

The Portrayal of Women in Media

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the history of women's depiction in media, particularly in the early 2000s, and discovers a substantial shift in the image of young female characters. Historically, media narratives have constrained women to traditional roles, depicting them as caring figures or hostile antagonists. This shift occurred in the early 2000s when the women interested in the male lead were tomboys or boyish, not the stereotypical image of femininity. Femininity was vilified, causing young girls to separate themselves from their femininity and try to appeal to men by acting like tomboys. This investigation analyzes the portrayal, erasure, objectification, and vilification of different kinds of women with different social, political, and economic backgrounds.

Introduction

This investigation is an in-depth analysis of the portrayal of women in media, specifically since the early 2000s. Women had always been portrayed stereotypically and overly feminine in media, but in the early 2000s, there was a shift in that representation, specifically in young teenage characters. Before the change, there was an unwritten rule in media that women had to be either nurturers or plainly "evil" or "madwomen," and while this rule remains in certain types of genres (such as horror or thriller), it stuck out more before. We can see this from the times of the Bible, where Eve is blamed for telling Adam to bite the apple and is seen as inferior to Adam (even though he chose to bite the apple) and even seen as "evil" in some points of view. "Cinderella Story," "Ten Things I Hate About You," and "Twilight" are examples of films that contain similar plotlines. For instance, In "A Cinderella Story, Sam, the female lead, is relatively less feminine than her stepsisters. She is seen as the "good girl" who cares about school, music, and chores rather than outfits, makeup, and even when she did wear a dress, it was blue.

Meanwhile, her stepsisters and mother enjoy everything pink and feminine, such as fashion, makeup, and nail polish, and are portrayed as the "evil" characters or "antagonists." They are described as "boy crazy" and materialistic gold diggers searching only for money and popularity. The love interests usually fall for the protagonists being "different" from the other girls. As the example shows, these girls generally care less about makeup, skincare, or doing sports and partake in hobbies considered more "manly." Someone might think this is good as women were not allowed to perform in "manly" hobbies for so long, but when it is excessive, it becomes a problem. The issue rests in that these films do not just glorify these kinds of girls but often also vilify the feminine. Usually, these movies contain a feminine antagonist and will do anything to get the male lead. During these years, these kinds of films were mass-produced. Companies like Disney and Nickelodeon were infected with shows and movies with similar plots. It reached a point where young girls would feel insecure about their femininity and refuse to like things. "other girls" wanted to appease these stereotypes and feel validation. The vilification of women, more specifically femininity, is rooted centuries back in time. However, all kinds of women worldwide feel or have felt misrepresented by the power modern media yields.

Problem Statement

During the start of the media, women were damsels in distress. There was not much good representation of women if any at all. There was no in-between for women: they were either weak and vulnerable, needing a man for saving, or femme fatales that used their beauty to target men. There have always been evident stereotypes for women, never really representing the genuine beauty behind womanhood, considering girlhood and womanhood are different for every woman. Regressing to folk stories, myths, and even the Bible, women have been vilified. Classic literature such as "The Illiad" and "Madame Bovary" and even fairy tales such as "Snow White" and the Grim Brothers' Versions of other fairy tales like "Sleeping Beauty" showcase female characters of the sort.

Purpose

Women like Sor Juana Inés have been personally affected by media portrayal. Sor Juana fought for the rights of women using her poetry, calling out the hypocrisy behind the female stereotype and asking men to acknowledge that women are the way they are because men demand it. Since the creation of literature and film, the representation of women and girls has been tainted, affecting culture and women globally, but this has taken a turn in recent years. Misogyny is not as visible in media as it used to be, and each day, there are new examples of good female representation. The need for good media representation of women, that is, every kind of woman, white, black, queer, or trans, is crucial to how young girls will grow up to be women.

Justification

The concept of femininity has been wrecked in every way possible for years, and it is time women reclaim their comfort in being women without worrying about being validated by men. This investigation studies how the portrayal of women in media has affected and impacted culture for the worse and, lately, for the better. The representation of women throughout the years has been tainted by what women stand for and are. That exact media representation has also contributed to the overall cultural view of women. Society silences women in every way possible: in real life through executions and incarceration and in media with unrealistic depictions of women.

Research Questions

1. How has the representation of women in media impacted culture, and why is it so essential to feminist history?
2. What was the psychological impact of the vilification of femininity on young girls who were raised in the 2000's?
3. How are women today represented in contrast to the early 2000's?

