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WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

**Celebrating Student Writing
Across the Curriculum**

Prize Winners 2024-2025

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL EDITION

Introduction

Now in its 24th year of publication, *Celebrating Student Writing Across the Curriculum* publishes undergraduate student writing from many disciplines. This magazine offers a space to celebrate student achievement in writing and to highlight exemplary written work from across William Paterson University.

On these pages, diversity in writing is celebrated. Some entries are thoroughly researched and deftly worded, others provide analytical exploration or make a compelling argument, and still others are imaginatively creative or superbly designed and arranged. Writing is often mistakenly assumed to be merely a skill that, once learned, can be applied formulaically for any situation. But effective writers, such as the ones featured here, know that continuous development of one's writing knowledge and practice is the way to becoming better at it. Today's employers report that a key attribute they seek in an employee is the ability to write clearly and effectively, which makes the writing our students engage in increasingly important. Nurtured by our faculty, the student writers featured within this issue have worked hard to understand and develop writing most suited to its occasion.

For this contest, William Paterson faculty nominate student writing from across a wide range of courses. Whether a written work is nominated for its creativity, insights, analysis, or well-crafted prose, each entry has first intrigued a faculty member and earned a nomination. After the submission deadline, a panel of judges from across the William Paterson faculty gathers to discuss and consider each entry, and the winners are selected for publication in *Celebrating Student Writing Across the Curriculum*.

This year's winners represent a wide range of majors: psychology, anthropology, literature, sociology, and more.

The excellent writing featured here represents upper-division courses from various disciplines and lower-division courses in general education, demonstrating that great writing comes from everywhere and anyone. Regardless of the course for which they were initially written, all of these student essays provide us with insights into their topics and appreciation for the hard work and dedication of their writers.

Celebrating Student Writing would not be possible without the continued support of those who are integral to its success. Thank you to Associate Provost Sandra Hill for continued support of the Writing Across the Curriculum program, which publishes this magazine. Special thanks to Wartyna Davis, Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, whose vision and assistance in all initiatives of the Writing Across the Curriculum program are vital. And finally, thanks to the many faculty who support student writing every day in their classrooms and who nominate the best of what they see to this contest, and to the students who are willing to share their work – without your commitment we would be denied this wonderful opportunity to celebrate your writing.

Write on.

Chris Salerno
Professor of English
Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

For more information about the *Celebrating Student Writing* contest, refer to the back page of this magazine or visit: <https://www.wpunj.edu/cohss/departments/english/wac/index.html>

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I Saw My First Off-Broadway Show. Now I'm Speaking Out.

Safa Hassan

Course: ENG1500

Professor: Nick Hirshon

Student: Safa Hassan

Essay: *I Saw My First Off-Broadway Show. Now I'm Speaking Out.*

As a girl in Egypt, I saw what happens when democracy fails.

I watched television reports of Palestinians pushed out of their homes and into the streets. I saw newspaper photographs of refugees fleeing their homeland for fear of being murdered.

Even after I moved to New Jersey at age 12 in 2013, I was still haunted by the faces of Palestinians who lived in constant dread.

These moments came rushing back on Sunday when I joined a group of William Paterson students at the final performance of an off-Broadway show named “Vladimir,” which follows a journalist covering Putin’s rise to power in Russia.

It was the first time I’d ever seen a show with professional actors, and it was cathartic.

“Vladimir” inspired me to write this article for all the Arabs who are speaking out about the genocide in Palestine. No matter how much the Israeli government does to make Palestinians feel unsafe, we can still be their voice from afar. I want all of you to protest peacefully and create art and post what you’re seeing and feeling on social media.

Not because we are Arab. But because we won’t stand



for dictatorship.

“Vladimir” documents how journalists can expose the truth of what their government is doing. The play centers on a hard-nosed journalist, Raya Bobrinskaya, who questions whether she should continue to use her voice and risk her life, or turn down the volume. Raya’s character was based on a real-life journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, who was murdered by Putin’s regime in 2006 in her apartment building elevator in Moscow.

In the wake of the election of Donald Trump, many of my fellow students at “Vladimir” said they viewed the show as a cautionary tale about what could happen in the United States in the next four years. I had a

different perspective. As an Egyptian and a Muslim, I thought about the oppression of Palestinians as well as the 137 journalists and media workers who have been targeted and killed in the Gaza conflict since Oct. 7, 2023, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Even after killing the leader of Hamas, Yahya Sinwar, last month, Israel continues to find every way possible to wipe out Palestinians and their allies in Lebanon and Yemen, breaking all international war laws.

It is not war; it is genocide.

These are important themes for students to explore, and I'm grateful to my professor, Dr. Nick Hirshon, for organizing this field trip for members of the William Paterson Society of Professional Journalists.

After the show, I stuck around with the other students and Dr. Hirshon to meet the two stars of "Vladimir," Norbert Leo Butz and Francesca Faridany. We asked a few questions about how they prepared to play journalists and what they took away from their roles. They told us that Anna was known for being relentless and difficult. Those qualities drove her to become a great journalist who refused to stop speaking the truth.

Butz spoke briefly with us about the traditional sanctity of journalism in the United States. "If you were to ask me six to eight years ago," he began, "I would've said, 'This is America. We have the First Amendment. We have an open and free press. We have institutions that are supported and protected by the government.' And what is hitting the audience and what is hitting me is how, like 2004 in Russia, certain factions in our country are going. So, I see more similarities unfortunately than differences from back then. We have a president-to-be who called American citizens 'the enemies within' and talked about using the military in peaceful protests."

Butz encouraged student journalists to use our voices, and that's what I've decided to do with this article.

I appreciate the courageous journalists in the Middle East who use the limited social media access they have to report on the home invasions, dropped bombs, and murders. Reporters such as Motaz Azaiza, Bisan Owda, and Plestia Alaqad are risking their lives to expose the truth. Committee to Protect Journalists has compiled a list of all Palestinian journalists who have been killed, injured, or missing in the midst of genocide.

And I deeply admire Al Jazeera in particular for digging into the roots of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Analysis of the Evolution of Women's Career and Family Choices

Erik Swanson

Course: SOC 2310

Professor: Anais Bailly

Student: Erik Swanson

Essay: *Analysis of the Evolution of Women's Career and Family Choices*

In this analysis, two women were asked the same questions about their lives and experiences. The main focus of the questions were to ascertain the differences in their experiences growing up and how that reflects societal changes. Another focus of the analysis of the answers was to see how race and class affect the answers and experiences of the two participants.

Before the results of the questions are analyzed, it is important to discuss the demographics of the participants. Participant one is a 54 year old white woman from New York who grew up middle class and is now upper middle class. Participant two is a 31 year old Hawaiian woman from Hawaii. She grew up poor and is now middle class and is living in Colorado. The main difference between the two women is their race and class. Participant two is a Polynesian woman, which is a minoritized group in the United States. This as well as the fact that she started off her life in poverty sets up her experiences to be way different than participant one's experiences.

It is important to also understand that participant two has experienced racism and xenophobia in her life like most Asian and Polynesian women. Despite being seen as the model immigrants, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have a long history of being mistreated

and discriminated against. This myth of perfection uniquely places AAPI individuals in a position where they are still facing challenges from white people, but also disdain from other people of color (Kim, 2023). This distinction must be made in order to understand any potential differences between the responses of the two participants.

Starting off with when these women were children, they had big dreams for their futures. Participant one had dreams of becoming either a veterinarian, a zoo owner, or an artist while participant two wanted to be a veterinarian, dancer or a "hacker" when she got older. This want for taking care of animals can be accounted for by the way society socializes young girls and women into more nurturing roles and careers. However, it is also interesting to note that both participants had a dream of doing something artistic as well. This is more where their own individual personalities shine through and are more in line with what I believe to be their true wishes even though they were not listed first. Something else that is interesting with participant two's response is that she did have a career dream as a child with something involving the STEM field, even though it was an illegal activity. This highlights a generational shift in the twenty years between the participants where it was becoming a

little more acceptable for girls to want to break into the field of STEM.

Though their dreams were different, their role models were not. Both participant one and two had explained that their biggest role model in their life was their own mother. Participant one talked about a time where she and her mother went to New York City to buy some jewelry and she felt so overwhelmed by the people and streets. Her mother, on the other hand, seemed very relaxed and sure of herself. The qualities that she saw in her mother that she really admired were the strength and resiliency that she had and despite that, her mother still found time to be soft, funny and kind. Participant two explained that while her mother was her biggest role model, she also really looked up to people like Emma Watson, Selena Gomez, Taylor Swift, Alicia Key, etc. Both women really admired strong independent women who really seemed like they had a handle on the world.

This upbringing that they had really reflects in the way the participants viewed their career choices right out of highschool. Neither participant really felt that their options were limited on the basis that they were women, but rather based on experiences and limited resources. For participant one, she mentioned that she really had no working experience right out of high school and no training in any field that could result in a job with real career value for her, but she said that she did get a job as an administrative assistant. Unbeknownst to her, she was experiencing what is known as occupational gender segregation, which is defined as men and women having jobs in separate occupations (Cohen, 2020). Being an assistant is a female dominated field with as many as 90% of all personal and executive administration assistants being female (Enovia Group, 2023). Participant two once again highlights the generational shift towards more equality as she joined the military out of high school. Her decision was also partially based on the fact that she was raised on the belief that you should go to college and she did

not have the resources to attend college without the support of the military. She is currently attending classes to become a data security analyst.

The way the two participants had started their families were also quite different. Participant one had the time and resources set aside for having a first and second child. However, that second pregnancy ended in a miscarriage which has shaped the way in which she and her husband view their only child. Like participant one, participant two only has one daughter. However, she was not expecting the pregnancy and was not married to her partner at the time. Due to her religious and cultural values and the influence of her family's expectations, she and her partner had gotten married. They eventually got a divorce after the pregnancy came to term because they both had different life goals that did not follow typical gender roles. After their separation, the father was set as the caretaker for their daughter because in participant two's eyes, she could not provide a good enough future for her daughter due to lack of resources and support that he has. Typically, women drop their jobs or reduce their hours once they are married and have kids, while males do the opposite (Guo et al., 2022). It's interesting how this only seems to be true for the upper-middle class white woman and not true for the Asian woman of a lower socioeconomic status. It could be a result of her upbringing with how her mother acted when she was younger, or perhaps there really has been a generational shift in how people play their roles in families.

As a byproduct of growing up with strong, independent women in their lives, neither participant really had any regrets or wished that they had done anything differently. The only things that they potentially would have changed were small changes that may or may not have had an effect on where they were today. Specifically for participant two, it was interesting that she didn't even mention the possibility of wanting to have chosen to go with her father when her parents split. Her father was more well off compared to her

mother and could have potentially given her a better life. However, thinking about how she expressed that she had always been taught to be strong it makes sense that she would choose to stay with her mother. When they split, the two decided that they would evenly split the 6 children they had and participant two offered to stay with her mother to allow for one of her brothers to go have a better opportunity with her father.

Looking at these two very distinct lives, one common theme is extremely prevalent. The idea that has been instilled in them since they were young that what it means to be a woman is someone who is strong and resilient and can pave her own way. They each experienced this development in their own way however, participant two is probably the most resilient and strong-willed person I know. Her experiences as an Asian and Hawaiian woman with lower socioeconomic status has compounded that strength due to the

hardships she had to face in her life. Ultimately, there does not seem to be much of a difference in the way that both participants had experienced society on the sole front of being a woman, but even from their dreams as children to their job opportunities out of high school, there are small steps being made in the right direction for change.

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Family History: The Influence of Societal Contexts on Individual Choices: A Historical Perspective

Jessica Caraballo

Course: SOC 2310

Professor: Anais Bailly

Student: Jessica Caraballo

Essay: *Family History: The Influence of Societal Contexts on Individual Choices: A Historical Perspective*

The experiences of these women illustrate the intricate interplay between social and institutional factors in shaping their life choices. Instead of being hindered by these forces, they have managed to identify and seize opportunities for career growth. In the initial interview, the mother, aged fifty-four, has a career in elementary education, where she has experienced equitable treatment compared to her peers. Her father dropped out of school and her mother was a high school graduate. She is the oldest of three sisters and the only one who completed college in her immediate family. After teaching for 15 years, she then went to graduate school to obtain her master's degree and additional certification. She needed this advanced degree to progress to the next salary level in her district so could have increased pay for her family.

Growing up in a working-class environment and being the first in their immediate family to achieve a college education. She had to recognize the necessity of further education to advance professionally which underscores the pervasive influence of these societal

factors. Despite these obstacles, she explained there is a trend of progress across generations, with contemporary women benefiting from an expanding array of opportunities. This shift is evident in the increasing chances for career advancement and the greater presence of women in leadership positions. This improves the landscape of equal pay, all of which signify a changing paradigm of choices for women today.

Applying modernity theory (Cohen, 2021, p. 842) to the responses, we can see a shift in societal norms and structures over time that has influenced women's choices. In the past, if you came from a working-class family where education was not a priority, there were clear obstacles to advancing in education and career. However, with modernization and societal progress, opportunities have been gradually opened for women. This is evidenced by increased access to education, more women in leadership roles, and improved gender equality in the workplace. This reflects the broader trend in modernity theory, where traditional

constraints and hierarchies are changed to accommodate greater individual agency and equality. Feminist theory (Cohen, 2021, p. 317) would analyze these responses through the lens of gender dynamics and power structures. Inequalities related to race, class, and ethnicity have intersected with gender to shape women's experiences and decisions. For example, being the only one in the family to complete college despite a working-class background illustrates the intersectionality of these factors. Additionally, the need for advanced degrees for pay advancement highlights the ongoing gender disparities in the workforce. However, observing that women's choices have evolved across generations aligns with feminist theory's focus on challenging and changing traditional gender roles and expectations. The increased opportunities for women in various fields and the progress towards gender equality reflect the ongoing struggle for women's rights and empowerment advocated by feminist perspectives.

In the next interview, the grandmother, aged seventy-three, has a career in Human Resources and explains their upbringing. From an outsider's perspective, the narrative reflects the profound impact of historical and societal contexts on individual choices and opportunities. The account of the 1970s portrays a time when married women faced systemic limitations, where their rights were limited, and authority resided with men. This context of limited autonomy and dependence on male figures created a sense of urgency and drive to attain independence. Her decision to marry at an early age and relocate to pursue a better life demonstrates a strategic response to these constraints, seeking to break free from familial and societal restrictions. Furthermore, the influence of race, class, and ethnicity is distinct in the individual's experiences.

As a Hispanic woman, she encountered additional barriers and prejudices in her journey toward independence. Overcoming these obstacles required

not simply demanding work, but also the need to navigate and adapt to an English-speaking environment, highlighting the intersectionality of her challenges.

Her story indicates a trend toward assimilation in newer generations. Women, regardless of their origins, have more equal rights than ever. This change mirrors broader societal shifts toward inclusivity and equality, departing from the disparities and limitations experienced by previous generations. This person's experiences provide insight into the intricate balance between societal influences and personal choices in shaping life paths. From an outsider's perspective, the individual's experiences can be understood through the lenses of acculturation, and assimilation. The account of the 1970s reveals a society where married women, especially Hispanic women, were minoritized, facing significant limitations on their rights and autonomy. This marginalization forced her to make choices that would allow her to break free from these constraints, such as marrying early and leaving Puerto Rico for better opportunities.

Furthermore, the individual's experiences also demonstrate elements of acculturation, as she had to navigate and adapt to a new cultural environment. As a Hispanic woman in an English-speaking society, she encountered additional hurdles. As she entered the workforce, she had to improve her English proficiency to advance her position. By doing so she would then practice her English at home while raising her son. This process of acculturation (Cohen, 2021, p. 224) highlights the challenges faced by individuals from minoritized backgrounds as they seek to integrate into a dominant culture while preserving aspects of their own cultural identity.

Lastly, she suggests a shift towards assimilation (Cohen, 2021, p. 224) in more recent generations, where women are now experiencing greater equality. This shift reflects a form of resistance against the societal norms that restricted their independence.

These societal norms often limited women's opportunities in many aspects of their lives. The broader societal evolution toward inclusivity and equality indicates a change from the inequalities and constraints faced by earlier generations. Overall, her experiences offer a glimpse into the complex interplay between societal forces and individual agency in shaping life choices and opportunities.

Reflecting on the experiences of these women reveals a stark contrast between their generation and mine. By being a part of Gen Z, my perspective on gender equality and diversity has been shaped by a world that often emphasizes these values. For instance, unlike these women, I have not faced the same discrimination or limitations in education and career opportunities. In many respects, the experiences of my generation are influenced by the progress and sacrifices of those who came before us. As we navigate an ever-changing world, it is important to acknowledge and learn from the experiences of older generations while also forging our path. Ultimately, this new generation must advocate for a more inclusive and equitable society.

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Free Will in *The Good Earth* and *The Joy Luck Club: Magpies*

Sara Maria

Course: ENG1500

Professor: Valerie Gonzalez

Student: Sara Maria

Essay: *Free Will in The Good Earth and The Joy Luck Club: Magpies*

Does free will exist? This is a question often asked in the studies of metaphysics and neurophilosophy. The concept of free will is a paradox. If humans have free will, it implies that they can choose to act independently of the laws of nature and society, but this contradicts how the universe works. It is hard to distinguish when a choice is truly free and when it is influenced by factors like religion, culture, necessity, and socioeconomic status. Humans face choices in life, producing either good or bad consequences. Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, and the *Magpies* chapter in *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan explore the concept of free will through the stories of people living in 19th and 20th century China, where decisions were heavily influenced by Chinese traditions and cultures. This essay will analyze how Wang Lung, O-lan, An-Mei's mother, and Second Wife's autonomy were limited by external pressures like cultural traditions, gender, and social status.

Wang Lung is a great example of how factors like necessity, societal expectations, and socioeconomic status influence the way people assert their free will. For the first half of the novel, Wang Lung's free will was very limited. He was a poor man, so naturally,

his only focus was survival and working the land. He was hardworking, with a good wife who also worked incessantly day after day to provide for their family. He seemed more morally principled than the wealthy people around him. Chinese society conditioned the poor not to feel entitled to anything. They were in no position to look down on others and were expected to behave with abject humility.

As a poor man, Wang Lung was honest and never compromised his morals. When his son stole pork and O-lan prepared it for dinner, he refused to eat it because it was stolen, "Now will I not eat this meat!" (Buck, 93), even though he had not had meat in many months. This all changed when he was driven by complete desperation to steal gold from a rich man during the revolution and accept the stolen jewels from O-lan (Buck, 114). Before, Wang Lung refused to condone stealing, but now necessity became the driving force behind his actions. He was not a thief by nature, but if he wanted any chance of getting back to his land and restoring his life, he had no choice but to steal the gold. Wang Lung's choice to steal suggests that one cannot make a free choice if they are desperate and acting out of necessity.

As Wang Lung gained wealth, he began to ignore his morals, choosing to act in ways that did not align with his original values. Money and status now governed his moral compass as his choices were now unrestricted by poverty and lowly social status. Initially, O-lan was the ideal wife since she worked hard and helped him become successful. Now that he had access to beautiful women, O-lan was no longer his ideal wife. All her hard work and the sons she bore him were no longer enough for Wang Lung, and “it seemed to him that she was altogether hideous” (Buck, 139). Now that he was rich and respected, O-lan was not fit to be his wife. She was too simple and too ugly to be the wife of a wealthy man. Wang Lung was no longer limited by the cultural expectation of humility or faithfulness. Wealthy people were entitled to use their money as they pleased, without the same moral restrictions. Because of his wealth, Wang Lung was now entitled to spend money on concubines without regard for his wife’s feeling.

