

New Errands

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The Eastern American Studies Association and the American Studies Program at Penn State Harrisburg are pleased to present the fifth issue of *New Errands*, an online journal that publishes exemplary American Studies work by undergraduate students.

Seeking to develop the next generation of Americanists, *New Errands*' mission is both to provide a venue for the publication of important original scholarship by emerging young scholars and to provide a teaching resource for instructors of American Studies looking for exemplary work to use in the classroom.

New Errands will be published semi-annually, after the end of each academic semester. The goal of this timetable will be to collect and publish essays produced during the previous term, so that they can be made available as quickly as possible for use in the following term. We encourage both self-submission by undergraduate students and nominated submissions by instructional faculty. They must have an American focus, but can employ a variety of disciplinary methods. Submissions can be emailed as Word documents to: newerrandsjournal@gmail.com.

Essays can be of any length, but they must have a research focus. Any visual images should be placed at the end of the manuscript, and tags should be placed in the text to indicate the intended placement of each image. Manuscripts should conform to MLA guidelines. Papers found in this volume were presented at the Undergraduate Roundtable of the Eastern American Studies Association Annual Conference in March of 2019.

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For further information about the Eastern American Studies Association, including the annual undergraduate roundtable and the EASA undergraduate honors society, please visit: <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/eastern-american-studies-association>.

A Message from the Editors—

We at *New Errands* are proud to present papers that demonstrate new directions in American Studies, including a mixture of the outstanding papers from the Undergraduate Roundtable of the Eastern American Studies Association Annual Conference held in March 2019, as well as essays submitted from Penn State's own student body. These papers have been selected because they represent exemplary undergraduate research and demonstrate an appreciation for and critical understanding of American culture.

Encouraging undergraduate study and research of American culture and society is our goal at *New Errands*. By recognizing and publishing the exceptional work of undergraduate students, we are able to meet this goal. Our hope is to inspire a new generation of American Studies scholars and provide a forum to share their work.

We look forward to continuing this tradition in the years to come.

Maria Rovito

The Pennsylvania State University—Harrisburg

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Heroism Satirized, Subverted, Yet Static: The Epic Narrative of Jamaica Kincaid's *See Now Then*

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For the eight years that I studied Latin, I spent enough hours in technical puzzles of etymology and dactylic hexameter that I failed to pause and wonder about the moments beyond fleeting encounters with the island inhabitants along the journeys of Aeneas and his heroic peers. Aeneas has derived centuries of fame from his fleeting encounters with islands and peoples he “found,” and whose historical existence would have been naught without the proclamations of Virgil. The same narrative of fleeting encounter, brief existence, and prompt erasure applies to the lasting tales of epic heroes Odysseus and Achilles. In *See Now Then* Jamaica Kincaid rejects the fleetingness of the epic encounter, challenging these classical stories, which are the bedrock of much western literature, through subversive literature of her own. Written with the style, tone, and motifs reminiscent of an epic, *See Now Then* navigates and brings to light the unwritten spaces of epic poetry by satirically fetishizing the world of epic heroes and inquisitively fetishizing the worlds of “otherness” which these heroes fleetingly encounter. In framing the vignette of the Sweet family as a prolonged epic encounter with “otherness,” Kincaid reveals the institutionalized epic poem of fetishization and othering that is American history.

In the classically Kincaidian style of interwoven fact and fiction, *See Now Then* paints a vignette of the Sweet family, revealing familial truths and contradictions while telling a tale of domesticity. The self-proclaimed novel paints a temporally non-linear, thematically heroic story of the Sweet family, an eccentric unit of four whose colorful emotions and volatile relations juxtapose their textbook New England setting. Yet, littered with autobiographical truths and self-referential

details, *See Now Then* begs the question: is the Sweet family merely Kincaid's own? From Mrs. Sweet's Caribbean roots, to the tenuous relationships between Mrs. Sweet and each of her relatives, the details of the Sweet family both comprise the core of the vignette, and refer to undeniable truths in both Kincaid's history and the Caribbean's history. The result is a story as much about a single family as it is about indistinct historical timelines, trajectories, and truths, fluidly coexisting “any Now and any Then (they are always the same)” (90).

It is not insignificant, then, that *See Now Then* is littered with classical references to such an extent that the story itself nearly becomes a neoclassical fetishization of Greco-Roman culture. In the Sweets' postcard-esque neoclassical home, in their picturesque New England town, the Sweets are surrounded by neoclassical architecture, have classically-modeled government representatives who represent their populace, look out their neoclassical windows to view a neighboring house belonging to a Homer, and raise their children named Heracles and Persephone. Their home contains stories of the likes of *The Iliad* and *The Library of Greek Mythology*, and their son plays with Trojan Myrmidon toy soldiers. Kincaid inundates her story with classical references, decoratively inserted so as to effectively create an epic ode to classicism.

In fact, *See Now Then* not only references classicism, but embodies classical techniques such that it assumes the identity of an epic itself. Most immediately noticeable is its form: though Kincaid departs from hexametric lines, she embraces rambling sentences that roll from one subject to the next, creating a rhythmic flow analogous to the meandering journey of the epic hero. A classically omniscient narrator tells the story of *See Now Then*, leaving the reader with a sense of divinity in Kincaid's authorship. The expansive setting of the story also evokes an epic, with the main characters encountering cities and islands which emphasize the geographic and cultural differences between each place. Littered throughout are rhetorical devices ranging from metaphor to onomatopoeia. One epic element remains somewhat ambiguous: the heroism critical to the form may—rather subversively—belong to Mrs. Sweet, a rare female hero of color,

or— rather ironically— belong to Mr. Sweet, a male character typical in all ways except in his lack of heroism. Through these qualities— some typical, some subversive— *See Now Then* becomes an epic poem itself, with a didactic agenda that mandates exploration.

In its deviances from classical epic poetry, *See Now Then* serves as a subversive epic poem, reconfiguring classical silences and representational absences by newly constructing a satirized classical form. Kincaid uses classical references ad nauseam, as if satirically fetishizing both classical history and neoclassical culture. Take Mr. Sweet’s quaint American home, for example: “he could see his home, the Shirley Jackson house, the structure that held within it his doom, that prison and the guard inside, in bed already... lying there reading *The Iliad* or *The Library of Greek Mythology* by Apollodorus, his wife that horrible bitch who’d arrived on a banana boat” (9). The Shirley Jackson house fetishizes classically perfect columns and white purity of color. Mr. Sweet’s satirical journey home is punctuated by an awaiting wife, a protectress of domesticity, intimidating through her domestic power and classical Greek obsession. Yet the story takes place in a charming New England town, far from the turbulent Mediterranean seas that rocked the boats of countless classical heroes. And throughout the story, Mr. Sweet’s homecoming journey is complicated by his preference to his childhood home in New York City. These departures from and inconsistencies with classicism seem to poke fun at any heroic homecoming of Mr. Sweet, uprooting him from a heroic position in a heroic America. This setting, tone, and narrative walk the line between classical embodiment and classical fetishization, satirizing the story itself for its inseparability of a classical Greco-Roman and a modern American narrative.

Simultaneous to this satirical fetishization is an attempt to subvert classicism by exploring the “other” and the “found,” who are so often encountered fleetingly and dismissively in classical culture and epic poetry. Protectress of Mr. Sweet’s quaint neoclassical home, Mrs. Sweet “as a young woman... had been like a flower found in the deep jungles of the new Americas: a black dahlia, a brown marigold, a sea-green zinnia” (91). Though she contemporarily lives in a classical New England

house, Mrs. Sweet seems to have been swept up into Mr. Sweet’s heroic American wake, once “found” on an epic hero’s pit stop to an exotic island. While typical epic poetry leaves such exoticism in its place of ‘discovery’— leaving plunders and assaults in their heroic wake— Kincaid’s epic uproots the exotic other from foreignness and transplants her, in the form of Mrs. Sweet, into the civilized American home. Mrs. Sweet’s floral adolescence exemplifies mysterious “scenes of turbulence, upheavals, murders, betrayals, on foot, on land, and on the seas where horde upon horde of people were transported to places on the earth’s surface that they had never heard of or even imagined” (19). In bringing these “scenes of turbulence, upheavals, murders” to the site of homecoming, Kincaid subverts the classical model of discovery-and-abandonment. Mrs. Sweet serves as a foil to Mr. Sweet, an exotic fetishization to juxtapose his satirical fetishization, subverting the patriarchal implications of the *patria*.

Yet when Kincaid replaces the classical model by engaging with the story of the exotic other, she reveals the truth of a modern epic: engaging beyond first encounter with the “other” inevitably mandates violence that is both interpersonal and institutional. Even upon the epic ‘finding’ of Mrs. Sweet, and even after her arrival in the great site of Mr. Sweet’s American homecoming, she cannot shed her identity as Mr. Sweet’s “wife that horrible bitch who’d arrived on a banana boat.” Her description through banana boat arrival embraces epic rhetoric in its repetition and metonymy, representing other Caribbean immigrants and their derogatorily perceived likeness to quickly spoiling Caribbean banana imports. Not only is Mrs. Sweet unable to shed this derogatory label; this label also evolves to define her in America as “such a bitch and a beast... who knew what she was capable of? People who come on banana boats are not people you can really know and she did come on a banana boat” (14). Mrs. Sweet cannot escape exoticization and otherness, even when the epic form engages her beyond the moment of encounter. To write her into being, in ways both similar to and subversive of classical poets, inevitably includes derogatory fetishization that fails to achieve the confident satire of her white male American counterpart.

In an attempt to liberate the marginalized and exoticized “other” from the epic form, Kincaid ultimately reveals that fetishization of this “other” is inherent to the epic American narrative. The satirical fetishization of the American Mr. Sweet ultimately juxtaposes an derogatory fetishization of Mrs. Sweet. The result is twofold: first, the “other” cannot escape exoticization, even through a Caribbean woman’s authorship; second, this juxtaposition reinforces the exoticness of the “other” within the stasis of the American and the classical. The Sweets’ children hint at the perpetuation of American othering: Heracles exemplifies classical heroism in American culture through his love of the Myrmidon toy soldiers he receives with his McDonalds Happy Meal, while Persephone exemplifies fetishized feminine beauty, and the simplicity of her fetishization hints at the continued American inability to engage beyond exoticization. In spite of Kincaid’s efforts at liberation from exoticization, Mrs. Sweet remains “other,” while her children perpetuate the American epic of heroism and othering. Kincaid’s epic satirizes a patriarch, discomfits a matriarch, yet upholds the power of the classical narrative. In this conclusion, one is left with the bitter taste of an epic hero’s heroism marred significantly, yet incompletely.

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Continuous “Conspicuous Consumption”?: Thorstein Veblen and American Expenditure Habits

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Near the end of the Gilded Age, a new class of Americans began to form, a class defined by its relative economic security and high-paying wages. Individuals in this developing middle class held a social stance that was not quite upper class but was considerably above lower class standing. This intermediary position led middle class individuals to be “other-directed,” meaning they took their social cues not from themselves, but from their observations of others.¹ Middle class other-directedness resulted in this group simultaneously living in fear of being perceived as lower class while striving to be perceived as upper class, making them prime targets for advertisers and the drivers of America’s oft-cited “conspicuous consumption”²—the purchasing of unnecessary items purely for social status. In this essay, I make two claims. First, I argue that what was true in the late nineteenth century remains true today, as the middle class is still largely controlled by clever marketers and businesses who prey off of their insecurities to keep them conspicuously consuming. Second, I question the inherent negativity of American partiality towards conspicuous consumption—is it indisputably bad that Americans seek products that enhance their social standing? Before answering this and other questions, I begin with a description of economic conditions at the turn of the twentieth century.

The late nineteenth century United States’ economic landscape was one of vastly uneven wealth distribution. Charles Orser, professor of anthropology at Vanderbilt University, describes the

growing disparity between the wealthy and the poor during the Gilded Age as “a form of instability that appeared to be endemic to the nation’s economic system.”³ Though America’s economic system remained intact, this was only possible because of a concentrated effort amongst the wealthy to maintain their superior position, largely through the establishment of monopolies and trusts, or, in other words, methods of corruption unrivaled in recent American history. Individuals like J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and John Rockefeller, the “captains of industry” who made unfathomable amounts of money and dominated their portions of the economy, ran this period of American life.⁴ These men found incredible success and became the most envied people in the country—many Americans worked hard to see their “American Dream” come true like it did for Morgan, Carnegie, and Rockefeller.

However, very few Americans were able to achieve this dream. People like the “Captains of Industry” constituted less than 1% of the American population, meaning they were an elite group that lived in abnormally luxurious circumstances. The vast majority of Americans—around 80%—lived very different lives marked by hard work and frequent economic instability. Jacob Riis described in detail the conditions most urban Americans faced in his 1890 publication *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York*. In this study, Riis depicts housing conditions that today would be considered unlivable but were typical for lower-class individuals in urban settings during the Gilded Age.

According to Riis, New York contained over 37,000 tenant houses by the late nineteenth century, in which around 1,200,000 people lived, or over three-fourths of New York’s population. In *How the Other Half Lives*, Riis says “there [was] no way out of...the ‘system’” that forced people to stay in these houses, and that all people could do was “make the best of a bad bargain.” Riis admits that tenements

¹ George M. Zinkhan and Ali Shermohamad, “Is Other-Directedness on the Increase?: An Empirical Test of Riesman’s Theory of Social Character,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 13, no. 1 (1986): 127.

² Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 33.

³ Charles E. Orser, “Why the Gilded Age... and Why Now?,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16, no. 4 (2012): 625.

⁴ Fouad Ajami, “Their Gilded Age—and Ours,” *The National Interest*, no. 63 (2001): 39.

had improved since they were first built in large numbers in the 1860s, as by the late nineteenth century new tenements included air shafts and improved sanitation control. Many of the old tenements remained, however, and even the new ones still provided horrible living conditions, with air “fouler than the mud of the gutters” and “dark and unhealthy rooms often over wet cellars” where “extreme overcrowding was permitted.”⁵

Many who lived in these tenements worked factory jobs under equally unbearable circumstances. In his muckraking novel *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair details the Chicago meat-packing industry’s conditions, which were outright dangerous for workers. Sinclair notes the inevitability of injury for workers in these factories, injuries that resulted from frigid conditions and unregulated machinery.⁶ Factory owners considered workers expendable, which ultimately forced them into financial instability—they could be fired at any moment and had no real social safety net. Almost all industrial workers faced consistent financial insecurity. Riis notes that women in New York “could not survive without assistance” because of the low salaries they typically earned.⁷ Sinclair describes multiple occasions in which workers fell into vats of meat product and were simply left to be chopped up. This effectively summarizes the working environment for unskilled laborers in the late nineteenth century: they were considered so insignificant that they could literally be consumed in the same way as the products they produced.⁸

The remaining 20% of the American population constituted the nascent middle class. The Gilded Age middle class remains an incredibly difficult group to define, especially given the limited data available from this era regarding an individual’s or family’s income. In addition to this

complication, different people define the middle class using varying standards. Some equate middle class status with economic excess while others equate middle class status with strict frugality.⁹ For the purposes of this paper, I define the Gilded Age middle class as the group of Americans that maintained financial stability compared to the bottom 80% of society, but whose wealth paled in comparison to the top 1%. This is the group of Americans that Alan Trachtenberg classifies as middle class in his book *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*. In this work, Trachtenberg says the Gilded Age middle class represented the “deliberate and conscious alternative to two extremes: the lavish and conspicuous squandering of wealth among the very rich, and the squalor of the very poor.”¹⁰

Middle class individuals often worked in salaried positions as supervisors or managers, meaning they had financial stability and at least some expendable income. These individuals typically lived in America’s growing suburbs, which were located directly outside of large cities in less polluted, more desirable areas. Middle class suburban dwellings were often comfortable and relatively spacious, especially as compared to lower class housing.¹¹ Many of these middle class residencies included parlors, a space in which a family could display items that portrayed a certain cultured status.¹² Parlors acted as a barrier between the residents of the house and the outside world—visiting guests would rarely move beyond the parlor, which was often situated directly behind the front door of the house, effectively preventing the guest from seeing the space in which the family actually lived.¹³ Middle class families would purchase sets of fancy books and busts of Julius Caesar to display in their parlors, as much of American society considered these items

⁵ Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970 [1890]), 4, 14-15.

