeks into her daily life point to the fact that she purposely acts in extreme ways to gain support and band her supporters against the Democratic party. The main reason why Greene can act in extreme ways is because of the community of followers that she has established. For instance, she is never seen creating her own conspiracy theory, rather repeating what she sees online as a direct example of social media's tailored media experience. Her comparison of the mask mandate and the holocaust is an example as she did not come up with the idea herself. This idea was already harboring a large community that had previously established her to be a figurehead (Wartman 1). Greene knows that there is a "market" for her behavior and a set target audience. Therefore, these clues point to Greene purposely overexaggerating the sentiments of polarized communities to gain those members as her supporters, whether she holds the same sentiments or not.

Considering Greene's actions thus far, she is not fit to lead as a representative, and her actions are a threat to democracy. Her use of conspiracy contributes to polarization and "When polarization merges with deranged conspiracy theories, then democratic breakdown becomes far more likely. One purpose of democratic government is to allow citizens to solve problems through compromise without resorting to violence" (Klass 2). With the rise of conspiracy theories due to social media, political polarization is also on the rise. Klass explains that an important factor of democratic government is compromise. Bessi provides another reason why polarization is a threat to democracy stating that "The emergence of polarization in online environments might reduce viewpoint heterogeneity, which has long been viewed as an important component to democratic societies" (Bessi 1). For these reasons, conspiracy theories pose a threat to the increase in polarization and therefore put democracy in danger. Greene is seen directly encouraging political polarization on Twitter by saying, "We need a national divorce. We need to separate by red and blue states and shrink the federal government" (@mtgreenee). Greene disservices democracy by feeding the public information that is not backed by research, therefore leading to homogenous thinking. By spreading conspiracy theories, she causes a decline in trust in the government and its leaders, harming the sense of legitimacy and ability to govern effectively. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on educating the public on critical thinking and media literacy to combat misinformation and conspiracy theories.

CONCLUSION

Conspiracy theories are a complex phenomenon that can be explained with a variety of psychological factors such as in-group/out-group mentality, paranoia, and collective narcissism. Marjorie Taylor Greene provides a valuable case to study on what role conspiracy theories play in today's government and what it means for the future. By analyzing Greene, it becomes clear that she relies on conspiracy theories to establish parasocial relationships with her supporters and gain a stronger support system with the help of social media. Evidence also points to her exaggerating those theories to develop her parasocial relationships. Unbeknownst to her, the danger of conspiracy theories lies in their potential to start dangerous events, such as the January 6th attack on Capitol Hill, and the extreme polarization of homogenous groups. Therefore, it is important to hold leaders accountable for their actions and words. It is important that in understanding the psychological factors behind conspiracy theories we can also learn to predict their impact on the population and aid in developing methods to effectively combat them. Ultimately, as long as people continue to believe in conspiracy theories, the need to examine and understand them will remain crucial.

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CASSIDY KUIKEN

Whispers of Metal and Flesh: The Impact of AI Sex Bots on Toxic Masculinity, Objectification, and Human Intimacy

ABSTRACT

The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced a new dimension to human interaction through the emergence of life-like sex robots. These AI-driven companions, meticulously crafted to simulate various aspects of human intimacy, have become an integral part of contemporary technological innovation. Offering an array of customizable features and functionalities, these creations prompt essential discussions surrounding their societal implications, ethical considerations, and potential impact on human relationships. As these AI sex robots proliferate in the technological landscape, concerns have surfaced regarding the normalization of unrealistic body standards. The customizable nature of these companions, ranging from physical attributes to programmed behaviors, raises questions about the societal values they may inadvertently reinforce. Additionally, the increasing prevalence of human-robot interactions invites critical reflections on the broader implications for the fabric of human relationships. This paper seeks to explore the multifaceted dimensions of AI sex robots, by delving into the intricacies of their development, the myriad customization options available, and the overarching impact on societal values and human connections. The study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the evolving technological landscape. The interplay between technology and intimacy is complex, and this research strives to navigate this complexity, offering insights into the ways AI-driven companions shape and, perhaps, challenge contemporary human experiences. In examining these aspects, the study aims to foster a comprehensive understanding of the role played by AI sex robots in the ongoing narrative of technological advancements and their impact on the fabric of human society.

INTRODUCTION

Amber will "answer any question!!!" She has porcelain skin, deep chestnut hair, and icy blue eyes. She is 5’6”, 108 pounds, has a 23-inch waist, and F-cup breasts. She also has a removable vagina for convenience. In case Amber’s price is too high, there is a less expensive alternative - a torso-only option, available for half the cost.

Amber is just one of many AI sex robots available for purchase on the website, *Robot Companion*. If you visit the site, you will notice that all their products have been made to resemble females. Each sex bot listed advertises its individual characteristics including the robot’s height, breast, waist, and hip size, as well as its vagina, anus, and oral depth.

AI sex bots are robots designed to simulate human sexual behavior and engage in intimate encounters with users. They are yet another form of artificial intelligence that has become available to the public in recent years. Although not widespread yet, their use and growth in popularity raise serious concern about their potential to exacerbate patriarchal violence and negatively influence human intimacy. The issues surrounding these alarming robots lie in how consumers may employ these robots, and the detrimental impact they could have on society through worsening toxic masculinity, objectification of women, sexual assault, and human intimacy.

This research paper argues that the emergence of AI sex bots will further enable toxic masculinity and the continued objectification of women, as well as contribute to the reinforcement of rape culture. To support my stance I will draw upon feminist theory, which illustrates how the development and use of AI sex bots reinforces harmful gender norms and perpetuates patriarchal power structures. Additionally, I assert the potential of AI sex bots to fundamentally alter the nature of human intimacy, possibly forever. To prove this, I will use technological determinism, a theory coined by scholars like Thorstein Veblen, asserting that technological advancements autonomously drive societal changes. This perspective posits that innovations, rather than human intentions, play a pivotal role in shaping the course of social development. Although many think that AI sex bots are the results of a more sexually free/liberated society, they are more regressive than progressive.

Coined as a term to describe the pervasive cultural construct, toxic masculinity normalizes traits such as aggression, dominance, and the repression of emotions in men. This construct, rooted in traditional gender norms, places undue pressure on men to conform to rigid expectations, limiting their emotional expression and perpetuating harmful behaviors. Central to toxic masculinity is the notion of male entitlement, wherein societal expectations grant men a sense of superiority and entitlement over women, contributing to imbalances of power and reinforcing gender inequality.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS: THE DANGEROUS INTERSECTION OF AI SEX BOTS & TOXIC MASCULINITY

The development and use of AI sex bots represent a significant threat to gender equality, as they have the potential to reinforce and perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and further entrench toxic masculinity. Coined as a term to describe the pervasive cultural construct, "toxic masculinity" normalizes traits such as aggression, dominance, and the repression of emotions in men. This construct, rooted in traditional gender norms, places undue pressure on men to conform to rigid expectations, limiting their emotional expression and perpetuating harmful behaviors. The cycle of toxic masculinity is self-perpetuating: societal reinforcement of these expectations leads men to internalize and replicate these behaviors, while any deviation is often met with social sanctions, fostering a continuous loop of adherence to harmful norms. Central to toxic masculinity is the notion of male entitlement, wherein societal expectations grant men a sense of superiority and entitlement over women, perpetuating imbalances of power and reinforcing gender inequality. This cyclical nature solidifies the influence of toxic masculinity within societal norms, making it a self-sustaining and pervasive force. Because AI sex bots are inanimate objects, they more easily allow for the unbridled expression of violent and degrading sexual fantasies, which perpetuate and intensify these norms. Considering the broader societal implications, scholars Piercosma Bisconti Lucidi and Susanna Piermattei delve into the specific link between virtual and real-life social dynamics. Their research underscores the critical connection, arguing that:

> Most of these unacceptable (or hardly sharable) phantasies in human-human sexual interactions are those violent and degrading. If we allow users - mainly male since SRs are mainly gynoid - to freely express these phantasies on SRs, this could severely modify users' sexual expectations and behavior acceptability, normalizing aggressive and degrading approaches to sexuality. In fact, since actions performed on SRs are phantasmatically transferred on a human subject, so it will be the presumption of an unlimited availability to any sexual behavior. (Lucidi,Piermattei 8)

When men are given the opportunity to express their darkest, most violent fantasies without consequence, it can normalize violent behaviors and attitudes toward real people. This standardization of violent sexual behavior is a consequence of the harmful gender stereotypes that make up the “culture” of toxic masculinity. Research has shown that the use of pornography, which can also involve the unbridled expression of violent and degrading sexual fantasies, is associated with more hostile attitudes towards women and higher levels of sexist beliefs (Rostad,et al., 2019). As AI sex bots serve a similar function to pornography (virtual, freely available sexual gratification), one can predict that their use might have similar outcomes. The exaggerated portrayal of female bodies among AI sex bots also reinforces toxic beauty standards, another facet of patriarchal culture. As illustrated in Figure 1, the sex robot presents an idealized and unattainable body image, possibly contributing to the reinforcement of unrealistic standards for women, characterized by disproportionately large breasts and a significantly narrowed waistline. These standards create unrealistic expectations from men, and pressure on real women to appeal to their fantasies. Addressing these concerns, Dr. Tanja Kubes, an esteemed scholar specializing in gender in stem studies, offers insightful perspectives on the problematic nature of the current representations of female bodies in sex robotics. Dr. Kubes notes, “Critics are absolutely right when they attack the way the female body is stereotypically exaggerated in the dolls and machines that currently dominate the field of sex robotics. Here, some sort of counterbalancing action is indeed required,” (Kubes). This normalization of violent, degrading, and objectifying behavior could contribute to feelings of shame and guilt in men who do not conform to these norms, ultimately perpetuating the cycle of toxic masculinity. As such, it is essential to critically examine the impact of AI sex bots on gender and sexuality and the potential harm they may cause to individuals and society as a whole.

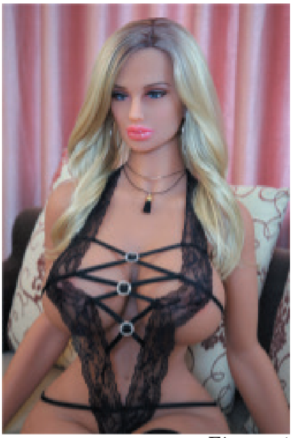

Figure 1

The development and use of AI sex bots, a technology primarily designed by men for men, perpetuates harmful ideas about male dominance and entitlement. Men’s relationship with technology is often driven by a desire for power and control, which can be especially concerning when it comes to the design and development of AI sex bots. The role of men as the primary developers of AI sex bots reproduces toxic masculinity. To illuminate this issue, Professor Judy Wajcman, an influential scholar in the field of technology and gender studies, delves into the cultural construction of the enduring force that associates technology with manliness. As she aptly notes, "The enduring force of the identification between technology and manliness, therefore, is not inherent in biological sex difference. It is rather the result of the historical and cultural construction of gender" (Wajcman). For example, if AI sex bots are designed to cater to male fantasies of dominance and objectification of women, this can perpetuate harmful ideas about male entitlement and reinforce traditional gender roles. AI sex bots being designed to cater to male fantasies can worsen toxic masculinity by reinforcing the belief that men are entitled to exert power and control over women, both in the virtual world of AI sex bots and in real-life interactions. Furthermore, the fact that AI sex bots are primarily developed by men for men can exacerbate the problem of male entitlement. The creation of AI sex bots by men, catering predominantly to male sexual desires can result in a lack of diversity in perspectives and values that shape the design and development of AI sex bots, leading to the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes and unequal power dynamics. The idea of unequal power dynamics is further supported by Judy Wajcman's argument that men's identification with technology often excludes women, as they are typically depicted as passive figures in the background, providing the necessary support for men's technological pursuits. The notion of imbalanced power dynamics is reinforced by Judy Wajcman's assertion that men's association with technology often sidelines women, casting them as passive figures in the background, providing essential support for men's technological endeavors. According to Wajcman, men form connections with each other through their identification with technology, and in these narratives, women are seldom present, except as wives at home, setting the stage against which men freely pursue their significant projects." (Wajcman, technology as masculine culture). The exclusion of women in technology can be problematic when it comes to the development of AI sex bots, as it leads to a lack of diversity in perspectives and values that shape the technology. If AI sex bots are primarily designed by men for men, there is a risk that they will perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and reinforce unequal power dynamics, as we have previously discussed. Moreover, the fact that women are rarely depicted as active participants in technological innovations means that their perspectives are often overlooked in the development of technology. Women's perspectives being overlooked in the design and development of technology can lead to technology that is not inclusive or accessible to women, further reinforcing gender inequalities and perpetuating the marginalization of women in the tech industry. The objectification of women in AI sex bot fantasies is a concerning example of how technology can reinforce harmful ideas about male dominance and entitlement. These harmful effects are further compounded by the specific features and functions of AI sex bots, which often cater to male fantasies and reinforce the idea that women exist solely for male pleasure. Wajcman sheds light on the societal construct of gender roles and how they have led to men being privileged to pursue their interests without any accountability towards their domestic responsibilities. "Boys learn from their fathers that it is their right to concentrate totally on the computer if they choose, oblivious of the surrounding domestic environment. Males are more easily allowed to follow up interests which do not have to be justified as benefiting anyone else" (Wajcman). That embodiment of male entitlement not only perpetuates harmful gender biases, but also reinforces the idea that women's bodies and sexuality exist for the sole purpose of male pleasure, and can be used and commodified at will. In the following section, we will delve deeper into this issue by examining the ways in which AI sex bots can perpetuate the objectification and dehumanization of women and the potential implications for gender relations and societal norms.

FROM OBJECT TO OBJECTIFIED: THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN AI SEX BOT FANTASIES

AI sex bots have become a new frontier in the objectification of women, perpetuating harmful gender biases and reducing women to mere objects of sexual desire. The commodification and sexualization of artificial bodies perpetuates harmful gender biases and further undermines the empathy and compassion that are traditionally associated with femininity, raising fundamental questions about the ethics of intimacy and the limits of human desire. The development of AI sex bots may reinforce the idea that women are primarily valued for their physical appearance and sexual desirability, rather than their capacity for care, empathy, and relationship-building. In this context, Judy Wajcman explores the intersection of technology and feminist perspectives. Referencing the influence of Carol Gilligan's distinctive view on women's cognitive and moral development, Wajcman writes, "Some writers are influenced by Carol Gilligan's (1982) view that women's cognitive and moral development is distinctly different from that of men. According to Gilligan, women's concrete and contextual style of thinking and moral reasoning involves an orientation toward nurturance and care, through relationship and connection" (Wajcman). The harmful gender biases perpetuated by the development and use of AI sex bots are not only detrimental to women's social status but also to their cognitive and moral development. Carol Gilligan's view that women's moral reasoning is grounded in their capacity for care, empathy, and relationship-building is at odds with the reductionist view of women perpetuated by the AI sex bot industry. The commodification of female bodies in AI sex bot fantasies reinforces the notion that women's worth is solely derived from their physical appearance and sexual desirability, while ignoring the importance of their emotional and relational capabilities. The promotion of AI sex bots as a means of fulfilling male sexual desires further emphasizes the societal belief that women exist solely for male pleasure, while ignoring the importance of women's autonomy and agency. The discriminatory nature of AI sex bots towards women as potential consumers is reflected not only in the market saturation of female versions of these robots but also in the disproportionate diversity of options and numbers available, as noted by Dr. Ania Malinowska, a leading expert in the field of love studies, sheds light on the troubling trends within the sex bot industry. "A clear discrimination of women as potential consumers of sexbot services is reflected in pilot/prognostic research as well as in the sex robot market which is not only saturated with female versions of intimacy robots but also disproportionately more diverse in terms of options and numbers than their male counterparts" (Malinowska 4). There is a disproportionate representation of female AI sex bots in the market compared to male bots, with the former being more diverse in terms of options and numbers. The overrepresentation of female AI sex bots in the market compared to male bots, reinforces the notion that women are only valued for their physical appearance and sexual desirability. The website *Robot Companion* further exemplifies the unequal portrayal of gender in the AI sex bot market, as it only offers one male doll with limited features and animations compared to its female counterparts. The female AI sex bots have the availability to customize traits like hair all the way to different vagina options. Consult Figure 2 for an overview of the diverse customization options available

Figure 2

for these AI sex bots. *Robot Companion* only offering one male sex bot points out the unique objectification of women in AI sex bot fantasies. Overall, the development of AI sex bots represents a significant challenge to feminist thought and activism, as it reinforces the idea that women exist solely for male pleasure.

The development and increasing prevalence of AI sex bots raise profound concerns regarding the blurring of lines between humans and machines, particularly when considering the implications of endowing these objects, created primarily for male sexual pleasure, with rights and agency. As an expert in the field of ethics, Kathleen Richardson sheds light on the potential dehumanization inherent in the evolving relationship between humans and machines: "Extending rights to machines has the potential to reduce the idea of what it means to be human, and to begin to redefine the human as an object, as Aristotle thought of his slaves"(Richardson). This unsettling trend becomes even more pronounced when we examine AI sex bots designed exclusively to cater to male fantasies. Granting rights and agency to objects crafted for male sexual gratification risks further entrenching the objectification of women. This not only raises ethical concerns about the implications of treating machines as entities with rights but also highlights the troubling potential for AI sex bots to reinforce and exacerbate deeply ingrained societal issues surrounding the commodification and objectification of women.

SHE'S ASKING FOR IT: AI SEX BOTS AND THE FUELING OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The way consumers of AI sex bots may utilize these devices has the potential to worsen the issue of sexual assault and violence. The detachment and dehumanization inherent in interacting with AI sex robots may lead individuals to view sexual encounters as purely physical and devoid of the need for communication, intimacy, and mutual respect. This normalization of non-consensual behaviors may result in individuals crossing the line between consensual and non-consensual acts, ultimately leading to an increase in sexual assault and violence. In examining the potential psychological impact, Piercosma Bisconti Lucidi, a scholar in political philosophy, underscores the concept of the pleasure principle, emphasizing its potential exacerbation through the use of AI sex robots and its contribution to issues of sexual assault and violence. Lucidi explains,

One of the fundamental concepts of the psychodynamic approach is the conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality one. The first, which characterizes particularly early childhood, implicates that the subject requires unlimited satisfaction of his needs and desires, regardless of the limitations that the outside world inevitably poses. The second, that evolve during the development, allows the subject to tolerate frustration, thus satisfying his own wishes to the extent that it is possible, given the limitations of external world. (Lucidi, 6)

The pleasure principle may encourage individuals to seek unlimited satisfaction of their desires without regard for external limitations, including the need for communication, intimacy, and respect in sexual encounters. By interacting with AI sex robots, individuals may employ the pleasure principle, reinforcing the idea that sexual encounters are purely physical and devoid of emotional connections or mutual respect. This detachment and dehumanization could lead to a normalization of non-consensual behaviors and contribute to a lack of empathy towards potential victims, ultimately exacerbating the issue of sexual assault and violence. The reinforcement of the pleasure principle through the use of AI sex robots may have concerning implications on attitudes toward sexual behavior, as previously discussed. Having that pleasure principle mindset may also intersect with societal views on gender and aggression, as observed in feminist literature. "So strong in fact that much feminist writing assumes that war, in the same way as rape, is the result of men's inherently aggressive behavior" (Wajcman). Wajcman highlights the feminist view that male aggression is a significant contributing factor to sexual assault and violence. The view of male aggression playing a large role in sexual assault and violence is further supported by The Campaign Against Sex Robots, which argues that the use of AI sex robots may contribute to the normalization of non-consensual sexual behavior. Normalizing non-consensual sexual behavior reinforces the pleasure principle discussed earlier, which prioritizes individual desires and impulses over the well-being and consent of others. In a similar vein, the pressure on men to gain power and status through their accomplishments can manifest in various ways, including the use of sex robots. Wajcman highlights the societal pressure placed on men to gain power and achieve success in order to prove their masculinity. As Wajcman notes, "Men are obsessed with gaining power and glory and he approvingly quotes Simone de Beauvior's view that male accomplishment in the field of science and technology serve to bestow a virile status on the respective male achievers and thereby underwrite a claim to masculinity" (Wajcman). Males having that pressure can lead to an obsession with gaining dominance and control, which can manifest in various ways, including the use of AI sex bots. By using these sex robots, men may feel a sense of power and control over the objectified body of the robot, which could potentially reinforce harmful attitudes toward women and contribute to the normalization of non-consensual behavior. Men using AI sex bots as a means of gaining power and control is supported by the case study of The Campaign Against Sex Robots, which argues that the use of sex robots can contribute to the normalization of non-consensual sexual behavior. Therefore, the use of AI sex bots may exacerbate the problem of sexual assault and rape by reinforcing harmful societal attitudes toward women and promoting non-consensual behavior as a means of gaining power and control. Given these potential implications, it is crucial to examine how AI sex bots are marketed and sold to consumers, as the way in which sex bots are advertised may also play a role in perpetuating harmful attitudes towards sex and consent.

