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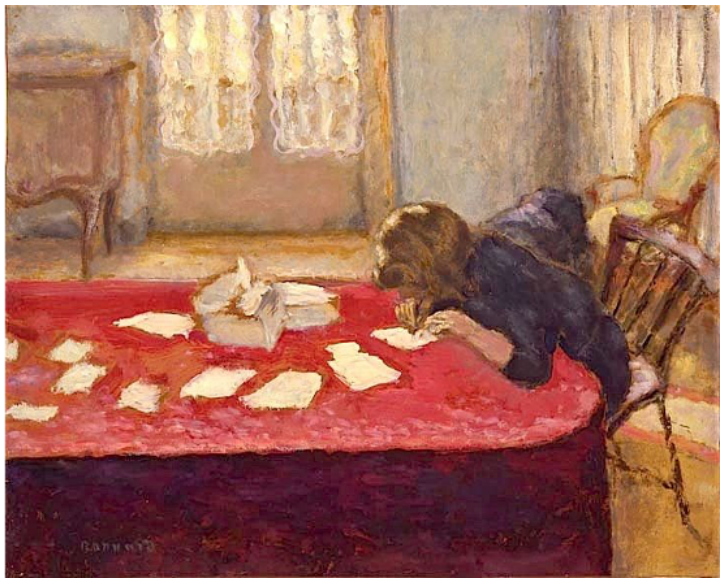

ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

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INTRODUCTION

The second volume of the EDUCOM Undergraduate Research Annual Yearbook is here and we are very pleased to present some of our students' best work for the academic year 2021-22.

Many thanks to our Dean, Richard Harty for continuing to support the publication of this volume. Our greatest thanks go to the contributors of this volume for their excellent work, as well as for their willingness to participate. Thank you Mariana Asensio de la Riva, Rukiat Ashawe, Isabella, E. Giorgianni, Ruth Hayden-Wason, Ana Maria Perca, Rosalie G. Prever, Christian Teruel Fernandez and Natasha M. Ward. This volume would not have been possible without you.

We hope that you will enjoy reading our students' work, as much as we have taken pleasure in bringing the whole volume together.

The Editor

Prof Maria Tamboukou

RESEARCH

DISSERTATIONS

THE POTENTIAL HARM OF A HETERONORMATIVE SEX EDUCATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF QUEERING THE CURRICULUM IN ENGLAND

Independent Research Project Qualitative Inquiry

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Acknowledgments

I would firstly like to thank my family and friends. I would not have had the courage to pursue this degree and move across the world without your love and support. The road here has been a strange one, but nothing worth doing is easy and I hope I have made you all proud.

To all the children I have been lucky enough to work with and make magic with over the last three years, you make me brave. Thank you for reminding me how much good there is in the world and for teaching me new things every day.

Lisa, the best supervisor in the world! Thank you for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself and for challenging me to do better, always.

To the queer community and my fellow lesbians- I see you. You are not alone. I am ever so grateful to have the space to be uniquely me and exist in a community so full of love, acceptance, and brilliance.

Abstract

This is a small-scale phenomenological and qualitative study that interrogated England's relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum and the legislative claim of LGBTQ+ inclusion by interviewing a small group of 20–23-year-old lesbians who went through some form of secondary school RSE in England. It also reviewed available literature on RSE and inclusion, then used thematic analysis to examine the participants' varying experiences, perceived knowledge gaps, feelings of being different, and if the women felt as though their educational experience was affected by being gay. This is to understand and bring light to the effect of heteronormative sex education through the viewpoint of lesbians who experienced it and contribute to the conversation of changing RSE to be more inclusive. The most important findings of this project include all participants experiencing a heteronormative RSE, feeling at a disadvantage when it came to sex and relationships compared to their heterosexual peers, using the internet and social media to learn about lesbian relationships and sex, and a fear of being different from their peers. These findings indicate a need for more studies and academic literature regarding the lesbian experience of English SRE, and the importance of further scrutinization of how teachers are rolling out RSE.

Key words: Relationships and sex education, LGBTQ+, Inclusion, Heteronormativity

Introduction

Relationship and sex education (RSE) is a large part of English education, with aspects being woven in from the time students start primary school until the time they exit the education system (Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers, 2019). The aim of RSE is to give students the tools and information to develop healthy relationships of all kinds, and when done effectively should teach students to understand sexuality and respect (Greenhill Primary School, 2022). The effect of a heteronormative and not inclusive RSE and the experiences of queer and gender nonconforming students is well established in current academic literature. Nevertheless, specific literature on how it effects lesbian students and data that encapsulates their experience is missing. It is important to fill this gap so there can be representation of the entire LGBTQ+ community, give lesbians a voice, and critique current RSE practice. Despite the plethora of research regarding relationships and sex education (Estes, 2017; Magee, Bigelow, DeHaan and Mustanski, 2011; Gowen and Winges-Yanez, 2013) most research to date is on some combination of the LGBTQ+ community, gay men, bisexuals, or transgender individuals. Lesbian exclusion in RSE research notwithstanding, there is an overall lack of comprehension and inclusion in the way teachers are delivering RSE, despite legislation requiring it. The research aims to identify and evaluate the effect that a heteronormative RSE has on lesbian students, and this chapter will provide an introduction by discussing the background, research problem, research aims, objectives and questions, the significance, and the limitations. Given the lack of research regarding the lesbian experience and interrogation of RSE's claim of inclusion, this study will attempt to provide a small group of lesbians the space to relate their stories and compare their experiences to the aims of England's RSE curriculum. It also hopes to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding how students experience RSE and the constant development of such a sensitive topic.

First, a review of academic texts such as peer reviewed articles and other resources will provide varying opinions and facts regarding English relationships and sex education and inclusion. This literature review will also provide some historical and current context, and due to the lack of literature, will proposition LGBTQ+ youth in place of lesbians. This will be followed by the methodology chapter, which will elaborate on the methods used and how they relate to my study. The importance of ethics and how ethical procedures were used this project will also be discussed. Lastly, findings of the research project will be compared alongside relevant literature to draw comparisons.

Research Questions

1) What are the lived experiences of the varying types of secondary school SRE for LGBTQ+ women? To clarify question one- This could include when the curriculum was first brought into their lives, how comprehensive it was, if there was sex and relationships education experienced at all, etc.

2) Do LGBTQ+ women believe the SRE they experienced in secondary school left a knowledge gap? If so, this includes lack of LGBTQ+ knowledge among themselves as well as any seen or experienced among heterosexual or cisgender peers and educational staff.

3) Do LGBTQ+ women believe their overall educational experience was affected by being gay / not identifying with what was taught in their SRE? This includes any feelings of prejudice, bullying, or discrimination.

Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to explore literature relevant to the three research questions of this research study- the lived lesbian experience in relation to England's sex and relationships education curriculum, if they felt a knowledge gap was left by their SRE, and if they believe their overall educational experience was affected by being gay or not identifying with what was taught. Despite there being a plethora of research on relationships and sex education, there is a significant gap in literature pertaining to solely the lesbian experience of England's sex and relationship education (henceforth referred to as SRE), and as such this literature review will instead discuss literature based on the whole LGBTQ+ youth experience. This complete absence of relevant literature demonstrates how staggering the lack of lesbian visibility is within SRE research, and how necessary it is for further research into the field of how lesbians experience England's SRE.

Historical Context

Queer and gender non-conforming individuals, and lesbians, have always existed within society, albeit not always legally, but pushing for inclusive education in schools is still a relatively emergent idea, and there are groups who lobby for both sides of the argument. To provide context of issues still faced today, the first equality act in England was not published until 2010, same sex marriage was only legalised in England in 2013, and as of 2022 conversion therapy is still legal. Lobbying for inclusive curriculum is important if queer youth are to be protected.

When looking at England's sex and relationships education curriculum it is important to adapt a children's rights-based approach, which the Consortium for Street Children (2021) explains as listening to children to ensure their best interests are respected. A school's curriculum is meant to exist for the child's benefit, not for any involved adults. UNICEF deconstructs the United Nations convention of the rights of the child and maintains that children are "neither the possessions of parents nor the state, nor are they mere people in the making; they have equal status as members of the human family" (Child rights and why they matter, 2022, p.1). Secondly, without specific attention being paid to the opinions of children, as expressed at home and in schools, in local communities and even in governments, their views often go unheard on the many important issues that affect them or will in the future. When using a children's rights lens, it is appropriate to learn and listen to the experiences of previous students, whether they be positive or negative, to inform further policy changes.

The Queer Experience

A non-inclusive sex and relationships education experience in childhood affects the way individuals experience adulthood, and despite living in a fairly progressive time, inclusive curricula are not widely instituted. One study conducted found that current sexual health education programs are from a heterosexual perspective and of 5,655 records retrieved, only 24 met the inclusion criteria (O'Farrell, Corcoran, and Davoren, 2021). Estes (2017) also discovered that their sample of queer students (self-identified as gay, lesbian, and bisexual) experienced a SRE that was heterosexually centred, revolved around sex being seen as dangerous, and was often lacking basic health and behaviour information. Kennedy and Covell (2009) claim that the current inadequate sex education is a violation of all children's rights, particularly those of sexual minority statue. Many participants in the study were sexually active but their knowledge of sexual health issues and of homosexuality was poor.

For students in England who identify as LGBTQ+, a nuanced contradiction exists between policy and practice. Abbott, Ellis and Abbott's (2016) study suggests that despite the substantial influence teachers' views and discourses have on what is taught, there is little attention paid to how teachers formulate SRE within their classroom. Current policy suggests that the education provided should be inclusive of sexual diversity, yet it simultaneously allows educators the scope to determine how it occurs. Another study discovered "that even when promoting their inclusivity, teachers' SRE provision upholds heteronormativity" (Abbott, Ellis, and Abbott, 2015, p. 1639). In doing this, they positioned LGBTQ+ student education outside of the classroom, potentially leaving the students without a sufficient sex education. Teachers play a crucial role in the delivery of SRE, and Campbell, Peter and Taylor (2021) find an abundant number of teachers wish to push a more inclusive curriculum, while others self-report reasons such as apathy for not being more inclusive.

Educators within some faith schools are forced to straddle a fine line, as religion is a protected characteristic just as sexuality and gender identity. The statutory guidance for England's RSE stipulates that all schools have the right to teach about faith perspectives. More specifically, "schools with a religious character may teach the distinctive faith perspective on relationships, and debate may take place about issues that are seen as contentious. The school may wish to integrate faith teachings about certain topics as well as how their religious institutions may support people in matters of relationships and sex" (Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers, 2019, p. 14), which very well may be condemning of issues such as sex or dating before marriage (no matter the sexual orientation), any education outside of abstinence, and LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming individuals. A group named *Catholic Parents Online* elaborates on ten reasons why public school sex education should be opposed. Highlights among those ten oppositional reasons being that "children need chastity education instead of sex education", that "forcing boys and girls to listen to, view and openly discuss the sexual functioning of the opposite sex's anatomy while in their presence is embarrassing and contributes to the breakdown of the modesty", that "the biology of sex takes ten minutes to teach so what exactly are teachers talking about in a long course", and that "comprehensive sex education has been shown to increase teenage pregnancies" (Ten Good Reasons to Oppose Public School Sex Education, 2012, p.1).

It is important to note that the claim of comprehensive sex education increasing teenage pregnancies is false, refuted by studies that conclude currently, "very little research has examined the impact of laws mandating sex education, and none have tested the effect across a range of countries" (Paton, Bullivant, and Soto, 2020, p. 802). If comprehensive heterosexual sex education is opposed by individuals of varying faiths and beliefs, it can be derived that those individuals would be equally, if not more, opposed to inclusive *and* comprehensive sex education.

Left at a Disadvantage

When examining the knowledge gap some LGBTQ+ individuals feel was left by their self- described heteronormative sex and relationships education, the main source used to close that gap appears to be the internet and online sources. Sexuality permeates adolescent life, no matter what an individual sexually identifies as, yet many schools choose to avoid addressing this and thus leave students no choice but to look to outside sources to learn what school will not teach them. While being positioned to learn about sex and relationships outside of the classroom is not ideal, DeHaan et al., (2012) suggest that many LGBTQ+ students actually perceive the internet as a positive resource to fill gaps in their knowledge of sexual health and sexuality outside of heteronormativity. New age media and social media has become part of many young people's daily routine, so using resources at their fingertips to answer questions they deem embarrassing or not covered by the curriculum may be less intimidating than asking the educator teaching them RSE. While the internet can spread misinformation and can potentially be detrimental in some situations, when used properly and safely it can be a bountiful resource. Barak and Fisher (2001) propose future sex education uses the outside source of the internet to better inform curriculum and pedagogy. If educators felt out of their depth or found their SRE curriculum insufficient for their LGBTQ+ students, they would be able to pull the special strengths of the internet to individualise their teaching and pedagogy and become better informed. Supportive curriculum was found to leave students feeling safer in relation to bullying (Snapp et al., 2015), and it has been concluded by Ashcraft (2008) that RSE is so much more than sex ed. Within the study it is proposed that teen sexuality is a vehicle for improving academic success and democratic education.

Bullying and Bias

The Public Sector Equality duty of the Equality Act of 2010 prohibits indirect discrimination, defining it as "applied generally, but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic" (Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies, and local authorities, 2010, p. 9). The phrasing of this stipulation, when relating it back to inclusive sex education, seems to tentatively construct an image that the Equality Act hopes to show up for LGBTQ+, gender non-conforming, and other disadvantaged students. However, despite the huge impact teachers can have on their students, two subsections later the Act also says that "no school, or individual teacher, is under a duty to support, promote or endorse marriage of same sex couples" (The Equality Act 2010 and Schools, 2014, p. 22). To not promote or endorse same sex marriage is one matter as those are overt actions, but the use of the word 'support' denotes a sly cancellation of the no indirect discrimination policy. If teachers were to not support certain students due to things they cannot change, other children may pick up on it and possibly act negatively towards the student.

While being bullied in school is not an issue exclusive to LGBTQ+ students, they do experience higher rates of (homophobic) bullying compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. A series of psychology studies concluded that "homophobia is more pronounced in those with unacknowledged attraction to the same sex and who grew up with authoritarian parents…This study the first to document the role that both parenting and sexual orientation play in the formation of intense and visceral fear of homosexuals, including self- reported homophobic attitudes, discriminatory bias, implicit hostility towards gays, and endorsement of anti-gay policies." (Weinstein et al., 2012, p. 1). The result of that study begs the question, for individuals who do not know same sex attraction is not necessarily good or bad but neutral, would an inclusive and comprehensive sex education help them with their identity discovery and affect bullying rates?

Fisher (2009) conducted another study that relates LGBTQ+ students' experiences with heterosexual prioritising SRE, with one participant being told "Well, at least you can't get pregnant" (Fisher, 2009, p. 69*)* and another questioning their abstinence until marriage sex education, saying, "Well, I can't get married so where does that leave me?" (Fisher, 2009, p. 70). Granted, in England same sex marriage is legal in 2022, but the meaning behind the sentiment still stands strong. Educators being ill versed in LGBTQ+ sex and relationship matters appears to be something all too apparent within many LGBTQ+ students' experiences. Experiencing homophobic sentiments and homophobia was reported by LGBTQ+ students to be very common with teacher intervention being inadequate. Prejudiced views and attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community from heterosexual and cisgender peers were related to prior experience with homophobia and a lack of knowledge (Estes, 2017). Some students also report that they viewed their sex and relationships education as exclusive, which in tying back to Kennedy's (2009) idea of insufficient sex education being a violation of children's' rights, means exclusive SRE experiences are a breach of rights.

The available literature seems to support a narrative of consistent non inclusive sex and relationships education in England. The quality and scale of inclusivity appears to be dependent on teachers' personal beliefs and biases, type of school, and outside resources and training available. A substantial amount of LGBTQ+ identifying students experienced a curriculum that put them at a disadvantage, left a knowledge gap among all students regardless of sexuality or gender identity, and report instances of bullying or feelings of exclusion. Most literature on the subject report that a heteronormative relationships and sex education affects LGBTQ+ students in a plethora of ways.

Methodology

This research project was framed with an interpretivist paradigm, as it was hoped to learn each participant's unique lived experience. This was the appropriate route as interpretivism 'refers to the approaches which emphasise the meaningful nature of people's character and participation in both social and cultural life…" (Chowdhury, 2014, p.433). Interpretivism advocates for understanding rather than explaining (Khan Eusafzai, 2014) when it comes to social matters. The approach in this project is qualitative, which offers a depth and richness that is unlikely to be achieved by using quantitative approaches (Skinner, Tagg and Holloway, 2000). Perception of reality is influenced by values, conscience, and experiences so when adapting a qualitative framework, there will be multiple truths.

Method of Data Collection

Informational sheets with accessible language and consent forms were sent out to interested participants, which can be found in the appendix, and it was only after these were reviewed and signed were interviews arranged. This step was crucial, as it ensured participants had a working knowledge of how their data would be anonymized, used, and kept secure. It also assured that all participants fully grasped they could withdraw themselves and the information they provided at any time.

To collect the data, semi-structured interviews were exclusively used. This decision was made to do participants justice in relating their truths and experiences. Additionally, because while there were underpinning questions, the topic of conversation was sensitive and participants feeling comfortable and at ease instead of feeling as though they were in a formal interview was important. Semi structured interviews allow space for verbal and non-verbal responses, such as "hunches, laugher and silence" (Kakilla, 2021, p.1) to reveal hidden information that may turn out to be helpful in the final data analysis of different themes (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Data collection methods such as questionaries and focus groups were thought to be too impersonal and would not provide the data / participant security necessary. While semi structured interviews were the best fit for this project, certain drawbacks remain. They are time consuming, labor intensive, and call for interviewer / researcher sophistication (Hatry and Newcomer, 2011).

Participants and Sampling

My participants were three 20–23-year-old white lesbians who had undergone some form of secondary school sex and relationships education curriculum in England. I initially set out with the age range of 18-23 but was unable to find any participants aged 18 or 19 who were interested. The participants were from various parts of England, and all attended state schools with either exclusively same sex or mixed sex peers.

All participants were found via purposive sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling. Taherdoost (2016, p. 23) explains purposive (or judgmental) sampling as 'a strategy in which particular settings persons or events are selected deliberately…'. This type of sampling was helpful because it allows the researcher to obtain information from niche demographics and I wanted to focus on the lesbian experience, of which there is little to no literature about. The criteria needed to be narrow and specific if the research was to do its participants justice in retelling their narratives. It was heeded that while purposive sampling has its advantages, it is prone to researcher bias, participants could manipulate the data, and it could make the findings not generalisable or intersectional.

Data Analysis

Thorne (2000) maintains that qualitative data analysis processes are not entirely distinguishable from the actual data, and the theoretical lens, strategies used to collect or construct data, and the understandings about what might count as relevant or important data in answering the research question are all analytic processes that influence the data. This project used thematic analysis, which Peterson (2017) defines as identifying common ideas or themes that emerge based on the data collected and that resonate with the research question/s posed on the study**.** This method of analysis was used because of the flexibility and accessibility (Nowell, et al., 2017) it offers to new researchers. However, this route falls short in some respects when compared to other qualitative analysis methods such as ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. It does not allow space to make claims about language use, and "its flexibility could potentially lead to inconsistency and lack of coherence when deriving themes" (Nowell, et al., 2017, p. 2). Even experienced interviewers are unlikely to conduct flawless interviews, as there will always be aspects that could have been executed differently and "more suitable questions to probe further" (Harvey-Jordan and Long, 2001, p. 2).

Problems Encountered

Unfortunately, no research project can be conducted flawlessly when humans and human nature is involved. One of the largest hurdles overcome during this project was one participant basically vanishing. She sent over signed consent forms, asked questions that demonstrated she had engaged with the informational sheet, expressed excitement, and we set up an interview. When time came for the interview, it was neglected with no explanation or contact. I proceeded to reach out a few times over the course of a few weeks but eventually considered the lack of contact to be a withdrawal and moved forward with the other participants. While going from four to three participants was not initially ideal, it ended up working well. Losing a participant afforded me the time to go more in depth with the remaining women without having to devote more time than was already planned for interviews and transcriptions.

At the start of the project, there was intention to have a gatekeeper to recruit participants through, as in much social research they are essential mediators for accessing study settings and participants (Andoh-Arthur, 2019). However, the organisation I planned to work with never responded to my email, so I took their silence as a no and shifted to acquiring participants through shared queer spaces. This lent me the opportunity to find individuals I believed to have a unique perspective and experience.

It was also a struggle to schedule interviews, as most the participants were either under or post graduate university students. Finding a time that worked for us both proved to be a time- consuming challenge and interviews were rescheduled several times. The interviews were conducted either in person or on Microsoft Teams, dependent on participant preference and access. Ideally all interviews would have been conducted in person, but a few participants struggled with Covid-19 anxiety as all restrictions in England had just been lifted. It was preferable to be in person as it was much easier to read body language, facial expressions, and develop rapport compared to on a screen (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2012), but all data collected was equally valuable and appreciated. Conducting interviews on a video call platform allowed for savings in time and travel costs, and for "a greater anonymity around sensitive topics" (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2012, pp. 1-2).

Ethics

The British Educational Research Association, or BERA, explain ethical decision making in research as "an actively deliberate, ongoing, and iterative process of assessing and reassessing the situation and issues as they arise" (BERA, 2018, p. 2). Ethics need to be woven in throughout a study, and ensuring a study remains ethical the whole way through is a continuous process. All social research "should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of individuals, groups, and communities" (AcSS, 2015, p. 4). In line with BERA, UEL's guidelines for research integrity and research ethics is "committed to preserving the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of research participants…" (Research Integrity and Research Ethics, 2014, p.1). In addition, it is required by UEL that formal ethical approval is granted before research begins.

To fulfil the requirement of gaining initial ethical approval from the university, I wrote and rewrote my ethics form several times after feedback from my supervisor to ensure the research questions were clear, answerable, and logical. Everything was written with participant wellbeing and safety as a priority, and the first step after gaining ethical approval was to ensure all participants were informed and knew what they were signing up for.

Disclaimer: within my findings and discussion chapter I have left in a small amount of profanity used by the participants. I decided that it would not be ethical to censor any participant, as it would be changing what they were saying. It was felt that the profanity participants used was deliberate and a way of making their point.

Informed Consent

The concept of informed consent maintains that all humans have the right to autonomy, which is to say that they have the right to determine what is in their own best interests (Coady, 2010). To ensure all my participants felt thoroughly informed, an informational sheet with accessible language (which has been attached to the appendix) was created and then sent out, which outlined the details of the project. At the start and end of each interview, I asked the participant if they had any questions about how their data would be used or about the project. I then reiterated that they had the right to pull their data out at any time, their identity would be protected, the only individual with access to the recorded meeting (which was to be deleted after transcription) would be me, and at no time would their right to anonymity be stripped.

Anonymity

Anonymity within research means that the research project, when finished, cannot link responses with identities of the participants (What is the Difference Between Anonymity and Confidentiality? n.d.) It is an important ethical principal because it keeps participants safe and free to answer questions fully and truthfully. This was vital to this specific project, as the topic is extremely sensitive and honest, robust answers were required.

When a research project poses a potential risk to interested parties SAGE's encyclopedia of survey research methods (2011) says anonymity may improve cooperation. While my participants verbalized ambivalence towards being identified, anonymity was vital within this project because accidentally naming a participant would out them and could put them in potential danger. Outing someone can be detrimental, as it forces them to reveal a deeply private part of themselves without their consent and under another person's terms (Law Fellow and Schwartz, 2022). To ensure anonymity, no schools were named, participants were not named, and at no time was a participants identity disclosed to anyone other than the researcher.

Participant and Researcher Wellbeing

"Being a good interviewer in a research context means to be aware of the responsibility for the participants' wellbeing as well as one's own. Good listening skills and emotional control are among the most crucial skills for a researcher to develop" (Adams, 2010, p.18). While listening to the participants recount their stories, I observed their body language on camera while listening. If there was a sense of being uncomfortable, the conversation was either steered to more neutral territory or was stopped completely so I could check in with the participant. All participants were provided with help lines and outside organisations who could assist with any mental or emotional struggles. An ethical principle at the forefront of any empirical research is to do no harm, and while this sentiment is aimed at participants, it applies to the researcher as well. If you as the researcher relate closely to the topic, it can be easy to get wrapped up and forget to check in with yourself. I personally fit word for word with my participant sample description. It was quite hard during the interviews to remain neutral, and at times I found myself quite triggered by experiences shared that I related to. To remedy this difficulty, before the interviews I informed each participant that I too was a lesbian, most likely had experiences akin to theirs, and may need to take a short break at some point during our interview to ground and reset myself.

Findings and discussion

Within this chapter there will be an interpretation of the data collected through semi structured interviews. The interviews gave these participants space to relate their truths, which were evaluated and held up against England's legislative claim of inclusion. This chapter will also compare each woman's story and connect back to existing literature. Current writings report findings about LGBTQ+ students as a whole, but the lesbian experience is different to other sexualities, and as such this chapter hopes to bring new narratives to life and showcase why more specific research into the lesbian experience is important.

Examining the curriculum

When asked if they remembered when the concept of relationship and sex education was first brought into their lives, participants collectively said primary school. The consensus seemed to be that towards the end of primary school they learned about the menstrual cycle, heterosexual sex, and the importance of getting tested for STD's after unprotected heterosexual sex, but it was from a very scientific and clinical viewpoint. One participant reported that her school brought people in from outside the school to give talks instead of the teachers.

"…they did make more of an effort, when we were a bit older, to have more open discussions and take away the embarrassment… but it was often people from outside organizations coming in and giving talks…." (Appendix, p. 45)

The data also shows a cohesive experience regarding secondary school relationships and sex education. All participants reported going through a curriculum that was not comprehensive and, as Abbott, Ellis and Abbott (2015) state, this occurs frequently within upheld heteronormative standards.

"There wasn't much room for discussion. I was just really confused… why am I not wanting to do this? I don't want to fuck boys. And there was no mention of like, gay-ness at all… I just wanted someone to say there are people that are lesbians, and that is fine. There was never a mention of the word lesbian, let alone fuckin' education about it." (Appendix, p. 48)

It is not a simple task to figure out sexual and gender identity, especially when the only thing students seem to take away from their sex education is that

"...sex was between man and a woman- not much outside of that." (Appendix, p. 45)

Teaching heteronormative sex as the only route or way a student should be having sex does not qualify as successful RSE. However, English RSE is designed to be about demonstrating different family models and relationships just as much as it is about sex education. Current legislation states that by the end of primary school, pupils should know that "other families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care." (Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers, 2019, p.20)

"...it was generally understood that you have a mum and you have a dad. And that's just sort of reiterated through all of primary school, like everything you do, making Mother's Day cards, making Father's Day cards... there was no reason to question that". (Appendix, p.46)

When being compared to participant experience, England's legislative aim of including different family models appears to not have been achieved. No participant reported learning about models that were outside of the nuclear family, a concept coined by Murdock (1949) which consists of a married heterosexual couple and their children. This means that not only same sex families, but reconstituted and single parent families are left out as well. It is important for all children to see themselves and their families represented and validated, yet no participant was able to recall an instance of validation.

"I used to search lesbian films and was crazily obsessed... I just wanted validation that that was normal." (Appendix, p. 48)

According to Cerezo and Bergfeld (2013), LGBTQ+ representation within schools facilitates the acquisition of skills to fight oppressive conditions as well as the development of critical consciousness. While that explanation of the importance of representation is quite broad and academic, among the women interviewed there was a simple desire to be seen.

"...if it was spoken about at school, probably would have realized sooner, and then would have had an easier journey... it took me quite a long time to be okay with the fact that I was gay." (Appendix, p. 44)

Wanting to see themselves reflected in the curriculum correlates with Barack (2020), who says that LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum creates social-emotional learning opportunities within a setting that is usually academically focused.

Perceived Knowledge Gap

The available literature suggests that many LGBTQ+ students may leave the school system feeling as though they have a knowledge gap (DeHaan, Kuper, Magee, et. al., 2012; Paton, Bullivant, and Soto, 2020), and my data support this claim. The heterosexual centric delivery leaves queer and gender nonconforming students to educate themselves. Linking back to other existing literature, O'Farrell, Corcoran and Davoren (2021) write that LGBTQ+ youth are turning to online sources of information due to the heterosexual perspective of sex education.