⁶ Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Doubleday, 1904), 132.

⁷ Riis, 153.

⁸ Sinclair, 105.

⁹ NPR Staff, “A Portrait of America's Middle Class, by the Numbers,” *NPR* (July 7, 2016): 1.

¹⁰ Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hili and Wang, 1982), 143.

¹¹ Trachtenberg, 88, 145, and 160.

¹² Shirley Teresa Wajda, “The Commercial Photographic Parlor, 1839-1889,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 6 (1997): 217.

¹³ Sally McMurry, “City Parlor, Country Sitting Room: Rural Vernacular Design and the American Parlor, 1840-1900,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 20, no. 4 (1985): 262.

demonstrative of a family's "high class" wealth and prestige. A parlor's interior "represented the best the family could afford," meaning middle class families quite literally used their parlors as a façade to display their supposed wealth.¹⁴

This was a defining characteristic of the "Gilded"—not "Golden"—Age: appearance, not substance, was what truly mattered. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner famously critiqued this aspect of American culture in their era-defining book, *The Gilded Age*, in which they framed life in the postbellum United States as a "contrived 'Gilding' masking an inferior reality."¹⁵ Twain and Warner, along with many other critics of the Gilded Age, consistently condemned the newly forming American "imperative to consume" centered around "pretentious material wealth," or, in other words, the constant drive to purchase flashy material goods simply because of their novelty.¹⁶

Gilded Age critics generally took aim at the middle class, whose financial stability allowed them to engage in consumer culture, which they exhibited in their parlors. Trachtenberg wrote that the mechanization of the United States allowed the "mass production of culture in the form of consumable objects," which the middle class generally considered to be "inscribed with culture."¹⁷ Demonstrating one's cultural literacy by displaying material possessions came to be a defining characteristic of the Gilded Age middle class, a physical manifestation of the "contrived gilding" articulated by Twain and Warner.

Thorstein Veblen, a late-nineteenth century sociologist and economist, wrote a compelling commentary on the middle class in his 1899 book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, in which he articulates the theory behind mindless materialism, coining the term "conspicuous consumption."¹⁸ Veblen argued that many economists at the time

commonly assumed that the "leisure class," or the above defined middle class, "consume[d] freely and of the best in food, drinks, narcotics, shelter, services, ornaments, apparel... [etc.]" because of the "higher efficiency of the improved products."¹⁹ Opposed to this line of thinking, Veblen posited that the "leisure class" had ulterior motives for consuming these products, motives not only centered around the "evidence of wealth" ascribed to certain consumer goods, but also because of the "mark of inferiority and demerit" associated with not having them.²⁰ In short, Veblen challenged the notion that the Gilded Age middle class purchased an item because of its utility, instead attributing their consumption habits to the perceived social status assigned to that item. This disputes the belief that consumers buy goods for their own tangible benefit, an assumption that nineteenth century economists consistently made.²¹ Instead, Veblen argued, middle class Americans purchased an item because of the potential *social* payouts of owning it—a status-related signal not necessarily indicative of middle-class consciousness towards a product's "higher efficiency."

Veblen's thesis is supported by the consumption habits of the middle class during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²² By 1900, middle class families owned more pianos than bathtubs.²³ Pianos became a hallmark item of the middle class, indicating prestige and class by explicitly showing the differences in spending power between the lower and middle classes. Middle class families quite obviously did not need to own a piano, and especially as compared to a bathtub, pianos did not provide much utility. A bathtub could be used to clean one's body and prevent diseases; a piano was a large, clunky, oftentimes ostentatious item that would merely sit in a family's parlor. As Veblen argues, middle-class families intentionally chose not to purchase a home

¹⁴ Wajda, 217.; McMurry, 262-263.

¹⁵ Paul R. Mullins and Nigel Jeffries, "The Banality of Gilding: Innocuous Materiality and Transatlantic Consumption in the Gilded Age," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16, no. 4 (2012): 746.; Mark Twain and Charles Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (San Francisco: American Publishing Company, 1874).

¹⁶ Mullins and Jeffries, 746.

¹⁷ Trachtenberg, 150.

¹⁸ Veblen, 33.

¹⁹ Veblen, 35.

²⁰ Veblen, 36.

²¹ Mullins, 746.

²² Trachtenberg, 150.

²³ Denes Agay, "An Early American Treasure Trove," *Clavier* 29, no. 8 (1990): 24.

fixture with utility, instead acquiring an item that indicated social standing.

On a larger scale, American Gilded Age mass consumerism was displayed during the Colombian Exposition, the United States' iteration of a then-periodical event held in many of the Western world's largest cities that aimed to provide the host country with a chance to show off its strengths. This macro representation of Gilded Age materialism helps to contextualize the motivations behind American middle-class purchasing decisions by providing a wider perspective of the United States' status-oriented drive to consume.

The Colombian Exposition was preceded by an Exposition held in Paris which led to the construction of the Eiffel Tower. At the time, many considered the Eiffel Tower to be one of the world's foremost engineering feats, but the miniature city built in south-eastern Chicago for the Colombian Exposition quickly made the Eiffel Tower appear dated. Top American architects designed the almost 200 structures constructed for the Exposition, the vast majority of which were temporary structures designed to be destroyed within a few years. These buildings remain some of the largest structures ever built by humans in terms of square footage. They produced an astounding 500,000 square feet of reusable glass when dismantled. In addition to these structures, the Exposition commissioned the construction of a 264-foot tall Ferris wheel, which eventually housed a full brass band in one of the wheel's cabins that played as the wheel made its rotations. A wide assortment of exhibits supplemented these structures, ranging from an American industrial museum to an entire series of exhibitions featuring actual human beings that supposedly demonstrated the trajectory of humanity, beginning with "primitive" Native Americans and other aboriginal peoples, moving to the "middling" Egyptians and Europeans, and finally ending with the "White City," an electrically-illuminated display of "superior" white Americans. These exhibits, along with the

grandiosity of the city built for the event, impressed the over 27 million people from around the world who visited the Exposition during its six-month run.²⁴

Realistically, the Exposition was an over-the-top, unnecessary expenditure used to display American strength and assumed superiority. In other words, Twain and Dudley's analysis of Gilded Age material motivations was correct—this truly was a tactile representation of "pretentious material wealth" that masked "inferiority" with the façade of greatness. At the time of the Exposition, the United States felt the need to prove itself geopolitically and saw the event as an opportunity to impress its European counterparts. The United States was, and still is, a relatively young country that claims to be an improvement upon the societies created by Europeans and thus felt, and still does feel, the need to aggressively project its standing. Constructing an entire city for a six-month Exposition was inherently futile and represents America's insecurities concerning its global positioning, insecurities that necessitated a display of strength. In short, the Colombian Exposition was a microcosm of the Gilded Age American mindset: showing off material wealth to mask insecurities deriving from perceptions of inferiority.

The American middle class employed this mindset to its fullest, engaging in the small-scale equivalent of the Columbian Exposition by purchasing unnecessary material goods to display in their parlors. In this way, the middle class—and the United States on a global scale—was other-directed, a coin termed by Sociologist David Reisman to describe the social motivations behind decision making habits. If a group is other-directed, they have a certain "sensitivity to the expectations and preferences of others."²⁵ This has implications for that group's consumption habits, which depend upon "others' approval" and the "standards of peer groups."²⁶ Middle class individuals felt the need to project their wealth in order to separate themselves from the "squalor" of the lower class and to create

²⁴ Rand McNally and Co., "Bird's eye view of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," Library of Congress, 1.; "Fate of the Chicago World's Fair Buildings," *Scientific American* 75, no. 14 (1896): 267.

²⁵ Zinkhan and Shermohamad, 127.

²⁶ Zinkhan and Shermohamad, 127.

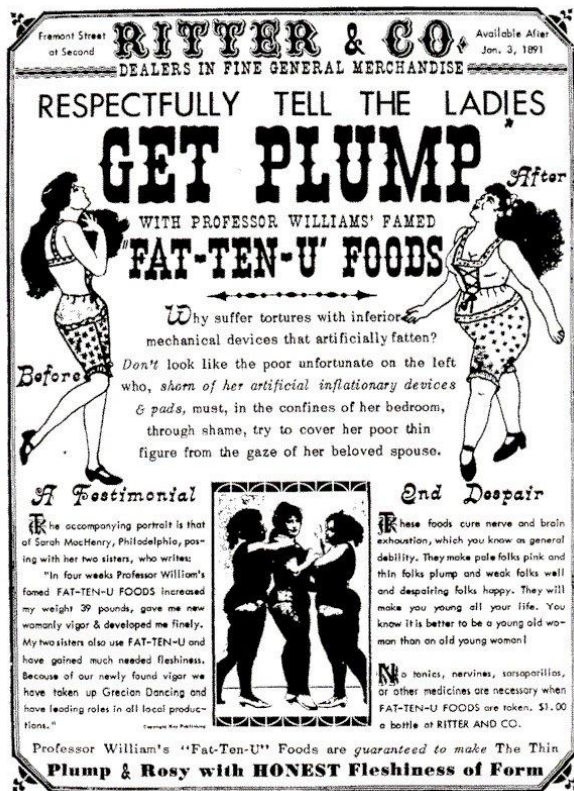
the illusion that they were indistinguishable from the upper class. Similarly, the United States felt a need to project its strength in order to separate itself from the supposed “squalor” of Native Americans and other aboriginal peoples and to create the illusion that it maintained the same geopolitical standing as European nations. Neither of these motivations derived from internalized goals, but instead were oriented towards the approval of other groups.

These other-directed motivations made Americans in general and middle-class Americans in particular prime targets for marketers and advertisers, who preyed on their insecurities to sell their wares. Though significant study of other-directedness did not begin until the mid twentieth century, advertisers recognized its importance as a criterion for purchasing decisions during the late nineteenth century and developed advertising techniques that revolved around its prevalence amongst middle class individuals.

Near the end of the Gilded Age, pioneering advertisers like Claude Hopkins began to incorporate the work of psychological scientists studying human behavior into their advertising techniques, attempting to discover what convinced people to purchase certain products over others.²⁷ Hopkins was aware of the importance of a product’s appearance to American consumers, and thus placed emphasis on the color and design of the Bissell carpet sweepers he advertised.²⁸ More specifically, Hopkins designed his advertising campaigns to highlight the aesthetic strengths of Bissell’s sweepers—how they would not clash with “middle class sensibilities of interior design.”²⁹ These advertising techniques proved to be incredibly effective and continue to be the basis of modern advertising.³⁰ Hopkins’s techniques preyed on people’s insecurities, as his emphasis on a product’s appearance indicates the importance of material status to the middle class. Indeed, people could not have an ugly, industrial looking sweeper; they had to have a flashy, wooden sweeper or they would be looked down upon by their peers.

Another perhaps more telling example of the ways in which advertisers manipulated the other-directedness of middle-class Americans is an advertisement from Ritter and Co. in 1891 which tells women they should “get plump” to increase their sex appeal. This advertisement, pictured above [insert image], includes a testimonial from a woman who used Ritter and Co.’s fattening foods, in which she says this product gave her “new womanly vigor and developed [her] finally.”³¹ Ritter and Co. also claims that their “Fat-Ten-U” foods are “guaranteed to make the thin plump and rosy with HONEST fleshiness in the form.” This advertisement conspicuously used the insecurities of a particular population to market them products, a technique that worked because of the other-directedness of this group.

Many women, and men for that matter, in the late nineteenth century based their self-



²⁷ Rob Schorman, “Claude Hopkins, Earnest Calkins, Bissell Carpet Sweepers and the Birth of Modern Advertising,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 2 (2008): 182.

²⁸ Schorman, 193.

²⁹ Schorman, 193.

³⁰ Schorman, 182.

³¹ Ritter and Co, “Respectfully Tell the Ladies to Get Plump,” January 1891: 1.

perceptions on the opinions of others. Advertising focused on members of the middle class proved especially effective because middle class individuals had excess money to spend and plenty of insecurities to spend it on. The irony of this system is that the individuals convincing middle-class people to purchase items indicating “high class” were often those in the upper class. The upper class directly profited from convincing the middle class that they needed to appear a certain way and have particular material possessions, a form of social control deeply intertwined with class structure.

The middle-class mindset centered around purchasing a product not because of its utility but rather because of its assigned social status was not specific to the Gilded Age, but instead persisted throughout the twentieth century and to a large extent still defines the purchasing habits of the modern middle class. Today, the middle class continues to orient its material purchases around what is “hip” and novel, meaning conspicuous consumption was not merely a Gilded Age phenomenon. In the early twenty-first century, the middle class remains a difficult group to define, but economists have begun to develop methods to determine its characteristics from an income perspective. Economists currently define the middle class as the group of Americans that has “an annual income between 66 percent and 200 percent of the median US household income.”³² People at both ends of this spectrum have enough money to survive, plus some extra. This group makes up around 50% of the modern United States’ population.³³ Ultimately, this means modern advertisers can manipulate a significantly larger group of financially secure people who look to others to determine what is “cool.”

In a 2011 study conducted on the contemporary validity of Veblen’s theory, Ori Heffetz demonstrated that modern middle class American households still consume goods not only

because of their “intrinsic value but also for [their] value as a signal.”³⁴ Heffetz shows that the visibility of an item directly influences how well that item sells, indicating a continued American ideal of conspicuous consumption.³⁵ Conspicuous consumption did not disappear; instead, it *gained* prominence. Today, marketers have improved the advertising techniques developed in the Gilded Age based on manipulating American middle class other-directedness to convince individuals to purchase status items. This is evidenced by the marketing of pickup trucks by large car companies. Companies like Ford, Dodge, and Chevrolet spend enormous amounts of money on their pickup truck advertising campaigns, campaigns that generally aim to appeal to white male Americans.³⁶ These advertisements often depict strong looking men hauling steel and rocks with their oversized pickup trucks, essentially equating this activity with masculinity. In a 2008 Ford F-150 television advertisement, the narrator claims that those who drive pickup trucks are not “hand modeling” or “pushing a pencil,” but instead they are “actually working for every dollar and need their truck.”³⁷ This version of masculinity appeals to a significant portion of the middle class, specifically working middle-class rural men. Ford’s advertisement implies that only “real men” drive Ford F-150s, in effect signaling to those listening that they are not “real men” if they do not drive a truck. This advertising tactic plays to the target demographic’s insecurities, and thus fuels conspicuous consumption—in this case demonstrating how manly one is by purchasing a pickup truck.

Another slightly different demographic of the middle class that faces similar marketing tactics is young urban Americans, whom Apple targets in their advertising campaigns. In an advertisement for Apple TV, Apple strategically places images of “cool” cultural figures and TV shows throughout the advertisement to cater to young, “hip” Americans.³⁸ These include musicians like Kendrick Lamar and TV shows like “House of

³² NPR Staff, 1.

³³ NPR Staff, 1.

³⁴ Ori Heffetz, “A Test of Conspicuous Consumption: Visibility and Income Elasticities,” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 93, no. 4 (2011): 1101.

³⁵ Heffetz, 1116.

³⁶ Nick Bunkley, “Aiming to be the Truck of Patriots,” *New York Times* (September 26, 2006): 1.

³⁷ Ford, “F-150 Way of Life,” YouTube video, 1:01, posted November 2008.

³⁸ Apple, “Apple TV—The Future of Television,” YouTube video, 1:00, posted December 2015.

Cards” and “The Simpsons,” all of which remain popular among America’s younger generations. Apple titled this advertisement “The Future of TV,” an indication that purchasing Apple products cannot only be equated with being culturally literate, but also that purchasing Apple products shows technological prowess. Young Americans are particularly inclined to appear culturally aware and tech-savvy, inclinations that have helped Apple consistently market slightly varied versions of the same product every year for the past decade. These purchasing habits are the direct result of conspicuous consumption, which in this case takes the form of millennials buying Apple products because of the cultural symbol Apple embodies.