The marketing of AI sex bots has the potential to aggravate the problem of sexual assault and rape. By promoting the idea of unlimited sexual gratification without the need for consent, these marketing strategies may normalize non-consensual behaviors and reinforce harmful societal attitudes towards sexual relationships. In the realm of societal critique, Danaher emerges as a perceptive voice, shedding light on the perilous normalization of sexual violence in our culture. With expertise honed in dissecting societal norms, he delves into the alarming reality that despite the unequivocal immorality of rape, it has become deeply entrenched in our societal fabric. "Rape is clearly immoral, but due to a range of historical practices and beliefs, it has been normalised in our culture. Consequently, we live in what is called a "rape culture", one which tolerates, condones and perhaps even encourages acts of rape and sexual assault" (Danaher). The marketing strategies used by companies such as *Robot Companion*, which describe their robot as a "secretary without temper," perpetuates the harmful stereotype of women as subservient and compliant. Marketing these robots as compliant, submissive, and lacking in autonomy reinforces the idea that women should be submissive and obedient to men's desires. That style of marketing can lead to men feeling entitled to control and dominate women, even if it is against their will. When these ideas are reinforced through the marketing and consumption of AI sex bots, it can further contribute to a normalization of non-consensual behaviors and reinforce harmful societal attitudes towards women. Marketing prepubescent sex robots is particularly dangerous as it can normalize and encourage pedophilic desires and actions. Danaher speaks on the issue, "The second holds that acts of robotic rape and child sexual abuse (even if they have no extrinsically harmful effects on others) would fall within the class of wrongful conduct that it is a proper object of the criminal law to prohibit (the *wrongness* premise)" (Danaher). When individuals engage in sexual acts with these prepubescent AI sex bots, they may become desensitized to the idea of sexual relationships with children, leading to an increased risk of engaging in sexual activities with real children. Furthermore, the production and sale of these AI sex bots may create a demand for real-life child sex dolls, which can lead to the exploitation and abuse of real children. In this way, the marketing of prepubescent sex robots can contribute to a culture that tolerates and even encourages child sexual abuse, further perpetuating harmful societal attitudes towards sexual violence. Refer to Figure 3 for an illustrative depiction of a commercially available sex robot designed to resemble a prepubescent individual, highlighting the concerning nature of such products in the market. The problematic nature of the marketing of prepubescent AI sex bots becomes even more apparent when examining the pre-programmed personalities and behaviors of these products. As pointed out by Danaher, "One of *Roxxxy's* pre-programmed personalities is called, by her makers, "Frigid Farah". We are told that if "you touched her in a private area, more than likely, she will not be to[o] appreciative of your advance." Admittedly, this is a pretty incomplete description of how she interacts with her users, but it does suggest a signal of non-consent" (Danaher). By designing AI sex bots to respond to sexual advances in

Figure 3

particular ways, companies may inadvertently reinforce harmful societal attitudes towards consent and sexual violence, perpetuating the belief that non-consensual sexual behaviors are acceptable. Moreover, the design of these AI sex bots could have unintended consequences, such as desensitizing individuals to the notion of consent, which could increase the risk of engaging in non-consensual sexual acts with real human beings. The existence of such pre-programmed personalities in AI sex bots may also suggest to some individuals that non-consensual behaviors are a part of sexual exploration, thereby perpetuating harmful attitudes towards sexual violence. As such, Danaher underscores the importance of considering the implications of the marketing of AI sex bots, particularly in relation to their pre-programmed personalities, and the potential consequences for sexual violence and rape culture.

ELECTRIC DREAMS AND MECHANICAL HEARTS: THE ROLE OF AI SEX BOTS IN CHANGING THE NATURE OF HUMAN INTIMACY

The evolving landscape of human intimacy is being devalued and reshaped by AI sex bots, ushering in individualistic and transactional dynamics in sexual relationships. These changes are not mere coincidences but are deeply influenced by the inherent characteristics and functionalities of these technologies, aligning with the core tenets of technological determinism. To better understand this transformation, we turn to interpretivism and the perspective of radical humanists. Interpretivism, a school of thought that sees society's relationship with technology as subjective, provides a valuable lens through which to analyze the impact of AI sex bots on human intimacy. Similar to radical humanists, interpretivists acknowledge the subjective nature of this relationship but with a distinctive focus on understanding social ordering rather than radical change. Subjectivity in technology implies that its effects and meanings are shaped by individuals' interpretations and interactions rather than having fixed, universal meanings. Consider, for instance, social media platforms where users assign personal meanings to likes, comments, and shares. The impact and significance of these interactions vary from person to person, highlighting the subjective nature of technology. In the context of AI sex bots, subjectivity suggests that their influence on human intimacy is not uniform; rather, it is shaped by individual interpretations, cultural nuances, and societal values. It is within this context that

Pargas' insights become relevant. As Pargas notes, "The interpretivists: Similar to radical humanists, interpretivists see society's relationship with technology as subjective. However, the focus of their discourse is not so much radical change but the understanding of social ordering"(Paragas). Through the interpretivist lens and the parallel understanding of radical humanists, we gain a nuanced perspective on how society's subjective relationship with technology, particularly AI sex bots, contributes to the evolving landscape of human intimacy. The risk lies in the possibility that the subjective nature of AI sex bots could lead to the normalization of individualistic and transactional forms of sexual relationships, thereby eroding the foundations of social and emotional intimacy, and further fragmenting human society. Furthermore, the emphasis on understanding social ordering raises questions about the potential for AI sex bots to disrupt existing social norms and values surrounding human intimacy, and the impact that could have on the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. As sex robot manufacturers develop more advanced models with expanded capabilities, the interpretivist perspective on the subjective nature of society's relationship with technology highlights the ethical, psychological, and social implications of human-robot interaction. "Manufacturers intend to equip the more advanced sex robots with expanded options of movement and ability to converse appropriately with their owners. In the likely event that robots designed to satisfy human sexuality and emotion are commercialized, ethical, psychological, and social issues regarding human-robot interaction will emerge" (Morten). The commercialization of sex robots with expanded options of movement and the ability to converse appropriately with their owners may lead to ethical, psychological, and social issues. At the core of these issues lies the question of whether robots can or should be considered capable of providing genuine intimacy. The kind of intimacy being advertised in the context of sex bots is often sexual in nature, which raises concerns about the devaluation of traditional human intimacy. Moreover, the normalization of sex robots may contribute to the creation of a society where individuals prioritize their own pleasure and satisfaction over genuine human connections. Ultimately, the development and commercialization of sex robots must be critically examined through a lens that considers not only technological advancements, but also the ethical, social, and psychological implications of such advancements on human intimacy and relationships. "On the other hand, as mentioned above, these new developments have given way to ethical concerns. Among other aspects, the possible process of objectification (especially with respect to prostitutes) needs to be kept in mind, as well as the illusion of love (caused by the illusion of interaction with a person), which can lead to various ramifications [8,9]" (Szczuka, Krämer). The development of sex robots raises ethical concerns beyond the mere objectification of women or the reinforcement of harmful gender stereotypes. It challenges the very nature of human intimacy and relationships, and the potential for individuals to become emotionally attached to machines blurs the line between reality and fantasy.

The development and use of sex robots, tailored to meet societal expectations of physical appearances associated with traditional gender norms, risks reinforcing harmful stereotypes and undermining authentic human intimacy by promoting a superficial and narrowly defined form of interaction. The potential devaluation of human intimacy may also affect how individuals perceive and interact with sex robots, as suggested by research into human visual fixation and perception of these machines. "Dixson et al. showed that men's initial visual fixation focuses either on the breasts or the waist, and as the shown robots do provide these features, it can be assumed that our participants—on an immediate and subliminal basis—reacted in a similar way to how they would react with regard to women" (Szcuka, Krämer). The design of such robots is based on societal expectations of how women and men should look and behave. The fact that men's initial visual fixation focuses on certain physical features, and that sex robots are designed to provide these features, reinforces harmful gender stereotypes and further perpetuates a culture that objectifies and devalues women. The development and use of AI sex bots that reinforce harmful gender stereotypes and perpetuate a culture of objectification and devaluation of women can have serious consequences for the nature of human relationships, as it reduces individuals to mere physical objects for sexual gratification, rather than complex individuals with emotional needs and desires. In essence, the development and use of sex robots may contribute to a culture where genuine human intimacy is devalued and replaced with a superficial and objectifying form of interaction. The use of sex robots as a substitute for genuine human interaction and intimacy, and the potential negative impact this could have on individuals and society could perpetuate harmful attitudes towards women and reinforce harmful gender stereotypes, ultimately leading to a negative change in the nature of human intimacy. The potential negative impact of sex robots on human intimacy is further supported by the idea that technology use can shape the user, as Paragas argues, "Other theorists espouse this idea of a reflexive relationship between the individuals' use of technologies and how this use, in turn, can determine the user.". The use of sex robots may also reinforce patriarchal norms, where women are seen as objects of sexual desire and men are encouraged to pursue their sexual desires at any cost, even if it means engaging in sexual activities with machines.

The growing reliance on AI sex bots as substitutes for genuine human interaction poses a profound threat to societal connection, fostering a culture where individuals risk becoming more disconnected from each other emotionally, psychologically, and socially. AI sex bots are promoted as an alternative or replacement for human intimacy and affection, particularly for those who may struggle to find a partner in real life. They offer an 'ease' of access, positioning themselves as a convenient solution akin to sexual fast food—readily available but lacking the inherently human aspects of emotional connection and responsiveness. The development of sex robots capable of satisfying human sexuality and emotion may lead individuals to find it easier to connect with machines than with each other. This ease of access, however, comes at a cost; machines lack the ability to feel emotions or experience pain. As a result, the inherently human aspect of intimacy is neglected, and these expectations for sensitivity, care, or communication beyond the sexual realm might begin to seem unreasonable and frivolous when individuals can source intimacy with such little consideration for emotional and physical needs. This dynamic has the potential to reshape societal expectations for genuine human connection, projecting onto real people the transactional and convenience-oriented features associated with AI sex bots. Men and women will be further isolated from each other because of the societal expectations forced onto them. Additionally, the use of sex robots may have serious psychological consequences, creating a dependence on machine intimacy and leading to feelings of isolation and detachment from the wider society. Advancements in artificial intelligence have led to the development of sex robots that can mimic human intimacy and emotion. The increasing popularity and accessibility of these robots raise important ethical and social questions regarding the impact of human-robot relationships on society. "Although men and women in committed relationships may not have the same social or sexual needs as individuals in relationships, they may still want to explore a social or sexual relationship with a robot. Loneliness and objective social isolation are often weakly correlated (Coyle and Dugan, 2012; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015) and many people who have a partner report experiencing loneliness and sexual frustrations. Similarly, pornography use is widespread among heterosexual males in committed monogamous relationships, and many men who solicit prostitutes are married, which suggests that some sexual desires are not met by the sexual activities in the relationship" (Morten). Although the proponents of sex robots argue that they can provide a solution for loneliness and sexual frustration, it is crucial to examine the underlying reasons for these issues. The desire for genuine intimacy and emotional connection cannot be replaced by a machine, and the use of sex robots may only serve to further disconnect individuals from one another. The use of sex robots as a substitute for human interaction may reinforce the toxic ideology of incels, who already struggle with social and emotional connections. By normalizing the idea that genuine intimacy can be replaced by a machine, individuals may become more isolated and further disconnected from one another. As we become more reliant on technology to meet our needs, we risk losing touch with our humanity and becoming nothing more than mere consumers of pleasure, disconnected from our own emotions and the world around us.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of AI sex bots has the potential to heighten toxic masculinity and perpetuate harmful gender norms by contributing to the objectification of women and reinforcing sexual assault and rape culture. Drawing upon feminist theory, my paper asserts that the development and use of AI sex bots reinforces patriarchal power structures and has the potential to fundamentally alter the nature of human intimacy. Through the lens of technological determinism, my research highlights the potential for unintended consequences and significant societal shifts resulting from the widespread adoption of AI sex bots. Many popular beliefs surrounding this topic are contrary to that of my paper's focus. I hope to foster a deeper understanding of the risks and benefits associated with this technology and contribute to a more informed and nuanced conversation about its ethical and social implications. Feminist theory provided a valuable lens through which to analyze the impact of AI sex bots on human intimacy, objectification, and toxic masculinity. At its core, feminist theory seeks to examine and challenge the ways in which gender and power intersect to create systems of oppression and inequality. In the context of AI sex bots, feminist theory helps us understand how the development and use of this technology reinforces patriarchal power structures and perpetuates harmful gender norms. Additionally, feminist theorists may draw attention to the ways in which the development and use of AI sex bots reinforces existing power structures by primarily catering to the desires and needs of heterosexual men. This reinforces the male gaze and perpetuates gendered power imbalances that are already deeply ingrained in society. Overall, feminist theory provides a critical perspective on the potential impact of AI sex bots on human intimacy, objectification, and toxic masculinity, and can help us understand how the development of this technology may reinforce patriarchal power structures and perpetuate harmful gender norms. Technological determinism is a theory that posits that technology has a deterministic impact on social change and cultural values. In the context of AI sex bots, this theory suggests that their widespread adoption may lead to unpredictable shifts in human intimacy and relationships. As people become more accustomed to using this technology for sexual gratification, it may redefine the nature of human intimacy and reinforce harmful gender norms. However, the impact of AI sex bots is not predetermined, and careful consideration is needed to ensure that their use prioritizes human values and well-being. The argument and findings in the paper highlight the potential consequences of widespread adoption of AI sex bots, including the reinforcement of harmful gender norms and objectification of human bodies. This underscores the need for careful ethical and regulatory considerations and ongoing research into the long-term impacts of emerging technologies. The implications of this research prompt further discussion and analysis of the potential consequences of AI sex bots on society and culture. As we confront the complex and often uncomfortable truths revealed by the emergence of AI sex bots, we must hold up a mirror to the world and ask ourselves what kind of future we want to build for ourselves and generations to come. The ethical and moral questions raised by this technology require us to engage in ongoing reflection, dialogue, and action in order to create a world that prioritizes human dignity, equality, and well-being above all else.

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JESSICA LUCAS

Motivation and Diet: Why College Students Suffer

ABSTRACT

The main question I will try to answer is how much the motivation of college students to find healthy food options is affected by their surroundings, and how that affects cognitive functioning by determining their diet. I plan to use the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain why students make the decision to eat healthily or unhealthily, and why they eat a certain quantity of food throughout an entire day. I will also study the effect of nutrition on cognition by using the Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory to examine which type of intelligence is most affected by diet. I will start off by explaining how motivation is found in an individual and why each individual has different levels of motivation to eat healthily, starting in childhood. Also, I will explain how the lack of readily available healthy options at a university directly affects eating habits. I will then lead into how the macronutrient composition of our foods creates a healthy or unhealthy gut microbiome, and use this to explain why we further crave foods that are unhealthy for us when we are used to eating them. This will then carry on into how the food we consume affects our cognitive functioning, and which areas are affected most by macronutrient deficits. I will also explain the mental problems that unhealthy eating causes, problems which interfere with motivation levels.

INTRODUCTION

Many college students fall into bad eating and exercising habits all around the world, no matter the location. In recent years, many adolescents have been constantly surrounded by unhealthy foods that create bad habits that will haunt them for their entire lives. Bennur Koca et al. in "The Relationship Between Adolescents' Nutrition Literacy and Food Habits, and Affecting Factors" use a cross-sectional experiment on the eating habits of adolescents and their correlation to their nutrition literacy and access to healthy foods. The findings were that there is a significant correlation between nutrition literacy and socioeconomic status, which supports that lack of accessibility to healthy food and information leads to bad eating habits. These unhealthy habits are accelerated by the lack of resources that students are given by their school to make important, healthy choices. When a group of men aged 18-25 years old were asked why they weren't eating as healthy as they would like to, the 10 most common barriers listed include ease of access of unhealthy foods, lack of time to cook/prepare healthy foods because of busy lifestyle, lack of motivation to cook healthy foods, high cost of healthy foods, lack of skills/knowledge to cook healthy foods, dislike of taste of healthy foods, social influences, lack of variety, lack of information on healthy foods, and believing that eating healthy is not a masculine thing to do (Ashton et al., 2015). These are all incredibly large problems that hinder students from eating foods that make them feel their best, both mentally and physically.

This healthy eating also promotes a healthy gut microbiome, which is essential for optimal brain function. The gut microbiome is connected to the brain through the microbiome gut-brain axis, through which "The central nervous system (CNS) and enteric nervous system (ENS) communicate along vagal and autonomic pathways to modulate many gastrointestinal (GI) functions. The enteric microbiota influence the development and function of the ENS and immune system which affects CNS function. The hypothalamic pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis forms a key component of brain-gut signaling, responding to stress or heightened immune activity" (Kennedy, 2014). Food plays an essential role in the cognitive functioning of students, which determines how well they do in their classes. This is why it is so important for students to have the motivation to eat properly, and to have proper access to food that promotes cognitive function in their college's food markets, so motivation is not diminished by inaccessibility. Overall, a student's diet is reliant on their own motivation to find healthy foods created in their adolescence, while also depending on the accessibility of healthy food at their college or university.

While we cannot make immediate changes to the food options that a college student chooses throughout the day, it is important to study why these choices are made. A high level of motivation to make healthy choices and easy access to healthy food options is most beneficial for optimal cognitive functioning.

FACTORS AFFECTING MOTIVATION

Many students have intentions to eat healthily when they get to college, but outside factors decrease their motivation by making it more difficult to obtain these healthy foods. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is "based on the premise that behavior can be predicted by identifying intentions to carry out the behavior. In the TPB framework, dietary intention is presumed to be the immediate precursor to behavior and determined by three direct factors: the extent to which individuals positively regard a particular behavior (i.e., behavioral attitudes [AB]); perceive a social pressure from significant others to perform the behavior (i.e., subjective norm [SN]); and believe that the behavior can be easily performed (i.e., perceived behavioral control [PBC])" (Lambert et al., 2020). TPB helps explore the true intentions of an individual, and what they want to achieve versus what truly happens: "Descriptive statistics of direct measures of TPB revealed that despite university students' overall positive attitudes toward eating a healthy snack and their pervasive confidence in their ability to select a healthy snack, not many students intended to select a healthy snack for their next snacking occasion" (Lambert et al., 2020). Although their intended motivation might be in the right place, outside factors do not always allow for the intended behavior to follow through. This is due to the fact that most college students do not have the proper tools needed to easily access a healthy snack. It is much easier to want to eat healthily than to actually follow through with the action, and since a lot of colleges do not have readily available healthy snacks, there is less of a chance for motivation to remain high once confronted with the inconvenience of not finding the desired options. Those who are most motivated will be the few students who look harder for the healthy options, but motivation will decrease in those less motivated to find healthy snacks since they are so much harder to obtain. This creates an overall decrease in healthy eating due to lost motivation.

A lack of motivation can lead to an increased number of barriers that one sets for themselves to overcome to eat healthily. Once an individual stops trying to eat healthily, mental barriers are put up, interfering with their ability to make the right dietary choices. Even though initial motivation might be in the correct place, colleges have made it so difficult to select these healthy options, which leads students to believe they cannot eat healthily. The more healthy eating is avoided, the harder it is to do: "Key barriers to eating healthily included ease of access to unhealthy foods, lack of time to cook/prepare healthy foods, and lack of motivation to cook healthy foods. Differences were apparent for some barrier responses by BMI, PA level, and fruit and vegetable intake" (Ashton et al., 2017). The difference in barrier responses shows that those who have a lack of motivation to eat well may have more barriers to eating well than those who choose to eat healthily. If these individuals are accustomed to a lifestyle that does not include many satiating and whole foods, it will set mental blocks in these individuals that healthy eating is harder than it truly is. This lack of healthy eating will most likely negatively impact a student's performance on assignments/exams. Due to lots of unhealthy eating, one's motivation will fall in terms of completing assignments and studying for exams because they are not provided with the proper nutrition that promotes ideal brain function. Motivation is a key factor in determining the healthiness of a diet, so it is crucial to have the correct tools to keep motivation high.

The eating habits that people develop as children carry on throughout their entire lives, unless provided with an outside intervention to bring about intense motivation to change their ways. As individuals enter adulthood, their bodies have become so accustomed to eating a certain way that they tend to crave certain foods over others. "The literature has reported that parental socioeconomic position is associated with children's dietary patterns, showing that higher parental occupation and education level are associated with higher diet quality" (Martinez-Lacoba, 2020). Socioeconomic status of families during childhood can alter their ability to choose healthy options when they are away from home. When people are used to eating a certain way as children, it determines their motivation for eating healthily. If they are used to eating unhealthily, this can reduce their motivation to change their eating habits. Also, there are so many changes going on during the transition to studying and living at university, that it leaves little time and desire to change other familiar habits, such as eating. Since there is little intrinsic motivation for most people to start eating healthily, an intervention is beneficial to force an individual to start: "The regression model with the experiment and follow-up survey data (n = 128) showed a significant relationship between ease of mental imagery and actual snacking behavior after controlling for habit strength. The findings suggest that adding a narrative message to the II intervention can be useful, especially when the intervention involves mental imagery and invites less motivated people" (Jung Oh, 2015). Providing individuals with unhealthy eating habits with evidence that healthy eating is good for the body and soul repeatedly over a short period of time helps them start to want to make these healthy decisions themselves. These narratives of healthy eating act as a catalyst to show unmotivated individuals how good healthy eating makes their bodies feel, which makes them want to keep eating healthily and reinforces their desire to change their eating habits over time. Though habits can be broken in adulthood through much effort, it is crucial to develop healthy eating habits as a child to increase motivation to choose a healthy snack when these individuals reach adulthood.