"…obviously, straight couples know, there's the pill, condom, things like that. But I had to Google, myself, 'what is safe sex for a lesbian couple'…" (Appendix, p. 44)

Online sources used to find representation mentioned by participants included platforms such as Google, Tumblr, and YouTube. However, no participant widened their knowledge exclusively through online platforms. Other sources mentioned were television, pornography, and one participant said they would speak to other lesbians and queer women they related to. There was no disclosure of how the participants felt towards these platforms.

No matter a student's ability to use outside sources as a learning tool, it can be alienating to sit through lessons that lends one route and one route only. Meyer's (2003) minority stress model proposes that sexual minorities are up against unique and hostile stressors. Avoiding teaching LGBTQ+ related content is likely to result in stress and ill mental health especially if queer identities are not recognized, provided with validation, and not positively affirmed (Glazzard and Stones, 2021). This theory fits well within this research project, as the desire for validation and affirmation in relation to sexuality and gender identity is not a severe heterosexual struggle. It is a uniquely queer struggle.

"I'm so preoccupied thinking, well, this is not normal. No one can know that I'm not normal… I'm not doing my work. I'm not present. I'm there. but not mentally… (Appendix, p. 49)

"You're scared to form relationships in case anyone ever finds out, in case you accidentally tell someone… I think it's quite hindering to not have the representation that you need." (Appendix, p. 49)

"I remember feeling, what about me? I don't feel like that... by this point, I'd already said to someone 'I am gay'... I was pretty clued up on my own feelings, but they were never validated by education. They were never validated by school. It was always 'this is what straight people do'... there's no scope for it to change." (Appendix, p. 48)

The fact that all participants disclosed they were never educated on LGBTQ+ matters is in direct opposition of current RSE legislation, which requires that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met, and when teaching students about LGBTQ+ concepts, content should be fully integrated into the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. In addition, the 2021 RSE and Health Education statutory guidance writes, "…we expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point…" (Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers, 2019, p. 15). Acknowledging that many students are left with a gap in their knowledge outside of heterosexual sex is important, as it heavily relates to the theory of Kennedy (2009), which maintains that insufficient safe sex education is a violation of human rights.

Affected Educational Experience

While the degree of affect was varied, there was a thread that ran through my data, with all participants agreeing their educational experience was to some extent affected by being gay and / or not identifying with what was taught.

"I went on a date with a girl in year 11… I got terrorized." (Appendix, p. 49)

"I think it was affected more than I realized at the time, because I look back and the way I heard it spoken about from a very young age was very negative." (Appendix, p. 46)

A theme of not wanting to be different or to stick out in school emerged quickly, and there was also a sense of fear. According to Henshaw (2017) this theme is common across students regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, etc. Notwithstanding, LGBTQ+ students are two to three times more likely to be bullied as non-LGBTQ+ peers, more likely to miss school, and nearly five times as likely to attempt suicide (Henshaw, 2017). No participants disclosed specific mental health struggles due to their experience growing up gay, but one felt her academic performance suffered because of her fear of being different.

"...it makes you not want to go to school... you're obviously not focusing on your education if people are calling you names or making you feel like you are different..." (Appendix, p. 49)

When reflecting on their experience and attempting to verbalize how they felt about it now versus when it happened, there was regret that being queer had such an immobilizing effect on their lives and a sadness that being a woman who was attracted to other women was considered strange.

"...you're focusing on something that shouldn't be focused on. It doesn't matter whether I fancy a girl or fancy a boy, whether I want boobs, whether I wish I had a penis, whether I am a girl, whether I'm a boy, whether I'm neither of that, like it shouldn't matter. And it shouldn't have my whole focus as a 12-year-old, but it did. I had my whole focus on it until being maybe 16-17. I think my education suffered quite a lot." (Appendix, p. 49)

"I went to an all-girls secondary school... you kind of stuck out if you weren't straight... everyone was very reluctant to step outside of that, because it would make you noticeably different" (Appendix, p. 46)

Fortunately, instances of bullying were not abundant within this group of women, with one stating her teachers stamped out any bullying quite quickly, and another retelling the only time she was 'bullied' was in primary school and was not aware until years later.

"Overall my school was pretty good at dealing with that and the kids in my year were pretty great... but if it was spoken about, probably would have realized sooner and would have had an easier journey..." (Appendix, p. 44)

"A girl had started a rumor that I was a lesbian. I've got friends now that I went to primary school with who were like, 'Oh, I heard that, and I was scared to be around you. I avoided you for weeks.' Because they didn't get it." (Appendix, p. 46)

The Power of Knowledge

After discussing the idea of knowledge gaps being left by a hetero-centric curriculum and the effect of being different, an unexpected theme began to take shape. The women all suggested, in one way or another, that they thought bullying rates would most likely decrease if students and staff were educated on LGBTQ+ matters.

"I believe a lot of bullying comes from a place of uneducated-ness. Because they don't understand it. It's different. So, they hate it." (Appendix, p. 49)

When discussing this hatred, fear, and even neutrality from uneducated peers, it was spoken about by the participants in an extremely nonchalant tone. They had accepted subtle and overt homophobia and even neutrality as a normal part of their life. Two participants did not elaborate, but one participant went so far as to say,

"…a lot of people are passive puppets in terms of LGBT inclusion… to me, as long as you're not confronting someone for living their truth, then that's fine. However…. everyone is so obviously accepting of straight people. So why can't we all be obviously accepting of gay people?" (Appendix, p. 49)

The participants maintained the sentiment that people fear what they do not know and did not express a view that being a lesbian in and of itself was disliked. Instead, they expressed thinking that homophobic reactions by peers were due to fearing the unknown.

When attempting to theorise and break down where phobias among children originate, Fritscher (2021) uses social cognitive theory. This theory proposes that fears learned by observing the reactions of others are similar to phobias learned through direct experience. This proposed way of development of fears and phobias suggests that homophobia can be learned by reactions of other people just as it could be directly taught. It then stands to reason that being educated would lead to a more positive reaction from teachers and educational staff, and in turn decrease students observing adverse reactions.

It was also thought among participants that being educated on LGBTQ+ matters could be powerful and have a large positive effect. This theme goes hand in hand with Barack's (2020) conclusion that improving LGBTQ representation in curriculum reduces stigma and bullying.

"... if we created that space, and the idea of being educated enough to say I am this or I am that or I accept this, and I accept that bullying would, dare I say, disappear in most cases..." (Appendix, p. 49)

The idea of creating a safe space is not new, especially within schools. Many teachers try to make the classroom a neutral space and somewhere every student feels safe in. However, if a child does not feel safe at school while outside of the classroom, there is little chance the teacher's efforts will succeed (Neely, 2019).

"And teachers as well, if they knew that LGBT kids were more at risk of being bullied and more at risk of having mental health issues... then they would be more aware to look out for it, which would help..." (Appendix, p. 49)

Identifying as LGBTQ+ does not inherently mean an individual will have mental health issues, but as one participant pointed out, they are at a higher risk of experiencing poor mental health. According to Stonewall and the Mental Health Foundation (Mental health statistics: LGBTIQ+ people, 2021), half of LGBTQIA+ people experienced depression, three in five had experienced anxiety, and one in eight experienced thoughts about taking their own life.

The data gathered from this research was abundant, comprehensive, and far more than could be sufficiently synthesized within the timeframe of the project. No participant held an experience that was exactly like another, but they related in all the ways that mattered. There was no report of experiencing an inclusive relationships and sex education. While there was a general fear of being different from heterosexual peers and a desire to be seen and validated as a lesbian, all participants hold hope that future generations of queer students will have a more positive experience.

Conclusion

As a lesbian woman who was failed by her country's relationships and sex education, my academic and personal interest in this project and its outcomes are intertwined. I have a strong interest in the journeys and feelings of queer individuals who have gone through a curriculum that excludes instead of teaches. While at times maintaining an attitude of neutrality was difficult, if I wanted to do the participants justice it was important to not position my experiences ahead of listening to theirs.

This project aimed to investigate the experiences of lesbians who have gone through some form of secondary school RSE. The results indicate all participants experienced a heteronormative curriculum and suffered adverse effects as a result. Further findings show a fear of being different from peers and experiencing academic environments that reinforced heteronormative ideals.

Often studies are conducted with a sample population of multiple sexual and gender identities to better represent the LGBTQ+ community. Despite the lack of lesbian specific literature, literature reviewed for this research provided a clear and cohesive narrative of exclusion and a lack of comprehensive education. This project then finds itself in a gap left by existing research, positioning the experience of lesbians as unique and potentially different to other members of the LGBTQ+ community.

In relation to limitations, this study has an extremely small scope. Only three white, British lesbians were interviewed and as such the results are not intersectional or generalizable. In addition, while lesbians who used the pronouns 'she / they' were invited to participate, the sample ultimately consisted of women who identify with the pronouns 'she / her'.

When the research design began to develop, it became clear that in order to accomplish what I really wanted, participants' narratives needed to be at the forefront. Using a semi-structured interview approach would give each participant the space to relay their narratives without restraint and allow for a more conversational method of data collection. Within this dissertation I have reiterated the importance of participant wellbeing and anonymity within my participants and have detailed how these ethical processes were accomplished and made a priority. The discussion of findings goes on to answer the research questions and elaborate on themes found among the data. Within these findings it was evident that the women felt to be pushed outside the classroom, left at a disadvantage compared to their heterosexual peers, and when reflecting thought their exclusive experience affected them more than they initially realised. Each of these women had a unique and incredible story to tell, and despite many trials, have grown into strong and intelligent individuals. They are all proudly out as lesbian, and there was a heartwarming sense of camaraderie as they trusted me to do their stories justice and use their bravery to improve education and raise awareness for struggling queer children.

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“JEWISH PEOPLE GET LOOKED AFTER DIFFERENTLY”: AN ANALYSIS OF ANTISEMITIC DISCOURSE PROPAGATED BY INFLUENTIAL INDIVIDUALS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

(MJL, 2017) (SeekPNG.com, n.d.)

Applied Research Project in Social Sciences

International Development with NGO management
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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to understand the role of influential individuals on social media in shaping public attitudes and opinions towards Jewish communities and broader society. Furthermore, how social media use can potentially increase social choices and development. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) in this research supports understanding how communication and ideologies operate through language across social media. Previous studies have established the connection between race representation and digital media, algorithmic amplification, and the complexities between legislation and the freedom of speech; (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.; Becker et al., n.d.; Campaign Against Antisemitism, n.d.). The evidence in this research suggests that influential individuals can facilitate a variety of views promoting dialogue and positive discourse. Nonetheless, when opinions are biased, misinformed, or inflammatory and endorsed by a celebrity, such discourse can reveal hidden agendas supporting language that can potentially create a vehicle for online hate to become amplified.

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Declaration

I declare that all the work included in this dissertation is of my own and conforms to presentation guidelines. Ethical considerations have been appropriately followed in guidance with The University of East London, and all ideas, arguments and data have been acknowledged.

Key Terms

Antisemitism, social media**,** algorithms, mediatization, intersectionality, Freedom of speech influential individuals.

Abbreviations

IHRA-International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance ADL- Anti-Defamation League
CAA-Campaign Against Antisemitism CDA- Critical Discourse Analysis CST-Community Security Trust
EPFL-Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne NetzDG-The Network Enforcement Law
OHCHR-Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

The ubiquitous practice of antisemitism has been present for centuries, manifesting itself across political and social institutions. Moreover, various reports have underlined the role of social media companies in enabling the spread of antisemitic hate speech and the amplification of algorithm-driven technology. Nevertheless, there is a growing need to research digital technology and the power of celebrities to influence opinion and the related technological challenges when promoting the othering of Jewish communities.

1.2 Aims for the Dissertation

This study aims to explore the volume of influential individuals using social media platforms to express views and opinions about Jewish populations. Moreover, to understand how antisemitism manifests in digital communication and the impacts on Jewish communities.

1.3 Objectives for the Dissertation

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will support understanding the motivations and language of influential individuals to promote biased content or disinformation in a social context, including how prominent opinions affect the development of wider society and Jewish minority populations.

- To collect and examine social media posts concerning antisemitic themes from individuals of influence representing various professions.

- To measure the implications of propaganda and bias on the social and economic development of institutions, Jewish communities, and broader society.

- To explore recommendations for policy and practice, including the freedom of speech and social media.

1.4 Rationale for the Research Project

Given the rise and freedoms within social media, the representation of Jewish communities on digital platforms who may experience marginalisation and discrimination has become an increasingly urgent and pressing issue. A recent survey by the Campaign Against Antisemitism evidenced in their research that 'For three years now, over one in four British Jews have considered leaving Britain due to antisemitism' (YouGov, 2020, quoted in CAA, 2020). According to Zannettou et al. (2020, p.786) 'We lack a clear, large-scale, quantitative measurement and understanding of the scope of online antisemitism and how it spreads between Web communities.' Furthermore, the extent to which social media is influencing hate speech and hate crime. Overt and covert antisemitism has existed for centuries, expressed as antisemitic imagery and caricatures to 'false depictions of Jewish ritual murder' (Antisemitism Policy Trust, 2020, p.4). However, as argued by (honestreporting.co.uk, 2021; Community Security Trust, 2021) technology has amplified the potential for its spread. From banal to extreme social media has become the vehicle for a new expression of antisemitism, while still echoing antediluvian tropes such as 'portraying the Jew as 'the other', as a nefarious controller of banks, Hollywood, and politics, or as the hidden hand behind society's problems' (Antisemitism Policy Trust, 2020, p.4).

The growth and influential character of social media have meant that researchers are attempting to evaluate how discriminatory discourse on social media can affect development, racial identity, and support xenophobia. According to existing literature, twenty-four-hour access to the internet has created a more significant audience (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.; De Smedt, 2021; Becker et al., n.d.), demonstrating that although media plays a critical role in increasing our access to information and events, it also has the power to potentially influence and support beliefs that can result in prejudices (Scott, 2014; Becker et al., 2021).

In 2000, United Nations member countries pledged their support for eight Millennium Development goals aiming to reach a variety of targets by 2015. The UN acknowledges that racial discrimination and social gaps are of significant relevance, however, Telles (2007, p.2) argues that 'The MDGs themselves are silent on the question of race.'

Critical Discourse analysis in this report will assist in examining language and the underlying meanings behind communication. According to Fairclough (2013, p.3), 'CDA has three basic properties: it is relational, it is dialectical, and it is transdisciplinary.' Furthermore, Fairclough states that CDA allows the primary focus to be on social relations rather than the individual. In this research, CDA will help deconstruct the social impacts of language used by influential individuals, exploring if celebrity social media activity has contributed to the rise in antisemitic online abuse.

The conceptual framework (CDA) will further help to identify that without research, antisemitism could potentially become embedded in the practice of social discourse on digital media and support the spread of ideologies across the internet, influencing global communities. Digital technology has become a salient feature of contemporary life and culture that are at times compared to legal institutions, using CDA will 'seek to reveal and challenge the practices of subordination facilitated and permitted by legal discourse and legal institutions' (Stefancic and Delgado, 2017, p.185).

During a study between January 2017-January 2018, The Anti-Defamation League analysts determined that 'roughly 4.2 million anti-Semitic tweets were posted and reposted on' Twitter' (Anti-Defamation League, 2018.). This data does not include shared posts, multiplying the final statics substantially. In response to this increase of online hate, several reports to support legislative reform have been achieved; most recently, the UK released The Online Harms White Paper (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019).

This dissertation will include chapter one; an introduction to the objectives of the dissertation, chapter two reviews the literature on historical background and othering of the Jewish people, existing reports and research, the impacts of influential people, legislating and policy reform and the Freedom of speech. Chapter 3 highlights the research adopted, sampling techniques and ethics, Chapter 4 presents the findings and themes including case studies, and the discourses that emerged from the found materials. Finally, Chapter 5 introduces discussion and recommendations, and finally, Chapter 6 covers the conclusions and reflections.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The proposed study is significant since few studies have examined the othering of Jewish communities on social media by influential individuals. Astor (2018, p.2) states that 'the public consciousness of the average person is assaulted daily with a stream of disinformation.' A recent report highlighted that the five leading social media platforms failed to act on 84% of the antisemitic content posted that displayed propaganda and anti -Jewish hatred (Wolfe-Robinson, 2021). Focused studies have produced research on social media and antisemitism, raising awareness of the consequences of inaccurate content: However, this study would be able to significantly contribute to the existing literature by exploring the impacts of influential individuals who promote antisemitic themes on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook (Lopez 2020 & Georgiou, 2013). Finally, there is only a limited number of research studies that observe the links between social media antisemitic discourse and freedom of speech. Therefore, using various research approaches**,** this study aims to fill this gap by exploring whether celebrities or individuals of influence, posts' volume, spread, and sway can potentially impact Jewish communities and broader society.

Chapter 2

A Review of the Literature on the dissemination of antisemitism and social media

A large body of literature on Antisemitic hate speech illustrates how it has reinvented itself over thousands of years, most recently evolving through the vehicle of social media.

According to research the dissemination of hate speech, conspiracy theories, authentic speech and the freedom of speech has become an increasingly critical socio-political issue. Chandra et al. (2021, p.148), argue 'the exponential rise of online social media has enabled the creation, distribution and consumption of information at an unprecedented rate.' To answer how far social media discourse, freedom of speech and marginalisation of Jewish minorities on digital platforms has affected Jewish communities in the United Kingdom, this review examined four central bodies of literature.

i) The literature on the historical background and othering of the Jewish people. (Voigtländer and Voth, 2012; Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, 2016; Meir Israelowitz, 2016).

ii) Reports and research that analyse antisemitism on social media and the use of algorithmic coding.

(Anti-Defamation League, n.d.; Becker et al., n.d.; De Smedt, 2021; Ozalp et al., 2020; Zannettou et al., 2020; Hübscher and Von Mering, 2022).

iii) Literature on the history and influence of celebrity, such as media stars, educators, and politicians.

(Campaign Against Antisemitism, n.d.; Kido Lopez 2020).

iv) Legislating and policy reform on social media, The Freedom of Speech and censorship.

(The Network Enforcement Law, 2017; Tworek, 2019; Gullo, 2021; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2013).

2.1 Historical background to antisemitic propaganda

There is a consensus of the continuous presence of anti-Jewish prejudice that has spanned continents and communities for centuries, crossing political, social, and religious civilisations. 'The first clear examples of anti-Jewish sentiment can be traced back to Alexandria in the 3rd century BC' (Israelowitz, 2016, p. 27). Since the first enforced diaspora in 580 BCE Jewish discrimination was experienced wherever communities settled; however, it is perhaps the events of the Holocaust that undoubtedly represent antisemitic discourse and, ultimately, the consequences of extreme nationalistic prejudice (Goldhagen, 2016). Building on these theories, Voigtländer and Voth (2012, p.1,339) analyse the historical events of antisemitism, suggesting that 'Germany's persecution of Jews is one of the defining events of the twentieth century.' Their findings are similar to that of Nicholls (1993, p.22), who argues that the pogroms of Eastern Europe and Nazi antisemitic ideology could not have been achieved if they had not formally had 'the universal heritage of antisemitism in Christian Europe' (Nicholls,1993, p. 22). Until the fifteenth-century anti-Jewish ideology meant using antisemitic imagery and the spread of verbal propaganda; nonetheless, as expressed by Andersons (2006), the invention of the printing press enabled the radical transformation of communication in society, therefore, elevating the dissemination of antisemitic rhetoric. In Germany, 'the invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1493 dramatically amplified the dissemination of disinformation and misinformation' (Posetti and Matthews, 2018, p.1).

Germany in the 1930's saw technology become an integral part of Nazi propaganda mass communication, with radio broadcasts, newspaper, imagery, and cinema all supporting the aims of Hitlers Nationalist Socialist German Workers Party. "Repeat a lie often enough, and it becomes the truth" were the infamous words attributed to Goebbels (Goebbels n.d, quoted in Stafford, 2016). Geleaser (2005) and Arendt (1994) consider the underlying economic issues that fuelled Nazi antisemitic propaganda. However, in contrast, Voigtländer and Voth (2012) challenge this perspective evidencing in their research the complex and varied political, religious, geographical, and social issues that have motivated antisemitism not just in Nazi Germany but over hundreds of years across multiple states. Furthermore, 'there is also convincing empirical evidence that events and institutional arrangements in the distant past influence norms and preferences today' (Voigtländer and Voth, 2012, p. 1339). Many scholars have recognised that whether fuelled by economics, political or religious intention if Goebbels had had access to digital media, the ability to shape and influence public consciousnesses could have resulted in an even greater catastrophe. The introduction of technology as a forum for mass communication has accelerated over the past century, since the early days of radio, to the internet and, more recently, social media. These advances have enabled the spread of antisemitism at an unprecedented rate; as Posetti and Matthews (2018, p.1) argue, digital media has 'dramatically multiplied the risks of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, and hoaxes.'

Building on the historical background to antisemitism the following section will review current studies and research that have raised awareness of the rise in antisemitic themes and misinformation expressed on digital platforms.

2.2 Antisemitism on social media research and reports, trending hashtags, fake accounts, and algorithmic coding

The literature on digital media and antisemitism research has revealed an escalation in disseminating antisemitic misinformation, and conspiracy theories across social media on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram (Hübscher and Von Mering, 2022; De Smedt, 2021; Becker et al., 2021). Several authors have considered the complex and intersectional relationship between; i) Social media representation, ii) The use of digital media to shape and frame political ideologies, iii) Social discourse and the increase of antisemitism (Hübscher and Von Mering, 2022; European Union, 2020; Gullo, 2021). In addition, case studies and in-depth content analysis have investigated our social environments and the mediatisation that increasingly influences our perceptions and decisions. In addition, authors such as Scott (2014) have argued that negative development consequences are connected to inaccurate imagery, and shock effect approaches in social media, suggesting the urgency for debate and further research into this issue. To realise the potential for social media to increase deleterious effects on individuals and society, we need first to highlight the issue of algorithmic amplification and the deliberate promoting of offensive posts to increase and quickly normalise online interaction. Social media has allowed pockets of communities to form using 'social media as a tool to distribute their message' (Hatzipangos, 2018). These discussion forums have led to examples of online hate translating into actual life harm.

Hatzipangos (2018), writing for the Washington Post, expressed how prosecutors described Dylann Roof as 'self-radicalised online before he murdered nine people at a black church in South Carolina in 2015' (Hatzipangos, 2018). On the 15th of March 2018, Christchurch experienced a mass shooting that left 50 people dead and dozens more injured. The now infamous webpage 8chan, allowed the sharing and promotion of hateful themes, images, and the live streaming of the attack. There were even suggestions by the gunman that his actions were an 'extension of his online activity' (Sommer, 2019) demonstrating the undeniable links between online hate and real-life harm. According to Hatzipangos (2018), 'the digital world has provided a safe space to explore extreme ideologies and intensify their hate without consequence.'

The United Kingdom experienced a surge of online antisemitic activity in the spring of 2021; evidence has attributed this to the outbreak of violence that began on May 10th in the ongoing Israel -Palestine crisis (Becker et al., 2021). As stated by Zannettou et al. (2020, p.786), 'we find the frequency of antisemitic content greatly increases (in some cases more than doubling) after major political events.' During this period social media posts were used to express and spread antisemitic themes visually and linguistically, moreover research has concluded that the dissemination of antisemitic hate speech even contributed to increased levels of hate crimes (Becker et al., n.d.; Campaign Against Antisemitism, n.d.; CST, n.d.). In the first half of 2021 the 'Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 1,308 antisemitic Jewish hate incidents nationwide; this is a 49% increase' (CST, n.d.). There is a consensus across present literature of the links between online conspiracy theories, political events and antisemitic themes (Becker et al., 2021; Zannettou et al., 2020).

Social media has become an integral part of our technically influenced lives; digital impute and the use of algorithms can now impact our thoughts and actions, manipulating perspectives 'particularly with unfounded, untruthful dialogue' (Sabah, 2021). According to O'Neil (2016), algorithmic bias is built into supposedly neutral mathematical models ultimately reinforcing 'discrimination and widening inequality' (Chalabi, 2017).

In October 2021, Frances Haugen, a former Facebook employee, publicly 'exposed how the tech giants put profit before the public good' (Milmo, 2021). Meta, Facebook's parent company, currently owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Researchers, journalists, and whistle-blowers repeatedly refer to the company as choosing growth and profit over safety, warning of the dangers that Facebook and Instagram's algorithms pose. In Switzerland, a recent study by (EPFL), Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, researched the scale of manipulation behind Twitter trends; their analysis included 19,000 fake trends that were promoted over 108,000 accounts. Their results included identifying disinformation campaigns and 'pushing hate speech against minorities or vulnerable populations' (Petersen, 2021). The exploration into the platform highlighted profound implications evidencing that 'the platform uses an algorithm to determine hashtag-driven topics that become popular at a given point in time' (Petersen, 2021). In addition, this research draws attention to Astroturfing 'a term used to describe a fake grassroots campaign that tries to influence public opinion' (Petersen, 2021). According to research (Petersen, 2021; Sabah, 2021), fake accounts can promote trending hashtags and untimely influence opinions.

In another comprehensive study related to Jewish antisemitism on Twitter and the role of community organisations in countering online hate, the CST 'estimate that there are up to 495,00 explicitly antisemitic tweets per year made viewable for UK users.' (Community Security Trust, 2021, p.4). The research evidenced the prolific antisemitic content across digital platforms. Similarly, Becker et al. (2021) confirm these results in their report, further drawing attention to the increases in online antisemitic hate. However, in contrast, Ozalp et al. (2020) suggest that while antisemitic content can potentially be offensive when challenged by more significant positive responses, such posts achieve greater longevity and spread further. Furthermore, Ozalp et al. (2020) argue that it is essential to consider the various 'patterns of divisive tensions within a society.'

The body of literature on reports and research into antisemitic hate crime is growing. This review has identified studies from the UK, the United States, Switzerland, and Germany, all are recent studies dating from 2019 to the current date. It is becoming apparent that with the effects and influences social media has on political choices, development, accountability, and freedoms, the relevance of research into this topic is becoming increasingly important.

As the popularity of technological communication grows, public relations, fandom, and promotion build across social media platforms. As a result, influential Individuals and powerful institutions are turning to Astroturfing and bots to make their messaging more palatable, increase influence and essentially manufacture support. Having investigated the literature on current reports and research into antisemitism on social media, we now turn to the figure of the "influencer" to observe those whose influence is in various domains of culture and transfers to social media due to the amount of following and attention they receive. Furthermore, the extent to which influential individuals can potentially increase the dissemination of harmful discourse on digital platforms.

2.3 Literature on the history and influence of celebrity, such as media stars, educators, and politicians.

Though much has been written on social media as a platform for expression and debate, little attention has been paid to the impact of influential people supporting, sharing, or posting antisemitic themes. For the first time in history influential individuals, such as celebrities, educators, academics, Members of Parliament, and representatives from NGOs, can have their opinions reach millions at the click of a button without even leaving their homes. Long before the advent of social media, falsification was used by those in power to persuade and influence. As discussed in Chapter 2:1 systems to communicate messaging and control the masses in the first world war were more intensively developed. In Germany, Hitler used all the states' resources and growing technology to spread the fascist ideology; the new media of radio and cinema enabling the transmission of Nazi party doctrine by 'hypnotic directness' (Brendon, 2017). The now infamous Leni Riefenstahl German actress and dancer is possibly best known for directing the Nazi propaganda film Triumph des Willens, "Triumph of the Will". Salkeld (1997) argues that her celebrity status contributed to the attention and acclaim that the film received. Riefenstahl was not charged with war crimes and denied knowing about the Holocaust, however, it is evident that in the 1930s Nazi propaganda machine understood the power of celebrity endorsement.

There is a consensus across the literature that influential people impact the volume and ideologies of populations (Yemini, 2017; Astor, 2018; De Smedt, 2021). Furthermore, current literature highlights the antisemitic themes promoted by individuals of influence on social media often failing to address the intersectionality of Jewish people, stereotyping them as one identity (Crenshaw, 2017). For example, the Campaign Against Antisemitism recorded on their website antisemitic online comments and shared posts from 2013 to 2019 by each political party in the UK, results for the labour party are 168 entries by 40 MPs and for the Greens, 53 antisemitic responses from 9 MPs (Campaign Against Antisemitism, n.d.).Furthermore, the charity lists over 183 pages of recorded incidents of antisemitism by the public, celebrities, university lecturers and MPs; much of the antisemitic abuse occurred online.