In other words, both Apple and Ford have effectively created a “brand” surrounding their respective products, or the establishment of a particular status ascribed to a product. Daniel Krähmer, in an article on modern-day conspicuous consumption and advertising, argues that companies intentionally use advertising to create brands that appeal to certain groups within society.³⁹ These brands become popular because they are considered “signaling devices,” or an indication that the consumer has certain qualities because of the brands they purchase.⁴⁰ Once a company has branded their products effectively, consumers automatically tend to purchase that company’s products over another’s simply because of the brand’s status. Apple and Ford have both effectively marketed their products to their respective target demographics, indicating that middle class Americans continue to be other-directed. This modern-day middle-class purchasing criterion is reminiscent of the Gilded Age middle class, who also purchased material goods based on cultural status.

But is this motivation for consumption inherently bad? The connotations of conspicuous consumption and other-directedness in this paper have been overwhelmingly negative thus far, but perhaps this is a fundamental misreading of these motivating forces. Conspicuous consumption may not be inherently negative, especially if it makes

Americans more inclined to create or experience new things. Conspicuous consumption can drive people to use their imaginations to invest their excess money in sources that bring them joy, a quintessentially human desire.

The aforementioned statistic concerning the purchasing of pianos and bathtubs is often cited as direct evidence of Gilded Age Americans choosing a status item over a utility item, but perhaps this is an inaccurate appraisal of this expenditure. Given modern standards of hygiene, it is easy to view purchasing a piano over a bathtub as an illogical choice centered in other-directed motives. But hygiene standards in the Gilded Age were vastly different than they are today; people were only expected to bathe once every two weeks or so. Given these expectations, owning a large, clunky tub that took up significant space in a small house was not nearly as necessary as it is today. Americans found it easier to simply take a bucket shower or to splash water on themselves than to haul water to the bathtub and attempt to keep it warm. A piano, on the other hand, provided a source of entertainment during a time period without recorded music. A piano constituted an instrument that the whole family could practice playing. One could work at perfecting their piano skills, and many found it enjoyable to listen to others play. Perhaps purchasing a piano was not simply a status-oriented choice; maybe this choice was more centered in a desire to have easily accessible entertainment.

So, what truly was a sign of conspicuous consumption? Purchasing a large, unnecessary bathtub or purchasing an entertaining, engaging piano? I ask these questions not to delegitimize my argument, but to call into question just how *bad* it is that Gilded Age middle class purchasing decisions may have been based in other-directed motives. Even if clever marketers manipulated Gilded Age middle class members into purchasing pianos, if these pianos brought the consumers joy, should this expenditure be considered inherently negative? Though Veblen’s argument is convincing, perhaps

³⁹ Daniel Krähmer, “Advertising and Conspicuous Consumption,” *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical*

Economics (JITE) / Zeitschrift Für Die Gesamte Staatswissenschaft 162, no. 4 (2006): 661.

⁴⁰ Daniel Krähmer, 661.

his overly negative attitudes towards conspicuous consumption should be reframed. Today, we should not consider conspicuous consumption to be an inherently negative motivation, but it absolutely can be negative in certain situations. If someone is driven to consume based out of a *fear* of being perceived negatively instead of the *joy* that comes from personal expression, that undoubtedly constitutes a negative motivation. Conspicuous consumption becomes dangerous when it inclines Americans to waste resources on items that they do not actually want or find joy from, but instead feel they must have to fit in.

Overall, from a utilitarian perspective, middle class Americans would ideally stop purchasing items based on the ascribed status of those items and would focus instead on purchasing items that directly improve the tangible quality of their lives. This mindset would eliminate the negative aspects of conspicuous consumption and other-directedness, but it would also eliminate the individuality and personal drive that these motivations establish. Ultimately, Americans should aim to interrogate their consumption habits to identify the source of their purchasing decisions, focusing on whether these decisions are based in joy or fear. In America's increasingly materialistic culture, conspicuous consumption is here to stay, but this need not be a bad thing. With some awareness, Americans can recognize the motivations behind their consumption habits and prioritize purchasing goods that bring them joy instead of purchasing goods because of a fear of not fitting in.

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Healing the Mind When East Meets West: Using A Dual-Theoretic Strategy to Treat Comorbid Major Depressive Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder In Military Veterans

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According to The National Center of PTSD (n.d.), at present, there are over 8 million cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the United States alone. Since its introduction into the DSM (3rd Edition), PTSD as a disease, has been revised in classification as well as added symptoms required for diagnosis. The only element that has not changed for PTSD in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (now in its 5th Edition) is the presence of “diminished interests,” also known as Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). As Flory and Yehuda (2015) explain, “an alternative view is that the comorbidity between PTSD and MDD represents a distinct phenotype, possibly even a subtype of PTSD.” As they suggest, because of the unique internal and external dimensions exhibited in PTSD patients who also show high signs of MDD, the existing treatments of PTSD are failing to be effective when treating people who manifest severe symptoms of both disorders.

The comorbidity of PTSD/MDD is a crucial concern for military veterans in the United States. Although there are several suggested approaches to the treatment of comorbid conditions, treating comorbid PTSD/MDD as a dual-diagnosed disorder calls for the recommendation of a feasible dual-theoretic treatment plan as the best strategic proposal when assisting mentally injured veterans diagnosed with MDD and PTSD. This new treatment strategy targets the unique psychological

and neurological aspects of comorbid diagnoses. Due to the high congruent phases and the tandem relation of these conditions, it seems imperative that effective treatment is needed to address the duality of comorbid PTSD/MDD. This research is an argument for a well-defined strategic plan to treat the comorbidity of PTSD and MDD by using the eastern philosophy of Mindfulness, for existential treatment of MDD, in conjunction with western practices of Time Perspective Therapy, for the cognitive treatment of PTSD. Reasons for this course of therapy stem from the complicated diagnosis and assessment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in military veterans and the high rates of psychiatric comorbidity found in diagnoses of major depressive disorder (MDD).

Comorbidity, in medicine, is a disease or condition that coexists with, but often is independent of another disease or condition. Although occasionally detected after the principal diagnosis, comorbidities have often been present for some time. “Approximately 80% of people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have a co-occurring psychiatric disorder throughout their lifetime” (National Center for PTSD n.d.). Findings from a comprehensive national survey show that MDD is approximately three to five times more likely to develop in those with PTSD than those without. A large meta-analysis comprised by data gathered from multiple studies, according to Rytwinski, et al. (2013) revealed that “among the psychiatric disorders, major depressive disorder (MDD) has a considerably high comorbidity concurrence with PTSD; indicating evidence in (52%) of US active-duty service members.”

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (the fifth major revision) is, according to The American Psychiatric Association (2016), used by “physicians and researchers to diagnose and classify mental disorders. The criteria are concise and explicit, intended to facilitate an objective assessment of symptom presentations in various clinical settings—inpatient, outpatient, etc.” DSM-V consists of three major components: the diagnostic classification (the official listing of mental disorders recognized by DSM), the diagnostic criteria sets (i.e., symptoms that must be present as well as other disorders that must be ruled

out), and the descriptive text (sub-sets and other related variables that attribute to or exclude from classification). In the DSM-5, PTSD has moved from a class of “anxiety disorders” into a new group of “trauma and stressor-related disorders.” Implying that how PTSD was once perceived and diagnosed has changed from its outdated understandings to a class of its very own.

UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHE

During the 1800s, before psychoanalysis, Dr. Sigmund Freud shocked the academic world with his contemplation explained by Dayan and Olliac (2010) “the memory of trauma which the patient fails to confront because it will cause them too much mental anguish, can be converted into physical symptoms.” Freud suggested a concept of “conflict,” an external conflict between people or internal conflict between desires; emotions clashing the opposing force due to repression of painful feelings. Repression was then believed to cause unconscious forgetting of the traumatic event resulting in inhibition of action and endless reminiscences (i.e., flashbacks and nightmares). Although much of Freud’s work has been disproved today, with his help we now understand how the subconscious affects the conscious state of mind as a “traumatic neurosis” consisting of a past traumatic event causing a current physical reaction.

However, the workings of the “unconscious” mind is so detailed that, to date, there is neither a widely accepted definition or conclusive explanation of what it encompasses nor its overall effect on human behavior. The one thing psychologist, theologians, and philosophers can agree on is that there is, without a doubt, an “unconscious” mind. It is believed to exist under the surface of humankind’s conscious awareness and is believed to influence the intended behavior of man directly. According to Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), “Research shows that because traumatic events overload one’s senses, these events can imprint in multiple areas. From the frontal cortex to the amygdala of the hippocampus, links connecting one’s senses of sight, thought, speech, smell, hearing, and emotions — to the memory.”

THE NEUROBIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF STRESS AND HOW IT CAN LEAD TO MDD/PTSD

Extensive research in the field of neurobiology has given scientists comprehensive insight into how MDD/PTSD is developed and how living with this disorder affects the brain. It all starts with stress, there is a proven correlation between stress and depression. Latest statistics, according to The National Institute of Mental Health (2018) states “Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults, ages 18 and older.” They stipulate that roughly one-half of those who are diagnosed with MDD are either additionally diagnosed with an anxiety disorder or report anxiety as one of the symptoms they continually experience. Science proves that fear and anxiety affect the brain drastically through multiple neurochemicals we depend on for numerous functions. They directly impact regions of the brain that regulate stress and fear, this includes the prefrontal cortex, the amygdala, and the hippocampus. These regions are also responsible for cognition, emotional reactivity, and memory.

Stress has been proven to enhance one’s memory as well as proven to disrupt one’s memory. Just as there are different subsets of memory (explicit, implicit, short and long term), there are different areas of the brain involved in memory storage and retrieval -namely the cortex and its interaction with the hippocampus. Explained best by Robert Sapolsky (2004), “think in terms of a computer metaphor, the cortex is the hard drive, the place where memories are stored, and the hippocampus is a keyboard, the means by which one places and accesses memories in the cortex” (206). The behavioral condition of learning is accomplished by storing memories, this process strengthens the neuro branches of the brain. “Increasing evidence proves that the formation of new memories arise from the formation of new connections between neurons and even the formation of new neurons themselves” (210).

Stress damages neurons in the hippocampus, this disrupts long term memory potential. In just a couple of weeks of induced stress, the levels of a

hormone class called glucocorticoids rise in correlation. This hormone, when released by one's immune system, is regarded as a typical endocrine response to stress, a response that combines conflicting feelings of suppression and stimulation. Widely termed "fight or flight", this reaction is recognized as an instinctual goal for the preservation of self. Exposing the hippocampus to excessive glucocorticoids for a length of time will damage neural synaptic connections, and, as they get pulled apart, one's neural network declines significantly. "There is now evidence that truly prolonged exposure to stress or glucocorticoids can actually kill hippocampal neurons" (219).

Glucocorticoid Neurotoxicity is a term used to label the detrimental effects of prolonged exposure to glucocorticoids. They appear to diminish the aging hippocampus, effectively waning it in strength and size. People with MDD, PTSD, or comorbid MDD/PTSD from "repeated trauma (as opposed to single trauma) – such as soldiers exposed to severe and repeated carnage in combat -have smaller hippocampi" (221). The loss in volume only appear to be in the hippocampus. The more severe the history of trauma, the more extreme the volume loss. It is not clear just yet if PTSD is the cause of smaller hippocampi or if smaller hippocampi lead to PTSD, but one thing that is clear, that it is not a permanent process and by stopping the excess of glucocorticoids the hippocampus can slowly begin to regrow.

THE COMORBID NATURE OF MDD & PTSD

According to Brady et al. (2000), there is "a substantial amount of symptom overlaps between PTSD and many other psychiatric diagnoses." Focusing primarily on MDD may lead to the misdiagnoses or, more importantly, the under-diagnosing of PTSD. Complete trauma histories are imperative to proper diagnosis. Depressive disorders are most common in comorbid diagnoses, this includes disorders of substance abuse and anxiety. Having MDD is a proven risk factor for developing PTSD; in fact, all it takes is a traumatic event to occur while the patient is already in the midst of major depression.

Diagnosing PTSD as a disorder begins with the criteria of trauma. It may be a one-time event, or

continuing trauma of ongoing physical, mental, or verbal abuse; even an event in time in which the sufferer participated, including war or prison. Whatever the reason, that experience causes what experts refer to as a "mental injury." The mind's response to a traumatic event include the re-experiencing of memories generally in the form of nightmares and flashbacks. Arousal, emotional numbing, and hyper-vigilance (always waiting for the hammer to fall) are all displays of behavior that are typically observed as one's reality becomes overwhelming.

As the mental walls of one's sense of "self," their identity of who they are, or rather, their place and functionality in this world, come crashing down, depression takes over and any remaining feelings of hope they have left are washed over by an overwhelming sense of constant doom. There is no escape when the prison is one's mind. Reliving such negative imagery warps a person's view of the world around them and any possible planning for the future. The fears of the past are infused with each new moment, coloring over the present and future moments with the same dark emotional scars as that past. Like the infinite ouroboros (a symbol depicting a snake swallowing its tail), the comorbidity of PTSD and MDD is a never-ending and vicious cycle.

DEFEATING A DEPRESSIVE STATE OF THE MIND

Research and careful deliberation suggest the first course of action should be to treat the depression first. Opposition can be viewed in the context example of putting a band-aid over a hemorrhaging injury to one's artery. The band-aid won't stop the bleeding artery from exsanguination, pressure must be applied till the bleeding stops first. Think of depression as an arterial wound: without the proper attention it requires, the bleeding will not stop. Depression fuels PTSD, while flashbacks and nightmares create anxiety keeping the person in a hopeless state of mind. Military service members deployed to combat encounter unimaginable trauma. Data gathered by a Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT), focusing primarily on soldiers from brigade combat teams (BCTs), along with a secondary sample of soldiers at the corps level, as well as Transmission Team members, primarily of

United States Army Soldiers within the Iraqi Theater of Operations (ITO), ascertained through an (MHAT-V 2008) assessment survey that “of soldiers deployed, 27% faced ethical situations during deployment to which they did not know how to respond” (Gaudet et al. 2016). A typical emotional response to events like these causes a profound personal guilt described by psychopathologists as “moral injury.” People with both PTSD and MDD report high levels of distress and role impairment produce a greater risk of suicide than PTSD alone. According to Lukoff and Strozzi-Heckler (2017), “the practices of mindfulness can be particularly beneficial for veterans who are at high risk for committing suicide.” Seventeen veterans per day is the latest average released by Veterans Affairs in its annual National Veteran Suicide Prevent Report (2019).

An historical example of the calming effects of mindfulness philosophy can be viewed through Japanese Samurai warriors who face death daily. They embraced the meditation practices of Zen to calm their mind and body. Mindfulness is a lifelong practice, a fundamental belief described in Buddhism, some say it is incapable of being fully understood by western cultures. “In psychology, the construct of mindfulness is generally taught through three fundamental beliefs: (1) a mental state (2) a spiritual past (3) a single cognitive process commonly trained across multiple human activities” (as cited in Lukoff and Strozzi-Heckler 2017). For this paper, the cognitive practice of training one’s thought process through daily activities is the primary focus. His Holiness, The Dalai Lama, teaches (1998), “suffering is inevitable, but there are strategies that can help ease it.” Mindfulness is the ability to focus on the present moment rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. This notion is easier said than done for someone living with comorbid PTSD or MDD. Mindfulness practitioners learn to observe internal feelings or external situations objectively. In doing so, decisions can be made rationally, rather than impulsively.

Humans are mentally at war with their inner voice; a mental monologue driven by their thoughts and feelings. It is said Buddha refers to this common occurrence as having a “monkey mind.”

The inner voice encourages someone’s worst fears and discourages the type of self-reflection needed to recognize destructive behaviors. It fills the mind with endless worries or observations of a negative subtext, most of which have nothing to do with the current moment. The critical principle of mindfulness is meditation, a learning that sets aside internal narrative allowing the present moment to receive one’s full attention. A task only accomplished through continuous mental training. Harvard Health Publishing (2016) advises cognitive training added to a daily physical routine helps “...put a strain on the brain, which the brain loves to do.”