Nutrition literacy and access to healthy foods in adolescence greatly affects an individual's motivation to seek out healthy options throughout their entire life. Adolescence is the prime developmental period in one's life to form eating habits, whether they are good or bad. These bad habits can be formed due to little knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet, and what foods are unhealthy: "Adolescents are increasingly exposed to unhealthy food environments and marketing of unhealthy foods (on television (TV), movies, social media and point-of-sale advertisements). They consume larger amounts of inexpensive, energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods that are rich in sugar, sodium, and fat (including processed and ultra-processed foods). They do not have access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables, and they may not have control of resources, nutritional knowledge or skills to purchase and prepare foods necessary for a healthy diet" (Koca, 2021). Children consume the marketing of unhealthy foods from such a young age, which conditions them to develop these bad eating habits. When nutrition literacy is deficient in an individual, especially during their developmental years, that individual can develop bad habits throughout their whole lives. The lack of control that children have over the food they receive can either force an individual to create a healthy relationship with food, or an unhealthy one. There is potential to make some dietary changes during adolescence due to increasing independence and more unrestricted access to the internet, but ultimately their parents have control over most of their diet since adolescents are financially dependent on them. These parents might not want to change their unhealthy eating habits because they followed these unhealthy habits for so many years, or socioeconomic reasons may prevent them from having an entirely healthy diet. By the time an individual enters their college years, they will already have formed a relationship with food that is extremely hard to break. This leaves individuals, especially those who have a bad relationship with food, extremely susceptible to persuasion by the media in a desperate attempt to fix their eating habits. An example of a desperate attempt made by some people would be purchasing products online that "promise" weight-loss, like detox products. This can be very troublesome to one's physical and mental health, because they are very unhealthy, and they do not work as promised. This can cause more mental health problems and feeling as though they are helpless and that weight loss and a healthy lifestyle will never be attainable for them. Not to mention, the products advertised online usually are very unhealthy and mostly are diuretics, which are not sustainable to take for a long period of time. Advertisement is a very effective tactic to persuade individuals to eat a certain way: "Winning the accessibility race has been a central mechanism of breaking habits through forming implementation intentions, and a racehorse mechanism further posits that an implementation intention increases accessibility of an alternative behavior so that it can fight against the schema associated with habits" (Jung Oh, 2015). When healthy foods are accessible to college students, the bad habits they have formed in childhood are more likely to be broken due to their "implementation intention," which is defined as "an explicit plan linking a certain behavior with contextual cues associated with that behavior." Seeing healthy food options in their surrounding environments can help break bad habits formed in childhood and reinforced in adolescence due to the advertisement of unhealthy foods. Mental imagery is an incredibly important determinant in students' decisions about whether or not they are going to eat healthy.

Colleges making information on proper nutrition widely accessible to all of their students can help to improve motivation. Students who understand nutrition and what a healthy diet looks like are more likely to follow a healthy diet, since they are constantly reminded of what they should be eating. This can be done through advertisements on campus: "On the domain of environmental factors, the media advertisements' influence (mean = 3.17, SD= 1.03) obtained the highest mean score, followed with easy accessibility (mean = 3.04, SD = 0.92), and perceived parental control (mean = 3.03, SD= 0.86)" (Xiang, 2021). This shows that advertisements can be helpful or harmful in terms of following a healthy diet, since they can be used to reinforce bad habits by promoting unhealthy foods, or strengthen healthy eating habits by reminding students of the benefits of healthy foods. Overall, many students have a greater chance of eating healthily if they are exposed to the health benefits that come with it, and reassurance that it is easy to do. Since social media is such a large part of the lives of young adults, if universities decide to advertise that way, it will reach a large demographic of students and influence them to make healthier choices. Even by using posters around dining halls or food markets on campus that show students how beneficial eating healthy is, they will be more inclined to try it themselves. Advertising strengthens motivation and intention while availability helps with their implementation: “For the ease of mental imagery, unmotivated individuals benefited from reading and following healthy snacking stories to a greater extent than did motivated individuals, such that those who were in the message-aided II condition were able to imagine themselves carrying out their implementation plans more easily (M = 5.89, SD = .82) than those in the self-generated II condition (M = 5.08, SD = 1.34)” (Jung Oh, 2015). People who already eat healthily do not need imagery as much as unmotivated people because they already know the benefits of eating healthy and want to continue to do so for the personal benefits that they have already seen through themselves. Unmotivated individuals, however, do not always know the benefits of eating healthily, or even what good nutrition looks like. Because of this, they need an example to follow to be able to implement these healthy habits themselves.

COGNITIVE HEALTH

College classes are psychologically demanding, which is why it is extremely important to be at peak cognitive functioning to tackle these courses. To have optimal cognitive functioning, a healthy diet is necessary. Foods most accessible at college markets and dining halls across universities usually include “juice cocktails, soda, diner foods like hamburgers, grilled cheese sandwiches, French fries, and breakfasts that contain large amounts of oils and fat (i.e, bacon, sausages, pancakes and syrup), along with an endless selection of sugary desserts” (Garcia, 2011). One of the healthiest diet models that should be followed by all is that of the Mediterranean diet (MD), which is described as “high consumption of fruits, vegetables, unprocessed cereals, olive oil, nuts, and sea foods, moderate consumption of poultry, dairy products, and red wine, and low consumption of red meat” (Gotsis, 2015). The effect of this diet on cognition will be studied using the Multiple Intelligence Theory, which is described as “how all people have a specific skill and a type of intelligence to a greater or lesser extent. However, there are eight different intelligences with a specific location in the brain” (Bas, 2016). Since the MD is such a healthy diet, it has many cognitive health benefits: “In parallel, MD has been studied for its multiple benefits against cognitive impairment. Numerous studies point out how MD foods, rich in omega-3s, support brain development” (Galbete, 2015). This directly explains that the Mediterranean diet contains essential macronutrients that promote intelligence and cognitive development. This relates to the fact that many college students do not have access to this healthy diet, since most of the readily available foods that they are provided with do not meet the criteria of the Mediterranean diet. This will cause a decrease in cognitive functioning, and have a negative impact on academic performance. While physical activity is important to cognitive function, diet is the most important independent variable to the dependent variable: multiple intelligences. "While we considered that men would score higher on all three variables, the talk obtained showed that men obtained higher PA scores than women. As for MI, similar scores were observed in relation to gender, although the highest score was obtained by women in M intelligence. Concerning MD, women obtained higher scores" (Ubago-Jiménez, 2020). Women were seen to adhere more to MD than men, and they obtained the highest score. This is significant because it shows that an adherence to a healthy diet that promotes cognitive functioning is more important than physical activity. Though physical activity is seen to be important to keep our brains functioning, the amount of physical activity does not matter so much, as long as an individual does not live an entirely sedentary life. However, an adherence to a healthy diet for a majority of one's eating throughout the day is extremely important and will result in the greatest differences in each form of intelligence, especially Linguistic, Intrapersonal, and Naturalistic.

Cognitive health directly hinges on the consistency of one's eating schedule. In college, most students do not have the means, or will, to have a healthy eating schedule: "The vast majority (79.20%) of the students reported that they always or sometimes skip a meal per day, with breakfast reported to be the most skipped meal. Only 38.28% of the students reported having breakfast every day. When students who sometimes (<7 days/week) or always (0 days/week) skipped breakfast were asked the reason behind not consuming breakfast, the main answer was the lack of time (25.31%) followed by oversleeping (20.04%) and lack of appetite (18.78%)" (El Hajj, 2021). When students have barriers to a regular eating schedule, eating is more likely to become a chore, instead of a treat. When this happens, motivation for finding healthy options will be hindered, due to solely finding food that is most available. If colleges only offer foods that are deficient in key nutrients, this leads to lower cognitive functioning. Our brains are very dependent on receiving proper nutrition, and at a consistent time of day, and if these standards are not met, neither are our nutritional needs. As stated earlier, lots of college courses are extremely demanding, which leads to little time remaining for meals. As a result, many people skip meals, especially breakfast. Skipping meals can have a serious effect on cognition: "The effect of breakfast reflected poorer memory for the NB [no breakfast] and LP/HC-NAP [low-protein/high-carb–no animal protein] as compared to the LP/HC-AP [low-protein/high-carb–animal protein] and HP/LC [high-protein/low-carb] treatments, and the interaction reflected a decrease in the effect of breakfast over time." (Emilien et al., 2017). There is a direct relationship between the nutritional value of breakfast and information retention. This proves the argument that food is extremely important for cognitive function, and doing well in classes in general. Since so many college students do not have the motivation to get breakfast before their early classes, this affects how much they retain when they go to class and subsequently how well they do on their exams. If they do get breakfast before their class, it is usually something high in carbohydrates and low in protein that is easily accessible, which also does not promote cognitive functioning. Breakfast becomes less effective over time since most students can get their nutrients in during other meals or snacks during the day, but it is very important to find time to eat a healthy breakfast while building up motivation to maintain an entirely healthy diet. Overall, diet is a large determinant of how well a student does in their classes.

CONCLUSION

An individual's cognitive functioning is directly affected by the diet they choose to follow, but a high level of motivation is key to achieving this optimal diet in the first place. To achieve this ideal level of motivation, it is essential to be in an environment where healthy eating is supported. This can be seen through universities providing media advertisements and making healthy options easily accessible to all students. Motivation is also a key factor to eating healthily, which is heavily dependent on the habits formed in childhood. Motivation levels can be directly measured using the Theory of Planned Behavior, since it is a determinant of motivation to eat healthily and explains why some students follow through with their intentions to eat healthily and some do not. This is shown through the habits developed in childhood determining how likely an individual is to eat healthily, and how much media advertisements change their eating habits as young adults. If colleges do not make healthy food extremely accessible, most students will not follow through with choosing it even though they somewhat intended to. This helps to separate motivated students from unmotivated students, since motivated students would more likely seek out these healthy options even if they are slightly difficult to find. The Multiple Intelligences Theory is used to explain how an excellent diet can be so important for proper brain functioning. Since most college students do not have access to foods that make up the Mediterranean diet on a daily basis, most students will be negatively affected by their diet. Also, adherence to the Mediterranean diet has a lot to do with proper motivation to stick to a healthy diet, showing a direct correlation between motivation and cognitive functioning.

The research provides a good start for universities to explore the options they have to improve the diets of their students. This can be furthered when universities implement motivators to eating healthy by studying how the overall cognition of their student population changes, which could help their students greatly in excelling in their courses by promoting optimal cognition. In extremely successful cases, this could even change how prestigious the university is. Overall, the diet of a college student can be extremely influential in determining that individual's success for the rest of their lives due to the effect on cognitive functioning during these crucial academic years.

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MAZEL ANNE MALALUAN

Understaffing of Nurses: The War Between Healthcare and Profiteering

ABSTRACT

In hospitals nationwide, the continuous understaffing of American nurses became more prevalent in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, nurses have taken action in unions and strikes, like the New York State Association in January 2023, demanding higher pay and lower nurse to patient ratios for their sake and their patients' sake, bringing to light the corruption that the practice of profiteering has on hospitals. The key focus of this research is to analyze the impact of corporate profiteering in hospitals that contributes to the understaffing crisis of nurses, as well as the effect on the nurses, through the framework of wartime profiteering in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. Some argue that the profit maximization is beneficial for the maintenance and resources of hospitals. However, corporate profiteering leads to nurses suffering the troubles of mental burnout and lack of administration transparency. The dehumanization of nurses in a high-risk and pressure-induced environment is not as violent as the war environment, but the consequences are just as fatal, being that nurses are the primary care providers of hospitals and have the most effect on patient outcomes. Putting nurses at a significant disadvantage for the sake of corporate greed not only puts the nurses themselves at risk, it also puts the overall United States healthcare system and its future at risk.

INTRODUCTION

"On strike for better patient care! More nurses = Better care! Nurses deserve a fair contract!" Those were the mottos of over seven thousand nurses of Mount Sinai and Montefiore Medical Centers during the 2023 NY State Nurses Association strike. Voices were raised and stakes were high as the registered nurses united for three days on the streets of New York City demanding higher pay, workers' rights, and patient safety (Seitz). Registered nurses of all clinical specialties work in a variety of workplaces from medical hospitals and nursing homes to even insurance and managed care companies. Their responsibilities consist of long-term or short-term patient care and creating care systems and procedures. Nurses have a big influence on patients since they provide the most direct care. Despite their large numbers and crucial presence in the United States healthcare system, they have been victim to an ongoing crisis of understaffing in hospitals. The patient-to-nurse staffing ratios differ for every state and hospital unit but generally exceed manageable ratios like 3-4 patients per nurse. Nurses formed unions throughout the years to challenge the status quo and gain more work rights and safety, but the staffing problem still stands today in nonprofit and for-profit hospitals. Nonprofit hospitals are not taxed federally and are funded by religious denominations, charities, or research. For-profit hospitals are owned by shareholders of private or publicly traded companies and do have to pay federal taxes. It would not be expected, from the name alone, that nonprofit hospitals prioritize profiting the way that for-profit hospitals do, but that is not the case. Profits are a defining feature and priority of both hospital types, as enforced by hospital administrations and corporations. The collection of these profits, done by companies and corporations of monopolies and competitive markets, on overpriced costs of goods and services, is known as corporate profiteering. For healthcare specifically, profiteering is present in insurance billing and service charges as well as the staffing of hospital employees. Secretary Sharon Graham of the union Unite details that "The [profiteering] crisis is systemic: corporations and investors, facilitated by governments, have won enormous power to set the rules and reap the rewards" (Graham 11). The head investors of these monopolies and corporations have unregulated and unchallenged authority to continuously focus on the maximization of profits. Strategies to maximize profits consist of increasing costs and decreasing expenses or wages in order to outlast other corporations and services, but with that comes a corporate greed that cannot be eradicated so easily.

This brings up the question "To what extent do financial decisions of profiteering impact nurse understaffing and the battle of priority between healthcare and money?" Through the perspective of wartime profiteering as detailed by foreign policy expert William D. Hartung's "Profits of War: Corporate Beneficiaries of the Post-9/11 Pentagon Spending Surge," we can see that the understaffed field of nursing is devalued and dehumanized under corporate influence, forsaking the likelihood of a humane future for the U.S. healthcare system. The greediness of profiteering is prevalent in times of war, especially for the big military power that the United States takes pride in. Contractors are underpaid foreigners from countries like Nepal who were taken advantage of by the U.S. military staff through corporations' deployment, giving unregulated power to companies, like Brown and Kellogg, that were partnered with to supply the contractors. The corporate greed present with the war contractors and medical industry is expected of the systemic profiteering, and it is quite alarming and unjust in the medical industry since it prioritizes costs and money over the true priority of patient health and humane care.

THE UNDERSTAFFING CRISIS UNCOVERED

The crisis of nurse understaffing in hospitals has existed for so long that it has been normalized in hospitals, taking advantage of nurses' efforts and depriving them of higher pay. During the Covid-19 pandemic, news reporters documented how hospital environments were severely underprepared and crowded because of pre-existing staffing designs in hospital units. Dr. Linda H. Aiken's research team articulates that

> 33% of nurses in hospitals where mean pre-pandemic medical surgical staffing was more than six patients per nurse reported poor/fair quality of care during the pandemic, compared with half that many, only 16% of nurses, in hospitals where the mean pre pandemic staffing was 5 or fewer patients per nurse. (Aiken 7)

As more patients were taken care of before the pandemic, the more understaffed hospital units became and the more the nurses were unable to provide high-quality care. During and after the pandemic, the correlation still existed. Over 20 states under the influence of the hospital chain for-profit company HCA reported that "By 2020, HCA staffed its hospitals about 30% below the national average" compared to the non-HCA hospitals with 1:3 or 1:5 ratios (Morgenson et al.). Looking after five or fewer patients at once is manageable, but being responsible for more is quite error-inducing and difficult to manage. Registered Nurse Alexa Davidson states that

> California and Massachusetts have laws about nurse-to-patient ratios in hospitals. Laws in Massachusetts limit nurses to one patient in the intensive care unit…The California RN Staffing Ratio Law defines the number of patients nurses may oversee in each hospital unit. For example, a nurse in the postanesthesia care unit may care for two patients at a time. (Davidson)

Yet, there is still a shortage in staffing in both states despite the use of mandates. The shortage of staffing likely causes layoffs, resignations, or transfers to other positions different from the unit work of registered nurses.

When it comes to the breakdown of hospital earnings, there is a variance in the payment of nurse wages between hospitals, worsening the nationwide understaffing crisis. Ge Bai and Hossein Zare's study of nonprofit and for-profit hospitals displayed that 41.3% of labor costs were for the nurses, with only 5.9% as the employee benefits, and 54.9% for the hospital administration and general workers (Bai & Zare). For hospitals associated with the company HCA Healthcare, "...salaries and benefits [of nurse staffing] accounted for 46% of the company's revenues in the first nine months of 2022" (Morgenson et al.). Hospitals do make an effort to have their workers earn wages and payments for patient care, but more money is put into other costs for the administration and the hospital's stability. "When the reduction of non-capital-non-labor costs (e.g., medical supplies) was insufficient, many hospitals chose to cut the labor costs of these services, thus disrupting the compensation of the patient care labor force" (Bai & Zare). The workers of patient and worker care in for-profit and nonprofit hospitals are under-compensated, causing the patients and nurses to be less prioritized. The Massachusetts Health Policy Commission stated that hiring a few thousand nurses would "...lead to an increased annual cost of $676 million to $949 million…" (Sofer). Limiting the number of nurses on staff prevents a higher percentage of profit allotted for labor costs in order to keep the higher compensation for-profiting purposes and expensive treatments and technology. It is equivalent to the low wages that the contractors of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars received for their rigorous labor on and off the battlefield. The low wages did not equal the struggles they were forced into as the contractors were taken advantage of as objects that could be replaced with other deployed foreigners rather than respected, hard-working individuals. The greed and lack of monetary appreciation or reward is a reflection of the profiteering ways that the healthcare system has adopted in dehumanizing its nurses as objects that maintain the hospital's activity to allow donors to provide donations, with the majority of the income ending up replenishing administrative costs. No matter the status of the affected individuals or the extremity of the violence in the environment, corporate greed will exist as a systematic aspect as long as the priority of money is existent. With the nature of the healthcare industry providing medical help to its community and the increase of expenses of medical equipment and resources, training, and insurance services, profiteering will be ever-present, continuing the mistreatment in the career of nursing.

PRESENCE OF TRANSPARENCY, OR LACK THEREOF

The immoral intentions of hospital administration and medically-involved corporations are hidden from public knowledge but nurses and other healthcare workers are more open about what happens behind-the-scenes. Dr. Aiken's study of nurses reported that:

> Before the pandemic, an astounding 70% of hospital staff nurses lacked confidence in management in their employing organization to resolve clinical care problems identified by nurses, and close to half of nurses reported their employer did not listen or respond to their concerns. Nurses' negative appraisals of hospital management increased further during the pandemic when nurse layoffs and furloughs were common. Almost half of nurses reported pre-pandemic that the actions of hospital management show patient safety is not a top priority which increased to 53% during the pandemic. (Aiken 7)

Nurses had to experience multiple uphill battles in navigating Covid-19 while fighting for their voice. They were the ones witnessing the troubles of the work environment firsthand, but their concerns were meaningless to the administrations and corporations. The dismissiveness of hospital management during a crucial time is difficult to believe, but it is the reality that registered nurses have spoken out about. There was also obscurity when it came to the corporations and the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars as detailed by Hartung when he wrote "The lack of transparency, with respect to the activities of private contractors, has been compounded by the Pentagon's 2018 decision to stop reporting on the numbers of U.S. troops engaged in combat overseas" (Hartung 12). The ongoing increase of contractors became so overwhelming, representing that the U.S. government was greatly inferior and loyal to the contractor corporations. A large portion of U.S. expenses was spent on purchasing more workers abroad instead of weaponry and basic resources, which supported the underpaid and unsafe labor of the contractors. The lack of meaningful work of hospital management in assisting and managing hospital practices defeated its responsibilities of patient and worker safety, supporting the underpaid and unsafe labor of the nurses before and during the pandemic. Administrative workers shut down workers' rights and opinions, just like how the New York State Nurses Association union members felt inferior and unheard by hospital management before their strike in January 2023. Although the nurses are being paid a wage, their services are underpaid by the hospital. Of all the medical services provided by physicians, nurses, and technicians, employers tend to pay the nurses the lower pay. Doing this provides the "best offer" for the hospital in order to maximize its profits, dehumanizing nurses as a commodity of medical service and unsafe labor rather than a human being providing medical service. No matter how much transparency is expressed by the inferior groups, the corporations and hospital administrations have such high, unregulated powers that are unmatched, preventing them from experiencing public shame for their wrongdoings.

