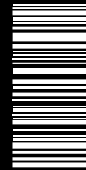


The Culture

SEXUALITY AND THE MEDIA



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-
2022



DENVER

LOS ANGELES

NEW YORK

This edition of The Culture reflects the power of stories through a thorough analysis of how LGBTQ+ representation is interpreted in the media. This magazine includes an in-depth analysis of film, television, and news related media.

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About the Author

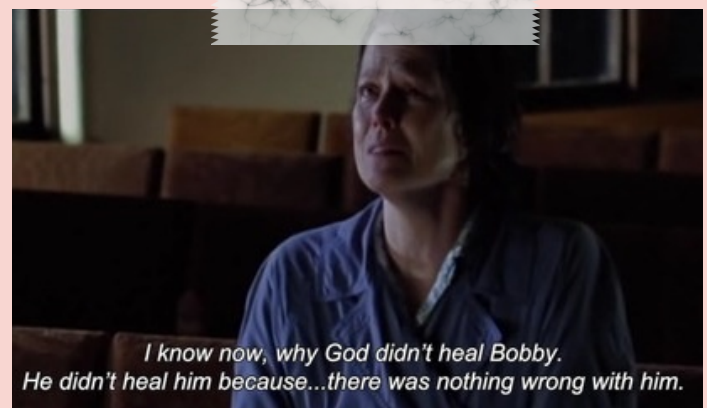
Who I Am:

My name is Sarah Neff (she/her) and I will earn my BA in Journalism and Media Communication from Colorado State University in May 2022. I am committed to inclusive media and strive to do my part to have underrepresented voices heard. I am an Asian-American woman and because of my experience with how the media addressed the origins of COVID-19, I want to build a space for those who have been silenced and misrepresented.



My Commitment:

I strongly believe in the power of visual storytelling, entertainment arts, and social media to change the world. Being intentionally inclusive in all facets of storytelling has the ability to create awareness, foster empathy, and develop connections among those from a variety of different backgrounds. As I move from the classroom to my career, I am committed to championing the voices of underrepresented communities in all forms of digital storytelling.



Definitions

When considering the different perspectives the media provides regarding the queer community, we must understand a few quick definitions first.

SEXUALITY:

sexuality or sexual orientation "has to do with whom a person is, or is not, attracted to either sexually or romantically. People may identify more with one sexuality than another at different points of their lives" (Zambon 2020). LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.



Simon Malvaez. (n.d). *Cartels, Cops, and Queers*.

QUEER:

"a multi-faceted word that is used in different ways and means different things to different people. 1) attraction to people of many genders. 2) don't conform to cultural norms around gender and/or sexuality. 3) a general term referring to all non-heterosexual people. Some within the community, however, may feel the word has been hatefully used against them for too long and are reluctant to embrace it (Vanderbilt University n.d.).



Deborah Kass (2008). *Daddy I Would Love to Dance*.

* Perspectives

KANYE WEST RUMOR

HIV/AIDS disease here is seen as a punchline for Kanye West. This exemplifies ways that perspectives towards the LGBTQ+ community can be misrepresented, villainized, and misinterpreted. This disease has been mistranslated to be a "gay person" disease. However, "anyone regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or other factors - can acquire HIV" (HRC 2017).

Kanye West making allegations such as this not only disrespect those living currently with HIV/AIDS but also exemplifies the intersection where sexuality reflects a disease. This example also shows us how our society literally cannot move forward towards a place of inclusivity when jokes like this still exist.

SNYDE

Kanye West spreading baseless rumor Pete Davidson has AIDS: report

By JAMI GANZ
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | JAN 28, 2022



Kanye West is allegedly telling people that Pete Davidson has AIDS.



MOONLIGHT (2016)

Moonlight, the 2016, A24 film not only depicts characters of color as the main ensemble character but also adds another layer of inclusivity with LGBTQ+ representation. This film does contain a more dramatic and heart-wrenching narrative but it also explicitly depicts the struggles faced by LGBTQ+ youth who live in a rather heteronormative society.

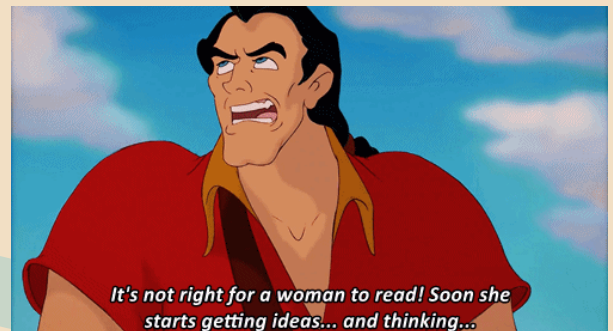
Moonlight fosters an understanding among the queer community including the struggles, discrimination, and mental health battles they tend to endure. The film also communicates to the viewers that not doing anything for queer kids actually perpetuates prejudice which further harms the community. For some queers viewers, the film can be both significant and triggering. These viewers will finally see themselves represented but it also highlights broad struggles they have also likely experienced.



Storytelling

THE STORIES WE TELL...

"Our stories create our mindsets, behaviors, and even our biology. In fact, the essence of psychotherapy is examining, parsing, and sometimes modifying our stories in order to change the way we feel" (Silberstein 2020).



THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE STORYTELLING...