The rapid growth of a technological revolution has given birth to celebrity culture; as of January 2022, Facebook has claimed a global membership of an estimated 2.89 billion active users, Instagram has registered 28.81 million, Twitter 206 million, and TikTok has now reached 1 billion. According to Giles (2018, p.53) 'The media landscape has changed beyond all recognition in the last two decades.' Understanding the scope of influential individuals has raised the urgency for scholars to turn a 'critical gaze to the emergence of celebrity in digital media' (Giles, 2018, p.73). Various studies exist as to why the rapid evolution of social media has attracted those who seek fame and celebrity worship. To examine this concept further, Kahr (2020, p.265) analyses the 'Psychoanalytic theory of the roots of our obsession with fame.' In addition, Kahr (2020, p. 164) argues that understanding "celebrity worship Syndrome" is a significant concern for our modern world.

Various literature has explored the psychoanalytic exploration of fame, building theories on Winnicott and Freud (Kahr, 2020; Billig, 2006; Giles, 2018). Billig (1988) focuses on the psychoanalytic theory of language, collective madness and the 'ideological meaning of the denial of prejudice' (Billig, 1988, p. 91). In contrast Kahr (2020, p.274)), also drawing on the works of Freud and Winnicott, frames his ideas on the 'unconscious psychological forces' to further understand celebrity and fame in the twenty-first century. Celebrity power and discourse has evolved through digital media, blurring the lines between public and private, normalizing the microscope of intimacy. The power at times presents as an allure that becomes all-consuming, a potentially parasocial relationship. Conceptualized by Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016, p.4), the authenticity of exposure to celebrity engagement on social media often 'results in a perceived emotional attachment.' Digital media now facilitates the exploitation of such admiration on an unprecedented scale. Rojek (2001, p.123) explains that 'the growth of celebrity culture created new opportunities for celebrity endorsement.' However, the complication arises when the promotion of opinion becomes indistinguishable from the promotion of the product. To summarise, celebrity on social media enables validation, greater reach, and increased digital traffic. Furthermore, celebrity disinformation can potentially become a commodity when encouraged by algorithmic amplification and fuelled by the profit of popularity or income.

Current literature evidence how unedited and uncensored iconography and discourse can be shared with millions and reposted instantaneously (Campaign Against Antisemitism, n.d.; Becker et al., n.d.; Anti-Defamation League, n.d). However few studies have explored how, with seemingly no agenda, the discourse of individuals of influence are reflected in antisemitic hate speech. This review has drawn on existing literature to further understand the impacts of influential individuals who promote and endorse misinformation and bias. Furthermore, how unmonitored actions by celebrities can potentially result in polarisation, othering, antisemitism and hate crimes.

2.4 Legislating and policy reform on social media, censorship, and The Freedom of Speech

Having analysed the literature on the impacts of negative discourse from influential individuals on social media, the literature on existing legislation will now be considered. Mainstream media has been subjected to layers of legislation that has evolved over several years; however, social media is fundamentally different for several reasons, i) the speed at which social media has progressed ii) the infinite audience and reach iii) the lack of editorial oversight. While mainstream media is restricted from pushing extreme content by editorial standards and consensus, the business model of social media seeks out recipients, with algorithmic amplification actively encouraging the spread of polarising content. In addition, social media companies have long and detailed privacy settings that often fail to address ownership issues. However, although internet users may have consented to their posts' public use, they may not be fully aware that their shared content is not private. In addition, there is an ongoing debate over the legality of social media companies and whether they are considered publishers or platforms. Representing as a platform, companies such as Twitter can avoid legalities that publishers are legally obliged to conform to, such as the regulation over defamatory content. The question often arises over who has the claim to authorship and content regulation.

The power of celebrity endorsement of ideals means that influential individuals can, at times, lose authority or authorship over their voice and intention as their posts are retweeted and imagery used to promote the ideas of others. Given the influence of social media on society, several initiatives have been implemented to ameliorate the problem of trolling or hateful content, including Ofcom's report on Diversity and equal opportunities in television 2018, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, The Online Harms White Paper, Article 10 freedom of Expression report on Freedom of speech, the EU code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online and NetzDG. However, the idea that technology is progressing faster than law means that legislation constantly falls short of its commitments.

Germany is currently regarded as one of the country's leading the way in legislating social media companies. In response, to overwhelming challenges monitoring online conten policymakers designed the Network Enforcement Law (NetzDG) this policy reform took effect in Germany in October 2017. NetzDG was created using 22 statutes of existing policy from the German criminal code to hold social media companies responsible for their regulations rather than the state having to police the unrealistic task of the overwhelming volume of online hate (Tworek, 2019, p. 22). Commonly known as the "hate speech Law" Tworek (2019, p.1) asserts that NetzDG is potential 'the most ambitious attempt by Western states to hold social media platforms responsible for combating online speech deemed illegal under the domestic law.' (Tworek, 2019, p.1). According to Tworek, Germany has addressed the importance of urgent monitoring and legislation of social media companies; additionally, countries like France are now 'using NetzDG as a basis for proposed legislation' (Tworek, 2019, p.1).

One of the key critics of this approach is Gullo (2021); she raises alarms of over-regulation, claiming that tech companies have been forced to behave as 'internet police with the power to decide what is free speech and what is hate speech' (Gullo, 2021). Likewise, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (2013) has also raised concerns on overregulating, claiming that excessive regulation may jeopardise the principles of Freedom of expression and human rights. Nonetheless, they state that NetzDG does satisfy the demands of Article 19 (3) of ICCPR regarding online interactivity (Gullo, 2021; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2013). While studies have examined the various attempts by lawmakers to impose legislation on social media companies, there is a consensus that the effects of policy reform on the Freedom of speech appear to be raising concerns. (Gullo, 2021; Tworek, 2019). It is suggested that 'holding companies liable for the user speech they host has a chilling effect on freedom of expression' (Gullo, 2021).

Censorship in the UK has existed since the 18th century when theatre was the primary medium of expression. However, it was not until the 1960s when concerned with the freedom of speech, the Theatres Act 1968 abolished such censorship. Many scholars have argued that censorship remains in the form of the 9 pm watershed, Ofcom, and age restrictions applied to the film industry. The responsibility to monitor online discourse has raised the debate to consider, 'at what point do their safeguards become censorship?' (Phillips, 2022).

Chapter 2 has examined the existing literature on historical antisemitism, current policy, censorship and the role of influence and celebrity on social media. Chapter 3 will now consider how the absence of censorship can evolve into a licence to propagate hate speech or casual discriminatory discourse especially in the case of influential individuals who have already established large platforms and followings.

Chapter 3 Research

3.1 Research approach, and method of data collection

For this research, no primary research was conducted; secondary data was collected to support the research outcomes, helping to facilitate the analysis of opinions and how views are expressed through social media. The use of CDA was adopted to help establish 'the importance of interdisciplinary approaches when investigating such complex issues as racism and anti-Semitism as produced and reproduced in discourse' (Wodak, 2007).

Discourse analysis aims to 'answer many kinds of questions about language, about speakers and society and culture' (Johnstone, 2018, p.6). This analysis method is appropriate for this research as anonymous discourses often reveal subliminal bigotry and political agendas and expose negative discourse. According to Johnstone (2018), the study of linguists can help to understand how conventional ways of thinking can develop into ideologies that can lead to power and influence in society. Since the introduction of the internet, 'the relationship between text and ideology, and between the author and reader, appears to have changed.' (Bouvier and Machin, 2018). The nature and structure of social media promote conversation and communication in short paragraphs or sentences; this results in interactions that are often reactionary and emotive, meaning the use of vocabulary becomes over or under-considered, this is often referred to as microblogging. Those who actively use their platforms as public relations and marketing tools, such as influential individuals, often understand that shared opinions need to be compelling, concise, evoking emotions and incite readers with powerful words to action.

The approach to this research was supported by the method CDA as behaviour, arguments, narration, exposition, and the relationship to the social world are often exposed across social networks in ways that face-to-face confrontation or opinion would not be expressed. For example, the second discourse report, "Decoding Antisemitism," studied approximately 15,000 social media comments, mainly from Facebook profiles. The statistical analyses of interactions over social media supported how 'the ways in which issues are being discussed and understood, as well as providing a means of analysing much larger and more complete volumes of text' (Becker et al., 2021, p.34).

The connections between social change, control, power, and the dissemination of speech was clearly understood by fascist propaganda across Europe in the early part of the twentieth century, as discussed in 2.1. The legacies of Nazi discourse in promoting antisemitic rhetoric and justifying the Holocaust are documented in Fascist political history, 'albeit expressed and enacted in coded or euphemised in discursive or pragmatic practices and devises' (Wodak and Richardson, 2015, p.9). While Nazi propaganda and the use of words and imagery as tools remained confined to newspapers, speeches and posters, the introduction of communication across social media have fundamentally changed language and social interactions. As stated by Hübscher and Mering (2022, p.5), 'Through algorithm-driven technology which serves to generate profit, the dissemination of hate thus got a major upgrade' (Hübscher and Mering, 2022, p.5).

This study used secondary data collection to identify and collate possible antisemitic themes expressed by influential individuals on social media. Focusing on volume analysis helped identify keywords and hashtags within a fixed time frame. Relationship analysis considered the further interactions such as responses and shares. Furthermore, clustering observed the similar characteristics of users reacting to posts, the interpretation of language by groups and how algorithmic amplifications support agendas and opinions to support the spread of possible antisemitic themes. In addition, during the research, there was no engagement with any online discussions or debates; only existing and available posts were collected.

3.2 Sampling Techniques

The secondary data collected was from a range of social media platforms, including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Over 100 posts were collated and analysed over three months to specifically observe interactions and responses to the posts of influential individuals. Professions with domains of influence were identified and chosen to cover a range of demographic responses. These included Historians, Influencers, actors, sports professionals, Members of political parties, educators, celebrities, journalists, musicians, and representatives of NGOs. Different researchers may choose to investigate other domains of influence. In addition, all collected posts were reviewed, identifying common antisemitic themes. Finally, five case studies collated a corpus of posts that reflected the traffic and responses generated by individuals of influence. Specific case studies were identified by the attention already received by mainstream media, further supporting the claims of the potential for amplification, and spread of social media posts by influential individuals. Finally, observing a succession of posts across a given time frame, explicitly comparing previous and following posts, aimed to avoid bias and highlight whether these selected posts had generated significant or more substantial reactions.

Appendix A

Questions to support analysis included:

- Did the post-receive language that could be identified as antisemitic responses,
- Were the posts casually or notoriously antisemitic and did discursive practices support ideologies.
- How did the social media platform respond was the post removed, and how long did it take, were social media companies justified and what language was conveyed to explain such actions?
- The further analysis considered whether there was a rise in hate crime during this period.
- Did this post receive more traffic and attention than previous posts?
- How did these posts attempt to influence opinion?
- Could these posts be considered freedom of speech?

This report aimed to refine the methodology by looking beyond keywords and hashtags and, in addition, identify actual antisemitic themes.

Observations of recurring Gifs and emojis as dialogue, repeating hashtags such as #Holohoax #JewishPrivilidg were also considered. These need to be considered as responses to the posts and not always the intention of the comment/opinion. In addition, posts popularity and reach, such as numbers of likes, shares, trending, or viral content, were also analysed. Questions were chosen to guide the analysis, such as, were the posts casually or notoriously antisemitic to observe and highlight the language used. (Refer to, **Appendix A**).

3.3 Ethics

Approval was granted by The University of East London (UEL).

Found materials for the study were collected using ethical principles. Considering any tensions arising due to the anonymity and ownership of social media posts, 'anonymity and storage are presented as key ethical concerns' (British Sociological Association, 2017). There is a question about whether collecting and sharing individual posts from social media are public or private. This raises ethical concerns about consent. Social media companies have long and detailed privacy settings to address these issues, enabling personal and group accounts to control the viewing of their posts. Profiles may be protected from viewing or replaced with an alias, which is a considerable element for validating such research. It is possible to argue that although internet users may have consented to their posts' public use, they may not be fully aware that their shared content is not private. However, there is an acceptance that social media users are aware of the public availability of their posts. The British Sociological Association (2012) confirms that 'In social media research it is commonly understood that conversations are generally public and viewable by almost anyone.' Therefore, using data without full consent could be seen as both reasonable and accepted. While the issue of confidentiality, ownership and privacy is unclear, all efforts in the collection of posts were made to protect the identity of any individual data. While tweets, posts, and shares are primarily from individuals that are already well-known and have already been reproduced multiple times across the mainstream media. The decision was made to protect the anonymity of the owners of the posts mainly for two conflicting reasons but complementary facets of the same issue:

i) A way of furthering /unwittingly validating the antisemitic discourse.
ii) Not allowing the post to define the individual, especially if that individual has now distanced themselves from the original post. Consideration also needs to be made towards The Right to Be Forgotten (RTBF), legislation that has been in place in the EU and Argentina, clarifying the right to have the personnel or private data removed.

Therefore, for this research, even if it is possible that the reader, as well as the researcher, knows the name of the author of a social media post, this paper will only indicate the author by referring to their occupation/field of influence, e.g., "actress, producer and author".

Chapter 4

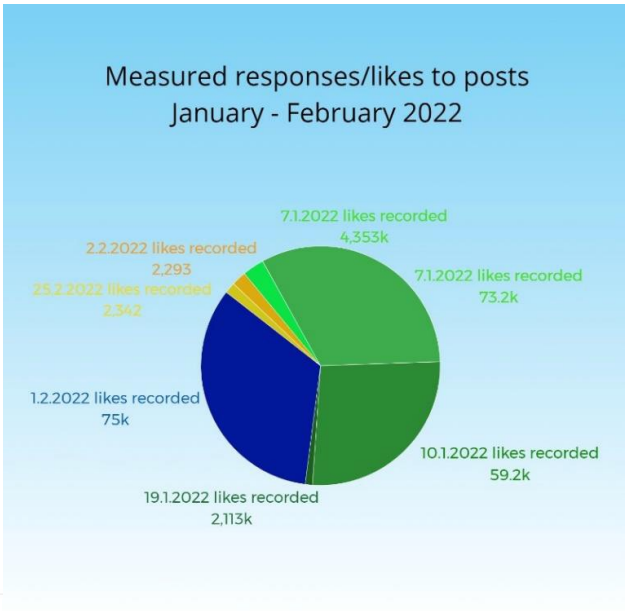
Findings and Discussions

4.1 Case Studies

i) Actress, comedian, author, television personality

The post in this case study was Holocaust-related. The author intended to support themes around understanding the Holocaust, defending opinions expressed on Jewish persecution claiming that the Holocaust has nothing to do with race. The original comment created immense media attention with an apology from the celebrity going viral across social media. Raising questions about social norms and discourse regarding racial identity. The post highlights the increased volume generated. However, mainstream media contributed to the promotion of this post.

The chart demonstrates the that the post related to antisemitism receives the highest traffic; however other posts also receive high responses. The responses from this post demonstrate how online communities use discourse on social media to share values and emotions. Many of the quote tweets and threads were statements rather than microblogs, with language challenging the endorsement of misinformation. Many of the responses expressed empathy and support. The responsive language was divided between outrage and exoneration.

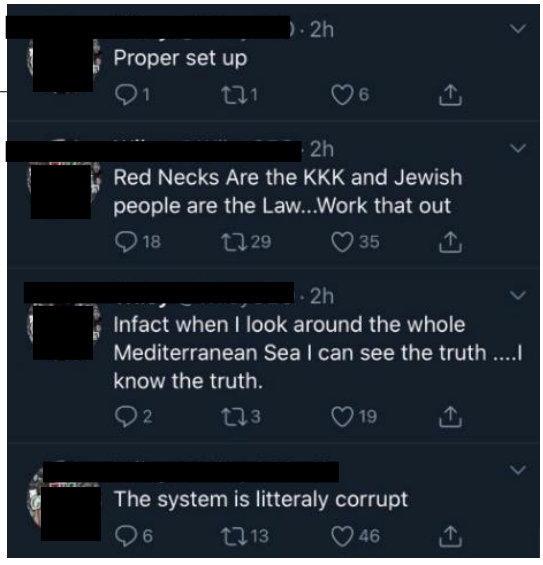


Data collection

Profession	Followers	Publish Date	Platform	Likes	Quote tweets	Shares	Origin of post	Hashtags
Name anonymised-Actress, comedian, author, television personality	1.6M	1.2.2022	Twitter	75k	29.4K	10.2K	America	#NazisinFlorida #Holocaust #EndJewHate #HolocaustEducation
Previous posts-1	1.6M	19.1.2022	Twitter	2,113	24	116	America	#RememberMe#health #MentalWellbeing #heal
Previous posts-1	1.6M	10.1.2022	Twitter	59.2K	67	2,695	America	#BettyWhite #bobsagent
Following post-2	1.6M	25.2.2022	Twitter	2,293	13	256	America	#endpoliticsnow #AffirmativeAction
Did this post create traffic?	Yes							
Was this post more popular than previous posts?	Yes							
Did the post intend to influence?	Yes							
Were the comments opinion or fact?	Opinion							
Could the comments be considered notoriously or casually antisemitic?	Casually							
Was the post removed?	No							
How long did this take?	N/A							
Did the post trend?	Yes							
Was there a rise in hate crime at this time?	Yes/unrelated							
Was there political unrest in Israel at this time?	No							
Could the post be considered as hate speech?	No							
Where there antisemitic responses?	Yes							

ii) Musician/rapper

The posts from June 2021, created media attention and responsive dialogue, prompting a 48 Twitter boycott by the public and other celebrities.



Data collection

Profession	Followers	Publish Date	Platform	Likes	Quote tweets	Shares	Origin of post	Hashtags
Name anonymised-Rapper/Musician	498.1K	July 24th 2020	Twitter	Various	Various	Various	United Kingdom	
Example 1- "Jews would do anything to ruin a black mans life but it wont work with me I am savage"	498.1K		July 24th 2020	Twitter	739	408	U/D	United Kingdom #KKK #BDS #Palestine #Jewish
Example 2- "Jewish people you make me sick and I will not budge hold this com"	498.1k		July 25th 2020	Twitter	186	226	405	United Kingdom
Example 3- "Jewish people you think you are too important I am sick of you"	498.1k		Juy 24th 2020	Twitter	465	466	U/D	United Kingdom #endpoliticsnow #AffirmativeAction
Response example	105.6k		July 25th 2020	Twitter	4.3K	2.1k	U/D	United kingdom #NoSafePlaceForJewHate
Did this post create traffic?	Yes							
Was this post more popular than previous posts?	U/D							
Did the post intend to influence?	Yes							
Were the comments opinion or fact?	Opinion							
Could the comments be considered notoriously or casually antisemitic?	Notoriously							
Was the post removed?	yes							
How long did this take?	Upto 12 hours							
Did the post trend?	Yes							
Was there a rise in hate crime at this time?	yes							
Was there political unrest in Israel at this time?	No							
Could the post be considered as hate speech?	yes							
Where there antisemitic responses?	Yes							

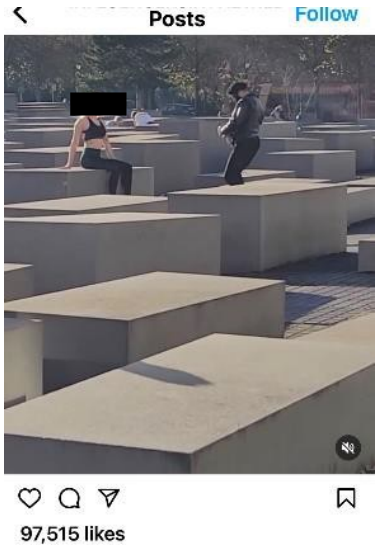
The musician in this case study posted a series of Tweets, using xenophobic and antisemitic language to scapegoat others for socio-political issues. Most of the tweets were expressed as short microblogging sentences, endorsing racist tropes such as corruption, truth, satanic comparisons, power, and dominance. This case study highlights the racial divisions expressed through social media discourse, demonstrating how conversations and opinions on race intersect sometimes presenting as one group holding the monopoly on suffering over another; this is also represented in case study i) with conversation revealing hate hierarchies.

iii) Social Media Influencer

In this case study, the influencer used their profile to raise awareness of antisemitism; the post received 97,511 responses. The platform has a following of 4.6 million.

Data collection

Profession	Followers	Publish Date	Platform	Likes	Comments	Origin of post	Hashtags
Name anonymised-Influencer							
Example 1- Influencer posted by Holocaust Memorial	472K	December 3rd 2018	Instagram	3.093	176	United Kingdom	#sightseeing #NeverAgain #Hatersgunnahate
Example 2- Re-posted by INFUENCERSINTHEWILD	4.6M	October 29th 2021	Instagram	97, 511	5,613	United Kingdom	#yolocaust #NeverForget #disrespectful
Did this post create traffic?	Yes						
Was this post more popular than previous posts?	Yes						
Did the post intend to influence?	Yes						
Were the comments opinion or fact?	Fact						
Could the comments be considered notoriously or casually antisemitic?	Notoriously						
Was the post removed?	No						
How long did this take?	N/A						
Did the post trend?	No						
Was there a rise in hate crime at this time?	Yes/unrelated						
Was there political unrest in Israel at this time?	No						
Could the post be considered as hate speech?	Yes						
Where there antisemitic responses?	Yes						



The Internet influencer was photographed at the Memorial to the murdered Jews in Berlin, Germany. INFLUENCERSINTHEWILD reposted the image; this platform is used to highlight the insensitivity of Influencers. Responses demonstrated intercultural communication and affiliated replies that challenged societal norms. In addition, emojis and repetitive language such as disrespectful, disgusting, and offensive were used endorsing the group's online community and social bonds.

iv) Model, Activist, Influencer

This case study, post one, directly responds to the raised activity over social media during the recent conflict in Israel, May 2021. Regarding The Freedom of Speech, the posts selected to highlight specific concerns see image ix) the celebrity removed the post. Post 2 references the promotion of biased, unsubstantiated opinion.

Data collection

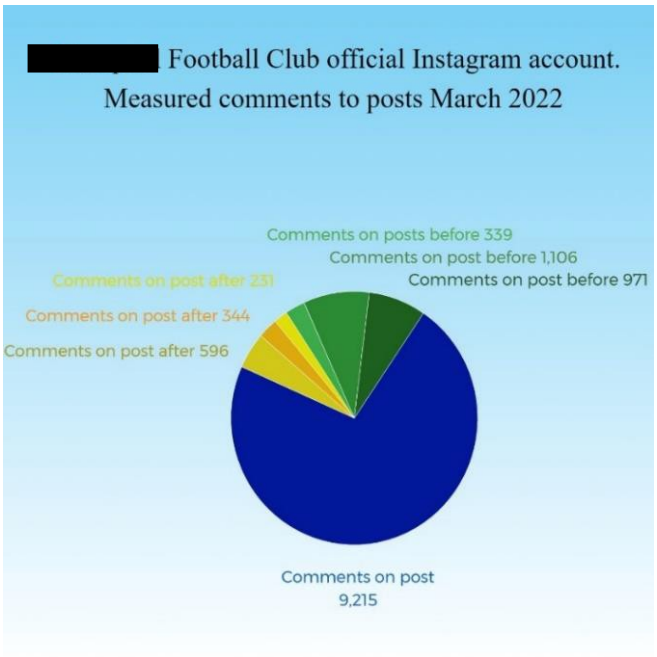
Profession	Followers	Publish Date	Platform	Likes	Quote tweets	Shares	Live views	Origin of post	Hashtags
Name anonymised-Influencer/model/Activist									
Posts-1-Model	1.4M	16.5.2021	Twitter	953	22.5K	1.813	56.7K	America	#FreePalestine #SaveSheihkjarrah
Posts-1-Activist	248K	Janurary 19th 2022	Twitter	15K	914	4,262	N/A	East Jerusalem	#Lier #Antisemite #PatheticLowLife #PallyWood
Previous post 1	248K	Janurary 19th 2022	Twitter	3,115	10	1,987	N/A	East Jerusalem	#FreePalestine #SaveSheihkjarrah
Previous post 2	248k	Janurary 18th 2022	Twitter	990	8	558	N/A	East Jerusalem	#AparthiedIsrael #IsraeliCrimes #IsraeliTerroism
Following post 1	248K	Janurary 19th 2022	Twitter	3,218	6	920	N/A	East Jerusalem	#Boycottisrael #AparthiedIdrael #TerroistIsrael
Did this post create traffic?	Yes								
Was this post more popular than previous posts?	Yes								
Did the post intend to influence?	Yes								
Were the comments opinion or fact?	Opinion								
Could the comments be considered notoriously or casually antisemitic?	Notoriously								
Was the post removed?	No								
How long did this take?	N/A								
Did the post trend?	No								
Was there a rise in hate crime at this time?	Yes								
Was there political unrest in Israel at this time?	Yes								
Could the post be considered as hate speech?	Yes								
Where there antisemitic responses?	Yes								

The language in these Tweets demonstrates how discourse is used as microblogging to express and shape opinion—chanting to endorse socio-political bonds and affiliations. The repetitive language uses short messaging to persuade and influence. There is an argument about whether this language represents an opinion as freedom of speech or elicits violence.

iv) Sports

Data collected from a Premier Football Club Instagram account highlights the extreme responses from a pro-Jewish post. Many of the posts were both notoriously and casually antisemitic, however, many were supportive and rejecting antisemitism. This post did not receive the most likes and i however created the most interactive discourse.

Profession-Sport	**Followers 36.4M**		**Platform**
Name- UK Football Club official Instagram account	**Comments**	**Platform**	**Likes**
Previous post 1	**971**	**Instagram**	**194,315**
Previous post 2	**339**	**Instagram**	**538,104**
Previous post 3	**1,106**	**Instagram**	**261,170**
Pro-Jewish post	**9,215**	**Instagram**	**218,083**
Following post 1	**596**	**Instagram**	**206,882**
Following post 2	**344**	**Instagram**	**1,098,967**
Following post 3	**231**	**Instagram**	**124,658**
Did this post create traffic?	Yes		
Was this post more popular than previous posts?	Yes		
Did the post intend to influence?	No		
Were the comments opinion or fact?	Both		
Could the comments be considered notoriously or casually antisemitic?	Both		
Was the post removed?	No		
How long did this take?	N/A		
Did the post trend?	No		
Was there a rise in hate crime at this time?	No		
Was there political unrest in Israel at this time?	No		
Could the post be considered as hate speech?	Yes		
Where there antisemitic responses?	Yes		



Section of transcript from a Premier Football Club Instagram Account.

Lol! Why all you hate Jews? Happy Holiday to all the Jews in the world! There is no God but Allah.
LET'S GET THAT TOP SPOT EPL 🙌🔥YEAR

✡️🤝✝️🤝☪️🤝✌️

[redacted]LIVEPOOL IS RED 🔴❤️

Thank you, princess (in Hebrew). Allah is always number one.
Free Palestine ya zoam.

Thank you 

It's so sad to see all these comments…….
Has nothing to do with Palestine.

This post intended to support intercultural relationships; however, it received mixed responses, from supportive to antisemitic. The football club itself becoming a victim of hate speech. The CDA could consider the othering prevalent within the online group; The verbal dominance expressed using repetitive emojis and recurring chanting, and the thread of replies demonstrating individuals validating each other's hate speech. The discourse of over 9,000 often splits into micro debates, with many choosing to disengage. The engagement of social media discourses also allowed individuals to comment and leave, resulting in the absence of responsibility, challenge, conversation, and critical thinking.

Posts taken from -A premier Football Club Official Instagram A

18.7 k Posts 36.4 M Followers 230 Following

[redacted] Antisemitism at its finest.
Never expected this from [redacted] fans.
I feel ashamed....😔
10h 41 likes Reply

[redacted] How much hatred there is here, anti-Semitism
11h 128 likes Reply

[redacted]
Posts Follow

184,092 likes
[redacted] Wishing a happy Purim to all of our followers that are celebrating!
View all 8,988 comments
mightyred_lfc Happy Purim to all celebrating 🎉

Tweet
sampling of the horrific, antisemitic comments that followed.
instagram.com/p/CbKLCvaINlm/...