Research Objectives

1. To discuss the impact culture has undergone in effect of bad representation throughout feminist history.
2. To analyze the effects the misrepresentation of femininity has caused on younger generations of girls who were exposed to media early in their life.
3. To converse how the rise of marketable feminism has effected media compared to the early 2000's.

Theoretical Framework

The following research elaborates on the different types of misrepresentation of women in media, such as the vilification of femininity, women of color, queer women, and trans women, among others, and their effects on culture. The sources highlight how social media, such as TikTok, promote themes of internalized misogyny and the vilification of women who are influencers (Rosida et al., 2022) or how the 'Not Like Other Girls' phenomenon came to be and its root to internalized misogyny (Petkova, 2021). Additionally, the investigation analyzes the 'madwoman' character in different kinds of media (Haralu, 2021) and its ties to the lack of and misrepresentation of queer women (Walker, 2019), the dehumanization of trans women in film (Reitz, 2016), and the use of women of color as marketability (Schutte, 2023).

Definition of Terminologies

According to Meriam Webster, misrepresentation is giving a false or misleading representation, usually intending to deceive or be unfair (Meriam Webster, 2024). To vilify is to utter slanderous and abusive statements against (Meriam Webster, 2024). Feminism is the belief in and advocacy of the sexes' political, economic, and social equality, expressed primarily through organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests (Meriam Webster, 2024).

Review of Literature

The Misogyny Behind the 'Pick Me Girl' Trend

Women on TikTok are routinely harassed in comment sections and referred to as 'pick me girls.' A 'pick me girl' is a woman who degrades other women and engages in internalized misogyny to gain the love and adoration of a specific group or community, primarily men. Internalized misogyny results from young females growing up in a male-dominated culture, as well as the cultural impact of sexism. The issue with these callouts is the tremendous impact they can have on these young girls, some of whom may not even match the concept of a 'pick me.' The TikTok community is well-known for redefining and using terminology and phrases as slang. While this is typically harmless in some situations, it can be devastating when using gender and racially-specific phrases, like in this case, where women from all over the world are being pursued on the internet for allegedly insulting other women to seek male acceptance. The purpose of the source is to highlight how social media platforms such as TikTok promote themes of internalized sexism and vilification of other women. In this regard, a study by *A Biannual Academic Journal on Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies* was able to indicate that:

"The popularity of TikTok may assist athletes in developing positive connections with fans, promoting sponsored content, and appealing to real fan groups." This study is different from this recent study because previous studies investigated the effect of TikTok as a tool for athletes to promote themselves, while the recent study revealed aspects of internalized sexism contained in the popular term "Pick Me Girl" in TikTok videos. The previous research related to internalized sexism has been discussed by Kira K. Means, who explained internalized sexism throughout "The Bachelor" show on season 20. In this case, the show is about women who implicitly depict women who implicitly look down on each other, and according to Means, what is shown in the series "The Bachelor is common in everyday life (2021). Although the previous research had discussed internalized sexism, the research focused on internalized sexism within TV shows by comparing the implicit and the explicit of internalized sexism, while this study is focusing on the aspects of internalized sexism towards TikTok. However, this current study has analyzed the aspects of internalized sexism within Pick Me Girl behavior on TikTok in a global context. (Rosida et al., 2022)

The importance of this source regarding the investigation is to analyze the impact of misogyny in social media and popularized and modern slang. The children engaging in social media are getting younger by the year, and the young girls watching other girls put each other down will affect their overall judgment and view on misogynistic. The young girls raised by social media will be observed in an environment where both men and women hate other women. The information helps advance the investigation by providing an in-depth analysis of how women are represented, attacked, and bullied on TikTok. The acts of online bullying can and will generally begin to unfold, such as social media constantly affecting their user's views and stands. It is fundamental to be informed so these girls do not grow up with the same, if not worse, kind of internalized misogyny girls suffered around the 2000s. If the problem is not fixed, it will worsen. The impact of film on the cultural aspect of womanhood is severe. Girls must grow up in environments where women are not vilified and femininity is not despised for society to grow.