In time, the mental exercise of mindfulness teaches its practitioners how to step away from a situation and observe it objectively in hopes of reaching a different perspective. Since childhood, humans feel the need to define a state as “good” or “bad.” As natural as it seems, this is a learned behavior. Through the teachings of the Dalai Lama, one comes to understand that “happiness is determined more by one’s state of mind than by external events” (Dalai Lama and Cutler 1998). He continues by explaining:

I say “training of the mind” in the sense of the Tibetan word Sem, which has a broader meaning, closer to “psyche” or “spirit;” it includes intellect and feeling, heart, and mind. By bringing about a particular inner discipline, we can transform our attitude, [and thusly] our entire outlook and approach to living. (15)

Over time and practice, each new moment can be experienced without the weight of the future, regardless of any fears one may perceive. As Millman (1980) warns, more often than not, “it is the thoughts about circumstances and not the circumstances themselves that influence someone’s life.”

“It has been well documented that mindfulness-based modalities like Aikido and Tai chi have shown particular promise in veterans dealing with PTSD” (as cited in Lukoff and Strozzi-

Heckler 2017). Mindfulness as a cure for depression, anxiety, or even healing a soldier's "moral injury" can shift a person's perspective from negative to positive just by completing little acts of achievements. Eventually, these acts will lead them to a fuller and more satisfying life. Unfortunately, even though mindfulness is so uplifting, without daily practice, effects fade and negative habits resume, inevitably leading one back to depression. In time, like the ouroboros, the symptoms of PTSD come back around again. Because PTSD encompasses the full timeline of a person, considered as one's past, affecting their present, in time, their future ideologies will start to inevitably crumble. Without the therapy of Time Perspective, any results a soldier might experience is short-lived, therefore not a long-term solution for PTSD.

USING TIME PERSPECTIVE THERAPY TO TREAT PTSD

With the practice of mindfulness, one learns how to separate emotions of the past from any present conscious moments. Now that they are in a better frame of mind, as well as mentally stronger, it is time to deal with the trauma of the past that put them down the negative path initially. Without this, flashbacks and nightmares attack when one is unconsciously unprepared, and with the right opportunity (when someone is at their worst), they'll seize the moment and seize the mind. "The world has changed drastically, just in the last 150 years, the human intellect is an antique biological device that evolved in response to a world that no longer exists" (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999). Today, people don't have to think about the same things as those even 100 years ago, our ancestor's prevailed over danger, the same dangers that kept their thoughts in the present moment. People are free to contemplate further into the future than those before them. As Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) explain it:

One's time perspective reflects attitudes, beliefs, and values related to time. For example, how much time does one spend thinking about the past, present, or future? When one thinks about the past, present, or future, is it negative or positive, happy or sad,

hopeful or fearful? One's time perspective helps determine the answers to these types of questions and reflects one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors — in fact, all aspects of life. (52)

Research by Zimbardo and Boyd revealed multiple dimensions of time perspective, but for this study were able to characterize perception of time into six distinct states of thinking: past-negative, past-positive, present-fatalistic, present-hedonistic, future, and lastly transcendental-future. Each perspective is believed to be theoretically unrelated to the others; however, some patterns link one to another in an individual's time perspective (TP) profile.

STEPS OF TIME PERSPECTIVE THERAPY

- 1) "One takes inventory of what negatively charged memories impact and hindered their perspective of the present moments— understanding that memories have positive and negative emotions attached to them individually by each person involved" (Zimbardo et al. 2013). Just because one person saw an event as unfavorable only means, they were looking at it through one perspective, and there may be another. The way one recalls their past is influenced by one's TP profile developed throughout life. Because it is a learned trait, it is, therefore, a learned behavior that can be modified.
- 2) Now aware of one's TP profile, if it is biased, then determine which time zone(s) it is biased towards (ie. positive or negative —past, present, or future).
- 3) "Establish the equal and opposite TP needed to balance the client's time bias" (Zimbardo et al. 2013). For example, a past positive and future positive TP balances a past cynical and present hedonism or present fatalism TP.
- 4) Throughout TPT, clients are encouraged to:
 - a) Become less ego-centric and more socio-centric by focusing on helping others, like their family, friends, and community. AA encourages its members to work with the newly sober, suggesting "the only way to keep it is to give it away" (i.e., by helping

others one is reinforcing the behavior within themselves).

- b) Work on breaking out of negative TPs and develop the ability to call upon the TP most needed in any circumstance that shall arise and cautioned not to become stuck in a particular time bias, especially if it is negative.

The descriptions of time perspectives are most evident in the way that people interact with the world. “People live their lives through their memories — memories examined through personal perception are often riddled with emotional responses and not upon the factual occurrences. In other words, one’s past can shape the current thoughts, feelings, and actions. Ultimately, they shape the memories of the past” (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999, 74). This notion makes one’s memories fallible. The mind can forget or create memories; “the past” someone remembers is only “the past” in their mind, a different history with different emotional ties than the person standing next to them may recall. Furthermore, the past affects one’s opinion of themselves, (i.e., a soldier, a friend — good or bad depends on the view of the one asked).

As cited in Davies (1995) Albert Einstein, once proposed a version of time interconnected with the individual observer, namely, “the experience of time depends on, and is influenced by, the individual observing it.” Einstein did not conceptualize “time” as a constant and independent force. Instead, his work suggested: “time is weighted by perspective and circumstance, that is, time is relative” (as cited in Davies 1995). The most compelling explanation of relativity is found in a quote attributed to Einstein, which reads, “put your hand on a hot stove for a minute and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. That’s relativity” (as cited in Shapiro 2006). Formulating a new understanding about the role of “time” will invite one to work with it; rather than against it.

The goal for anyone, not just those with PTSD, is to shape the direction of inevitable change in the most positive way. With practice and strength of the mind, the memories that once haunted a person, can become the fuel that drives their goals.

Some veterans understand what it takes to overcome PTSD and spend their retired life helping other veterans, thus, reinforcing the TP present positive for themselves. A message expressed by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, suggests, “there is a Tibetan saying (that states) ‘tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength.’ No matter what sort of difficulties or how painful experience is, if we lose our hope, that’s the real disaster” (Dalai Lama and Cutler 1998). Completing proper therapy for comorbid PTSD/MDD requires one to not only change their behavior but the very core of their thought processes as well. People with MDD don’t realize it but they’ve lived with negative TP for years, maybe even decades. They only become aware when their lives became unmanageable. Therefore, it will take almost as much time and continued therapy to neutralize the dominant negativity that has reigned supreme.

Using the practices of mindfulness to overcome the depressive state will keep a person active mentally as well as physically. This is highly beneficial for increasing serotonin, and, at the same time exercising the brain cells and the body. Now from a positive perspective and working with a therapist, techniques like “conscious association” will help to identify any negative memories that charge one’s present decisions. Once the subconscious is unlocked, one can explore the repressed emotions that have lied dormant for so many years. Due to the highly emotional negative charge of suppressed trauma, by using the method of Time Perspective Therapy they will gain insight they previously couldn’t understand. No longer will they see themselves as “victims” but as “survivors.” A famous quote by Freud (n.d.) states, “a man should not strive to eliminate his complexes but to get into accord with them; they are legitimately what directs his conduct in the world.”

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Shopping the Status Quo: Barbie as a Pedagogical Tool to Propagate Cold War Ideals of White Heteronormative Femininity

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Partly overwhelmed and wholly excited, my eight-year-old self stood mystified in front of Barbie's castle in Toys Я Us' Times Square location. Glitter, colorful accessories, and a seemingly infinite number of dolls bombarded my senses. My combined brain power could only muster one thought: "this is the best day ever!" Five years later, my regard for Barbie had shifted from admiration to complete reproach. I vividly remember facing my eighth-grade class and delivering an impassioned speech about how Barbie and other forms of pop culture cultivated toxic notions of body image for young women. At different points in my life, I have both idolized and condemned Barbie. But having a complicated relationship with this particular toy is not a unique experience. The social and cultural significance of Barbie has been discussed in detail both in academic settings and casual conversations. Such discourse often talks about Barbie as a toy and a symbol for young women in the twenty-first century. Indeed, Barbie's significance as a cultural artifact dates back to the doll's inception during the Cold War in 1959. During this time period, Barbie functioned as a tool of hegemony that allowed parents to teach their children white, heteronormative femininity and enabled toy makers to communicate the values of consumerism.

Other scholars have noted Barbie's proclivity for promoting ideas that uphold the status quo between the powerful and the powerless. According to Paul R. Mullins, archeologist and professor at Purdue University Indianapolis and his co-author, Marlys Pearson, "Barbie play may be considered a process of learning and reproducing dominant social values through role simulation"

(225). The idea of children acquiring and emulating such values alludes to Gramsci's theory of hegemony. As an American Studies scholar, the notion of hegemony has transformed the way I see the often overlooked facets of everyday life that appear to be meaningless. In the case of Barbie, I intend to apply a more nuanced approach as I propose that the doll embodies *negotiated hegemony*. Justin Lewis, a professor of communications at Cardiff University, argues that hegemony is at its most powerful when its processes are imperceptible (88). However, Barbie is not always very subtle with its representation and reinforcement of hegemonic values, and people have advocated against what they believe is Barbie's promotion of problematic social norms. Therefore, in order to maintain a certain level of invisibility, ruling elites must be willing to negotiate the more apparent examples of hegemonic processes with the changing social values that result from people's rejection of prevailing power dynamics. By sacrificing their representation of more obvious hegemonic ideas, the ruling elite can escape scrutiny and continue to influence the rest of the public with the more covert messages delivered by constructed cultural artifacts. To begin unpacking this notion of negotiated hegemony, we must first uncover how Barbie represented dominant cultural ideas in its debut during the Cold War and how both parents and producers used the toy to communicate these values to children. The rest of my paper will be divided into three sections. The first portion will cover how Barbie was promoted through market segmentation, Mattel's appeals to the purchasing power of families, and how parents saw the doll as an instructional tool for their children. The second section will discuss how Barbie represented hegemonic ideals of consumption, heteronormativity, femininity, domesticity, and whiteness during the Cold War. Finally, the last portion of my paper will evaluate how Barbie's transformations before and after the Cold War reflect a negotiated hegemony.

CONSUMING BARBIE: MARKET SEGMENTATION, PARENTS' PURCHASING POWER, AND BARBIE AS A TEACHING TOOL

To sell toys, advertisers and producers turned to the principles of market segmentation and treated children as a market of their own. In

essence, market segmentation is the targeting of a certain demographic for specific products. Advertisers appealed to particular members of a community by treating them as separate from other consumers and tailoring advertisements and products to that group's needs and interest. According to Susan Douglas, a prominent feminist writer, children during the Cold War "became one of the most important things any group can become in America: a market" (Douglas 24). With the increasing presence of televisions in homes, marketers were able to carve out a permanent space for their advertisements in the living rooms of American families. Through television, advertisers had almost unlimited access to children. Elizabeth Cohen, a scholar of American Studies and Pulitzer Prize finalist, elaborates on this idea by explaining how advertisers conducted extensive research on consumers to customize "marketing plans" (304). By doing so, marketers were able to "[carve] up...television programming and audiences into market niches and moved segmentation to a whole new level" (304). Market segmentation prospered with the rise of television, and Mattel, the toy company that produces Barbie, used ad campaigns to promote their products.

We find evidence of market segmentation in vintage Barbie commercials which directly addresses the child as an autonomous consumer. The narration for such advertisements frequently uses the "you" pronoun, indicating that sellers of the product are speaking directly to children as individuals with purchasing power. As part of my research, I watched fourteen Barbie commercials from the 1960s, and all of them had little to no adult presence. The advertisements were child-centric, and young girls are portrayed as independent purchasers. The 1967 commercial for the Twist N Turn Barbie Doll features young girls venturing to and lining up outside a toy store without adult supervision. Another advertisement features two young girls walking into a toy store that has been designed to look like a luxury boutique. The only adult present is the sales associate, but the two girls who play the role of customers were not accompanied by an adult figure. Instead, the girls were treated like "grown-ups" and depicted as being capable of contemplating options, making decisions, and paying for products all by themselves. This autonomy and freedom assigned to

children show how advertisers saw kids as an independent, distinct, and separate market with their own set of niched interest and a potential to be an active consumer.

Although children were seen and portrayed in advertisements as their own market, it is important to underline that children by themselves are not completely independent in their consumption. While children will eventually become financially autonomous, they ultimately had to rely on their parents' money to buy the toys they wanted. The purchasing power of children came from their ability to wield the purchasing power of their parents which increased during the Cold War with the rise of disposable income (Cohen 310). Consumption during the Cold War was family and entertainment-centric (May 171). Since being a patriotic American became associated with being a good consumer, it is reasonable to conclude that providing children with material comforts got equated with good parenting, an overemphasized value during the Cold War. Fixated upon the ideals of a nuclear family, parents were compelled to meet both the needs and wants of their children which included toys.

Parents' selection and purchase of particular toys is indicative of hegemonic Cold War values. In an article published in *Material Culture Review*, Helen S. Schwartz determines that analyzing toys parents bought for their children tells scholars the kind of values that parents wanted to pass down to their children about that society's most prevailing issues (39). Barbie dolls, like many other toys, are inconspicuous daily objects that can be used to propagate "veiled dynamics...which are claimed to benefit everyone but actually, and invisibly, express the interests of the ruling class and its strategic will to control and dominate" (Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture). In many ways, parents used Barbie to communicate ideals of consumption, heteronormativity, femininity, domesticity, and whiteness. This served to enforce a power dynamic that encouraged sexism, confined romantic relationships to heterosexual partnerships, and generalized race to whiteness.

BARBIE AS A CULTURAL ARTIFACT:
IDENTIFYING AND CRITIQUING THE

HEGEMONIC NORMS THAT BARBIE REPRESENT

Barbie teaches children that shopping helps to realize the ideals of the good American life. Schwartz affirms that “toys themselves taught children that consumption was good, necessary, and fun” (38). In this way, Barbie is special in her reinforcement of consumption’s merits. Not only does acquiring her as a toy bring children opportunities for leisure and play, Barbie herself is a character who values shopping. Barbie is a “Teen-Age Fashion Model,” and her life revolves around clothing and accessories. Schwartz explains that “Barbie was a textbook of lessons on proper behavior. These lessons taught prepubescent girls about how to behave both as young women and as young shoppers“ (43). Furthermore, the aforementioned advertisements for Barbie that depict children shopping alone also teach kids to be consumers. It is early education on the value of being an active participant in the market. Such commercials serve as instruments of learning that allow children to imagine their future as consuming Americans.

Moreover, Barbie fortified notions of heteronormativity. Mattel brought Ken to the toy market in 1961 after consumers demanded Barbie to have a boyfriend (Pearson and Mullins 236). In the TV advertisement that introduced Ken, he and Barbie are seen going on numerous dates. The video ends with the two of them getting married. In the first-ever Barbie commercial, Barbie is seen wearing a wedding dress, but she is not accompanied by a romantic partner. This ambiguity creates room for counter-hegemonic interpretations of same-sex marriages. However, in Ken’s first advertisement, Barbie wears the same wedding dress, but this time she is a bride in a heterosexual wedding. By purchasing Ken, parents are able to communicate to their children the idea that marriage is between men and women.

BARBIE’S PHASES OF FEMININITY AND DOMESTICITY

Perhaps the most distinct hegemonic characteristic that Barbie exemplifies is the ideal of femininity. Mary F. Rogers, a scholar of Women and Gender Studies, argues that Barbie represents

“emphatic femininity” which is the extreme and unsustainable image of what it means to be a woman (12). Even when she partakes in more masculine activities or professions, such as playing baseball or becoming a police officer, Barbie’s outfits and accessories are unmistakably feminine (Rogers 12). Not only is her physical appearance an exaggeration of femininity, but her personality is also the manifestation of gendered expectations of a woman’s unwavering altruism. Rogers insists that Barbie exhibits the cornerstones of a feminine personality that is focused upon unconditional compassion, sensitivity, meekness, courtesy, gentleness, and affability (12). This portrayal of femininity has remained the essence of Barbie for the entirety of the doll’s history. Barbie has journeyed through three distinct phases that differed in their portrayal of womanhood and domesticity, while still keeping intact this core of feminine values.