The "inferior" nurses faced more danger when hospitals lacked transparency in the reporting and enforcement of readmission rates. Readmissions are rates that measure the frequency of patients admitted into the hospital another time for the same or different diagnosis and are meant to be reported to the public. They were the determining factor for Medicare's Hospital Readmission Rates Program (HRRP) which penalized participating hospitals with high readmission rates with a decrease in Medicare payment of medical charges. In the eyes of HRRP, readmission indicates that the care provided by nurses and physicians was not sufficient, due to factors such as lack of resources or staffing, without considering that some conditions are severe and require frequent medical attention. Hospital administration and corporations expect reduced readmission rates to have increases in operating margins and revenues, but not all publicly reported the rates in hopes of preventing public shame and loss of income from a reduced number of admitted patients, HRRP penalties, and nurse understaffing. Dr. Soumya Upadhyay refuted the association between profitability and reduced readmission rates with findings that "In the case of PN, a higher readmission rate was associated with a higher operating margin" (Upadhyay 8). For acute conditions like pneumonia, the profit from the use of medical technology during consultations and care increased after paying for the production of the used medical equipment. This would be applicable to hospitals that invest in higher quality machinery and treatments, so that even when patients are readmitted, there is a fair compensation since there are valuable and effective resources in supply and in use. The American Association of Heart Failure Nurses was transparent in the reality of HRRP guidelines by stating that "Following the implementation of the HRRP, the mortality rate in Medicare beneficiaries hospitalized with HF increased from 7.9% in 2008 to 9.2% in 2014" (Marra & Laramee 2). Readmissions would have been prevented by extending the stay of heart failure patients until the condition is cured or no treatment or care could improve the patients' conditions, which is a more cost-effective approach. The expectations of HRRP and hospital administrations for reduced readmissions to increase profitability would more likely be proven correct for poorer-quality hospitals or those that are not investing in advanced medical equipment. In doing this, it creates an unsafe environment and lack of resources that nurses are exposed to, putting healthcare workers at risk. It also puts the patients at risk because the primary care providers are at a disadvantage and there may not be enough resources or qualified services for high-quality care. Not only will nurses be forced by management to shorten the duration of patient care, but also the patients themselves may be inclined to avoid the hospital to avoid low-quality care and expensive medical bills. Either way, the understaffing of nurses will prevail to upkeep profit maximization in case there is a reduction in income from service payments. Lack of maintenance and improvement from a lack of corporate transparency also had an impact on the people during the Iraq war. Hartung detailed that "A particularly egregious case of shoddy work that had tragic human consequences involved the electrocution of at least eighteen military personnel in several bases in Iraq beginning in 2004 due to faulty electrical installations, some of which were done by KBR and its subcontractors" (Hartung 8). By misinforming the U.S. government to keep the hazardous setup, the corporations Kellogg, Brown, and Root increased their income flow from the U.S. government with more hiring of their force of contractors. The actions that corporations have in implementing required rates and hazards in the workspaces, that are not reported as they should be, set up the nurses and soldiers to face mortality and failure. Medical and war corporations and hospital administrations abuse their power over the people as well as the resources in supply. The transparent nurses in Aiken's study were met with little acknowledgment by the power-abusing hospital administrations for their requests for improvement in resources and methods, increasing the likelihood of rising readmissions and less advanced medical equipment. The poor quality care determined by the readmission and mortality rates is then blamed on the nurses, but the root of the problem is the administrations refusing to accept and be honest about the hospitals and the readmission or mortality rates, which in turn perpetuates the struggles that nurses go through under their unaccommodating management. The organizations with such power ignore the realities and consequences of sickness and death. The corporate and administrative goals, mindsets, and actions tunnel vision their own financial greed and growth, no matter if the nurses and war-involved Americans will benefit or not. Transparency is ignored in favor of greater financial goals that nurses, U.S. officials, and soldiers cannot challenge with retaliation due to the harsh regulations of unrealistic expectations and disadvantaged situations that remain unchanged.

THE TOLL ON THE HUMANITY OF NURSES

Like the unrealistic expectations and disadvantaged situations of the nurses, the prevalence of profiteering is beneficial to corporations and executives but is very detrimental to the nurses' welfare and safety. Corporate practice of healthcare prioritizes public image since it aids in competing with one another in the reliability of quality care, leaving nurses to do all the heavy lifting in patient care. For the Vanderbilt University Medical Center, their prestigious reputation was tainted by the death of brain injury patient Charlene Murphey and the conviction of former nurse RaDonda Vaught in 2016. Journalist Brett Kelman reported that during the former nurse's trial for neglect and negligent homicide, "Assistant District Attorney Chad Jackson likened Vaught to a drunken driver who killed a bystander, but said the nurse was 'worse' because it was as if she was 'driving with [her] eyes closed'" for prescribing the paralyzer Vecuronium instead of the sedative Versed (Kelman). Her unintentional mistake took a toll on her career and life forever. During the Iraq war, the soldiers drafted and hired to be on the frontlines experienced troubles with physical capabilities due to their living situation. That fact came to light when "Finally, the 2008 death of Staff Sgt. Ryan Maseth, a Green Beret who was electrocuted while showering in Iraq, brought Congressional and public attention to the issue" (Hartung 8). In order for the drastic problem to be recognized, it took the death of a Sergeant to do so. The soldiers and contractors of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars were frequently unappreciated or valued as human beings and instead as inputs of war that were replaceable. The main priority of the war was the conflict and opposition, not the individuals whose lives were at risk. This dehumanization caused nurses and soldiers to have a lack of security in their safety, which is a violation of their rights as workers. The very extreme, like death, is the minimum required to captivate and convince corporations for dire improvements, not the concerns and pleas for help that were brushed off as reported in Aiken's study. This is because the very extreme is the opposite of what is expected of nurses and soldiers. They are expected to perform their work perfectly without error because there is so much on the line. For the hospital administrations and corporations, the reputation and public image of the hospitals are heavily prioritized, contributing to the high expectations that are already expected from medical workers. High expectations in medicine are necessary to ensure that the professionals are qualified and carry their duties out properly, but perfection is an impossible standard. It cannot always be reached when there are already flaws with corporate influence from the very start, like the absence of transparency and lack of accommodation for resources that both the working nurses and patients are victims of. Without addressing nurses' concerns and signs for help, the high pressures and expectations can cause more medical errors to occur in the midst of the shortage, risking the lives of not only patients but also the nurses themselves. Although the medical field has more involved, intricate organization and regulations, and is less violent, there is still a lack of regulation and oversight of the nurses like the same that occurred for the soldiers. The reason for this is the greed for-profit maximization that drives the profiteering off of the working nurses. Individuals in higher positions are responsible for those below them and will expect highly from them, but it can cause extreme incidents to occur when there is weak regulation and oversight.

The mental impact of the normalized understaffing of registered nurses draining and can put their work and future in danger, just like what happened to Vaught. Of the 40,674 registered nurses that were studied, Aiken found that the reports of high burnout were "48.0%" in pre-pandemic data and "51.0%" in data during the pandemic, measuring a "3.0%" change overtime (Aiken). The small change demonstrates that the increase in statistics is insignificant and that burnout rates have always been high. Close to about half or the majority of the population studied have endured the mental and physical struggles common in nursing culture. In Florida's Kendall Hospital linked to HCA, the burnout experienced was detailed by ICU nurse Rublas Ruiz who explained that "...his workplace is so understaffed that he and other nurses have to leave the ICU to deliver patients to other areas of the hospital for CT scans or MRIs, a job usually performed by patient transporters" (Morgenson et al.). Because of simultaneously handling nursing duties and non-nursing duties, the universal overstimulation and the quick-paced environment add to the rising burnout rates reported by Aiken. It also adds to higher probabilities of medical errors, which can lead to accusations of malpractice. Nurses not only fear making medical errors, they also fear for their work safety and the future of nursing because RaDonda Vaught's conviction "...sets a dangerous precedent of criminalizing the honest reporting of mistakes" (Kelman). Honesty in healthcare is greatly valued because no practitioner wants to prescribe the wrong treatment and endanger their patients' lives, and no patient wants to intake the wrong treatment and risk death. It is understandable that corporations fear their hospitals will receive a bad reputation for the mistakes of their nurses, motivating them to punish their nurses and convince them to not speak out about their faults. Saving profits from being spent on nurse salaries and benefits is beneficial for corporate influence, but it cannot save the mistakes and lives at cost. The mistakes of healthcare cannot be solved with money the way business transactions are solved. The primary care providers of hospitals do not deserve to struggle with heavy burdens and fears, but it cannot be taken away while corporate influence is strong.

Despite the prominence of struggles and the understaffing crisis, nurses were able to experience some silver linings in their careers. The NYSNA nurses who went on strike finally received contracts this year that "...will relieve chronic short staffing and boost pay by 19 percent over three years" (Seitz). The earning of contracts for nonprofit Mount Sinai and Montefiore hospitals is a big success for a state that had one of the highest hospitalization rates while understaffed during the Covid-19 pandemic, making New York one step closer to having mandated staffing ratios like in California and Massachusetts. For example, the mandated ratio for Psychiatric units in California is "6:1", and the collected ratios from the study were "5.7:1" for California, "7.0:1" for New Jersey, and "7.9:1" for Pennsylvania (Aiken 910). The nurses in California reported higher rates of patient care and lower rates of burnout, mortality, and dissatisfaction than the rates for New Jersey and Pennsylvania, proving the correlation between abiding by mandated ratios and increasing quality care and welfare. But, it did not resolve the staffing crisis in California. Massachusetts had a different patient outcome when it came to the mandating of 1:1 ICU staffing law with the report that " After implementation of nurse staffing regulations, risk-standardized mortality remained stable [1.20… to 1.15…] in Massachusetts but decreased outside of Massachusetts, without a significant difference-in-difference " (Law 5). The mandated standards force hospitals to hire more nurses to compensate for the lower mandated ratios, but the staffing crisis withstands them. The revenues and profits of the hospital administrations and corporations would have to be sacrificed, which should not pose a huge problem since hospitals usually have a constant flow of revenue and profits from shareholders and donors. The U.S. government spent millions to even trillions of dollars to hire more contractors in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, but it resulted in multiple accounts of crime, fraud, and mortality. Direct improvements and victory were not guaranteed, especially with the fact that the wars lasted for several years before solutions were reached: the Afghanistan War lasted from 2001 to 2021 and the Iraq War lasted from 2003 to 2011. For a nursing shortage that has existed for decades, it will take even longer to reach the end of the staff shortage without the sacrifice of profits. Spending large sums of money is inevitable, so the decision of what they are spent on becomes even more important. Spending it on hiring more nurses and lower ratios would benefit the nurses in helping relieve their burnout and dissatisfaction, but corporations and hospital administrations would insist that a huge mistake was made since millions of their earnings would decrease as a result. The NYSNA strike and mandated ratios of some states do show that nurses are becoming more acknowledged and appreciated, which is an improvement from pre-pandemic and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The fact that the NYSNA nurses on strike reached resolution with the Mount Sinai and Montefiore hospital managements within three days is an example of the increasing value and appreciation for the nurses' opinions and well-being. Successful negotiations resulted in the nurses receiving higher pay and increased staffing ratios, combatting the profiteering practices that underpaid and overworked the registered nurses. The resistant presence of the understaffing crisis around the nation, however, indicates that corporations and hospital administrations would rather continually choose to feed their financial greed and escalate the burdens of nurses than recognize their humanity.

CONCLUSION

Even though healthcare is meant to be centered around patient care, it has become a profitable hotspot. The decades-long understaffing of nurses is a prime example of the devious impact that money has on Americans who are burdened with so many internal and external challenges for the sake of patient care and their own income. The unrealistic expectations placed on the nurses and the lack of corporate honesty are huge factors in the dehumanization of nurses. The lack of mandated staffing ratios and regulation of corporations and hospital administrations set the next generation of nurses up for failure and danger. But will the next generation of healthcare workers be able to turn around the staffing shortage? How will they be affected in their careers? Will they be the ones to make healthcare more about the people and health again?

The presence of profiteering in both for-profit and nonprofit hospitals was one of the biggest surprises while researching, along with how far hospitals will go to maintain their financial stability and public image. The fact that profiteering is also in wartime, specifically the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, is representative of how the greedy priority of money does not pick and choose what will be impacted, it has an influence in any situation as long as there is little regulation. Enforced unrealistic expectations sustain high powers and create the inferior. As long as money is prioritized, the rich and elite are kept in power.

There is no one method that will resolve the ongoing shortage or profiteering. In order for progress to be made, there should ideally be multiple factors implemented. There should be more legally mandated staffing ratios in all states. Even though the outcomes differed between California and Massachusetts, the presence of mandates would increase the likelihood of improved patient and nurse outcomes and meaningful involvement of hospital administrations. To maintain the staffing ratios so that hospitals will have favorable outcomes, there should be more hired permanent nurses. Increased hiring factors in the satisfaction of nurses as well as the reduction in burnout and overloaded schedules, making their shifts more manageable and work mindset positive. Regulation of staffing could be done by implementing more staffing committees that advocate for the safety and rights of nurses. Work environments should also improve and be provided with more resources in a cost-effective manner. Transparency would also improve accountability and awareness of the shortage. The NYSNA strike in January 2023 increased the transparency of the unjust conditions at Mount Sinai and Montefiore hospitals and successfully accommodated the nurses. Unfortunately, not all strikes are as successful, such as the thousands of nurses in Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey who have been on the picket lines since August 2023. Even though no resolutions have been met, the effort for accountability of the profiteering is indicative of how unfair the treatment of nurses has become. The systemic practice of profiteering cannot be fully eradicated, and the presence of corporate greed cannot either, but any efforts put into action to increase fairness and rights for the inferior groups is crucial in such circumstances.

The increased awareness and efforts of nurses unionizing for their rights and patient rights is a key event for the world of healthcare. Higher wages have been implemented for nurses' salaries not only from the negotiations and improved management but also as a way to "reward" or "justify" the overloaded work life that is common in the workplace. Of course, there will always be some form of burnout when working, but the evident increase was quite prevalent during the Covid-19 pandemic from increased patient admissions, and the lower wages did not fairly compensate for the obstacles faced by the care providers. Nurses went from rarely being appreciated publicly to being bowed down to as Covid-19 pandemic essential workers. The 2023 NYSNA strike is a historic moment for the union itself and the field of nursing and continues to pave the way for other unions in hospitals, such as Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, that are also experiencing such crisis coming out of a global health emergency united and assertive for better conditions for their patients and themselves is powerful. Corporations and hospital administrations may have more authority and power, but the nurse unions and hospital units are full of hard-working Americans whose efforts are more valuable and appreciated by the population cared for through healthcare. Their sacrifices in caring and fighting for their patients while facing struggles with their own physical and mental health and safety do not equate to any sum of money. Their staffing ratios need to be addressed and resolved so they can care for their own welfare, be able to love their career again, and set up the next wave of healthcare for success. Putting an end to the nurse shortage seems impossible, but increasing public awareness, especially to the next generation of healthcare professionals, is a huge stride in saving the medical industry from increased corporate influence and shaping it to be safer and more reliable, bringing healthcare back to the patients and nurses of America.

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Parasitism in Science Fiction: America's Comprehension of Trauma

ABSTRACT

The genre of science fiction often features narratives of parasite-based stressors such as pandemics, epidemics, plagues, and viruses. Through dramatized depictions of parasitism, science fiction holds the potential to spread misinformation and contribute to societal divisions. As the world has faced crises like the COVID-19 pandemic or the HIV/AIDS epidemic, parasitism narratives surged within the genre and terms like "disease" and "parasite" increased in use to reflect the experiences and anxieties of society. Popular TV shows like The Walking Dead (2010-2022) and The Last of Us (2023-present), whose narratives formed in the 2010s, display themes of parasitic stressors and their contribution to societal divisions based on beliefs of what parasitism is or how parasite-host relationships function. Individuals may utilize these narratives to guide public fears. However, with these frequent depictions comes the concern that people may be unable to distinguish exaggerations and anthropomorphisms from reality. Specifically, such narratives may create misunderstandings of how parasitic relationships and viral infections manifest. As American society internalizes this information, the implications of the parasite stress theory, illusory truth effect, selective attention, and narrative transportation theory provide explanations for how misconstrued information impacts individuals. These theories, working in tandem with individual use of science fiction as guidance in the face of parasitic stressors, can spread misconceptions that lead to differences in opinion and divisions in American society.

PARASITES WITHIN POPULAR SCIENCE FICTION

Parasites, infectious disease agents that take form as viruses, bacteria, or fungi (Thornhill & Fincher, 2020, p. 1), have remained prevalent throughout history as organisms responsible for events such as the Black Death in 1347, Spanish Flu in 1918, and recently, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (Piret and Boivin, 2021, p.2). In the last five years especially, the COVID-19 pandemic and by extension parasitism and parasitic organisms have consumed American media. This has resulted in the popularity of dystopian TV shows based on parasitism, such as *The Last* *of Us* (2023-present), or its predecessor, *The Walking Dead* (2010-2022). Both series highlight curiosity surrounding the capacity of parasites in a contemporary world. The representation of parasitism within these shows is sensationalized and can fuel misconceptions about parasitism and disease to audiences.

The popularity of science fiction television makes one question how people absorb the information in these shows, as there is a lack of distinction between what is real or sensationalized. In science fiction media, sensational ideas appear through metaphors and anthropomorphisms. Both storytelling devices utilize comparisons between humans and other objects to create a comprehensive idea for audiences. However, the use of these literary elements ultimately contributes to the dilution of scientific ideas within forms of media (Doherty, 2020, p. 4). This paper will explore the portrayal of parasitism in science fiction media so as to understand American society's approaches to illness, disease, and parasites, particularly over the past five years. Specifically, I am investigating the sensationalized portrayal of parasites in *The Last of Us* (2023-present) and *The Walking Dead* (2010-2022). I argue that the exaggerated image of parasitism in these shows allows misconceptions to form around the topic, and enables divisions in society based on differing responses to parasite-related stressors.

Anthropomorphisms and sensationalism, by definition, dilute the true meanings of the ideas they intend to describe. Americans may look for guidance through the genre of science fiction in the instance of a parasitic stressor (Menadue 8). Those who relate to such stories may assume that exaggerated anthropomorphisms are realistic rather than fictional. As individuals hold onto these false ideas, they reject others who attempt to correct them, as per the illusory truth effect. The illusory truth effect is a cognitive bias referring to an individual's tendency to hold information to be true in response to repeated exposure. Thus, in a situation where there is an outbreak, such as COVID-19, people may become divided through their beliefs. The parasite stress theory then amplifies such divisions. The parasitic stress theory is a socio-ecological theory that refers to the impact of parasitic infectious diseases on cultural practices within a given society. Behaviors are molded in an adaptive manner to alleviate the impact of parasite based stressors.

WHAT IS A PARASITE?

Parasites, despite their negative connotations, are simply catalysts for change within their given environment. Parasites possess an inherent ability to alter ecosystems from a cellular level (e.g. Cordyceps fungi) to a societal level (COVID-19). Pierre-Olivier Methot, a professor of philosophy of the life sciences at Laval University, and Samuel Alizon, researcher of the evolutionary ecology of infectious diseases, assert that "the term parasite is ecological and includes both micro-parasites (e.g., viruses and bacteria) and macro-parasites (e.g., worms)," (Methot and Alizon, 2014, p.775). Methot and Alizon outline that parasites are organisms integral to ecosystems, as they range from virus to animal and rely on other organisms for resources, sometimes impacting that organism negatively. Parasites are unacknowledged for their complex ability to alter various elements within their environment.

Furthermore, tracing the parasite stress theory back to this basic definition can explain the exaggerations of a parasite's role beyond an ecological perspective. According to Randy Thornhill and Corey L. Fincher, entomologist and evolutionary biologist at the University of New Mexico and professor of psychology at the University of Warwick respectively, the parasite stress theory is "[one] of cultural diversity, the parasite-stress theory of sociality informs the processes causing new cultures to originate," (Thornhill and Fincher, 2020, p. 175). It hypothesizes that human cultural values are linked to adaptive reactions in response to parasitic threats. Additionally, the parasite stress theory of sociality indicates people respond to parasite-based stressors by forming new microcultures. Microcultures are subgroups within society that share similar values and beliefs that may differ from mainstream culture. They often provide a sense of comfort and normalcy, and are instrumental in understanding American societal changes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

PARASITES AND SENSATIONALISM

The illusory truth effect helps to understand the complex relationship between American society and sensationalized parasitism. Jean-Francois Doherty, from the department of Zoology at the University of British Columbia, explains the link between exaggeration and the illusory truth effect. He states, "humans tend to remember erroneous statements if they are repeated enough," (Doherty, 2020, p. 3). This can lead to the creation of false memories. Furthermore, even when presented with new, accurate, but contradicting information, an individual will still validate the previous (false) statement because of perceived accuracy. Doherty's ideas of the illusory truth effect are seconded in a study conducted by Valentina Vellani (2023), a researcher of behavioral economics at the University College London. She investigates how misinformation spreads through online platforms as a direct result of perceived accuracy. Vellani conducted research by gathering randomly selected individuals and observing how they responded to repeated information, as well as how repeated information impacted perceived accuracy among the subjects. She then utilized the results to understand how misinformation spreads beyond health domains. Vellani's research concluded that her results "generalize beyond the health domain. (a) Estimated marginal means from the linear mixed models predict perceived accuracy show that repeated information is perceived as more accurate than new information," (Vellani et al., 2023, p. 5). Accordingly, her findings depict a relationship between perceived accuracy, information repetition, and the spread of misinformation. Individuals sustain information they perceive as true because of repeated exposure, catalyzing its spread.

The claim that media sensationalism around parasites impacts American perspectives about disease is supported by the fact that discourse around parasitism correlates with renewed interest in the genre. Evaluating the degree to which anthropomorphisms and metaphors within science fiction influence human comprehension of the science of parasitism, Doherty (2020) states, "...the repeated use of such catchy, yet misleading words in both the popular media and the scientific literature could unintentionally hamper our understanding of the complexity and extent of host manipulation," (p.1). He elucidates that repetitively interweaving sensationalized narratives with the humanization of scientific objects or relating scientific concepts like parasitism to mirror the human experience allows science fiction readers and viewers to sustain sensationalized ideas and believe they hold a level of accuracy. Vellani furthers this notion that the continuous circulation of a specific description or image will solidify the idea in a viewer's mind. She asserts that the results of her study display "Estimated marginal means from the linear mixed models that predict sharing shows that people share repeated information more than new… (c) Perceived accuracy fully mediates the relationship between repetition and information-sharing," (Vellani et al., 2023, p. 5). She reiterates that repeated information drawing an individual's attention increases the likelihood that the individual shares that information and holds it to be true. In other words, people are more likely to share information they perceive to be accurate, with repetition bolstering an individual's choice to spread information. As perceived accuracy and the illusory truth effect work in tandem with the anthropomorphisms and metaphors of science fiction, one can deduce that the spread of sensationalism, false notions about how parasitism looks, and misconceptions about infectious disease transfer, all trace back to viewers' perceptions of this information as true. Thus, if a viewer is not cognizant of the accuracy of the information they consume and share, they can contribute to the spread of misinformation.