The Phenomenon of Not Like Other Girls

Memes with the phrase 'I'm not like other girls' can be found on Reddit and Instagram. This term emphasizes the difference between feminine girls and tomboys. These 'tomboys' usually join in this craze by posting and distributing memes showing a feminine girl with long, wavy hair, jewelry, and polished and formal apparel, usually dresses and skirts. A sporty-dressed female with an untidy ponytail wearing a blue or red t-shirt may be seen on the other side of the image. The goal of these memes is typically to highlight the gap between these 'tomboys' and the rest of the female gender. Posts, remarks, and memes frequently carry superiority overtones because of their uniqueness. The purpose is to investigate the 'Not Like Other Girls' problem thoroughly and to clarify the notion of internalized misogyny. Women are in fear of being feminine. Regarding this, a study by Petkova P. was able to state that:

The thesis examines how the logic of misogyny and post-feminism has perpetuated the negotiations of femininity in digital environments. Employing thematic analysis, the study explores online depictions of the phenomenon Not Like the Other Girls to explain its relation to internalized misogyny. The data has been formed as a case study of Instagram #Notliketheothergirls and Reddit - r/notliketheothergirls. The result of the analysis unveiled the expression of traditional notions of femininity and post-feminist ideas and be found, resulting in a paradoxical idea of femininity. Moreover, the method has developed three central themes repeated within the data around the phenomenon of Not Like the Other Girls. Their significance spurs the opposition between the patriarchal and post-feminist ideals of women and discovers a new term - internal dichotomies. The constant comparison throughout the paper requires analysis of the role of 'the other'. As findings claim, it is an essential part of finding one's position and developing a sense of belonging. The overall findings conclude that internalized misogyny can be explained as the driving power of phenomena such as NLOGs. (Petkova, 2021)

The information presented in this source validates that popularized media has vilified women since its existence; this only became more pronounced during the 2000s when movies such as 'Mean Girls' and '10 Things I Hate About You', and singers such as 'Avril Lavigne' became more popular. Despite this, these forms of media aimed not to make younger girls self-conscious of their femininity. Movies like 'Mean Girls' whose objective was to portray misogyny and the stereotypical life of a teenage girl in a satirical, sarcastic, and comedic sense, were not intended to be analyzed like they were. The importance of this source regarding this investigation is to provide research on how media has vilified women and made them turn against their femininity. Girls were forced to feel insecure about their femininity and began abruptly projecting that insecurity onto more feminine girls. This information helps advance the investigation by analyzing the effect of 2000s media on teenage audiences.

The "Mad Woman" From a Feminist Perspective

The "madwoman" is distinguished by her insanity, hysteria, and status as an "anxious wreck of a woman." The study investigates the popular media cliché "madwoman," comprising stereotypical and misogynist characteristics and social-cultural and widely-represented characterizations. It also discusses how women's representation has progressed throughout time. Women and female rage have just begun to show how women act in various ways. Because every woman is different, female roles should be different as well, rather than just hysterical and sad. Representation should be improved. The inquiry focuses on the 'mad woman' persona in many forms of media. This inquiry examines the "madwoman" cliché in fiction and discusses why it is so prevalent in the media. Regardless, the "madwoman" figure appears in a variety of media., and the following source goes into detail by indicating that:

Madness is a concept that has long been gendered females throughout Western history, in medicine, language, religion, and culture. Socially and culturally constructed madness can be used to determine the boundaries of society, the norms and values from which "madness" deviates, while the character of the madwoman can be used to demonstrate how women have challenged these boundaries and how the roles of women and definitions of femininity have changed over time. This study analyzes the madwoman trope from its origins in etiological myths—situating women as dangerous, irrational, and subordinate to men—through modernity and the waves of feminism, as seen through the following works of narrative fiction: *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, *Black Swan* dir. Darren Aronofsky, and *Midsommar* dir. Ari Aster. This project builds upon previous feminist critiques and relevant scholarship on women and madness, examining ancient literature as well as modern works. (Haralu, 2021)

As other sources within this investigation imply, the "madwoman" trope and character have affected culture and society. Recently, film communities have found a way to make this trope more inclusive. Examples such as the film "Midsommar" provide well-written examples of the 'madwoman' trope. In "Midsommar," the character Christian assures Dani that her missing sister "does this all the time" and "goes into full panic mode." He assures her that it is simply a ploy for attention and that he is playing mind games. Small details like this can make the trope so beautiful. Truthfully, there are 'madwomen,' but many were victims of social pressure and stigma before they were mad. Though many women may be hysterical, emotional, and overreacting, frequently, these women are only a product of what they forcefully adopt. Name-calling and stereotyping itself can transform these women into what is now called "madwomen."