Barbie’s “first phase” took place between 1959-1963. Although Barbie’s early years are not examples of counter-discourse to the Cold War’s expectations of domesticity, Barbie in this part of history was actually portrayed to be a career woman. Barbie’s creators were adamant about the fact that “Barbie did not do rough housework” (Pearson and Mullins 236). Instead, Mattel imagined Barbie as a model, a fashion editor, a registered nurse, a flight attendant, and an executive career girl (Mattel). Undoubtedly, Barbie’s limited career options expressed a gendered interpretation of the types of jobs that young women were supposed to aspire for. However, it is still worth noting that Barbie was assigned responsibilities that were outside of the home. A lot of scholars credit Barbie’s first phase to the doll’s creators, Ruth Handler and Charlotte Johnson, who were career women themselves. Handler echoed the sentiments that women confined in the private sphere expressed in Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*. Handler disclosed her complete dissatisfaction with the mere idea of being a housewife. She shares that “If [she] had to stay home, [she] would be the most dreadful, mixed-up, unhappy woman in the world” (Pearson and Mullins 236). Understanding Barbie’s creators shed light to why the earliest version of Barbie featured the doll as a career woman with a role to play in the public space. However, this phase did not last for a significant amount of time. From

1964-1967, Barbie entered the “second phase” which ushered in a retreat back to the domestic realm.

In Barbie’s second phase, the doll exhibited many characteristics of the Cold War’s ideal domesticity. In this part of the doll’s devolution, Barbie “for the first time did rough housework and performed domestic labor” (Pearson and Mullins 238). Barbie withdrew from the workforce and promptly relegated inside the home. In contrast, Ken’s character became more developed and his career opportunities expanded. At first, Ken served just as an accessory for Barbie. He was a mere companion to witness Barbie’s many adventures. However, the “second phase” changed the role that Ken played in Barbie’s world. Pearson and Mullins contrast Barbie and Ken’s depictions during the “second phase” and pointed out that Ken’s masculinity and life outside his relationship with Barbie flourished while she was confined to her duties at home. At the end of the “first phase,” Ken’s wardrobe changed to become “more overtly macho [and] Barbie stood poised to descend into unambiguous domesticity for the first time (Pearson and Mullins 238). This shift echoes notions of the family wage ideology, which sees the man as the income earner for the household and the woman as the caretaker of the home. Barbie’s retreat from the public sphere during the rise of second-wave feminism can be baffling. However, Pearson and Mullins explain that the mid-1960s was full of “increasing unsettled and politicized public discourse ranging across class inequality, Vietnam, and feminism, [and] Barbie took a conservative, utopian look to a settled society with clear gender roles and settled politics” (241). Consensus was disrupted during the mid-1960s with people protesting systemic injustices both domestically and abroad. However, instead of supporting this disruption, Mattel tried to uphold the idea of an American consensus with its depictions of a utopian life for Barbie. In preserving this consensus, Barbie proves to be a tool of hegemony that tried to undermine people’s protest and advocacy against oppressive norms.

While Barbie occupied somewhat opposite ends of the domesticity spectrum during her first and second phase, the “third phase” (1968-1984) marked an almost total recoil from any significant

social statements. Feminist critique helped usher in the end of Barbie’s “second phase” but ongoing “social unrest” motivated Barbie’s “[retreat] to independent and stylish socializing with ambiguous politicized implications” (Pearson and Mullins 230). During this period, Mattel made Barbie apolitical. They tried to make sure the doll represented fashion and style but not prescriptions of gender roles or social/political values.

Barbie’s whiteness is one of the most salient parts of her identity that expressed Cold War hegemony. The Barbie doll’s portrayal of ideal femininity and beauty defaults to a white standard. Shirley Steinberg, professor of Youth Studies at the University of Calgary, maintains that “Mattel has defined ethnicity as other than white. Blonde, regular Barbie is the standard from which the “other” comes” (qtd. in Schwarz 299). As a tool of hegemony, Barbie instructs young children that the norm for womanhood is white skin and white features. Whiteness is primary, and the physical features of other races and ethnicities fall in the periphery. This perpetuates hegemony because people who have Barbie’s European features are members of the dominant group, who is seen by the rest of society as representing the gold standard of beauty.

NEGOTIATED HEGEMONY

Mattel’s attempt to include multicultural dolls in their collection is an example of negotiated hegemony. Barbie’s whiteness drew in criticism from the Civil Rights movement as Black Americans sought diversity and accurate representation in the products they consume (DuCille 268-269). In 1967, Mattel released “Colored Francie.” The doll was almost an exact match of Barbie with its white features and straight hair (DuCille 269). The only distinguishable difference is that Francie had darker skin. The doll was met with criticism from both White and Black Americans. Black consumers found the doll and its racist name to be unacceptable, while white consumers balked at the implication of miscegenation as Francie was advertised as Barbie’s cousin (DuCille 268-269). After the failure of “Colored Francie” in the market, Barbie went on to successfully sell other collections of Black American, Asian, and Latina dolls (DuCille 269).

The introduction of dolls of other races and ethnicities reflect negotiated hegemony as the United States moved towards a superficial definition of diversity and multiculturalism. DuCille continues to explain that “multiculturalism has become at the hands of contemporary commodity culture: an easy and immensely profitable way off the hook of Eurocentrism that gives us the face of cultural diversity without the particulars of racial difference” (269). It would be a lot easier to scrutinize Barbie’s status as a tool of white hegemony if she never had “friends” from other racial backgrounds. Barbie maintains her power and popularity over consumers by employing faux integration. Similar to the “I have a black friend, so I am not a racist” argument, Mattel’s multicultural dolls is a half-hearted attempt to quell protest over its lack of significant representation. Ultimately, multicultural dolls just reinforce the hegemonic notion that white Barbie is the norm and toys representing other backgrounds are outside the usual standard. As explained by Maureen Trudelle Schwarz, professor of anthropology at Syracuse University “the contrast is consistently between a person representative of a norm [Barbie] who needs no explanation and a person who deviates from that norm [dolls of color]” (300). This idea is echoed by Elizabeth Chin, a scholar of anthropology, who states that multicultural dolls are just an exercise of niche advertising and market segmentation (145). Chin explains that Barbie epitomizes the “assumption of whiteness” and multicultural dolls appear to be an attempt at a counter-discourse. However, what seems to be a move towards integration is actually only “firmly fixing racial boundaries in ways that are surprisingly regressive” (Chin 144).

Barbie’s three phases of femininity and domesticity also exemplify negotiated hegemony. Douglas reflects on her adolescence and explains that there were several “female archetypes to consider [who represented] a compromise between obeying gender norms and subverting them. Even so, the absolute importance of having flawless skin, thick, shiny hair, a slender figure, and great clothes remained indisputable” (Douglas 103). Barbie’s three phases represented different versions of the female archetype: from the career woman to the homemaker. This shows a negotiation over the different roles that women can play in the

workforce and the private sphere. However, the hegemonic standards of a woman’s proper “look” continued to pervade throughout all these different portrayals. Throughout her negotiated ideological shifts, Barbie’s physical attributes stayed the same, depicting a bodily ideal that is impossible for real women. Another example of negotiated hegemony is Barbie’s depiction as an astronaut during her “second phase” in 1965. Gender roles are negotiated as Barbie is given a career made exclusive to men during the Cold War. However, this only served to communicate another hegemonic idea, particularly that of the United States’ technological prowess against the Soviet Union during the space race. In this example, Barbie’s gender and career opportunities are negotiated to assert ideas of national identity.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

With consideration of my proposed idea of a negotiated hegemony, I would put Barbie towards the Frankfurt School by 85% on an agency continuum. What stops me from leaning even further towards the Frankfurt School is the fact that toys are ultimately interpreted by the unique imaginations of children. Schwartz theorizes that “toys reveal what adults wanted to tell children but not what children actually heard” (Schwartz 39). While hegemonic ideals are communicated to children, it is not clear if they receive the same message that both parents and producers attempted to send. Joel Best, a professor of sociology and criminal justice at the University of Delaware, suggests that empirical research be conducted to investigate how children’s toys actually influence kids’ behaviors and conceptions of the world around them. Best denounces the efforts of “claimsmakers,” who he accuses of having “too much academic fun” by making claims that are “easily made, yet rarely proven” (208). I find myself agreeing with Best that we need to conduct more research that can give us quantitative data about the relationship children have with their toys. Considering the interdisciplinary approach of American Studies, I imagine that there is a lot of room for collaboration between sociologists, psychologists, historians, and cultural scholars. However, I disagree with Best’s denouncement of “claimsmakers” because I believe that there is a lot of information that cultural scholars can gather that

is not necessarily quantifiable or can be researched empirically. Even if we suppose that students of culture and history cannot study how children feel about a particular toy, the very existence of a doll can tell us a lot about the norms of a particular society and what kinds of lessons parents found important enough to teach their children.

Barbie is a tool of hegemony that has been used to teach children the values of consumption, heteronormativity, whiteness, femininity, and domesticity. Barbie became a mode of instruction to show young girls the values and norms of Cold War America. There have been instances when it seemed like Barbie was deviating from a hegemonic narrative, but I argue that this is just a negotiation being made by elite members of the prevailing power structure. By making such negotiations, like introducing multicultural dolls and portraying Barbie as an astronaut, dominant society can continue to impart covert hegemonic values through seemingly harmless and neutral cultural artifacts. By making these negotiations, hegemonic tools continue to be invisible and are able to keep communicating unopposed narratives that reinforce the existing power dynamics. During the Cold War, Barbie was used to show young girls what an American woman should be like. In 2019, it seems that Barbie is continuing to communicate an unrealistic expectation of womanhood to young girls worldwide.

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Edited Selection from:
Better than Cheesecake:
An Analysis of Pin-Up Drawings
in *Esquire* Magazine
from 1933 to 1953

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INTRODUCTION

Like many others, I have long been fascinated by the beautiful, cartoonish drawings of women that find their way onto the sides of motorcycles, inked onto the arms of men and women, and posted on the walls of bars and billiard halls. Always gorgeous, these women laugh and wink at the viewer, revealing their legs, chest, or behind in a kind-of staged, voyeuristic “accident” that they are clearly enjoying. I have often wondered where these images come from, why they are so popular and how they are able to create a stronger sense of sexuality and playfulness than some of the more explicit material produced today. The answer, I believe, is connected to the nostalgia of their golden era: when the pin-up girl was not only a popular image collected by millions of Americans, (and plastered on the walls of numerous barracks, bedrooms, and bars) but an ideological figure who conveyed, within the curves of her impossibly perfect body, the nuanced anxieties regarding gender, sexuality, and consumerism embedded in American society.

Pin-up, as a genre, has been said to have ancestry in the cart-de-vista trend within Burlesque culture, in the nineteenth century, and with the Gibson Girl in the early twentieth. Like the cart-de-vista images, women were posed alluringly to generate publicity, but pin-ups were able to make the transition over to a mass public audience more akin to the Gibson Girl. Also like the Gibson Girl, the pin-up girls of *Esquire* magazine (the publication that arguably ignited the genre) adopted names taken after their respective artists, and became influential commonplace images within

mainstream American society. The transition from the Gibson Girl to the pin-up girl was not immediate and rested significantly on the creation of *Esquire* as a new magazine during the Great Depression. It was because of the threat of financial ruin that *Esquire: The Magazine for Men* created the pin-up girl in 1933 deliberately, as part of its marketing strategy, to bring a struggling publication out of the depths of the Depression. She was vital to the initial success of the magazine, creating a loyal readership, and subverting any homosexual assumptions about an exclusively male audience for a fashion and life advice magazine. *Esquire* needed the pin-up girl, but likely had no idea about the amount of popularity and success she would garner on her own.

While the pin-up girl technically began within the cartoon section of *Esquire* magazine, I hesitate to call them cartoons. Most of *Esquire's* cartoons were not as detailed, large, or marketed as separate commodities as the pin-up girl. The pin-up also evolved into a genre of its own, which included three evolutionary iterations (the Petty Girl, the Varga Girl, and the Esquire Girl) of drawings as well as a sea of other pictorial material. While the purpose of the girls often overlapped with that of the cartoons, the pin-up went beyond their reach—and beyond the pages of *Esquire*—making them much more than the content of humorous and crude cartoons.

Contemporary critics of the first pin-up girls debated the respectability of such images, comparing them to the tasteful nudity of art pieces, such as Michelangelo's *Venus*, or to the depravity of fallen women, such as prostitutes and burlesque

dancers.¹ The pin-up continually oscillated between the realms of fine art, popular art, and pornographic imagery. However, because the pin-up never reveals her full nudity she is *not* considered pornographic, operating as what Joanne Meyerowitz calls “borderline material.”² This inability to pin down which category the pin-up girl belonged to was largely what made *Esquire* so revolutionary; they created a market for middle-to-upper class “gentlemen” who could respectably view a traditionally lower-class construction of female sexuality.

For the purpose of my analysis I have created a definition of pin-up girls based on several historians’ definitions: she is an idealized woman, typically posed in a sexually suggestive manner, revealing just enough nudity so as to tease the audience. She is deliberately produced for a mass, public audience, ideally taking up an entire page, or pages, in print, likely for the purpose of being torn out of the publication and tacked up in a communal space. *Esquire*’s airbrushed drawings were also often accompanied by a caption, verse, or title that guided the viewer to understand how she was connected to a nuanced experience of societal expectations, making them unique within the genre. The term “pin-up,” which was a nickname in itself, referred to the action of men ripping the full-page images out of the magazine and literally pinning them up for public viewing. These images were also often called “cheesecake.” The name “cheesecake” is rumored to have come from a man regarding a pin-up girl and exclaiming “why this is better than cheesecake!”³

This definition applies directly to the work of the most famous pin-up artists, George Petty and Alberto Vargas, who created airbrush drawings for *Esquire* magazine from 1933-1947. While these two artists were not the exclusive creators of pin-ups, they assisted *Esquire*’s leadership in creating the medium and remain among the most well-remembered artists for the genre. Additionally, lots of other media was often called pin-up or “cheesecake,” including advertising campaigns,

which sought to profit off the popular style of pin-up images, and photographs generated by Hollywood. Photographs, while able to maintain the appeal of realism, often compromised on the skin exposure and posing of its models. Hollywood successfully attached itself to the pin-up craze, but often did not produce the “true” cheesecake that was the hallmark of the Petty and Varga drawings. Airbrush drawings had the luxury of being a complete fantasy, unrestricted by human models or real life. Additionally, “true” pin-up girls, like the Petty and Varga Girl, sought to sell herself as the primary commodity, not other consumer goods (or movie tickets). Therefore, although pin-up girls existed beyond the pages of *Esquire* magazine, it was this publication that curated a uniquely mythical female sexuality (from the birth of the publication in 1933 until 1953 when *Playboy* became a significant rival) that was incorporated within the representation and admiration of a wealthy and “respectable” lifestyle for the American male audience. The invention of *Playboy* and the strategies utilized by Hugh Hefner, namely the explicit nature of *Playboy*’s centerfold girls, marked the distinct end of the pin-up era and acts as the end of my analytical timeline. However, once established and in her golden era, the pin-up girl reflected the desires and anxieties of mainstream American society. She embodied, in many cases literally, an ideal image for American men to fantasize about, fetishize, and use to prove their masculine identities.

PART I: “A MAGAZINE FOR MEN”

Before the Depression, masculine identity had long been tied to the act of production. Starting in the nineteenth century with the creation of the middle class, the definition of manhood focused on a productive identity that was able to contribute to the market and provide for his family. With the rise of industrialization and modernization, the “strenuous life” that was believed to curate true masculinity was becoming harder to perform. Men who had understood themselves as the “breadwinner” (a term coined at least a hundred

¹Mark Gabor, *The Pin-up: A Modest History* (New York: Universe Books, 1972), 25.

² Joanne Meyerowitz, “Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: responses to girlie pictures in the mid-twentieth-century U.S.” *Journal Of Women's History* no. 3 (1996):10.

³ Gabor, *The Pin-up*, 23.

years earlier) were now confronted with the reality of becoming a leisurely consumer throughout the early 1900s. This tension led to a prominent reaction: many men attempted to reassert a “[robustly] physical” interpretation of manhood that was largely “mythical.”⁴ With the growing presence of a consumer identity, and the sharp descent into unemployment that defined the 1930s, masculinity, as it had previously been defined, experienced a major crisis. Various historians have analyzed this shift in the masculine role and attempted to descriptively identify its characteristics. E. Anthony Rotundo called these new men “pleasure seekers,”⁵ while Barbara Ehrenreich described them as participating in a “playboy ethic.”⁶ Essentially, the defining trait of the emerging twentieth-century masculinity was leisure and consumption where it had previously been rigorous labor and production.