Furthermore, Christopher B. Menadue, a researcher of digital humanities applications to popular fiction at James Cook University, argues that "science fiction is able to indicate the timing and intensity of a 'cultural pathology' of popular interests and concerns about disease, sickness, and death" (Menadue, 2020, p. 8). This idea suggests that the science fiction genre mirrors the concerns of society, and in reaction to an environmental stressor like a pandemic individuals look to science fiction. Menadue examined corpus linguistics, which calculates the frequency of specific words in a given environment. From Menadue's examination, he provided evidence that science fiction from almost a century ago illustrates that the increased prevalence of terms like pandemic, epidemic, and virus coincide with contemporary public issues that cause distress within a given society (Menadue 7). People consume media that magnifies contemporary issues, which can advance the reach of misinformation and create tension during stressful periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea that science fiction can determine "cultural pathology" suggests that people seek guidance regarding management of their changing surroundings in unprecedented circumstances. Menadue maintains that science fiction may be used to measure public perspectives when ideas related to parasitism have placed a certain level of stress on individuals. He states that the genre functions "as a reflection of cultural interests, the frequency and prominence of these topics would focus on contemporary events and public concerns," (Menadue, 2020, p. 1). He describes how within science fiction, larger stressors are communicated in this literature through the increased presence of the terms"disease" and "virus,". Thus, the genre mirrors cultural events and the anxieties of the American public.

Doherty explains that parasitism is exaggerated and oversimplified as a means to be understood by a majority of people, who turn to science fiction when they do not comprehend what occurs in their surroundings. This idea is demonstrated in *The Last of Us* (2022-present), which illustrates a post-apocalyptic world in which a parasitic fungus has contributed to the formation of a dystopia. Within the dystopian world of *The Last of Us*, there was a dependence on the media to communicate details of the fungi's spread. The lack of answers for the questions in their society contributed to the build-up of mass hysteria and tension among groups. As per Menadue's idea, the frequency of keywords appearing within science fiction can indicate these public fears. There is also a presence of exaggeration and falsification of parasitic host manipulation in *The Last of Us*. It applies anthropomorphisms to the infected people in the series by describing them as "zombies" and "the infected," which weakens the idea of host manipulation. By spreading erroneous ideas about parasites and linking them to a dystopian environment, the audience believes these representations as literal portrayals of host manipulation, repeatedly illustrated in the manner of an "infected" individual or a "zombie." These false notions connect to situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. Even when people's initial impressions of disease and parasitism are proven wrong, such as extremely aggressive infection processes or damage to society due to poor government regulation, individuals will believe their original notions, due to the illusory truth effect. Menadue's notion of science fiction as an indicator of public fears is displayed in *The Last of Us* as zombies created by a pandemic in the show reflect the unprecedented global environment surrounding the spread of COVID-19. The narrative of a global pandemic has always been present in *The Last of Us*, as it is based off the 2013 video game with the same name, although the series is set to the present-day while the game takes place in 2033. In the ten years between the game's release and the production of the show, the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea of a parasite based pandemic consuming society became a reality rather than a far-off science fiction future. Doherty's ideas about anthropomorphisms and sensationalism work in unison with Menadue's description of science fiction as a public concern indicator, and is depicted in season one episode two of *The Last of Us* (2023-present). One character, Tess, works with protagonists Joel and Ellie to move Ellie to a firefly camp. In this episode, an infected individual attacks Tess and subsequently infects her. The infection process (in which the "clicker's" fungus extends into the orifices of Tess' face) and the depiction of the clicker itself (a deformed human) exaggerate the idea of parasitism (Mazin C., et al., 2023). The inaccurate image of what a Cordyceps fungal infection looks like in a human and the attribution of labels like "zombie" and "clicker" to those infected by the fungus work as forms of sensationalism and anthropomorphisms. These exaggerations work as a reflection of American society's views of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the fear and panic that surrounded it. One must remain cautious of how much truth they attribute to science fiction and how they perceive parasitism, as these exaggerations can enable ideas to be misconstrued and misinformation may spread.

WHY DOES PARASITE REPRESENTATION EXIST?

The comprehension of the collective trauma experienced over the COVID-19 pandemic is multifaceted. Comprehending this issue requires knowledge of the various components that make up individual trauma. The COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted great strife on society. As of 2021, it has infected over 92 million people worldwide and killed close to two million (Esses and Hamilton, 2021, p. 253). The immense loss and infection rates at the time of the pandemic revealed that ideas of death and disease were concepts that many people worldwide could comprehend. The response to death and disease, specifically in America, implied a great amount of collective mental anguish. Dalila Talevi, a P.h.D student in Neuroscience at University of L'Aquila, in comparing the psychological responses to COVID-19 across multiple countries, determined that "people experienced considerable psychological distress during the initial stage of the CoViD-19 outbreak in terms of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic symptoms," (Talevi et al., 2020, p. 142). This indicates that the presence of parasitic environmental stressors, which contributed to death and disease over the course of the pandemic, played a role in causing emotional turmoil during this time. The rise in cases of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic symptoms indicates that negative feelings in some capacity existed throughout society in response to such significant amounts of trauma and distress. COVID-19 creating a landscape of uncertainty, alarm, and a lack of control, catalyzed the rise of societal tensions. In their analysis of the impact of pandemic-caused death and infection on rates of prejudice, Victoria M. Esses and Leah K. Hamilton, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Ontario and an addiction health researcher at the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute respectively, explain that "the plethora of perceptions of threat and competition, heightened uncertainty, feelings of lack of control, and a rise in authoritarianism driven by the pandemic all lead to a surge in xenophobia and anti-immigrant attitudes across the world," (Esses and Hamilton, 2021, p. 256). The general air of negativity that engulfed American society as a result of the pandemic allowed for tensions between various groups to arise. The "lack of control" experienced by Americans as well as the consistent feelings of "threat", whether that be from individuals around them or a threat of infection, added to collective fears.

The general air of negativity that engulfed America at the time of the pandemic created tensions between groups. These occurrences further the notion that in the face of a landscape filled with uncertainty, individuals will lean into what is most familiar to them. This is depicted in *The Walking Dead*, which produced and released its tenth season over the course of the pandemic. Because it was produced during this time period, the fictional threat of a parasitic stressor became more tangible, and the show resonated more with audiences. During the tenth season, specifically in episode 1, the audience witnesses main characters like Carol, avoiding groups that she feels unfamiliar with while attempting to survive the infected individuals or "walkers" around her. Carol finds comfort in those she already knows and works with them as a means to avoid infection in a post-apocalyptic world. As a result, new microcultures form in *The Walking Dead* world.This reflects real life microcultures that formed as a result of differing beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic. As individuals within American society favor what they are familiar with and, consequently, shut out information and people that contest their own ideas or are different from them, they contribute to societal divisions and add to existing trauma. Thornhill and Fincher (2020) explain that "in an ecological setting of high disease stress, reduced dispersal, xenophobia, and ethnocentrism reflect evolved preferences/values and motivate behaviors for the avoidance of novel parasites contained in outgroups." (p. 169) They explain that through fear and stress triggered by parasitic environmental stressors, individuals find a sense of safety in what they already know. Thus, they contest unfamiliar outside ideas and avoid people who are unfamiliar to them, enabling tension to grow. The trauma created by retreating into a specific mindset that rejects other notions prevents individuals from seeing the various perspectives that encompass an issue, as seen with parasitism (Doherty, 2020, p. 5). The combination of societal tension, parasitic environmental stressors, negative mental health, and a lack of understanding are all instances of trauma that individuals long to comprehend (Menadue 8). The distinct "cultural pathology" that surrounds a parasite outbreak is reflected in the science fiction genre, as evidenced by the spike in terms such as "pandemic," "disease," and "illness" in science fiction at times of parasitic environmental stressors (Menadue, 2020, p. 7). In order to comprehend their trauma, an individual turns to science fiction for guidance regarding their thought process because it reflects what is occurring in society at the time of a parasitic environmental stressor. When science fiction acts as a reflection of American society, individuals dissect what is occurring in their society and how to approach the situation at hand. Members of American society hold a desire to understand their trauma and the uncertainty of what is transpiring around them. Thus, they turn to sensationalized parasitic representations in the genre of science fiction.

EFFECTS OF SENSATIONALISM

Sensationalism is molded by various components, ranging from environmental factors to internal cognition and psychology. As individuals witness sensationalism through science fiction shows that mirror what is occurring in their society, they feel connected to the media.P. Navami and P.E.Thomas, researchers at Bharathiar University in Tamil Nadu, India, argue that the recent popularity of repetitively watching a show can enable narrative transportation in audiences, thus forming an increase in affective responses within viewers (2022). They hone in on the idea of narrative transportation, explaining that it occurs when "individuals enter mentally a world evoked by a story, a narrative," (Navami and Thomas, 2022, p. 306). As individuals repeatedly consume these forms of science fiction media, specifically TV shows, they begin to relate to characters, plot lines, and narratives that reflect the society they exist in (Menadue, 2020). These relations "transport" them into the narrative of a show, impacting the individual on a mental and bodily level. As individuals try to function in a society that has been impacted by a parasitic stressor, various experiences alter the way they perceive information presented to them, whether it be something they have perceived as accurate or something that contests their way of thinking. This notion is bolstered by Navami and Thomas's explanation for what transpires as a result of narrative transportation.They explain that "affective and cognitive responses, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions function as potential consequences of narrative transportation. It helps the viewers to escape into a fancy world where viewers can experience different kinds of emotions," (Navami and

Thomas, 2022, p. 307). As individuals look for guidance to understand their emotions and surroundings, they utilize narrative transportation to answer their questions and cathartically process emotions induced by parasitic stressors in their environment. The viewer experiences bodily changes, including buffering impacts of depression, denial, and isolation when engaging in an enjoyable experience, such as watching shows that impact his/her comprehension of the parasitic stressor. For instance, in *The Walking Dead* season nine episode fifteen, when the character Alpha leads one of the main characters, Daryl, to a massive herd of "walkers," or zombies, the audience is met with intense visual and auditory stimuli, such as loud noises, exaggerated gore, and graphic injury. This is coupled with the idea that over the course of season nine, the audience is drawn into the show by attaching emotionally to the characters. Within this episode, there is an exaggeration of what a parasitic stressor is, as there is a large mass of infected individuals attempting to kill Daryl, displaying exaggerated gore, intense graphic imagery illustrating decaying individuals, as well as loud noises indicating distress, dramatizes the presentation of parasitic stressors. On a physiological level, a viewer who experiences narrative transportation physiologically reacts to the strong stimuli presented in the show. As individuals connect to the characters and experiences stimuli that lures them them into the show (Navami and Thomas, 2022), their perception of the parasitic stressor in the show and in the real world is altered as they feel closer to the characters and plot of the show (Thornhill and Fincher, 2020). Through the lens of the parasite stress theory individuals find comfort in familiarity (Menadue, 2020), thus revealing that individuals are comforted by the ideas and narratives presented within a TV show that reflects society and guides their thinking surrounding environmental stressors.

However, an individual's cognitive abilities also play a crucial role in their ability to grasp what information they receive in a science fiction TV show. A human's brain, in its attempt to navigate a world of constant stimuli, breaks down and filters information based on what is most important for an individual to know. Sabine Heim and Andreas Keil, a researcher at the Infancy Studies Lab at Rutgers University and Professor of Psychology at the University of Florida respectively, simplify the cognitive processes of attention and selective attention, as they explain that "emotional activation mobilizes and guides attentional resources to stimuli signaling threat or reward," (Heim & Keil, 2017, p. 4). Heim and Keil's explanation of selective attention asserts that individuals filter out information their brain considers unimportant. Specifically, individuals pay attention to things that they view as inherently good or bad for them. As individuals take in information and have an adverse emotional and physical response to it, they may go through the narrative transportation theory (Navami and Thomas, 2022). Individuals are then inclined to think information presented within a show is more accurate than it is, as it reflects and sensationalizes what is happening in the environment around them (Doherty, 2020).Thus, they feel the parasitic exaggerations within shows are more real than they actually are, enabling the spread of misinformation. (Thornhill and Fincher, 2020). For example, in season one episode three of*The Last of Us*, main character Ellie comes across an abandoned convenience store and searches for supplies. While there, she enters the basement of the convenience store and finds an infected man that is pinned down by heavy concrete. Here, as a viewer's brain pays attention to what is happening on screen, it filters out whatever else may be occurring around Ellie. It solely focuses on the inherently "bad" stimuli–the infected man attempting to get Ellie. The show, which reflects society's response to the parasitic stressor, exaggerates the depiction of the parasitic stressor. As a viewer's brain filters out what is good and bad for the character through selective attention, they fail to recognize that through narrative transformation and the parasite stress theory, they are not focusing on comprehending what is realistic and what is falsified. This enables the spread of false information. The scene's exaggerated depiction of the fungal infection blurs the image of how that sickness manifests in reality. Viewers stop distinguishing what information is true about the parasitic stressor in both the show and real life, and instead, focus on the characters' storylines due to the emotional connection established by the narrative transportation theory.

This essay has focused on American societal divisions that emerged over the pandemic, from the misconstruing of information in an attempt to digest one's trauma to understanding a new environment molded by parasitic stressors. However, there are other factors that have contributed to rifts in society within the last five years, ranging from economic problems to mass hysteria caused through other divisive and traumatizing political issues. Specifically, the unequal economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to large-scale disagreements surrounding xenophobia. COVID-19 has economically devastated specific groups within America, as the closing of businesses and layoffs left citizens to struggle with high unemployment levels as well as the risk of an economic recession (Esses and Hamilton, 2021). Feelings of uncertainty that have consumed the country are exacerbated through disagreements surrounding the ideas of employment opportunities and unemployment insurance (Esses and Hamilton, 2021). While economic disparities impacted the unemployed, societal tensions formed over who to blame for the pandemic and economic competition. As individuals responded to economic tensions, foreign countries were blamed as the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic, and consequently, the cause of the unemployment issues that had fallen upon America. Furthermore, the lack of economic competition left America in economic insecurity, with citizens and businesses competing for limited resources with other countries (Esses and Hamilton, 2021). Thus, the significance of these political and economic factors as contributors to tensions within America, in the context of this paper, is to depict that societal divisions stem predominantly from insecurity, fear, and uncertainty. This is an idea that purely analyzing exaggerations within science fiction does not entirely reveal. However, it is integral to analyze works of science fiction to combat misinformation and come to terms with national trauma. Science fiction, through its inclusion of themes that reflect the concerns of society, gives insight as to how the American public emotionally responds to parasite based stressors.

HOW PARASITISM SENSATIONALISM IS HELPFUL AND HELPLESS REGARDING COVID-19 TRAUMA

Parasitism depictions in science fiction can aid society in some capacity, as they help to emotionally and mentally navigate a new American society where environmental changes caused by parasitic stressors can be draining to comprehend. As negativity surrounds an individual regarding death and disease, and one's mental health dwindles (Esses and Hamilton, 2021), an individual that turns to science fiction may be in search of answers (Talevi et al., 2020). As per Menadue's description of the capabilities of science fiction, "science fiction examines mechanisms and impacts of viruses from biological, psychological, and socioeconomic perspectives," (Menadue, 2020, p. 7). He asserts that the tools science fiction employs tease apart more significant societal issues, mirroring society's primary concerns. Thus, individuals relate to science fiction on an emotional level. Audiences turn to the genre for guidance on how to cope with the environment around them, as characters navigate worlds with similar stressful stimuli. This is reiterated by Menadue as he explains how works of science fiction can identify public concerns, thereby guiding them by describing instances with "lockdowns, quarantine, wearing masks, zoonotic diseases, mis-use of medication, and socioeconomic impacts," (Menadue, 2020, p. 8). By reflecting real life situations, individuals find comfort in science fiction by relating their problems to the narrative. Science fiction employs tools that individuals may use to break down and comprehend the trauma they are facing as a result of a parasitic stressor. Rather than compartmentalizing these issues, audiences can manage their multifaceted emotions through the tools the realm of science fiction provides. The tools may not entirely solve their issues, but it provides guidelines and ideas through how characters in the show deal with their emotions in the face of parasitic danger.

SCIENCE FICTION, SENSATIONALISED PARASITISM, SOCIETAL DIVISIONS, AND BEYOND

On the other hand, science fiction's depiction of parasitism may play a role in dividing society. If a viewer is not cautious in understanding the anthropomorphisms and metaphors that dramatize parasitism they may misunderstand the situation at hand and give way to the spread of false information (Doherty, 2020) and enabling the formation of microcultures out of fear of the unknown (Thornhill and Fincher, 2020). Audiences also unconsciously discard pieces of information as they take in large amounts of stimuli, further enabling the spread of misinformation. Heim and Keil (2017) outline the brain's filtration of information in a new technological age, as it "constantly switches attention on and off rapidly, between important and unimportant things," (p. 2). Viewers hone in on the information that their brain deems to be important, as it is labeled as "bad" or "good". Meanwhile, parasitism is sensationalized and individuals that become emotionally invested in a show via the narrative transportation theory cannot differentiate between realistic and exaggerated ideas. The failure to filter out exaggerated ideas creates misconceptions of how parasitic relationships look or what infection transfer looks like (Vellani et al., 2023). The uncertainty that results from these misconceptions can result in tensions caused by conflicting opinions.

Through one's journey to understand trauma and tension onset by parasitic stressors, he/she may find comfort and guidance in science fiction movies that reflect their society. However, they must be cognizant of how they consume this information, as representations of parasitism within science fiction TV series are sensationalized. If a viewer is not careful they can contribute to the spread of misinformation and societal tension in response to parasitic stressors within their environment. The impact of parasitic stressors on individuals and society is asserted particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in America over the past five years. The implications of the illusory truth effect, parasite stress theory, narrative transportation theory, and selective attention reveal how misconstrued information impacts individuals. Societal divisions are impacted by various components, including innate human cognition in response to stressful circumstances brought on by parasites (Thornhill and Fincher, 2020), and the exaggerated portrayal of parasites (Doherty, 2020). The rise in popularity of shows like *The Walking Dead* (2010-2022) and *The Last of Us* (2023-present) that feature parasitism narratives alludes to the reliance of American society on science fiction to guide one's thinking during stressful periods. Though this paper focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic in America, this topic is relevant to past analyses of environmental stressors in cultures besides America. The frameworks utilized (illusory truth effect, parasite stress theory, narrative transportation theory) provide lenses through which one may analyze the influence parasitic stressors and the consumption of sensationalized information has on other societal and historical contexts.

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PATRICK LYONS

Art Breaking Free: The Street Art Movement's Rise From Museum Underrepresentation

ABSTRACT

Museums, despite having a social responsibility to fairly represent all cultures, prioritize the history of white men. The underrepresentation of women and BIPOC Americans in museums creates epistemic injustice, preventing these communities from properly learning about their culture and the injustices they face. To fight this, street art is used as a consciousness raising tool to give a voice to those who can't have one in a museum. Activist street art, however, is threatened by an anti-graffiti movement that is fueled by the discomfort of privileged Americans who are made uncomfortable when faced with morally shocking content.

INTRODUCTION

When told to imagine the greatest artist of all time, the minds of many Americans will draw names from famous painters that have been praised for their unmatched ability. Da Vinci, Van Gogh, Michelangelo, and Monet are commonly discussed with the utmost praise, however, the similarities held between these artists are often unspoken. The "greats" in the minds of many Americans are all white men. American museums are responsible for this concerning, exclusionary, and misleading pattern. A 2019 study led by Chad M Topaz titled *Diversity of Artists in Major U.S. Museums* found that around 75.7% of artwork featured in American museums was the art of white men, which is highly disproportionate considering the global diversity of art, let alone in the US. Museums have established themselves as places for education where museum-goers learn about the cultures and societies that influenced the different cultures of our nation. When only the art and stories of white men are highlighted, and other races and genders are marginalized, society learns from museums that the art and stories of white men are more important than those of any other culture. Due to the underrepresentation in museums, some discriminated communities have found another outlet to creatively express themselves, doing so through street art. Street art allows the artist to express themselves freely in a public environment where their work has exposure to mass amounts of people without needing to be selected for display. A piece of street art does not have to be sought after in order to impact an individual, but rather any person on the street can view the art piece in their everyday life, letting the art send whatever message the artist intended. The communicative power of street art led to its use by women and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, for the white male dominated museums fail to adequately represent their struggles. However, this creative outlet does not exist unchallenged, for there are people who are made uncomfortable by the presence of street art. This discomfort is what drives the anti-graffiti movement, a movement which seeks to rid the streets of street art, and in the process, takes away any of the messages sent through it. When this happens, women and BIPOC communities are once again oppressed in their ability to express themselves creatively.

This paper will focus on how a lack of minority representation in American museums affects people from discriminated communities. Additionally, this paper will examine how street art can encourage discriminated communities to express their stories creatively, while also performing activist work. Furthermore, this paper will examine the countermovement to street art, and how it is caused by a fear of the messages sent through activist street art.

MUSEUMS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Museums act as a reflection of society, allowing them a significant influence in how societal values are established. This power leaves museums socially responsible to reflect values that show everybody as equal, being able to do so through the artwork that they choose to display. American museums, however, fail to meet this responsibility. The inability to properly feature the artwork of marginalized groups creates an epistemic injustice. In his article "Epistemic Injustice: A Role for Recognition?", author Paul Giladi discusses this phenomenon, stating that epistemic injustice, "arises when somebody or a social group is wronged in their 'capacity as a knower'", and that it can be "a result of a social structure rendering social group X powerless" (Giladi 142). Victims of epistemic injustice lose access to information due to a social power dynamic that establishes them as less deserving to know it. When society prioritizes the teaching of a white focused history, BIPOC Americans are denied knowledge of their own cultural background, resulting in epistemic injustice. White men get to learn their history in museums, meanwhile, everyone else does not. Further, Americans that lack access to information are denied the ability to learn about the injustices they suffer from in the first place, which makes them unable to take action against them.