Motherhood in British Media

Depending on their age, mothers are represented differently in British media. Younger or teen mothers are characterized as a 'teenage chav mom,' which signifies a low social standing and a snobbish demeanor, whereas older women are seen as gentle nurturers. Meanwhile, contraception and abortion are increasingly legal, and women continue to endure criticism for seeking such help. The media also promotes the stereotypical physical appearance of a young mother. Catherine Bennett, according to the story, commented on another woman's physical appearance, adding that she was "slim, has a lovely smile, tasteful clothes, and nice highlights, and is not snaggle-toothed," as if insinuating that those were the attributes that made her a better mother. Modern media conveys that moms must look a certain way, notably keeping slim even after giving birth. Modern media conveys that moms must look a certain way, notably keeping slim even after giving birth. This source aims to learn how the British media changed the definition of "motherhood" in the twenty-first century. A study conducted by Hadfield, L., Rudoe, N., & Sanderson, M. J. stated that:

As three Ph.D. students from The Open University, all working on different aspects of motherhood, we examine and discuss the significant debates around motherhood, fertility and choice taking place recently in the British media. In the context of increasing divergence from traditional family forms, advances in medical technology such as assisted reproductive techniques, and changing attitudes to sexual behaviour and marriage

over the past few decades, motherhood and parenting remain contested sites in the public domain. The availability of contraception and of abortion has given rise to increased choice, and yet women's fertility choices are increasingly subject to scrutiny and criticism. In particular, media debate in the UK has focused on challenges to traditional motherhood and the implication that the family is 'in crisis'. This is particularly evident in the coverage of teenage mothers, older mothers and women who delay motherhood. Such media representations of older and younger mothers and those women who 'leave it too late' reveal significant insights into the social construction of motherhood. (Hadfield et al., 2007)

The importance of this source concerning the investigation is the effect on the culture of representation of motherhood in modern media. The media portrays stereotypes of younger and older mothers that harm the reality of mothers living in our day and age. This information helped advance the investigation by providing a clear understanding and in-depth analysis of the effects caused by these harmful stereotypes. The media often puts women on a pedestal, anticipating them to act, look, and be a certain way. This concept is particularly evident when one observes the level of self-criticism women direct toward themselves or other women regarding their nurturing or parenting skills. This issue stretches to a point where even mere physical appearance, not looking thin or clean enough, can distort society's view of how good of a mother one is. The article discusses how media promotes social exclusion, and the authors present interest in constructing a community that encourages the positive identity of all kinds of mothers around the UK, regardless of their age, looks, or economic status.

Online Hate Speech Against Women

In recent years, there has been an increase in public conversation in Australia over language that denigrates women. Such remarks are usually considered hate speech or are offensive to women. In other words, it may be seen to be geared toward a specific group of women while yet being broad in scope. It might also be claimed that it is intended only for women because of their gender or because of their actual or perceived sex as women. Despite the recent emphasis, sex-based vilification is nothing new. Because of sex-based vilification, cyber harassment of women is a big issue, involving sustained campaigns of vitriol, image-based abuse, and objectifying discourse by several assailants. Assailants' anonymity and invisibility make it impossible to identify participants and assess the scope of the mob, making it harder to hold offenders responsible. This lexicon, which is frequently associated with violence, may be found in pornography, advertising, popular culture (including cinema, music, literature, and other visual and performing arts), as well as mainstream news and tabloid media reporting. The goal of this source in this inquiry is to demonstrate the vilification of women in media and movies. The following source explains this further by stating:

Public discussion of speech expressing contempt for women has intensified in Australia in recent times. Such speech may often be said to constitute hate speech against or vilification of women. That is, it may be said to be directed at women for being women, or on the basis of their actual or perceived female sex, in the sense that it is about all women, even as it is directed at particular women. Despite the current surge in interest, sex-based vilification is nothing new. Such speech typically accompanies violence committed against women and occurs prolifically in pornography, advertising, popular culture (including film, music, literature, and other visual and performance arts) and mainstream news and tabloid media reporting. It is directed at and about powerful women, 'ordinary' women, and women generally. It occurs digitally and in person, online and in physical spaces such as workplaces and educational institutions, and via speakers who may themselves colloquially be described as powerful or 'ordinary'. The proliferation of digital and online media means that the prevalence and severity of sex-based vilification is increasing and is more easily observable and documented than before. (Anjalee, 2021)

The usefulness of this source within this investigation delineates that misogyny in media can highly affect democracy and general politics. In patriarchal societies, women face vilification for gender expression,

including non-conformity. This sex-based vilification is different from gender identity vilification. Online technologies have heightened communication. These online technologies lead to sex-based vilification, including victimization and sexist remarks directed at female journalists. Speech characteristics of the 'Manosphere' promote misogynistic masculinity in different media, such as podcasts and videos. Social media, articles, and blogs can affect a community's views on politics and general misogyny in the government.