Wealth gives people more power, but morality determines what they do with it. For some people, compassion for others or fear of consequences prevents them from doing bad things with their power. When Wang Lung was poor, he wasn’t entitled to anything, so he suppressed his desires and took pride in his morality. When he became rich, he was no longer obligated to adhere to old moral confines. His wealth allowed him to prioritize his desires, so he did. He knew it was wrong to cheat on his wife, but ultimately, his compassion for O-lan was not great enough to stop him from hurting her. Society no longer expected him to be kind to her.

There are many factors competing for first place in shaping how we assert our free will, and in this instance, Wang Lung allowed his lust and selfish aspirations to win. He had what seemed like boundless freedom to do as he pleased with his money. For a while, it seemed as if he were unstoppable, but the traditions and social expectations of 19th century China limited all men and women in some way, regardless of their status. No matter how much wealth he gained, Wang Lung was

still subject to the traditions of Chinese culture.

A clear example is Wang Lung’s compliance in letting his uncle stay at his house. In Chinese culture, it was abominable to disrespect or correct an elder, so even though he hated his uncle, Wang Lung was forced into compliance because of the fear that his uncle would turn the town against him. However, when he saw that his uncle’s son was leading his own son down a bad path, Wang Lung was infuriated. Without regard for traditions, he demanded that his uncle leave the house. He soon realized however, that his uncle was part of a dangerous gang, Wang Lung was once again forced by fear into compliance, and “to his uncle he said no more of leaving the house” (Buck, 189).

Based on Wang Lung’s inconsistent behavior throughout the story, one can conclude that morals are influenced by factors like status and wealth. Morality can be overridden by personal ambitions, and autonomy limited by societal expectations and the fear of consequences. In any situation, one always has the option to assert their free will as they wish, but they often hold back after some evaluation of the limitations and forces working against them. This paradox of free will lies in the fact that while humans are free to choose, one’s choices are rarely free from external pressures.

O-lan handled her circumstances by accepting and excelling in her role as a subservient wife. To many, she might appear weak for not standing up for herself, but this was her way of exercising her free will to make the best of the situation she was in. Women were not considered equal to men, and their freedom of choice was very limited. While they had the option to go against the patriarchal system, many were compliant because the consequences were severe. O-lan could have chosen to go against society and escape her home, but it would have only brought her shame. If she managed to escape, how would she survive on her own as a woman who was considered “low value” and unattractive? O-lan’s choice to stay in her role as a

submissive wife was not free; it was her only option.

Instead of complaining about her circumstances, O-lan labored tirelessly to provide for her household. Her actions were based on the survival of her family. When she gave birth during the drought, O-lan knew that her family could not handle the burden of another mouth to feed, so she strangled the baby right after it was born (Buck, 68). This act was driven by pure necessity and it highlights O-lan's ability to think logically to do what was best for her family. Under immense pressure to survive, O-lan had no option but to kill the baby. O-lan's desperation took away her ability to make free choices.

When Wang Lung betrayed her by taking in Lotus as a concubine, O-lan showed her distaste by refusing to engage with Lotus and Cuckoo. When asked to boil extra water for Lotus, O-lan responded, "I am not slave of slaves in this house at least" (Buck, 168). By keeping her distance from Lotus and deliberately choosing to not participate in her care, O-lan showed that she was unwilling to degrade herself by accepting her husband's betrayal. This subtle resistance was the only means available to Olan to challenge her husband. O-lan's story proves that societal expectations and gender roles can greatly restrict a person's autonomy, often forcing them to act against their will or moral compass.

Similarly, An-Mei's mother in the Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* fights for her autonomy as concubine to Wu Tsing, who raped and coerced her into becoming his fourth wife. Nobody believed her, not even her own mother. Shunned and shamed for something that she had no control over, "her brother kicked her, and her own mother banned her from the family house forever" (Tan, 267). Fourth Wife had no choice but to stay with Wu Tsing and accept life as his concubine. There was no room for making free choices in this situation. For five years she was submissive to him, and like O-lan, she chose the route of compliance rather than working against a system she could not beat. With no hope

for a better future, she eventually commits suicide because "...she would rather kill her own weak spirit so she could give [An-Mei] a stronger one" (Tan, 271). Fourth wife's death was timed strategically two days before the lunar new year, when all debts must be paid, forcing Wu Tsing to elevate her to First Wife and An-mei as his child.

All women in 20th century China, though some more than others, faced the same issue. They all had to fight their way to receive a mere fraction of the privileges a man receives the day he is born. A woman's restricted autonomy can be described just as An-Mei said, "all of us are like stairs, one step after another, going up and down, but all going the same way" (Tan 241).

Second Wife is a singer and trophy wife (Tan 264). She manipulates people to get whatever she wants and does not care that her actions are morally wrong. Her control over Wu Tsing gives her power within the patriarchal system. She regularly uses Wu Tsing's fear of ghosts to coerce him. When he refuses her a bigger allowance, she fakes a suicide attempt, and three days later "...Second Wife had an even bigger allowance than what she had asked" (Tan, 265). Second Wife is two-faced and befriends the other wives to use them as her pawns.

Similarly, Lotus uses her beauty as power over Wang Lung. Before she met him, she seduced other men at the tea shop to give her anything she wanted. Both Lotus and Second Wife spend their lives seeking superficial vanities. They have no sense of right and wrong, and no loyalties to anyone but themselves. Though Second Wife was able to gain advantage over the other wives, and Lotus over O-lan, they have no legacy and nothing meaningful to say of their lives because all they ever did was indulge in self-seeking. Lotus and Second Wife appear to have freedom, but their choices to manipulate men are not truly free. Their actions are driven by the need to secure status in a misogynistic society.

When examining *The Good Earth* and *Magpies*, it becomes evident that a character's decisions not to challenge external pressures is also a way of exercising free will. Doing nothing is still a choice, and for many of the characters, it was a very wise one. These characters reveal that exercising "free will" is never influenced by just one factor. Some people have more freedom of choice than others, but ultimately, everyone is limited or driven by something, whether it is fear of consequences, lust, greed, or desire for status. Moral compass plays a major role in how people assert their autonomy, but people do not always act according to their morals. There are times when morals are overridden by ambition, or a person is forced to make choices under desperate circumstances. When analyzing what drives people to act, one begins to realize the complexity of free will and why its existence is so debated.

The Princess and the Frog: The (Working) Princess and the (Broke) Frog Prince

Kai Bowleg

Course: ENG 1500

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Student: Kai Bowleg

Essay: *The Princess and the Frog: The (Working) Princess and the (Broke) Frog Prince*

Stereotypes such as women belonging in the kitchen and not being the breadwinners of the family have been proven wrong by millions of families and couples across the world where traditional gender roles have been switched. This new reality has reached every aspect of media and pop culture today. It can be seen in Disney's recent attempt to create strong, empowering female characters and princesses that young girls can look up to. In an undergraduate research journal article, author Juliana Garabedian explains that "The Princess and the Frog, set in New Orleans in 1912, centers around Tiana, Disney's first African-American princess, who dreams of opening her own restaurant. Her role as a strong, determined woman is a credit to Disney's interpretation of the modern woman." (Garabedian). The creation and production of the film was one of Disney's attempts to change with the times and follow a different path from the movies it created during the 30s-60s. It follows Tiana, a young black woman living in New Orleans. Tiana is determined to own her own restaurant, but her plans go haywire when she runs into a frog, a prince who had an unfortunate run-in with a voodoo doctor. They kiss, and she is turned into a frog, which begins their journey through the bayou as they search for a

way to revert to their original forms.

Perhaps unknown to many, the story of *The Princess and the Frog* is based on an old fairytale written by The Brothers Grimm, called "The Frog King or Iron Heinrich." The original tale follows a different course, with the main female character being a princess who finds herself in a crisis when her favourite golden ball falls down a well, and she cannot reach it. She makes a deal with a frog that he will get her ball if she accepts him as a companion. When the frog recovers her ball, the princess runs, unfulfilling her side of their agreement. The frog later confronts her, and she is forced to uphold her end of the deal, during which the frog is revealed to be a prince under a curse, and the next day, they return to his kingdom and live happily ever after. Although these two versions of this popular fairytale seem incredibly different, they follow a similar basis and plotline with the transformation from a human into an animal and the interference of an outside force. The Disney adaptation challenges and subverts these stereotypes by portraying a female protagonist who embodies determination, ambition, and agency, thereby reflecting societal shifts toward more progressive gender norms.

For example, Disney's Tiana is a determined and somewhat self-sacrificing young woman who gives up her social life to fulfill her and her father's shared dream of owning their own restaurant. This is a stark difference from her original character layout. In the original tale, the main female lead, the princess, is a stuck-up young girl whose only good quality is the fact that she is beautiful; the princess wasn't even given a personality, and her only redeeming quality was the fact that she was the most beautiful of all her sisters. The Brothers Grimm go as far as to describe her as "so beautiful that the sun itself, who, indeed, has seen so much, marveled every time it shone upon her face" (Grimm). The Brothers Grimm version of the tale supports the patriarchal ideology that the only thing a woman is good for is to look at. The princess never truly makes a decision for herself, and the singular one she makes is to betray a deal she made, further substantiating the idea that women are incapable of thinking for themselves without, ultimately, making a mistake.

In contrast to the Grimms' description of their princess that plays into the hands of gender stereotypes, in Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*, Tiana is a determined young woman who is in charge of her own life. Tiana works for everything she wants rather than things being handed to her. This can be seen just under the 10-minute mark of the film when Tiana gets back from work and adds her tips to her collection. In the scene, Tiana's drawer is stocked with ten relatively large tin cans, all filled to the brim with a mixture of dollars and coins she saved from the tips she earns from her two jobs. At one point during the scene, she even says, "Good night Cal's. Good morning Duke's" (7:15-7:21), showing that Tiana works most of her waking hours of her day. Along with her two jobs, Tiana's social life has declined due to her constant work. While working at Duke's, a group of Tiana's friends invite her out to go dancing; one friend even told her to "live a little." Tiana declines so that she can work a double shift to save

up for her restaurant (9:36-10:02). This is a distinct difference from the princess in "The Frog Prince" since it can be assumed by the reader that she has never truly worked for anything in her life. At the same time, her father, a man, handed everything to her, such as her favorite golden ball. Tiana's character as a whole shows young girls, especially young African-American girls, that it is possible to achieve what you want if you put in the work, which is a message that numerous Disney movies have never attempted to spread to young girls.

The Prince's representation in the original tale, "The Frog Prince or Iron Heinrich," also conforms to the common gender stereotypes for men. Although for much of the story, the prince is in the form of a frog, he is still the princess's knight-in-shining-armor to her damsel-in-distress role. Their first encounter is when the princess drops her ball down a well, and rather than try and figure out a way to get her ball back, she begins to cry. The Grimm Brothers even go as far as to say, "She cried louder and louder, and she could not console herself" (Grimm). The prince (in his frog form) eventually hears her and "shockingly" offers his help to attain her golden ball. Although in this situation, the princess should be the one with the power since she is still human, the prince, even as a frog, is the one who comes to her rescue. Even in a seemingly innocent and unfortunate situation, the Grimm Brothers are further perpetuating the idea that women need someone to rescue them, preferably and often a man. This idea shows up towards the end of the story when the Prince is returned to his original state. Akin to many of the other princesses in Disney films, the female lead is passed from man to man, more commonly seen as father to husband. The situation in the original tale is the same since the princess never truly has a say in what happens to her. Following the prince's return to his human form, the Brothers Grimm write, "And he was now, according to her father's will, her dear companion and husband. [...] that tomorrow they

would go together to his kingdom” (Grimm). One can see from that quote that the princess’s marriage to the prince is “according to her father’s will” and doesn’t consider her feelings. Their union forces the princess to be dependent on the prince since they are going to live together in *his* kingdom, which continues the idea and stereotype that the man is the provider of the family and his wife is expected to follow.

Focusing on the change in male representation between the two versions of the stories, the character design for Prince Naveen differs an extreme amount from the original character. In the original tale, the prince concentrates on returning to his human form. While Naveen wants to return to his original form, he acts nonchalant throughout much of the situation; at one point, he even creates a makeshift guitar using branches and cobwebs and relaxes. When Tiana says that she could use some help paddling their jury-rigged raft, Naveen responds by saying, “Oh! I will play a little louder” (36:06-36:18). The creators of the movie have attempted to change the narrative of the women sitting back while the man works by essentially swapping the roles of the two characters. Instead of assuming Tiana will be the damsel-in-distress who needs Naveen to save her using the brain she “obviously” doesn’t have, Naveen is the one who needs saving. This dynamic between the two is seen multiple times when Tiana’s street smarts save them from different situations throughout their journey through the bayou and the streets due to Naveen’s lack of awareness. Disney further breaks the stereotype that the man is the provider of the household with the original driving point of Naveen’s character. Since he is a prince, one would assume that Naveen is fabulously wealthy, but it is explained that he doesn’t have the funds to support his lifestyle any longer. His butler even explains that Naveen has “two options, woo and marry a rich young lady or get a job!” (16:57-17:53). It is a common stereotype that women are goldiggers who marry for money, but in the movie’s case, it is Naveen,

the male lead, who is the goldigger marrying for money. By putting Naveen in this situation, he is the one who is dependent on the woman to provide for him rather than the other way around.

Another significant difference lies in the parental figures in the two character’s lives. The princess’s mother is never mentioned in the original tale; the only parental figure is her father. As is common in many fairytales, the princess is more often “ordered” or instructed by the male authority figure (her father) to do certain things rather than making independent decisions. This is evident in instances such as when the princess is commanded by her father multiple times to listen to the frog’s needs to fulfill her half of the agreement she made with him (Grimm). The presence of Tiana’s mother and the death of her father goes against standard gender stereotypes in fairytales, where the mother typically either dies or is never mentioned or shown. This is discussed in a blog article titled “Death in the Margins: Gender,” where the authors found that in 28 separate fairytales written by the Grimm Brothers and Hans Christian Andersen, 71% of the deaths in the stories were female. The *Princess and the Frog* film breaks this ongoing stereotype even among other Disney-made and produced fairytale movies. It makes Tiana’s mother the head of the household and the person in charge rather than her father, who, if he hadn’t died in the war, most certainly would have been.

As much as Disney worked on presenting a more progressive version of the old fairytale through the recharacterization of the male and female leads, multiple examples within the film still work to perpetuate certain gender stereotypes. One of these examples is acted out by Tiana’s mother, who tells Tiana that her only wish for her is that she meet her “prince charming, and dance[s] off into your [Tiana’s] happily ever after” (13:25-13:37). While Tiana’s mother does go against gender stereotypes in fairytales by outliving her husband, she still maintains

the idea of a woman finding a “prince charming” and having a “happily ever after” by only wanting that for her daughter. The belief that women can’t run a successful business or be independent is further substantiated when Tiana is undermined and underestimated by two white businessmen. After giving them the downpayment, the two businessmen tell her that they gave the building to a higher bidder after not allowing Tiana to sign any papers. They explain to her that a “little woman of your [her] background would have had her hands full trying to run a big business like that” (24:21-24:48): a statement like that unmistakably displays how men look down on women as an *inferior species*. Simply because she had worked hard as a woman to earn her and her father’s restaurant, these two businessmen believed that she would never be able to succeed in the end. These two examples, although minute compared to the number of stereotype-breaking scenes that comprise the movie, convey the obstacles and difficulties women face simply for being women and the demeaning stereotypes that merely come with the assigned gender.

Throughout Disney’s extensive history in the entertainment business, they have constantly made movies that haven’t aged well. Many of the early

film adaptations of classic fairytales have sustained common societal gender stereotypes such as the damsel-in-distress, the brave and robust male hero, or the two-dimensional princess without a personality besides the fact that she either falls in love or is traumatized. Compared to many other older Disney movies, such as *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, the film encourages a message to young girls that they can achieve their dreams and shouldn’t give up even if the rest of the world tells them to. Seen in its audience approval ratings, *The Princess and the Frog* received an 85% Rotten Tomato rating, which ranks relatively high among the 73 animated movies Disney has put out as of 2023. A top critic on the site even went as far as to say, “*The Princess and the Frog* will certainly be remembered years later as not only a pioneer Disney movie, but also one that allowed audiences to never let go of their dreams and that with love anything is possible, no matter your age or color,” keeping in mind that this review was written in 2017, 8 years after the film had come out. While this movie doesn’t perfectly fix the decades of harm Disney has caused through the constant visual representation of characters, *The Princess and the Frog* attempts to correct some of the numerous wrongs that occurred during their time producing princess and fairytale movies.

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God is a Woman: Feminine Divinity in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"

Cristina Lezcano

Course: ENG 2190

Professor: Raje Kaur

Student: Cristina Lezcano

Essay: *God is a Woman: Feminine Divinity in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"*

Assignment

My final project takes an artistic approach in the form of a digital zine. I chose this medium to support my project thesis, that Rossetti's "Goblin Market" supports a woman's redemption through divinity and sororal community. Zines have a history of being a radical medium to express thoughts, arts, and everything else that does not conform within traditional publishing and society. "Goblin Market" rejects the Victorian notion of self-abnegation, which can be perceived as radical for the time.

The Victorian Era perpetuated the idea of the self-abnegating woman—a woman who punished herself and submitted to the patriarchy without question. We have seen this exemplified in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* with the character of Helen Burns. She maintains an unwavering faith in God and Christianity, and demonstrated compassion and Christian principles that were sought in women at the time. Burns' spiritual journey juxtaposes the one presented to readers by Rossetti's "Goblin Market," which suggests that women can redeem themselves without the need of a patriarchal figure guiding them to salvation.

Readers and critics can only speculate as to why Rossetti wrote "Goblin Market" because of the many underlying themes found within the poem. Several critics have theorized that Rossetti's poem proves to be radical because it advocates for women being capable of salvation through the help of their own gender, alluding to the idea that religion did not need to be dictated through the patriarchy. I believe it is only fitting that a radical thought such as female empowerment through a religion that was greatly dominated by men at the time should be represented through a radical medium such as the format of a zine.



GOD IS A WOMAN

Feminine Divinity
in Christina Rossetti's
"Goblin Market"

WOMEN REDEEMING WOMEN

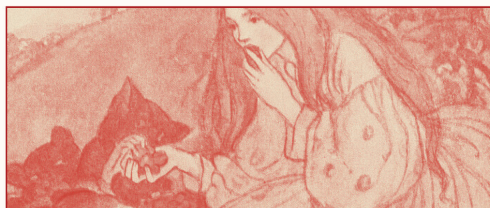
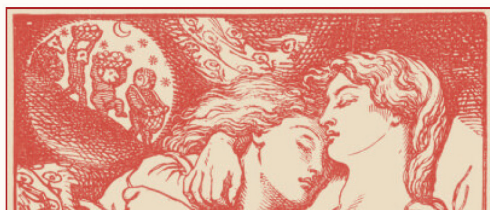
"Goblin Market" can be seen as a revolutionary work that challenges traditional notions of femininity and presents an alternative vision of female empowerment—one that is rooted in sisterhood, selflessness, and spiritual strength. Through its exploration of these themes, the poem remains relevant and influential, inspiring generations of readers to reconsider the role of women in society and the sources of their power.



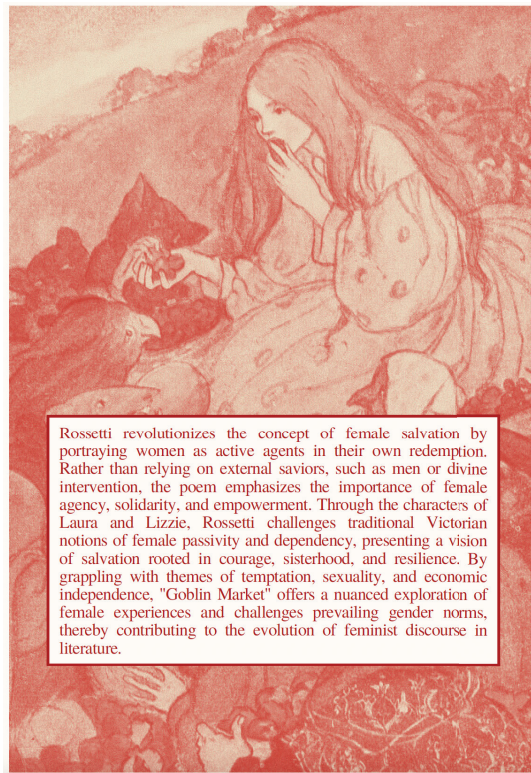
“...Rossetti is using
the body not as a
symbol or metaphor
but rather as the
concrete conduit
through which
humans understand
God.”