Museums are one of the many institutions that create these kinds of epistemological injustices, as they can control how people view their own history and importance.In his book *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition*, Timothy W. Luke claims that museums "possess a power to shape collective values and social understanding in a decisively important fashion," (Luke 2002). Museums are able to do so through the exhibits and art pieces they choose to display. Since museums have the ability to influence collective values and social understandings, the value at which they portray a certain social group can decide whether that group is affected by epistemic injustice. This influence that museums have is explored by Richard Sandell, who in his book *Museums, Society, Inequality*, introduces the concept of social responsibility, which on behalf of a museum, "requires an acknowledgement not only of the potential to impact on social inequality, but also of the organizations' obligation to deploy their social agency and cultural authority in a way that is aligned and consistent with the values of contemporary society" (Sandell 18). A socially responsible museum actively monitors the collective values that they teach their attendees, not favoring one social group over another. A museum that fails to be socially responsible is then responsible for America's whitewashed version of history and culture, which views the stories of BIPOC Americans as less important.

In 2020, in the wake of the murder of George Floydand the subsequent grappling with racial injustices, as well as the profound effect of the BLM movement, society was seeking the restructure of racist establishments. Here, museums were rebuked for failing to meet their social responsibility of equally representing minority cultures in America. In June of that year, the curatorial staff of the Guggenheim museum, who are responsible for selecting the items to be displayed, came together and wrote an open letter directed to the head of the museum. In this letter, the staff directly addressed the lack of cultural representation for people of color that they noticed in the museum, seeking a solution to fulfill their social responsibility. The letter stated that they must "redress the museum's primarily white, male exhibition history and collecting practices by devoting significant financial resources to diversify the collection … as well as to support major exhibitions and educational programming that center BIPOC perspectives" (Curatorial Department 2020). In writing this letter, the curatorial staff actively admitted that they were failing to fulfill their social responsibility as a museum by underrepresenting the cultures of people of color. By admitting their failure to be socially responsible, the curatorial staff at the Guggenheim confirmed that the lack of museum diversity nationwide was an issue, because the lack of cultural representation seen throughout the country reinforces societal values that place white history as more important than the history of BIPOC Americans.

STREET ART AND ITS CONSCIOUS RAISING ABILITIES

When marginalized groups in America are unable to teach others about injustices they face, they become silenced. In order to raise awareness about these injustices, silenced Americans create street art, using it as a tool for effective protest and consciousness raising. Being unable to advocate for these injustices through art in museums, women and BIPOC Americans find street art to be a more effective way of conveying their message. In her paper titled "Finding Your Voice in the Streets: Street Art and Epistemic Injustice", author Sondra Bacharach explores the expressive abilities offered by street art. Bacharach explores epistemic injustice and how those who suffer from it are effectively silenced, unable to share their knowledge. She defines street art as something that is "aconsensual", referring to how street art can be created by anybody without the need for external approval (Bacharach, 33). Street art's aconsensual nature allows artists to have more freedom in expressing their ideas than they do with art featured in a museum. Museums, which have been established as generally unequal with their representation of women and minorities, filter art through a biased process, curating the art that is fit to display to the public. Street art, on the other hand, is aconsensual, and so a person whose voice is silenced can display their art in a public environment, diffusing a message that likely would not have been accepted in a museum. Due to this, activists are able to use their street art to speak out against injustice, giving voices back to victims of epistemic injustice, since the museum no longer acts as a filter to silence women and BIPOC Americans.

The art made by activist groups plays a role in consciousness raising, an idea that is explored by Adrienne Trier-Beck and Patricia Leavy in their book “Gender and Pop Culture”. When defining consciousness raising, the authors state that it is “work done to draw people’s attention to a social problem, increase their understanding of it including how it personally impacts them, and hopefully motivate them to help solve the problem” (Trier-Beck and Leavy, 85). Silenced people lack agency to raise consciousness about their issue because systemic injustices discredit the value of their word in society Looking to street art, however, offers women and BIPOC Americans the ability to use it’s aconsensual nature to speak out about their issue without needing the approval from an outside party, effectively unsilencing themselves. Street art’s assertive presence in a public space catches the attention of different backgrounds of people walking by, meaning that a large audience can receive its message. This also provides repressed communities with access to information about their history and culture, creating and empowering a community that could not be found in a museum. Street art has been used for its consciousness raising by women who are victims of street harassment, speaking back to the men who silence them.

Fig. 1. Stop Telling Women to Smile

In major US cities, men verbally assault women by harassing them on the street, and so, through the use of street art’s consciousness raising abilities, women fight back, directly responding back to the men that verbally assaulted them. The effects of catcalling on women was explored in a research article by Maria DelGreco et al. titled "Contending with Catcalling: The Role of System-justifying Beliefs and Ambivalent Sexism in Predicting Women's Coping Experiences with (and Men's Attributions for) Stranger Harassment". The researchers found that the average woman who experiences verbal assault on the street is "not likely to respond to the predator" and has "a desire for justice against the perpetrator" (DelGreco, Maria, et al. 1404). Being catcalled makes a woman feel threatened, and the fear that speaking could result in violence from the catcaller effectively silences them. In order to fight back against misogyny, a street artist in Brooklyn, New York named Tatyana Fazlalizadeh created a series of murals titled "Stop Telling Women to Smile", which was created to encourage victims of catcalling to speak back to their perpetrator and unsilence themselves. In this series, Fazlalizadeh interviewed women of Brooklyn that had been catcalled, and with the information she gathered, she went to the site of each verbal harassment and plastered a wheat paste portrait on a nearby wall. Each portrait was in black and white, depicting the victim with a stern look on their face, and accompanied beneath was a caption that gave a statement from the women. Each caption was a brief statement directed to the perpetrator of the harassment, including taglines such as "Harassing Women Does Not Prove Your Masculinity" and "My Value Extends Far Beyond My Body" (Fazlalizadeh 2014). Upon viewing the work, the black and white coloring and the stern faces of the women indicate a serious tone to the work, which helps to further emphasize the message featured beneath the portrait. By placing the portraits at the scene of each verbal assault, there exists a likelihood that the perpetrator will go to the same location and have to see the portrait, directly facing the woman they verbally assaulted while reading her message. With the perpetrator unable to further escalate the situation, the woman is no longer afraid to fight back, no longer burdened by the fear of what the man may do if called out. , The serious look on the women's faces draws in the attention of people passing by, and this again brings attention to the messages that emphasize how serious of an issue catcalling is, highlighting the negative effects it has on women. These women, who were initially silenced, found their voice through street art, because street art is a consciousness raising tool that allows silenced people to speak out about the harassment and injustices that they face.

THE ANTI-GRAFFITI MOVEMENT'S RE-SILENCING

When looking to raise consciousness about a social movement, street art activists can utilize moral shock in their art, which causes people to question the ways in which they support injustice. Black street artists often shock and offend White Americans with anti-racist art. This discomfort brought by activist street art fuels anti-graffiti movements, which strive to maintain a society's comfortable ignorance to injustices. As has been established, street art is an effective way for activists to spread a message to the general public, allowing them to raise consciousness about injustice. Morally shocking art causes people to think about how their actions and values influence an injustice. In their article *Moral Shocks and Social Networks in Animal Rights and Anti-Nuclear Protests*, authors James M. Jasper and Jane D. Poulsen introduced the theory of moral shock, stating that it is "when an event or situation raises such a sense of outrage in people that they become inclined toward political action" (Jasper and Poulsen 498). The sensation of outrage described by Jasper and Poulsen is the feeling that comes with questioning one's own morals in relation to the topic of discussion, which can drive a desire to help fix the issue that shocked their morals. When a piece of art brings attention to an overlooked type of justice, an individual who has remained ignorant to the issue may experience moral shock upon realization of the injustice's prevalence.

The aconsensual and hyper-public nature of street art makes it a great vessel to carry morally shocking content to the public. This can be seen with some of the activist street art made for the BLM movement, whose messages can be morally shocking to White Americans. In their study by Frank J. Kachanoff et al., titled *Equating Silence With Violence: When White Americans Feel Threatened by Anti-Racist Messages*, the authors explore the effect that anti-racist messages have on White Americans. Anti-racist messages, as stated by the authors, "often argue for the role of White silence in maintaining systems of racial inequity" (Kachanoff et al. 1), meaning that these messages actively call out white Americans for allowing structural racism to continue in society by remaining ignorant to the issue, making them take accountability. Kachanoff conducted a series of studies that examined white Americans' responses to activist messages, some featuring anti-racist phrases like "White Silence is Violence". When reflecting on the results of the studies, they stated that their "work reveals how the idea of structural racism and White privilege is generally threatening to White Americans" (Kachanoff et al. 19), ultimately reflecting the idea that White Americans are made uncomfortable by direct, confrontational anti-racist messages. These messages force White Americans to confront their own ignorance toward racism. This confrontation of their own privilege is morally shocking for White Americans because they are forced to view themselves as morally in the wrong for letting racism continue, a realization that is shocking. For some of these White Americans, acknowledging their own privilege may be too morally shocking, causing them to feel uncomfortable, and deny or push away anti-racist messages. For the members of society that have privilege, some morally shocking content may make them too uncomfortable to be in the presence of that information, causing activism that uses moral shock to be opposed by some. Because of this, when street art and graffiti bring morally shocking topics to the public eye, anti-graffiti movements, like the Graffiti-Hurts organization, can try to suppress their activism.

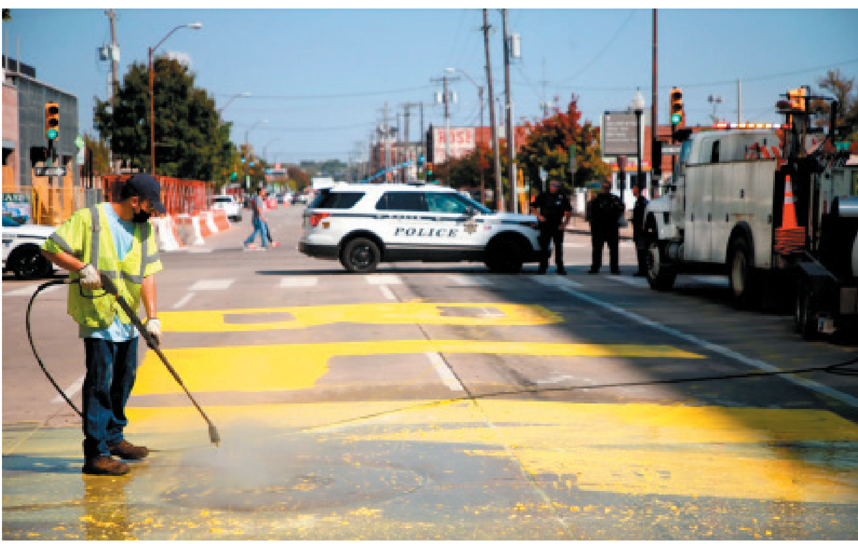

Fig. 2. The Defacement and Destruction of Black Lives Matter Murals.

Since privileged Americans can feel threatened by morally shocking messages, anti-graffiti organizations try to silence the morally shocking messages that underprivileged artists send through their street art. This can specifically be seen through the silencing of Black Artists during the BLM movement, being silenced for their morally shocking anti-racist messages. One of the main anti-graffiti organizations is known as Graffiti Hurts, and in a paper titled *Graffiti Hurts and the Eradication of Alternative Landscape Expression*, authors Terri Moreau and Derek

H. Alderman explore beyond the corporate facade of the organization, discussing the strategies that it uses to villainize graffiti. According to Moreau and Alderman, Graffiti Hurts pushes the idea that graffiti actively harms a community by causing disorder, treating it as a blight that cannot be ignored. The authors state that "by controlling awareness of graffiti in the media, anti graffiti organizations use public persuasion to frame graffiti as irredeemably bad" (Moreau and Alderman, 119). Villainizing graffiti to the public isn't enough for these organizations, because according the authors, "Graffiti Hurts argues that support for governmental law enforcement - including better budgets, specific graffiti units, a graffiti expert, and long-term commitment to combat graffiti– is essential" (Moreau and Alderman, 120). With governmental enforcement brought into the picture, Graffiti Hurts can effectively eradicate a community of any street art, and in doing so, eradicate the messages brought by the art as well. This is desirable to the organization because some of the privileged members of a community are made uncomfortable by the morally shocking content that some street art carries, and eradicating the source of those messages can help prevent the privileged from confronting their own morals. In doing so, the organization further suppresses any minority activist communities, because although some were able to unsilence themselves through their street art, the banning of street art from Graffiti-Hurts makes them unable to do so. This type of silencing was very present during the 2020 surge of the Black Lives Matter movement, where activists called for the acknowledgement of the systematic racism faced by Black Americans. The movement itself supported anti-racist values, calling for White Americans to recognize their ignorance toward racism. Many activists expressed their support through street art, commonly represented by the letters BLM, which were plastered all over cities to remind people of the presence of the movement. One way that activists did so was by painting the letters "BLM" in giant letters that covered city streets, urging anybody passing by to acknowledge the movement and in turn the movement's anti-racist messages. This type of mural was created on a street in Tulsa, Oklahoma, sitting right in front of the City Hall building. Unnamed activists laid out tarps that acted as a stencil, and splattered yellow paint onto them. When the tarps were removed, large script "BLM" letters covered the street. This street mural was meant to act as a constant reminder to those in city hall as well as those passing by that the movement was present and strong, however, the artists faced persecution by the city. The act was labeled as vandalism of public property, and three of the artists were arrested on the scene, and the mural was later power washed away by government employees (Luckerson 2020). This case is a blatant example of how the criminalization of graffiti art prevents society from being exposed to morally shocking content. The artists who were trying to spread awareness about the movement, and in turn its anti-racist messages, had the potential to morally shock some of the privileged, White members of the community who were perhaps more distant from the movement. Although some may support the movement after being morally shocked, recognizing their failure to prevent racism, some perhaps could have been made uncomfortable. Possibly done in order to maintain the ignorant but comfortable lifestyle of privileged members of the community, the mural was removed, silencing the message sent by the artists. Even though street art had established itself as an activist medium to unsilence silenced individuals, the community discomfort that could result from moral shock caused those artists to be silenced once again by the anti-graffiti organizations that push for the art form's extinction.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated throughout this paper, street art is an effective activist tool that communities facing discrimination can use when unable to express themselves in museums, however, the street art has a counter movement that is fueled by a discomfort from morally shocking messages. Many American art museums have failed to fulfill their social responsibility, representing the culture of a white man as more important than that of others, and ultimately translating into an epistemic injustice due to the museum's influential role in society. More recently, however, the BLM movement has inspired museums like the Guggenheim NYC to take accountability for their unfair representation of BIPOC stories, and strive to create a more equal, socially responsible representation of societal power dynamics. Due to the epistemic injustice brought by a museum's inability to represent minority communities, women and BIPOC communities found street art as an effective means for creative release, using it's aconsensual nature to raise consciousness about the social issues they would have been unable to share if their work was confined to a museum. Women particularly are able to find their voice through street art, being able to express opinions on social issues like street harassment in cases where they would otherwise be silenced. To further the effectiveness of street art's consciousness raising, some activists incorporate moral shocks into their work, causing viewers to question their moral stance on injustice. In some cases, this confrontation of one's own morals can cause too much discomfort, like with the threatened response that anti-racist messages elicit from some white Americans. When acknowledging one's own ignorance becomes too uncomfortable for a person with privilege, they can become defensive and push away the morally shocking message, which is what the Graffiti Hurts organization does, banning graffiti and its accompanying messages to keep a privileged population ignorant, yet comfortable. Street art rose in popularity because it allowed marginalized communities to creatively express their problems outside of the control of the predominantly white, privileged museums. Despite this escape from restriction, the privileged members of society found a new way to keep these marginalized communities under control, doing so by taking away the art form that gave them their freedom to begin with. This reaction to street art's creation shows that the privileged groups of America actively seek to maintain their power over marginalized groups, working to take away activist tools, like street art, when that power becomes threatened.

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CASSANDRA MACENAT

The Mocking of Black Women: Finding Space in a White and Male Industry

ABSTRACT

Media is a form of communication that can reinforce societal messages through images and dialogue. Specifically, the Hollywood industry is a space where directors can bring art to life as they create entertainment that enlightens and targets audiences. The faces behind the Hollywood industry are primarily white and male directors and actors. African Americans progressively play roles within production as society shifts from slavery and overt racism to becoming more inclusive. Historically and even today, however, this form of media has been used to preserve stereotypes of minorities as a form of entertainment. These stereotypes have become so common within the entertainment business that, many times, it takes years for viewers to understand the effects of such messages. More recently, film production companies have issued warnings of insensitive dialogue and images that come across in classic television shows. This article primarily focuses on how these stereotypes look like for black women who have intersectional identities. Kimberle Crenshaw was the first to use the word "intersectionality" to describe the experiences of black women in America. Due to the diversion of race and gender, black women face a unique experience that makes their involvement in the film industry much different than their white and male counterparts.

INTRODUCTION

On March 12, 2023, a video uploaded on the *Tiktok* platform accumulated massive attention because of a detail that had gone unnoticed and forgotten in the television classic *Tom and Jerry*. It zoomed into the caricature of the maid whose face was rarely ever shown. The video asked, was Mammy Two Shoes' face usually hidden, and given such animalistic features, because she was a woman? The name says it all: she takes a role of servitude while the white woman who owns the house has beautiful human features. The *Tiktok* video reached 3,694 comments, some of which showed genuine shock (@theyoutubebro, 2023). Unbeknownst to many of those *Tiktok* viewers, Warner Bros, the company responsible for this 1940 classic, issued a warning message about potential racist portrayals in the film due to rising concerns regarding racism in American society.

The Mammy Caricature is shown frequently in the exaggerated images prominent in the Jim Crow era, which emphasize and make joy out of anti-blackness. Southern culture used this representation to depict the enslaved black woman as a large woman that cooks and cleans for the slave owner. She is considered the opposite of a white woman, who embraces thinness and beauty. Other facets of the Mammy Caricature include a role of hostility and seduction. Through these portrayals, black women in real-life are expected to take on this Sapphire and Jezebel trope. Stereotypes stemming from white supremacist bigotry have evolved and heavily impacted on society. An effective site where white people have perpetuated anti-blackness repetitively is the Hollywood film industry. According to the Geena Davis Institute on gender in 2019 media, black female characters are 29.3% more likely to be shown as violent as opposed to white female characters, who are 24.6% more likely (4). This is significant considering there are more positive images of white women than black women historically, and this finding continues even now. Meeting the standard of whiteness proves to offer actresses a better chance at being respected, making success difficult for black women attempting to find it in such a white and male dominant industry. Especially considering that many black women within the film industry, itself, want to combat these harmful stereotypes.

In this paper, the experience of black actresses will be emphasized by first introducing the intersectionality theory and why it is significant to black women. This then will lead to the discussion that because of the interconnection between racism and sexism, white patriarchy attracts a need to subject black women to ridicule and judgment by targeting their femininity. This expression of dominance, in the case of black women, is known as the “white male gaze” or fetishization. Their intersectional identity drives their otherness in White cinema, which positions them as sassy, sexual objects, an image further shown in the Sapphire and Jezebel trope. Thus, it influences their stereotypical portrayal in Black entertainment, specifically by black men. Perhaps this means that black women can only find refuge within themself, if conformity is not grounds for their acceptance. Black women are systematically objectified in Hollywood through the reduction of fixed stereotypes, a process in which both white and black men participate, & which makes “stardom” in a traditional sense even more difficult to achieve. Thus, only in innovative new spaces where black women control the production itself is meaningful representation & centering of complex Black female characters possible.

THE INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF BLACK WOMEN

A dilemma that black women face is the multiplicity of minority identities they embody, which create complexity in the discrimination they experience. The idea of intersectionality describes how two or more identities interact dependently with one another to create a distinct form of oppression. The term 'intersectionality' has its roots in Black feminist activism and was first used by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989 (139). To be black and a woman introduces a life of hardships as whiteness and masculinity continue to dominate and influence the social hierarchy. Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate, argued that black women were sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are individually based on experiences that do not fully reflect the intersection of race and gender (140). Black women experience, therefore, a unique form of marginalization. Their experience sets them apart from the experiences of black men and white women. The intersectionality theory recognizes black women who are systematically relegated to a subordinate status because they are neither male nor white.

Rather than acknowledging the significance of black women's issues, many tend to undermine it by broadening how intersectionality affects others as well. Many scholars have criticized intersectionality for focusing "too much" on Black women." (Carbado et al., para. 22). Is it possible that this is a reflection of the lack of concern for black women's struggle? If the intersectionality theory works to shed light on those who are at loss of opportunities because they stand at an intersection of multiple identities, then it would focus on whatever group is affected until a resolution comes. The theory works to give much attention to those who are marginalized, black women being one category of people. It is justifiable to defend that another group deserves just as much attention, but it shouldn't require shifting gears from black women, given the magnitude and persistence of their trauma. Crenshaw emphasizes anti discrimination policies present a dilemma for black women, as the court forces them to choose between expressing their concerns about their intersectional identities or standing by black men to address racial disparities (148). Many black women have found better representation in the feminist movement. However, due to the dominance of whiteness, white women take the lead in that conversation. With such complexity, and through extended intersectional research, black women are significantly and uniquely oppressed.