David Baddiel and David Collier

View 2 replies

[redacted] Lol! why do you hate Jews? Happy holiday to all Jews in the world!
10h 29 likes Reply

[redacted] This comment section is so sad
10h 29 likes Reply
View 3 replies

[redacted]
11h 1 like Reply
View 1 reply

[redacted] لا اله الا الله
10h 19 likes Reply
View 2 replies

[redacted] Stop being recisit

[redacted] Keep the bigotry off this page man. We are all [redacted] fans. I echo [redacted]s message to the Jewish people. Have a great day
10h 3 likes Reply

A Selection of found materials from across platforms: all the posts below are from influential individuals and have been anonymised.

Fig. i) Journalists

Fig. ii) Historian

Fig. iii) Lecturer

Fig. iv) NGO

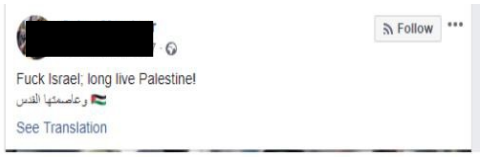


Fig. vi) Politician Labour

Fig. v) Politician Liberal Democrats

4.2 Discourses identified and themes that emerged within the case studies

Across the posts analysed, existing stereotypes and harmful tropes were often used at different degrees, from casually covert antisemitism to notoriously overt hate speech. See case studies, i) ii) iv) and v). Antisemitic imagery was also used see fig. v) and fig. vi).

Responses contained arguments from all sides, with those who wished to remain neutral to those responding with opposing opinions. Evidence suggested that responses/traffic increased when posts expressed antisemitic themes in almost all cases, see case studies i) - v). However, all the posts initiated a range of reactions that sometimes led to informative or positive replies, (refer to page 12), Ozalp et al. (2020) referring to evidence that suggests favourable posts achieve increased longevity and reach; nonetheless, in most cases, the thread initiated a significant volume of abusive and inflammatory feedback; furthermore, the use of hashtags often supported and promoted contentious and harmful opinions. In most cases celebrity following did increase the volume of the post; the combination of influence, media attention and algorithmic amplifications enabled posts to reach a far greater audience than other posts. In addition, research observations suggested that ideas and opinions became validated in the responses and shares. Moreover, the collective following facilitated the alliance of group affirming sub-cultures.

Othering was also prevalent in many of the responding comments, 'Othering is the construction and identification of the self or in-group' (Brons, 2015, p.69). The idea of othering spread from post-colonial studies and feminist theories; however, it 'is originally rooted in Hegel's dialectic of identification and destination' (Brons, 2015, p.69). The evidence of othering can be seen in the various examples of stereotyping posts, see fig. ii), v) and vi) with various hashtags identified, such as, # HHX6, #6MiLiers, #KKK, #Boycottisrael. These themes were also identified in the references to Jewish control, derogatory imagery, and discourse, comparing Jewish people's connections to finance and commerce, see case study ii) and fig. v). In addition, the comparing of Zionism to Nazism was extensive; the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance has identified these beliefs as contravening the IHRA working definition of antisemitism (IHRA, n.d.), see fig. i) and vi).

The found materials demonstrated that only those with high numbers of followers or media attention increased traffic and awareness to their posts. Moreover, the power of celebrity endorsement often created mainstream media attention, further amplifying both their profiles, popularity and, therefore, responses and potential personal value. As in the case studies, i) and ii) celebrities potentially contributed to the polarization of racial divisions by using socially sensitive language amongst like-minded groups to claim ownership over discrimination. Positive outcomes included overtly antisemitic content challenged by a backlash of positive comments; in many cases, the reach and popularity of the platform enabled the confrontation of offensive language. Therefore, it could be argued that posting by influential individuals increased awareness, discussion, and even comparative discourse. However, the posts also identified that promoting anti-Jewish themes and the absence of an intersectional awareness of Jewish populations motivated the development of subcultures and social sway, affecting political motives, discriminations, and othering.

The use of CDA highlighted the way social interactions were expressed online, often using a social or economic event to frame or justify an opinion. It is essential to acknowledge that not all antisemitic language is articulated with intentions of hostility and othering. However, many of the posts relied on prejudicial assumptions, demonstrating ‘how descriptions of racism can rely on tropes in argumentation’ (Weaver and Bradley, 2016). Also evidenced is the repeating of instantly recognised stereotypical imagery and language, perceptions of privilege and power allusions with explicit and implicit assumptions. Furthermore, expressions and imagery with humour were used to trivialise and reflect from the abusive nature of the language. Multiple posts also referred to the Holocaust with conspiratorial discourse used to justify, compare, or initiate responses that implied Jews were to blame for the Holocaust. While specific posts were presented as harmless opinions, the volume of responses often triggered an outpouring of antisemitic rhetoric that then became challenged, repeated, and exaggerated by further replies in smaller forums of micro dialogues. The group discourse sometimes confirmed social bonds, displayed by endorsements, the repeating of antisemitic themes, such as hashtags or gifs, and the volume of repetitive language and affiliations, often raising antisemitic responses.

As expressed by (Foucault, 1978), racism is not always recognisable as when at its highest; furthermore, robust discourse ‘is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself’ (Foucault 1978: 86). Without a forum for an equal exchange of ideas, opinions, and ideologies to be challenged and discussed, these exchanges often ended with antisemitic hashtags or short abusive statements, memes, or Gifs to verbally illustrate opinions.

Chapter 5

Discussions and recommendations

5.1 Limitations of the research

This study has highlighted how discourse on social media can present barriers to dialogue and language and imbalances in communicative responses. In addition, social interaction across digital platforms can involve and encourage cyberbullying and control. A more in-depth study could observe how emotions, opinions, and self-interest manifests in language and are used to persuade or discriminate.

Multiple attempts were made to work with a social media data analysis tool such as HateLab, Mozdeh and Pulsar Platform, as used in similar research (Anti-Defamation League, n.d; Becker et al., 2021; Campaign Against Antisemitism, n.d.). In addition, Twitter offers programmatic access to data through their API v2 (application programming interfaces); this information would have increased the depth of potential statistical analysis; however, research suggested that these services are ethically not available for an undergraduate dissertation.

Additional statistical data gained from an analytic tool, such as how many times a particular hashtag was used or comparisons between posts, could also have provided a more accurate and in-depth analysis, Furthermore, a selection of the posts used for this research had been removed from the platform; this made tracking responses and history difficult without data analysis programmes. However, all posts evidenced in this research were still available through internet searches and available via mainstream media reporting. Further limitations included tracking onward responses from shares; this could have provided additional analysis material and supported a much broader reach of data collection. Finally, more evidence collected using a broader celebrity base could have increased evidence; the random choices of celebrities presented many limitations. This additional material could have provided a more comprehensive study to apply CDA, generating more significant knowledge by looking at agendas and studying the connections between language, power, and influence.

5.2 Reflexivity

My research dissertation directly reflects my religious and cultural heritage combined with life experiences. I am a Jewish woman that has had personal experience of antisemitism both online and in many different spheres of social life; the current rise in antisemitism is a personally emotive subject. Therefore, the ability to draw on my own experiences was of value; however, every attempt was made to acknowledge my personal preconceptions and unconscious bias by applying critical thinking whenever possible. Finally, while the collection of material often presented harmful and distressing content, it also highlighted many positive and supportive reactions.

I hope the results of this research will contribute to the existing literature on antisemitism and help shed light on the ongoing challenges that minority communities face every day.

5.3 Recommendations for policy and procedure

As previously mentioned in section 2.4, governments are continuously adapting existing legislation to counter harmful discourse across social media, specifically with concerns to online hate that may insight actual harm, (see section 2.2). However, this research has identified that despite the current legislation, the dissemination of antisemitic themes across social media still exists, this is evidenced in case studies ii) and v). These examples highlight notoriously antisemitic themes posted by an influential individual or responses to influential accounts. In case study ii) notoriously antisemitic posts uploaded by a celebrity with a following of 498.1K were left on Twitter for twelve hours. The failure of Twitter to remove the posts resulted in a forty-eight-hour boycott of the platform, further amplifying the story. The amount of exposure cannot be measured without data analysis tools, however, because of the volume of following and celebrity the posts received significant attention in a relatively short period of time.

As social media is quickly becoming the chosen forum for political and social debate, researchers, social scientists, and politicians are beginning to understand the importance of increasing legislation (Community Security Trust, 2021; Anti-Defamation League, n.d; Becker et al., 2021). Further recommendations for legislation could include the implementation of disclaimers, outlining the status of posts as opinion rather than fact. In addition, to support policy reform, current legislation needs continuous assessment and revision to protect communities, individuals, and social impacts.

Finally, as this report has highlighted, the ubiquitous influence on social media demands further research to identify the consequences and quantity of hate speech across digital media platforms.

5.4 Education

While legislation continues to chase technological development, education could potentially be the key to some of the issues raised in this report. According to the Campaign Against Antisemitism (2021), '36% of British adults believe at least one antisemitic stereotype to be true, 1 in 5 people believe at least two stereotypes and 12% believe at least three stereotypes.' Therefore, recommendations from this research could include providing educational tools to support the development of critical thinking and the influences of algorithmic amplification, especially for minors and young adults.

The CST has recorded a steady yearly rise in antisemitic incidents reported by university students, with 1,375 incidents reported in 2016 and 1,813 in 2019. Furthermore, their reports include that 'in some instances, university staff, academics and student societies were themselves responsible for antisemitism on campus' (Community Security Trust, 2021). While there are considerations to an individual's right to the Freedom of Speech, this research has raised the question of whether educators and academic environments require legislation to support impartiality rather than the boycott and censorship of opinions?

5.5 Inoculation theory

Psychological therapies have previously used Inoculation therapy, the concept includes supporting the individual to develop receptivity to potentially harmful ideas. While social media algorithms promote extreme content, online monitoring exposure is increasingly challenging. Inoculation therapy could therefore propose a new theoretical lens for research, when analysing the influences of social media, especially with regards to minors. Furthermore, as researchers begin to understand the impacts of influential individuals across digital platforms, the implementation of such therapies could potentially offer further understanding and 'ultimately lead to resistance to influence.' (Compton, Jackson and Dimmock, 2016).

Chapter 6

Conclusions and reflections

This dissertation seeks to understand the potential negative impacts of digital media on Jewish communities and the extent of false representation amongst influential individuals; moreover, how the relatively new vehicle of social media has now magnified centuries of historical antisemitism. This research has highlighted how, when opinions represent antisemitic themes, outcomes for Jewish communities and broader society can negatively affect communities and individuals' development and social cohesion. Various attempts across the globe to challenge some of the online harms and influence are being regularly assessed and updated by policymakers. Nonetheless, given the ever-growing magnitude and reach of social media, the need to challenge social media as a vehicle to spread propaganda is of the utmost urgency.

The absence of censorship and the acceptance of the freedom of speech as an essential role in a healthy society, this ensures that when multiple opinions are allowed to be expressed, social media can be a positive tool to promote discussion and learning. Furthermore, the influence and sway of celebrity can facilitate discussion and dialogue Nonetheless, if biased, disinformation or inflammatory comments, are endorsed by celebrity, the negative use of discourse can result in harmful imagery, cyberbullying and othering. Legislation needs to be addressed concerning impartiality and misinformation. Most importantly, education is vital to safeguard against influencing distorted perceptions to prevent social media from becoming a gateway to hatred. The body of research and literature regarding antisemitism on social media is growing. However, the issue's complexity reveals that more investigation is needed to understand the links between historical overt and covert antisemitism and the spread of abusive content in an ever-expanding digital society. Social media represents a new and ever- expanding forum for discourse that, without policy reforms, can lead to the othering of minorities and restrictions on the Freedom of speech.

Finally, this research concludes that recognising the potential impact of those in positions of influence concerning the spread of misinformation is needed if we are to fulfil the development aims laid out by the United Nations 'to securing Freedom from fear and want for all without discrimination (OHCHR, 2012).

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HOUSING WELFARE POLICY AND COMMUNITY COHESION:A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF BECONTREE ESTATE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

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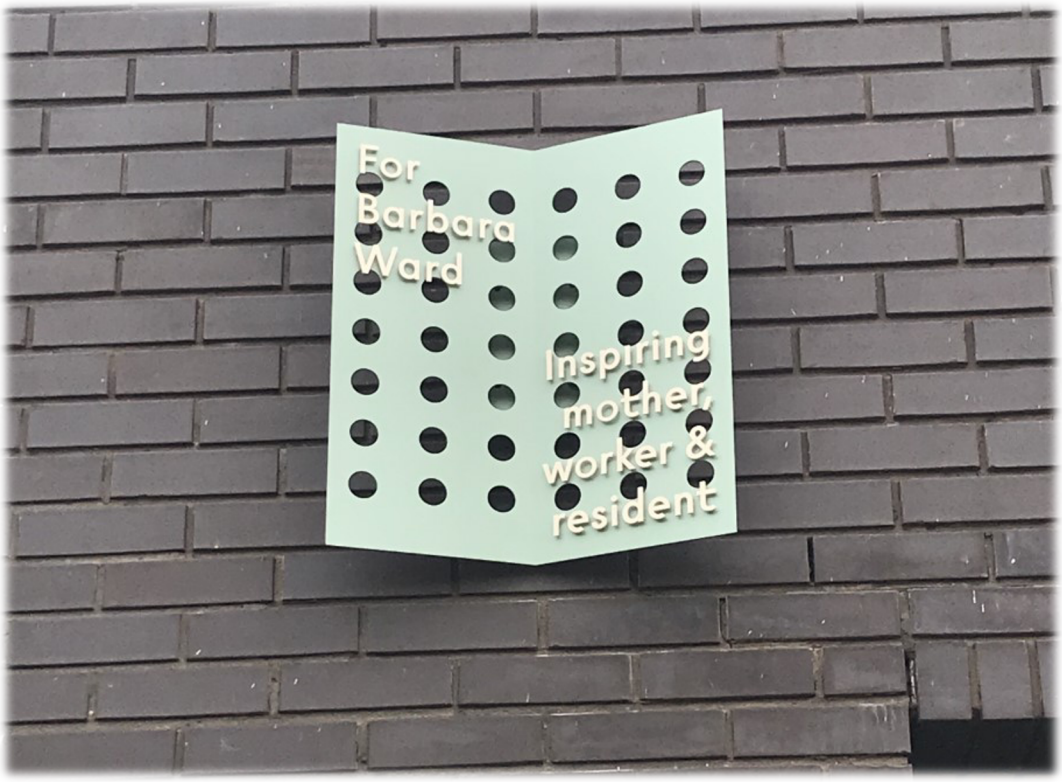
DEDICATION

It would not have been possible to write this undergraduate dissertation without the motivation of the abundant love I feel for my family and friends who grew up with me in Becontree. Although I cannot individually thank everyone, I must acknowledge the sense of close-knit community they have fostered by accepting our differences with affection and embrace.

But above all, I thank my mother, Barbara Ward, whose life-long loving sacrifice has made it possible for me to pursue higher education. I am continuously inspired by her to acknowledge and intervene in the social inequalities that have restricted her and others in their pursuit for happiness, which is why I am so proud to see her honoured with a celebratory plaque displayed at Valence House Museum. I nominated her as my Becontree Hero and she was chosen out of hundreds of applications that were made to commemorative plaque scheme, of which 17 were created to celebrate significant and influential residents throughout the history of the estate.



DECLARATION

No portion of this work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institutes of learning.

ABSTRACT

The Becontree Estate has experienced rapid changes in demographic and housing welfare policy since its construction 100 years ago. This research seeks to understand if and how different housing welfare policies have impacted the 'community cohesion' of tenants; whilst interrogating the concept itself. This query raised the following core research objectives; (i) to establish if between changes in council housing provision have led to low levels of community cohesion in the Becontree Estate; (ii) to examine the impact of commodifying council housing on community identities; (iii) to investigate the barriers preventing effective action to improve community cohesion. The key results reveal that contradictory emotions and arguments converged at critical conjunctures to position immigrants as the scapegoat of the problems created by the neoliberal regime. The study concludes by presenting the concept of community cohesion as a system of behavioural modification – and presents the opportunity for an effective counter-hegemony against macrostructural inequalities by the transference of responsibilization.

KEY TERMS

Community cohesion '…is closely linked to other concepts such as inclusion and exclusion, social capital and differentiation, community and neighbourhood' and is achieved through the process of developing equality, participation and belonging (Cantle, 2001, p.13).

Hegemony – is the cultural, social, economic, and ideological dominance exerted by the ruling class universally despite the outcomes only serving their own interests. The status order is legitimised through the manufacturing of consent and the production of ways of seeing and thinking that excludes alternative discourses or visions (Gramsci, 1999).

Conjuncture – '…is a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape…what drives [history] forward is usually a crisis, when the contradictions that are always at play in any historical moment are condensed…crises are moments of potential change, but the nature of their resolution is not given' (Hall and Massey, 2010, p. 70).

Neoliberalism – '…is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey, 2007, p. 11).

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The centenary of the construction of the Becontree Estate has marked a need for a critical reappraisal of the impact that UK housing welfare policies have had on welfare reliant communities in the past 100 years due to 'grossly inadequate' contextual understandings of the present-day intersecting crisis in housing and community (Hodkinson, Watt, and Mooney, 2013). Perspectives and policies on housing welfare in the UK are at the mercy of intersecting points of crisis, termed 'conjunctures' by Stuart Hall (*et al*., *1978*), where emerging ideologies can either secure a dominant hegemonic settlement or a counter-hegemony can materialise to offer a radical alternative to long-standing ideas (Inch and Shepherd, 2019). Three significant conjunctures in housing policy will be reviewed before reflecting on theoretical understandings on nationalism, welfare, multiculturalism, and cohesion.

David Lloyd George supported a 1919 subsidised housing programme that aimed to construct 500,000 affordable council-owned homes for the White working-class living in overpopulated and destitute slums in London's East End, many of whom fought in WWI (Pepper and Richmond, 2009). Such functionalist and redistributive processes were founded by a Fabian socialist perspective that aimed to counter the economic and social inequalities of the private market (Williams, 1989). As a result, council estates, such as the Becontree Estate in Essex, were built in alignment with Ebenezer Howard's utopian concept of Garden Cities that advocated for reduced rents in sanitary conditions, surrounded by beautiful gardens that could provide:

> better opportunities of social intercourse [that] may be enjoyed than are enjoyed in any crowded city (2014, p. 11).

The inter-war 'Homes for Heroes' projects was motivated by the belief that the institution of Britain's nationhood must be sustained with the provision of macrostructural intervention in order to provide survivors of the war and their families 'hope of a new world' via a radical and idealist imaginary where material conditions determine the cohesiveness of a community (Fisher cited in Lee, 2019).

In the following case of significant housing welfare policy, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher heavily endorsed a neoliberal ideology transformation and anti-collectivist welfare policy reversal in the Conservative government's 1980 Right to Buy (RTB) policy that provided the opportunity for council housing tenants to buy their homes with a 70% discount after a national economic crisis that left the state effectively bankrupt. Social problems were now explained by individual inadequacy, and therefore housing welfare expenditure was viewed as a barrier to social mobility whereas the insertion of the logic of the private market into state assistance programmes provided individualistic freedom and prosperity to those who are willing to work hard (Williams, 1989).

Prevailing issues of poverty and community were rebranded as a failure of socialist welfare policies and the provision of affordable homes were deemed paternalistic (Williams, 1989, p. 26). Those unable to afford buying their homes through RTB – including a significant number of immigrants and people of colour – were stigmatised as lazy and inherently deficient. Neoliberal housing welfare policies segregated the previously united working-class, producing a racialised cultural apparatus that polarised communities (Schram, 2017).

Subsequently, further amendments to housing welfare policy were implemented as a response to the global economic recession of 2007-2008; austerity measures were favoured as opposed to increasing income tax rates (Lund, 2018). As of 2018, 48,500 council homes have been lost to the RTB scheme in Becontree's borough of Barking, meanwhile 5,600 people remain on the housing register, but they did not have opportunity for heroism that granted their deprived counterpart with affordable housing in the 1920s (Barking and Dagenham Post, 2018). Whilst housing welfare stock has been depleted by RTB, austerity measures stagnated the construction of new council homes (Lund, 2018).

1.2 Rationale and significance

The Becontree Estate's demographic has been the victim to the changes in housing welfare policy 100 years, making it an ideal setting for evaluating how the changing nature of the ownership of housing for working-class communities can have on people's sense of identity, belonging and collective consciousness over time. I will also consider how rapid changes in demographic have been effected by changes in housing policy at the following periods: (i) the 1920's after the enactment of the 1919 Addison Act; (ii) the 1980's after the enactment of the 1980 Housing Act; (iii) the 2010's after the initiation of austerity measures. I aim to identify council discourse on social housing to identity 'points of crisis' using Stuart Hall's conjunctural analysis that have legitimised racial polarisation and the reduction of socialist ideologies (Clarke, 2014).

There are multiple justifications for this research: (i) A wide range of projects are taking place to mark the centenary of the Becontree Estate, these opportunities for community engagement increase the prospects for action research; (ii) a conjunctural analysis has not yet been applied to points of crisis in the Becontree Estate; (iii) low community cohesion in the Becontree Estate epitomizes a national crisis of council housing provision and this research will examine key social processes that can be utilized in future studies.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This project will aim to critically analyse how rapid changes in tenure impact on community cohesion in the Becontree Estate. An in-depth analysis of the Becontree Estate will aim to evaluate the role that welfare housing policies have had on people's sense of identity, ownership and belonging in an area that has experienced abrupt changes in demographic.

These aims raise the following core research objectives: (i) to establish if between changes in council housing provision have led to low levels of community cohesion in the Becontree Estate;
(ii) to examine the impact of commodifying council housing on community identities; (iii) to investigate the barriers preventing effective action to improve community cohesion

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent have housing welfare policies determined levels of 'community cohesion' in the Becontree Estate?

1.5 THEORETICAL APPROACH

The theoretical framework of this research will be critical race theory (CRT) which seeks to 'study and transform the relationship among race, racism, and power' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 2). CRT has been selected for this study due to its utility in uncovering how the construction of race has been used as an instrument for manipulating consent to macrostructural systems of inequality, namely the regime of neoliberalism; a perspective that is expanded on in chapter 3 (3.1).

1.6 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This dissertation employs a mixed retrospective and cohort longitudinal design due to its ability in contextualizing the current crisis in housing welfare and community cohesion (Clark, Foster, and Bryman, 2019). Community archival materials will be triangulated with primary data collected from life history interviews of longstanding residents of the Becontree Estate to reveal the community discourses present at specific conjunctures that have led to racial polarization and welfare chauvinism.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

1. The scope of this dissertation is small, with only four participants, and is limited to the residents of the Becontree Estate. It is also restricted by the researchers' schedule and resources associated with undertaking a full-time undergraduate degree.
2. The 2021 census data has yet to be published, and so this research must unfortunately rely on demographic information from the 2011 survey.
3. Covid-19 also prevented the possibility of face-to-face interviews, meaning that a rapport with interviewees could not be established by introducing myself through trusted community programmes.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 NATIONALISM

Antonio Gramsci (1999) questioned the operation of dominance and subordination in modern capitalist nations when anti-capitalist revolutions did not arise despite widespread economic and social disparities. The most deprived provided 'spontaneous' consent to a system that is responsible for their hardships, it is argued that this contradictory process occurs due to the power of cultural hegemony – where the ruling class manipulate and compel subordinate groups into embodying the cultural value system that maintains the ruling class's position at the top of the social and economic hierarchy (Jackson Lears, 1985). Cultural hegemony is exercised through 'historical blocs' – the material and discursive formations that align at strategic junctures to produce meaning, formed by the interplay between the economic base and the ideology producing superstructure (Levy and Egan, 2003). It has been suggested that cultural hegemony is effective in generating largely encompassing subscription to the dominant group's ambitions despite contradictory aims because it provides meaning where it's been lost for its less privileged sovereign members; collective values and mutual goals implies:

> a deep, horizontal comradeship [and a] profoundly self-sacrificing love (Anderson, 2006, p. 7, 141)

In this sense, evoking feelings of inclusion via cultural hegemonic processes ignites the cultural construction of nationalism which reifies individuals into a bordered homogenous identity.

Anderson (2006) argues that nations are imagined communities, where most members never meet yet they subscribe to a collective identity as a united family with a paternalistic authority, the nation-state, who preapproves the boundaries of their autonomy. Limited rights have been gained through these small avenues to allow counter-hegemonies to be established against a subordinate group's immediate oppressor – e.g., enlist to fight in WWI to prevent Germany from taking control of Europe – whilst the systems of inequality that perpetuate wars remain unchallenged (Jackson Lears, 1985). By utilising Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, WWI can be presented as a historical bloc that partly functioned to prevent international power disrupting the cultural hegemonic order whilst triggering spontaneous consent to national policies. A discourse of equal risk regardless of differing levels of privilege was presented to coalesce the divided people in the United Kingdom as:

> it builds on historical passions to serve modern interests as a state-enforced simplification of cohesion (Marx, 2002, p. 126).

The nation-state has replaced the cultural artefacts of colonial and monarchical power to establish a nationalism that condones universal application of identification, a common allegiance, for each cause to be fought for wholly and for every policy to be applied identically. Yet, there is disagreement in the literature about the source of national identities – whether it be the relations and means of production (Gramsci, 1999) or from national institutions (Marx, 2002).

2.2 WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Following the constitution of the nation and its ideological by-product nationalism, social surveys, such as the census, have been conducted to evaluate and categorise the population whose deprivation was presumed to be caused by a moral deficiency and/or failure to socially integrate into the liberal economy (Watt and Jacobs, 2000). Charles Booth (1902), a social researcher and reformist, conducted the first extensive social survey of London in the late 19th century to discern the working-class's experiences of poverty by examining types of occupation, religious beliefs, and municipal influence to create a colour coded map that categorised each street in inner London by level of financial hardship (Spicker, 1989). Booth observed extensive poverty concentrated in the overpopulated East End slums whose situations frequently arose without individual fault, leading to the acknowledgement of macrostructural causes that indicates a need for redistribution of public resources. Whilst systematic quantification of a population may highlight the requirement for a welfare society, Anderson (2006, p. 173) asserts that this process divides people and territories on the basis of a 'totalising classification' that provided the instrumental means for people to form binaries of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and unbelonging, deserving and undeserving – dualisms that have been applied to welfare access since its inception in the early 20th century.

A number of studies have examined the racializing effects of the welfare system as an ethnonationalist project whereby socially dispossessed White natives of areas with high rates of immigration – named 'transition zones' by Stuart Hall (2021, p. 45) – become protective of scarce welfare resources that have steadily declined since the 1980s. The non-White immigrant is viewed as the personification of social decay and economic issues that have plagued the working-class because the totalising classifications that have arisen from nationalism and census-style studies have conjured an identity politics where personal values that determine support for welfare policies are derived from socially constructed groupings. With the rise of neoliberalism and the subsequent decline of welfare resources; council housing stock; housing benefit; grants for home improvements, comes a phenomenon of 'responsibilization', a term utilised by political scientist Sanford Schram (2017), that entails a need for disciplining subordinate groups such as welfare claimants to be economically compliant and to lessen their burden on the tax paying society. It has been noted that the White population tend to presume that most welfare users are Black and/or immigrants despite contrary data, and due to exclusionary practices resulting from historical stigma and cultural hegemony, the White population offer consent to economic self-reliance in order to prevent housing security and social mobility for their non-White counterparts (Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016).

In this sense, racial attitudes influence support for reducing housing welfare, yet what is missing from the literature is the speculation of whether racial attitudes towards welfare have arisen as an organic process or as a cultural hegemonic tool for orchestrating spontaneous consent. Social researchers Keskinen, Norocel and Jørgensen (2016) argue that welfare chauvinism – the discourse and policies that call for welfare to be reserved for natives – originates from right-wing populism as a tactic for appealing to the mass of ordinary people who feel their concerns are being ignored by the elite and established political parties in times of economic and social crisis.

Inch and Shepherd (2019) supports this claim in their conjunctural analysis of planning processes and shifts in ideology as a potential outcome of the perceived housing crisis in the UK; a conjuncture that secured the dominant cultural hegemony through the 'war of position' – an ongoing plural struggle through which political motives and leadership can be established with the modification of ideology, that is achieved by:

> suturing together contradictory lines of argument and emotional investments…to secure consent (Inch and Shepherd, 2019, p. 1, 16).