The Lack of Queer Women in Media

The objective of this essay is to highlight the social and psychological consequences of queer women's absence and misrepresentation in the media. The source gave in-depth information regarding women's media preferences, including samples from films, novels, and movies. The source provided instances of how queer women are misrepresented in media, including queer women in cinema being shown solely for male enjoyment or the male gaze, lesbian stereotypes, and bisexual erasure or biphobia. The source provided particular examples of misrepresentation, such as stereotypes and plotlines. The author explains how patriarchal behavior stems from a patriarchal culture. Women have been raised for the pleasure of men, and this affects even women who are not romantically or sexually attracted to men; this is further proof that Patriarchy affects everyone. The following source indicates that:

The purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate the existing scholarly literature on the topic of WLW depictions in fictional stories, in particular those featured in movies and on television. "WLW" in this context refers to women who are interested in romantic and/or sexual relationships with other women, and this term is distinct from "WSW," which refers to women who have sex with other women and does not concern itself with potential romantic or emotional attachments which may be involved in these relationships as well. "WLW" here includes the women in fiction who label themselves as lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and so on. It also includes those characters whose sexual identity is not declared or defined within the original text of the story but is inferred to be WLW by the writer of the journal article being explored. The aim of this critical literal review is to establish the depths to which prior research has gone, to critique the arguments that have been made, and to offer paths for future research to take. (Walker, 2019)

The presented information is paramount for the advancement of this investigation because it describes the fact that most films about queer women are solely created to sexualize queer women for male pleasure, are incredibly harmful to young girls, and promote ideas of heteronormativity and misogyny. These concepts also promote to young girls the patriarchal thought that women must live for men, even if they are not romantically or sexually attracted to them. This sexualization is prominent in anime or other Asian media, where the industry thrives on fanservice and the sexualization of their female characters. In the K-pop industry, this is especially noticeable when observing how fan service so significantly affects marketing. Many companies will go as far as instructing their idols to pretend to be dating each other (without explicitly confirming it) to push marketability for the groups. While this is present in both men-loving men and men-loving women, it can be especially noticeable in women considering that some songs and music videos purposefully insinuate being about queer women (for example, You Attack My Heart MV by Loona); this is also present in Western culture and media.

Manic Pixie Dream Girl

The source looks into the manic pixie dream girl cliché in movies and how their character arcs are often centered on saving the main character from an emotional crisis. The site gave examples of movies that fit this stereotype, including Elizabethtown (2005), Garden State (2004), and 500 Days of Summer (2009). The author characterizes the manic pixie dream girl as a free spirit with uniquely dyed hair who dresses in vintage and listens to indie music. Her eccentricity is frequently used to enhance her masculine personality with a touch of femininity. These manic pixie dream girls are often a mirror of the male main character himself. These women are less

uptight and female versions of the men they assist throughout the film. The following excerpt will further discuss the manic pixie dream girl trope:

Although her spontaneity and hedonism may render them attractive to the alienated male protagonist, they also mark her as irremediably girly and cute, rendering her neoliberal sexual freedom less threatening for men. Indeed, there are glimpses of feminist discourses permeating the figure of the MPDG (Summer insisting she is allowed to enjoy sex without commitment, for example), but they are immediately counteracted by the heteronormative endings of the films. Her individualism, in line with postfeminist neoliberal discourses on personal choice and consumerism, is more based on superficial personality markers (hair colour, vintage clothing, music tastes) than on an actual desire to create less stereotypical female characters. As I noted on my introduction, despite its alternative disguise, the MPDG is still situated within the socially constructed image of femininity, becoming a contemporary adaptation of the muse an impersonation of male's projections of the ideal woman which essentially perpetuates what Imelda Whelehan (2000) calls the postfeminist mystique. (Rodríguez, 2017)

The data extrapolated from this source shows that the "manic pixie dream girl" showcases a femininity less threatening to men. The manic pixie dream girl trope follows a usually thin, white woman marketed as "different from the other girls." The sole purpose of this girl is to guide the alienated protagonist through their internal quest; the girl often needs to develop herself. Usually, manic pixie dream girls in films are the most complex. As a free-spirited girl who can often be impulsive because of her unresolved traumas, manic pixie dream girls usually have the most room for development, but the characters are often erased. Their growth is often overlooked despite having the most potential to be a well-developed, complex character; this is a product of gender ideology and the patriarchal belief that women's purpose is to live for men. At the end of these films, the viewer never finds out what happens to the manic pixie dream girl.