“...humans do not so much as transcend
the body as they *experience the*
transcendent through it” (Hill).

Themes of female empowerment in "Goblin Market" and the prevailing Victorian ideals of female self-abnegation contrast greatly. It is almost as if Rossetti was implicitly protesting this antiquated Victorian ideal of womanhood. During the Victorian era, societal expectations placed a heavy emphasis on women's self-sacrifice, submission, and obedience to patriarchal norms. Women were often expected to prioritize the needs and desires of others above their own, sacrificing their own autonomy and ambitions in service to their families and communities.



"Did you miss me? / Come and kiss me. / Never mind my bruises, / Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices / Squeez'd from goblin fruits for you, / Goblin pulp and goblin dew. / Eat me, drink me, love me; / Laura, make much of me..."



Rossetti revolutionizes the concept of female salvation by portraying women as active agents in their own redemption. Rather than relying on external saviors, such as men or divine intervention, the poem emphasizes the importance of female agency, solidarity, and empowerment. Through the characters of Laura and Lizzie, Rossetti challenges traditional Victorian notions of female passivity and dependency, presenting a vision of salvation rooted in courage, sisterhood, and resilience. By grappling with themes of temptation, sexuality, and economic independence, "Goblin Market" offers a nuanced exploration of female experiences and challenges prevailing gender norms, thereby contributing to the evolution of feminist discourse in literature.

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The Impact of Parent Marital Status on Attachment Anxiety and Number of Close Friendships in Adulthood

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Course: PSY 2030

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Student: Cristie Nunez

Essay: *The Impact of Parent Marital Status on Attachment Anxiety and Number of Close Friendships in Adulthood*

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982) argues that the quality of an individual's early emotional bonds with their primary caregivers is the blueprint for attachment type in relationships during adulthood. According to the theory, individuals who experienced their primary caregiver as warm and reliable tend to have secure attachment orientations during adulthood. Secure attachment in adults is usually categorized as being trusting, independent, and stable during romantic relationships. Individuals who had a colder and more distant bond with their primary caregiver may have insecure attachment orientations during adulthood. Insecure attachment is categorized by fear of abandonment, being emotionally distant, and avoiding closeness in relationships.

As the rate of marriage has steadily declined in the United States over the past several years, with experts estimating that 40-50% of marriages will end in divorce (American Psychological Association, 2013), research has shown the implications of parent divorce, separation, and conflict on attachment

security, anxiety, and the amount of stress individuals experience. For instance, Lopez, Melendez, and Rice (2000) examined whether parental divorce and race/ethnicity affect relationship attachment security during adulthood. Results of the study showed that there is not a significant relationship between parent marital status and adult attachment security. However, in comparison to participants from "intact" families, participants from divorced households did describe their early relationship with their parents as less pleasant and caring. Similarly, Riggio (2004) observed the impacts of parent conflict on the psychological and social well-being of young adults. Participants from families with high-parent marital conflict reported lower independence, emotional support from parents, and significantly greater anxiety in relationships compared to participants from households with low-parent marital conflict. The reported experiences of participants from high-parent conflict families coincide with the characteristics of insecure attachment. Parent divorce and separation have also been linked to

higher rates of general anxiety and stress that individuals experience in adulthood. Individuals from divorced-parent households report experiencing significantly more stress and anxiety compared to people whose parents are still married (Afifi, Granger, Joseph, Denes, & Aldeis, 2015; Richardson & McCabe, 2001).

The present study seeks to further explore the effects of parent marital status on attachment insecurity and anxiety. Many studies have explored the connection between parent divorce and separation on insecure attachment in romantic relationships during adulthood. Considering previous research, I hypothesized if different parent marital status groups would have similar impacts on attachment orientation in close friendships. I expected individuals from divorced or separated-parent households would experience more attachment anxiety in close friendships compared to individuals whose parents were still married. Additionally, I hypothesized if parent marital status would impact the number of close friendships people consider themselves to have. I predicted individuals from divorced or separated families may have fewer close friendships.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 206 participants at the start of the study and 175 participants by the end of the study with ages ranging from 18-65+. Fifty-two percent of the sample was between 18-24 years old. Participants were recruited through an online survey that was shared across social media platforms and email. One hundred participants were from married families, 23 were from widowed families, 39 were from divorced families, 11 were from separated families, and 33 were from never-married families.

Materials

Participants completed the following measures:

The Revised Adult Attachment Scale, Close Relationships Version (Collins, 1996)- The attachment scale is an 18-item measure of *attachment anxiety* and *attachment avoidance* in close relationships, using a 5-point scale (1= *not at all characteristic of me* to 5= *very characteristic of me*). For the purposes of this study, only 3 items were used (see Appendix).

Demographic Information- Participants were asked about their parent's marital status (married, widowed, divorced, separated, never married). Participants were also asked how many close friendships they considered themselves to have (minimum 1, maximum 8).

Procedure

Participants completed an online survey. Participants were first asked to select one option that best described their parent's marital status. Then they completed the attachment anxiety measure (see Appendix). Lastly, participants answered how many close friendships they have.

Design

For my first hypothesis, I employed a 1-way between-subjects ANOVA. Parent marital status (married, widowed, divorced, separated, never married) was used as the predictor. The outcome was friendship attachment anxiety (1= no attachment anxiety to 5=maximum attachment anxiety).

For my second hypothesis, I employed another 1-way between-subjects ANOVA. Parent marital status (married, widowed, divorced, separated, never married) was the predictor and the outcome was number of close friendships (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8).

Results

I predicted that parent marital status would affect the amount of attachment anxiety people experience in close friendships. My prediction was that participants

whose parents were either separated or divorced would report higher levels of attachment anxiety. Overall, feelings of attachment anxiety were rated as $M=2.91$ with $SD=.91$ on the 1 to 5 scale indicating moderate feelings of attachment anxiety on average. The results of a one-way ANOVA showed that there was a significant, medium effect of parent marital status ($F(4,186)=4.68, p=.001, \eta^2=.092$) such that participants whose parents were never married reported feeling the highest amount of attachment anxiety ($M=3.44, SD=.81$) and participants whose parents were either widowed ($M=2.56, SD=.69$) or separated ($M=2.56, SD=.95$) reported the lowest amount of attachment anxiety (see Figure 1).

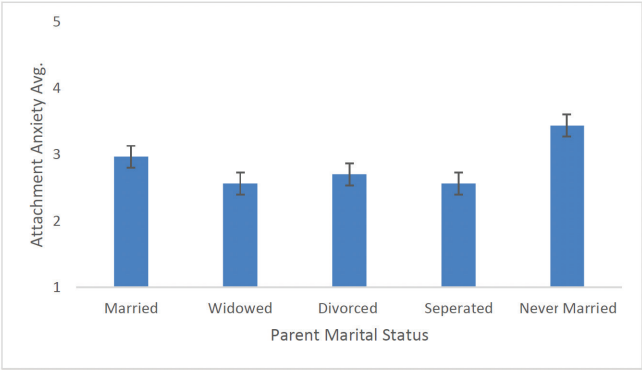


Figure 1. Mean attachment anxiety levels across different parent marital status groups where higher numbers indicate higher levels of reported anxiety. Standard error bars are shown.

My second prediction was that parent marital status would affect the number of close friendships people have. I predicted that people whose parents were divorced or separated would have fewer close friendships. The results of a one-way ANOVA showed no effect of parent marital status ($F(4,170)=1.194, p=.315, \eta^2=.027$), such that parent marital status does not affect the number of close friendships people consider themselves to have. Overall, the number of close friendships participants reported was $M=3.74, SD=1.973$ on average. (See Figure 2).

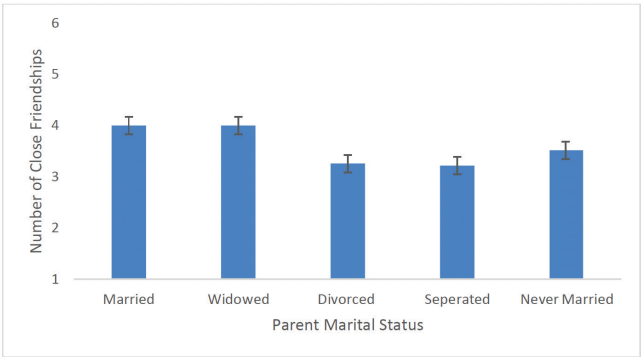


Figure 2. Mean number of close friendships across different parent marital status groups. Higher numbers indicate a greater number of close friendships. Standard error bars are shown.

Discussion

The present study sought to explore whether five different types of parent marital status groups would have any impact on attachment anxiety in friendships and the number of close friendships individuals have. Since previous studies have found that parent marital status does impact the amount of anxiety individuals experience (Afifi, Granger, Joseph, Denes, & Aldeis, 2015; Richardson & McCabe, 2001), I predicted that individuals from some parent marital status groups would experience more reported attachment anxiety than other groups. I expected individuals from divorced and separated groups would have the highest levels of self-reported attachment anxiety. As I expected, parent marital status does affect attachment anxiety in close friendships, which expands the idea of parent marital status affecting attachment orientation in one’s romantic relationships. However, I found that individuals whose parents never married had the most self-reported attachment anxiety, which was a result I did not predict or expect to find. While researching attachment insecurity and anxiety across different parent marital status groups, many studies focused solely on divorced or married groups. The findings of this study suggest that an individual’s parents never being married may also have significant impacts on

attachment orientation, anxiety, and stress one experiences related to close friendships during adulthood as well.

Research has shown individuals from high-parent marital conflict households report lower independence and significantly greater anxiety in relationships (Riggio, 2004). My second prediction was that individuals whose parents were divorced or separated might have fewer close friendships. I found that parent marital status does not have a significant effect on the number of close friendships people have. Number of close friendships were around the same range across the five different parent marital status groups. Although my second prediction did not yield any significant results, my study may have been limited due to only a few number of participants belonging to the divorced, separated, widowed, and never-married parent groups. A vast majority of participants' parents were married.

Limitations

Throughout the course of the current research, several limitations have been identified. The most significant limitation is the sample size of the five marital status groups. Four out of five of my parent marital status groups had less than 40 participants while one group, the married group, had over 100 participants. There could have been a difference in the results of the current research if there were more participants in each group. Additionally, there were fewer participants at the end of the study compared to the beginning of the study, leading to missing data. My results could have been limited by the data of the missing participants. Another limitation of the current research is participants possibly being affected by the fatigue affect. The survey used in this study was a part of a larger research class survey, so it included many different questions and took a few minutes to complete, which may be why some data was missing.

Future Directions

The results of the current research provided several directions for future research. In the future, I would expand the items included in the attachment anxiety measure. For the purposes of this study only 3 items were used but asking a few more questions might've made the measure a more accurate representation of attachment anxiety symptoms. Additionally, I would have included a parent conflict variable in the study. In the future, I think it would be interesting to ask participants questions related to how much parent conflict they've experienced and see if high conflict also affects friendship attachment anxiety. While much research has been done on parent marital status in connection to romantic attachment orientations, future research on how parent marital status affects an individual's experiences in friendships can be beneficial in understanding how adults develop socially and emotionally.

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Appendix

Attachment Anxiety Scale:

Please answer the following questions based on your close friendships.

1) I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.

1- Not at all characteristic of me 2 3 4 5- very characteristic of me

2) When I show my feelings for others, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.

1- Not at all characteristic of me 2 3 4 5- very characteristic of me

3) When I get close to people, I don't worry about being hurt.

1- Not at all characteristic of me 2 3 4 5- very characteristic of me

My Old Friend, Yuri Ozawa

Kieran Johnson

Course: ENG 3410

Professor: Raje Kaur

Student: Kieran Johnson

Essay: *My Old Friend, Yuri Ozawa*

Project Statement

I decided to write a short story that served as a continuation to Dwight Okita's 'In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers'. In this story I try to echo the emotional resonance of Okita's poem by extending it into a narrative about Denise's remorse, reflection, progress, and confrontations by tying it into the bigger picture of it all. In my opinion these things happen and continue to happen because this is a capitalistic world and capitalism cannot exist without having someone to oppress. I wanted that to be one of the central focuses of the story.

I chose to do this because 'Farewell to Manzanar' and Dwight Okita's Poem were my two favorite pieces we read in this class. I think the way in which the narrator (in Okita's Poem) also feels a need to insert their American tendencies is not only sad but it is almost humiliating. It's the truth and a very blunt one and

I think that's what makes it powerful. I wanted to emulate that sense of humility with Denise in kind of realizing that she's done things for some time simply because she's been programmed to. I also think I chose to do this because I wanted something positive to come out of it. In a perfect world I would hope that this is how it would have played out. I think everyone is capable of change, you just have to put in the work to do it, and Denise does that by reading and reading Yuri's memoir. (I think her guilt also forced her into doing some reflection but hey, she got there, that's all that should matter now). more I wrote the more I learned what sort of emotions and lessons I wanted the audience to take away and tried to channel that a bit better as I revised. I finished the first draft in 15 hours (spread across two days), and then I asked ChatGPT to read it and give me feedback. Some of it was useful, some of it wasn't.

(A prose sequel to Dwight Okita's 'In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers**')

My bones settle in front of the plastic box television as I sit perched in Carl's pine plaid rocking chair. And

sitting -- wisely -- on top of the TV, eliciting more questions by the passing days, is Yuri's memoir.

The sun was still up when I first flew into the house. I rebelliously plopped down in the seat my husband's ass was imprinted into, blinked, and now my dim living room was glowing with the fawn, yellow-brown

complexion of a woman from the TV. She looks similar to how Yuri looks now, or at least how she looked when she took the headshot featured in the book on the page titled 'Author's Bio'.

I inadvertently dart my gaze away from the screen, too cowardly to face her and the lookalike. But she's sitting right behind me, tapping me on the shoulder with her pencil. I turn and keep turning until I see Yuri sitting in the metal framed desk in our ninth-grade Geography class with Mrs. Thompson. Maybe a part of me does wish that she were truly here. Not the 44 year old version of her that apparently resides in NYC now, but the fourteen-year old version of my best friend from childhood. That way I could apologize for how things ended.

Moreover, I specifically want to apologize for saying the things I said. But I couldn't yet because she was a figment of my imagination and I still don't really know why I said it.

I cut the volume of Johnny Cash's voice down to five, plagued by the thought of how the apology might have played out. She wouldn't have been sitting behind me because I cut a gash into her chest when I sat across the classroom, then doused the wound in Isopropyl Alcohol with my parroting.

Sometimes, when I talk, I can still hear the innocence in my ignorance as it rolls off my tongue.

"You're trying to start a war . . . giving secrets away to the enemy. Why can't you keep your big mouth shut?"

The cadence of my younger voice floods my living room unexpectedly. It rings similarly to how it did in the classroom, echoing like the cry of a coyote resonating through Yosemite Valley. It pinches my eardrums and pulses through my temple until I shoot out Carl's chair, turn the tv off, and storm off to my bedroom for the remainder of the night.

What made me say such a horrible thing?

I turn the night lamp off, flinch, then turn it back on for

Carl although I know he isn't coming home because we're heading for a divorce. Also to keep from having to face Yuri, who's been wandering my house at night like a ghost ever since Carl banished her from my life. Like a fish, I flop around my bed until inevitably forcing my eyes closed.

I hadn't thought about her in years, then I stumbled across a copy of her memoir in a bookstore window two weeks ago. Despite running late for Little Timmy's baseball game, I recognized her on the cover because she was blessed with pores that aged backwards and it's hard to forget your best friend's face. Especially when you were cruel to her in the weeks before she would go exchange the word cruel for life in internment camps.

A New York Times Bestseller

Yuri Ozawa-Anderson

In Three Years We, A Memoir Of Japanese
Incarceration

I practically threw the dollar and seventy-five cents at the clerk and inhaled the woody-fragrance of all 189 pages by the time Little Timmy hit a grand slam at the bottom of the ninth inning.

It went with me wherever I did for the next week. I read it from cover to cover at the grocery store, in church, in the bathroom, another baseball game, at the office, and at doctor's appointments. I'd even bring it to bed, night after night, and fall asleep to the sound of Yuri reading aloud, just like she would volunteer to do in class. Then Carl told me he didn't want me reading about 'Japs'.

I let Carl tell me what to say, how to think, what to do, what to wear, how to feel, what to drink, when to eat, and now, what to read. I'm not too sure about why I do that either. He decided he was taking up permanent residence in his mother's house three nights ago, and for various reasons, I still hadn't retrieved Yuri from her time-out.

A part of me feels guilty about that too. It was like it was happening all over again; I went on with my day to day life, completely unaltered, while Yuri sat across the house, alone, coated in the dead skin cells the environment dumped on top of her.

I think more of Carl as I lay stagnant in the first stage of sleeping. I was in bed, reading aloud the night he ripped it from my hands. Outloud, I read the section where Yuri stated that she couldn't remember what anyone in Manzanar looked like because her *'body roamed the campgrounds like the floating petals of a wilting orchid, while her spirit unknowingly withered at the roots,'*. And how the men in her *'family were left bitter and hardened like a stain from the ring of a coffee mug when it came time to rejoin society,'*.

Carl made a comment about how they couldn't complain after they bombed our country. After reading and re-reading Yuri's memoir, I became incredibly sensitized to her experience and asked how he could genuinely think that her family was responsible for Pearl Harbor. We argued and he repeated something I'd heard someone else say before packing his things. I'm not sure who said it, but he told me "A Jap's, A Jap, - and it makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not,"

I throw the comforter off from over my legs and sit up furiously reflecting on how I wound up with someone like Carl. I feel the eraser end of her thin pencil press into my right shoulder and turn to see Yuri again. She doesn't say anything, she usually doesn't unless she's reading from her memoir. All she does is point and so I go, staggering into the living room, following her finger all the way to the book.

I press the TV's power button. The light projects onto me. Yuri taps my shoulder again, and keeps tapping until I'm forced to acknowledge it. I bring the book back to Carl's chair and open to where left off last:

"I was extraordinarily bitter when I left the compound and that hasn't been easy to shake. I became a cynic

before I'd even completed my first twelve menstrual cycles and it affected my ability to make friends after. That really pissed me off. everywhere i went, when people got comfortable enough, they asked what life was like there. but no one ever wonders why it happened. few seem to question the government's sudden classification of how over 120,000 japanese americans suddenly became potential threats overnight. they just believed it because those in power said so, and power is what makes a human into a machine. I like to think of the relationship just as the computer is to the user. We (the 'powerless' machine) are conditioned to do, think, and regurgitate whatever the 'infallible' user (parents, teachers, husbands, elders, officers and anyone power is loaned out to) installs in us. And when we -- the japs, the negros, the mexicans, the dykes, the fags, the communists and all other labels -- aren't functioning how they see fit, they strip us of all necessary components until we barely function at all. Then they blame us, the failing machine, rather than the infallible user who intentionally disrupted our system,"

I rock in the chair, receiving answers from Yuri that I've far from earned. Eventually, I rock until the sun returns. I face it humbly, allowing it to paint my insides with its golden light. A little later, the clock strikes nine, and I dial the number to the publishing office printed on the back of the book.