In the wake of the masculine crisis, and before *Esquire* was even tangible, publishers David Smart, William Weintraub, and editor, Arnold Gingrich, understood that a new tactic was necessary to create the ultimate men’s magazine. Gingrich therefore attempted to shape unemployment as a positive development in the life of men, declaring that “the new deal [had] given leisure a new economic significance.” He understood that “men [had] had leisure thrust upon them,” but that “the majority—haven’t the faintest idea how to go about it.” He introduced *Esquire* as “a new kind of magazine—one that will answer the question of what to do? What to eat, what to drink, what to wear, how to play, what to read—in short a magazine dedicated to the improvement of the new leisure.”⁷ Arnold Gingrich thoroughly understood the new “advertising-first” method of magazine editing that had emerged in the early twentieth century and planned on using advertising to manipulate the consumer into using their limited funds to purchase written entertainment and guidance for the creation of a new masculinity.

However, with the looming reality of decreased consumerism within a depression, they needed to market something other than goods. The trio decided to capitalize on a risky, but potentially lucrative, consumer market: men only. While several magazines had catered to male preferences earlier, *Esquire* was the first to bluntly and exclusively market to only one gender and identity. Plenty of magazines had been catering to the consumer identity of women, and experienced easy success since purchasing power fell traditionally within the woman’s realm. Smart and Weintraub’s experience in the men’s fashion industry taught them the potential success of continuing to market to men, but Gingrich was acutely aware of how delicate this approach would need to be. They could not merely advertise and sell clothing (that had already proved unsustainable in the contemporary market); instead, they would attempt to sell the idea of a desirable masculine identity. This identity needed to account for the changes in economy by merging the physicality of traditional masculinity with the “high-brow” aspirations of wealthy readers and advertisers who would be willing to support such a niche magazine. They sought to create an expectation for the *ideal* man: someone who dressed well, had knowledge about food and his home, was stylish and tasteful, handsome, well-read, and extremely successful with women. The potential of this fantasy, regardless of how achievable, was also part of the sell. If this new idea of manhood was desirable enough to upper-class *and* ordinary men, it would hopefully be able to sustain the magazine. The result was what historian Hugh Merrill has called Gingrich’s “three-ringed circus”: a combination of “fashion, off-beat masculine writing, and sex.”⁸

Essentially, the creators of *Esquire* attempted to enter the uncharted territory of incorporating consumerism *into* the masculine identity. It was clear to the founding editors that while “men wanted to be ‘in style’” there was “an indication of

⁴ Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America* (Berg, 2006), 21 & 23.

⁵ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 287.

⁶ Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Anchor Books, 1983), 170.

⁷ Arnold Gingrich, “The Art of Living and the New Leisure Class” promotional pamphlet for the launch of *Esquire* as printed in Osgerby, *Playboys*, 39.

⁸ Hugh Merrill, *Esqy: The Early Years at Esquire* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 32.

effeminacy” that surrounded other home and fashion advice magazines.⁹ This created an assumption of homosexuality, a fear that *Esquire* would simply be a woman’s magazine aimed at gay men. Gingrich therefore had to strategize a way to “deodorize the lavender whiff coming from the mere presence of fashion pages.”¹⁰

Pin-up girls were the perfect solution for *Esquire*; the inclusion of women as sexual objects presented the magazine as a clearly heterosexual interest. However, because the *Esquire* team wanted to present the magazine as a classy, gentlemen’s guide to leisure, incorporating explicit sexual content had the potential to alienate their targeted audience. This was why pin-ups were often drawn in such a way that their nudity was never completely exposed and their sexuality remained potential rather than active. Ultimately, the products that *Esquire* produced were not only physical and intellectual (in the form of literature, fashion, and advice), but also related to American men’s need to reassert themselves as powerful and valuable. Within the new modern world of the early twentieth century, Gingrich and *Esquire* gave men an avenue towards understanding their manhood as consumers of the feminine ideal.

PART II: THE PETTY GIRL

George Petty was *Esquire*’s first pin-up artist and the creator of the famous Petty Girl. Petty essentially designed the Girls and the pin-up genre by curating his paintings to the needs of the magazine. He established pin-up imagery as unique to the industrial age by using an airbrush machine to paint his watercolors, as well as incorporating the popular “streamlining” techniques that characterized much of early twentieth-century advertising. “Streamlining” was a specific way of designing new consumer products in the 1930’s with “round edges, smooth surfaces, and low profiles.”¹¹ When applied to the Petty Girls, it was thought to make them even more appealing as a sexual commodity because it was “the shape of least resistance.”¹² Because the Petty Girls were being used to entice a male consumer into participating in

a market that had previously been associated with homosexuality, it was essential that access into her fantasy world was seamless.

Another characteristic of the Petty Girls that allowed for an easy connection with the reader was the inclusion of her iconic telephone. The telephone became intimately connected to the Petty Girl’s persona, allowing her to engage with an ambiguous audience and reveal her sexual and consumer-focused personality. The telephone allowed readers to imagine themselves interacting with the Petty Girl, inserting themselves as the subject of her comments and antics, to further solidify the consumption of the masculine identity that *Esquire* was trying to sell. During the Depression, the Petty Girl utilized an association with adrenaline and wealth to captivate her audience. Often seen as an irresistible gold-digger, men appeared to enjoy engaging with this fantasy because it meant that they were rich, stylish, and handsome enough to attract a Petty Girl, even if her interest was superficial, extramarital, or physically dangerous.

What makes the Petty Girl’s persona even more interesting was how fiercely it contrasted with that of her successor, the Varga Girl. As America began to transition into the 1940’s the country witnessed an improvement in the economy and began to anticipate a Second World War. Additionally, the magazine staff began to experience financial difficulties and had some contractual arguments with artist George Petty, causing Petty to leave the magazine altogether.

PART III: THE VARGA GIRL

In the throws of a serious financial crisis, *Esquire* attempted to keep itself afloat by running four foldouts in the December issue of 1939, one of which was the Petty Girl. The foldouts alone were not enough. *Esquire* still faced a daunting editorial task and World War II was becoming a terrifying reality. Additionally, George Petty began to demand a raise for his notorious illustrations, demanding fifteen hundred dollars per painting and the reprinting rights for all his work. Petty had seen his

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Arnold Gingrich as quoted in Merrill, *Esquire*, 32.

¹¹ Merrill, *Esquire*, 40.

¹² Ibid, 40. Merrill notes that Reid Austen first coined this description of the Petty Girls in his unpublished biography on George Petty, the artist.

contract begin at only one hundred dollars per illustration, but by 1940 he had two successful advertising contracts (Old Gold and Jantzen), and a payout of one thousand dollars per image sold to *Esquire*, but still wanted *Esquire* to pay more for his work. Gingrich and Smart were reluctant to meet the artist's new demands.¹³ Instead they began planning to replace Petty, looking for an airbrush artist who could provide them with the Girls, but avoid contractual drama. While many fans remained loyal to Petty, and he continued to produce art elsewhere after leaving *Esquire*, readers were eventually won over by a new Girl in the early 1940s. The Petty Girls were not featured from April 1940 until January 1941, but in May 1940 Gingrich and Smart met Alberto Vargas, a Peruvian artist desperately looking for an illustration job.

Joaquin Alberto Vargas y Chavez was born and raised in Arequipa, Peru where, at an early age, his father taught him about the family photography business and he practiced airbrushing the photos in his father's studio. His father eventually brought Vargas and his brother to Paris where Vargas studied art and refined his talents.¹⁴ In 1916, as World War I began, Vargas's father urged him to take an apprenticeship in London but he was unable to make the trip. Instead Vargas attempted to make his way back home to Peru, but ended up making a permanent layover in New York City. Vargas's American career consisted of illustrating for various advertising campaigns, including a contract with the *Ziegfeld Follies* Broadway show. In his early days, his wife (a fashion model and showgirl) acted as his model. *Zeigfield*, which closed in 1931, brought him into the world of Hollywood where he painted for Paramount, then Twentieth Century-Fox, and, for a short time, Warner Brothers. Vargas's career took many turns, and he struggled to find a permanent and steady home for his artwork. By the time Vargas approached *Esquire*, he had been blacklisted in Hollywood and was struggling to support his wife and pay the bills. Smart felt as if he had finally found a man who could "out-Petty the Petty Girl" and struck a deal with the desperate artist, paying

him only seventy-five dollars a week.¹⁵ Additionally, Smart persuaded Vargas to adopt the name "Varga" (without the "s") when illustrating for *Esquire*, establishing that the magazine, not the artist, owned the copyright to all the images.¹⁶

The year was 1940 when Alberto Vargas released his first ever Varga Girl in the October issue of *Esquire*. The first Varga Girl was specially made to mimic the Petty Girl, complete with telephone receiver in hand and a snappy poetic verse, by a new poet Phil Stack, highlighting her gold digging tendencies. Vargas even mimicked the style and look of George Petty's last two, indicating that *Esquire* had requested a very specific image from Vargas. Throughout the following year, both Petty and Varga Girls ran features in *Esquire* but Vargas quickly proved to be the more appropriate (and affordable) artist. While the Petty Girls were "streamlined" Vargas "created the appearance of real women...full-bodied American beauties...with wholesome, rounded faces."¹⁷ Vargas quickly abandoned much of the Petty mold, creating Girls that were also glamorous and stunning, but less antagonistic. Petty Girls had engaged in many behaviors that made her sexuality and confidence both dangerous and alluring, an unachievable fantasy to sustain the disenfranchised reader throughout the economic crisis of the 1930s. The Varga Girl, however, entered a magazine and economy that was well established. The country's main focus was, by the 1940s, the possibility of going to war, and thus the Varga Girl had a different and new fantasy to perform. Because the Petty Girls remained dedicated to their selfish antagonisms of adultery and expensive extravagance, they began to appear self-centered and unreliable. Essentially, the Petty Girl's adrenaline-inducing antics, once seen as exciting and provocative, became trivial compared to the Varga Girls' deep dedication to patriotism, country, and honor. The Petty Girl wore uniforms and the colors of the American flag, but her behavior (pronounced in her famous one-line captions) revealed that she was still a gold-digging,

¹³ By now, Weintraub had left the duo to pursue other publications where he could retain more publishing power instead of being constantly overruled by the dreamer Smart and the visionary Gingrich.

¹⁴ Dian Hanson, ed., *The Little Book of Pin-up: Vargas, The War Years 1940-1946* (Italy: Taschen, 2015), 5.

¹⁵ Merrill, *Esqy*, 85.

¹⁶ Osgerby, *Playboys*, 53.

¹⁷ Merrill, *Esqy*, 86.

adulterous naif who did not care much that her dates were headed off to war.¹⁸ The Varga Girl had dropped the Petty act after her debut, and quickly became a character of her own. Throughout the twelve issues of 1941 the two Girls competed for viewers' affections. This was likely another strategic editorial move on behalf of Arnold Gingrich, who had always understood the many ways the country's political, economic, or military climate could impact his readers. Thus the Petty and Varga Girls entered 1941 at odds, while the editor and publisher waited for public opinion to validate their new Peruvian artist.

The comparison between the Girls was immediately evident, elaborating a thematic rivalry between their two personalities. When the January Petty taunted readers asking if they "remember[ed]" her, the Varga Girl posed with angelic wings covering her bosom. February brought a Petty who was back to manipulating her date, while the Varga Girl dreamed of a romantic evening long ago and sought her lover's promise of devotion. In March a Petty Girl "forgot" to get dressed for a party, while the Varga Girl embodied a goddess of the hunt, ready to track down her enemies. The Petty Girl remained dedicated to her frivolous engagements in April, while the Varga Girl took up a nurse's uniform and the name Mary, bringing a soldier the reminder of "what [he was] fighting for."¹⁹ The May Varga Girl got to work negotiating an alliance with Mexico while impersonating a pilgrim in order to represent America, and the Petty Girl admitted to being unfaithful to her soldier boyfriend. In June the Petty Girl talked of divorce, while Varga played a bride. Clearly the Petty Girl was still playing games while the Varga Girl was not only aware of the world and the war, but also getting serious about her involvement. Towards the end of the year, as more and more servicemen from all over Europe wrote into the magazine beginning to request subscriptions abroad, the Petty Girl was *not* shaping up to be the woman servicemen needed.

A large part of the Varga Girl successfully becoming "an industry, not just a magazine

feature," was owed to the war.²⁰ World War II had broken out in Europe in September of 1939, and the January 1940 cover of *Esquire* officially acknowledged the pictorial feature as a "pin-up." The cover featured Esky, a clay model, eyeing an enlarged Petty Girl who originally debuted in October 1939 and was also featured in that year's calendar. Although Petty competed with Vargas for *Esquire*'s illustrating position, the Varga Girl established herself as the more complimentary companion to a world at war by 1942. *Esquire*'s staff appeared to have been paying very close attention to the global military and political climate because they began running patriotic material long before America became involved in military conflict. As another act of deliberate capitalist strategy, the Varga Girl was shaped very early on to be palatable within global military conflict. Once the war began, men were no longer concerned with needing to prove their masculinity by understanding the importance of leisure. Instead they needed a pretty face that gazed at them devotedly to remind them of simpler, safer times—a companion to calm them during dangerous and unbearable deployment, someone they could control and rely on. This was exactly the woman *Esquire* decided to sell them, and she proved more profitable and popular than the Petty Girl ever could have been.

Kurt Vonnegut, who wrote an introduction to *Varga: The Esquire Years* in 1987, pointed out that the Varga philosophy was to create a woman who "seemed to say to their beholders... 'I am posing just for you at this very moment.'"²¹ This was how the Varga Girl revolutionized *Esquire* once again; she became a *wartime* commodity, a true consumer item, that was marketed plainly and explicitly, and appealed directly to the consumer as merchandise. Although the Petty Girl had validated and sold the magazine, by selling herself as a commodity as well, the Varga Girl's sales soared with the demand for patriotic encouragement and morale boosters. She became a stand-alone product that appeared in the *Magazine for Men* and as collectible paraphernalia. By December 1940 Smart had requested a Varga calendar which appeared in the

¹⁸ Caption and image were never separated, so while Petty could have drawn the girls with any situation in mind, their captions were paramount to the creation of her personality and overall fantasy.

¹⁹ Alberto Vargas, "To Mary, From Keith," drawing, *Esquire*, April 1941, 75-76.

²⁰ Merrill, *Eskey*, 87.

²¹ Kurt Vonnegut as quoted in Merrill, *Eskey*, 87.

December issue and was also available via mail order. Old Gold Cigarettes had been offering a special printed copy of their “Betty Petty” to dedicated customers since at least 1939, but Smart began to advertise the Varga Girl as purchasable separately from the magazine, no product loyalty necessary. To accommodate its new product, *Esquire* quickly opened a new division dedicated to selling Varga Girls called “Esquire Buy-Products” which sold “in addition to the calendars, Varga playing cards, Varga datebooks, and Varga yearbooks.”²²

Magazine advertising remained a vital part of the Varga Girl’s promotion as America entered the war. During the first year of American military involvement, *Esquire* released its twelve-page calendar in the January issue and continued to produce a new Varga Girl every month. For the following three years, however, *Esquire* continued to release its calendar in full during the January issue, but cut back on the monthly installments of Varga within the magazine. This did not indicate a lack of notoriety or popularity, rather that the other Varga products were succeeding and the necessity of a new magazine feature every month was no longer vital. Advertisements continued to appear in the magazine promoting special sales for servicemen and encouraging people on the home front to send Varga and Esky products abroad to “keep him smiling.”²³

The remaining creators of *The Magazine for Men* had dedicated themselves to supporting “total war” long before a congressional decision was ever put to a vote. In November 1935, a comment from the editor promised readers that, should America ever go to war, the magazine would be “full of propaganda...from cover to cover.”²⁴ Dedicated as they were during the Depression to providing an avenue for the expression and development of masculinity, *Esquire* committed itself to supporting the United States military by providing a vital source of morale. *Esquire* was among a handful of magazines that had convinced the War Production Board, in 1942, that their content was essential to

“military morale,” and received a special paper allocation that was based on weight in spite of the rations. Gingrich decided that instead of reducing the number of pages in their magazine, *Esquire* would start printing on lighter-weight paper that was cheaper but allowed them to maintain its prewar size. *Esquire* sales boomed during the war, turning the pacifist Vargas into a “war hero.” As more and more men were sent overseas, the demand for *Esquire*’s “special ‘mascot’ pin-ups” grew.²⁵ As a result, Smart began to cater the magazine’s content to the needs of a patriotic and militaristic nation, running advertisements for war bonds and evolving the Varga Girl to match the standards of Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. Because the magazine was dependent on government support to maintain its paper ration, Smart recognized the value in appealing to government regulated standards of sexuality. Morgenthau was the primary creator of the new idolized American woman because he believed that America ought to admire “more wholesome, apple-cheeked American girls who posed in bathing suits...uniforms...and, only occasionally, a negligee” rather than “haughty, upper-class faces” who wore “mink coats, showgirl costumes, and expensive jewelry.”²⁶ The Varga Girl transitioned completely from the precedent set by the now-absent Petty Girl to the representation of America, women, and home that the government needed her to be.