The use of a conjunctural analysis in welfare studies is not widely adopted, yet it provides the possibility for action research due to its power in mobilising identities to act together at the right time and place to take up new positions. Seeing as logic is discursive, the meaning behind racial signifiers can find a new 'truth' that can disrupt social practices and invoke a diaspora, defined as:

> a kind of imagined community that would cut across configurations of cultural nationalism (Hall, 2021, p. 337).

Disagreement in the literature lies in the explanation of why individuals may consent to a reduction in welfare to exclude immigrants: whether it be accessibility envy when non-natives are eligible for rights that the British working-class had to sacrifice for in WWI (Keskinen, Norocel and Jørgensen, 2016); moral deservedness (Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016); or pragmatic competitiveness (Inch and Shepherd, 2019). Discovering the prominent and contradictory emotions that lead to welfare self-sabotage allows for new positions to be forged that may widen the counter-hegemony avenue. This research will seek to fill in what is missing from existing research, namely how immigrants' behaviour is modified by the ideology of neoliberalism within the welfare society.

2.3 THE MULTICULTURAL QUESTION

The notion of community cohesion was firmly established in the UK with the Home Office's Community Cohesion Report (2001) and endures as a genealogical product of the multiculturalism problem – when the state assertion to celebrate difference described in the 2000 Race Relations Act was revoked after the ethnically-motivated 2001 Oldham riots between unassimilated Asian migrants and the increasingly poor native White community (Worley, 2005). Stuart Hall (2021) addresses the effect of globalisation and migration on the urban environment of London that emerged in the 1970s, he argues that disrupting the homogenous population has reconfigured social divisions and conflicts and presents the 'multicultural question' – how an inclusive shared society can be achieved amidst a:

> double rhythm of involvement and exclusion, proximity and separation, fixity and fluidity (Hall, 2021, p. 389).

Hall claims that the link between the history of post-war racism and mass migration have not been extensively studied, and suggests that multiculturalism is directly informed by the 'post-colonial paradigm'; a social problematic where the institution of global domination can no longer provide a source for identity construction, instead being replaced by a:

> defensive mobilisation of difference, ethnic tension, racial conflict, and civil unrest (Hall, 2021, p. 398).

The colonial assimilation project, whereby Western protestant values where delivered to 'undeveloped' countries with the saint-like discourse of bestowing liberation and civility, was lost in the ambition of delivering a multicultural society. Yet, a new racism unfolded where troubles of heterogeneity were predominantly cultural, generating a state-led solution of community cohesion instead of a morally relativist investigation to uncover why certain antagonisms exist between different cultures with the goal of establishing an agonist society (Mouffe, 2016).

Kundnani (2002) presents the acceptance of multiculturalism between the 1970s-2000s in Britain as an end in itself, rather than a true expression of the abandonment of an assimilation project and greater freedoms to honour the migrant's home culture; revealing that there was little attempt to answer the multicultural question, but instead the proposition of the question by the state allowed for claims of macrostructural racism to be denied. The problems that arose from the alleged state acceptance of plural cultures revealed a 'parallel cultural bloc' that produced spontaneous consent to restore the colonial assimilation assignment, albeit this time within the nation's borders yet applied to all migrants and immigrants who enter the territory (Kundnani, 2002). Colonisation is no longer necessary to achieve the aim of universalising Western values because the process of globalisation delivers those allegedly in need of moral and cultural revision to the doors of the fallen British Empire instead. Academics producing literature on multiculturalism agree that the presence of a historical external threat as seen in the war on terror has transformed into an internal crisis of culture and race, meaning that:

> The Cantle report is the government's race manifesto. It provides a new formula, in which the separate cultural development that had been encouraged for decades is to be subsumed to the demands of 'community cohesion' (Kundnani, 2002, p. 70).

However, disagreement lies in where the origins of discourse on cultural difference lie: a manufactured classification to prevent working-class solidarity that could motivate a counter-hegemony against neoliberalism (Hall, 2021); an existing antagonistic division that has been intensified by mass migration (Huntington, 1993); or a genuine acceptance of celebrative plurality (Cantle, 2001).

2.4 COMMUNITY COHESION

Young and Willmott (1962) conducted a study of the tight knit 'organic' community who were displaced from the now demolished slums, they observed a loss of community in the Becontree Estate which they attributed to the poorly designed, excessively uniform architecture that did not encourage close and complex social networks because the dynamics of the area were centred around housing rather than people. Their ethnographic method revealed stark changes in community structure; long-held relations that once occurred naturally through chance meetings were now manufactured and newly established; interwoven communities were now isolated; importance of personal characteristics was trivial compared to material possessions. This suggests that despite the 'Homes for Heroes' ambition that would result in a cohesive community, low levels of cohesion were evident since the beginning of large council estates that displayed; social conflict; incompatible values; and poor levels of social interaction (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). This indicates that a return to the 1920s socialist community cohesion is a myth that has produced a discourse that something valuable was once obtained, has been misplaced and finding it once again is of great importance. The post-war contract of prosperity and equality had been broken once economic disparities widened, resulting in a fusion of 'ruptural unity' – where the contradiction of one broken promise ushered in the consent to break the other pledge, indiscriminative equality (Grayson and Little, 2017). Sacrificial entitlement to prosperity and equality once earned in WWI were transformed into the sacrifice of welfare in order to prevent the parity of non-White immigrants.

A significant study on the crisis of community cohesion revealed that communities branded with low cohesion did not necessarily experience polarisation and/or deviancy in their everyday lives, this shows there is a state and community misalignment of interpretation regarding the community concept as Forrest and Kearns (2001, p. 2127) notes:

> for most people the degree to which they believe or not in core values such as 'equality' or 'inequality' may be fairly unimportant. Cohesion is about getting by and getting on at the more mundane level of everyday life.

However, Worley's (2005) examination of the key characteristics of the community cohesion framework demonstrates that state fabrication of this purported community crisis reproduces racial boundaries whilst omitting which communities they are referring to. It is argued that community cohesion as a framework for informing policies and community discourse mimics the assimilation agenda endorsed prior to the multiculturalism programme. Worley (2005) implies that a deracialized cultural homogeneity campaign prevents the deconstruction of White identities that continue to reinforce the confines of totalising classifications and fortifies Eurocentric boundaries of belonging because the call for a collective British national allegiance denotes a devotion to Whiteness.

Whilst there is agreement in the literature that the attempt to produce consent to a common value system despite cultural discrepancies has been orchestrated to solve macrostructural problems from a localist onset, there is disagreement about whether the power of strong place attachments – a central goal of the community cohesion agenda – weakens loyalty to macro-hegemonic projects and policies such as neoliberalism (Forrest and Kearns, 2001) or if managing diversity by positioning neighbourhoods as a collective source of identity for its inhabitants will effectively discipline and govern said bodies into neoliberal obedience (Kalra and Kapoor, 2009). This research will seek to fill a gap identified in the literature of whether times of intersecting crisis encourages a national allegiance or if periods of peace and prosperity inspires a shared solidarity rooted in Whiteness; followed by interrogation of whether perceived conditions of peace or crisis are partially fabricated at historical blocs to forge a spontaneous consent to a neoliberal ideology.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This discussion has attempted to highlight the main trends in the literature relating to issues raised in this dissertation on housing welfare and community cohesion. The contrasting arguments on how identities are constructed in alignment with state institutions, discourse and policies have been identified, and the significance of cultural hegemony as a tool for upholding a neoliberal ideology has been considered. The use of a conjunctural analysis has been demonstrated as a key instrument in diagnosing the present issues that prevent genuine counter-hegemonies against systems that generate economic and social inequalities. A critical analysis of the community cohesion agenda reveals potential covert intentions that may perpetuate housing inequality as well as prevent agonistic plural communities from forming; revealing a need to disentangle the historical trajectory of state identified social issues with the aim of influencing the formation of an agonistic community that may inspire heterogenous mutual aid.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 OUTLINE

This chapter outlines the methodology for this research dissertation and provides justifications for the data collection and theoretical approaches utilised for data analysis that seeks to answer the research question stated in chapter 1 (1.4).

Preliminary secondary research was collected and analysed for the identified triad of housing and community conjunctures in the past 100 years which can be found in the literature review framed in chapter two and significant gaps were identified: (i) whether times of contradictory crisis or periods of peace inspires national solidarity, followed by an interrogation of the discourse on these conditions; (ii) how immigrants' behaviour is modified by the behavioural regime of housing welfare; (iii) if adopting a conjunctural analysis can widen the avenue of a counter-hegemony in the Becontree Estate. The researcher is motivated by the potential for a longitudinal design that utilises a conjunctural analysis to transpire into communitarian action research through the cyclical process – where research findings are assessed as a prelude to further studies (Denscombe, 2017). The research topic has emerged due to longstanding personal experiences of the effect of housing welfare policies and immigration on community identities in the Becontree Estate, an ahistorical tendency can be observed in community discourse of place attachments and sense of belonging.

Stuart Hall's (2021) method of diagnosing the present crisis by examining historical crises have provided inspiration for dismantling the cultural hegemony of a blameless state and the guilty immigrant without endlessly awaiting macrostructural intervention. CRT underpins this research because it is observed that the classifications of race and nationality of welfare claimants have primacy in the justifications for White working-class residents to give spontaneous consent to minimise public expenditure for housing help; this theoretical framework has been utilised with the goal of encouraging radical change as opposed to reformist adaption that may only challenge the immediate oppressor, which in this case, is believed to be the unassimilated immigrant (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

To meet the objectives detailed in 1.3, four qualitative semi-structured life history interviews were conducted with long-term tenants of the Becontree Estate who were asked to recount their experiences between 2008-2021, this data will be triangulated with archival materials to provide context and reduce bias.

3.2 SAMPLING STRATEGY

The participants for life-history interviews will be recruited using a snowball sampling method whereby an initial contact will be able to refer other relevant participants (Layder, 2013). Previously a mixed method of stratified and snowballing sampling was planned, however stratified sampling requires numerous participants within each stratum which is not possible due to word count restrictions. The snowball sampling strategy has been favoured as the participants' affiliation with a shared social network can divulge how the independent variable of nationality can have an exceptional impact on lived experience despite each participant operating within similar social networks.

Criteria has been organised by the nominal variable of nationality to ensure a full ethnic spectrum of the Becontree estate have been included, one participant has been selected from the following nationalities: White British; Asian; African; Eastern European. These values have been selected because they represent the largest ethnic and migrant populations (London Datastore, 2014). The sample size was originally 20 participants, but due to a limited word count the sample will include four respondents who have lived in the Becontree Estate for a minimum of 15 years to ensure the effectivity of the life-history qualitative method. The age range of the participants is 30-65 to prevent skewed recollection of events when recounting narratives from prior decades for over 65s and under 30s have not been included because of the limited time frame they have lived on the estate. The independent variable of nationality has been changed to reveal the dependant variables; (i) trends in changes of personal identification and sense of community; (ii) attitudes towards housing policies and changes in demographic; (iii) level of antagonism felt and experienced from people of different nationalities and/or races.

The snowball sampling process began with a White British community member who frequently engages with local community programmes hosted by Becontree Forever (2020), 'a programme of art, architecture and new infrastructure to mark 100 years of Becontree Estate in 2021.' The first sample subject was selected due to their knowledge of and participation with diverse activities and people in the local community, as well as their pursuit in community-building which drives this research in locating community issues for people who are seeking active solutions. If the sample subject was not pursuing community engagement, their personal insights of community problems may be due to their lack of interaction with people and activities in their community which could have led to a possible misidentification of causes in the current conjuncture. The White British subject referred the three remaining participants.

Interviews were conducted between January-February 2022 once the ethics form had been approved, fully explained, and signed. Following this, participants were invited to 1-1 online video-call interviews using Teams that lasted roughly 30 minutes. The study originally intended on asking six questions, but due to the lengthy nature of the life-history method where interviewees have the freedom to expand on their answers, the questions were limited in consideration of the word count. The interview began with a demographic survey to detail the interviewees'; race; age; time lived in the Becontree Estate; country of origin; self-identification of nationality; type of tenure; and occupation. Interviewees were then asked the following open-ended questions:

1. What problems do you feel have arisen due to the influx of immigration to this estate in the last 15 years?
2. How do you feel welfare housing policies have affected you throughout your time as a resident of this estate?
3. How did you identify when you first moved here, and how do you identify now?

Interview recordings were deleted once transcripts had been written, and all participants were sent copies of their transcript to provide the opportunity for redaction of private or sensitive information. Four transcripts were arranged into one document, and the data was then colour coded by the time period being discussed in each answer, as well as identifying themes in discourse to ensure effective application of both CA and DA – details of which are included below in section 3.4.

3.3 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Contextual secondary data provided in the literature review compiled themes, ideas, and arguments from a range of policies and academic sources on perspectives on nationalism and the intersection of council housing and community cohesion in racially diverse areas. Further secondary data will be presented from the historical archives provided by the local museum Valence House that includes personal narratives on the residents' recent relocation from the East End, as well as historical photographs of the newly built estate.

Primary qualitative data has been collected in the form of semi-structured life history interviews, of which ethical approval had to be obtained from the University of East London ethics board – a risk assessment outlined ethical considerations such as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements for both primary and secondary data as well as the potential emotional distress if and when the participant recounts experiences of racism (see appendix C and F). The researcher has attempted to mitigate these risks by revising legal requirements of data deletion and by providing a print-out of accessible mental health support services.

The life history method – a qualitative approach to elicit subjective narratives about participants' life experiences – will be combined with historical oral history recordings to reveal 'the inner experience of individuals, how they interpret, understand, and define the world around them' (Faraday and Plummer, 1979, p. 776). This method entails the participant recounting significant events in specified periods of time, whilst considering the role that community and housing changes have had in their lives (Davies *et al*., 2018). This method can be justified due to its ability to reveal a diagnosis of the participants' present situation by revealing an ancestry of their interpretations on the classifications of belonging and identity.

3.4 SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

Secondary data collection occurred in November 2021 in collaboration with Valence House Museum. The archives at Valence House Museum include historical personal and departmental records of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham dating back to 1558, this study will utilise the oral history recordings sourced from:

1. Oral history recordings of residents in the Becontree Estate held at the reading room of Valence House Museum, records are viewable from: http://valencehousecollections.co.uk/types/archive-guides/
2. Photos of the estate, archived and digitized by Valence House Museum

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Emerging themes that are identified from the primary and secondary data will be utilised in the endorsement of action research with the assistance of a conjunctural analysis (CA) and discourse analysis (DA). CA can be described as:

> a means of historical periodisation places special emphasis on crisis as a driving force of history (Grayson and Little, 2017, p. 63).

The process of a CA are as follows, of which steps 1-3 have already been fulfilled in chapter 1 and 2:

1. Identification of prominent issues and potential preconceptions
2. Delimitation of relevant time periods, location, and sample
3. Investigation of significant influences
4. Determining contradictory emotions and arguments that have secured the cultural hegemony
5. Diagnosis of the present situation and predictions of future crises outcomes
6. Evaluation of potential counter hegemonies

A CA analysis has been pursued in this case due to the influence of Stuart Hall's (et al., 1978) landmark book titled *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, a study of the moral crisis that emerged over a national mugging issue in the 1970s that was sensationalised in the media, once he discovered data that suggested mugging had actually decreased in the last decade, he revealed how discourse on societal troubles can act as a scapegoat for cultural hegemonic projects that bestow consent to the neoliberal regime whilst inequalities are perpetuated.

DA has also been selected due to its instrumentality in revealing the meaning behind seemingly neutral community and state language; meanings that will be triangulated with the CA method in order to provide a comprehensive explanation of the discourse processes that lead to a convergence of contradictions at conjunctures. Community and council discourse will be compared to discover how widespread dialogues are shaping perceptions of community and identity, and how this informs the boundaries of belonging and deservedness (Walliman, 2006). The steps to using a DA are flexible due to its universal ability to dissect any form of communications, academics also resist a definitive codifying of data in fear of simplifying the meaning of each communication (Clark, Foster, and Bryman, 2019). Considering this, the following aspects of communication will be considered for both primary and secondary data sources before triangulating with the CA findings:

Form	**What is analysed?**
Vocabulary	Ideological correlations
Grammar	Intended/unintended meaning
Structure	What the participant deems most important
Genre	Setting and role
Non-verbal communication	Attitudes and emotions
Conversational codes	Role formed in relation to researcher

Table 1 – Forms of communication analysed in D

3.6 LIMITATIONS

The study was firstly limited by the inability to conduct primary qualitative interviews at the specified historical periods which is what is typical for longitudinal case studies. Secondly, the life history interview method is limited to treating the autobiographies of interviewees as a sample of one and therefore the generalizability is narrow (Bryman, 2015, p. 489). Thirdly, data collected from life history interviews can be inaccurate due to the nature of recollecting events from the past. The researcher aims to mitigate these disadvantages by limiting the time frame of autobiographies to key moments of change and crisis whilst focusing questions on the subjects: housing, community networks and engagement, identities, and polarization.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a thorough presentation of findings that have been distinguished by three significant conjunctures that each contain demographic and social-economic characteristics of the triad of time periods that appear to suggest that housing welfare policies are not responsible for declining community cohesion in the estate. This is followed by an analysis of data that is arranged according to Stuart Hall's (2021) approach of understanding the past in order to diagnose the present. Societal context, living conditions and personal values such as identifications and ideas surrounding belonging and deservedness of the three timespans are compared to help identity the current problems preventing an agonistic and cohesive community. To conclude, this chapter revisits the research question and interrogates the concept of community cohesion.

4.2 1919-1935

4.2.1 SOCIAL CONTEXT

Thirty oral history recordings were reviewed, and they revealed that tenants during this time span were of a sole White British descent, living in nuclear family council-owned households, with occupations in manufacturing, transport, or communications, who had recently been relocated from the general area of Bethnal Green (Young, 1934). Residents reported similar levels of poverty, yet they experienced increased satisfaction by escaping overpopulated slums in the East End, an area that had the highest death rate in London (Pepper and Richmond, 2009). The male residents expressed relief that they survived the war: "Some of my mates didn't make it back, so I got ta' appreciate I'm here… I'm really thankful for that". However, nine tenants conveyed concern regarding lack of travel services and employment opportunities, stating in 1928: "It feels like a form of exile… back to my area takes hours, and the trains are useless, I can't get a job at Ford either." The landlord, London City Council (LCC), enforced a strict rent collection schedule and two missed payments warranted eviction – meaning a greater priority was placed on sustaining regular incomes, whereas in the East End it was common for the community to simply avoid rent collectors (Booth, 1902).

4.2.2 LIVING CONDITIONS

The rent collector's other duties were to ensure local conditions were kept to the LCC's standards: "my nan is scared of the rent collector; he reports people if they have messy gardens or if their curtains are tatty." The reputation of the estate's image was enforced with a tenants' handbook that included strict rules such as: do not hang laundry out of window; clean windows once a week; sweep the chimney annually; do not hang pictures without approval from the LCC.

A tenant reflects on moving to the estate several years prior: "moving from the East End to somewhere like Becontree was unbelievable… I was a five-year-old boy when I moved here, and I remember it as a sea of green." On the other hand, some residents appeared relieved to be segregated from the bustle of London: "I focus on my growing a lovely garden, last year I won 15 pounds for having the best garden in the estate!" The rent collector disciplined unwanted behaviours while rewarding model conduct with financial incentives and praise by placing awards on the lawns of the weekly winner (see appendix A). The semi-rural geography of the estate was a key motivation for relocating as it provided more space and diversified activities: "we go fruit picking in the countryside a few miles away. It feels like a haven compared to what we were used to."

4.2.3 IDENTIFICATION AND VALUES

52% of the thirty community members who recorded their stories took great pride in self-identifying as British and working-class, with 11 of them expressing pride in their families' involvement in the war. One resident comments: "this is what we sacrificed for" – an estate that was designed to foster community solidarity and to encourage engagement with tenants being placed in uniform two storey cottages with shared porches, with both a front and back garden, were often located in curvilinear road layouts (see appendix B). 87% of the narratives included glowing compliments about their houses, that included running water and separate bathrooms, features that they were not accustomed to: "I really felt like the king of the castle, it was everything we could have dreamed of, but right now it's quite empty because we don't have enough furniture."

4.3 1980-1990

4.3.1 SOCIAL CONTEXT

RTB reconfigured the equality that was established by every resident having the same landlord (LCC), rent amount and tenancy rules – conditions that were diversified with the discounted sale of council homes, with 3,000 people registering for the scheme within months (Valence House, 2019). Roughly 3,000 people remained on the council housing waiting list whilst stock was progressively declining, meanwhile Windrush, West African, Asian, and Eastern European immigrants began to call the Becontree Estate their home, with one of the newly arrived tenants commenting in 1986: “it doesn’t feel like home to me, I don’t feel welcome here.” Public expenditure for communal areas was also reduced, there were no more garden competitions and residents observed a decline in the well-kept reputation that the Becontree Estate had once embodied: “the budgets got cut and everything got a serious squeeze, the parks are neglected” Residents’ incomes began to drop as a reflection of the economic stagnation and deindustrialisation in the UK during the 1980s, leading to the rupture of class – White residents became either agents or victims of Thatcherism, whilst immigrants were often excluded from any form of categorisation when 17% interviewees responded with “neither” or “I don’t know” when asked which class their non-UK born neighbours belonged to.

4.3.2 LIVING CONDITIONS

Newly established homeowners had obtained the legal right to personalise their homes by adding decorative surface textures to their 50–60-year-old pebble dashed houses and porches to expand their living rooms (Royal Institute of British Architects, 2021). The have and have-nots of the Becontree Estate were now easily distinguishable, yet the White population were better equipped to obtain upward social mobility due to accumulating savings from decades of secure work in the UK’s post-war period of economic expansion, meanwhile immigrants joined the lengthy council housing waiting list. Social degradation was also observed in the local community: "people used to fight over who had the most beautiful garden, now they are just extra space for fly tipping or cars.” The decay in communal maintenance and affordable rent inaccessibility was blamed on demographic changes, with one participant of the oral history archives believing: “immigration has put a strain on housing and the community, everywhere is so untidy”

4.3.3 IDENTIFICATION AND VALUES

Once RTB users maintained a mortgage for 10 years, they were permitted to sell their homes without having to pay back the hefty discounts they received (National Archives, 2016). 49% of White former residents recall the need to sell their RTB homes to move further into Essex and the previous ethnically homogenous community was beginning to diversify – roughly 1 in 10 of the population were non-UK born in 1991 (Thane, 2010). Whilst 8% of the oral interview subjects expressed a desire to escape the area due to this diversification, 23% were firm in their place attachments: "It's all been built on now, the countryside… but I still feel this is where I belong, I just imagine it how it used to be. I always will." White residents continued to identify with the communitarian values of the estate and attempted to recreate the LCC's rules whose landlord responsibilities had been replaced by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in 1965. Archives of an interview with a Windrush resident who moved to the estate in 1967 revealed that he felt pressured by the voluntary surveillance of his White neighbours: "next door said I'd thrown trash by my gate and to clean it up, it were not me, but I cleaned it. They don't talk to me for other reasons."

4.4 LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEWS 2008-2021

4.4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF INTERVIEWEES

Race and pseudonym	Age	Time lived on the estate (years)	Country of origin	Self-identification of nationality	Type of tenure	Occupation
White - **MV**	47	47	UK	English	Council	Cleaner
Asian - **AT**	51	17	Bangladesh	British	Mortgage	Uber driver
Black African - **TB**	43	19	Nigeria	Nigerian	Private renting	Security
Eastern European - **LL**	36	15	Lithuania	Romani	Private renting	Construction

Table 2 – Demographic data of interviewees

4.4.2 WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU FEEL HAVE ARISEN DUE TO THE INFLUX OF IMMIGRATION TO THIS ESTATE IN THE LAST 15 YEARS?

The population of the Becontree Estate increased by 8% between 2001-2011 (ONS, 2011) and the ethnicity of the population in 2011 included 50.06% White British, 17.3% Asian, 17.7% Black African, 7.2% Eastern European and the remaining 7.7% identified as mixed race, Arab and unspecified ethnicities (LBBD, 2013). The estate has experienced unprecedented changes in demographic, with the White British steadily becoming a minority in the estate that was once racially uniform, when the White British respondent **MV** was asked about the problems that have arisen due to the influx of immigration, she stated:

> I feel like a minority, even when I go shopping all there is is Muslim supermarkets. Weren't this place supposed to be for us? All the chippy shops are closing down, they even stopped doing the Dagenham Show, the council don't care about us working-class like they used to. Now it's all about being woke, they open up happy clappy churches and mosques instead.

Following the economic crash in 2008, local council budgets were reduced, and it was decided to indefinitely cancel the historic celebration that costed roughly £100,000 per year (Valence House, 2019). Residents' incomes declined too, in 2011 the Becontree Estate's home borough of Barking and Dagenham was declared as one of London's most deprived boroughs, over a third of the children live in poverty and the life expectancy of the population is 4-5 years less than the London average (Trust for London, 2011). However, the three other respondents reported more positive opinions when asked the same question as MV, the Asian respondent **AT** believed that: "I love the diversity here, my neighbours are Nigerian, next door is a Romanian, then an English family. It's great!" The respondent who belongs to the Black African participant **TB** took roughly twenty seconds to consider my question before replying with: "Some people are stuck in their ways, the only problem I see is one of faith, I think that would fix a lot of the present issues." The Eastern European respondent **LL**: "I guess I'm part of the problem to them, it's been hard to feel accepted."

4.4.3 How do you feel welfare housing policies have affected you throughout your time as a resident of this estate?

Participants were subsequently asked how they feel housing welfare policies have affected them, **MV** sighed before answering with:

> I don't see that affecting me much, I think we're just being ethnically cleansed from Dagenham by Africans, it's changed tragically, they're all waiting for council houses. My neighbour Dave was living with his mum 2 years before she died, and then they kicked him out, saying that he needed to live there 5 years, then they gave it to an immigrant family.

AT proudly exclaimed that her family had bought a new build home 9 years ago and added the comment: "But before that we were renting privately, we tried to apply for council housing, but we were still about 200th in the list after 4 years." When posed with the same question, **TB** explained he wouldn't know because he has privately rented since moving here 19 years ago, instead he answered my third question unprompted regarding his personal identification: "I am British! But I'm also Nigerian. But my kids say they're neither." **LL** stated that he thinks council houses being sold is one of the reasons house prices had increased so much, before crossing his arms and saying: "that's why I'm stuck paying £1200 rent a month."

4.4.4 How did you identify when you first moved here, and how do you identify now?

MV appeared ecstatic to be asked this question, whilst shuffling forward towards the camera she said: "I'm British! I'm working-class! That was true when I was born here, and it will be true forever. I voted to leave the EU and I'm proud of that" – her vote reflects a trend in the area with 46, 130 (62.4%) people who voted in the 2016 Brexit referendum in Barking and Dagenham chose to leave the EU (BBC, 2016). **AT**, who was born in Bangladesh and moved here when her husband gained an employment opportunity, unexpectedly replied with: "I identify as a mother – one of my children is a pharmacist, one is a solicitor, one is an accountant, and one is only 16." **LL** did not understand my question and asked me to rephrase, I provided them the with identity categorisations of class, race or ethnicity, nationality, class, occupation, relationship role without specifying which they should give primacy, leading to the response of: "I used to say I'm from Europe when I first moved here, but I say I'm Lithuanian."

Analysis

4.5 Diagnosing the present

The use of a DA suggests that White British frustrations over the influx of immigration to the Becontree Estate largely pivot around capitalist functions, such as the inability to access culturally appropriate foods from shops that are now largely tailored to the slightly more affluent Asian community. The use of a CA reveals that the commodification of public resources has resulted in the embodiment of an exchange value system, as opposed to use value whereby goods are judged by their objective practicality – meaning that the disdain towards diverse products is caused by its symbolic representation of loss of White British culture, a discursive category that Stuart Hall (2021) calls 'the floating signifier'. The floating signifier of symbolic culture can no longer be transferred for other rights, as seen in the working-class's national efforts in WWI that earned them the relocation of the Becontree Estate. Secondary historical data supports this argument with the contrasting feelings of gratitude and abandonment to the suburbs, the 'exile' they experienced was not ideal, but it was theirs, and they earned it through their belonging and sacrifice to the nation. In this sense, it can be argued that periods of crisis provide ideal conditions for establishing the dominant cultural hegemony; as deprived communities forfeit their limited privileges, they are more likely to trust populist claims that their suffering would be acknowledged in due course. The commodification of council housing in the 1980s

reduced the stake that White British residents felt they had in their communities; the use of words "serious squeeze" reveals that tenants may have interpreted policies that reduced public spending as a form of discipline. Their inability to categorise immigrants into preformed 'totalising classifications' suggests that the 'systemic quantification' of their population was a bordered and exclusive process whereby calls for submission to systems of inequality should only be heard by "us", and "they" can simply be abolished instead (Anderson, 2006).