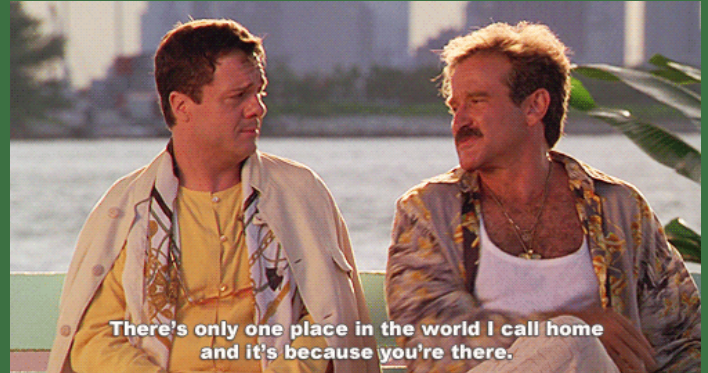
Inclusion and positive representation in the media are extremely important if we want to create a more inclusive environment for all. In order to accurately portray the people that media narratives aim to reflect, it is important to allow access and opportunity to everyone. One way the film industry can improve is to allow a seat around the table for all kinds of different identities.

"We live in a diverse society and need to appreciate our differences in a positive and effective manner. At the same time, we need to understand that diversity is extremely important but is not enough without inclusion. In addition, storytelling will help spread the importance of diversity but it will also begin to introduce the extreme significance of inclusion" (Paradiso 2019).

Stereotyping



"Stereotypes are highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition and behind it's defenses, we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy" (Dyer 1999).



BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES

GLEE: KURT HUMMEL

In media consumption, it is often that we see tropes mixed with stereotypes. A common stereotype in LGBTQ+ representation is the characterization of the "gay best friend". In the television show Glee, Kurt Hummel is the character that is portrayed as the "gay best friend". He is depicted to be a choir star, a fashionista, but most importantly, the best friend to the straight characters.

"When we think of the gay best friend they usually exist to serve as a sidekick to the straight character, speak in stereotypes about fashion or platitudes about men, and lack sexual agency or oftentimes even other gay friends" (Henderson 2021).

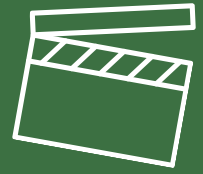
RIVERDALE: BETTY & VERONICA

Another misconceived stereotype that we see in the LGBTQ+ community is the portrayal of "girl on girl". There is no shame for two women to be together romantically but in this instance, the two women here are both in romantic relationships with boys. This scene was completely done for pleasure and the element of surprise rather than representing LGBTQ+ characters.



"Too often [the girl on girl] is played strictly for the pleasure of a male character who hopes to jump in the middle of the action and, by extension, for the pleasure of the male viewer who identifies with the male character on screen" (Gilchrist and Reynolds 2017).

stereotyping cont.



Stereotypes are often associated with negative connotations and assumptions. While they indeed have served a negative purpose in storytelling, Richard Dyer reminds us that "stereotypes express particular definitions of reality...which in turn relate to the disposition of power in our society" (1999).



POSITIVE STEREOTYPES

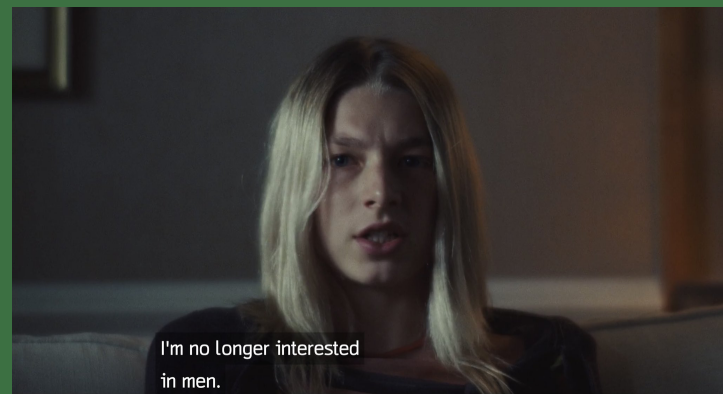
BROOKLYN 99: CAPTAIN HOLT

Breaking away from diminishing tropes and stereotypes, the show Brooklyn 99 has been known to display a relatively inclusive cast ensemble. Captain Holt, portrayed by Andre Braugher, is a gay black male who is not only a strong leader, but remains fierce, stoic, and proud. He is not seen as flamboyant like many gay-identifying characters, but rather a figure of authority, one who many of the other characters look up to. Additionally, his struggles with coming to terms with his sexuality created a special narrative which keeps this character multi-dimensional which is rarely depicted with LGBTQ+ characters.

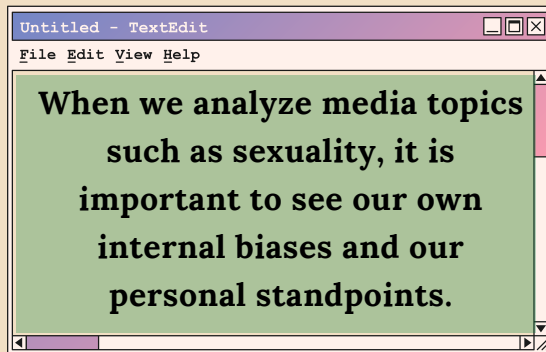
EUPHORIA: JULES

In the HBO Max show Euphoria, we see an important yet intricate story line about an ensemble of LGBTQ+ characters from a variety of race/ethnicities, ages, and such whom each is given a unique persona; narrative.