Transgender Women and Comedy

The source's objective is to examine how transgender women are portrayed. The source talks about how transgender characters in the media are undeveloped. The Hollywood practice of casting cisgender men in trans roles reinforces the impression that trans women are not women; this stars Jeffrey Tambor from Hulu's *Transparent* (2014-) and Jared Leto as Rayon in Jean-Marc Vallée's *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013). Representation of transgender women is scary, to begin with, so when that little bit of representation falsely depicts trans women, it can be harmful to the community. Trans women are being killed at an alarming rate; due to a lack of support and prejudice, 49% of trans women have committed suicide. Trans women are constantly at risk of being discriminated against and physically violated. An investigation conducted at Grand Valley State University focused on analyzing different examples of transgender women in media, and it was able to state that:

Film and television often casts trans women as villains. GLAAD is a non-government media monitoring organization that is funded by LGBT people in media. Since 2012, they have catalogued 102 episodes of television featuring transgender characters. Out of those episodes, 21% of them featured a trans woman as a villain (GLAAD). Multiple popular movies follow suit where the main antagonist is a trans woman. *Sleepaway Camp* (Robert Hiltzik), released in 1983, features a killer that is a trans woman who spends most the movie passing as a cisgender woman. At the end of the film, the character is seen naked on a beach holding the murder weapon. It is then revealed that the character was assigned male at birth. *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) main antagonist, Buffalo Bill, is a serial killer who kidnaps women, skins them, and then wears their skin. Although it is not explicitly stated that Buffalo Bill identifies as being a woman, he is seen dressing up, applying makeup, and then tucking his genitals between his legs. He feminizes himself while also being a deranged character. (Nikki, 2017)

This source's summarized information indicates that the patriarchal thought of a "man" giving up their masculinity to "become" the patriarchal status quo enforces a woman and allows men to continue having superiority over women. This is the reason why many are against the idea of having more than two genders. With only two genders, men assert themselves over women and continue the cycle of hatred. Masculinity is acceptable in society, so when that masculinity is given up, it is especially looked down on. When trans characters are featured in the film, usually the focus is placed on everyone around them coming to terms with the fact that they are trans rather than focusing on the individual's feelings towards their transition. Trans women are often criminalized as well. Many films portray trans women as dangerous criminals or victims who ultimately have become criminals.

The Objectification of Women of Color

This resource aims to demonstrate how women of color are represented in the media. The author discusses how women of color are often sexualized or dehumanized in the media. One example is a contentious 2013 advertisement by Mobile, Alabama-based Club Sun Color Studios, which featured a white "pilgrim" and a "Native American" lady. The ad goes on to say: "The Indians brought more than just 'corn' to the first Thanksgiving... they brought Sexy 'Color.'" This advertising uses sexualized racial differences to promote the capitalist market, gender hierarchy, and the subjugation of women of color in the West. To appeal to white buyers, sexualized non-white women are shown; this is further proof of the objectification of colored women. The following excerpt discusses how colored women are objectified, further demonstrating that they are often sexualized for marketability:

Advertisements utilize binary thinking by attempting to project an image that is so different from the consumer. This results in the want to know more, to purchase an item, to see a movie, attend a concert, and so on. Here, I will show how the contemporary misrepresentation of women of color is produced by Eurocentric systems of meaning. It is my belief that Eurocentric misrepresentation is a form of violence enacted through commodification and appropriation, a desire for Otherness, and misconstrued cultural values. More simply, advertisements depicting women of color that cater predominantly to a white audience harm women of color by framing their racial or ethnic difference as exotic, a framing which creates a more hostile society for women of color. Accordingly, when we consider the misrepresentation of women of color, we see how Eurocentrism erases and discards the richness and depth of numerous cultures and people, especially of women. (...) Representation matters. By showing one to be lying on the beach all day wearing next to nothing, it is likely that the entire culture may be viewed in such a way: lazy, sexually available, care free, and only pleasure oriented. (Schute, 2017)

This source evidences the objectification of women in media. According to Williamson, presenting a person of color using a whitewashed lens distorts the culture, people, and country of the commodified individual. It concerns who is portrayed. Misrepresentation often involves white people portraying "the Other," leading to cultural appropriation and representation being put in the hands of white people. People of color are misrepresented throughout all of human history. They have been portrayed as savages, stupid, inferior, and dangerous. For women of color, it is all of the above, but it also concerns the troubles women in general go through. Women of color are diminished, portrayed, and perceived as objects, notably more than anyone else.