By 1937 Hollywood had caught on to the lucrative nature of a male audience and began producing sultry images of actresses and models to appear alongside the drawings of the Petty and Varga Girls within *Esquire*. The movie-making industry was no stranger to the benefits of image advertising, but began to adopt the style of Petty and Vargas to capitalize on the pin-up popularity and promote the success of their own actresses. During the 1930s Hollywood ran a feature within *Esquire*, with the help of Hurrell’s photography studio, posing its knockout actresses in luxurious gowns and robes that matched the styles of the Petty Girl in decadent black-and-white page features. By

²² Merrill, *Esky*, 87.

²³ “For men in the service the gift of gal...,” advertisement, *Esquire*, August 1942, 151.

²⁴ “A Thought on Propaganda,” Editor’s note, *Esquire*, November 1935, 5.

²⁵ Hanson, *The Little Book of Pin-up: Vargas*, 5.

²⁶ Merrill, *Esky*, 94.

1940, Hurrell dared to produce its photos in color, allowing its full-page features to come to life and compete with the magazine's airbrush artists. As the expensive "upper-crust" persona of the Petty Girl evolved into the "apple-cheeked" wholesomeness of the Varga Girl, so did Hollywood's photos. With the start of World War II, the term "pin-up" or "pin-up girl" had finally become commonplace, referring to servicemen's affinity for ripping out the photos and drawings and pinning them up in barracks, bunkers, foxholes, and other places to be viewed publicly by their regimens.

While Hollywood also engaged in "total war," by providing entertainment as a military necessity for mental escape and morale boosters, "pin-up" actresses such as Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth occupied a different subsection of pin-up paraphernalia than the Varga Girls. Although both types of "cheesecake" were printed together within "girlie" magazines like *Esquire*, pin-up actresses garnered a different appeal. They were beautiful and able to exist in a semi-imaginary fantasy; men could fantasize about them but did not have as much control over that fantasy as they did with the Varga Girls. This was because actresses were still real people, with real lives, and real boyfriends or husbands. Varga Girls *never* had the complications of having a real-life love interest. Although Betty Grable's popularity did not diminish once she got married and had a baby, it changed her pin-up status to be commingled with that of the American mother and wife. While these were important and impactful identities for women, Varga Girls were never truly bound by matrimony or motherhood. Even when depicted in a wedding dress, it was up to the viewer to decide if she had said her vows already (for there was not a groom in sight). Additionally, Varga Girls never had children, because they were waiting for their perfect man to return from the front lines to live out their "happily ever after."

To further complicate "cheesecake" as a category, Hollywood pin-ups often did not dress or pose its models as scandalously as airbrushed pin-ups. Hollywood was limited by the realities of the

physical world and production codes, which limited how revealing and provocative their images could be in comparison to the easily manipulated drawings. Vargas almost always altered the Girls' proportions to accentuate their breasts, legs, waist, or neck. This kind of body manipulation was impossible with real actresses, leaving them once again within a quasi-imaginary world, not a complete fantasy. The imagination of the reader was what made pin-up so popular, because the airbrushed Girl merely teased nudity and was accompanied by vague and generic captions or poetry that required men to fill in the blanks. Hollywood's Hurrell photos were almost never accompanied by written commentary of any kind, which gave the viewer the power of interpretation, but left these types of images out of explicit societal discourse. Hollywood's actresses were just pretty faces and perfect bodies, while the Varga Girls developed personalities and fictitious, but mutual, relationships with their fanbases. Commentary made the airbrushed drawings of *Esquire* unique, further distinguishing them amongst the sea of material produced during the mid-twentieth century, all of which had been loosely labeled "pin-up."²⁷

The philosophy used to generate support for war-time pin-ups was the idea that they would help curate a military cause that would encourage American men to invest their lives in the protection of America as defined by their private interests. These private interests included the women the pin-up girls represented: the wives, girlfriends, and fiancées of soldiers.²⁸ It was also believed that the sexual availability and allure of these American beauties would help bolster soldiers' dedication and stamina while stationed so far from home. David Smart and other magazine publishers used patriotic language to promote this pro-war ideology and to petition the United States government to support their "girlie" features. The result was a state sanctioned, propagandist campaign that rested squarely on the Varga Girl's shoulders. Historians have recognized the impact of the pin-up within WWII for several decades; while the bodies of women have long been capitalized on and

²⁷ This is not to say that Hollywood portraits were not immensely popular, simply that a distinction must be made between photographs and airbrushed drawings.

²⁸ Robert B. Westbrook, "I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James": American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II," *American Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (December 1990): 587-614.

incorporated into the rhetoric of patriotism and nationalism, the pin-ups provided for a new and unique avenue for the American government to motivate its citizens. Historian Robert B. Westbrook stated that; “the American State attempted to draw on the moral obligations prescribed by prevailing gender roles,” perfectly positioning the Varga Girl in the forefront of the propaganda formula.²⁹ She represented both the idolized American woman and idolized Americanism. To fight on behalf of a Varga Girl was to fight on behalf of the perfect fantasy of the American future. While *Esquire* had used patriotism as a deliberate marketing and survival business technique, they inadvertently paved the way for the establishment of the pin-up genre as a unique pro-war American tool. Americans could equate morality with their military participation because they saw their American values as being represented in the sexualized female form of the pin-up: a form that they not only owned and helped create but had an obligation to protect and perpetuate by valiantly fighting a demonized enemy abroad. This posited the pin-up as America’s “secret weapon.”

Despina Kakoudaki discussed the pin-up as a “talismán of patriotic action” that was uniquely owned by American troops and therefore provided them with a special justification that the Axis powers did not possess.³⁰ Essentially, “Americans during World War II were not called upon to conceive of their obligation to participate in the war effort as a *political* obligation” rather propagandists utilized “moral values...such as ‘freedom,’ ‘equality,’ and ‘democracy’...and implored Americans as individuals and as families to join the war effort in order to...defend *private* interests.”³¹ As “objects of obligation” Varga Girls, and other pin-up paraphernalia, created a compelling prescription for American men of what, and who, they were fighting for, as well as who their enemy was and what they were capable of.³² Additionally, this cause did not *exclusively* utilize female sexuality, although it was clearly present and prominent. If images of women were meant to be

produced merely as sexual property, then the Varga Girl would have likely kept the overt and unapologetic sexual nature of the early Petty Girl. Therefore, pin-ups (as a general category) were not just “surrogate objects of sexual desire,” but also, as Westbrook argues, “representative women” that reminded soldiers of home.³³

The transition to a focus on pro-war propaganda influenced *Esquire* to adopt Morgenthau’s preferred Varga Girl and Hollywood to promote actresses like Betty Grable. Servicemen, evidently, wanted to look at women who represented their girlfriends, fiancées, and wives *as well as* their mothers and sisters. American women represented the values of America, including whiteness, morality, democracy, and freedom, all of which was incorporated into the Varga image throughout the war era. *Esquire*, being a *Magazine for Men*, chose to emphasize the fantasy and desire surrounding their unique pin-ups. Even within Morgenthau’s guidelines, both the magazine and the government saw pin-ups as a perfect avenue for ensuring military involvement was linked to a “healthy heterosexual desire.”³⁴ The pin-up girls were also thought to be a sexually charged “talismán” that was meant to ensure American victory by bolstering the confidence of individual men.³⁵ Once again the pin-up girls of *Esquire* magazine were deployed to fight off an assumption of homosexuality but now also had the responsibility of helping maintain a patriotic nation and an alert military to ensure a swift victory.

Pin-up girls, either generated from Hollywood cameras or airbrushed drawings, also had an incredible impact on the average American woman. While pin-ups were marketed to men as a commodity that they were encouraged to consume and enjoy during wartime, they also became an idol that American women attempted to emulate. Women were undoubtedly aware of the images that their husbands and boyfriends were viewing, and of the impact that pin-ups were rumored to have for the deployed soldier. This led many women, such as the wife of wartime sailor George J. Pantages, to

²⁹ Westbrook, “I Want a Girl,” 589.

³⁰ Despina Kakoudaki, “Pinup: The American Secret Weapon in World War II,” in *Porn Studies*, ed., Linda Williams (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 335.

³¹ Westbrook, “I Want a Girl,” 588.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 595.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 595.

³⁵ Kakoudaki, “Pinup: The American Secret Weapon,” 340.

partake in the creation of home-made pin-up imagery, which they would send abroad alongside issues of “girlie” magazines.³⁶ Pantages claimed that in a letter from home there was included a picture of a girl he had never met in a majorette outfit, posed in a pin-up style. Upon returning from war, Pantages sought out the mysterious woman and married her.³⁷ The production of amateur home-front pin-up images, like those sent to Mr. Pantages, displayed an intimate awareness and acceptance of this culture of sexual commodification. Far more women sent homemade “cheesecake” abroad than those that wrote public statements of disgust for the genre. Women were aware of their sexuality and how it was being represented and utilized by media outlets such as *Esquire*, primarily because they bought into the rhetoric of “obligation” that both the *Magazine for Men* and the United States government sold them. Although the everyday American woman could not hope to emulate the perfected and unrealistic representations of sexuality provided by the Varga Girls, they certainly saw these images and allowed them to influence their perceptions of their duties as American women living in a country that was at war. The Varga Girl’s “duty” to support the deployed soldier was meant to act as an encouragement and example for the real women the Girls represented to American men. While the privately produced images never made it into an avenue of mass distribution, such as *Esquire*, they are a perfect example of the vast impact and influence the pin-up “craze” had on the American public.

The 1942 Varga Calendar had already been completed when the United States announced it was going to war, but *Esquire* threw itself, and its Girls, into the fighting cause as soon as possible with the February issue. The February 1942 Varga Girl wore only a grass skirt and flowers in her hair while she faced away from the reader and looked back over her shoulder. Her verse was titled “Reveille” and reminded readers that “we go to war for many

precious things.../But first of all for freedom that we prize.” This Varga Girl was a “girl who lives beneath Hawaiian skies,” a direct commentary on the attack on Pearl Harbor, the “prey” of the “wakened” “Eagle” “on the march.”³⁸ For the next four years, the Varga Girls often played the part of helpless Pacific Islander women or wore stars and stripes, military insignias, and uniforms mixed in with their traditional wardrobe. Phil Stack continued to write the poetic verses that accompanied the Varga Girls, giving them a social and political awareness that, at times, seemed out of place next to such an alluring woman. Stack helped associate the Varga Girls with popular sentiments of the era; they were meant to represent the general feelings of everyone during the war, men and women alike. The Girls sometimes revived the Petty Girl’s iconic telephone and lamented the absence of the men who bravely went off to war but encouraged them not to come home until peace was won. They shared memories of what life was like before the war and dreamed about life after inevitable victory. It seemed that every Varga Girl was waiting to meet, hear from, or reunite with a “patriotic Yankee.”³⁹ Even though they were not engaging with the enemy directly, the Varga Girls were not idle. They put their bodies on display, boasting that their duties included keeping morale up, buying war bonds and paying “victory taxes,” writing letters to servicemen, joining the various women’s divisions, and maintaining their American beauty. It was clear that soldiers abroad wanted to dream of an “all-American girl” who was their girlfriend, fiancée or wife waiting for them back home. Therefore, unlike the Petty Girl, the Varga Girl was strictly monogamous and hyper-focused on her patriotic duties.

Esquire was intimately aware that the Varga Girl acted as a symbol. Occasionally, when she was not wearing a service uniform or a traditional gown or negligee, the Varga Girl appeared in a more explicit nationalistic “costume” meant to help her literally embody the nation. For example, the

³⁶ Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Duke University Press, 2006), 224.

³⁷ George J. Pantages, “My secret pinup girl.” *America in WWII*, June 2013, 56. Academic OneFile (accessed May 29, 2018), 56.

³⁸ Alberto Vargas and Phil Stack, “Reveille,” drawing, *Esquire*, February 1942, 31-32.

³⁹ Alberto Vargas and Phil Stack, “Beauts and Saddles,” drawing, *Esquire*, November 1942, 39-40.

February 1942 Varga feature shows the Varga Girl in what was *Esquire's* assumption of traditional Pacific Island clothing. The Varga Girl "became" a Pacific Islander six more times throughout the duration of the war, wearing tropical flowers and a grass skirt but *always* maintaining her overt whiteness. In these cases, the Varga Girl was meant to participate in the conversations and complaints that many soldiers had about being stationed overseas. They desired white women (like the Varga Girl) more when deployed to areas, like the Pacific, where there were none. However, the erotic exoticism already present in racist understandings of "native" land captivated American audiences. Western culture had a long history of hypersexualizing non-white bodies by the 1940s, however the military ventures into the Pacific offered a new sphere for the creation of a unique "exotic" fantasy. A new myth was produced that; "the island paradise [came] to stand for consumerism's beguiling promise of indulgence and unabashed pleasure seeking in a land of plenty."⁴⁰ The Pacific Islands came to represent a fantastical paradise where Americans could consume pleasure and beauty, in all its forms, without respite. Coupled with the patriotic assurance that America belonged in the Pacific in order to avenge Pearl Harbor and maintain its status as a military protector, non-white Polynesian bodies became a symbol of an easily exploitable and purchasable hyper-sexuality.

By presenting the Varga Girl in a stereotypical "island" costume *Esquire* was able to capitalize on the assumptions of non-white sexuality while still catering to many servicemen's racial preference.⁴¹ Additionally, many of the verse titles accompanying the Varga Girls explicitly referred to her as a symbol of America, such as "Heritage," "Miss America," "Victory Song," and "Warning Signal." Other costumes worn by the Varga Girl during the duration connected her to a long history of American patriotism and propaganda. In *Esquire's* highly self-promoted "Victory Issue" in August 1942, the Varga feature stands proudly wearing the costume of George Washington. In the 1944 calendar, produced in the January issue of that year, the July Varga Girl wears a similar "revolutionary"

styled costume as she supposedly conducts the national anthem. The tradition of incorporating the Founding Fathers and other revolutionary imagery has long been a part of America's nationalism and patriotism. By dressing the Varga Girl in such an overt expression of the nation's heritage and history, she became directly involved with the continuous process of national affirmation and pro-war propaganda. Additionally, in May 1941, the Varga Girl appeared wearing a "pilgrim" costume as part of *Esquire's* commentary on the importance of a Mexico/Latin American-American alliance. "American" Varga was joined by an Hispanic friend, clearly indicating that the Girls had become personified representations of their respective countries.