THE WHITE MALE GAZE IN HOLLYWOOD FILMS

It's important to note how oppression may look in the American film industry, which is rooted in racist and sexist ideologies. Black actresses have significantly limited opportunities compared to their white and male counterparts, which leaves them roles that continuously mock them. As society evolves, is it not peculiar that black women can continue to refer to the Jim Crow Era when describing their depictions in films? If a lack of regard towards intersectionality and historical illiteracy exists, it allows a system to target an already vulnerable audience through comedy and entertainment. People are able to excuse, for example, the Mammy Caricature because they may not be familiar with it as a trope. By being introduced to the true stories of black women, people can finally dissect how a hierarchy of social status where white is dominant enables inequities. Hollywood, an industry predicated on controlling and directing what is worth people's attention, is a place to start in understanding how black women are perceived and treated because of their intersectional identity. Throughout history, the film industry has been a space for white male directors to bring their creativity to life since they are the foundation. The Hollywood film industry began with a group of Eastern European men, some of whom include Samuel Goldwyn, Louis B. Mayer, and the Warner Brothers (Champlin, 1988). With white men having the ability to control filming productions, actors who made it on screen primarily followed the same gender and race patterns.

When diversity is accounted for by white men, black culture is obliged to the interpretation of white men, which may or may not be accurate. Lizzie Chen, a digital content coordinator, writes that the representation of black culture on screen will never be as fulfilling if black people are not in executive power to depict what they know to be true (para. 11). White men not only control production but the perception of black culture. Black people must then meet the criteria of such perception if they wish to succeed within the industry. For black women, specifically, it is less observed, discussed, and protested than black men because of the double marginalization black women experience. The research of black women by white psychologists in earlier years calls on similar ideas. Theorists claimed that the black matriarchy would lead to social problems because black women were "deviant, masculine, and naturally superior." and another research by white psychologists also rejected black women to "nonfamilial" roles, such as politicians, activists, etc. (Hull et al., 1982). Such research, of course, is a voice of reason for sexist and racist claims. By allowing such research to circulate, stereotypes that stem from racism become definitive. Now, there is a source on why a black woman lacks femininity or is incapable of being hired for a particular job. It successfully demonizes black women, leaving historical trauma to go unnoticed.

The Sapphire and Jezebel trope reiterates not only biased research but reflects the history of black women submitting their bodies to their slave owners, which brought about their quote-on-quote deviance and masculinization. Dr. Carolyn West discusses this in her paper, titled "Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel," the importance of media portrayals in the care of black women in therapy. The Sapphire image, included in a 1940s and 1950s radio show, depicts the black female character, the wife of Kingfish, as hostile and naggy (West 461). As analyzed by West, portraying the black family dynamic, as one where woman of the household gives her husband trouble, reinforces the notion that by marrying a black woman a man will have to endure constant disapproval and contemp, which is the antithesis of the submissive Mammy (461). After slavery, there was a shift in how black women were perceived. The anger of black women may be authentic, considering their intersectional oppression. However, black women's portrayal in media has made anger the black women's only form of expression, as if they are incapable of passivity. The fact that roles by black women are rarely passive is another way to strip them of their femininity. Indeed, quiet roles are a gendered issue for women, but especially for white women. The behavior of Black women is often not seen as "feminine" behavior because of the prejudices media have associated with black skin: masculinity and strength. A Black feminist phrase captures this, stating that "All the women are White and all the Blacks are men" (Coles et al, p. 315). Thus, within the context of the Sapphire portrayal, black women are further seen as undesirable to straight men because of their aggression or distinctiveness from qualities associated with women.

The hegemony of the white male gaze leaves black women's identity to whatever benefits and pleases whiteness. To further understand how problematic the phenomenon of the white male gaze is, it is necessary to look at the male gaze and its role in the film industry. The male gaze is defined as the "mechanisms the dominant cinema uses to construct the male spectator in accordance with the needs of his unconscious." (Kaplan, 2010). The power of the male gaze is to not only objectify, but it carries the ability to construct women into possessions. The female gaze might objectify men to their liking, but it is usually a response to the male gaze and does not have much authority to alter the perception of men. The male gaze does not take pleasure in deviating from patriarchal norms, but instead adds the sex appeal of women to attract male viewership. If men are primarily in these executive positions, it allows them to explore their sexual desires through film and encourages other men to take an interest in the same. As established, black skin is separated from femininity, with animalistic portrayals throughout history, courtesy of slavery, which results in black women being more likely to be remorselessly objectified within the male gaze. Anderson et al. concluded from a Go/No-Go Association Task study, which analyzed if white or black women captured more attention:

> "We found Black women were more susceptible than traditionally idealized White women to objectifying perceptions. It appears likely that although adherence to the White, Western ideal may facilitate objectification, other factors such as a history of sexualization and subjugation also play a role in determining a social group's susceptibility to objectification" (Anderson et al., 2018).

The image of beauty is centered around whiteness in Western culture and media. However, the sexualization of black women is on a different scale than white women. The generational trauma that forces black women into a box stems from their bodies being held captive to servitude, racist ideologies, and fetishization. The image of representation for black women commonly looks like Jezebel, a promiscuous African American woman who is purely known for her seduction and parading of her sexuality. If black bodies are perceived in derogatory ways or can grasp attention, the Jezebel trope should benefit the film industry through viewership (Anderson et al., 2018). Take 2004 *Catwoman*, for instance, directed by Jean-Christophe "Pitof ‘’ Comar, which did horribly in the box office but viewers took into account Halle Berry's revealing costume as *Catwoman*. Roger Ebert wrote in a critical movie review, "*Catwoman*" is a movie about Halle Berry's beauty, sex appeal, figure, eyes, lips and costume design. It gets those right." (Ebert, p. 1). Sex appeal by a black woman is being prioritized here rather than the depth of the plot of the movie. There are other cases of the Jezebel image in media outlets that do more harm to black women, like the persistent portrayal done in rap music videos (Anderson et al., 2018). The sexualization of black women on such a large scale, or hypersexualization, has made black women participate in their own objectification. Black women have come to believe that their bodies are means to carry them to their own success. Of course, this is a conclusion drawn when attempting to fit in a space that simply can not empathize with black women given years of internalizing the sexist and racist messages throughout society.

THE MOCKERY BY BLACK MALE DIRECTORS

When it comes to black entertainment, which can finally bring a sense of accuracy from the perspective of a black person, it is usually at the hands of black men. In 2018, there was an increase in the percentage of black film directors. But, according to Communication & Marketing Staff, the increase was due to black male directors, not female directors (Staff, 2019). The lack of black women directing films cannot be explained by inadequacies on the part of black women, but rather on the American film industry being more open-minded to putting black men into leadership roles, as masculinity is associated with leadership, unlike femininity. As mentioned by Anderson et al., sexualized women candidates are perceived as less competent, trustworthy, and electable (Anderson et al., 2018). Such hypersexualization and belittlement of black women in media images affects real black women and the opportunities available to them. Although there are sexist ideologies at work, black entertainment by black male directors has brought about excellent and well-deserved actors and actresses to the big screen.

What appears to be the diversion of an all-white cast and the increased embracing of black culture does not include black women. The depiction of black women by black men introduces how the effect of racism and sexism has caused black women to become less desirable, masculinized, and not understood even by those in their community. Black men have created entertainment by taking on the appearance of a black woman, sometimes exaggerated to emphasize the comical aspect.

For example, Sheneneh Jenkins is a character acted and created by Martin Lawrence on his hit show Martin who dresses and appears as a black woman. Sheneneh is known for speaking loudly, exaggerating her words, dressing revealingly, and having a “sassy” attitude. Tyler Perry and Martin Lawerence, to name a few, are examples of successful black directors that are popular for the comedy of black women, allowing “these jokes to be harmless, edgy humour” (Mabelle, 2022). The problem with this is the persistence of such reenactment, regardless of their source. Many of the stereotypes black men reenact are identities black women are forced to take on because it is the identity expected of them. It’s a continuation of the infliction white supremacy has caused, but read as funny because the male director is black.

Why have black men profited, received acclamations, and built success off demeaning portrayals of black women? Their dominance as men mean they will not experience the same oppression as black women, and thus they are not in a position to understand. Especially if they can achieve success through these stereotypes, which further alienates them from the experiences of black women. In reality, black men capitalizing on the mockery of black women is a boast of their dominance, as they thrive off of what separates them from their female counterparts.

THE BLACK WOMAN IN CONTROL OF PRODUCTION

If black women are reduced by white men and can not seek refuge in black entertainment because men control production then they should perhaps look within themselves to create something more authentic and genuine that describes their experience. bell hooks explains in the essay “The oppositional gaze: Black female spectators” that the oppositional gaze, “a site of resistance for colonized black people globally”, can empower black women to deviate from their reduction (hooks, 2010). Black women are repressed from looking and observing, as it is a sign of being rebellious. It comes from a time of bondage when simply looking could lead to punishment. Thus, such trauma has remained and encouraged black people to forge acceptance. Black women, in this case, are expected to engage with their reduced identity because it has opened doors to many opportunities. By seeking an awareness of their double marginalization and seeing how it exists within the film industry allows black women to begin to own their agency.

Black female directors have already used their oppositional gaze to showcase the depths of the social problems that exist for black people, showcasing how ambitious and strong black women are. *LoveCraft Country*, directed by Misha Green, is an example, particularly season 1, episode 8. Diana Freeman, a young black girl who is verbally abused then cursed by two white cops, is chased by two demonic young girls with an animalistic portrayal that looks familiar to many Jim Crow caricatures and no one else can see the figures, which drives her to misery and panic (Green, 2020). It's interesting to note how Green uses this episode to depict the collection of trauma experienced by black young girls. They are chased by stereotypes and introduced very early on to social problems, possibly never getting a chance to be young and oblivious. For black young girls, who barely have a chance to decide who they should be because of racist and sexist messages, depictions like this can show that they are genuinely seen and there is hope to change the dynamic of the film industry.

CONCLUSION

The intersectional theory is a map that points out specific factors that cause a divergence in the road for black women and others aiming for success. Racism and sexism are so embedded in society that black women have expectations to see their reduction as a form of representation in the Hollywood media. If black women are obliged to such limited opportunities, many might feel they must meet the standards set out by white or black directors. At the pleasure of the white male gaze, black women embody caricatures that have long been present during a time of blatant discrimination. This meets the agenda of earlier white directors who used the film industry in hopes of further dismantling the black community. Is diversity being embraced if the same repetitive portrayals of black women are taking the big screen? Even black men have used their dominance as men to participate in such stereotypes. Their way of navigating acceptance in a white industry is using black women as a laughing stock. But, also it reflects how sexist ideals and even the influence of racism have allowed them to not see or turn a blind eye to the sufferings of the women within their community. Black women can be their own savior, though, and truthfully embrace and captivate the beauty of their culture. This is already happening with black women beginning to take roles behind the screen. There are further complications within the film industry at work against black women. Colorism appears to be a strategy for inclusion while adhering to the same white beauty principles. The separation of skin tone, where lighter tone black women can potentially have a better chance at success, has caused an even larger division amongst the black community. This should be studied to engage with how colorism continues to inflect even the more hopeful parts of the industry. All in all, recognizing the barriers that exist within the industry is a step towards hearing the voices that usually go unheard, thus creating more room for inclusivity.

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ALEXIS KVETNOY

Social Exclusion in Witchtok: Exploring Western Influence of Magic and Nature-Based Subcultures and Movements in America

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the phenomenon of social exclusivity within the WitchTok community, a prominent subculture on the social media platform TikTok devoted to discussing and learning about witchcraft, spirituality, and astrology. The investigation employs a theoretical framework combining concepts of hegemony, cultural appropriation, and the logic of domination which draws from Karen Warren's oppressive conceptual framework. The study examines three interconnected nature-based subcultures – Romanticism, Contemporary Paganism, and Witchtok – to establish a historical timeline leading to Witchtok's social exclusivity. The argument posits that the influence of Western ideology, historically attributed to the rise of patriarchal religions, has shaped the subordination of nature to culture. While the Romantic movement briefly equalized the value of nature and culture, it ultimately reinforced nature's subordination within Western ideology. The rise of Paganism, inspired by Romantic ideals, faced gaps in knowledge that led to cultural appropriation, perpetuating social exclusivity. The analysis concludes by addressing the complex factors contributing to Witchtok's social exclusivity, including Tiktok's biased A.I. algorithm and the need for education on cultural appropriation. The paper suggests that efforts toward inclusivity require both individual awareness and systemic changes within platforms like TikTok.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the revival of many hobbies such as crocheting, making sourdough bread or finally doing much-needed home improvement. Severe boredom and uncertainty regarding the state of the world resulted in people picking up some unique hobbies. TikTok, a social media platform released in 2016 that rapidly gained a following by 2019, was in the perfect position to steal the attention of bored quarantine participants. Besides the standard dance trends and cat videos, one genre of TikTok gained an unexpected amount of attention: witchcraft. WitchTok, a hashtag coined for "Witchcraft Tiktok", has amassed over 19.8 billion views (Moniuszko) in the past 3 years. Witchtok can be described as a community of content creators and consumers who are interested in discussing and learning about witchcraft, spirituality, astrology, and other topics of that nature.

It's not surprising that people turned to witchcraft, magic, and spirituality during troubling times. In his book, "Magic, Science and Religion", Bronislaw Malinowski, discusses how magic plays a vital cultural role by fostering confidence during challenging situations; It provides a mental and practical framework, empowering individuals to tackle vital tasks with assurance and maintain mental well-being in circumstances that would otherwise lead to despair and anxiety (Malinowski 116). Witchcraft allowed people to gain a sense of control back in their lives by alleviating their anxieties. Witchcraft seems like a friendly, inclusive subculture but is it? Em Torres, a Chicana Witchtok creator, "has seen a love spell in which a person paints honey, in the shape of a cross, on their tongue, being appropriated by non-Latines, even though she said the practice derives from brujería, a Latin American and Afro-Caribbean spiritual practice" (Delgado). This kind of appropriation takes the voices away from those, usually minorities, who are qualified to speak on the subject. On the surface, WitchTok seems like a friendly, inclusive subculture that anyone can participate in and feel empowered by due to its accessibility on TikTok and strong emphasis on community. But digging below the surface reveals that it is exclusionary towards minorities and people of lower socio-economic status. Through my research on patriarchal religion and other magic and nature-based subcultures, I ask the question of what events led to WitchTok being socially exclusive. This paper will also investigate an individual's motivation to join a magic/nature-based subculture along with whether or not being involved in one of these subcultures is inherently privileged.

This paper will investigate three cases using a theoretical framework combining the concepts of hegemony and cultural appropriation along with Karen Warren's oppressive conceptual framework which involves value dualisms, value hierarchies, and the logic of domination (Warren 128). Hegemony, cultural appropriation, and the logic of domination all work together to produce social exclusivity, which is the restriction of access or membership to a particular social group based on criteria such as social status, wealth, or ethnicity, through the justification of a dominant group's rule over society and their influence over the spread of ideologies. The three cases I chose are Romanticism, Contemporary Paganism, and Witchtok. They are all magic and nature-based subcultures that will be presented in that specific order to establish a timeline of events that led to WitchTok's ultimate social exclusivity. I argue that WitchTok is socially exclusive because nature and magic-based subcultures in the United States were subject to the influence of Western ideology. Historically, the separation of nature and culture can be attributed to Patriarchal religions which led to Western ideology that emphasizes men, whiteness, and culture as reasoned through the logic of domination. Romantics managed to level nature and culture on the value hierarchy, however, nature remains subordinate to culture as can be seen through Romantic poets placing extrinsic value on nature, which subsequently led to personal empowerment. Thus, it sparked people's interest in magic and nature as it was a source of personal empowerment. However, due to gaps in knowledge within these subcultures, individuals had to be culturally appropriate in order for the practice to seem more legitimate. Ultimately, hegemonic power led to social exclusion within magic and nature-based subcultures.

BACKGROUND

Nature and magic-based subcultures in the United States can be traced back to the Romantic Era. Romanticism was a counterculture movement that occurred in response to the Industrial Revolution, lasting from the beginning to the mid-eighteenth century. It emphasized "imagination and emotion, experience, individualism, subjectivity, idealism, …, aesthetics, beauty, nature and enchantment" (Sage 29). The themes mentioned above directly oppose rationality, objectivity, and industry which defined culture at the time. People were unsatisfied with the bleak existence of urbanization and industrialization as "It provided little room for "enchantment" – the sense of delight and astonishment at the wonders, marvels, and mysteries that they believed had been intrinsic to the premodern worldview" (Saler 128). This is why Romanticists found solace in nature. The wilderness, a separate entity from culture and humans, was able to provide people with enchantment. It gave people comfort knowing that there was a world outside of industry and productivity and that they could escape to a place where the only rules that controlled them were ones of nature.

Since Romanticism, the United States didn't see an increase in magic and nature-based subcultures until the 1960s and 1970s. To name a few, there's Contemporary Paganism, Wicca, and New Age Spirituality. Contemporary Paganism, also known as Neopaganism, is a spiritual subculture that draws upon the beliefs and practices of ancient pagan religions. It rejects destructive "male" religions such as Christianity, while embracing femininity, magic, and nature (Sage 32-33). Inspired by the Romantics, Neopagans use nature and magic to re-enchant their lives. Witchtok, which emerged recently, is completely online and draws from Romanticism, Neopaganism, and others to educate viewers about various aspects of magic and witchcraft.

HEGEMONY, CULTURAL APPROPRIATION, AND THE OPPOSITIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that will be used to analyze my three cases consists of the concepts of "Hegemony", "Appropriation", and Karen Warren's Oppressive Conceptual Framework. I will tie all of these together to explain how nature and magic based subcultures were influenced by Western ideology and how that made them socially exclusive. "Hegemony" was a concept originally theorized by Antonio Gramsci in the 20th century (Hebdige 15). He drew upon observations made in Karl Marx's, "The Communist Manifesto", such as "'the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class'" (Bates 351). Adding on to this, Gramsci came up with the concept of Hegemony to describe a process of intellectual and moral leadership that embedded a ruling class across society (Martin). Stuart Hall's work throughout the 1960s more thoroughly defines Hegemony as a concept that "refers to a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert 'total social authority' over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by 'winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural'" (Hall 317). Hegemony is essentially saying that due to social inequalities in society such as race, socioeconomic status, and gender, a hierarchy is formed and subordinate groups unconsciously accept that dominant groups have more power.

Cultural appropriation can be seen as a byproduct of hegemony. It is typically defined as the taking of something produced by members of one culture by members of another (Young 136). There also exists appreciation that is seen as exploring rather than stealing (Cattien and Stopford). When looking at appropriation and appreciation on a cultural scale, the line is blurred between the two. Examining a culture with the concept of hegemony in mind reveals that some groups hold more power than others. Therefore, when members of a dominant group engage in cultural appropriation, the action is still considered to be wrong as they are taking an element of another culture without permission. This continues to uphold old oppressive structures by exerting dominance over groups that have historically been marginalized and disempowered. That begs the question: Can a dominant group practice appreciation? Cattien and Stopford (2022) disagree. They state:

> A more appropriate formulation of our position is that the 'appreciation' of the hegemonic subject takes the subaltern object as an object for itself and is therefore appropriative… Against the idea that cultural appreciation fundamentally involves what is *already there*, we argue that *what is 'culturally appreciated' is manifested in advance by the appreciating subject*. This 'manifestation in advance' is already an act of cultural appropriation.

To answer the question, no, dominant groups cannot practice cultural appreciation, if the object that's being "appreciated" is from a subordinate culture. The "manifestation in advance" that's stated in the quote refers to past instances of domination that created a power imbalance in the first place, such as colonialism or imperialism. Therefore, as a consequence of hegemony, dominant groups can't practice cultural appreciation without it ultimately being an act of appropriation.

Lastly, I will be using concepts defined in Karen Warren's Oppressive Conceptual Framework, to help with analyzing my cases. She argues that there are three significant features to the framework: 1) value-hierarchical thinking, 2) value dualisms, and 3) logic of domination (Warren 128). Value dualisms are disjunctive pairs (such as man/woman) that are seen as opposites and exclusive, and higher value is placed on one over the other. Value dualisms lead to value hierarchies which occur when entities or concepts are ranked hierarchically. This is also known as Up-Down thinking where entities/concepts with higher value are known as "Ups" and entities/concepts with lower value are known as "Downs". Lastly, the logic of domination is a structure of argumentation that leads to a justification of subordination. Warren states,

> A logic of domination is not just a logical structure. It also involves a substantive value system, since an ethical premise is needed to permit or sanction the "just" subordination of that which is subordinate. This justification typically is given on grounds of some alleged characteristic (e.g., rationality) which the dominant (e.g., men) have and the subordinate (e.g., women) lack (128).

Essentially, value dualisms and hierarchies come together to fuel the logic of domination. This sort of logic is harmful because it leads the dominant group to develop a sense of superiority.

Hegemony, cultural appropriation, and the logic of domination all work together to produce social exclusivity. It starts with the logic of domination which, based on value hierarchies and dualisms, leads to certain groups gaining a sense of superiority based on a set of characteristics. This leads to the organization of dominant and subordinate groups in society in which the dominant group holds more power. Once some time goes by and the dominant group continues to remain in power, they gain total social authority which the subordinate group unconsciously accepts. This leads us to the concept of hegemony, which makes the dominant groups' rule appear legitimate and natural. Once hegemony is established in a society, subordinate groups are socially excluded as they don't have as much influence over the spread of ideas and information. Based on Dick Hibdege's work on hegemony, he states:

> For instance, if we pause to reflect for a moment, it should be obvious that access to the means by which ideas are disseminated in our society (i.e. principally the mass media) is not the same for all classes. Some groups have more say, more opportunity to make the rules, to organize meaning, while others are less favorably placed, have less power to produce and impose their definitions of the world on the world (14).