The Most Hated Character

The source's purpose is to look at why female characters are despised more for doing fewer awful things than male characters are for doing more terrible things. The source explains why people dislike Dolores Umbridge so much. Dolores Umbridge is a polarizing character in the Harry Potter series, which has received little attention from academics despite her popularity among fans. Watchers often emphasize Umbridge's brutality while

overlooking her other attributes. Popular online comments on Umbridge stress the "transaction" between the audience and the texts, which historians have overlooked. Compared to other male characters who have committed substantially more immoral offenses than Umbridge, she is nonetheless the most despised. Dolores Umbridge is a complex character that people water down too "annoying." Because she manipulates gender roles through her corrupt system, she is hated most. In this regard, the investigators were able to state the following:

Although cruelty appears to be the main reason why people hate Umbridge, her gender is foremost and underlies many of the comments. Several comments implicitly refer to Umbridge's gender by referring to her as "she" or "her," which is difficult to track in a quantitative analysis. However, in total, there were twenty-three comments overtly referring to Umbridge's gender using words such as "bitch," "feminist," "hoe," "woman," and "witch." Looking at direct comments about Umbridge's gender is vital. However, there are also several more comments about Umbridge's cruelty, manipulation of gender roles, and relatability that are more significant because she is a woman. For example, nsbruno13 on Instagram explains, "The worst thing Umbridge said was 'you know I hate children' or something like that because if Umbridge hates children, why would she be at Hogwarts?" While this comment explicitly discusses Umbridge's hatred of children, the implication is that Umbridge, as a woman and a teacher, should love children and enjoy working with them. However, she doesn't, which goes against traditional gender roles. (Griffeth, 2019)

The presented information is paramount for advancing this investigation because it describes how Umbridge is among the most hated characters in the Harry Potter series. Often, she is despised more than Voldemort himself. Her overall goal is to become a pure race. She imprisons and tortures dissidents to carry out her duties as a senior government official. While that reason is not valid, even Voldemort is humanized through his book and throughout the movies. Wildhalcyon's remark helps to humanize Umbridge since, in her view, modern government officials act similarly to hers—that is, they would stop at nothing to eliminate any rivals. Even considering the bad things she did, most people dislike her because she is deemed "annoying" and not for the valid reasons of the acts she commits (Griffeth, 2019).

Methods

This investigation utilized a computer with an internet connection and an internet browser, Google Chrome. To find the sources required for this investigation, the Google Scholar and EBSCO Host search engines were paramount for pinpointing the necessary sources to elucidate the research question. Although the internet connection was unstable at times, it proved sufficient to conduct all the required constituents of this investigation. Even though some sources are not peer-reviewed, the investigation mentor revised them and approved them while confirming their validity. All these components working in tandem created the optimal conditions for the summation of this project.

A qualitative documentary analysis design and a descriptive analysis methodology were used for this investigation. A total of ten sources were collected in six months, all discussing the portrayal of women in modern media and its cultural effects. The different sources followed different types of women marginalized in media. An M2 2022 MacBook was used to research the investigation topic. A research template was used to perfect the format of this investigation. To populate this research, it was necessary to specify the purpose of each of the ten sources used. Furthermore, it was essential to recognize the source's design and approach, indicate the target audience, highlight their limitations, and determine their recommendations and findings. An analytical component outlining the significance of the data presented in the inquiry was generated, so a descriptive content analysis methodology had to be utilized for this investigation.

Results

The fourth source, which was not recent (2007), describes the social and political view of motherhood in British media. The seventh, eighth, and ninth sources were not recent (2017). The seventh source validated that the manic pixie dream girl trope stems from the ideal view men have of women. The eight sources discussed the vilification of transgender women in media. The ninth source illustrated that women of color are objectified in the media. The sixth and tenth sources were recent (2019). The sixth source demonstrated that media lacks queer women characters and overall representation. The tenth source clarified that fandoms hate female characters more than male characters, even if the men are more pernicious. Source one was recent (2020) and dealt with information regarding the manifestation of internalized misogyny on social media. Finally, the second, third, and fifth sources were also very recent (2021). The second source discussed information regarding internalized misogyny and the “I’m not like other girls” mindset that trended in the early 2000s. The third source addressed the concept of the madwoman in film and literature. The fifth source described the representation of women in politics.