The Varga Girls who participated in the expression of nationality and history by wearing costumes were clearly sequestered to strict fantasy realm, however many of the more "realistic" looking Girls had to negotiate the worlds of fantasy and reality. A successful pin-up was "real" enough to provoke a convincing fantasy, but she maintained a mystical element that ensured that the fantasy would never be disrupted by real life. *Esquire* did this especially well with both Varga and Petty, not only because the artists could manipulate the Girls, but also with the language the magazine itself used to refer to them. Once Vargas became the leading artist for *Esquire's* "girlie" features, the magazine began to fully commit itself to the advertisement of the Girls' "other-worldly" qualities. Particularly in the advertisement for the Varga playing cards, *Esquire* began to compare the Varga Girls to ethereal beings such as Eve, Lilith, ancient Roman goddesses Diana and Venus, and Eastern religions such as Islam and Hinduism. Occasionally, the Varga Girl wore a costume to become a goddess (March 1941) or was referred to as an "Eve" in her accompanying poetry. It was in advertising, however, where her mythical reputation grew the most. In *Esquire's* September 1940 issue, an advertisement ran "introduc[ing] the Varga Girl" to whet reader appetites for the following month when the very first Varga Girl would be released. In the promotional ad, *Esquire* described the Varga Girl as "a legend" whose "name joins those which have

⁴⁰ Osgerby, *Playboys*, 109.

⁴¹ Westbrook, "I Want a Girl," 599.

made men stir uneasily in their beds, look critically at their wives, and wander to distant parts—pretending to seek a Golden Fleece, a Holy Grail, a Fountain of Youth, or a Northwest Passage.” Her image was compared to both the Goddess Vishnu and Medusa, indicating that her beauty was so immense that she should be worshipped *and* feared.⁴² By April of the following year *Esquire* boasted that the Varga Girl was as “lush as the Midici Venus” made “tangible” to “long tapering fingers” in the form of her calendar. *Esquire* promised that by the next month “the Varga Girl, bathed in new magics, anointed with the dream-twisting milk of unicorns, fragrant with the delights of pleasure’s pastures, will come to you in a more plaint form—to while away the darkling hours.” Additionally, it was “by the will of Allah” that the Varga Girl or “the waiting pearl of the Prophet’s paradise neatly bound” would be delivered to those who purchased her.⁴³ This type of mythical and Orientalizing association was pivotal in the first year of advertising for the Varga Girl. The magazine constantly equated her to timeless examples of unearthly beauty, a comparison that only increased with the creation of the Varga playing cards.

Esquire, and much of the Western world in general, often participated in the process of “othering” what was thought of as “the East.” This concept, known as Orientalizing, was theorized by Edward Said, and refers to the tendency of Western people to exaggerate and distort the cultural differences between white Anglo Saxon Protestants and Arab people in order to posit the white “West” as superior to the “East.” From the very beginning *Esquire* was a participant in this global discussion on race and ethnicity, particularly within a cartoon segment illustrated by artist E. Simms Campbell. Campbell’s cartoons were characterized by his exaggeration of racial, gender, and economic stereotypes, which he often utilized to express notions of contemporary humor. For at least two decades, Campbell illustrated a number of cartoon

segments, but his most popular was a series that depicted an Arabian sultan and his harem of white women. The sultan was almost always shown wearing a turban and assumed to be overweight, uneducated, and commanding when it came to the presence and bodies of his slaves. One example was a Campbell cartoon that was incorporated into a Hart Schaffner & Marx suit advertisement. In it, the Sultan traded one of his women as the “down payment” for his suit, however the ad speculates that he “doesn’t seem to be too greatly perturbed” because he “realizes that with what this new suit adds to his already magnetic charm, he’ll have no trouble in replacing her by sundown.”⁴⁴ Meant to be read as both enviable and laughable, the sultan enjoyed the bodies of his girls and often discussed selling them or trading them away to meet his petty desires. While Campbell’s cartoons were never considered pin-ups, his commentary on race and his success at “othering” Eastern cultural experiences became a useful marketing tool once the Varga Girl became purchasable within products beyond the folds of the magazine. *Esquire* mimicked Campbell’s exaggeration and manipulation of cultural differences to market their Varga products as unique, exotic, and desirable.

By 1941, readers could not only purchase a calendar full of “eggshell beauties” to create “a harem of your own”⁴⁵ but they could also order playing cards decorated with beauty that diminished even “the rarest of opium dreams.” Varga Girls could now “nestle in the palm of your hand... yours to touch, to shuffle, to play.”⁴⁶ *Esquire* emphasized that owning these special playing cards would make them synonymous to the men who enjoyed the company of women like Marie Antoinette, Madame Roland, Cleopatra, or the Queen of Sheba because the Varga Girl was “Venus incarnated in still another body.” Their immense beauty ensured that they would be the most desirable deck of “slaves”⁴⁷ because they “neither [talk] overmuch, nor [are

⁴² “Esquire Introduces the Varga Girl,” advertisement, *Esquire*, September 1940, 11.

⁴³ “Looking Ahead with the Varga Girl,” advertisement, *Esquire*, April 1941, 154.

⁴⁴ E. Simms Campbell, “I hate to let you go...,” cartoon, *Esquire*, May 1937, 42.

⁴⁵ “Around the Year with the Varga Girl,” advertisement, *Esquire*, January 1941, 153.

⁴⁶ “Next Step with the Varga Girl,” advertisement, *Esquire*, May 1941, 155.

⁴⁷ “Gentlemen, two Queens—and both will be your slaves,” advertisement, *Esquire*, June 1941, 17.

they] unduly coy.”⁴⁸ Proud to boast “the choicest milk-skinned maidens in the caliphate of Allah”⁴⁹ *Esquire* promoted coupons and sales to make the “serpentine loveliness” of the Varga Girl even more accessible to the dedicated reader “every month, committing her to your care, your possession, and your *savior vivre*.”⁵⁰

Although *Esquire* ran numerous advertising campaigns and was extremely successful during the war, the magazine did not escape the 1940s unscathed. While the Varga Girl was becoming a phenomenon, and pin-ups kept the subscription numbers afloat, she attracted the attention of the Postmaster General, inviting legal complications the creators of *Esquire* had not foreseen. Even though the Varga Girls were adapting to the war Production Board’s standards of respectability and proving their versatility and usefulness among servicemen, the spring of 1942 found editor Arnold Gingrich under constant harassment by the U.S. Post Office. The Postmaster General claimed that *Esquire*’s pictorial content crossed the line of respectability and into the “obscene.” According to Gingrich, he had to make monthly trips to Washington D.C. so that the Post Office’s solicitor, Vincent Miles, could personally approve of the content appearing in every issue. The Post Office department, under direction of Frank Walker, had taken issue with *Esquire* on the grounds that its content was too obscene to maintain its second-class mailing privileges under the precedents of the Comstock Act of 1874 and the Postal Act of 1879. These acts gave the Post Office the power to prevent “obscene, lewd, or lascivious publication” by censoring their distribution by mail and gave them the right to criminally prosecute or remove cheap mailing privileges for publications found guilty of including such material.⁵¹ The U.S. Post Office, unsatisfied with Gingrich’s process of preemptive monthly approval, eventually held an internal hearing for *Esquire* in October 1943. *The Magazine for Men* had to prove before a board of assistant postmasters that it met the criteria for second-class mailing

status: a minimum of four issues annually, a fixed office of publication, a printed form with paper covers, and “originated and published for the dissemination of information of a public character, or devoted to literature, the sciences, arts or some special industry, and having a legitimate list of subscribers.”⁵² Although a total of ninety items, including cartoons, photographs, illustrations and literary pieces, were cited for obscenity, twenty-two were Varga Girls. The pin-up beauty that had caught the attention of the country and the servicemen had also attracted legal intervention.

What began as an internal hearing stretched into a serious legal battle. Gingrich decided to prepare a full legal case to present to the board of postmasters, the base of which they could take to court if needed, causing *Esquire* to hire a full legal team, scour for character witnesses and generate over 1,000 pages of testimony and hundreds of pounds of exhibits. *Esquire* was able to produce character witnesses that included “thirty-eight nationally known educators, writers, critics, and scientists” who praised the intellectual merits of the magazine while the government produced many religious figures, and even a suffragist who opposed the magazine on the grounds that it was degrading to women.⁵³ *Esquire*’s lawyers focused on revealing the fact that many of the government’s witnesses were not intimately familiar with the *Magazine for Men* and instead labelled the Post Office’s actions as attempts at censorship and a violation of constitutional rights. On November 14, 1943 the Postal Board voted in favor of *Esquire* keeping its second-class status, only to have this decision overruled by Walker himself, which launched the magazine into three years worth of court appearances, ending in the Supreme Court in 1945. The magazine was funding the fight for its existence, not the least of which included hosting its legal team on an entire floor of the Statler Hotel in Washington D.C. and attempting to ground its case in the idea that “such an action by the postmaster

⁴⁸ “The Varga Girl is in the cards...,” advertisement, *Esquire*, July 1941, 13.

⁴⁹ “Oyez, the last trump is sounding...,” advertisement, *Esquire*, August 1941, 14.

⁵⁰ “Here is the head of the line...,” advertisement, *Esquire*, December 1941, 229.

⁵¹ 39 U.S. Code, Section 226, as quoted in Merrill, *Esqy*, 109.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ Jean Preer, “Prologue: Selected Articles.” National Archives and Records Administration. 1990. Accessed September 12, 2018.

general, [was] a threat to all publishers.”⁵⁴ At the same time, publisher David Smart was taking many financial risks that resulted in an *Esquire Co.* bailout. Smart’s ambitions propelled him into a failed horticulture business and an unsuccessful educational film company while his editor, Gingrich, fought to maintain the magazine’s legal status. By the time *Esquire* appeared before the Supreme Court in 1945, Robert E. Hannegan had been appointed Postmaster General by Harry Truman and the question that remained was whether government entities had the right to decide which magazines deserved mailing privileges and which should be restricted, and ultimately censored, based on content. The court ruled unanimously on February 4, 1946 that “the power to determine whether a periodical which is mailable contains information of a public character...does *not* include the further power to determine whether the contents meet with some standard of the public good or welfare [emphasis added].”⁵⁵

The trial marked a change in the public’s understanding of sexuality and entertainment, a shift that would eventually pave the way for *Esquire*’s successor *Playboy*, but also marked the end of the magazine’s unmatched success. Shortly after the legal victory, and likely exhausted from the extensiveness of the process, Arnold Gingrich left the magazine to “retire” in Switzerland. Supposedly, Gingrich was meant to stay on the payroll as the European editor but, after leaving the United States, he maintained very little involvement in the magazine that was his original brainchild. Throughout the course of the 1940s, as *Esquire* became a major vehicle for pin-up imagery, the magazine had become less and less what Gingrich had originally envisioned. While the war raged, Smart had encouraged more pin-up and pictorial features and less literary pieces of substance or prestige. Additionally, fashion and leisure advice began to take a backseat to patriotic propaganda. Therefore, upon the closing of the major court battle, Gingrich left, and the magazine slowly lost its grasp on the pin-up craze and its prestigious

position within the magazine industry because, regardless of their freshly earned second-class mailing rate, Alberto Vargas sued the magazine in 1946 over the outrageousness of his contract. Smart had continually coerced Vargas into doing more work for less money, and had copyrighted the “Varga” signature as property of *Esquire Co.* Alberto Vargas was unsuccessful in reclaiming ownership of his signature and quit the magazine without any rights to the drawings that had made him famous. *Esquire*, therefore, owned both the name and the mailing privileges necessary to continue publishing pin-up material, but had lost its most significant artist. David Smart also struggled to find a new permanent editor to replace his old friend. Subsequently, as America entered the Cold War, *Esquire* struggled once again to remain relevant and appealing to its contemporary audience. What would develop over the course of the next decade was *Esquire*’s steady decline as it was unable to ever regain its grasp on the pin-up spotlight either the Petty or Varga Girl had held. The powerhouse publication had seen the last of its golden age, particularly as the post-war nation turned its attention to new concerns and found themselves fulfilled by a new daring magazine.

CONCLUSION

As America transitioned into the Cold War, a sexually available patriotism was no longer what the nation’s men desired. They had grown tired of being teased by the pin-up’s “respectable” sexuality and turned to a fresher, more explicit version provided by a new magazine, *Playboy*.⁵⁶ Where Arnold Gingrich had recoiled from the risky task of continuing to produce sexualized images during a time when female sexuality was becoming further demonized, and American society was experiencing cultural anxiety in general, Hugh Hefner rose as the new bold figure who had the courage and vision to pursue a magazine that utilized the new notions of female sexuality that surrounded him. Hefner took a gamble; that American men still needed a sexual outlet for their masculine fantasies, but that this

⁵⁴ Arnold Gingrich, *Nothing but People; the Early Days at Esquire, a Personal History, 1928-1958*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1971, 161.

⁵⁵ Supreme Court of the United States, October term 1945, no.399, pp.6-9, as quoted in Merrill, *Esqy*, 118.

⁵⁶ *Esquire*’s pin-up empire did not end completely after the Varga Girl, rather the magazine attempted to maintain the pin-up installment with a team of rotating artists and finally a brief fashion series, but gave up the endeavor altogether once *Playboy* hit major sales.

outlet needed to be explicit, overt, and real. Thus, as *Esquire* began to fade from the “girlie” magazine spotlight, *Playboy* took their place and began to embark on an empire and legacy of its own.

Hefner’s willingness to produce nude photography officially ended the pin-up era. As *Playboy* took over the market of girlie magazines, it also began to gradually influence less restrictive social understandings of sex and sexuality. The Marilyn Monroe feature in the first *Playboy* issue in December 1953 abandoned all stylistic signifiers of pin-up imagery. She does not tease the audience with her sexuality; she flaunts it. Nor does she need to be accompanied by a guiding voice or caption. The abandonment of “the tease,” as well as the permanent transition to colored photography, was what distinguished the photo of Monroe from pin-up imagery. Her body fell distinctly in the category of pornography, not the borderline area where pin-ups existed. This was a significant shift in the marketability of sex, indicating how impactful and influential *Esquire* and its Girls had been in conditioning a public audience to view sexualized images of women. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, *Esquire*’s success in legal battles had made it possible for publishers like Hefner to entertain the idea of pushing the limits of obscenity even further. While *Playboy* was certainly the competitor that drove *Esquire* out of the girlie industry, it was also in many ways its successor and heir, owing much of its legacy and success to that of its predecessor. *Esquire* had proven that “sex sells” and had influenced the American public to appreciate a commodified female sexuality, as well as convinced the American *government* that an attempt to restrict the marketing and sale of this commodity infringed upon the rights of Americans. To ignore this impact would be to misunderstand how Hefner was able to get away with such an explicit magazine and make it successful.

Overall, the creation, perpetuation, and evolution of pin-up imagery was primarily rooted in the tactical and deliberate need of the *Esquire* staff to avoid unemployment and bankruptcy. In order to do so, the publishing and editorial team of *Esquire* magazine needed to remain acutely aware of men as a social group so as to predict their consumer interests as often as they attempted to influence

them. The greatest measure of their success was likely in how pervasively they were able to impact the behavior of men. From the initial push to re-conceptualize leisure, to the propagandistic advancement of commercialism, patriotism, and fantasy, to the admission that their impact on the social constructions of acceptable public sexuality had extended beyond their influence and control to develop on its own, *Esquire* used its girlie features to dictate a highly capitalist and nationalistic agenda.

What is most impressive about pin-up as a genre, was how the images began within the cartoon section of an up-and-coming 1930s magazine and evolved into a true phenomena that took on many different mediums. Not discussed in this analysis were the interpretations of pin-ups that extended beyond art forms, such as performative expressions of pin-up, nor were all the places pin-up drawings and Hollywood photos appeared addressed within the limits of this work. The recognition of the longevity of pin-up art and culture, that which initially started my journey into this topic, is another indication of *Esquire*’s success in its ability to influence and change American culture. It is likely possible to connect other public expressions of sex and sexuality to pin-up imagery and its origins, including but not limited to the bathing suit (specifically the bikini) advertising, sex as an advertising technique and, eventually, pornography as a prominent entertainment industry. This is all to say that the study and recognition of pin-ups, and of *Esquire* specifically, was not a random or inconsequential endeavor. The representations of female sexuality, masculinity, and patriotism that *Esquire* sold impacted American life in such a way that it has shaped our contemporary memory of the pin-up. Whether cognizant or not, *Esquire*’s team were not merely reacting to existing understandings of American men, but molding them into the perfect consumer of fantasy, masculinity, and female sexuality. Their assertions that readers could enjoy owning Varga cards or Petty calendars helped curate their understandings of how masculinity should be performed, how femininity should be consumed, and where this type of transaction should take place: within the sexualized fantasy of women’s bodies as a commodity for the exclusive male gaze.

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