Resources

1. This Man Filmed Life Inside An Internment Camp (Youtube Video)
 2. In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers (Poem)
 3. A Slap's a Slap: General John L. DeWitt and Four Little Words (Article)
-

Self Assessment Questions

1. In doing this project, I think I learned the ways in which people reflect and move past being in these concentration camps. Of course, that naturally comes with just being individuals, raised by different parents, with different genetic backgrounds, in different parts of the world. But I did a lot of other research as I had intended to include a much longer excerpt from 'Yuri's' perspective. I (briefly) looked over a few other novels about being in one of the ten Japanese internment camps in America and I noticed some are very upfront about how they view the world post-experience, whereas others seem a lot more reserved with their resentment.
2. I think the biggest challenge I faced in doing this was ensuring I portrayed two races that I am not, accurately. It was less challenging for Denise because, (I don't say this to be funny) but when it comes to white people trying to redeem their faults in regards to discrimination and oppression . . . I don't think capturing that is too hard when you are an oppressed person. I wrote it how I would want it to happen to me. But capturing the Japanese was hard in the sense that I thought very carefully about the words I used the entire time.. Another challenge I faced was not making this a pity piece about Denise. I think that would dismiss the entire point of the assignment and the teaching of this class. It was hard to find a balance of feeling sympathy for Denise, while still honoring and talking about Yuri's story.
3. Well, to ensure I captured the Japanese opinion 'accurately', I scanned a few other memoirs and did some research on when they began to speak more openly about their experiences. As for ensuring that it didn't become a piece about pitying Denise, I made sure Yuri's presence was consistent throughout the piece.
4. I think my final product is incredibly successful. I'm very proud of it. Of course, there's always room to make improvements.
5. If I wanted to ensure that it didn't become a pity piece about Denise I would have left Yuri's excerpt about how she fell in love and became an activist after her time in Manzanar. I'm not sure what else I could've done better, but I'm open to feedback :)

Collected Poems

Hannah DiGangi

Course: ANTHRO 3710

Professor: Lilian Luisa Milanes

Student: Hannah DiGangi

Essay: *Collected Poems*

Chronically

Brittle nails and Broken bones,
Droning on about what isn't fair,
My long, red hair is falling out,
I slap on a fake smile,
But inside I want to quit,
This pain is too much to bear,
Every step,
Every tear,
Every breath,
How much can one person take?
Youth filled with joy,
Growth filled with pain,
How much longer must I bear the weight?
The weight of the ones I love?
But I *must* keep going,
I cannot let this win,
I will keep going,
Every. Single. Step.

Hello Darkness

I think about you every day,
Every day without fail,
How nice it would be,
To welcome you,
To let you you overtake my body,
To become one with you. . .
But I cannot,
Not yet,
Not while I still have people,
People who ho need me,
So pain or not...
Here I come

Little Helper

This pain is too much,
I need my little helper,
But people are trying,
To take,
My little helper away. . .
So while others abuse it,
I need it,
Though it only masks the pain,
Like a Band-aid,
A Band-aid that won't stick,
It is better than nothing.

Made From Stars

We were all made,
Made from something,
In this life or another,
It is important to find the beauty,
Of just being alive.
Some have it easy,
Some like me do not,
Even though this pain is a Bitch,
I mustn't give in,
No, not yet.
As easy as it would be,
What about life is easy?
Contemplate, Contemplate,
I was put here for a reason,
And that reason?
To be a star in other's lives.

One Wish

It is that time of year,
Again...
My birthday,
I see the red velvet cake,
With one candle.
I will wish,
Wish for the same thing,
That I always do,
For something to make,
To make this pain stop,
Once and for all. . .
Though it never works,
One can always wish...
Right?

Not Gonna Take It

The Doctor's laugh,
Say that I can't "possibly"
Have pain,
I don't look like,
I am in pain,
But trust me,
I am.
What does pain look like?
What does pain act like?
What is pain?
Apparently not me.
Well,
I'm not going to take it, no...
Not anymore.

My Personal Beliefs on Mental Illness

Hillary Castillo

Course: SWK 3500

Professor: Anais Bailly

Student: Hillary Castillo

Essay: *My Personal Beliefs on Mental Illness*

Abstract

This paper explores my personal beliefs about mental illness and the influences that shaped my beliefs. Exposure to mental health stigma has gotten me to think more about why people judge others mental illness. From thinking negative to positive, people should be more open to learning about different mental illnesses. Different sources in my life like TikTok and relationships have influenced the way I look at

mental illness. Different moments of my life, I am more alert of what I think and say to those to people that struggle with other disorders, especially in the professional setting. Moving forward in my social work training, I can address different levels of my beliefs and reactions. The way I see mental illness is affected by what I've experienced, thought, and felt.

Mental Illness belief

Growing up I learned from my mom that in our Peruvian culture, we do acknowledge mental illness but do not believe in the medication that one takes for it. Due to the influence of my mother and our Peruvian cultural background I believed that mental illness should be handled naturally and without medication. My mom had three main concerns about mental illness that I used to agree with: First, she believed that it should be treated naturally without relying on medication. Second, she worried that people could become addicted to the medications prescribed for their mental health conditions. Lastly, she was

skeptical about doctors giving out multiple diagnoses just to profit from their patients. As I matured and gained more experience with mental illness, I started to think differently. I've come to believe that people facing serious mental health illness may benefit from medication to manage their emotions and feelings. Although, it is not the case for everyone. For instance, someone dealing with moderate to severe depression might consider antidepressants as an option, while those with milder forms of depression may not necessarily need medication. It all depends on the person who has the choice to take medication or not (NHS, 2023).

Exposure to Mental Health Stigma

In my past relationship, my partner had severe depression. It was tough to handle. Despite my efforts to support them, I struggled to understand what they were going through. Seeing their challenges made me realize the seriousness of mental illness and how it impacts relationships. It motivated me to learn more and offer support to others facing the same thing. Online, I've encountered a lot of stigma towards mental health. Platforms like TikTok sometimes feature people self-diagnosing with mental illnesses without seeking professional help. For example, the article "Teens are using social media to diagnose themselves with ADHD, autism, and more. Parents are alarmed" explains how a parent's daughter self-diagnosed herself because of these popular creators she follows having a mental illness. Another example is, I saw a video where someone claimed to have obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) without a formal diagnosis, which bothered me a lot. They had explained when a photo isn't framed a correct way, their OCD is acting up. It's frustrating because I was diagnosed with OCD. Not everything has to do with organization in OCD (Kelly, 2023).

Exposure to Mental Health Stigma

Also, my reactions vary when encountering someone with mental illness. My affective reaction aims me to be sensitive and avoid saying anything inappropriate, mindful of the person's condition and my own opinions. On a cognitive level, I may internally reflect on certain matters that I understand are better left unsaid. What I could do is always correct others if they accidentally say something they didn't mean to say. That will have to do with professional settings, family, and friends. While I remain open to engaging with clients across all age groups, I would prefer not to work directly with clients who are diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. I would only work with them very cautiously with the appropriate training that I

completed. As a person who was diagnosed with BPD, I recognize the difficulties of myself. But again, I will be open to learning about other mental illnesses in the DSM-5.

Social Work Training

As I move forward in my social work training, I can use the ten diagnostic principles as a guide to address the beliefs and reactions I've discussed, and fight against stigma at both micro and macro level. In Cheree Hammond's book "Diagnostic Essentials of Psychopathology: a case-based approach", three principles that stood out to me that seem helpful for my profession would be: 'The Warranted Concern', 'Horses and Zebras', and 'The Principle of Predominance'. 'The Warranted Concern' emphasizes that social workers should have a valid reason to worry. When it comes to 'Horses and Zebras', it suggests that we should consider common explanations, helping us differ between depression and anxiety, for example. It's like hearing hooves on the ground and thinking horses first because they're more common. Lastly, 'The Principle of Predominant' advises us to focus on the most important client problems rather than throwing so many diagnoses on a person that may not be true (Hammond, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper explored at how I see mental illness. It explains my experiences, thoughts, and feelings toward mental illness. My culture and personal experiences influenced me, but I've shifted from negative to positive thinking. As I continue my journey to becoming a social worker, I recognize to be more understanding than assuming things. Now, I am more careful about what I say, especially for my future job as a social worker whether it be in a micro or macro level setting. I know I have a lot to learn from my supervisors. As I start my social work training, I know I will be going through difficult obstacles which I know I can overcome. I'll work hard to understand mental

mental health better and be better at helping people. It's a value of mine to be kind, empathetic, and to advocate for others. I'm excited to keep learning and making a difference.

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“Stressors have a major influence upon mood, our sense of well-being, behavior, and health.”

Kristyn Meeks

Course: LBST 4800

Professor: Laura DiSumma

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Essay: *“Stressors have a major influence upon mood, our sense of well-being, behavior, and health.”*

“Stressors have a major influence upon mood, our sense of well-being, behavior, and health.” (Schneiderman et al.) Stress has become an omnipresent force in contemporary society, permeating every aspect of daily life. From the pressures of work deadlines to the challenges of personal relationships, individuals constantly grapple with stressors that can exert profound effects on their well-being. However, the impact of stress extends far beyond mere feelings of discomfort or unease; it has been increasingly recognized as a significant determinant of both physical and mental health outcomes. The body’s physiological response to stress, often characterized by the activation of the “fight or flight” mechanism, sets off a complex cascade of hormonal and neurological changes that can exert substantial strain on various bodily systems. Moreover, the psychological toll of chronic stress can contribute to the development or exacerbation of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Understanding the intricate relationship between stress and health outcomes is of paramount importance in contemporary healthcare discourse.

The objective is to aim to delve into the multifaceted impact of stress on both physical and mental health, synthesizing evidence from diverse fields of research to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic. By exploring the physiological mechanisms underlying the relationship between stress and physical health outcomes, as well as the psychological ramifications of chronic stress on mental well-being, we can gain valuable insights into the complex interplay between stress and health.

Through an examination of seminal studies and systematic reviews, we decode the various pathways through which stress influences health outcomes, shedding light on the mechanisms that underpin its detrimental effects. Furthermore, by critically reflecting on the implications of stress for holistic health promotion, we can identify potential avenues for future research and evidence-based interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of stress on individuals and communities.

In synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying gaps in current research, we seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of stress on both

physical and mental health. By elucidating the complex interplay between stress and health outcomes, we can pave the way for the development of more effective strategies for prevention, intervention, and treatment, ultimately promoting resilience and well-being in individuals and populations alike.

Stress triggers a complex array of physiological responses within the body, orchestrated by the intricate interplay between the nervous and endocrine systems. At the core of the body's stress response is the activation of the "fight or flight" mechanism, an evolutionary adaptation designed to mobilize resources for survival in the face of perceived threats.

The "fight or flight" response initiates a cascade of hormonal and neurological changes aimed at preparing the body for immediate action. In response to stressors, the hypothalamus, a region of the brain responsible for regulating various bodily functions, signals the release of corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH). CRH then stimulates the pituitary gland to secrete adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), which in turn triggers the release of cortisol from the adrenal glands. Cortisol, often referred to as the "stress hormone," plays a central role in orchestrating the body's physiological response to stress by mobilizing energy reserves, enhancing cardiovascular function, and suppressing non-essential bodily functions such as digestion and reproductive processes.

While the "fight or flight" response is adaptive in the short term, chronic exposure to stress can have deleterious effects on physical health. Research has consistently demonstrated a link between chronic stress and a myriad of physical health problems, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and immune dysfunction. Turner et al. conducted a systematic review of prospective studies and found that both exaggerated and blunted stress responses in key physiological systems, such as the sympatho-adrenal medullary (SAM) system and hypothalamo-pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis, were associated with

various health and disease outcomes. "Exaggerated stress reactivity at baseline predicted an increase in risk factors for cardiovascular disease and decreased telomere length at follow-up." (Turner et al., 2020)

Blunted stress responses were linked to increased adiposity and susceptibility to mental health disorders such as depression and PTSD.

Incorporating evidence from Turner et al. underscores the importance of understanding stress reactivity in shaping future health outcomes. By elucidating the physiological mechanisms through which stress influences physical health, we can better appreciate the significance of stress management strategies in mitigating the negative effects of chronic stress on overall well-being.

The systematic review conducted by Janssen et al. (2015) sheds light on the comprehensive effects of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) on employees' mental health across various occupational sectors. Their findings indicate a multitude of positive outcomes, highlighting the efficacy of MBSR in addressing key mental health indicators.

Emotional exhaustion, a prominent dimension of burnout, was significantly reduced following MBSR interventions. "...the strongest outcomes were reduced levels of emotional exhaustion (a dimension of burnout), stress, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and occupational stress. Improvements were found in terms of mindfulness, personal accomplishment (a dimension of burnout), (occupational) self-compassion, quality of sleep, and relaxation." (Janssen et al., 2015)

This finding underscores the potential of mindfulness practices in alleviating the debilitating effects of burnout, a prevalent concern in today's workplace environments. By targeting emotional exhaustion, MBSR interventions offer promising prospects for enhancing overall well-being and resilience among employees.

Similarly, MBSR demonstrated effectiveness in mitigating stress levels among participants. Through cultivating moment-to-moment awareness and nonjudgmental attitudes, MBSR equips individuals with valuable coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges of daily work-related stressors. By fostering a greater sense of present-moment awareness and acceptance, MBSR empowers individuals to respond to stressors more adaptively, thereby promoting psychological resilience and well-being.

Psychological distress, encompassing a range of negative mood states, showed notable reductions following MBSR interventions. By targeting underlying cognitive and emotional processes, MBSR equips individuals with effective tools for managing distressing thoughts and emotions, fostering greater emotional regulation and psychological flexibility. This finding underscores the potential of MBSR as a holistic approach to promoting mental health and well-being in the workplace.

Depression and anxiety, two prevalent mental health concerns, exhibited significant improvements following MBSR interventions. By promoting greater self-awareness and acceptance, MBSR interventions offer individuals effective strategies for managing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Through regular mindfulness practice, individuals develop greater resilience in the face of adversity, leading to improved mental health outcomes and enhanced overall well-being.

Occupational stress, a pervasive issue in modern work environments, also showed notable reductions following MBSR interventions. By fostering greater self-compassion and mindfulness, MBSR equips individuals with effective coping mechanisms for managing job-related stressors. This finding highlights the potential of MBSR as a preventive measure for addressing occupational stress and promoting a healthier work environment.

Moreover, MBSR interventions led to improvements in mindfulness, personal accomplishment (a dimension of burnout), and (occupational) self-compassion. By cultivating greater self-awareness and compassion towards oneself and others, MBSR empowers individuals to navigate work-related challenges with greater resilience and well-being.

Additionally, MBSR interventions were associated with improvements in the quality of sleep and relaxation. By promoting greater relaxation and stress reduction, MBSR equips individuals with effective strategies for improving sleep quality and overall well-being.

Overall, the findings of this systematic review suggest that MBSR holds promise as an effective intervention for enhancing employees' mental health and well-being across various occupational sectors. By addressing key mental health indicators such as burnout, stress, depression, and anxiety, MBSR interventions offer a holistic approach to promoting psychological resilience and well-being in the workplace.

Examining the implications of stress on both physical and mental health reveals the intricate interplay between these domains of well-being. Stress, often perceived as a solely psychological phenomenon, exerts profound effects on physiological processes, underscoring the interconnectedness of physical and mental health.

One critical aspect of this reflection is the recognition of the bidirectional relationship between stress and health outcomes. Chronic stress not only predisposes individuals to physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease and immune dysfunction but also significantly impacts mental well-being. Persistent stress can contribute to the development or exacerbation of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This bidirectional relationship highlights the importance of adopting a holistic approach to health

that addresses both physical and mental aspects of well-being.

Moreover, the reflection delves into the implications of stress on overall quality of life and functioning. Beyond the manifestation of specific health conditions, chronic stress can impair cognitive function, disrupt sleep patterns, and hinder social relationships, thereby diminishing individuals' overall quality of life. By acknowledging the broader implications of stress on various domains of functioning, we gain a more nuanced understanding of its impact on overall well-being.

However, it is essential to critically analyze the limitations and gaps in current research on stress and health outcomes. While existing studies have provided valuable insights into the physiological and psychological mechanisms underlying stress, there remains a need for more longitudinal research to elucidate the long-term effects of chronic stress on health. Additionally, the complex interplay between individual differences, environmental factors, and stress reactivity necessitates further investigation to develop personalized interventions tailored to individuals' unique needs.

This reflection underscores the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness between physical and mental health in the context of stress. By critically analyzing the implications of stress on both domains of well-being and addressing limitations in current research, we can advance our understanding of stress-related health outcomes and develop more effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

The exploration of stress and its impact on both physical and mental health reveals the intricate relationship between stress and overall well-being. Through an analysis of the physiological mechanisms underlying stress responses, as well as the associated health outcomes documented in research, it becomes evident that stress exerts a significant toll on various

facets of health.

The importance of addressing stress for holistic health promotion cannot be overstated. By recognizing the bidirectional relationship between stress and health outcomes, healthcare professionals and policymakers can develop more comprehensive strategies for health promotion and disease prevention. Integrating stress management techniques into healthcare interventions and public health initiatives can help mitigate the negative effects of stress and promote resilience among individuals and communities.

Some may argue that stress is a natural and unavoidable aspect of life, and while it may have some negative effects, it also serves important adaptive functions. Stress can motivate individuals to achieve goals, enhance performance in certain situations, and facilitate learning and growth. By solely focusing on the negative aspects of stress and emphasizing its detrimental effects on health, we risk overlooking its potential benefits and resilience-building properties. While it's true that stress can sometimes serve as a motivator and catalyst for growth, it's essential to differentiate between acute stress, which can indeed have adaptive functions, and chronic stress, which is the focus of concern regarding its impact on health outcomes. Acute stress, such as the pressure before a performance or an exam, can indeed sharpen focus and boost performance temporarily. However, chronic stress, which persists over an extended period, can have pervasive and damaging effects on both physical and mental health.

The objection highlights the importance of acknowledging the nuanced role of stress in human functioning. Indeed, some stressors can prompt positive adaptations and foster resilience. However, chronic stress, especially in the context of modern society where stressors can be relentless and overwhelming, poses significant risks to health and well-being.

Furthermore, while stress can sometimes enhance performance in the short term, chronic exposure to stress hormones like cortisol can lead to long-term physiological dysregulation, contributing to various health problems such as cardiovascular disease, immune dysfunction, and mental health disorders.

Recognizing the potential benefits of acute stress does not diminish the importance of addressing chronic stress and its adverse effects on health. Rather, it underscores the need for a balanced approach that acknowledges both the adaptive and detrimental aspects of stress. Incorporating stress management techniques and promoting resilience-building strategies can help individuals navigate stress more effectively while minimizing its negative impact on health and well-being.

Looking ahead, future research should focus on addressing the limitations and gaps in current understanding. Longitudinal studies are needed to

exemplify the long-term effects of chronic stress on health outcomes and to identify potential risk and protective factors. Intervention trials are also essential to evaluate the effectiveness of stress management strategies in diverse populations and settings. Moreover, interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate insights from psychology, neuroscience, public health, and other fields can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between stress and health.

In conclusion, while stress presents significant challenges to health and well-being, there is also tremendous potential for evidence-based strategies to mitigate its negative effects. By advancing our understanding of stress and its impact on health through rigorous research and interdisciplinary collaboration, we can pave the way for more effective interventions and ultimately improve the health and quality of life for individuals worldwide.

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Ethics Paper

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Introduction

The interrogation of suspects by law enforcement is a controversial but compulsory exercise within the criminal justice system. The cops must get confessions and information from the accused so that they can settle cases and meet justice. Still, interrogation strategies and techniques may often breach ethical boundaries and violate the rights of the suspects (Bentham, 1970). This essay examines the ethics surrounding police interrogation by investigating the interrogation process, exploring incidents wherein there have been ethical breaches, why these ethical lapses occur, and how they can be averted. I argue that the use of interrogation techniques by police is necessary, but sometimes the methods used are inhuman, and they breach suspects' rights and dignity. It is essential to reinforce the ethical guidelines for interrogators.