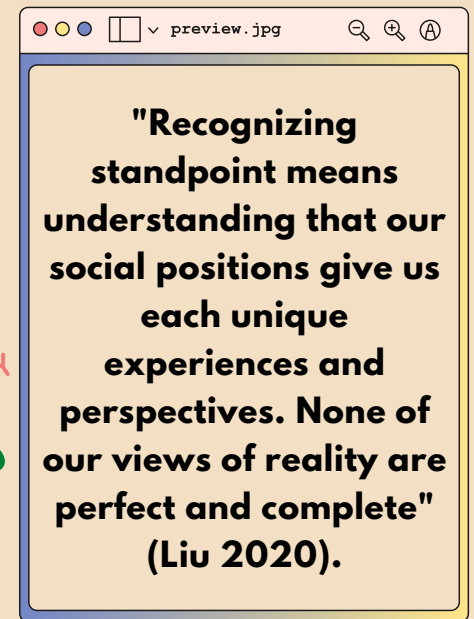
Each LGBTQ+ character has their own battles to confront, including Jules, an open transwoman. Interestingly, their queerness or sexuality isn't seen to be the leading characteristic to each person but rather their personal backgrounds and how those sexualities intersect with their identities. The show rejects mainstream labels and depicts a more authentic story of queer characters. The show avoids mainstream tropes and tells a modernized and realistic version of what it is like to be queer.



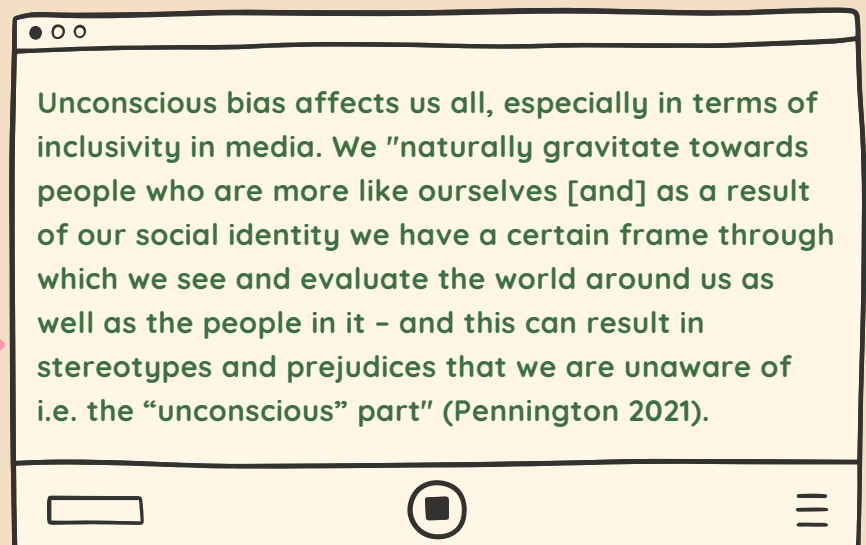
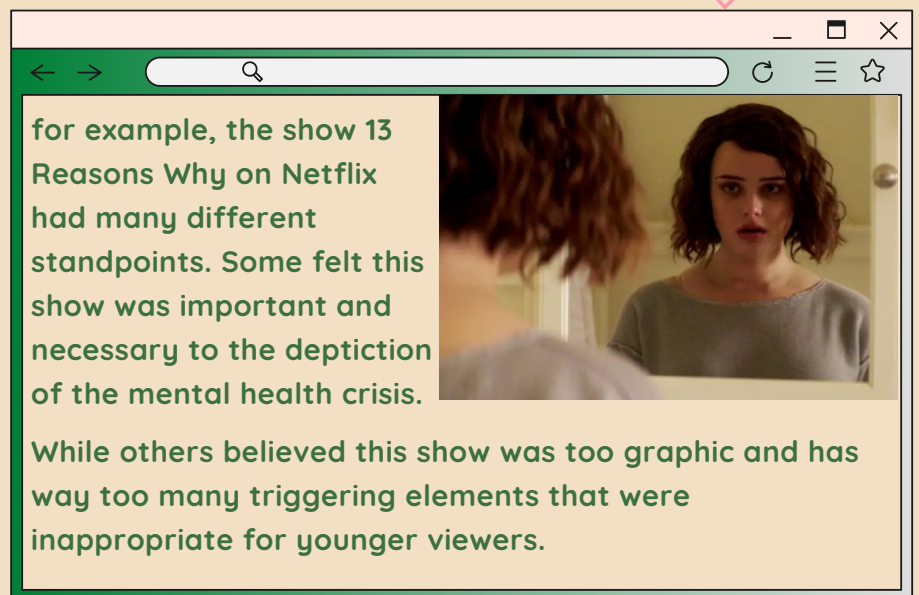
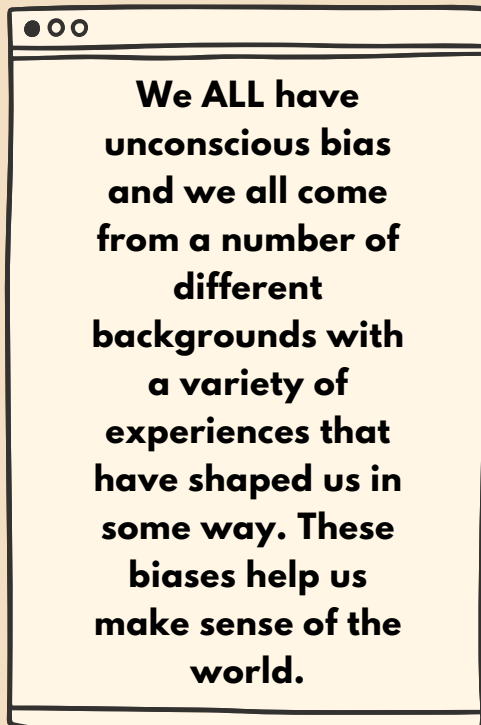
Understanding BIAS