It is clear that not all social classes have equal access to the tools that allow ideas to be spread in our society. Since the dominant group has hegemonic power in society, they have an easier time getting their voices heard. This is significant because dominant groups then have the power to define cultural norms which usually don't fit to include subordinate groups, thus leading to social exclusion. As for cultural appropriation, since dominant groups appropriating from subordinate groups involve hegemonic power, the same reasoning that explains social exclusion as a product of hegemony applies to cultural appropriation as well.

CHANGING VIEWS OF NATURE, SEPARATION OF NATURE FROM CULTURE, AND WESTERN DENOMINATION

Ecofeminists have long debated when the separation of nature from culture occurred, and one of the arguments attributes the separation to the rise of patriarchal religion. Prior to 4500 B.C., nature was viewed as a feminine space, representing a place of sacred fertility with no gender hierarchy (Gaard and Gruen, 237). Post 4500 B.C., marked the shift from goddess-worshiping cultures to patriarchal religions, such as Christianity, where people worshiped a sky god and nature was seen as his creation. The role of man in reproduction rose above that of woman, with women being compared to fields which would gestate and bear the male seed (Gaard and Gruen 237). The views on nature changed quite dramatically after the rise of Patriarchal religions. Nature's and wilderness's closest synonyms were "savage", "desolate", and "barren"; its connotations were anything but positive, spiking emotions of bewilderment or terror (Cronon 8). In the Bible, the wilderness was where Moses wandered around with his people for 40 years and Adam and Eve were kicked out of their garden. The wilderness was a place people came only against their will and it had little or nothing to offer civilized men or women (Cronon 9). Nature and culture were once seen as a unit, but Patriarchal religion completely changed people's perspectives based on value dualisms.

Patriarchal religions led to value dualisms of man/woman and culture/nature which led to value hierarchies that placed man and culture above women and nature. It didn't take long for the logic of domination to kick in. 'Man' was physically stronger than 'woman' and 'culture', as influenced by Patriarchal religion, was structured and ordered while 'nature' was unpredictable and wild. Nature was also seen by many as God's creation. The alleged characteristics of 'structure', 'strength', and 'order' justified man and culture's superiority over women and nature through the logic of domination. Thus began what is commonly known as The Patriarchy, which is a society/culture that's dominated by men.

The logic of domination that fuels The Patriarchy, as I described above, is observed throughout the centuries through colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism is defined as "the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically" (Oxford Dictionaries), and Imperialism is defined as "a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force" (Oxford Dictionaries). While different by technicality, both lead to the same outcome: one country dominates another. Colonialism and Imperialism are most often associated with the Western world, that being Europe and North America. These cultures would dominate others based on value dualisms such as culture/nature, civilized/uncivilized, and white/other. Since the Western world was civilized, white, and emphasized culture, they reasoned that they had the authority to take over civilizations on the premise that those characteristics made them superior. The domination of the white race in the Western world can be seen emerging here due to white being merged with other "Ups" such as culture and man on the value hierarchy. Domination, control, selfishness, and superiority became fundamental themes of the Western world through the influence of The Patriarchy.

Ecofeminist Carolyn Merchant sees the separation of culture from nature as a product of the Scientific Revolution (Merchant 300). The scientific revolution arose in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries and led to drastic changes in scientific thought (Spencer). Science was separated from philosophy and technology, abstract reasoning was emphasized over common sense, people developed a quantitative over qualitative view of nature, and the development of the scientific method. It's understandable why some Ecofeminists attribute the scientific revolution to the separation of culture from nature. Prior to scientific advancements, the wilderness inspired fear because of how different it was from civilized society (Cronon 8). Nature was a force, unpredictable and independent. After the scientific revolution, people had the tools to understand and analyze nature quantitatively. This development placed humans "above" nature because now there was a lack of fear of the unknown, causing a separation of culture from nature.

CASES AND ANALYSIS

The following cases will be presented sequentially to support my argument that magic and nature-based subcultures experienced heavy Western influences, particularly the impacts of Christianity, that led WitchTok to be socially exclusive. The first case that will be presented is Romanticism. Through the works of Romantic poets, I will demonstrate how their association of God with nature leveled nature and culture on the value hierarchy. The works of Romantic poets also reveal the logic of domination that justified man's domination over nature is still evident due to the poet's self-centered relationship with nature. The second case is Contemporary Paganism, which serves to demonstrate why members of the subculture need to be culturally appropriate from other polytheistic nature-based religions, in order to make their practice seem legitimate and the thought process that justifies the cultural appropriation. The last case is Witchtok, which highlights how a subculture that openly claims to be inclusive for all members is socially exclusive towards marginalized groups. Witchtok also serves to demonstrate how the culmination of past nature and magic based subcultures, led to Witchtok and the implications of Western influence in the modern day.

CASE STUDY 1: HOW ROMANTICS SHAPED THE VIEWS ON NATURE INTO WHAT IT IS TODAY

Romanticism can be seen as the original nature-based subculture in the Western world due to its influence that resulted in the changed perception of nature. The issue is that since Romantic poets were the primary people spreading the subculture's writings and ideas, their idealization of nature westernized it by altering its value originally established by the rise of Patriarchal religions. From the theories of well-known Romantic poets of the time such as Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, William Gilpin, and others, "sublime landscapes were those rare places on earth where one had more chance than elsewhere to glimpse the face of God" (Cronon 10). Romantics were seeking out nature landscapes in hopes of producing divine experiences. John Muir, a famous Romantic poet, captures the God-like quality of nature through his description of the North Dome in Yosemite Valley. He states:

> No pain here, no dull empty hours, no fear of the past, no fear of the future. These blessed mountains are so compactly filled with God's beauty, no petty personal hope or experience has room to be. Drinking this champagne water is pure pleasure, so is breathing the living air, and every movement of limbs is pleasure, while the whole body seems to feel beauty when exposed to it as it feels the camp-fire or sunshine, entering not by the eyes alone, but equally through all one's flesh like radiant heat, making a passionate ecstatic pleasure-glow not explainable (Muir 131).

Muir's description makes nature sound heavenly. A place blessed by God's divinity is one that evokes emotion and freedom, and where someone is allowed to be authentically themselves with only nature as a witness. Romantics achieved their goal of romanticizing nature and the wilderness. What were the consequences of all this?

The Romantics search for sublime landscapes in hopes of interacting with God and having divine experiences. One of the definitions for sublime is "to convert (something inferior) into something of higher worth" (Merriam-Webster). Using this definition means Romantic poets were giving nature value by associating it with God by feeding into notions such as "God is Earth's creator, therefore nature is his home" which was born with the rise of Patriarchal religions. The association of God and nature in a positive light completely shakes up the value dualisms of man/woman and culture/nature set in 4500 B.C. As mentioned previously, nature was a place that had nothing to offer to civilized people. But now nature rose higher than culture on the value hierarchy because culture became a place of struggle and hardship due to Industrialism. The issue is that the separation of culture from nature can be attributed to the birth of Patriarchal religions. The culture was a place for God-following, civilized men and women who were safe from an un-orderly and chaotic nature. Now that the Romantics shifted the perception of nature by adding God-like influences, it subsequently interlaced Patriarchal elements into nature's foundation. Therefore, since culture and nature have both been influenced by Patriarchal elements, they are more or less equivalent in the value hierarchy.

Romantic use of nature can also be seen as selfish when analyzed using Colonialism and Imperialism. Circling back to their definitions, both involve a country dominating another for personal gain. Taking another look at John Muir's description of the North Dome in Yosemite Valley (131), we see phrases such as "drinking this champagne water is pure pleasure", "whole body seems to feel beauty", "no pain here, no dull empty hours". These statements are very observer-focused, and make it seem like nature's only purpose is to benefit humans. Not all cultures view nature through this lens. Taoism, a nature-based religion from ancient China, teaches that all living creatures should live in a state of harmony with the universe, and the energy found in it (National Geographic Society). Compared to Romanticism, Taoism offers a more balanced relationship between humans and nature. The self-centered relationship that Romantics experience with nature is evidence that can be traced back to the Western logic of domination. Although nature and culture have arguably leveled in value due to Romantic association with God, evidence of perceived superiority can be seen through Muir's work. While not as direct as Colonialism and Imperialism, the use of nature for personal gain demonstrates the Western ideal that 'man' continues to dominate nature.

CASE STUDY 2: CONTEMPORARY PAGANISM AND THE ISSUE OF APPROPRIATION

Neopaganism, a collection of spiritual subcultures that embrace femininity, also attempts to revive the ancient polytheistic religions of Europe and the Middle East and it has a close relationship to ritual magic and modern witchcraft (Stefon). Gaining rapid popularity during America's civil rights movement of the 1960s, Neopaganism found allies in the ecological and feminist movements as they all saw nature as sacred and recognized the Great Goddess as Mother Nature (BBC). Finding one concrete definition of Neopaganism is difficult since it is a highly individualistic practice with no single authority or organization and draws upon ancient pagan religions (which were usually orally passed down). Graham Harvey argues not to define paganism at all by saying, "paganism is a polytheistic Nature religion. It is recreating ways of relating to the Earth, and that is concerned with the 'everyday'" (Harvey 1). This definition, or lack thereof, is conflicting because Paganism is Western in origin and the general lumping of "polytheistic nature religion" erases cultural differences (Sage 34). This is problematic because polytheistic nature religions can be observed all around the world (Hinduism, Confucianism, and Taoism, etc.), and lumping them together oversimplifies diverse belief systems into a single category and fails to recognize the rich cultural nuances, practices, and histories unique to each religion, hindering understanding and perpetuating stereotypes. That leaves us asking, why does Neopaganism have so much variety to the point that it's hard to define?

To answer that question, it's vital to look at the demographics of Neopaganism. They are generally women (Charbonneau 6), white, of European descent, urban, educated, and working-class (Sage 36). All of these characteristics possess hegemonic power in the Western world, but since they are women, they feel oppressed by the patriarchal Western society and find solace and empowerment in the Pagan subculture as it emphasizes femininity. As mentioned before, Neopaganism is a highly individualistic practice with no single authority and draws upon orally passed down traditions. This leaves many gaps in the practice, so to make it seem more legitimate, members have to appropriate from other cultures. Instances of appropriation can be seen through Indian Chakras, Buddhist meditation techniques, and Native American Spirituality such as the use of white sage, dream catchers, spirit animals, and others (Gottlieb 33). Whether it's appreciation or appropriation is unclear but since white women dominate the subculture, and all of the cultures mentioned are part of a subordinate group, it automatically becomes an act of appropriation.

Another explanation for why Neopagans practice appropriation is due to the Spiritual Marketplace Model. It says that "in a consumerist, secular, and modern world, people can and do choose religions the same way they might choose many other products and services that constitute their lifestyles" (Hunt XVI). This kind of behavior can be traced back to Colonialism and Imperialism in the Western world, as countries dominated others based on a value hierarchy. Gottlieb states:

> It is very hard for a white individual who grew up in the United States to let go of the melting pot ideology they were raised with, to think of cultural blending of any sort as anything but a very, very good thing because this is America so everyone shares. It is even more difficult for a Westerner to let go of that fundamental idea that culture is malleable and shareable because we westerners decided that it was. The old colonial viewpoint is still going strong: I shared (forced) my cultural practices with (upon) you, so why won't you share (give without any questions) your cultural practices with (to) me? (28).

Due to centuries of Colonialism and Imperialism, Americans have internalized that culture is something that can be shared and altered to one's needs. It's important to remember that Colonialism and Imperialism involve the forced domination of one group over the other, as demonstrated through the logic of domination. Since America was consistently the dominating group, whatever aspects of culture it shared were seen as unwelcome. Tying this back to Neopaganism, since a majority of the members are white women and white people are the dominant group in America, any acts of appreciation are automatically considered appropriation (Cattien and Stopford 2022). Therefore, Neopagans pick and choose aspects of religion, as seen through the Spiritual Marketplace, that they hope will lead them towards empowerment and enlightenment, and end up being acts of appropriation.

CASE STUDY 3: THE RISE OF WITCHTOK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Witchtok is a subgenre of the social media app TikTok, where creators and viewers share knowledge about magic and witchcraft. Based on the research done by reporter Sara Moniuszko, she believes the subgenre spiked in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic for three reasons (Moniuszko). First, WitchTok is community building because creators and viewers are able to connect on information that they're interested in and start open dialogues. Second, it provided people with a sense of control in the uncertain times caused by the pandemic. Magic and witchcraft allow people to focus inward which is comforting when the world around them is unpredictable and unstable. Lastly, TikTok made the community accessible. Witchcraft has been present in pop culture for a few decades now, but due to Tiktok's availability, the community flourished with minimal resistance. On the surface, it seems like an inclusive subculture that anyone with a curiosity about witchcraft can join. It's easily accessible through Tiktok, creators claim full inclusivity, and the only requirement asked of potential participants is a curiosity towards witchcraft. However, from instances of appropriation to persistent advertisement of goods and materials, WitchTok excludes certain minority groups and people of lower socioeconomic status.

Appropriation is a significant issue on Witchtok, such that by typing "Witchtok Appropriation" into the Tiktok search bar, a large volume of videos come up. Just from watching a 10-minute Witchtok compilation video on YouTube (Tiktok Favs), I found an instance of appropriation within 13 seconds, of a creator displaying white sage on their altar. A Witchtok creator who goes by the user name, @aragingwitch made a video discussing everything wrong with their first altar which included white sage, a coyote jaw, and a feather fan. The last two examples demonstrate non-Native people using elements of Native American spirituality in their practices. As mentioned earlier there's also been evidence of love spells derived from Latin American and Afro-Caribbean practices being appropriated by non-Latines (Delgado). A recurring pattern in these cases is that a white creator is seen appropriating from marginalized cultures. Not only is this disrespectful as it disregards cultural significance and fails to give credit, but it also poses grounds for social exclusion from the community. When discussing anything social media-related, it's important to remember that artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms are working hard behind the scenes. A.I. researcher Marc Faddoul states that "if the most popular creators on a platform are white, and the app keeps recommending other white creators, it makes it hard for creators of color to gain followers and popularity — even if that's not the intention of the algorithm" (Strapagiel). This is a troubling issue because if a viewer engages with content in which the creators are mostly white, the algorithm will supply them with even more white creators. After a few cycles of this feedback loop, the content the viewer consumes will be primarily white. Tiktok's algorithm bias towards white creators can be attributed to the fact that not all social classes have equal access to the tools that allow ideas to be spread in our society (Hebdige 14). Since white people have hegemonic power in today's society, they have an easier time getting their voices heard. Circling back to Witchtok, if white creators constitute the majority of creators, through the algorithm their videos will reach more people and subsequently have more influence in the Witchtok community. This is unfair and socially exclusive towards marginalized creators as they have less of an opportunity to grow their TikTok following and interact with people from the community. Witchtok appropriation is especially harmful since it misrepresents the practice that's being appropriated and marginalized creators have less of an impact in attempts to stop the appropriation.

HOW DID THE WESTERNIZATION OF NATURE AND MAGIC-BASED SUBCULTURE LEAD TO THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF WITCHTOK?

At first glance, one would assume WitchTok is an inclusive subculture consisting of creators and viewers who share a common link between magic and witchcraft (Moniuszko). It exists on TikTok, a widely available social media app, and consists of videos including live-streaming tutorials, educational videos, and documenting the day-to-day lives of witches (Jones). With a low barrier of entry and countless educational videos, what is the basis for social exclusion on WitchTok? The answer starts with an examination of how Romanticism leveled nature and culture on the value hierarchy. By positively associating God and nature, Romantics interlaced Patriarchal themes into nature. Nature became socially exclusive because for centuries it was associated with the "Downs" but due to the Romantics it was now associated with the "Ups". Patriarchal themes can also be seen in Neopaganism as the subculture heavily relies on appropriation to seem authentic. Through the spiritual marketplace, we can see why Neopagans are culturally appropriate, although it doesn't justify their behavior. Since Neopagans are predominantly white women appropriating from marginalized cultures, it is considered to be socially exclusive because it involves a dominant group taking from a subordinate group which is a demonstration of hegemonic power. Romanticism and Neopaganism along with other practices involving magic, spirituality, and witchcraft merge together into the subculture of Witchtok. Inclusivity was bound to fail with Western themes already deeply ingrained in Romanticism and Neopaganism. In addition to the Westernized themes promoting social exclusivity, Tiktok's A.I. algorithm was revealed to have a racial bias preferring whiteness only added to the social exclusivity. From TikTok's accessibility to countless creators producing educational content, everything was set up for WitchTok to be a fully inclusive subculture. In practice, with the Westernization of two prominent nature/magic based subcultures and TikTok's A.I. algorithm bias, full inclusivity is impossible.

MOTIVATION TO JOIN MAGIC AND NATURE-BASED SUBCULTURE & THE INHERENT PRIVILEGE OF IT

One of the questions I wanted to answer through my research was why people join magic and nature-based subcultures. According to Dick Hebdige, changes in culture occur when modes and categories inherited from the past no longer seem to fit the reality experienced by a new generation (Hebdige V). Subcultures are essentially a side effect of rapid changes in culture.

In all three of my cases, rapid changes in culture were occurring. Industrialism, which led to Romanticism, was a time of rapidly growing industry and urbanization (Schlicke). Contemporary Paganism gained popularity during the 1960s and 1970s which was a time of American civil rights movements. Lastly, WitchTok emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic which was a time of massive social unrest and upheaval. The social climate involved a significant and rapid social change in which individuals joined subcultures with hopes of being able to escape "culture". But why do people specifically join magic and nature-based subcultures? The subcultures I chose all exist in the post-scientific-revolution world that emphasizes rationality, learning, and the scientific method (Spencer). Such a rapid increase of knowledge and information circulating in society left people with little room for enchantment which is the sense of delight and astonishment at the wonders, marvels, and mysteries that individuals experienced before the scientific revolution (Saler 138). Individuals found enchantment in nature, which refers to "everything which is not human and distinguished from the work of humanity" (Soper 15). Since nature was distinctly not human, individuals were able to use it as an escape from the bleakness of post-modern society. People turn to magic for a number of reasons, the main one being that it engages the practitioner in imagination and fantasy (Luhrmann 327). Like nature, it allows people an escape from culture. Secondly, magic is used as a form of empowerment as people can use it to change their reality. When taken in the context of the bleakness inspired by the post-scientific-revolution world, having the ability to change one's reality (even if it's just fantasy) is empowering as it gives power and control to the individual rather than an external force. In conclusion, rapid changes in culture and the enticing qualities of nature and magic such as enchantment, fantasy, and empowerment explain why individuals joined subcultures such as Romanticism, Contemporary Paganism, and WitchTok.

Individuals join nature and magic based subcultures to feel empowered and cope with rapid changes in culture, but there is evidence to suggest that it's an inherently privileged activity in the post-industrial world. This is explained by the Spiritual Marketplace Model and can be seen in Neopaganism through the picking and choosing of various religions and practices that they hope will lead them toward empowerment and enlightenment. Unfortunately, their picking and choosing only what they see fit for their own spiritual practice ends up being cultural appropriation. A similar behavior is observed on WitchTok since viewers are presented with a wide range of content and it is up to them to choose which parts fit their individual practice the best. This sort of melting pot ideology is fundamentally Western and can be traced back to the old colonial viewpoint of a dominant group forcing their culture on a subordinate group and expecting the subordinate group to share their back (Gottlieb 28). So while individuals turn to magic and nature-based subcultures to feel empowerment, their use of nature is inherently privileged.

CONCLUSION

Social exclusion seen on WitchTok can easily be blamed on TikTok's A.I. algorithm and cultural appropriation but it goes so much deeper than that. Due to the rise of Patriarchal religions, nature's subordination to culture began. Through the value dualisms of man/woman, culture/nature, white/other, civilized/uncivilized, etc, nature was classified as a "Down" on the value hierarchy along with 'woman', 'other', and 'uncivilized'. Through the logic of domination, 'men', 'culture', 'white', and 'civilized' became dominant within Patriarchal ideology which ended up becoming Western ideology as seen through colonialism and imperialism. Fast-forwarding, industrialism was on the rise which sparked the Romantic movement Romantics found comfort in nature, and due to their emphasis on divine landscapes that produced God-like experiences, nature and culture were seen as equal in value again. However, nature remains subordinate to culture as can be seen through Romantic poets placing self-centered values on nature which falls in line with Western ideology. Inspired by the Romantic movement, there was a rise of magic and nature-based subcultures, as individuals wanted to feel empowered just as the Romantics were. However, due to gaps in knowledge within these subcultures, individuals had to be culturally appropriate in order for the practice to seem more legitimate. By the time WitchTok came around, there were no hopes for full social inclusivity, considering the history leading up to it. Along with TikTok's biased A.I. algorithm towards whiteness, hegemonic power is maintained and keeps white people dominant on the app. This creates a socially exclusive environment because ideas get disseminated unequally, if there is a power imbalance. Hence why WitchTok is socially exclusive.

Overall, nature and magic based subcultures wouldn't be what they are today without the influence of Western ideology. While there are many issues surrounding the subcultures, mainly appropriation, we can't simply ask people to stop practicing. As discovered in the paper, people find personal empowerment through these subcultures. A solution is educating them on the harmful effects of cultural appropriation. WitchTok is becoming more aware of this as can be seen through hashtags such as #witchtokappropriation #culturalappropriation, and plenty of other variations. Videos under these hashtags educate viewers on the harms of appropriation and give advice on what to do if you have been culturally appropriated (@terminallyhomosexual). While education is beneficial, changes won't occur until TikTok fixes its A.I. algorithm bias. If viewers only see white creators making videos on the topic of appropriation, we will fall back into the same cycle of social exclusion. There are hopes that WitchTok will be able to make a positive impact and spread awareness about appropriation which will hopefully make the subculture more inclusive in the future.

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