At the early stages of the investigation, our main question was:

1. How has the representation of women in media impacted culture, and why is it so essential to feminist history?
 - The section titled “The ‘Mad Woman’ from a Feminist Perspective” proves, through the madwoman trope in media, which has been present since the start of time, how thoughts affect media and how media inevitably affects thoughts. The representation of women in media has impacted culture by impacting how men view women, women view each other, and women view themselves. This controversial media is rooted in misogynistic thoughts, and that same media impacts the consumers who later make more media regarding the topic; this is essential to feminist history because it is a loophole. Patriarchal mindsets travel years back and are still present in today’s society and culture.

As more evidence was gathered, one more question was generated to define further the variables of this investigation (investing, equity, bluechip):

2. What was the psychological impact of the vilification of femininity on young girls who were raised in the 2000’s?
 - The section labeled “The Phenomenon of ‘Not Like Other Girls’” discusses how the vilification of femininity in media significantly impacts young girls. Most girls who grew up watching Disney shows or other iconic chick flick films trending in the early 2000s feared being perceived as feminine; this created entire communities of girls and women who claimed they were not like the stereotypical girl who wears makeup and likes pink because of the connotation of being perceived as a “bimbo,” which is an attractive but stupid young woman (Dictionary, 2024), or a materialistic mean girl. Young girls were forced to separate themselves from their femininity by being made to believe that being feminine and a woman is wrong. The section titled “The ‘Mad Woman’ from a Feminist Perspective” proves, through the madwoman trope in media, which has been present since the start of time, how thoughts affect media and how media inevitably affects thoughts. The representation of women in media has impacted culture by impacting how men view women, women view each other, and women view themselves. This controversial media is rooted in misogynistic thoughts, and that same media impacts the consumers who later make more media regarding the topic; this is essential to feminist history because it is a loophole. Patriarchal mindsets travel years back and are still present in today’s society and culture.

Such a situation led to the final question:

3. How are women today represented in contrast to the early 2000s?

- The sections labeled "The 'Mad Woman' from a Feminist Perspective" and "The Most Hated Character" discuss the representation of women today compared to the early 2000s. The 'mad woman' trope has been present since the start of time; this is shown when you observe mythological and fantastic creatures such as sirens and witches, where sirens lure the men using their attractiveness, and witches are madwomen who curse the villages. While this representation of mad women has been stereotypical and a generalization of all women, today, this representation captures the "mad woman" as a victim of a Patriarchal society. A negative example of the change is Dolores Umbridge, a well-hated character in the Harry Potter series. To this day, many characters are treated like Dolores was during the peak of the Harry Potter fanaticism. Another example of characters whom fanbases have hated more than the antagonists is Daisy and Tom in "The Great Gatsby," where Daisy is hated for being a "gold digger," a tactic she uses to survive, compared to Tom, who abuses Daisy. A modern example is Imogen from the 2022 Heartstopper series, which "stands in between" the two main characters' relationship by having a crush on one of them. Imogen is, at times, more hated than a male character, Ben Hope, who sexually assaulted the main character.

Discussion & Conclusion

Marginalized communities have been misrepresented in the media for years to come. This investigation aims to understand the significance of sound representation in media. It deals with topics such as the misogyny behind the 'pick me girl' trend, the phenomenon of 'not like other girls,' the "mad woman" from a feminist perspective, motherhood in British media, and online hate speech against women. The first five sources describe, explain, and analyze these topics. More topics this investigation discusses are the lack of queer women in media, manic pixie dream girls, transgender women and comedy, the objectification of women of color, and the most hated character, which are explained in the last five sources. The source detailing the mad woman trope was the most informative, as it explained not only the past representation but how it is shifting now that we live in a society where feminism is paid more importance. The source discussed multiple examples of mad woman characters and how they were represented in the past and modern times. Another informative source was the one discussing the issue of the misrepresentation of transgender women in media because it analyzed different examples of celebrities or characters in media. Considering transgender people have been objectified in media and played off as a joke, adding on to the fact that a biological man would "want to become a woman" makes situations extra controversial and worsens the portrayal in media. For upcoming continuing research and data analysis, recommendations include securing more years of data and requesting more study resources. All of the sources were able to properly discuss and explain the portrayal of women in media and the vilification of women and its impact, prevalence, and manifestation in culture.

Limitations

In order to successfully conduct the investigation, the research question needed to be broadened to gather more information and facilitate a comprehensive answer. If the original research question had remained unchanged, it would have been difficult to complete the essay. Additionally, various external challenges had to be overcome to ensure the credibility of the research, including issues such as an unstable Internet connection, a restricted database, occasional slow computer performance, and loss of methodological resources.

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