①
STANDPOINT THEORY



②
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



IDEOLOGY

"Ideologies do not consist of isolated and separate concepts, but in the articulation of different elements into a distinctive set or chain of meanings" (Hall 1981, pp. 18).

"We have to 'speak through' the ideologies which are active in society and which provide us with the means of 'making sense' of social relations and our place in them" (Hall 1989, pp. 19)

Ideology: Mothering

Back in the Victorian days, wealthy white Victorian wives claimed that mothering was an essential, delicate, and time-consuming enterprise. These women embarked on a "deliberate and self-interested effort to preserve their social standing" (Willert 2021).



This was during a time period when "the gendered work/home distinction was new, and these mothers have often resisted the devaluation of their work and the domestic sphere" (Willert 2021).

Mothering Today



Today, we see the ideology around mothers pertaining to the "Mommy Tax". This suggests that childbearing and care should include copious amounts of time, energy, and material resources. Mothers should be "giving children these things and this should take priority over all other interests, desires, and demands" (Willert 2021).

It also suggests that mothers must be "taking time out of the workforce to raise small children and then reentering it with less momentum [which] means lost wages, benefits, and social security contributions" (Willert 2021). It also assumes that in a co-parenting marriage model "one of the functions of marriage is still to transfer economic resources from breadwinners to caregivers" (Willert 2021).

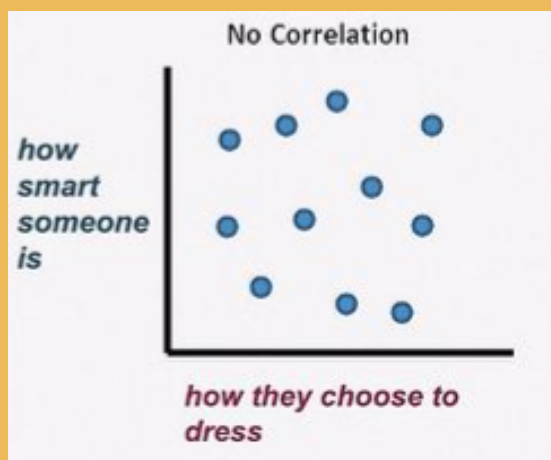


IDEOLOGY cont.

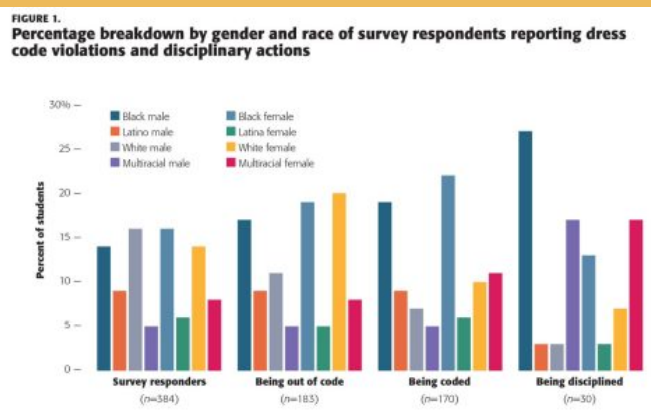
Ideology: Clothing

In the public school setting, there has been a history of enforcing dress codes that tend to limit the way students can express themselves. Arguably, these dress codes can be both discriminatory and sexist. These dress codes tend to imply "that showing female body parts are 'distracting' or 'inappropriate' [and that they're necessary] for girls as boys will be distracted by their bodies" (Chapman 2021). We tend to see the gender binary at play which fuels a double standard for our youth. A boy may wear a similar garment type as a girl, such as a tank top, but only one of the two students is likely to receive disciplinary action.

On the other side of the gender binary, we see how educational institutions force masculinity on their male students. There have been punishments for boys wearing skirts, nail polish, and makeup.



"[ideologies] produce...representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations, and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works" (Hall 1981 pp. 19-20).



Yearbook Photos of Girls Were Altered to Hide Their Chests

Photos of at least 80 female students at a Florida school had been digitally edited. The school superintendent said there was no "intent to embarrass or shame" them for the clothes they wore.

Male student given in-school suspension for wearing nail polish to Texas high school

Trevor Wilkinson, a senior at Clyde High School, created a Change.org petition demanding that boys be allowed to wear nail polish.

“Outside the rigid boundaries of the gender norms too often imposed by our society, fashion is a place where people can be whomever they want to be and provides us with the freedom to express ourselves in any way we want. And because fashion's main purpose is to promote individuality, it's therefore genderless" (Yeasky 2021).



SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION



“Symbolic annihilation points to the ways in which poor media treatment can contribute to social disempowerment and in which symbolic absence in the media can erase groups and individuals from public consciousness (Coleman and Yochim 2008).”

SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION VS STEREOTYPES

Symbolic Annihilation: gives us a “deeper look at media as a site of American culture politics in which imagery is not seen as simply positive and or negative, but where ‘what things mean and how they register’” (Coleman and Yochmin 2008 pp. 3)

Stereotypes: “expresses particular definitions of reality...which in turn relate to the disposition of power in our society” (Dyer 1999). They describe “the promotion of an unvarying depiction of a group that in a media context, has come to be associate with negative portrayals” (Coleman and Yochmin 2008 pp. 3).

SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION: PRINCESS ARIEL



The famous mermaid Ariel, daughter to King Triton, uproots her entire life and sacrifices her body, her voice, her home, and everything she's ever known for a prince. The teenage mermaid film implies that her value as a woman comes not from her wit or mind but her looks and body.

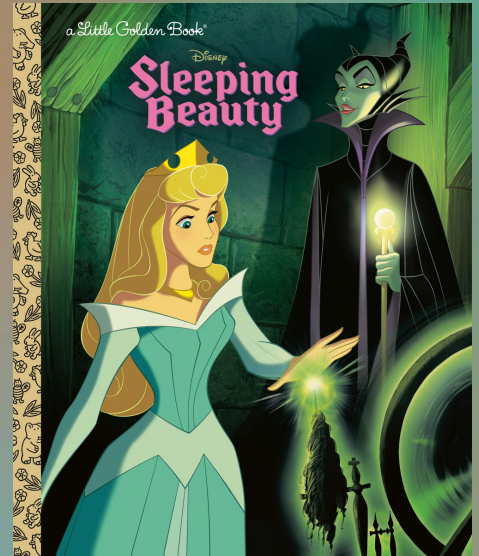


The villain, Ursula, embodies a rather detrimental version of internalized misogyny and sexism. Ursula uses her position of authority to exploit Ariel's vulnerabilities, much like how the stereotypic male aggressor might do. She tells Ariel that she doesn't need her voice to win over Eric but also that having it would actually be a turn-off for men. This is problematic because it promotes the systemic silencing of women, beating down young girls by pinning their insecurities against them and affirming that they are powerless against men (Rizvi 2020).

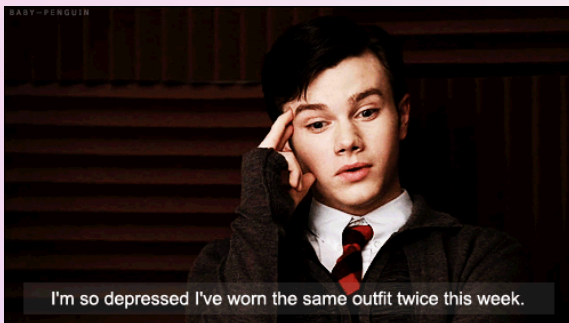
SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION cont.

SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION: SLEEPING BEAUTY

Sleeping Beauty was cursed by an evil witch where she is set to die on her sixteenth birthday. A good fairy overrides the curse and puts her into a deep slumber where she can only be awoken by a true love's kiss. Before she falls into her sleep, she falls in love at first sight. Aurora has the least amount of lines which makes her to be more of an idea than an actual character. Because this narrative struggles with communicating influential lessons such as love, femininity, beauty, consent, and family dynamics it serves more harm than good for young viewers. Symbolic annihilation is a scholarly explanation of the erasure of female characters who are independent to their male counterparts. Many princess stories are angled towards being save and/or loved by a man, and oftentimes at first sight which is a poor reflection of relationships. Women do not live to be found and/or saved by men and media storytellers should stop assuming that they do.



SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION: GLEE



Kurt Hummel, a lead character who is a gay male is portrayed as extraordinarily feminine. He is stylistically presented more flashy and aspires to be a fashion designer. He also is bullied more than the average student which is a common and unfortunate theme we see in LGBTQ+ youth. Kurt also pursues Finn, who is a straight heteronormative character who is a star football player. This represents gay men to be both feminine but also predatory which is not an accurate representation of the LGBTQ+ community.



David Karofsky, another misrepresented character is a jock, a homophobic bully, and a popular student. We see mostly the enraged homophobic attributes with him but then we also see him kissing Kurt, even after being his biggest aggressor. This harmful representation of a closeted gay man shows that not only do they act violently but they also do things like nonconsensually kiss a man. LGBTQ+ character should freely be able to come out or come to terms with themselves at their own pace and shouldn't be associated as less than if they are not.

Villains

Every day in our media consumption, we are shown narratives and contextual clues that make out who the villains are and who the good guys are. This can appear in television stories, books, films, and even in news media. However, sometimes it becomes way more complex and nuanced than just good vs bad.

B E I N G T R A N S G E N D E R

Transitioning and existing as a transgender person can be a very difficult and exhausting process, especially in today's social climate. It is not uncommon for news outlets to attack these individuals for a variety of reasons but mostly rooted in a lack of acceptance and understanding.

Oklahoma governor signs transgender sports ban

More than a dozen states have enacted legislation limiting transgender students' participation in school sports.

Kansas legislator says she doesn't 'appreciate the ... transgender female' using Capitol bathroom

GOP state Rep. Cheryl Helmer also made baseless claims in an email that girls are being regularly "raped" and "beaten" by transgender attackers in restrooms.