The shift in welfare housing policy in the 1980s had a significant impact on the material conditions of working-class residents, yet negative opinions were more commonly made about the "untidy" communal areas; indicating that identities had previously been constructed on the basis of LCC's tenancy rules. The issue of bordered belonging has been reinforced by the archetypal cultural conditions that were established in the estate's youth to create a prolonging discourse that something once obtained had been lost – the reputation of the community, rather than the economic policies that caused said degradation. Primary data interviews suggested a racialized bias about users of housing welfare, with assumptions that long waits on the housing register were due to the council prioritising non-UK born claimants, this argument is backed by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (2019, p. 4):

> For some residents, newcomers are perceived as directly responsible for their growing difficulty to access affordable housing and for their children's inability to set up home near where they live. There is a perception that resources – or services – are distributed to the advantage of specific people in our community.

None of the non-UK born interviewees rented from the council, **AT** seemed disappointed that they were unable to access affordable rent via earning the right to rent a council house, but those negative feelings were swiftly replaced with feelings of grandeur about their home-buying accomplishments. This suggests that the 'responsibilization' phenomena produced by the neoliberal ideology triggers people's reward systems in a manner that encourages buying assets during periods of inflation despite the risk of losing money at point of sale (Schram, 2017). Furthermore, opinions about home-buying pivoted between the 80s and 2010s, with some non-UK born residents expressing frustration with council-owned tenancies because their neighbours had more freedom to conduct surveillance and enforce shame on non-compliant individuals, yet the realities of the impact of a home-buying society were stated by **LL** who believed it had reconfigured of all forms of tenure to the disadvantage of newly established immigrants.

Previously homogeneous identifications of race in the first conjuncture acted as a trajectory for the future personal struggle of identification for those who did not fit within the rigid discursive classifications. It appears that collective community claims placed sole responsibilities of declining public spending and British business closures on immigrants who in fact had no influence on the global economic crisis; it could be argued this was a cultural hegemonic tactic designed to claim state innocence and to produce consent to further working-class self-sabotage, as seen when RTB was celebrated as an escape from ethnic heterogeneity. In the present-day, immigrants chose to identify by; their relationship role **(AT)**; by a duo of countries, **(TB)**; and by continent, **(LL)**; whilst the White British **(MV)** respondent was immediately sure of her race and nationality identification, this supports Worley's (2005) argument that the push for a deracialised society – framed under the concept of community cohesion – destabilises "other" identities that in turn strengthens the cultural borders of White Britishness.

At the first conjuncture (1919-1935) people operated with hope and appreciation, as there was little alternative to deviate from the ideology of the socialist redistributive plan that underpinned the 1919 Addison Act as doing so would mean their WWI sacrifice was meaningless. As a result, conditions of belonging transpired through post-colonial ethnonationalist processes; framing the Keynesian period as a period of war crisis whereby the dominant cultural hegemony was readily prepped for manufacturing consent to blaming other subordinate groups for the benefit of those who have experienced the prosperous end of economic disparities in the following decades. The dominant cultural hegemony was firmly secured in the successive conjuncture (1980-1990) where negative community discourse about immigration did not match the government's advocation to celebrate difference, and non-UK residents of the Becontree Estate experienced alienation that prevented the development of voluntary diasporas. The life-history interviews exposed the endurance of racialised categories of belonging, with several respondents altering their identifications based on what would earn them the right to belong to the imagined community of the nation; in this sense, the drive for a cohesive community acts as an idealised prophecy that shapes the future identification of people who pose a threat to the dominant cultural hegemony.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE HOUSING WELFARE POLICIES DETERMINED LEVELS OF 'COMMUNITY COHESION' IN THE BECONTREE ESTATE?

The findings of this dissertation do not indicate that housing welfare policies have determined community cohesion in the Becontree Estate. Rather, they demonstrate that lack of engagement and mutual aid are features of the neoliberal ideology that has produced the concept itself in order to perpetuate the social inequalities that maintains content to the dominant cultural hegemony. The first objective of this dissertation were to (i) establish if between changes in council housing provision have led to low levels of community cohesion in the Becontree Estate; though the study reveals a steadily declining community engagement, mutual aid and common values, the majority of cases revealed a lack of community resources and collective pride were the cause and this represents a discord from government policy that affirms that a lack of allegiance to the imagined community of the nation is the primary cause. The second objective of this dissertation was to (ii) examine the impact of commodifying council housing on community identities, the study revealed that the discursive cultural symbolism of international shops and products perpetuated polarisation due to the ongoing stabilisation of White British identities and culture that have been formed in the colonial paradigm of categorised belonging and deservedness. The final exploration (iii) to investigate the barriers preventing effective action to improve community cohesion, was partially answered by the interrogation of the community cohesion concept itself – a pathology of community that created discourses of losing something that was once earned, and positioning immigrants as the scapegoat as opposed to macrostructural inequalities.

The anti-collectivist neoliberal doctrine re-established localist solutions to macrostructural problems by producing a 'community cohesion' agenda through the medium of government funded reports on the problem of multiculturalism e.g., the Home Office's Community Cohesion Report chaired by Ted Cantle (2001) whose mission of national collective values and assimilation embodies an underlying discourse of:

> It's not about race. It's about community (Worley, 2005, p. 488).

Whilst material conditions of housing welfare are eroded, and globalisation increases the rate of immigration to cities with more employment opportunities, community anxieties over council housing stock and eligibility are increasingly finding voice through the threat of immigration.

The findings of this study suggest that housing welfare has transformed into a *laissez-faire* behavioural regime whereby:

> responsibility [is assigned] to a man, not in order to say that as he was he might have acted differently, but in order to make him different (Hayek, 1960, p. 75).

This doctrine appears impenetrable, yet the avenues of counter-hegemonies may be widened for effective action research by transferring responsibility onto national institutions, not in order to say that it should have acted differently, but in order to make it different.

5.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings would seem to support the current move towards national abandonment of the community cohesion concept in order to prevent assimilationist goals from preventing diaspora havens. Mouffe (2016) argues for an agonistic democracy, where adversaries replace enemies and discussions replace arguments; this study finds agreement in this claim by displaying the ineffective nature of attempting to reproduce a homogenous community. It is also recommended that local councils be more transparent in their housing register requirements and conditions in order to dismantle the myth that immigrants are given priority in the provision of housing welfare.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this research conclude that further scrutiny of historical crises is required in order to prevent ongoing pathologizing of community problems. This study therefore suggests a need to focus greater attention on; (i) the power of a mixed cultural symbolism of shops and products to forge agonistic alliances, such as multiple languages on shop fronts; (ii) the phenomena of White British identities becoming antagonistic when faced with becoming minorities; and (iii) how a conjunctural analysis can form alternative prophecies to inspire unbounded identity construction in neglected areas to equal a community with a plural of agonistic diasporas.

APPENDIX

1931 FRONT GARDEN – A

Figure 1 - 1931 front garden (BBC, 2019)

1929 CURVILINEAR ROAD - B

Figure 2 - 1929 curvilinear road (BBC, 2019)

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THIRD YEAR ESSAYS

RESISTING HETERONORMATIVITY: FOREVER 'BECOMING' IN THE QUEER HETEROTOPIA

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Module: Gender Studies

FOREWORD

Upon my arrival to the library to begin writing this essay, a friendly young man approached me to attempt to assist me in finding my relationship with God – he believed that as soon as I discover such a thing, any ounce of homosexuality that imprisons me would naturally evaporate from my soul as if it were steam from a kettle. Whilst he rummages for potential sinners who require cleansing, I ponder over the use of the word "man" in my first sentence; who am I to assume what someone identifies as? Yet, he believed that his religious relationship with a symbolic figure rooted in historical exploitation legitimises his moral judgement to the people who saved me from losing myself in the maze of trauma that has plagued me since my early youth. This agonistic conversation has provoked me to utilise this academic opportunity to defend my LGTBQ+ family, one of whom is no longer with us – 'I love to you' Lewis Howlett (Irigaray, 1996).

Figure 3 – Lewis (Osborne, 2014)

Identity categories have been dichotomized to act as instruments for disciplinary regimes; motivated by macrostructural and ideological systems that require inequality to uphold the privilege of their prosperous agents. Heteronormativity – a product of religious, medical, scientific and political essentialisms and social constructions – has produced an array of binary discourse that diminishes alternative truths. I argue that to deconstruct the 'regulatory operations of power as knowledge that produce these identity frameworks in the first place' (Richardson and Robinson, 2020, p.86), the margins of identity construction must be widened to reveal a radical space in between the realities of heteronormativity and the abstract stylisation of the non-binary imaginary, where the act of 'queering' (Fotopoulou, 2013) can appropriate and satirize rigid social classifications that follow dualistic logics. The pluralisation of selfhood can be realised through a flux of 'becoming'; where there is no destination in the journey to identity, meaning the 'technologies of the self' escape the spontaneous consent to heteronormative governmentality (Foucault, 1988). This essay will outline and synthesise theories of; correspondence (Stanley, 2002); gender roles (Richardson and Robinson, 2020) standpoints (Haraway, 1988); power (Green, 2010); performativity (Butler, 2006); intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and queer theory (Fotopoulou, 2013) to support the argument that the revival of a queer heterotopia lends itself to intersectional experiences of oppression by its ability to provide radical tools that can build new 'epistemologies, histories and practices of resistance' (Fotoloupou, 2012, p.29).

Heteronormativity is a cultural apparatus that insists upon a biologically essentialist gender binary; the 'correspondence theory' presents the notion that reproductive organs and the physical expressions of sex hormones have been corresponded with socially constructed imaginaries of "woman" and "man" as well as their designated sexual orientations (Stanley, 2002). These social categories of identity are universally diffused by religious, medical and political institutions that construct a seemingly coherent dichotomy that silences other ways of living by the imposition of normative values, qualities and roles that are designated to the gender 'dualism' – an epistemology originating from the Age of Enlightenment that secured knowledge by means of oppositional reason e.g. mind/body, good/evil, woman/man, heterosexual/homosexual. Despite a resurgence of a monistic doctrine in the 60s-70s that views gender as constructed in the social, the gender binary remains somewhat impermeable due to a:

> internally consistent self-fulfilling prophecy in which contrary evidence is instead treated as confirmation of the [correspondence] theory because its very existence demonstrates its own unnaturalness and thus irrationality (Stanley, 2002, p.40).

Simply put, any misalignment of sex/gender/sexual orientation normative correspondence dictates the subject as a pathological outlier that threatens the 'truth' of heteronormativity.

The interrelating representation, inscription, and agency of gender roles informs the alleged fixed classifications of biological sex; a division that has so far remained relatively unharmed by post-constructionist thought due to its scientific legitimisations, yet its vicarious nature can be revealed by the viability of other physical characteristics determining biological binary groupings e.g. facial hair, height, weight distribution. The tenacity of the sex dualism ensures subjects 'become gendered' through; attribution of gender labels; acquisition of historically and culturally specific gender knowledge; universalising gender and pathologizing deviants; stabilisation of gender as an unchangeable entity (Richardson and Robinson, 2020). The differentiation in how binary subjects become gendered described in this 'gender role theory' illuminates how the social construction of gender is a product of patriarchal hierarchies – the boundaries of becoming are established during primary socialisation years, and whilst boys may grow up to feel righteous in their social and/or economic superiority, girls may inhibit their non-domestic potential. In this sense, 'gender categories would not exist if social divisions did not exist'; divisions that rely upon the prevailing heterosexual matrix to ensure a distribution of power and resources that serves the interests of capitalist endeavours and its male heirs (Richardson and Robinson, 2020).

Whilst the cultural impact of heteronormativity fixes subjects into gendered characteristics, the enduring divide in material conditions for oppositional gender identities prevents the reconfiguration of the operations of power that sustains those cultural differences. Materialist feminisms highlight the significance of economic disparities between binary genders by building upon a Marxist analysis to show:

> that 'subjective,' 'individual,' 'private' problems are in fact social class problems; that sexuality is not for women an individual subjective expression, but a social institution (Wittig, 1992, p.19)

Although postmodernist feminists have critiqued the universal validity of binary positions, it has been argued that scrutinization of social structures is a necessity to achieve gender equality; a goal that requires a 'cognitive subjectivity' to reveal the 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988) of oppressed subject's positions in the social order that results in a 'disidentifying consciousness' – an alternative identity position formed from a:

> critical perspective that opens up systemic ways of thinking about sexuality [and gender] in both straight and gay culture (Hennessy, 1993, p.972).

It can be argued that the aim of materialist feminism – to unfold the category of sex by dismantling the social system of heterosexuality through a historical materialist analysis – can be realized with the recognition of the positionality of knowledge that determines what is knowable to an array of subjects, 'allow[ing] us to become answerable for what we learn how to see' (Haraway, 1988, p.583).

However, in becoming answerable to the subjectivities of oppressed positions, the application of standpoint theory risks diffusing group solidarity and subsequent social resistance to oppressive macrostructures because the endorsement of a disidentifying consciousness entails the dispersal of commonalities. Whilst the operations of power may be less effective in stabilising homogenous gender and sex groupings with the pluralisation of positions, dismantling the binary is more complex than simply formulating racial gender labels (e.g. non-binary); the acquisition of gender knowledge persists if the social structures that ensure a cycle of power and knowledge remain intact (Green, 2010). Standpoint theory attempts to understand the positional perspectives of knowledge, and materialist feminism seeks to ignite social change within the existing capitalist system; an analysis of Foucault's theory of power reveals that subverting discourse can reverse the totalising effects of disciplinary regimes to equal a society where the gender knowledge can be enacted through a micro level power tactic of 'reverse discourse' where subjects appropriate heteronormative discourses of sex and gender that may:

> empower them in the assemblage of a more self-directed and intentional project of the self (Green, 2010, p.326)

I argue that through the appropriation of heteronormative discourses, the docile body can become instrumental in asserting discipline to the institutions that have narrowed the subject's sites of becoming – the docility of institutions rests upon a collective self-constituting of 'camp' performativity.

Having considered the ideological legitimisations of heteronormativity and how structural systems uphold gendered material disparities, the performative nature of gender will now be considered to demonstrate how this process can be utilised in camp and queer spaces and perspectives for the purposes of genuine binary liberation. Butler (2006) proposed the theory of performativity which suggests that gender identity is purely an expression of predefined roles and said expressions construes the appearance of an innate gender identity. In essence, the script of gender has already been written and subjects perform those scripts as a strategy of cultural survival, yet:

> there is no being behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing – the doing itself is everything (Nietzsche, 1887, p.29).

According to Althusser (2001) the script of gender hails individuals into subject positions with the power of ideology – a set of beliefs that have been formed within institutions and through material processes that drives a 'spontaneous' consent to the scripts that confine them. Although Butler argues that the performative nature of gender identities can be subverted by radically modifying the tools of social constructionism to reveal the interpellation where their consent is manufactured (Salih, 2006), it can be argued that subversion is still conditioned by truth regimes and reformulated identities still exhibit heteronormative binaries, e.g. non-binary subjects labelling themselves as 'femme' or 'masc'. Radical modification must be applied to the ideology that conjures the interpellative process to reveal the social construction of all totalities, such as class and race as 'attempts to move beyond gender divisions [without addressing their source] can sometimes strengthen them' (Glover and Kaplan, 2000, p.145).

I am therefore pursuing an intersectional lens for the mission of resisting heteronormativity, a framework developed by Crenshaw (1989) that promotes the analysis of how categorical differences interrelate to reveal that the experiences of multiple oppressive categories cannot be simply added together to understand the subject's reality e.g. the experiences of being 'black' cannot be added to the experiences of 'woman' to explain the 'black woman'. This framework allows me to conceive a metaphorical argument: imagine an intersection where cars are crossing from multiple directions – if one lane is closed, will the driver give up on reaching their destination, or take the next path that is still accessible? What I am suggesting is that Butler's solution of radically modifying tools – closing one of the roads in the intersection of oppressions – without creating radically transparent routes, means that heteronormativity will simply let itself in through the back door and transpire into other forms of difference through the power of ideology, e.g., queer Muslims experience greater levels of Islamophobia compared to their heterosexual counterparts after the decriminalisation of homosexuality (Rahman, 2010).

Having considered an intersectional approach for subverting gender identities, it is also crucial to illuminate queer theory, a framework that questions identity categories, oppositional gender and sexuality binaries and correspondence equations (Hennessy, 1993). In this respect, queer studies shares much in common with prior theories mentioned in this essay; gender role theory where essentialised binaries are deemed as social constructions; correspondence theory where gender and sexuality inform each other; materialist feminism where identities are reified by an identity politics exuded by capitalist and political systems; intersectionality where gender and sexuality oppressions are reinforced by other categories of difference. However, queer theory differs insofar that 'queer' is framed as a site of 'becoming' (Fotopoulou, 2012, p.25) and this lends itself to a genuine subversion of gender identities as the tools of social constructionism are unreachable when there is no destination in the act of becoming. Subjects may still be interpellated into positions, but these positions are in constant flux and without these final destinations the subject never arrives at the destination of becoming – to 'become' is to re-establish totalities. It can be argued that queer theory presents the least risk of reformulating divisions in the act of attempting to dissolve them. In this sense, the performativity of 'queering' (Fotopoulou, 2013) can be utilised beyond issues of sexuality and gender; loosening the grip of disciplinary power and emptying the fuel from the tank of heteronormative ideology may be possible if identities exist in a:

> different space... [that will] suspend, neutralise or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected, or represented by them (Foucault, 1998, cited in Tamboukou, 2004, p.177).

Before considering the process of limitless becoming that occur 'different spaces', it is important to clarify how radical knowledges can unfold within the dichotomous truth regime. Foucault described how people develop knowledge through four 'technologies'; technologies of production; technologies of sign systems; technologies of power; and most significant to my argument is the 'technologies of the self':

> which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (1988, p.18)

Foucault argues that the technologies of power and of the self interact to create 'governmentality' – the institutional and ideological practices through which subjects are subjugated and interpellated, practices that are a genealogical product of the ancient Greek Delphic maxim *gnōthi seauton* ("Know thyself"). To know thyself is to; discern what is known and unknown; to locate what is advantageous and what mistakes to avoid; to pursue good and to evade evil (Xenophon, 2008). It can be argued that the dualistic epistemology of heteronormativity is rooted in this restrictive philosophy that encourages subjects to act within a self-knowledge deriving from a patriarchal and capitalist governmentality; rationalities whose survival depends upon the spontaneous consent to binary relations. And so, in the act of knowing thyself, the subject who navigates outside of the parameters of knowing is viewed as an agent of evil. It can therefore be argued that to employ the technologies of the self as a tactic of discourse reversal, the subject must do so in a space that renders a passive governmentality where there is no back door for heteronormativity to willingly re-enter.

The ‘different space’ I am referring to is a ‘crisis heterotopia’ – a Foucauldian concept that describes a sacred refuge for subjects experiencing crisis in their society that ‘have been established by social practices to accommodate subjects in transition’ (Tamboukou, 2004, p.3). Before analysing the power of crisis heterotopias to; act as places of becoming; provide the cultural and material resources for a reverse discourse; radically modify the ideology that powers the tools of social

constructionism – I present the reader with two collages of the House Ballroom Scene community in New York between 1989-92 to illuminate my theoretical perspective of this space as a crisis heterotopia (see next page):

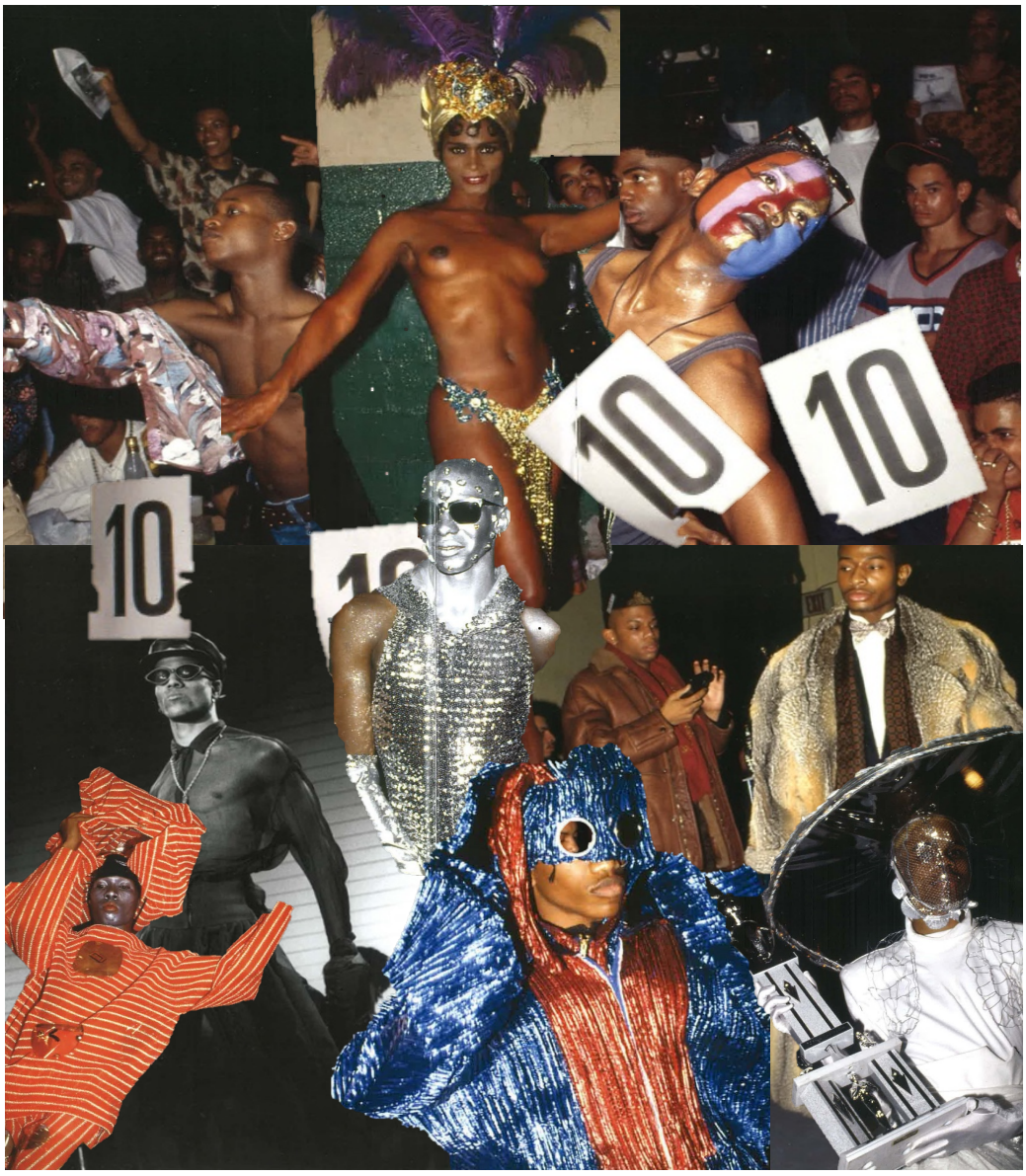

Figure 4 - House Ballroom Scene of New York City 1989-92 (Regnault, 2011)

Figure 5 - House Ballroom Scene of New York City 1989-92 (Regnault, 2011)

The underground queer/camp ball community were featured in the 1990 documentary film *Paris is Burning*; making the 'forbidden' space visible to the heteronormative public sphere to reveal how the attendees – mostly male African-American or Latino/Latina communities who formed 'houses' that appropriated the nuclear family structure – competed in different categories that imitated and satirized gender constructs e.g. "femme queen" and the contestant who performed the most believable rendition won trophies and praise for their dazzling alterations of heteronormativity (Brathwaite, 2014). Authorised drag queen pageants had existed in America for decades prior but Black and Latina drag queens experienced racism from the White performers; standing as an example of the intersection metaphor I provided earlier. Meanwhile, the HIV/AIDS crisis worsened in the late 1980s that forced authorised gay clubs to shut their doors (Levenson, 2021) – and although people of colour in America were disproportionately affected, their need for camp performativity overrode the risk of the curtains permanently closing on their life. When the ballroom community could not position themselves into mainstream culture due to intersecting crises, they 'accommodate[d] themselves in between real and fictional positions' (Tamboukou, 2004, p.14).

The ‘in between’ contains radical appropriation of the real with abstract stylisation, for instance *Figure 3* shows the drag performer, Paris Dupree, wearing a Robe a la Francaise, a real 18th century French fashion worn only by the wealthiest women, and the fictional nature of this ‘queering’ lies in the indeterminate relationship between who this style was designed for (White, high class, wealthy) and the subject who is appropriating it (Black, working class, poor). Interpellation has therefore occurred, but in a manner that transparently mocks normative social constructions of gender. A radically clear route to spaces of permanent becoming had been marked in this queer heterotopia through the camp paradox where ‘one can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious’ (Sontag, 1966, p. 288). It can also be argued that the believability of the camp subject’s satirised rendition of heteronormative positions reveals the standpoint of binary positions had been discerned – and made fun of – to convey a critical depiction of the contradictions of upper class and superior race styles being embodied by subjects who are supposedly inappropriate for such roles. The clothing and make-up styles in *Figure 2* represent the abstract and fictional nature of this other worldly heterotopia; where the source of interpellation lies in the imaginary of non-binary standpoints as opposed to existing heteronormative roles and styles. The tools of gender identity did not need modification, because radically routes of eternal ‘becoming’ had been located through the; parodied configuration of other avenues of oppression; the acknowledgement of dominant discourse and its subsequent reversal – fashioning a docile governmentality through which the technologies of the self are unhinged from racist, classist and homophobic disciplinary regimes and ideologies.

In conclusion, a resurgence of a queer heterotopia can help us achieve the:

> ultimate aim [of] de-legitimis[ing] the regulatory operations of power as knowledge that produce these identity frameworks in the first place (Richardson and Robinson, 2020, p.86)

through the appropriation of the heteronormative cultural apparatus and within a space where governmentality – the regime of binary truths – cannot reach ‘thyself’ as there the parameters of self-identification have evaporated, the intervention of performative ‘queering’ within the heterotopia ‘eats away and scrapes at us’ (Foucault, 1998, p.178). Whilst it has been argued that radical cultural changes in queer and camp spaces is not commensurate with social reform of the macrostructural and ideological causes of intersectional inequalities (Hennessy, 1993), I believe that a collective awareness of the dreams that a queer heterotopia can provide will allow even cisgender and heterosexual folk to realise that each of us contains the other – heterosexuality in homosexuality, non-binary in trans, Black in White and Black in Latino – a ‘situated awareness’ that can prevent identity categories being used as instruments in disciplinary regimes. Queer studies may have the most power in igniting this reverse discourse because it embodies elements of theories of materialist feminism, power, performativity and intersectionality with the added benefit an eternal ‘disidentifying consciousness’ to replace the cycle of ‘becoming gendered’ with ‘forever becoming’.

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SECOND YEAR ESSAYS

HOW THE WOMEN OF THE PARIS COMMUNE WERE ESSENTIAL WHEN STORMING HEAVEN: DEMOCRACY FOUND IN REVOLUTION

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Module: Socia Theory II

The Paris Commune was the first historical attempt to put power in the hands of the working class. The year 2021 marked the 150th anniversary of the rise and fall of the Commune, an event that Karl Marx himself got to witness and Marxists continue to study. There are multiple lessons to draw from this short-lived revolutionary epicentre, democratically appointed officials, free and practical school for boys and girls and equal pay for women. From March to May 1871 the role of women in revolutionary politics catapulted in comparison to their inclusion in bourgeois politics. Women's involvement in the development of the Commune created radical change in their social and cultural position. In this essay I will outline the events of the Paris Commune, focusing on the role played by women, and how they placed themselves on these revolutionary and thus democratic processes by drawing from theorists Iris Marion Young on Deep democracy, Mary Wollstonecraft's position on education and gender inequality, and Hannah Arendt on action as democracy.