Understanding Police Interrogation

The primary responsibility of the police interrogators, who are well-trained officers, is to gain confessions and information from the suspects through the application of psychological manipulation and persuasion. Traits of outstanding interrogators include perseverance, confidence, keen observation powers, and the knack

for mentoring suspects. Skilled investigators employ tactics like the "Reid Technique" to increase a suspect's stress and pressure during long-term interrogation, which is aimed at finally overcoming the opposition with a confession (Hill, 2007). The primary traits that an interrogator should possess include influence, warmth, and emotional intelligence in reading a suspect's verbal and nonverbal cues, composure, and unshakable focus during long interrogations where tensions are running high. Experienced inquisitors can deftly exercise a suspect's vulnerabilities and psychological weaknesses by using isolation, confrontation, and suggestion tactics where denials are disintegrated.

The interrogation normally starts with the investigation carried out by law enforcement officers, in which the evidence is collected, further leading to the identification of a suspect. When proof has been substantially found, the police detain the suspect and escort them to the police station (Hill, 2007). They get confined in an interrogation room, an isolated room by design to be unknown and unnerving surroundings for the suspect. The interrogation process could include carefully placed objects like no window, a bare table and chairs, and some techniques that create sensory deprivation (Shue, 1978). The officers will first present

themselves to the suspect and remind him that he is not under arrest but is being detained for questioning, with the evidence gathered so far at the core of the process. The officers start the conversation on a neutral base with the suspect, addressing the suspect casually. During the interrogation, the perpetrator is overwhelmed by a myriad of nine separate approaches, from confrontation to presenting evidence for a long time to confess his sins.

Police interrogators over the years have used a myriad of ethically doubtful methods to acquire a confession from suspects through the use of coercion. Some of the most common physical treatments, such as flogging and other forms of cruelty, were used to abuse human rights and the principle of no assaulting helpless, incapacitated individuals (Shue, 1978). These types of torture were prohibited as they caused unthinkable suffering. Other forbidden procedures have also been documented, such as the duration of time without food, water, or bathroom breaks to add to desperation and long-time questioning, which lasts many hours to exhaust the resilience completely (Hill, 2007). Classic mind game tactics are applicable, and the police are using “the good cop/ the bad cop routine” to drive trust, maximize exaggerating evidence, minimize downplaying crimes, and present fictitious proof. Interrogators may throw all sorts of implied threats at their suspect or their family or assure leniency for confession to exert psychological pressure (Bentham, 1970). However, the persuasive nature of this mechanism raises ethical issues related to human dignity, conflict of autonomy, the possibility of false confessions, and the prospect of a slippery path of violation. They point out the long-term need to ban inhumane interrogation technologies through advanced ethical methods of interrogating suspects by protecting human rights.

Evidence of Unethical Practices During Police Interrogation

Miranda v. Arizona

The *Miranda v. Arizona* decision exploded the judicial oversight of police interrogation at the height of immoral interrogation practices. Ernesto Miranda, as the case reveals, had been interrogated interminably and was a victim of a continuous violation of his constitutional rights every step of the way (Hill, 2007). The police resorted to numerous manipulative psychological techniques, such as the fabrication of the evidence of Miranda’s guilt and the implication of very bad consequences for his answer but not confession. They kept information from Miranda

to keep the advantage and used the fact that he was not educated about his rights to their advantage. The psychological pressure outweighed the fact that he had a constitutional right to stay silent, which was a severe infringement of his right to be autonomous, presumed innocent until proven guilty (Bentham, 2007). Through the Supreme Court’s acknowledgment of the fact that such unfair interrogation techniques could easily lead to a false confession, the power imbalance is very visible. Honoring Miranda’s rights has been the most vital check on all mentally abusive interrogations, which run the risk of violating an individual’s rights and due process.

The Central Park Five Case

The unjust arrest of the Central Park Five suspects, teenagers, in 1989 encapsulates the consequences of coercive interrogation tactics that violated ethical standards. Under such interrogation, lasting over 24 hours and conducted on young people without parental supervision, the youths who were too tired were forced to accuse themselves and each other through improper interrogation methods (Shue, 1978). The police constantly used psychological manipulation by using maximization and minimization techniques, exaggerating incriminating evidence while underrating the gravity of stating the truth. The defendant adolescents were intentionally detached from support

systems and deceived about legal safeguards. Indirect and explicit threats of violence created an environment of coercion through which people were made to confess, even if they did not know anything (Hill, 2007). Besides depriving the detainees of their legal rights and contributing to unnecessary incarcerations, the illegal practices had severe psychological effects on the young men. The case inspired reform regarding ethical investigations of minors in general.

Frazier v. Cupp

During Frazier vs Cupp, the actions of the police in their interrogation raised many ethical concerns, which essentially meant that the defendant's right to autonomy was breached, as well as the possibility of forcing a false confession. Frazier, who has an intellectual deficiency, faces interrogation methods that deliberately play on his cognitive deficiencies and his weaknesses (Hill, 2007). They brandished Frazier with some actions that were partially fabricated and refused to listen to his angry cries of innocence. By no means concerned with the power imbalance and Frazier's suggestibility, detectives resorted to psychologically coercive tools of intimidation and constant confrontation in the absence of an external perspective for several hours in an isolated room (Shue, 1978). The underlying legal issue is that these interrogation techniques, which have been proven to bring out involuntary false confessions from fragile individuals, are in violation of the judicial system's due process and fundamental fairness. The ethics violations were tried to manipulate the innate weaknesses of human beings in their judgments and autonomy through intimidation and misinformation, which led to the miscarriage of justice.

Why does this happen? How can we fix it?

Correlation between Ethical Theories and Interrogator Actions

Every article points out that some torture tactics

come from wrong ethical reasoning because they do not observe the core moral values. A utilitarian point of view of finding out anything no matter what, to avoid greater harm can be used to defend human rights abuses like torture and forced confession (Mills, 1966). This sequential approach of Davis flawlessly equates the harms of killings in combat with torture without seeing whether torture targets the defenseless surrendered personality. According to Daniel Hill, it is utopian to reason that interrogational torture is similar to self-defense in response to aggression, which enemy detainees do not pose (Hills, 2007). Valuing absolute deontological ethics, which forbids seriously injuring or harming someone, except when it comes to self-defense and continues, would get rid of interrogation methods that are considered unethical according to practical utilitarianism, which says "ends justify the means," the rationale. Maintaining inalienable negative duties forbids abuse, which gives place to human dignity, autonomy, and ethical interrogations of voluntary cooperation.

Improving the Interrogation Process

For the improvement of ethical interrogation, a multifaceted approach, including restructuring internal incentives, rigorous training, external accountability, and implementation of human rights principles, is essential. The police culture, which is more preoccupied with the rates of confessions than ethical conduct, should be overhauled by revising performance metrics and leadership, which are now obliged to observe the ethical constraints as matters of non-negotiability (Hills, 2007). The interrogators should undergo comprehensive training in ethical interrogation techniques, the psychology of false confessions, methods of informing interviewees of their rights, and interpersonal skills that involve relationship-building, not coercion. Ensuring robust external monitoring from civilian boards, courts, and human rights organizations that govern compliance with standards of morality is essential (Mills, 1966). Ethically, interrogation requires

every person, whether involved or not, to internalize the moral philosophy that interrogational torture and forced admissions deontologically constitute what is morally right and that withhold human dignity.

Elevated Ethical Standards for Authorities

The ethical standards of those holding power over others are rightly deemed higher, especially for individuals like the police who conduct interrogations because their vast moral hazard leads to unprincipled decisions. As the law enforcement authorities possess exceptional powers, including suspending liberty, collecting confessions under duress, and biasing judicial processes, they are entitled to the supreme mandate of observing the strict principles of ethics (Bentham, 1970). Therefore their position, in which they hold substantial power over ordinary citizens' lives, requires the greatest moral responsibility never to distress the imbalance. Ethics rules should be defined precisely concerning the conduct and behavior of employers and employees; unethical behaviors and their consequences should be strictly followed. They must exhibit zero tolerance for unethical questioning methods like torture. Police granted vast power of

sovereignty should live up to the high banner of ethical conduct and accountability deserving of public investment through unwavering ethical judgments.

Conclusion

Police interrogations have often been associated with violations of human rights and dignity because they use coercive methods such as torture and psychological manipulation and deprive the basic needs of the detainees. As illustrated by the cases of *Miranda v. Arizona*, the Central Park Five, and *Frazier v. Cupp*, the issue of using unethical interrogation methods is based on the consequentialist approach that disregards human autonomy and the duty to protect the weak by solely focusing on discovering information. Conversely, a deontological approach that would not allow willful inflicting of harm on someone else, except for self-defense purposes, could incorporate interrogations into the ethical framework. Improving the process requires systemic reforms: restructuring incentives, promoting training, ensuring accountability, and leadership responsible for making moral concerns non-compromising conditions.

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The Ongoing Floodings in Passaic County of New Jersey

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Essay: *The Ongoing Floodings in Passaic County of New Jersey*

Persistent flooding in New Jersey has damaged the Totowa homes of the Del Rio and Laguna families, leading to the loss of their basements and the struggle to receive home insurance coverage and protection from the state.

Part One: Fear In the Storm

TOTOWA – 64-year-old Luz Laguna was standing at the door of her basement on Oct. 24, 2012 with one thought in her mind: she had to get out.

She remembered Hurricane Sandy entering the skies over New Jersey two days before. Pouring rain became a flowing river in the streets of downtown Paterson. Luz watched cars form single-file lines and block intersections as she was working in City Hall.

“It had been raining all day,” Laguna said. “The mayor ended up closing the roads for an entire week on that day because no one was able to get to work. I made it home just in time.”

The rain didn’t stop coming down. By the next day, yellow road lines began to drown in floodwater and the Passaic River started overflowing.

The Laguna family remained in the living room of their

new home throughout the evening. They were told by their neighbors that the area never flooded. It was why Luz decided to stay.

A few hours later, Luz realized she made the wrong decision.

At 3 a.m. on Oct. 24, the booms and drums of rainfall pounded against the walls. Luz woke up and raced to her living room. She didn’t see any signs of rainwater leaking through the ceiling, but the noise did not stop. When she opened the basement door, she froze.

There was over six feet of water below her.

Her brown leather couch was floating along with her treadmill. A pungent odor of rotten eggs entered her nose. The roars of water echoed in her ears. She knew this was only the beginning and the water wouldn’t stop coming in. She realized there was only one option.

Luz hastily threw on her waterproof jacket, smocks and overalls alongside her husband, daughter, son and nephew. The family ran to their rooms to stuff any clothes they could into a bag and kept running.

With heavy bags and two small dogs, the family began to wade through floodwater.

They trudged through the thick pond that was overflowing in their neighborhood. They couldn't feel the sidewalk under their feet. They latched onto nearby poles to avoid falling.

Neighbors watched from their windows in disbelief and yelled to turn back. The Lagunas were the only family to leave their home, and they kept walking unaware if their evening at home was going to be their last.

Two hours later, the family was checked in at a La Quinta Inn and Suites in Clifton. The hotel was 15 minutes away from their home. The highways of State Route Three were littered with trees and shallow streams flowing in each lane.

The family slept in their separate beds and rooms. Luz sat on her bed with her hands intertwined as she made a silent prayer. She was the only one awake.

"I couldn't sleep for three nights," she spoke with a stammering voice and shaking hands. "All I thought about was how much we were going to lose."

Part Two: The Everlasting Flood of Problems in New Jersey

It has been 12 years since the Laguna's basement flooded. Today, flooding continues to inundate thousands of residential homes. It is not only a common problem in New Jersey but an ongoing one.

According to Garrison Flood Control, New Jersey is one of the top five states most at risk of flooding. It accounts for more than 75% of payouts distributed by the National Flood Insurance Program and is responsible for 67% of total flood insurance claims.

The frequent flood risks have more than doubled in the state due to rising sea levels. Since 1980, the levels have increased the number of New Jersey homes at risk of frequent flooding by about 110%.

Frequent flooding has increased economic costs for flood damage for residents. A report compiled by Rhodium Group, an independent research provider

of climate change data analysis, in 2019 estimates that the average annual loss from hurricane-related wind and flood damage today is \$670 million to \$1.3 billion higher than it was in the 1980s.

The cause of flooding is attributed to a climate crisis. Diane Concannon, the communications director for the American Red Cross in New Jersey, confirmed that environmental disasters are frequent.

"We are definitely facing a climate crisis," she said. "The Red Cross is seeing not only more frequent disasters but also more extreme weather. We've also seen these freak rainstorms that dump six to eight inches of rain and overflow sewers and gutters, that is what causes havoc in New Jersey."

In 2023, the American Red Cross distributed more than 1,000 emergency relief items and more than 4,000 meals and snacks to residences in more than five counties that have fallen victim to flood damage.

"When you see people trying to salvage whatever they can and you know that they really can't, it's heartbreaking," Concannon said. "You feel for people, and you want to provide whatever comfort you can."

The Passaic River has been flooding for more than a century. In 1903, over 10 inches of rain fell in the Passaic Basin. Nine bridges were damaged and destroyed. New Jersey's damages cost \$7 million to repair 20,000 homes and businesses.

The Delaware River flood of 1955 cost \$1.6 billion in damages and the lives of 191 men, women and children. The 2011 tropical storm Irene destroyed 200,000 homes and caused more than 31,000 state residents to file assistance claims.

Superstorm Sandy took 37 lives and Hurricane Ida claimed 30.

According to Scientific American Magazine, the flood projections are expected to expand to 2150, when sea levels in New Jersey are likely to be 5.2 feet higher than they were in 2000 and could be as much as

19.6 feet higher.

“Science and research tells us that our climate change is making our precipitation events more extreme,” said Nicholas Angarone, the chief resilience officer of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. “In Northwest Jersey, we have a 50% increase in precipitation. Our systems are not able to handle those things.”

Concannon added that the increase in precipitation has influenced the extent of frequent floodings.

“We are seeing intensified extreme weather in one of the worst disasters you can have,” Concannon said. “Within two months, we saw so much flooding within the state with two separate storms back to back. That is not the norm, that is not what we usually see.”

Part 3: The Current State of Flooding

On Dec. 18, 2023, another basement in Totowa flooded. 45-year-old Jessica Del Rio woke up to the meows of her grey British shorthair cat named Bluey. Bluey would never meow at 6 a.m. or leave his room. Del Rio knew something was wrong.

When she walked out of her bedroom, she heard hums of bubbling water inside her walls. She walked around her living room and kitchen. She watched the raindrops on her window shine with the white LED lights from the building across the street.

She continued walking until she stopped at the door of her basement. The stench of sewage water entered her nostrils. Her eyes widened and she quickly turned on her flashlight.

The sounds became louder as she entered the basement. Panicked, Jessica turned around and ran to the bedroom to wake up her husband.

“I told him I heard water coming in,” she said. “But I couldn’t see it and didn’t know where it was coming from.”

49-year-old Joel Del Rio jumped into his boots and

flew down the stairs. When he approached the laundry room, he paused.

“I told my wife that the sound was coming from behind the washing machine,” he said. “The water had started to accumulate from inside and I knew I had to break the wall open.”

With a sledgehammer, Joel began banging on the wall cautiously to avoid damaging the pipes. Jessica watched him from behind.

After a few hits, the water began to explode.

Gusts of water began to soak their clothes and travel along the gray wooden floors. Streams of water entered the pantry, laundry, family lounge and music entertainment rooms. The carpets were littered with debris in minutes and the fabric of the couch started to ruin.

Jessica and Joel dashed to grab five-gallon buckets and tried to stop the water.

“We were basically jack and jilling buckets of water across the basement,” Jessica said. “We had to move all of our furniture so we wouldn’t fall. We did this nonstop for an hour.”

After an hour, the water stopped. Jessica went upstairs and took off her shoes. Her 10-year-old son, Aaron, had just flushed the toilet.

“My son had gone to use the bathroom and the water just seemed to stop pouring in after he flushed,” she said. “I was like ‘finally’ and felt so relieved. We had a break and were able to start cleaning for a little bit.”

Water started to enter the walls of their home at 2 a.m. but they only experienced flooding for an hour and a half. In the midst of this, the family was still affected.

“We’re afraid to open the sink, to do the dishes, to utilize the bathroom and to even take a shower,” Jessica said. “We don’t know what’ll trigger the water to come in again.”

Part 4: What Was Lost

Jessica Del Rio waited 10 years for the basement of her dreams. When she moved from Paterson to Totowa a dozen years ago, she imagined the possibilities.

“The basement was an unwelcoming storage space,” she said. “I envisioned it being a place where my husband can host get-togethers and I could have my own laundry room.”

Jessica Del Rio set aside hundreds of dollars every month from her job as an application systems analyst at Englewood Hospital until she could start her renovation.

After 10 years, she was finally able to showcase her husband’s collection of acoustic guitars and create a space where family members can sing worship songs in the music entertainment room. She was also able to store her ingredients for her bakery business in the pantry and connect her son’s PlayStation 4 to the TV in the lounge so he could spend time with his dad every night.

“We were finally able to have people come over and go downstairs to do some music or watch something nice on TV,” Del Rio added.

But after the flood, mold began to form on the walls. Faded stains marked the grey carpets. The insides of acoustic guitars were filled with water. The couches were upside down with cushions thrown around. Piles of food cans were swimming in the water.

Jessica and Joel had to rip out the walls, remove the carpet, place new installation and sheetrock and apply new moldings. Additionally, they had to empty Jessica’s food pantry.

“I had to just cancel every order for my bakery and throw a lot of stuff into the garbage,” she said.

Joel had to throw away expensive tables, chairs and gifts for his newly-born grandson. He also had to throw singer stands and guitars in the garbage.

“We spent \$40,000 on remodeling this basement, and now we have to throw so much away,” Joel said. “You win some and you lose some. That is part of life.”

Joel walked in and out of the house with items to throw away alongside his son. Jessica stood in the hallway and began sobbing.

“All I thought about was how long is it going to take us to rebuild again?” Jessica said. “Do I have to wait another 10 years to have a basement in my house again?”

After Hurricane Sandy, the Laguna family did not return to their house until three days later. Luz Laguna’s son, Giancarlo, 33, couldn’t see past his chest as he walked in floodwater.

“You saw from the daytime that the water was thick,” he said. “You couldn’t see through the water. It was filled with mud and dirt.”

The rotten stench of sewage water reached them from their front porch. As soon as they entered their home and looked in their basement, they knew their items were gone.

“I lost my treadmill and leather sofa,” Luz said. “I had to give up so many pictures of my parents before my mom passed as well as baby pictures of my children and my wedding pictures. Those pictures can never be replaced.”

Luz’s husband, William, 69, kept a library of bible study books in the basement. He had limited edition versions of the scriptures and multi-lingual books analyzing biblical stories that he studied nightly.

After Oct. 24, his nightly routine took a pause.

“My entire library was a total loss,” William said. “I tried air-drying the pages for each of my books, but the pages were soaked and the ink was unreadable.”

Giancarlo lost his wooden drum set as well as special clothes collected from his childhood and gifted by his

loved ones.

The Laguna family ended up spending a couple of days cleaning their basement while saying goodbye to items that couldn't be salvaged.

"It really hurt me to throw those items away," Giancarlo said. "Those items had sentimental value to our family, and we used the basement to store everything, not lose it."

Part 5: Living with Regret

For the Laguna and Del Rio families, these flooding incidences weren't the last. In Jan. 2024, flood water entered both of their basements and sewage pipes once again. Even though the water damage was less than in previous floods, both families began to feel helpless.