Utah governor vetoes bill banning trans girls in school sports

By Maria Caspani

TEXAS

Transgender archery champion banned from Texas women's competitions

METRO

'Terrified For My Life': Transgender Woman Verbally Assaulted on Metro Train



By Devan Cole, CNN
Updated 5:35 PM ET, Wed March 30, 2022

Arizona governor signs bill outlawing gender-affirming care for transgender youth and approves anti-trans sports ban

Alabama governor signs bill criminalizing transgender health care for minors

Alabama is the third state in the country to pass a restriction on gender-affirming care for minors – though it's the first to include criminal penalties.

POLITICS > Posted April 29 | Updated April 30

Maine Republicans adopt platform to ban sexually based material, transgender identity in schools

The Maine Republican Party kicked off its two-day convention in Augusta by also rejecting an effort to remove the party's one woman-one man definition of marriage.

Boris Johnson: UK Prime Minister says transgender women should not compete in female sports

By Amy Woodyatt and Matias Grez, CNN
Updated 11:16 AM ET, Wed April 6, 2022

Republicans add transgender athlete ban to Michigan education budget bill

Transgender girls and women now barred from female sports in Iowa

March 3, 2022 · 3:19 PM ET

BREAKING: Kansas Legislature Sustains Governor's Veto of Bill Banning Transgender Students from Playing School Sports

Lauren Boebert pushes bill to stop airport security from implementing transgender-friendly screening procedures

NEWS • OPINION • NEWS

APRIL 15, 2022

'A Star-Being': Friends Mourn Fern Feather, a Transgender Woman Killed in Morristown

By COURTNEY LAMDIN



Villains cont.

DON'T SAY GAY BILL

Recently, Florida passed a bill which is commonly referred to as the "Don't Say Gay Bill" which basically says "teachers may legitimately fear being sued for a wide variety of classroom instruction, including lessons concerning same-sex marriage or the history of the AIDS epidemic" (Lavietes 2022).

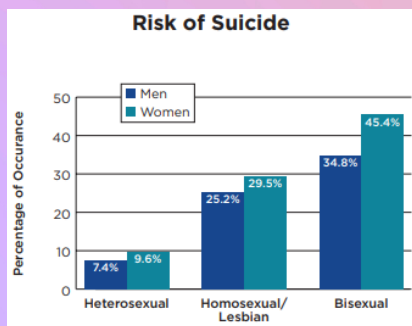


The issue regarding the proposal of the bill is that children are not taught to be gay. Today's youth will be queer whether or not leaders let them talk about it. In addition, when queer kids are not given a space to talk, learn, and discuss their identities in a safe and educational setting, they will look elsewhere. They may turn to chatrooms, porn, or even expose themselves to content that is made for adult consumption. Children of LGBTQ+ parents would also prohibit them from talking about their two mothers or two fathers. Rather, this bill only serves to protect simple-minded parents from confronting more uncomfortable topics and is a step away from inclusivity in education.

If we refuse to confront discourse regarding LGBTQ+ topics, it takes away from the safe classroom setting that public schools always preach.

let's break down the suicide rate and mental health issues among queer people.

- 1) The Trevor Project (2021) estimates that at least ONE LGBTQ+ person between the ages of 13-24 attempts suicide every 45 seconds in the U.S
- 2) The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey of LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found that 19% of them ages 13-18 and 8.3% of LGBTQ+ people ages 19-24 reported attempting suicide in the past year.

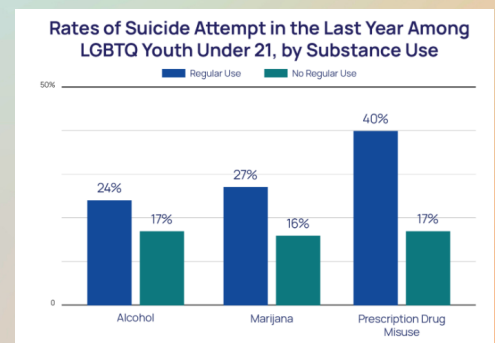


American Psychiatric Association (2020).

Sexual Orientation	Considered Attempting Suicide
Heterosexual	2.3%
Gay or Lesbian	4.4%
Bisexual	7.4%
Transgender	30.8%

Source: Mass. Dept. of Public Health, 2009

American Psychiatric Association (2017).



The Trevor Project (2022).

Othering

When we throw LGBTQ+ members to the side and begin throwing labels on them, we are further reinforcing negative stereotypes and ideologies. This can lead in stigmatization and further harm of these individuals.

In our everyday media consumption, we have our own standpoints and biases that exist in our minds that help us absorb what we experience or watch. This helps us categorize what or who is normal and what determines the other - and sometimes the villain.

“

“Only when creative freedom is encouraged and Hollywood offers more opportunities for BIPOC creators - and white creators use their capital to support creators who are too often overlooked - will we get more superhero tales that adequately grapple with the complexity of justice in America” (Dockterman 2020).

”

While the integration of LGBTQ+ characters and community members is making their way on screen and presence in our social climate, there are still spaces where media have found ways to "other" and alienate LGBTQ+ people.

Dog abandoned for being 'gay' is adopted by same-sex couple

The North Carolina couple adopted 5-year-old Fezco after his previous owner dumped him at an animal shelter for humping another male dog.