The French Empire declared war with Prussia on 1870, which left citizens of France living in the most precarious conditions; the Siege of Paris left the city isolated. The highest paid Parisians workers were able to afford rats and bread that was mixed with paper and straw (Lissagaray, 1976). The Prussian occupation of France and the food insecurity drove men to join the National Guard, a body of local defense set up by volunteers during the revolution of 1789. Women also joined the National Guard, they supplied food and basic aid, though they'd also come to rise with arms. Between December 1870 and January 1871 thirty thousand citizens died of hunger and cold. By the end of the occupation, a new government, the Third Republic, was declared. The anger towards Versailles meant the National Guard was formed by men and women whose loyalty was with one another and not the Republic, led by Adolphe Thiers. The early hours of the 18th of March, under the orders of Thiers, troops were sent out to disarm Paris by retrieving the National Guard's cannons. The women of Paris were the first to see this, they shamed the troops and called in the men, the National Guard then intervened and fraternized with the troops, which would later join the revolution (Kennedy, 1979).

Already we can begin to see the important role played by Parisian women, their house duties required them to be awake in the early hours, which allowed them to warn the people of Paris about the troops. By midday the arms were reclaimed by the city and the city was reclaimed by the people, after government officials fled from Paris to Versailles. The National Guard proceeded to defend Paris and isolate it from the rest of France, as a way to ensure its autonomy.

The Commune had a provisional government and then a call for elections, in which women did not get to participate, the Commune did not immediately grant women the right to vote, though women were granted with equal pay, divorce rights and pensionfor widows (Gridley & Kemp, 2012). The question of women's suffrage in the Commune can be studied with Iris Marion Young's theory on *deep democracy.* Iris Marion Young was an American political philosopher whose work focused on social justice and political participation. Young argues that democracy as we know it is not truly representative of society, to let democratic processes rely on political elections is jeopardizing democracy; candidates can hold 'vague stands' (Young, 2000, p. 5), wait for their time in office to run out, and justice on behalf of positions of power can be affected by bureaucracy. Therefore, the notion of deep democracy is building democracy in a way that is representative of society. Democratic and pollical participation, is not limited to elections, it is instead taking place in smaller scales by advocating for justice and inclusion. Inclusion is the key to fairer democratic outcomes because everyone gets to participate. Inclusion comes from deliberating, a ground for building political equality, since it becomes a process of expressing opinions, persuading, and understanding, which is important for collective action (Young, 2000). In the Paris Commune women had essential roles, they operated in vigilance committees which were neighborhood militias that stood in place of the army or the police, and even fought in arms defending the barricades. Women re-organized the education sector, provided ammunition and uniforms for the Guard, and held debates during which they agreed the enemies of the revolution were the Church and the rich (Hawkins, 2021). Parisian women, therefore, exercised their democratic rights through debates and committees. Women became more active in politics and began to set ground for suffrage. They would petition and raise funds for the demand and campaigns that they believed would benefit women (Stewart, 2006, pp. 264-265), thus deepening democracy beyond political elections through deliberation, just as Iris Marion Young outlined. The brief life of the Commune cut all these progressive and egalitarian outcomes short, but there's no doubt they would've earned their place in democratic elections.

Education in the Commune was reformed, education was no longer on the hands of the church, instead it was free and open with a practical curriculum that would teach boys and girls alike. The Commune also gave the poorest pupils the necessary school supplies. Education was a top priority for communards, it was secular and accessible since previously education was private and administrated by the Jesuits. Committees dedicated to reforming girls' education were founded, and the entire sector received better funding (Tombs, 1999). The social importance of education is undeniable, communards saw that and wanted to prepare the children of workers to be taught to participate in politics. The communards, however, were not the firsts to see this, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote about the education of girls, or lack thereof, being a key factor in gender inequality almost a century before. Mary Wollstonecraft is one of the most popular figures in feminism. Her work argued that education is a critical point for gender relations, she believed that girls being robbed of the opportunity to learn reduces their cultural and social importance (Wollstonecraft, 1792). Women must be taught practical skills, so they are no longer turned women into beautiful bodies, but also brilliant minds.

Communards Louise Michel and André Léo became essential figures for women's education and overall inclusion in the Commune. Louise Michel was an appointed official for the Commune, her devotion to the Commune kept her in the barricades, however she was a great advocate for women's education (Gullickson, 1996). André Léo was a journalist for a socialist newspaper, she'd later join the *Union des Femmes* (Offen, 1991). They believed that providing girls and women education would put an end to prostitution. So, when it came to ending prostitution, the Commune didn't penalize and punish women, but instead presented women new opportunities so they wouldn't have to surrender themselves to make ends meet (Stewart, 2006). When the executive committee in charge of education was founded, it was composed of three women and three men, giving women a platform to advocate for changes in education of girls. Mary Wollstonecraft would not get to see the Commune develop, yet her ideas were put into practice, and proven to be right. The education of girls and women deepened the understanding of the female gender and improved their position in society.

The commune had the political essence of communism and anarchism. Many communards were members of the first International, they were revolutionaries. Hanna Arendt was one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th Century, her work took from Marxist theory. In her book *The Human Condition,* Arendt argues that life exists on two realms: Active life, *Vita Activa* and Life of the Mind, *Vita Contemplativa.* She explains the Life of the Mind involves one's personal, often private thoughts, dreams, and judgements whereas Active life refers to the material or physical endeavors which are labour, work, and action.

This is where Arendt's theory begins to deviate from Marxism; Marx used work and labour as synonyms, but for Arendt labour involves the repetitive, mandatory tasks that make life possible, the tasks that accompany the processes of the body; 'the human condition of labour is life itself' (p. 7). Work is unnatural to humans, yet it has shaped their surroundings beyond nature, work therefore makes up civilization. Action intermediates between humans and their plurality, plurality is the notion that everybody is different yet has common interest such as carrying human life on, it makes a distinction between humans and humankind (Arendt, 1958).

Action is to have initiative and set things in motion, according to Arendt action is the one indispensable aspect of Active life. Speech and action bring a person's traits and characteristics to the surface, before speech there is no conflict, disagreement or even unison. Action and speech are most useful in the public realm, which can be made equal by unequal individuals that seek to change that. In describing action, Arendt claims that it exists as protests and expressions that salvage democracy, she argues that unity and the society is what crushes democracy (Arendt, 1958).

On the contrary, I argue that democracy can exist among organizations and unions, most importantly they help society operate democratically. For instance, women of the Commune started their own organizations; the *Union des Femme*s was founded by Elisabeth Dmitrieff, a member of the first communist International, to put forward the demand of ending the competition between workers of different sexes, because their struggles against capitalism were the same (Gridley & Kemp, 2012) this meant that women participated in political clubs and were introduced into the democratic scene. Unlike Arendt, I take the position that democracy, which stands for power belonging to the people, suggests that *the people* is the collective, which ultimately reflects the will of individuals, and works for their best interest. Democracy works best as way of agreement, rather than struggle.

Although the Commune made so many changes for the conditions of workers and women, it was under constant attacks from the Third Republic and the government of Versailles. The troops made their way into Paris, and they were ordered to take back the city by any means possible. Though the Vigilance Committees defended their neighborhoods, the troops bombarded the city and the committees needed better leadership from the National Guard. The troops had been ordered to capture and execute communards; they broke into hospitals where they murdered bed-ridden communards. Over the span of a week, the Versailles death squads executed the defeated resistance, this is now known as *The Bloody Week* (Lissagaray, 1976). This attack on Paris took the lives of about thirty-thousand Parisian men, women, and children.

Communards like Louise Michel and André Léo went into exile, and they continued their political careers from a distance. The principles of the Commune had spread across France, all major cities were building worker's movements. After the defeat of the Commune on the 29th of May 1871 the government of Versailles entered a reactionary period of monarchist right-wing governments to restore social order (Gould, 1991). The defeat of the Commune demoralized the revolutionary movements of Europe and caused the dissolution of the first communist International (Woods, 2014).

Several mistakes from the men of the Commune *othered* and excluded women, however women were allowed to organize and have claims over these decisions. For instance, when the National Guard made the executive decision to ban women from battle, whether as medics and soldiers, the women completely opposed this decision, claiming it was against the principles of the Commune and jeopardized the Commune itself (Grams, 2021). This shows that women's participation was integral for this revolutionary process to take place. My argument is that the features of a revolution set grounds for bigger leaps in inclusion and democracy, than through reforms. Revolutions are complicated processes, and unity among the people is essential for them to be carried out. It is through class unity that men and women, and all those *excluded others* can unite and create a representative democracy and consequently a fairer society. In 1871, some Parisian men felt as though the inclusion of women and the rise in their political participation went against their gender roles, they were right. The role of women before the Siege of Paris was limited to housewifery, before then they weren't considered intellectuals, soldiers, medics, nor comrades. It is because revolutions shake society at its core that the role of women changed so radically in such a short amount of time. Thus, societal expectation of gender roles can be left behind through revolution, it is a harsher transition than reforms, yet more definite.

Education programs are also pushed during revolutions, it comes from the need to moralize and empower the worker to participate in the political sphere. This was a lesson of the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 (Tamboukou, 2019, pp. 3-4). These lessons were used in the Commune, later in the Soviet Union and on the first years of the Cuban revolution.

Marx and the tendency that followed him have studied the successes and mistakes of the Commune, nonetheless it completely changed the gender relations of Paris in two months, something that bourgeois politics have not achieved to this day. One hundred and fifty years after the Paris Commune, the gender pay gap is still a reality for women workers across the globe. The progress of women's social and cultural roles was achieved by revolution, the unity of men and women was a historical necessity to protect Paris and its citizens.

The oppression of women is systematic, women are yet to be emancipated from the *second shift,* their duties as housewives that follow their duties as workers. Parisian women were granted the right to organize and have demands, these rights came from their participation in the revolution, both men and women 'stormed the heavens' because antagonism was no longer between genders, but class. This makes revolutionary politics, those that unite the working class, the most inclusive democratic processes (Chandhoke, 2015). Unions and committees in the Commune allowed for women to exercise their democratic rights almost on the same level as men, without having to wait every four years to cast a vote and their voices to be ignored.

Today women are still among the excluded others of democracy, with little control over their bodies, lower access to education, unequal pay, and being banned from organizing.

It is through the lens of Iris Marion Young's deep democracy, that the women of the Paris Commune accomplished so much for democracy. Their collective action and political participation did contribute towards the inclusion of women in the political and social sphere. Education also played a key role in the participation of women, not just for building the minds of young girls, but also presenting women with new opportunities. In the final analysis of the Paris Commune, women were ultimately indispensable and for this revolutionary process the communards saw more benefit in the inclusion of women rather than subjecting them to archaic gender roles. The shift of power dynamics during revolution should leave no room for the exclusion of others, instead to call them to participate in a new, truly democratic system. Democracy is found in representation and unison, both of which are achieved through participation and debate, as proposed by Young; as well as education and building the minds of those who are being excluded, as Wollstonecraft argued. Unions, committees, and debates do contribute to democratic processes, and these are places for disagreement, as Arendt argued, however they also must come to a consensus and act on the will and best interest of the majority. The Paris Commune, although short in duration, has a strong legacy of revolutionary and thus, democratic lessons. It propelled women's place in society by setting their democratic rights in motion, some outcomes so progressive, we are yet to see to this day. Although failed revolutions have shied people away from the movement, The Paris Commune, among other revolutions, sets an example of hope, that the current state of society is not final, and that it can be improved. It is through revolution that the remnants of exclusion and othering will seize to exist.

'Vive la commune!

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IDOL BODIES: A FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDOLS, FANS, AND MUSIC LABELS IN KOREAN POP-MUSIC.

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Module: Social Theory II

The globalisation of K-pop has been nothing short of extraordinary. In the space of two decades, the music genre has transformed itself into one of the world's biggest music exports, at first taking hold within its origin country South Korea, and then spreading into other local Asian countries such as China, Japan, and many others in the Southern region (Chang and Park, 2016). Jin (2016) referred to this first wave as "Hallyu 1.0". The term Hallyu roughly translates to "Korean Wave" and not only contains K-pop, but also various other aspects of Korean arts and culture that have grown in popularity in the Asian region. The second wave "Hallyu 2.0" is what Jin (2016) describes is currently happening now. Korean popular culture, in particular K-pop music, has surpassed the margins of East and Southern Asia and has spread globally at an exponential rate into regions such as Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa and the Americas (Chang and Park, 2016).

The allure of K-pop stems from its cultural hybridity; it's ability to combine multiple western music genres such as Hip-Hop, R&B and EDM, as well as multiple elements of American popular culture, to combine them with what is considered to be "Koreanness" (Kim, 2020).

But what really catches the attention of consumers and solidifies their monetary devotion is the extreme fan culture surrounding K-pop, deliberately orchestrated by the music labels who manufacture the products themselves – music, visuals, performances, and the most important product of them all – the artists who are referred to as "idols", and whom which the cult of fandom is centred around.
Not only are fans devoted to their favourite idols, but they develop complex and personal parasocial relationships between themselves and the idols that both parties are actively encouraged and even pushed by the labels to participate in.

Lie (2015) states that K-pop is an 'output of the South Korean culture industry that seeks to satisfy consumers' (p. 140), which explains why labels adopt a "fan-first" approach. Upon first glance, one could say that the fans are the ones who are being used because it is they who willingly give up their money to the labels in order to watch, admire and even meet their favourite idols face to face. It is also the idols who benefit from a percentage of this fan-generated profit, so they too can be said to be using their fans for profitable outcomes. When investigating further though, through the use Michel Foucault's theory on discipline, it becomes clear that the artists wield much more power than is implied, especially within their parasocial relationships with idols. But most importantly, music labels wield power above them all.

In this essay, I am going to be exploring the relationships between the idols, fans and music labels through the use of Foucault's notions of discipline, the panopticon and docile bodies to explain how this plays a part in the manufacturing and distribution of idols for the consumption of fans. I will also be using these concepts to explore how the bodies of idols become a site for which power relations take place between them, the fans, and the music labels.

To interrogate the complicated relationship between the idols, the fans, and the music labels, one must begin with how idols are constructed. There are usually two ways in which idols are recruited; the first and most common way is through music labels conducting nationwide (and sometimes international) auditions to find trainees to develop into stars. Once recruited, trainees will then be put through a rigorous training system in order to eventually debut within a group or sometimes solo. The group system within K-pop tends to be favoured by music labels as it helps to cut costs and recoup some of the investment made into training them (Kang, 2017).

Another way is through "survival shows" in which participants consent to appearing on a talent show where they must perform tasks and take on challenges to show off their singing and dancing skills, which will then be judged by the public audience. At the end, only a few people will be chosen to debut in a group. Watching the 2014 survival show '*No Mercy*,' created by one of the top South Korean entertainment labels Starship, and which resulted in the formation of Monsta X who are one of the biggest K-pop boy groups today, the gruesome and ruthless nature of trainee life becomes apparent. Within the first five minutes of the first episode titled, '"*The Cruel Debut War" get started!'*, the trainees are already established as docile bodies, being primed, and prepped to go through a disciplinary process that manipulates and shapes them, which in turn increases their skills and their productive capabilities (Foucault, 1984), necessary for Starship to achieve profitable outcomes.

One trainee stated, 'I can't think of anything else but surviving' while in a followed-up clip, a judge in the show remarked that 'once the game's on, you have to step on each other'. The encouragement, and even slight glorification of such questionable worth ethics, instils a fear within trainees of the disciplinary action that will be taken against them if they don't adopt the ruthlessness of the music label they are fighting to be signed to. In other words, 'the trainees are a relatively disposable and interchangeable part of the system' (Cedarbough *et al.*, 2014, p. 11), which Starship makes no attempt to hide. They are not humans but instead workers, whose bodies are crucial to the success of the label.

The construction of the idol also requires self-discipline and self-regulation of the body (Zysik, 2021). An example of this can be seen in a short documentary by CNA Insider titled '*How to become a K-pop Idol: Life as a Foreign Trainee*.' In one scene, a dance instructor is forcing one of the young female trainees to stretch her body past its limit into a split, while the trainee screams that she is in pain.
In another clip, the female trainees are having a weekly weigh in, a practice that is mandatory to ensure that they are meeting the weight requirement of 50kg set by their label. One girl remarks, 'I couldn't even drink water' before being told that her weight has decreased to 49kg. She cries tears of happiness while the other girls cheer and applaud her, congratulating each other on their weight losses.
Lie (2015, p. 142) states that, 'in the K-pop studio system, perspiration is worth more than inspiration', meaning that the physical struggles and the high levels of strenuous practices that the bodies of trainees are put under, is worth more than even the music itself. One could say that the dance studios, the practice rooms, the recording rooms which all exist within the music label headquarters, are all observatories where examinations take place (Foucault, 1984). These examinations establish 'over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them' (Foucault, 1984, p. 197). So much so that disciplining oneself becomes normalised, and punishment becomes self-inflicted.

Idols have no say in how they are created, developed, and packaged for the music markets as everything about them is 'pre-determined, conditioned, and maintained to address the industry's profiteering imperatives.' (Kim, 2019, p. 127). They are trained to accept this process as the norm; to not question it and to normalise it into their everyday lives. Thus, the making of the idol cannot be possible without discipline, without their bodies becoming a site in which power moves through, resides in, and disseminates (Foucault, 1984), in order to be reconstructed into a perfect package which music labels can then sell to the masses.

To interrogate the relationship between idols, fans, and music labels, one must also understand the power that fans within the K-pop realm hold. The power of fans is highly underrated (McLaren and Jin, 2020), and their utilisation of social media undermined (Xiong, 2020) due to the success of K-pop being attributed to music labels and their "glocal" (globalisation-localisation) approach to creating and exporting products (Jin, 2016).

One way to understand the power of fans is to analyse the rise of the most successful K-pop boy group in the world, BTS. During the early days of their career, the group went through many hardships – they hosted an array of free concerts, their early singles failed to chart, they walked the streets of West Hollywood asking people to come to their free shows or to star in their music videos, and there are many clips on YouTube of their appearances on Korean variety shows where hosts would treat them rudely. What eventually catapulted them into worldwide fame though was their transnational fanbase, referred to as "ARMY" (Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth), and their 'cross-border devotion' to BTS (McLaren and Jin, 2020, p. 110).

On social media, the ARMY frequently mobilise for multiple endeavours. One of them being watch parties, where fans would stream the latest BTS music video for hours to boost up the viewing count, as YouTube metrics are highly coveted in K-pop fan culture (McLaren and Jin, 2020).
The ARMY is also the reason why BTS was able to make history in 2017, when they became the first Korean group to win a Billboard award in the category "Social Artist", a category that relies solely on voting power, and which they have been winning yearly ever since. The ARMY's determination to see BTS flourish as artists is how they have broken numerous music charts, album sales and concert sales records all around the world. On Twitter, many ARMY members can be seen wearing BTS' success as a badge of honour, creating fan made lists of all of their achievements so far. Fan accounts are created to keep track of their accomplishments, one account called "@btschartdata" with over two million followers, posts updates multiple times a day.

As well as supporting BTS musically, the ARMY also takes it upon themselves to do philanthropy work in BTS' name (McLaren and Jin, 2020). In 2018, they organised a crowdfunding for BTS' UNICEF campaign (Mclaren and Jin, 2020), and they have even gone as far as setting up a "#MatchAMillion" campaign to match BTS' one million USD donation to Black Lives Matter, which resulted in over one million USD being raised (Park *et al*., 2021).

Sometimes people outside of the ARMY fandom will even joke about not wanting to get on their bad side, due to the reputation surrounding their 'fan activism' and 'cybervigilantism' (Jung, 2012).
In one video titled 'HACKED by BTS Army' by a popular YouTuber called Kat Blaque, she talks about a time when the ARMY hacked into her Twitter account due to her tweeting statements about BTS that they did not like, starting the video with the opening line, 'Let me tell you. If there's one fandom you don't want to anger, its BTS ARMY.'

This collaborative effort, or act of 'participatory fandom' (Lee and Nguyen, 2021, p. 840) is an example of how much influence a fandom – despite no central official organisation within it – is able to collectively work together to generate power, which in turn has a profound effect on their idols careers and success. This is how the notion of discipline as a mechanism of power is created on the fans end; through relentless support and eagerness to see their favourite idols succeed, and anybody who stands in their way will face the consequences.

The relationship between idols and fans without prior knowledge of how fans support their idols, may appear as if the fan is the one being exploited. After all, they are the consumers that idols must work hard to extract money from and into the pockets of their music labels. Idols do this mainly through 'digital intimacy' (Chang and Park, 2019), which is orchestrated by their labels and even themselves. By creating numerous contents such as dance practice videos, reality shows, daily vlogs and other various creative content outputs, idols are able to build long-lasting parasocial relationships with their fans (Xiong, 2020). To put it precisely, 'this active communication via social media creates a reciprocal, creative, and social intimacy' between the fandom and the idol (Chang and Park, 2019, p. 270).

But when applying Foucault's notion of discipline to understand this intricate and complex relationship, it becomes clear to see that the fans actually embody discipline in the idols lives. They operate as a surveillance; to the point where they have the ability to micromanage and oversee the idols careers, just like a music label would. It is almost as if in the realm of K-pop there exists two types of companies: the one idols are officially signed and contracted to work for, and the unofficial 'fan company' (Jung, 2012); the group that holds huge stakes in the idols overall success.

The 'fetishistic gaze' (Zysik, 2021, p. 13) of the fans can even lead to deeply disturbing behaviours displayed by them. From stalking, to breaking into idols homes to install spy cams, to chasing idols cars in taxis (Zysik, 2021) – the fans operate as an all-seeing big brother which idols cannot see yet know is constantly watching them. So much so, that they rarely speak up, fight back, or advocate for their humanity and privacy because the disciplinary processes that they have been subjected to, from the moment that they became trainees, have conditioned their bodies into cooperation. Foucault (1984, p. 182) states that, 'disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination', which is why the power relations between idols and their fans will always tip in the fans favour. Because it is through their bodies, through their abilities to perform, to maintain a perfect appearance, to remain docile and obedient at all times, that fans are able to extract their source of loyalty and faithfulness from them – entertainment. This relationship is not one-sided though; while fans rely on idols for entertainment, idols rely on them for survival. The fans are essentially their bread and butter and without them, living would be near impossible.

An example of this can be seen in a film released by Starship titled '*MONSTA X: The Dreaming*', where members of Monsta X discussed their feelings towards their fandom "Monbebe". One member called Minhyuk stated that, 'Monbebe are like a mother-figure to me. They cloth me, feed me and put me to sleep.'

This statement, although endearing and sweet, highlights the complex and intimate relationships idols share with their fans. During promotions, the film was heavily marketed as a gift to Monbebe's, and even in the ending scene credits, "with MONBEBE" was plastered across the screen, as if to symbolise their fans contributions to the film, and to show appreciation for them.
By actively performing fan service – which is an act of self-discipline and self-regulation in itself – idols are able to keep their fandom satisfied and intact, which in turn ensures their survival.

It could be argued though that the one who truly holds all the power are indeed the music labels; the all-seeing panoptical entity that owns the means of production; the capitalist that only cares about profit and how to make more of it (Robinson, 1983). The music labels may find themselves going out of their way to please the fans, but they are not at the mercy of them because of how replaceable their products are. If the products are replaceable, then so too are the fandoms. The fandoms are nothing more than a 'panoptical apparatus' (Zysik, 2021, p.7), through which music labels can exert over, and through, the idols bodies. To them, the fans are like an assistant; an 'additional external surveillance'; an entity through which 'the disciplinary actions of the company are conveyed and transferred into the public sphere' (Zysik, 2021, p. 7). Although the idols bodies are a site in which fans can exercise control, can utilise, and can configure however they choose, in the end, the music labels can do the same to both.

In conclusion, by using a Foucauldian approach to attempt to comprehend the complicated and interwoven relationship between idols, fans and music labels, the inhumane exploitation that idols are subjected to become exposed. In this essay, I have established how from their very conception, 'K-pop idols are commercial products that a management company recruits, trains, promotes and markets based on a pre-determined concept or theme' (Kim, 2019, p. 133). The intention of creating them is to become consumable products that are distributed and utilised to maximise profit for music labels. Foucault (1984) states that 'the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body' (p. 173), and so from the moment a person becomes a trainee, their bodies are put under strict conditions in order to become docile ones, their humanity stripped away from them.
To maintain this status quo, music labels also discipline fans by producing a cult of fandom through the products that surround idols, and the idols themselves. This is how fans are transformed into panoptical apparatuses of the labels and how they too are exploited, because the constant attention of fans is needed to maximise economic profit (Kim, 2017). To keep the fandoms engaged, they must use the idols bodies, their physical labour of dancing, performing, appearing on variety shows, conducting fan meets and constantly churning out content to achieve this. The link between slavery and capitalism clearly still exists, it has just metamorphosed into something more subtle and elusive; something that isn't obvious to see yet is very much ever-present.

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HOW ASSEMBLAGE THINKING AIDS UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL

RUTH HAYDEN-WASON

Module: Social Theory II

This essay will address assemblage thinking in understanding the social. The essay will examine the different ways that assemblages are prevalent in our understanding of social relations. To do this, the essay will draw on theories from Gabriel Tarde (2000 [1899]) and Alfred North Whitehead (1929) whilst acknowledging Karen Barad's (2007) ideas of intra action. The essay will look at a real-life example from Tamboukou (2020) of how assemblages are embedded in the nature of all human relations. To understand the social, we should discuss microsociology as an idea that pays homage to assemblages and the entanglements embedded. Microsociology gives us the perfect canvas to create a bigger picture of the social. There are numerous ways that assemblages intersect with different aspects of the social, such as identity, connections with others and with inanimate objects. In this context, 'the social' refers to society, interactions, social relations and all that joins one to another. Assemblages could be thought as the webbing that connects someone like me in London, to someone in Western Africa, who grows cocoa beans for the company who produce my favourite chocolate bar. However, assemblages can look different and take other forms which we will now discuss.

Assemblage thinking can aid us quite adequately in understanding the social. Many theorists follow similar discourse when discussing assemblages, with slight tweaks in regard to how they help us understand social relations (Deleuze, 1987:3, and Tarde, 1929). I will now draw on the work of Gabriel Tarde (2000, [1899]), Alfred North Whitehead (1929) and Karen Barad (2007) to explicate and examine assemblages. Although there are many similarities between theorists, there are also many differences that we will discuss throughout the essay.

The first theorist we will discuss, is Gabriel Tarde who is considered the father of microsociology. Tarde's ideas relating to social interaction are very closely linked to the idea of assemblages and understanding the social. What sets Tarde apart from many other theorists of his time is his focus on the 'infinitely minute' (Tarde, 2000 [1899]:95). Tarde believed that everything we know about the universe and everything that makes it up comes from the 'invisible and inscrutable, —out of a seeming nothingness, —whence all reality emerges in an inexhaustible stream' (Tarde, 2000 [1899]:95). Tarde speaks imaginatively here but, the theory is solid. If we strip back what we do know about life on earth, we know that all life comes from atoms, and to be even more pedantic, subatomic particles. As we cannot see subatomic particles or atoms, or molecules, he is correct, everything we know on earth is made up of the 'invisible and inscrutable' (Tarde, 2000 [1899]:95). Consequently, this influences social relations and society as well as helps us understand it because without small or invisible we would not have big and visible.

Tarde questioned traditional sociology and thought that 'there is no science of the individual as such; all science is general; that is, it considers the individual as repeated, or as capable of indefinite repetition' (Tarde, 2000 [1899]:8). By this he meant that we cannot separate nature from society because both function under the same laws and should be examined in the same way. Because scientists work within a laboratory setting and work with small entities for example a cell or organ, Tarde believed this is how sociologists should work too but, the entity, instead of cells, would be people. He thought that it is only when we understand what these people have to say and we can observe their interactions, can we start to understand the bigger social relations that he wanted to explain. I agree with Tarde's ideas here regarding science. If we think about the creation of the planet, biological and human life it is just chemistry and chemical reactions.

Imitative relations for Tarde, were at the heart of social cohesion and relations are established through a natural desire to mimic. He also thought that interactions were a mixture of social relations and biology (Tarde, 2000 [1899]:16). How this relates to assemblage thinking in understanding the social arguably, starts at this point. The reason for this is because assemblages and assemblage theories are the mutual constitution of entangled agencies (Barad, 2007:33). In this case, it would be social relations and biology. Not only does biology set the foundations of life on earth but, also gives humans the ability to do all of the things they do, like sing, dance or hurt someone. This is one example of how assemblage theories can be used to understand the social in relation to Tarde's ideas.