For Jessica Del Rio, she began to lose hope in the potential of having a basement.

"I thought to myself, do I even feel like putting all this work into the basement again?" she said. "After the flood happened again, I became numb. I was like 'you know what? I just don't even care about this anymore.'"

Joel Del Rio is already considering packing his bags.

"We're going to put our house up for sale," he said. "We're at that point where we can't take it anymore. We don't want to deal with flooding again, it's too tragic for us."

For the Laguna family, their basement became an indoor dumpster. Piles of black trash bags formed a clutter around the entire room. Plastic bins with photo frames, bibles, emergency supplies and clothing were soaked with flood water.

"I can't even walk to the other side of the basement," Luz said. "There is nothing but a mess that we have to clean once again."

Both families are accustomed to flood damage, and they have lived with regret for one specific reason: They do not have flood insurance.

The Lagunas and Del Rios purchased their homes in areas that aren't considered flood zones, and they believed that it was unnecessary to get flood insurance as they thought they weren't at risk of flooding.

Today, the Lagunas have spent over \$10,000 to do repairs with no insurance support.

However, the Del Rios have been paying for homeowners' insurance that covers sewage backups and property damage. Unfortunately, they haven't received a single penny.

"We put a claim in December," Joel said. "Our insurance sent an assessor to look at the damages. They said we have at least \$15,000 in damages and that they can cover at least \$5000 due to their sewage backup policy. Two months later, we didn't receive anything, and we were left to handle it on our own."

Within the same month, The Del Rios received an unexpected check from their congregation that covered their sewage backup and flooring repairs. In addition, packaged food was sent to them for three days from their pastor.

"I was just taken aback by the generosity, by the kindness and thoughtfulness," Jessica said with tears as she released a sob. "We could not believe how much support we received. It was just a blessing that we had that to fall back on instead of relying on the insurance company and waiting for them to come through."

The Del Rios did not provide information about the flood insurance company upon request, but they emphasized that working with their insurance became a constant battle to receive funding.

"When you apply for help, you have to jump through hoops, you have to fight," Jessica said. "If you came and saw the damages, don't make it so difficult for us to get our insurance money so that we can rebuild."

Part 6: Lack of Pro-Action

The decision that the Lagunas and Del Rios made to

not invest in flood insurance is an example of a statewide issue. A national climate assessment report compiled by the U.S. federal government in 2023 showed that over four million vulnerable homeowners in New Jersey and the rest of the Northeast are not covered by federal flood insurance.

According to a press release by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, one factor that contributes to the lack of coverage is residents thinking that flooding won't impact them because they were uninformed by sellers and landlords.

"Too often, buyers and renters are unaware of the risks they face," said Shawn LaTourette, New Jersey's commissioner of environmental protection. "They make important decisions on where to live without any knowledge of a property's flooding history or potential."

An additional contributing factor is the price. According to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the average cost of flood insurance in New Jersey is \$1,173 per year for a policy. Flood insurance rates range from \$400 per year to more than \$5000 per year depending on where you live and the style of your home.

In Totowa, the current cost of flood insurance is \$1,871 per year. In Wayne, it is over \$2,000.

Over 100,000 policyholders across the nation have dropped their insurance over the past year according to U.S. Senator Bob Menendez and U.S. Representative Frank Pallone Jr. in a 2023 news conference. In New Jersey, at least 12,000 residents have dropped their flood insurance in 2023.

As a result, residents such as Luz Laguna express frustration that New Jersey governors, such as Phil Murphy, are not doing their part to prevent flooding as they watch part of their homes perish.

"Flooding is something that's going to keep happening because the government has not taken care of what's been given to them," Luz said. "There is so much

disaster, this world cannot handle so much and it's not going to get any better. We can only blame them."

On the other hand, Concannon believes that residents have not been preparing themselves enough for the dangers of flooding, which is why they experience so much damage.

"Residents need to do more than just know that we are in the midst of a climate crisis and extreme weather, they need to be as proactive as they can and become prepared," she said.

Unfortunately, the extent of flooding is difficult to predict, making it harder for residents to prepare.

"It's really tough because there's only so much that we as people can do in trying to prevent Mother Nature," Giancarlo said. "Mother Nature is going to happen whether we like it or not."

When asked to comment on the efforts of the government and the Department of Environmental Protection to prevent flooding, Angarone acknowledged the shortcomings.

"There's a lot of things that the department and the state are doing, but we are not doing enough," he said. "The flooding in the Passaic basin and those communities is one of the most difficult questions we have to wrestle with. There's no floodplain anymore, there's no place for the water to go to prevent flooding. To some extent, we're paying the price for past decisions."

Part 7: New Jersey's Newest Solution and Problems

It wasn't until Dec. 2023 that the Murphy Administration decided enough was enough. On Dec. 21, the Murphy Administration, along with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Community Affairs, released new tools and technology to provide prospective buyers and renters with disclosure information about houses with flood risks.

The government intends to provide important information for residents to make well-informed decisions on where they should live and how to protect their homes from flood damage.

“These new protections will enable prospective home buyers and renters to stay a step ahead when it comes to finding the safest residence possible for themselves and their families,” Governor Phil Murphy said in a 2023 news release.

The tools include forms of a seller’s property condition disclosure statement and a rental flood risk notice. Sellers or landlords will notify prospective buyers and tenants of a property’s known flood history and potential flood risks before purchasing.

The administration has also launched a user-friendly internet look-up tool that identifies properties in flood hazard areas when searching for mailing addresses and implements provisions of flood risk disclosure legislation signed into law by Murphy in June 2023.

“Consumers deserve to make informed decisions when renting or purchasing a home,” said Cari Fais, the acting director of the Division of Consumer Affairs. “The measures announced provide consumers with the information they need to fully assess the potential risks and costs associated with a flood-prone property so they can prepare appropriately.”

Before New Jersey’s flood risk disclosure laws were enacted, sellers and landlords were not obligated to disclose a property’s flood history or inform buyers if the property was located in a federal emergency management agency (FEMA) flood hazard zone area.

As of March 20, 2024, sellers and landlords must notify tenants in writing of the flood risks in the new forms before signing sales contracts, leases and lease renewals. The lease signing or renewal becomes effective 90 days after the Department of Community Affairs publishes the model notice.

“The flood disclosure requirements we’re implementing

under the new law are some of the strongest in the nation,” said Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin. “It will help New Jerseyans protect themselves, their families, and their property from the consequences of hidden flood risks.”

However, amid the flood disclosure requirements, the Department of Community Affairs has rejected the idea of building flood walls in cities, most notably in Paterson. On April 23, 2024, an application for a \$2.8 million grant to build a flood wall along the Passaic River was not approved.

Instead, \$5 million was given to the city of Passaic and Hudson County for floodwater pumping stations and \$721,600 was sent to North Arlington for flood resilience even though the Passaic River is considered most at risk for flooding in the state according to the New York district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Nevertheless, Murphy remains determined to protect families from climate change.

“With climate change making New Jersey more vulnerable to destructive storms and flooding events, my administration is taking steps to better protect lives, property, and infrastructure from natural disasters,” Murphy said in a 2024 press release. “We are confident that initiatives like the Resilient Communities Program will help local governments as they work to safeguard neighborhoods and families from harm.”

Part 8: Optimism Amid Crisis

Flooding in New Jersey remains unresolved today. Amid the statewide efforts to reduce flood damage, flooding is unavoidable. Flooding is expected to accumulate with the increase of extreme rainstorms, and it will continue to reach households until there are barricades placed in rivers.

Even though flooding is difficult to control, the Laguna and Del Rio families emphasize that how people respond to flooding is a choice that is made by all

victims. For Giancarlo, he decided to have fun with his cousin instead of living in despair.

“On the night we returned home from the flood, my cousin and I grabbed an empty grey container and decided to use it as our sailboat outside,” he said. “We were sailing in floodwater with nothing but a flashlight. My mom was screaming that we were crazy, and we laughed so much. She recorded it, and it is still on my YouTube channel to this day.”

For the Del Rio family, the flood brought them closer to their congregation as they were filled with gratitude.

“My husband would speak to people on the phone about our basement and say we’re blessed, I thought he was crazy at first,” Jessica said. “But I didn’t understand until after our church donated to us that even if our basement is lost, we still have what’s priceless, our family. We’re more than blessed.”

Both families unanimously said that they were fortunate to not lose one thing from flooding: life. Even though they said that it was okay to feel upset and to have patience for blessings to come, neither could deny that having another day to live is worth more than the materials lost.

“In the end, I am grateful because what is more important? Life,” Luz said. “What you lose can be replaced, but life can’t be.”

One Eye Open: A New Perspective on a Renowned Fairytale Villain

Jayla James

Course: ENG 1500

Professor: Jason Myers

Student: Jayla James

Essay: One Eye Open: A New Perspective on a Renowned Fairytale Villain

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, stop. Close your left eye and without moving your head, take a look to the left. Repeat the same process with your opposite eye, and take a look to your right. Now, with both eyes open, keep your head in a forward position and gaze to your left. Then gaze to your right. Notice how with both eyes open, you have a greater field of view? Looking to your left or right with one eye closed, restricts your perception, therefore leaving you incapable of seeing everything surrounding you. In the same way, viewing a situation from only one point of view limits your ability to grasp the fullness of the story.

The classic fairytale, widely known as “Sleeping Beauty”, has a vast array of versions. “Little Brier-Rose” by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and Disney’s *Maleficent* directed by Robert Stromberg will be the fundamental focus of this analysis. Both portrayals are based upon a similar foundation; the King and Queen are graced with a beautiful daughter who is cursed by an evil woman in the land. In “Little Brier-Rose”, she is the 13th wise woman and in the Disney film, she is Maleficent. Despite having the relatively same framework, the versions differ drastically through the way each creative director represents the characters

and the overarching theme of the tale. “Little Brier-Rose” is told through a third person point of view, with a primary focus on the life of the protagonist. The events that unfold from the time of Rose’s birth, to her peaceful slumber as she waits for her true love’s kiss, are told with limited insight into the thoughts and emotions of Little Brier Rose, as well as her perceived enemy. *Maleficent* is played out from a first person standpoint, which unveils another level of complexity that drives the audience to see the antagonist in a new light. Analyzing “Little Brier-Rose” by Jacob and Wilhem Grimm alongside Disney’s *Maleficent* through a narrative lens reveals how the point of view from which a story is told influences the audience’s perception of the character and the takeaway message.

The diction used by Jacob and Wilhem Grimm when describing the 13th wise woman; modern day Maleficent, powerfully shapes the way her character is portrayed. In this version of the tale, she is depicted as an unpleasant character whose presence is essentially despised. The whole kingdom came together to celebrate the birth of the princess, which included the wise women who were there to present gifts to the princess. That is, all of the wise women except for the

13th one. The authors write, “The eleventh one had just pronounced her blessing when the thirteenth one suddenly walked in.... Everyone was horrified” (Grimm). The author’s use of the number 13 for the evil wise woman can be seen as an intentional act. The number 13 is often associated with misfortune. This belief dates all the way back to Norse mythology and Christianity. (Markovsky) The negative connotation of the number 13th is embedded within the text to create a distinct image on the type of individual the 13th wise woman is, or rather, the character the authors want us to believe she is. Because Little-Brier Rose is told from a third person point of view, with much of the attention on the protagonist, the identity of the 13th wise woman is shaped only by the information given to the readers. The third person point of view fails to provide any background knowledge and context on the characters. Consequently, readers are only seeing one part of the picture.

This minute, yet significant detail changes in Disney’s *Maleficent* film. Maleficent comes to the palace uninvited, and all of the guests shriek back upon her arrival. Ominous music plays in the background and the atmosphere shifts from one of light, to darkness (00:28:45-00:29:18). The people’s fear of Maleficent remains consistent, but she is no longer referred to as the “13th” fairy. Robert Stromberg’s decision to remove the number 13 from Maleficent’s title early on in the film is a precursor to show how the film will move away from the simplistic labeling of characters and reinvent Little Brier-Rose as a tale that gives the character’s substance and intricacy.

By sharing her origin story, director Robert Stromberg gives the audience a chance to see Maleficent in her fullness and comprehend the sophistication of her character. Stromberg removes the veil that the Grimm brothers placed over the eyes of their readers, and allows them to see the story from every angle. In “Little Brier-Rose”, the authors equivocate about the true reason for Maleficent’s wrath. The text states,

“She wanted to avenge herself for not having been invited....” (Grimm). The lack of embellishment within this sentence pushes readers to believe that the 13th wise woman was one who let pride and bitterness control her, without rhyme or reason. Stromberg combats this by emphasizing that Maleficent’s hateful facade went deeper than an inane dinner invitation. As a young fairy, Maleficent and King Stefan were in love, or so she thought. When Stefan discovered that he could adopt the role of king at the cost of hurting Maleficent, he moved hastily. When King Stefan stripped Maleficent of her wings, he also robbed her of her light and her freedom. Maleficent’s wings gave her the ability to soar; without them, she was damaged and as a result, less powerful (00:18:03-00:20:15). The first person point of view used in *Maleficent*, enables the viewers to explore the events that led up to the current circumstances, and their contribution in the development of each character. Stromberg’s version of the tale differs from the Grimm brothers in this way, as he exquisitely develops Maleficent’s character to show that behind her hostility and animosity lies deep wounds from a person whom she once loved. The film captures the hallmark of the saying “hurt people hurt people.” This renowned phrase highlights how unhealed emotional trauma has the ability to negatively impact those surrounding the individual, which is manifested through Maleficent’s actions.

Maleficent challenges the traditional fairy tale trope of “true love’s kiss”, as portrayed in “Little Brier-Rose”, by offering a new perspective on the power of maternal love. In both Disney’s *Maleficent* film and “Little Brier-Rose”, a curse is inflicted on the princess to prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall into a death-like sleep, able to only be revived by true love’s kiss. After Little Brier-Rose pricks her finger in the Grimm’s version of the story, she falls asleep, as destined, and is rescued by a prince. The Grimm Brothers express, “There she lay and was so beautiful that he could not take his eyes off her. He bent over and gave her a kiss. When he touched

her with the kiss Little Brier-Rose opened her eyes, awoke, and looked at him kindly” (Grimm). The classic cliché of men stepping up as the knight-in-shining-armor to save the helpless princess is enacted in “Little Brier-Rose”, as well as countless other fables. This conventional way of thinking urges readers to think about the transformative power of love in only one way: between man and woman. However, could it be possible that other forms of love hold the same capabilities, if not more?

Conversely, Stromberg deviates from the recurrent use of “true love” in fairy tales by focusing on how the maternal love between Aurora and Maleficent brought about transformation and healing. The fairies assigned as Aurora’s guardians were rather unfit for the task, so Maleficent hovered over their cottage, and with the help of her bird, watched out for the princess daily (00:40:52-00:41:26). As Aurora grew and the two developed a relationship with one another, a maternal bond was formed. This bond brought warmth to the fairy’s hardened heart, as she began to experience love in another form. Their relationship caused her to regret her actions. In an effort to save the princess, she brought Prince Phillip to the castle to break the spell. Yet, his attempts were futile. It is only when Maleficent planted a kiss on Aurora’s forehead that the princess awakened from her slumber (01:14:56-01:17:12). Endowing Maleficent with the power to break the spell speaks back to the ideas originally presented in “Little Brier-Rose.” This scene strongly contests the customary ideas of true love kiss by exhibiting that true love comes in a multitude of different forms, and in this case, it is maternal love that is displayed as the truest of them all.

Maleficent’s wings were symbolic of her innocence and her light, the loss of them is what brought forth her malevolent persona. After Aurora was awoken by Maleficent’s kiss, the King’s men attacked her and her sidekick, Diaval. In this battle, Maleficent was completely powerless. As a fairy, her wings were what

supplied her with strength and power, thus she was limited in her abilities. It was Aurora who came to the rescue by freeing her wings from a hidden chamber in the castle. Aurora giving Maleficent back her wings was symbolic of how the love they shared resurrected the light within Maleficent’s heart. Once she defeated King Stefan and his army, Maleficent returned home to the Moors, where Aurora was waiting for her. After King Stefan stole her wings, Maleficent built a wall of thorns in the Moors to protect herself. This wall not only served as a wall of protection for her home, but as a means to protect her heart. In light of gaining her wings back, the wall of thorns descended and the Moors returned to being a forest filled with life and radiance. (01:18:39-01:26:33). The destruction of the wall and penetrating luminescence served as a reflection of how the love between Aurora and Maleficent transformed the fairy and opened up Maleficent’s heart to the idea of loving once again. This alternative ending gives the audience an opportunity to empathize with a seemingly evil character. Stromberg uses the first person perspective to take viewers below surface level in order to see the elaborate characterization of Maleficent, which the Grimm Brothers failed to highlight.

In a world where the ways of society are often delineated as black and white in fairytales and fables, Disney’s *Maleficent* disrupts this perfect balance by painting a canvas of our world in several shades of gray. Mixing the notions of good and evil and to develop a character with multiple facets dismantles the idea of a monochrome society, as portrayed in Little Brier-Rose, where each character is confined to fit one definition. Through Maleficent’s lived experiences with love, grief, and hatred, Robert Stromberg demonstrates that human beings are not intrinsically good or evil, as Little Brier-Rose teaches. Rather, mankind is a complex culmination of thoughts and emotions which hold tremendous power. The Grimm Brothers disservice their readers by presenting the story through a facile

third person perspective which influences their audience to think simplistically about individuals, especially women, and the way in which adversity is overcome. Contrary to what Little Brier-Rose and numerous other fairy tales would have you believe, freedom does not always come by way of a male savior.

Because fairytales are often used to teach life lessons to the younger population, it is imperative that authors reconsider the way stories are told. It is the precise detail and comprehensive representation of the main characters that allows two stories with the same fundamental background to give their audience a completely different understanding of the characters and overall theme. There is power behind the “who” in storytelling. Whether you are pleading

on behalf of the protagonist or the villain, there will be bias and an inclination to skew the diction and syntax in a way that fits the perspective the *author* wants to be told. Thus it is important to view the story from all sides before drawing a conclusion on the situation in its totality. Consider the reason parents teach their children to look both ways before crossing the street. Lack of complete knowledge about your surroundings leaves you susceptible to danger and harm. Accordingly, failing to educate readers on the perplexity of humankind and the significance of analyzing all perspectives, is a danger indeed. Perhaps then, it is time for this renowned parental expression to familiarize itself in the world of literature.

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“Revise the following into a compelling thesis statement: ‘By looking at “Little Brier-Rose” by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and *Maleficent* directed by Robert Stromberg, through a narrative perspective, we are able to examine how the point of view from which a story influences the audience’s view of the character and the takeaway message” prompt. *ChatGPT*, 13 Feb. version, Open AI, 02 April 2023, chat.openai.com

The Lefty Two-Hander: Bowler Ethan Bromley

Matt Goldman

Course: COMM 1100

Professor: Nick Hirshon

Student: Matt Goldman

Essay: *The Lefty Two-Hander: Bowler Ethan Bromley*

Bowling requires pinpoint accuracy and ultimate focus. In a survey presented by statisticsanddata.org, bowling wasn't among the top ten most followed sports or the top ten most played sports.

It's never been the most common sport for kids in the current generation. Football, basketball, and baseball, amongst others, have dominated youth. Ethan Bromley, a first-year student at William Paterson University, believes it should be more widely recognized and televised as the primary sport in America.

Growing up in Mahopac, New York, and later moving to Montrose, Bromley picked up his first ball at the beginning of middle school. At eleven, Bromley joined his first youth league. Admitting he wasn't perfect early on, Bromley stuck with it, only watching YouTube videos for advice.

"I wasn't the most physically fit," Bromley said. "I tried other sports while younger, including flag football, basketball, soccer, rowing; I felt none were for me."