Anti-gay Ted Cruz's daughter is bisexual and disagrees with "most of his views"

Caroline Cruz said her father doesn't know about her sexuality but wouldn't be "mad about it"

By Rhuanidh Marr on January 11, 2022 @rhuanidh

Missouri Teacher Quits After Being Told To Remove LGBTQ Pride Flag From Classroom

John Wallis said he was warned he'd be fired from Neosho Junior High School if he did not keep his "personal agenda on sexuality" to himself.

Police 'sent to home of Superman creators' following threats over bisexual character



DB Cooper @DBCooper8675309 · 20h
Santa is not gay. He's heterosexual. We don't need to make everything gay to be accepting of LGBTQ. That's it. That's the tweet.

174 366 391

Male teachers wear skirts to school after pupil was expelled for wearing one

Comment

Climate + News

Men less likely to recycle because they are worried people will think they're gay, study claims

Scientists say measures to save the environment are often seen as typically 'feminine' things to do



Richard Grenell @RichardGrenell

Stop voting for Democrats.



COMING OUT:

Coming out isn't always easy. It's when a person decides to reveal an important part of their identity to someone in their life. For many LGBTQ people, this involves sharing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

One common way we understand and can normalize the LGBTQ+ community is through coming out.



LZ Granderson @LZGranderson

Yo so real quick— I'm seeing way too many "who cares?" in a country that introduced more than 250 anti-LGBTQ bills this year. A lot of people care.



Jemele Hill @jemelehill

Carl Nassib likely isn't the only active gay player in the NFL, but him coming forward will be huge for those who haven't gotten there yet. Very courageous decision that will not only help other players but so many young people in this country.



matt @mattxiv

"who cares?" is truly such a shitty response to someone coming out. it's just a smooth way of pretending homophobia/transphobia doesn't exist and gaslighting a queer person for ever having struggled with who they are

Othering

COMING OUT CONT.:

Some things to consider when understand the everchanging and complex process of coming out

1

LGBTQ+ people have the right to come out on their own terms. It is important to be mindful of this because it is no one's right to take this away from someone else just because it might not seem like a big deal to us.

2

You do individually do not to be 'out' to be proud. Your sexual identity is always valid no matter how many people know or how 'out' you are.

3

If you choose to stay in the closet, you're not "lying" to your friends, family, or peers. Not one single person is or will ever be entitled to your sexuality.

4

In the big picture, if you choose to come out in any capacity, it is only one potential step in the big great wonderful journey of finding yourself. You are in the driver's seat.

5

Despite what you might have been told or thought, you do not need to sacrifice your faith to come out. Many queer people across a multitude of religions have found ways to love without sacrificing their faith.

6

If you are an ally or peer and someone entrusts you with their sexuality, it is not your place to out them. It doesn't matter if you think you are helping or have good intentions, they trusted you with a vulnerable subject, and as a friend or ally, you must protect that trust. It is not your place to out someone no matter what. It is also not your place to speculate and make suggestions about someone's identity.

7

Responding to a person entrusting you with their sexuality is a big step for that lgbtq+ person. Be mindful of how you respond. (p.s. saying "who cares?" or anything else that diminishes them as a person is the wrong response). Be kind to one another.

BEAUTY AND GAZE

“ —

"Individuals perform various forms of beauty work, thus reproducing and strengthening a social system that privileges youth and attractiveness" (Kwan and Trautney 2000 pp. 49).

— ”

According to Teen Vogue (2021), beauty standards worsen mental health issues in most people, regardless of how you identify. The rise of social media has brought a lot of changes in the past few decades, one of which has been increasing the LGBTQ+ community's impact on changing society's toxic interpretations of beauty (Delfino).

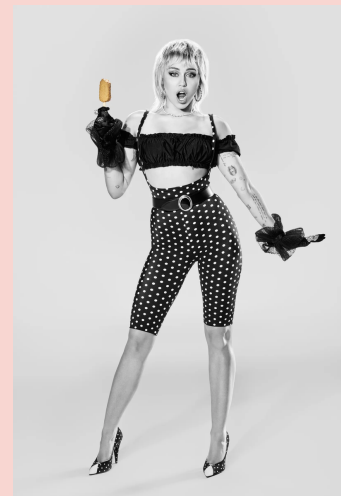
Icons Breaking Beauty Standards

Harry Styles: "what's feminine and what's masculine, what men are wearing and what women are wearing - it's like there are not lines anymore," he told The Face in 2019. "I'm not always super outspoken. But I think it's very clear from choices that I make that I feel a certain way about lots of things."



Timothy Chalamet: "I want to say you can be whatever you want to be. There isn't a specific notion, or jean size, or muscle shirt, or affectation, or eyebrow raise, or dissolution, or drug use that you have to take part in to be masculine. It's exciting. It's a brave new world. [Our generation] has a real excitement about doing things in a new way and breaking the mold" (Belle 2018).

Miley Cyrus: "People fall in love with people, not gender, not looks, not whatever," she told Vanity Fair, "relationships and partnerships in a new generation - I don't think they have so much to do with sexuality or gender" (Nardino 2021).



BEAUTY AND GAZE cont.

“Women are conditioned to think about their appearance and to make changes to their appearance in pursuit of achieving the perfection associated with the hegemonic beauty ideal (Kwan and Trautney 2000 pp. 55).”