These ideas of mimicry and imitation arguably helped Tarde shape his ideas about his approach to sociology. Because he thought that imitation was at the heart of everything we do (Tarde, 2000 [1899]) this helped him think about how this is so. He did this by creating three social laws: repetition, opposition and adaptation and Tarde (2000 [1899]:9) states that:

> Thus, science consists in viewing any fact whatsoever under three aspects, corresponding, respectively, to the repetitions, oppositions, and adaptations which it contains, and which are obscured by a mass of variations, dissymmetries, and disharmonies

This triplet is very cohesive and helps us understand the way that the social is formed. We repeat what we see, through reading or hearing something (Tarde, 2000 [1899]:94). When we repeat these things, we also oppose them. Maybe this is because repeating helps humans understand things better and thus gives people the agency to have an opinion on an action or noise and so on. Through the opposition, we are able to adapt because we are able to understand how we feel about certain things, we can adapt to make something easier for us, to make sense of things better or even to make the said action better than what it previously was. Adaptation is a combination of repetition and opposition. Additionally, Tarde believes opposition holds extra importance within this frame because it aids repetition to develop into invention. We adapt to new ideas, new social norms and practices through this notion of repetition, opposition and adaptation. This idea is solidified by Tarde's (2000 [1899]:31) writing:

> When, for instance, in a group, the need is felt of expressing a new idea by a new word, the first individual who finds an expressive image fitted to meet that need has only to pronounce it, when immediately it is echoed from one neighbor to another, till soon it trembles on every lip in the group in question, and later spreads even to neighboring groups.

The second theorist we will discuss is Alfred North Whitehead (1929), a philosopher and mathematician who was responsible for the idea of the 'philosophy of the organism' (Whitehead,1929). From this concept, one can already deduce that this work is based around the philosophy of the small, similar to Tarde. However, what sets Whitehead apart from Tarde is the crucial philosophical underpinning of assemblage theories. Whitehead's notion, or couplet (as we will go on to discuss) of 'permanence and flux' (Whitehead, 1929:338) is very important when thinking about societies and social relations. Permanence and flux are what allows us as humans, to understand the way the world changes and stays the same, for example - seasons. Seasons come and go every year; we know that in January it is cold and in August it is hotter. Each year however, the seasons also change. The seasons are the permanence but, the uncertainty of how hot a summer will be in comparison to the previous years, or if it will snow in London this winter is the flux element in this interplay.

We can take this one step further, in a more metaphorical context and argue that because Whitehead thinks we should treat nature and social relations the same, that we can take social laws as 'the permanence' and social relations, as always in flux. According to Tarde, we use mimicry to learn under the law of repetition. This mimicry will continue long into the future, through instinctual and cognisant feelings, although the unique human body which imitates will cease to exist through the natural occurrence of death. Because social relations change and human beings cease to exist, that does not mean that social laws do not continue to function in their permanence.

This notion of 'permanence and flux' (Whitehead, 1929:338) is one that thoroughly captures the essence of what it means to be human. Society and social relations are not fixed but, they are also not in constant movement. Additionally, Whitehead (1929:338) thinks that:

> permanence can be snatched only out of flux; and the passing moment can find its adequate intensity only by its submission to permanence.

From this we can deduce that these notions should not be split, thus become a couplet, which Whitehead goes on to confirm by stating 'those who would disjoin the two elements can find no interpretation of patent facts' (Whitehead, 1929:338)

Intra actions are also a paramount idea embedded in assemblages and assemblage thinking. This is because our agency and intra actions subconsciously help us navigate assemblages. Intra actions, unlike interactions, is what is happening both within and among us as opposed to what is happening just among us (Barad,2007). The third theorist, Karen Barad (2007), believes that our identities do not constitute our relations with others but rather, that we *are* the relations we emanate. In turn, we are constituted through our relations. Barad (2007:10) states:

> Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating.

Additionally, in relation to the writing of the book, Barad plays with the idea that the book and the author (Barad) have 'intra-actively written each other' (Barad, 2007:x) through the many components that constitute both 'book and author' (Barad, 2007:x).

This idea stands strong and it can be used in regard to understanding social relations too. Babies are perhaps, a good example of how intra actions are embodied, within and among us and how different assemblage components constitute the development of a baby. Babies subconsciously take in the environment around them. They are not equipped with the language or understanding to make sense of their environment. However, babies absorb their surroundings and interactions with the world which in turn, helps 'write' the baby, their actions and who they become. Agency is to be seen as something emerging through relations and intra-actions, in this context (Barad,2007:198). With that in mind, we again draw on Barad's writing in which she believes 'agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has' (Barad, 2007:198).

Some babies grow up in environments of war. Babies cannot run away or keep themselves out of danger in this kind of environment and rely on their parents to do so. Some babies however, when they grow up, have a subconscious internalisation of their environment as a child which means that certain agency they have in later life, is affected and constituted by particular assemblages such as war that they will have experienced. They may not understand why they have a will to act in a certain way, however this does not mean that this will to act changes.

Thinking of a newborn baby as a blank canvas, which is however underlined by invisible subatomic particles, atoms, molecules which the bodily organs and nervous system are constituted from, with no understanding of who they are (lack of individuality) we can begin to understand the forces of complex assemblages. The family assemblage, environmental assemblages (for example if someone has grown up around or have experiences of violence in the home or war), and the assemblage of the home, (which could include themes of class) consequently shape and develop their relations, identities and attitudes to life.

Tamboukou (2020) writes on mobility assemblages and highlights a particular real-life example of how assemblages help us understand the social. Through citing 'Nadia's story' (Tamboukou, 2020:2) the many instances of how the social is shaped by assemblages becomes clear. In 'Nadia's story' (Tamboukou, 2020), we follow the path of a 15-year-old girl who is displaced from her home country Afghanistan because of violence and war. Nadia's mother makes the decision to leave Afghanistan with both Nadia and her other daughter. Nadia is later separated from them both at the border of Turkey and is left alone to try and figure out how to find them. During this time, Nadia becomes a child labourer for three years in a garment factory where she endures many terrible things such as a potential child marriage, child labour, and solo travel as a child. Because of these experiences, she has a desire to push on and continue to fight for her freedom and find a way out of her situation.

Following this story, we can also see how the assemblage of war gives intra actions a chance to become visible, because Nadia (subconsciously) attempted to make a positive change to her life from the experience with this assemblage. Nadia's actions come from within, so in that context it could be argued that she intra acts with the assemblage which surprisingly ends up with a positive outcome. Even though she goes through all of these events and more, Nadia's desire to look for her lost family and escape 'capitalist and patriarchal regime of the Istanbul garment workshop' (Tamboukou, 2020:244) is also the inspiration for her to 'sustain(s) her struggle to persevere and insist' (Tamboukou, 2020:244). We can already see, how the assemblage of war in this instance, shapes Nadia's identity even further. We could also argue that embedded in this story are Tarde's social laws too, from the way Nadia repeats, opposes and adapts through the assemblage.

Drawing on the ideas of both Tarde and Whitehead, we can start to understand how assemblage theories can explain the social. Using the couplet of 'permeance and flux' (Whitehead, 1929:338), and Tarde's (2000 [1899]) social laws of repetition, opposition and adaptation we can see how this can be used within the context of social relations today. Assemblages are the uniting of different eventual or influential components and the entanglements that constitute someone's identity [or shunning of]. These said events shape us, influence us, guide us and deter us from doing or even thinking of certain things. Immediately this helps us understand the social because reasons are presented for why someone may act the way that they act or do the things that they do.

In the aforementioned example from Tamboukou (2020) we can see assemblages are complicated and, in some cases, can be subjective. When thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic as an assemblage and its components which include (but, are not restricted to): wearing a mask, staying at home, getting vaccinated, washing your hands, working from home (and so on) we begin to see that what may be a component of an assemblage for me, may not be part of the assemblage for another. For example, wearing a mask, was not only something that split the nation in terms of the opinion of this action but, it also caused confrontation between one another. Perhaps we could name this differentiation in the assemblages as 'assemblage split' for a more appropriate name. How this particular assemblage helps us understand the social could draw on Tarde's model of repetition, opposition and adaptation. Some repeat mask wearing and, through the repetition, form their opinions and, oppose this action then, consequently, adapt to not wearing a mask.

We could apply this thinking to the family assemblage too. The subjectivity of what the components of family and family life are in the assemblage will be different depending on the repetition, opposition and adaptation formed through the individual in question. There are myriad assemblages that contain this type of aforementioned 'assemblage spilt'. 'Assemblage split' could also help us think about the earlier ideas of permeance and flux. Within this context, assemblages become the permanence, something that will be and has always been but, individual subjectivity of components of an assemblage is the fluctuating component in the couplet. The components will constantly flow and change and can become something else entirely.

The relation to the social and these ideas can be perceived in countless of ways. Firstly, they can help us *understand* the social, because of the way this idea creates differences in people. Our identities become unique through this model and consequently, shape our society, our social relations and imaginations of society. Secondly, these ideas can help us *embody* the social because of the way we act in response to 'assemblage splits'. The confrontation from opposing assemblage components (such as wearing a mask) means that confrontation becomes an embodiment of the social. This thinking can be linked to Barad because this embodiment can be categorised as intra action(s).

So, as we have discussed, myriad notions are entangled in assemblages and assemblage thinking. Assemblages help us understand the social because of the way we react and act in accordance with the components of different assemblages and how permanence and flux give another dimension to assemblages through the stationary and moving properties of assemblage characteristics. Intra-actions also add to this understanding of the social through the idea of our identities being made up of our enactment with others. Consequently, assemblage splits show us the embodiment of these intra actions. Assemblages are complicated and, as we have seen, there are many ways to interpret the ways to understand them.

In this essay, we have visited some of the ways that assemblages (and assemblage thinking) help us understand the social. Many themes and ideas are embedded in the notion of assemblages. Using the ideas discussed, we can start to look at social life a bit differently and additionally, think about our inter and intra actions as something that is not just exclusive to the human body. For all relations on earth, human, animal, inanimate, we can use these notions to discuss them and this is a good model to follow. Even in the event of the extinction of humans; plants, atoms and subatomic particles will still use Tarde's notion of repetition, opposition and adaptation to keep producing the biological necessities to harbour new life and shape reality into perhaps, something quite different. Without the micro relations such as particles, plants etc, there is no evolution of the social, meaning the micro is of paramount importance in assemblage thinking which assists in contextualising the social. The subjectivity of assemblages and assemblage splits additionally give reasons for how assemblages help us understand the social. Just having assemblage splits that come from subjectivity is a large contribution of the social. Tarde, Whitehead and Barad may not be a traditional triplet when discussing assemblages. However, the ideas entangle perfectly in the context of asking how assemblage thinking aids understanding the social.

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FIRST YEAR ESSAYS

HOW DO BODIES, SPACE AND TIME MATTER IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES? DISCUSS USING VISUAL EXAMPLES

ANA-MARIA PERCA

Module: Constructions of Identity

Identity is constructed by a series of symbolic frames, society formations, culture, individual experiences all intertwined in space, time, and bodies. In the following lines will be presented how these matter in the construction of identity with the focus on bodies and time.

Our identities are strongly connected and embodied with our natural bodies. The natural body refers to the bodies of people in the world, the ones that we need to live and composed of 60% water, different organs, bones, and minerals. We connect through society via our bodies most of the time and our identity starts budding during childhood and evolves in time until the endpoint long after we depart from this world. By the endpoint we refer to the memories which our beloved ones retain and things they discover about us, things that form our identities and they did not know while we were still alive. Pierre Bordieu believed that the body is the façade of different class-specific capitals which emanate in space and time. " Now, it must be recognized that techniques of the body constitute genuine systems, bound up with a whole cultural context." (Bourdieu, 2004). In addition, "…upbringing and social position lead them to be sensitive to 'tenue' (appearance, clothing, bearing, conduct)." (Bourdeu, 2004). As we change our bodies in time we swap most of our perceptions, identity and in the next lines, some examples will be provided of how these happened especially on feminine bodies.

Figure 1 – Paleolithic Goddess Venus Figurine

The photo in Figure 1, shows three little statuettes of Goddess Venus from the Paleolithic era. These represent the beauty standard of those times and they can be found across geographical spaces in different cultures and generations until soon after the middle ages (less in Greek culture). " Since the dawn of human history, the symbols of female fertility have been fat, very fat – particularly in the places where the female hormone, estrogen, sex, stores fat." (Frisch, 2002).

As Frisch mentions, back in time, for someone to be fat was difficult to achieve due to scarcity of food and hard conditions of living (2002). As a result, these goddesses and women with these types of body shapes were identified by their male counterparts as the preferred bodies in society. Their identity most probably was well known in the surrounding spaces where they lived and their shape contributed to gaining social capital. Fertility and mostly having lots of children to take the name further, and wealth were important in old societies. Time was of the essence in having the first son in the family with a healthy body. Not being able to conceive was one of the greatest sins and the mental wealth and identity of these women were greatly affected negatively.

In the 1920s the bodies shapes of women changed. In all the photos and representations of the era, such as books and movies, you will see women's bodies being slim and almost flat. To obtain a flat chest and androgynous body women wore undergarments that helped them to obtain a flat type of body and slip easily in those iconic dresses that we all know to recognize now. (Spiwack, 2003). Magazines started to publish ideal sizes and even to compare what a body shape should look like against the Roman goddess Venus (see Figure 2 below). This period coincided with female emancipation. They started to have better access to education, to jobs not accessible previously such as winning positions in journalism, education, medicine, and government. Many of them got involved in different aspects of social reform such as helping other women with lower incomes (Satter, 2001). They opened boarding houses, gained the right to vote, and "women sought to reconfigure female identity to fit a new economic order and a new order of subjectivity." (Satter, 2001). As a side note, is worth mentioning that Clara Bow from the image below was back then what we call today a " sex symbol" of the 1920s.

Coming back to the body shape, in a way, by having a flat body and short-cut hair, women tried to identify themselves on the same scale as men. Men almost always wore short hair and were slim due to their physical activities and the fact that they had to provide for their families. Women's in the 1920s started to share these roles with their male counterparts and these changes made them more confident and helped build stronger personal characters and identities. They could not be easily intimidated by difficult situations that arose in their paths and tried to solve them by themselves or with the help of their female friends. Men were not the first to hear about their worries anymore. They came on the second plan.

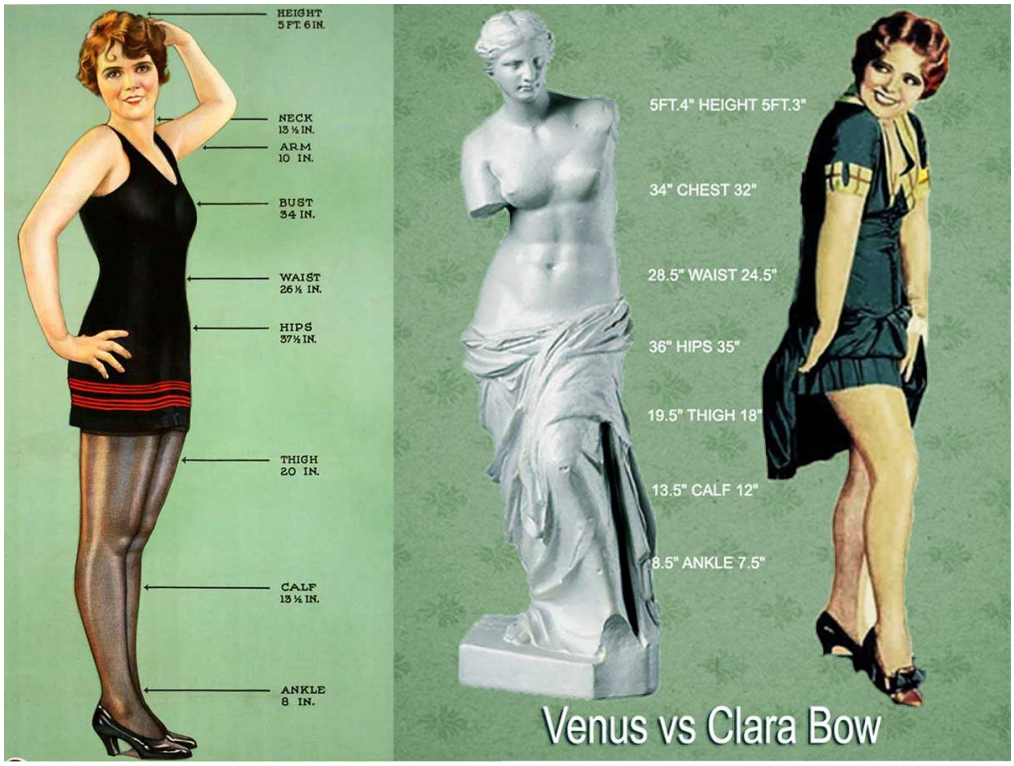

Figure 2 – Venus vs Clara Bow

Similarly, later in our times, the body shape of women changed again. Starting from 1960 to 2000 the perfect body was not flat anymore but slim with curves. The sizes 90-60-60 (chest -waist – hip line) were the new requirements in a matter of beauty. Men preferred thinner women and still do. (Fallon, Rozi, 1985). This might have to do with men's desire still to feel in power as their counterparts slowly invaded all social territories which have been for generations male designed. Having women with slim bodies and curves next to them unconsciously or consciously influenced their identity and made them feel like being "knights" or "warriors" in times of peace. This preference was noticed among Western cultures where there were no serious conflicts since the Second World War II. As being as thin as possible become a fashion, women of all generations started to feel pressure to get their bodies into shape. This needed a lot of work and sometimes huge sacrifices which influenced bodies identity and the identity of every generation. In addition, it is worth mentioning that these days society started to accept all types and sizes of bodies. New studies suggested that pressure on women to become slim had a devastating impact on health and made them feel less confident in life. As a result, embracing your body shape the way it is and not doing too much to change or harm it become slowly accepted by society.

We should not ignore men in these lines. Even though their body shape has not changed a lot over time, these days their identity started to change. Before they were characterized by being strong, not showing their feelings, and not sharing their worries with their female partners. These days, they started to open up, talk about their concerns, and most importantly they started to take care of their body image and use cosmetics or go regularly to gyms. This trend is demonstrating that the body is part of identity not only in women but in men too.

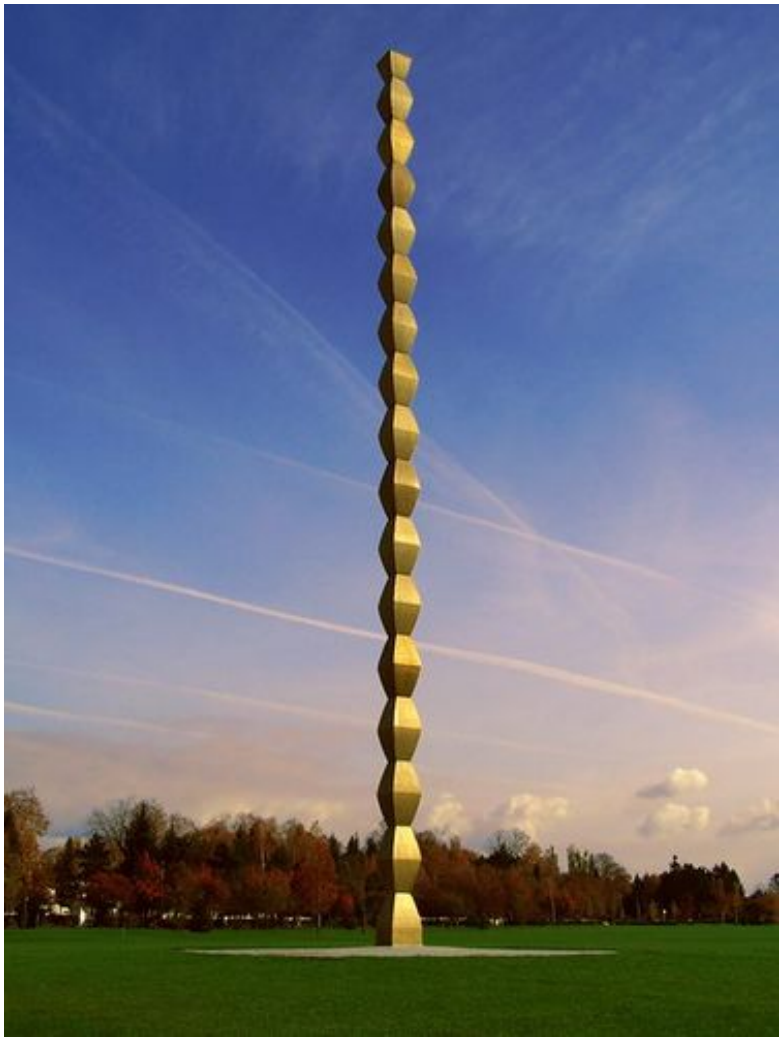

Figure 3 – The Endless Collum – by Constantin Brancusi

As we can see, from historical times, our perception of the body changed, and every generation designed and tried to modify it according to new standards of beauty. However, in every generation and across time, our bodies did not change too much. They have still the same structure bones, a heart, a pair of lungs, kidneys, and other necessary organs to function properly. We still need air, food, and water to survive. In time only our perception has changed and our standards of what we consider a beautiful body.

The Endless Collum from Figure 3 offers a good parallel on how generations succeeded to other generations similar to every module used in the creation of the collum. We can imagine, one module, one generation, one identity for that specific period. To make it a bit easier to understand we can imagine the Paleolithic era dominated by the representations of fat women. Later on, women with flat bodies become the symbol of the 1920s and the examples can continue until today.

The Endless Collum or Infinite Collum as it is known by the locals where is located it is a massive monument that was created and completed in 1938. Since then stands as a witness against time, space, and generations of people with different characters and identities.

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HOW DO BODIES, SPACE AND TIME MATTER IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES? DISCUSS USING VISUAL EXAMPLES

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Module: Constructions of Identity

Introduction

Bodies, space and time, have a significant impact on the construction of identities. And hip-hop culture serves as an example to illustrate how. Hip hop was born as a countercultural movement in the 70s and 80s and soon became mainstream, being a projector of influential lifestyles such as cinema or sports. In high modernity circumstances, the trend is to see the body as the core of a modern individual's sense of identity (Shilling, 2003, p1).

Hip hop aimed to spread a message not just through music and words but bodies and images as well. Even we can observe how it sets the trend nowadays, as I will explain in this case. I will first explain how bodies communicate a possessed identity, taking Queen Latifah as an example. Secondly, I will expose how bodies transmit identities and influence others to embrace and imitate them. For this purpose, I will use rapper Quavo and how the hip-hop industry utilizes bodies and the construction of identities to benefit. Lastly, I will illustrate how time and space are essential when people create identities and their effects. As Alfred North Whitehead (1985[1929]) points out that "we emerge from the world and not the world from us". I will use how time and place determined rapper 50 Cent identities to expound this.

Bodies' agency

The message transmitted by words is essential in the hip-hop movement, but the body also plays an indispensable role. The bodies permit actions to get involved in and shape the reality (Shilling, 2003, p.8). It does not matter if the statement claimed a peaceful world, women rights or the necessity to adopt a criminal life. Every artist supports their arguments and identity with the body, outfits and postures.

The picture above is an excellent example of how important the body is to create an identity and send a message. The image belongs to the rapper Queen Latifah's debut album cover. On it, she appears characterized as a leader of the Black Panther Party, stating the pride of her Afro-American status and roots, with a defensive but at the same time defiant attitude. In this way, she implies that she does not seek to attack anyone but is prepared to defend herself and her ideals. Also, appearing alone expresses her independence as a woman, strength, and leadership. All these facts help describe her circumstances, letting the other know beforehand what is coming from her (Goffman, 1956, p.1). Here, Queen Latifah is a clear example of embodied identity, seeing how she uses both representation and agency to announce what it is about when you press play.

Bodies creating and influencing identities

Once hip hop became one of the most followed movements, it started to use bodies to influence society and get profits. Considering the sales, people from different ethnic backgrounds embrace this culture (Mahiri cited in Morrell and Duncan-Andrade, 2002, p.88) and the increasing interest in the body (Shilling, 2003, p.1), the industry started to use all this to sell their products and simultaneously, identities that help its purpose. As Goffman (1956, p.3) says, "when an individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have". The hip hop industry uses the artists' bodies as manikins that symbolize success, wellbeing and wealth status, making the audience follow that pattern. "Music does not just shape people's actions, however, but plays an important part in how individuals form and sustain their identities" (Finnegan cited in Shilling, 2004, p.127). Thus, the hip-hop industry shapes the bodies of artists and fans, being the use of images a fundamental reinforcement for its message.

In this photo, we see what mainstream rappers have become. In it, we see the rapper Quavo showing off jewellery and expensive clothes in a video clip. In this respect, Goffman (1956, p.24) affirms that "the most important piece of sign equipment associated with social class consists of the status symbols through which material wealth is expressed". This means that objects such as jewels, luxury cars or big houses are used to prove the success and wealthy lifestyles. By doing this, rappers and hip-hop singers encourage the fans to follow this trend and behave in the same manner to be happy and prosperous as their idols look. Therefore, to adopt the appearance of a successful person, followers will buy the same clothes, accessories and stuff, being a lucrative business for the brands that previously have promoted their products via hip hop artists. Unfortunately, as we also note in the image, sometimes hip-hop industry also utilizes bodies as objects.

What we also see in the photo is a sample of women objectification. In this theory, Friedickson and Roberts (1997, p.175) argue that women are seen as just objects, and they and their bodies are only elements for other people's fun and enjoyment. Embracing this objectification, girls can end influenced and their development altered, internalizing and replicating that behaviour (Iwanicka et al., 2018, p.46). Simultaneously, this objectification of women affects male hip-hop followers, as it suggests that women's bodies are a material possession symbolizing wealth status. Thus, like having expensive shoes, gold watches and sports cars, a heterosexual man should boast of having women willing to satisfy his needs to be happy.

In this respect, social constructionism and symbolic interactionism are right about how bodies matter. Foucault, classified as poststructuralist, argues that discourses dominate bodies, while Goffman, who is seen as a social interactionist, does to body agency. (Shilling, 2003, pp.62-63). Shilling (2003, p.63) proposes that the two theorists are correct because "they both seek to hold on to a view of the body as central to the lives of embodied subjects, while also maintaining that the significance of the body is determined ultimately by social 'structures' which exist beyond the reach of individuals". As we saw, in hip-hop, bodies have the agency to create identities and influence others to do so. And at the same time, the hip-hop industry is a structure that shape identities using the bodies for its benefit, as I aforementioned.

Time and Space matter

When constructing identities, time and places matter, which can be seen in hip-hop culture. What we see in the photo above is another example of a successful identity but in a different context. In it, we observe the rapper 50 Cent posing like other mainstream rappers do, with symbols of wealthy status such as gold necklaces and luxury cars. However, what is also important is the place where he is. By standing next to the building corner with a 24-hour mini-market, he represents how important has been that place for him to become the successful artist and producer that he is today. 50 Cent grew up stopping by similar corners and areas, where he would see criminals and hustlers making a living as criminals. This influenced him to become a gangster, an aspect that later led him to exploit his creativity and write about his experiences. The place identity of an individual can communicate their background, manner of conducting themselves and posture about other locations (Tamboukou, 2021). What 50 Cent learned in his gangster days at the streets was used when negotiating and doing business in music and hip-hop industry.

He is showing a place attachment since, despite the success, he still stops by the places that made him who he is at present. According to Tamboukou (2021), place attachment describes the manners individuals link to diverse sites and the influences of these bonds in identity evolution. This means that 50 Cent is connected with where he grew up and developed his identity. Although he is a worldwide star with mansions in posh neighbourhoods and attends celebrities' parties, 50 Cent also has a sense of belonging that makes him hang out on street corners where he feels at home. However, the time has also influenced him when it comes to creating identities.

Though 50 Cent tries to show how the place he grew up influences his identity, he also illustrates how time does. As I mentioned, the rapper appears on the scene with wealthy symbols, which indicates his status. Thus, he implies that, in a sense, he is a different person than he was when hanging out younger on the corner. Yes, he still feels at home but has to represent that he is a successful artist and entrepreneur in specific ways. For that purpose, as other artists do, he uses the symbols I said above, the gold necklaces and luxury cars. Therefore, the passage of time has also influenced him and his identity.

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