Montrose, New York, has few bowling alleys, so it is not a big community for the sport. The residents of Montrose don't care for the game as much as Bromley does.

His step-grandfather began picking him up, and they started going to the bowling alley more and more. As



soon as the final bell rang at Blue Mountain Middle School, his step-grandfather was there, ready to drive Bromley 30 minutes to the nearest bowling alley.

"My step-grandpa is from Chicago," he said. "It's a big community for bowling down there. He took it upon himself to teach me his techniques."

While in middle school, Bromley began to excel academically. "Ethan has always been able to retain information," said his mother, Maria. "When he does his schoolwork, he is at the top of his class."

According to collegeboard.org, roughly ten percent of students receive a five on their exams on their Advanced Placement scores. Bromley achieved this feat five separate times.

Bromley reached this milestone in Advanced Placement in World History, United States History, Calculus AB/BC, Music Theory, and Literature & Composition. There is a 0.001% chance that this is attainable; this puts Ethan in a rare percentile.

Bromley began to take the sport very seriously during the latter half of Middle School. In the upcoming months before high school competition started, he realized, “I want to go pro.”

Bromley reiterates, “It’s not if I go pro; it’s when I go pro. I want to achieve my dream.”

Ethan is a journalism major who is involved in many clubs and organizations. He’s an analyst for WPTV’s “Sports Desk,” providing intel for the National Basketball Association. He’s also a producer for Brave New Radio and an actor for Pioneer Players.

He plans on picking a minor involved with music. “I’ve always been musically inclined,” he said. “I was a part of the All-State Choir in High School. Some of my favorite artists are Bruno Mars and Chappell Roan.”

In addition to these clubs, Bromley is a member of the Honors College. “The honors college is important



because I hold myself to a higher standard than most individuals. It allows me to better myself and the community,” Bromley said.

Bromley is a two-handed bowler. It’s estimated that

around 20% of bowlers currently use this style. This number is rapidly increasing due to its popularity at the professional level, such as in the case of players like Jason Belmonte, who is widely considered one of the greatest ever.

His unconventional technique in the lanes has attracted the interest of schools and bowling clubs all over the Northeast.

What has him excel is that he’s a lefty. Thirteen percent of adult bowlers are left-handed. In the Professional Bowling Association (PBA), ten percent of their top fifty bowlers of all time list are lefties.

“In the bowling community, being a two-handed lefty has got me a lot of criticism from the older community. We call them the old heads. They don’t understand the analytics of the game on different patterns. With my form, it picks up oil off the lane, which evaporates faster. With someone who bowls right and with one hand, their ball will push right, and it’s harder to control.”

Fellow freshman Matt Jinks explained to me that lefties have an advantage. “It’s a big advantage for our team; when you’re bowling, and you’re a lefty, you have your part of the oil to play in, not having anyone in your way.”

What’s unique about Bromley is he is Filipino. Professional bowling and collegiate bowling have been predominantly white sports.

Bromley mentioned, “I have never been criticized based on my ethnicity, but that’s because I have been in the youth leagues. I feel that when I get my name more recognized in the professional community, I expect there to be some comments.” Bromley made it to the 2022 Pepsi finals in Rome, New York, with hard work and dedication. He placed thirteenth out of thousands of participants, which gave him a lot of optimism to look forward to.

In the following year, he was invited back to Rome. Bromley took the gold medal this time, bowling one thousand four hundred and six in six games.

A couple of weeks later, Bromley threw his first 300. In bowling, that is a perfect game.

“It was the first time in my youth community that someone threw a 300-hundred game. My friend was recording me, and his hand was so shaky recording it because he’d never seen anything like that. I bowled another 300 two weeks later and didn’t celebrate too much as I want it to be a regular occurrence.”

Bromley now has seven Westchester Junior Bowler Tour Wins and One New Jersey Youth Bowlers Tournament win. Bromley now averages 231.2 in competition play.

Earlier in the year, Bromley placed in the top five at the Storm Youth Championships in Orlando, Florida, and second at a junior event in North Brunswick, New Jersey.

Committing to the Pioneers bowling team at the beginning of his senior year of high school, Bromley hopes to be a part of the varsity team right off the rip. Traditionally, first-year students play at the Junior Varsity One or the Junior Varsity Two levels.

The Pioneers finished as the fifteenth-ranked club in America; Bromley wants to raise that ranking to number one.

There’s a perception around the team that it will be a “rebuild” year. The club lost many productive players, and many also transferred out. Former head coach Gregory Hatzisavvas stepped down after getting a job in a higher-up position at the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). Former William Paterson bowler Dylan Kowaleski will take over as coach.

“Dylan, being a former bowler and having experience as a Pioneer, gives us a sense of comfort as a team. He has the mechanics to teach us to be the best bowlers we can be. GH will still be there for the next couple of years helping Dylan adjust to the coaching role,” mentions Bromley.

Bromley couldn’t be much happier to talk about his teammates when asked about critical returners who



can take this level to the next level.

“Anthony Derobertis is from the same town as me in New York; he puts his heart and soul into bowling. Ben Darrow was our club’s national MVP last year. He was lights out with a 95% strike percentage. John Tucker has one of the best two-handed forms I’ve ever seen in my life, and our captain Bradlee Pase, before the season, I never met him, and he is genuinely one of the best guys I’ve ever met.”

Bromley comes in with a very talented first-year class. The Pioneers recruited some of the most highly touted high school bowlers in the Northeast.

William Gifford, my roommate; Matt Jinks, a great guy who’s very good at his craft; Tai Burns, a good friend who throws amazing; I can watch his form all day; it’s buttery. Finally, Ryan Lashlee. They all have great potential but may take some time to develop.”

Gifford said, “Ethan is one of the best bowlers I’ve ever seen in person. His precision is almost like no one else I’ve ever seen.

Added Jinks, “I’ve only started talking to Ethan for a month, but he’s an amazing bowler and an even better person. He cares about his craft, but he wants success.

He's determined, and I believe he is already a leader."

The Pioneers bowling club looks gritty and fierce heading into the 2024-2025 season. Ethan Bromley hopes to be an evident factor in future team success, but most importantly, he wants one thing: bringing a championship to Wayne.

Same-Sex Sexual Behavior in Cephalopods

Grace Bustamante

Course: BIO 3500

Professor: David Gilley

Student: Grace Bustamante

Essay: *Same-Sex Sexual Behavior in Cephalopods*

Introduction

Cephalopod mating is characterized by the production of spermatophores and the storage of sperm. Male cephalopods produce specialized structures that contain sperm (spermatophores), which are released as sperm-containing sacs (spermatangia). Male cephalopods implant spermatangia on the tissues of female cephalopods, and females store sperm in implanted spermatangia until fertilization (Hoving et al. 2019). The specific tissues that are implanted and length of sperm viability after implantation depend on the species of cephalopod. For example, male *Octopoteuthis deletron*, a deep-sea squid, use a terminal organ called a penis to implant spermatangia on the ventral and dorsal tissues of females (Hoving et al. 2012). The mating of the oceanic squid *Dosidicus gigas* is characterized by the male using a penis to implant spermatangia on the buccal area of the female (Hoving et al. 2019). Octopuses have a specialized arm used to transfer spermatophores called a hectocotylus. Male *Hapalochlaena lunulata*, a species of blue-ringed octopus, deposit spermatophores by inserting their hectocotylus into the mantle cavity of the female (Cheng and Caldwell 2000). Anatomy may vary, but cephalopod reproduction relies on spermatophore transfer.

The persistence of same-sex sexual behavior has

traditionally been viewed as an evolutionary paradox, as animals that participate in same-sex sexual behavior expend energy without producing offspring (Lerch & Servedio 2021). Despite this evolutionary conundrum, same-sex sexual behavior has been observed in a wide variety of animal taxa, from invertebrates to vertebrates (Bailey & Zuk 2009). Although a lot of research has not been done on same-sex sexual behavior in cephalopods, same-sex sexual behavior between males has been observed in various cephalopod species at high frequencies. Male-male sexual interactions in cephalopods have been observed in species that live in different environments and have different sexual behaviors, suggesting that same-sex sexual behavior could manifest as a sexual strategy in cephalopods under separate conditions. Same-sex sexual behavior in cephalopods seems shocking since most cephalopods have a single reproductive cycle (Hoving et al. 2019 and Nigmatullin et al. 2001). This paper focuses on male-male same-sex sexual behavior in three species of cephalopods—*O. deletron*, *D. gigas*, and *H. lunulata*—that persist under distinct conditions.

The articles reviewed in this paper focus on cephalopods whose sexual behaviors and reproductive habits have not previously been studied in detail. The studies done to determine sexual interactions in these

species ultimately revealed same-sex sexual behavior between male cephalopods. The cases of the observed male-male mating are unintentional, but they play a role in maximizing the fitness of the individuals that engage in same-sex sexual behavior.

Indiscriminate sexual behavior in the deep-sea squid *Octopoteuthis deletron*

Deep-sea squid live in environments that are difficult to observe, which is why not much is known about the reproductive behavior of deep-sea squid. Previous deep-sea squid research has heavily relied on studying dead specimens of squid, and this has revealed preliminary information in deep-sea squid study. Implanted sperm receptacles (spermatophores) were observed on the bodies of two captured female *Architeuthis*, a deep-sea squid, indicating that sperm storage on the skin, a reproductive method used by many coastal cephalopods, is involved in the reproduction of this deep-sea species (Norman 1997). Studying dead specimens of deep-sea squid has also suggested a mechanical difference between the mating of deep-sea squid and coastal squid. In some coastal squid species, observations of wounds on the external tissues of the females suggest that inflicting wounds facilitates spermatangia storage. *Taningia danae* specimens from the stomachs of sperm whales reveal wounds on the internal muscle layers of mated females, rather than just the external layers, suggesting a slight difference in mating between deep-sea squid and non-deep-sea squid species (Hoving et al. 2009). Studying dead specimens has revealed key information about the reproductive strategies of deep-sea squid, and specimen study still plays a role in cephalopod study; however, there are downsides to studying dead specimens. Skin loss is common when collecting specimens, which is why implanted spermatangia had not been observed in deep-sea squid prior to the two *Architeuthis* specimens (Norman 1997). As new technology emerges, there has been a

shift from investigating dead specimens of deep-sea squid to remotely operated vehicle (ROV) explorations. Hoving et al. (2012) used ROV recordings to shed new light on the once unknown mating behavior of the Eastern Pacific deep-sea squid *Octopoteuthis deletron*. During mating, male *O. deletron* implant spermatangia into ventral and dorsal tissues of female *O. deletron*. The presence of implanted spermatangia on both female and male *O. deletron* at the same frequency suggests that males equally engage in same-sex and opposite-sex behavior.

Video recordings from ROV exploration were taken to observe 108 *O. deletron* specimens in California, and the video footage was examined to determine the presence of implanted spermatangia and the sexes of the squids. The sexes of the individuals in the footage were determined by observing for the presence or absence of wrinkled tissue on the ventral part of the squid body called rugose tissue. Preserved specimens of *O. deletron* show that only females have rugose tissue. Finally, the number of implanted spermatangia were counted on each mated individual.

The sexes of 39 *O. deletron* could be differentiated in the ROV recordings: 19 females and 20 males, which is approximately a 1:1 population sex ratio. The video footage suggested that male and females were mated at equal proportions, as the number of males and females that were found with implanted spermatangia were similar. Implanted spermatangia were commonly found on the dorsal body parts of both males and females, but they were also found in high numbers on the ventral body parts of females. The mated males had implanted spermatangia on locations out of reach of their terminal organs, indicating that the observed mating was not a result of accidental self-implantation.

Same-sex sexual behavior has been observed in other cephalopods (Cheng and Caldwell 2000), but these observations are dissimilar to the same-sex behavior

noted in this study. In this study, male and female *O. deletron* were found equally mated, suggesting that males engage in same-sex sexual behavior and opposite-sex sexual behavior at the same frequency. Males and female *O. deletron* were found equally mated despite the established belief same-sex sexual behavior has negative evolutionary value. Some of the costs of same-sex behavior relate to the short reproductive periods of *O. deletron* and the fact that same-sex behavior means losing sperm to other males without producing offspring. Nevertheless, the costs are likely outweighed by the potential evolutionary benefits of indiscriminate sexual behavior.

Lurch and Servedio propose a theoretical model that supports the idea that indiscriminate sexual behavior maintains the persistence of same-sex sexual behavior in non-human animals, because indiscriminate mating is an optimal strategy under specific conditions (2021). One condition that supports indiscriminate mating is a low probability of encounter between members of the opposite sex. *O. deletron* have only been observed as solitary deep-sea creatures, which likely reduces their chances of encountering conspecifics (Hoving et al. 2012). A low chance of encountering conspecifics in the deep-sea could possibly explain why same-sex sexual behavior, as a result of indiscriminate mating, is frequent in *O. deletron*. Indiscriminate sexual behavior with conspecifics likely maximizes reproductive success of male *O. deletron*, despite the possibility of losing sperm—it is better to mate with anyone than to not mate at all.

Indiscriminate sexual behavior between conspecifics of similar size in *Dosidicus gigas*

The presence of implanted spermatangia on male and female *Octopoteuthis deletron* were observed at the same frequency, indicating that male *O. deletron* mate indiscriminately with conspecifics. The benefits of indiscriminate mating likely outweigh the costs of same-sex mating events that do not

result in offspring. Specifically, male *O. deletron* possibly mate with any encountered conspecific to increase chances of successful reproduction, as *O. deletron* are solitary deep-sea creatures that live in dark environments where potential mates are scarce. Same-sex sexual behavior has been observed in squid species that, unlike *O. deletron*, live in large groups—the oceanic *Dosidicus gigas*. High frequencies of same-sex sexual behavior were observed in *D. gigas* when environmental conditions caused the male and female squids to be of similar size. Male *D. gigas* indiscriminately mate with conspecifics of similar size.

Soviet expeditions and literature have provided extensive information on the ecology, morphology, feeding habits, and distribution of the oceanic squid *Dosidicus gigas*, also known as the Humboldt squid (Nigmatullin et al. 2001). Despite the extensive information on the biology of this species, the Humboldt squid's mating behavior is not well-understood. As of 2001, mating in the Humboldt squid has only been observed once (Nigmatullin et al.). The Humboldt squid is an oceanic squid abundant in the open ocean of the eastern Pacific Ocean. The reproductive behaviors of coastal cephalopods have been easily observed through scuba diving trips and aquarium visits, but the same cannot be said for oceanic cephalopods because of technological difficulties (Hoving et al. 2019). To overcome the challenge posed by technological difficulties, the mating behavior of oceanic cephalopods has been documented by examining captured individuals. Examining captured individuals has revealed that the reproduction of cephalopods is characterized by the male implanting spermatangia on the tissues of the female. Morphological examinations of *Dosidicus gigas*, the Humboldt squid, have revealed that males of this species implant spermatangia on the buccal areas of the female (Nigmatullin et al. 2001 and Hoving et al. 2019).

To gain novel information on the mating behavior of

the Humboldt squid, Hoving et al. (2019) conducted a study of captured Humboldt squid in the Gulf of California, Mexico from 2013-2015. This study documented the presence of implanted spermatangia on female and male Humboldt squid, revealing the first observed cases of same-sex sexual behavior in Humboldt squid. The evolutionary benefits of same-sex sexual behavior in cephalopods are not well understood because same-sex sexual behavior has costs, such as wasting sperm and energy without producing offspring.

From 2013-2015, dead Humboldt squids in Mexico were obtained from two sources—squids from fisheries and squids that were captured and euthanized—to be examined for morphological characteristics of mating. During these examinations, the presence of spermatangia, weight, mantle length, and maturity stages of both sexes were recorded. After recording these observations, statistical computer programs were used to assess the variability between squid size and individuals mated between both sexes. Implanted spermatangia on the buccal areas of the squids indicated mating activity.

Most of the collected Humboldt squid specimens were unusually small, and environmental factors likely contributed to the small size of individuals. Female and male squids were the smallest in 2015, and the proportions of mated females and males were around the same that year. Mated male possessed spermatangia on the buccal area of their body, in the same manner implanted spermatangia were found in female squids. Implanted spermatangia were observed in males during the three years, but the proportions of mated females and males were the most similar when the sizes between the two sexes varied the least in 2015. In general, large, mature females were found mated less frequently than smaller, maturing females. Maturing females were around the same size as mature males. Mature, small males were observed to be mated in this study more commonly than scarce

larger males.

For the first time, same-sex sexual behavior was observed in the Humboldt squid, suggesting that same-sex sexual behavior might not be rare for this species and could be common under specific conditions. Same-sex sexual interactions can vary widely within species (Bailey and Zuk 2009), and the same-sex interactions in the observed squids differed as circumstances changed. Same-sex sexual behavior was observed in the three years, but it was only seen in similar proportions to male-female mating when environmental conditions resulted in male and female individuals of similar sizes. Observations of mated females and males when there was little variance in size suggest that small males prefer to indiscriminately mate with conspecifics of their size.

The persistence of same-sex sexual behavior is often characterized as an evolutionary paradox because it does not lead to procreation, and this has led researchers to study adaptive and non-adaptive reasons for its tenacity (Bailey and Zuk 2009). Males mating other males because of “mistaken identity” could be a non-adaptive explanation for same-sex sexual behavior of Humboldt squid, as there is limited sexual dimorphism between male and female Humboldt squid. The major difference between males and females is the larger size of mature females. Large, mature females often cannibalize smaller squid, and this likely explains why males tend to mate with maturing females. Maturing females and mature males are around the same size. The small number of larger mated males and the higher frequency of smaller mated males and females suggest that male Humboldt squids indiscriminately mate with individuals of similar size, which can result in a high frequency of same-sex sexual behavior when there is little variance in size between sexes. Same-sex sexual behavior might emerge as the result of an adaptive strategy to avoid large, cannibalistic females.

Same-sex sexual behavior to distinguish sex in *Hapalochlaena lunulata*

Male *Dosidicus gigas* face a potential risk when mating—larger females will often cannibalize smaller males. *D. gigas* likely mates with conspecifics of similar size to increase the chances of successful reproduction without the risk of being killed. Indiscriminate mating with conspecifics of similar size results in a high frequency of same-sex sexual behavior when there is little difference in size between sexes. Other than size, there is little sexual dimorphism between male and female *D. gigas*, which explains why males do not differentiate between small, maturing females and small males. *Hapalochlaena lunulata* is a species of octopus that cannot differentiate between male and female conspecifics until mating has initiated. Male *H. lunulata* will copulate with males and females, but male-male copulation is brief and does not result in the transfer of spermatophores. Male-male copulation events end passively and without aggression, unlike male-female copulation events that often end with the female attacking the male. Despite *H. lunulata* being a different type of cephalopod than *D. gigas*, its lack of sexual differentiation and the risks it can face while mating leads to same-sex sexual behavior.

Previous work shows that cuttlefish, a type of cephalopod, cannot differentiate between individuals, including mates. As a result of not having the capacity to recognize individuals, cuttlefish social interactions rely on social cues that do not involve differentiating others, such as interpreting the behavior of conspecifics (Boal 1996). The absence of social recognition raises the question if cephalopods can even distinguish between male and females. Distinguishing between sexes is not the same as having social recognition, but understanding the amount of recognition in cephalopod species can aid in the understanding of the behavioral evolution of these animals. In particular, it is unclear if octopuses can distinguish between males and females prior to

physical contact during copulation. Contact during copulation might induce sex recognition of octopuses, as noted by past laboratory observations of a blue-ringed octopus species, *Hapalochlaena maculosa*, in which males were observed to mate with other males before quickly withdrawing (Tranter and Augustine 1973).