GAZE:

Gaze in the media “is the way media view society and then represent their view in their media products such as magazines, films, etc. For example women as sex objects (the objectification of women)” (Thompson 2018).

GAZE: Sports

On July 20, 2021, during the summer Olympics, Norway's women's beach handball team “were fined over their decision to wear shorts instead of the required bikini bottoms during a game at the European Championship” (Illich 2021).

“Sports judged on aesthetics like figure skating have clothing rules consistent with judges’ often stereotypical views of what a ‘feminine’ skater should look like. Women’s beach volleyball uniform regulations are based solely on heterosexual sex appeal” (Bullens 2021).

Germany's women's gymnastics team made a stand against the sexualization of their sport during the qualifications round on Sunday by opting to wear full-body suits instead of the standard leotard (Illich 2021). Looking at the bigger picture, uniforms in professional sports vary immensely based on gender category. With such prominent, highly viewed, and high-earning sports, we see gaze at play. Female athletes are required and expected to wear more exposing, tight, and sexually revealing uniforms than male athletes.



BEAUTY AND GAZE cont.

THE MALE GAZE:

"In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly".

Laura Mulvey, 1992

This term was coined by British film theorist Laura Mulvey. She defines the male gaze to be "where women in the media are viewed from the eyes of a heterosexual man, and that these women are represented as passive objects of male desire. Audiences are forced to view women from the point of view of a heterosexual male, even if they are heterosexual women or homosexual men" (Sampson 2015).

Film: Transformers

Megan Fox's performance in *Transformers*, a rather popular film, is seen as a suitor of the male gaze. In this scene, she is leaning over a car and fixing it. She appears to be in a crop top and skinny jeans, she is tall, lean, tan, with nearly perfect hair. She entertains the male gaze by being both mechanically talented and knowledgeable but also due to her physical appeal. She is positioned in the center of the camera's line of sight where she becomes the only subject that audiences see.



Male Gaze and LGBTQ+

Sometimes, the male gaze extends to fulfill misguided tropes such as this scene from the film *Cruel Intentions*. This girl-on-girl kiss with two heterosexual characters is strictly present for the pleasure the audience will see it as. This is played strictly for the pleasure of a male character in the story who hopes to jump in the middle of the action, and by extension, for the pleasure of the male viewer who identifies with the male character in the story.

It is important to note that as independent viewers, we may decode and encode on-screen messages differently. For "production and reception of the television messages are not, therefore, identical, but they are related: they are differentiated moments within the totality formed by the social relations of the communicative process as a whole" (Hall 1980 pp. 53).

Relationships



Relationship in TV

Typically when people talk about being in a relationship, the term is referencing a specific type of romantic relationship involving both emotional and physical intimacy, some level of ongoing commitment, and monogamy (i.e. romantic and sexual exclusivity, where in members don't have this type of relationship with anyone else). (Gonsalves 2021).

“

"If identity matters, it is because social identity categories are the products of these systems, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and capitalism, and are one especially efficacious way of recognizing and measuring the inequalities produced by such systems"
(Grzanka 2018).

”

The word relationship encompasses such a massive variety of kinds of human connections, both romantic and nonromantic, and it's likely that no two people share the exact same understanding of what defines a relationship

Examples of TV Relationships



The Fosters: this non-conventional TV family is a combination family of adopted, biological, and fostered children. The parents are a married lesbian couple - one whom had a child in a past marriage. The show demonstrates a brilliant coparenting relationship between the two full-time working parents. They both have relatively prestigious jobs and are still able to help out their children. Additionally, the representation of nontraditional family settings is both refreshing and unique in comparison to what we are used to seeing.



Station 19: this show, which is a spin off of the long-running medical show Greys Anatomy, depicts a lesbian couple who eventually tie the knot. Maya Bishop, a fierce, driven, ex-Olympian firefighter and her wife, Carina DeLuca, a caring, motivated, Italian, and accomplished OB-GYN surgeon plan a life together. They find ways to maintain their high accomplished careers and still plan a family together. The visibility of having a multicultural couple who are both highly respected in their fields is both riveting and adds further inclusivity to a dynamic we often don't see.

Resources for you

We understand that this magazine edition contains a lot of content that some viewers may find triggering. We hope that this challenged you to consider what you are seeing when it comes to media narratives. In order to counteract the harmful and false narratives of LGBTQ+ characters, media industry leaders need to start offering a seat around the table to a greater range of qualified and diverse storytellers. Maybe then, we will see a more realistic reflection of the world we live in now. We also remind you while we are excited, hopeful, and optimistic about future media representations we understand change does not happen overnight. Thank you for reading. Thank you for being here <3

Here are some resources from us to you to help you and your loved ones...

The Trevor Project: connect to a crisis counselor 24/7, 365 days a year, from anywhere in the U.S. It is 100% confidential and 100% free.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

Trans LifeLine: provides trans peer support for our community that's been divested from police since day one. We're run by and for trans people.

1-877-565-8860 (United States)

1-877-330-6366 (Canada)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: a network of over 160 crisis centers that provides 24/7 service via a toll-free hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

1-800-273-8255

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-3224

Crisis Text Line: a global not-for-profit organization providing free mental health texting service through confidential crisis intervention via SMS message.

Text TALK to 741-741 (United States)

Text HOME to 741-741 (Canada)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

1-800-662-4357

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The Culture

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