Cheng and Caldwell (2000) observed the mating behavior of another blue-ringed octopus species, *Hapalochlaena lunulata*, to test if this octopus species could determine sexual identity prior to copulation. The differences between male-female and male-male sexual encounters were observed and analyzed. *H. lunulata* male-female and male-male interactions were also observed to determine if this species displayed courtship behavior. Courtship behavior has only been observed in a few species of octopuses, which is a curious observation since octopuses have a highly developed sensory system.

Wild male and female *H. lunulata* were obtained from the Philippines and housed in artificial sea water aquariums, and they were acclimated to their new environment for two weeks. After the two weeks, 15 male-male and nine male-female interactions were observed by randomly introducing one octopus into the aquarium of another octopus and videotaping their interactions. The recordings were analyzed to view precopulatory behavior, copulatory behavior, and postcopulatory behavior during the interactions. Copulation was characterized by the insertion of the hectocotylus into the mantle cavity. The interactions lasted for an hour unless the octopuses were still in physical contact.

The octopuses did not display behavioral changes prior to contact during male-male interactions, but physical contact was observed in 80% of male-male pairing. In most cases, contact was initiated by the larger male, and behavioral changes were observed during mounting. The male that was mounted darkened its body—which is characteristic of *H. lunulata* being

startled—when copulation initiated. During copulation, one of the males introduced its hectocotylus to the mantle cavity of the other male. Copulation was brief, ranging from five seconds to six minutes. However, in 50% of the cases, one male reinitiated copulation after some time; secondary copulation events were even briefer, lasting for less than a minute. Even when two copulation events occurred, no spermatophores were released in any male-male interactions. Male-male copulation passively terminated by one male removing its hectocotylus from the other male's mantle cavity. Postcopulatory interactions were passive with the males avoiding each other or remounting—no attacks were observed.

Physical contact was observed in almost all male-female pairings, and there were no behavioral changes until contact was initiated. Physical contact was equally initiated by males and females, resulting in the male mounting the female and inserting his hectocotylus in the female's mantle cavity. Mounted females responded to copulation initiation by displaying a flash of color on their body. Copulation lasted much longer between male-female pairings than male-male pairings, ranging from 25 minutes to 246 minutes. Spermatophores were released during male-female interactions. Spermatophore release was determined by the presence of wave contraction along the male's mantle cavity during release. Unlike in male-male interactions, termination of copulation was aggressive in male-female pairings, with the female forcefully removing the male's hectocotylus from her mantle. All copulation events were terminated by the female. Postcopulatory interactions were divided between avoidance and attack. All attacks were initiated by the female, and in one case, the female killed and cannibalized the male.

H. lunulata did not display courtship behavior prior to copulation, but lack of courtship does not necessarily indicate that *H. lunulata* cannot differentiate between sexes. However, the octopuses' inability to differentiate

between sexes prior to hectocotylus insertion is supported by copulation between both sexes. Hectocotylus insertion likely triggers sexual recognition, as noted by longer male-female copulation and spermatophore transfer that was not seen in male-male copulation.

Bailey and Zuk argue that same-sex sexual behavior can diminish or intensify intrasexual aggression (2009). Male-male sexual events in *H. lunulata* are brief, but they end in a passive, non-aggressive manner. Male-male copulation could be an unintentional, non-aggressive reproductive strategy used by males as a result of copulating with any encountered conspecific. Copulating with any encountered conspecific allows male *H. lunulata* to identify the sex of a potential mate. Copulation between males ends quickly without the risk of aggression—the male can quickly move on after determining the individual it has mated with is not female. Male *H. lunulata* do not risk wasting energy or losing sperm when copulating with other males because these events are brief and do not involve spermatophore transfer.

Conclusion

Classic scientific literature regards same-sex sexual behavior as an evolutionary paradox that goes against the basic goal of passing on genes through procreation (Bailey and Zuk 2009). The persistence of same-sex sexual behavior in cephalopods—which ranges from short periods of copulation (*H. lunulata*) to high frequencies of indiscriminate mating with conspecifics (*O. deletron*)—is not an evolutionary paradox. There are evolutionary advantages to the dynamics of same-sex sexual behavior in cephalopods that increase the fitness of individuals. It makes sense for a solitary deep-sea squid to engage in mating with any conspecific it encounters—the potential prospect of mating with a female outweighs the gamble of losing sperm to another male. It makes sense for an oceanic squid to mate with any conspecific of its size if it

means not being cannibalized by a larger female. It makes sense for a male octopus to briefly copulate with another male if it means being able to determine if a potential mate can be procreated with. These behaviors do not contradict evolution, because they increase the chances of successful reproduction. Same-sex sexual behavior in cephalopods might persist accidentally, but its accidental selection is strategically advantageous.

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Ethics and Violence in Film

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Essay: *Ethics and Violence in Film*

When people go to the movie theaters, they find a myriad of mass art films. Mass art is art that is produced and disseminated by large scale technology (Carroll, 1997, p.189). For most people, mass art is their most common aesthetic experience (Carroll, 1997, p.189). These mass art films include romance films and comedies but also drama and action films that include portrayals of violence. If there are millions of people being shown violent films, is there a chance that people are being influenced to do violence? Not all violence shown in these mass art films is the same. Even films that have similar character archetypes and settings can portray violence differently. *Joker* and *Taxi Driver* are examples of two films that include many of the same themes and ethical ideas and include significant violence. It can be argued that films, and art in general, are able to influence and educate an audience on ethical ideas. Film creators can portray violence to an audience in a way that does not encourage violence, provides good ethical teaching, and does not detract from the artistic depth of the film. By looking at both *Taxi Driver* and *Joker*, one can compare the ways in which both films educate an audience on ethical issues involving violence and how films can better teach people ethics using art.

For violence in mass art films to matter, films need to be able to teach ethical ideas. There are several arguments for and against whether art can teach

knowledge, including moral knowledge. The first argument is the banality argument. The banality argument states that the truths expressed by art are general truths or truisms that people already know (Carroll, 2002, p.4). For example, the truth that murder and violence is bad. These implied general truths present in art are brought by the audience and not provided by the art. You can't learn what you already know. *Taxi Driver* and *Joker* would not be able to encourage violence or educate a person on violence, because the film viewers have already come to the film with their preconceived moral theory on violence. If someone thinks violence is wrong, they will view violence in the film as wrong. The second argument is the no-evidence argument. The no-evidence argument states that the general truths that art provides cannot be substantiated accurately under a concept of knowledge. Art does not provide evidence to back up its empirical knowledge claims. One of the main points of this argument is that most works of art only provide one, or a few, cases of evidence for their moral claim (Carroll, 2002, p.5). For example, *Joker* and *Taxi Driver* each focus on one main character, which the no evidence argument would say is not enough to prove an empirical fact that a moral argument could be based on. The third argument is the no-argument argument which states that even if art has implied general truths, it does not actively engage in arguments, analysis, and debates about those truths

(Carroll, 2002, p.6). *Taxi Driver* and *Joker* can show characters engaging in moral dilemmas, but this does not mean the films engage in analysis and debate about those moral ideas.

There seems to be good arguments for why art, including films, can't teach ethical knowledge. There are counter arguments that poke holes in the previous three arguments and create areas where art can teach ethical knowledge. Philosophical thought experiments and virtue wheels can be used to teach knowledge in art. Thought experiments are commonly used in philosophy for refining understanding of concepts and creating new relationships between previously held ideas (Carroll, 2002, p.7). Virtue wheels are a set of characters that correspond to other characters and work by comparing and contrasting the virtues between them (Carroll, 2002, p.12). Within both *Joker* and *Taxi Driver* we find examples of supporting characters that frame the violent actions of the main characters Travis and Arthur. These supporting characters allow the film creators to educate the audience on the virtues concerning violence by showing how they compare to the actions of Travis and Arthur. There is an obvious argument to be made that thought experiments and virtue wheels are easily countered by the banality argument. We already know that killing people and violence is wrong. A thought experiment and a virtue wheel will not provide us with new knowledge. The thought experiments and virtue wheels within *Joker* and *Taxi Driver* bring many of the viewer's preconceived beliefs of violence into question. Art can create new knowledge of concepts, for example a new and more developed understanding of a virtue, by stimulating a viewer's analysis of a work of art (Carroll, 2002, p.14). In this way thought experiments and virtue wheels overcome the banality argument by showing that even knowledge that is technically already known can create new understanding within those relationships and refocuses our thoughts in new ways (Carroll, 2002, p.8). Thought

experiments and virtue wheels are also not countered by the no-evidence argument as they are not attempting to discover or teach empirical knowledge and are instead working based off conceptual knowledge (Carroll, 2002, p.11). Thought experiments and virtue wheels also contain incomplete arguments that are not deductive. The part that is missing is filled in by the person consuming the work of art and reflecting on the thought experiment or virtue wheel (Carroll, 2002, p.11). In this way, thought experiments and virtue wheels can overcome the no-argument argument. Philosophical thought experiments, which include fictional and narrative components, can't be rejected by the banality argument, no-evidence argument, and no-evidence argument (Carroll, 2002, p.19).

Even if new knowledge can be gained from art and film, how can violence influence this knowledge? To understand how people perceive violence, one must look at the parts that make up violence in an art medium. There are three primary parts that contribute to how people perceive violence. First is graphicness, which is defined as the graphical fidelity of an image (Tamborini et al., 2013, p.104). *Taxi Driver* and *Joker* are the same in terms of graphicness as both are films of real people performing violence in a visually accurate and graphic way. Second is realism which is defined as how close the art is compared to our real world (Tamborini et al., 2013, p.104). *Taxi Driver* could be seen as having higher realism as it is set in the real life setting of New York City in the 1970s whereas *Joker* takes place in the fictional city of Gotham. In DC comics, Gotham is supposed to be a fictionalized northern New Jersey city. *Joker* is a much more grounded reimagining of the comic book character and outside of the name Gotham, the setting also resembles New York city in a similar way to *Taxi Driver*. Both films essentially have the same level of realism. The high amount of realism that films provide is also a reason for the significant power that films have and explains why they have become a dominant art form

(Carroll, 1985, p.80). Last is justification, which is how justifiable the audience views the violent acts of the characters. If a character kills someone in self-defense, people will view this as more justifiable violence than if someone kills another person for fun (Tamborini et al., 2013, p.104). Justification is the most important concept when comparing how *Taxi Driver* and *Joker* express their moral claims on violence. The way that violence is portrayed and justified in both films is what shapes the thought experiments that are used to educate ethical ideas.

Joker and *Taxi Driver* use depictions of violence within thought experiments and virtue wheels to educate the audience on ethical ideas. To understand how the film creators do this, we need to first look at the main characters of each film and the setting they find themselves in. Travis and Arthur have many similar qualities, but some important aspects that set them apart. Travis is introduced as a former Vietnam veteran who, due to his insomnia, works long night shifts as a taxi driver in New York city. Travis goes to the most dangerous areas of New York City and gives rides to anyone. Arthur is introduced as a man working as a clown with a condition that causes him to laugh uncontrollably and living with his mother in Gotham city. Both New York City and Gotham are presented as deteriorating cities that have degenerated into a violent environment. Society has failed and will not offer justice to people who deserve to be punished and seems to punish those who are innocent. The main characters take the situation into their own hands using violence to enact their own brand of justice.

One of the primary ways moral ideas on violence are shown is by using virtue wheels to compare characters. Both main characters interact with a spectrum of supporting characters. Travis is contrasted with fellow taxi drivers, pimps, and various passengers in his Taxi such as senator Palantine. Travis speaks about how the city is filled with scum that needs to be washed away. From street pimps to politicians, Travis believes they all

need to be done away with. Travis is himself, in a way, a part of this scum and filth. He pours alcohol on his breakfast, does pills, makes money off the scum taking his taxi, and goes to porn theaters. He hates the scum of NY but as Betty, his early love interest, says he is a “walking contradiction” (Scorsese, 1976, 27:00). There is a moral greyness when Travis is compared with other characters. He is not positioned as a victim of society but as a participant within it.

An important scene in *Taxi Driver* is when Travis talks with Wizard. Wizard is one of the older taxi drivers who Travis looks to for wisdom. Travis and Wizard speak about life philosophy of which neither seems to know how to truly live a good life. Travis admits to feeling like he will “do something bad” in the future because of his mental deterioration and that he has been feeling “real down” (Scorsese, 1976, 46:30). Wizard says that “it happens to the best of us” (Scorsese, 1976, 46:57). Wizard acknowledges that he does not really understand Travis and states that “we’re all fucked. More or less, you know?” (Scorsese, 1976, 48:41). He encourages Travis to try and enjoy life by having sex, getting drunk, and tells Travis that he’s going to be alright. In a different scene, Wizard talks about how he owns a gun but never uses it contrasting Travis’s purchase of several guns with the intent to kill Senator Palantine. Instead of reflecting on the negatives of society, Wizard reflects on positive changes such as improvements in LGBT rights in California. Wizard represents optimism, calmness, and nonviolence whereas Travis represents pessimism, anxiety, and violence. Wizard shows how someone can find small things to keep them happy even when society is not perfect. He does not encourage violence and encourages Travis to take his happiness in life into his own hands. Wizard serves as a contrast to Travis and helps the audience see that the way Travis is acting is not normal and his future violence is not the only answer to his problems.

Joker does not have characters that represent the same

contrasting virtues to Arthur. A somewhat similar character in *Joker* to Wizard is Arthur's therapist. During one of Arthur's therapy sessions, his therapist agrees with Arthur that society is getting crazier and encourages the idea that society does not care about him. Instead of having a character that brings optimism and a voice for taking personal responsibility, we get one that blames society and confirms the idea that Arthur has no power to improve his life. Arthur speaks about how he "only has negative thoughts" similar to how Travis talks about feeling like he will "do something bad" soon (Phillips, 2019, 40:55). Instead of offering optimistic advice like Wizard, the therapist offers no optimism. In *Joker*, there is not a character that contrasts Arthur as a positive and optimistic figure. The one character that we get that appears to be optimistic and positive, and gives Arthur hope, is Murray. Murray turns out to be a charlatan who plays the part of an optimistic and positive character but is part of the negative aspect of society. Murray too puts down the poor and downtrodden and makes excuses for the wealthy and powerful. Arthur has no supporting characters to contrast his violent actions or show that there is a way to live a decent life within a bad society or that there is hope for improvement. Arthur does not have a character like Wizard who acts as a comparison character showing that the only option is not violence.

This is one of the primary issues with *Joker* teaching ethics to a mass audience. There is no optimism or chance at change in Gotham when compared to the New York City of *Taxi Driver*. *Joker* makes Gotham seem like a place that is so horrible with no hope for change or good justice while also being a somewhat realistic mirror to the real-world New York City. By doing this, it makes Arthur's violence seem warranted and justified. It does not seem like this is the actual intent of the creator of *Joker*. *Joker* appears to want to condemn violence. Arthur's violence leads to riots where Thomas and Martha Wayne are killed leaving young Bruce Wayne an orphan. It shows that even

though there is this violent outburst, nothing has improved in Gotham. Arthur ends the movie in a forensic psychiatric unit and Gotham appears to continue its deteriorating path. By making Gotham seem so terrible and by not including a non-violent parallel option to Arthur's violence, the thought experiment provided by *Joker* seems to lead to the idea that Arthur's violence was warranted against a society that has treated him poorly.

Travis and Arthur both express their frustrations with society through monologues. They explain their thoughts on their situation in life and why they think and act the way they do. There are key differences between these dialogues. In *Taxi Driver*, Travis's monologues are not directed at an audience. They are Travis explaining his inner thoughts in a way that is difficult to express in film. Unlike a novel where the reader has direct access to the thoughts of a point-of-view character, a film can't simply write out the thoughts of a character. Travis's solo scenes in his apartment and taxi allow us to hear exactly what he is thinking. Travis monologues act as a way for the audience to have better insight into the character and gives the audience more information to form their own opinion on Travis and his violence. When the view sees Arthur's monologue on the set of the Murray show, Arthur speaks to an audience. The scene breaks the fourth wall as Arthur not only speaks to the audience of Murray, but also to the person viewing the movie itself. In this scene, Arthur makes excuses for why he is acting violently and blames society for why he has acted violently. Murray counters Arthur by saying that not everyone is awful and accusing Arthur of self-pity. Murray makes a good argument against Arthur but still fails at being a good comparison as a virtue wheel character, because Murray himself is a bad person. Arthur points out that Murray only brought him on the show to make fun of him. Arthur's exact words are, "What do you get when you cross a mentally ill loner with a society that abandons him and treats him like

trash? I'll tell you what you get. You get what you fucking deserve." (Phillips, 2019, 1:44:55). Arthur has broken the fourth wall and told the moral argument of the film to the audience and stops the audience from being able to come to their own conclusion to the ethical thought experiment. The audience is not allowed to grapple with and confront the thought experiment provided by *Joker* which is based on narrative and characters and are instead told what to think.

The conclusion of *Taxi Driver* differs and allows the viewer an open ending to its narrative thought experiment. The final plot point of *Taxi Driver* is Travis saving Iris from being a prostitute. Travis had opportunities to possibly save Iris without using violence and these scenes create a scenario where characters have agency and the ability to make their own choices. Travis could have driven away with Iris during an early scene in the movie when she enters his taxi trying to flee from her pimp. Later, Travis verbally tries to convince Iris to leave New York City and return to her family. Iris makes the decision herself to stay, even though she was manipulated by her pimp. There are solutions to problems that are shown that do not involve violence and show characters having the autonomy to improve their lives.

The ethical thought experiment created by *Taxi Driver's* contrasting characters allows the audience more room to question, think, and compare different ideas surrounding the violence portrayed in the film. Nothing in the movie overtly tells you how to think and judge this thought experiment, unlike *Joker*. The characters in *Taxi Driver*, while many times being poor, young, or dealing with mental illness, are shown with a level of autonomy which gives them the ability to improve. In *Joker*, Arthur is shown to have almost no autonomy, no ability to change the world, and is forced into violence as a victim of circumstance. The thought experiment in *Joker* pushes the viewer to see society as having made Arthur what he is and justifies

his violence as the only option. The viewer of *Taxi Driver* is left to have to come up with a conclusion of their own. *Taxi Driver* still helps push the viewer along the path of viewing violence negatively by showing that there are other options other than violence and showing characters have the autonomy to choose that nonviolent path.

There is still an argument to be made that despite the concerns of films teaching poor ethical ideas, films are still simply works of art and entertainment. Works of art and entertainment should be able to express themselves and should someone not be able to simply enjoy a movie? It is only a film. It has no genuine influence or attachment to the real world. When Arthur harms someone in *Joker*, it has no effect on the real world. The issue with this argument is the high amount of violent realism in these films. Both films take place in settings that are extremely close to our real world. Many films lack this form of realism and may display cartoon violence or violence against things that do not exist in our real world. Arthur and Travis are killing people in a realistic and graphic way in worlds that are essentially the same as the real world. This is different than if Travis and Arthur were killing aliens in a sci-fi movie. It can be a credible defense to say it is only a movie when the violence is so distant from our lived experience that it has no bearing on our reality (Partridge, 2017, 390). Being sensitive to the relationship between violence in a work of art or entertainment and the real world is important if art can educate and influence people in the real world. There are other issues in trying to view films aesthetically without its moral component. If a film is trying to get a certain moral response from an audience and fails, it is also a failure of the aesthetic aspect (Carroll, 1996, p.2). If the narrative of *Joker* leads people to the idea that Arthur's violence is justified when the creators meant for the film to not do this, then it is also an aesthetic failure and not just a moral failure.

People who create films have a moral obligation to create ones that educate people of good ethics especially when those films involve violence. This does not mean that films need to shy away from violence and not include it. A movie like *Taxi Driver* includes similar levels of violence in a similar setting with similar characters to *Joker*. What *Taxi Driver* does that *Joker* does not is utilize artistic narrative tools such as virtue wheels and better uses tools such as thought experiments to educate people on ethics while maintaining its violent characters and setting.

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