

WALKING IN Her SHOES

No two lives are the same, but the majority of women share a list of common experiences that stem from one of the most basic parts of their identity: their gender. Starting in girlhood, women are taught to condition themselves to be unphased by certain phrases or behaviors. Statements like “let me explain this so you can understand” or “don’t you worry your pretty little head” become an unfortunate part of a woman’s routine. The hidden expectations and pressures placed on women make the female experience a difficult one. **One would have to walk a day in a woman’s shoes to truly understand the depth of the lifestyle.**

THE SINGLE MOTHER DOUBLE STANDARD

BY ANAGHA SUDHINDRA

The expected roles of a mother versus a father are seen as vastly different in the eyes of society. The archaic mantles of breadwinner and homemaker seemed to carry through even in today's progressive world. Yet as the expectations for a father have relatively stayed the same, mothers are now subject to even more parental responsibilities, creating a not-so-subtle double standard.

The role of the head woman in a family is especially burdensome. Women are typically expected to maintain a work life while endlessly supporting their kids. Senior Shobini Iyer commented on the looming presence of work in a mother's life, "The parental responsibilities of mother's are ever-changing, but one factor stays constant: the scrutiny women face while forging their personal work-life balance." Then came the glaring double standard, "The reality is that women are often held to a higher standard of achievement—not working is looked down upon, and so is not prioritizing family," she stated.

Women are subject to the trap of "intensive mothering," originally coined by author Sharon Hays in her book "The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood." Hays described "intensive mothering" as the "underlying assumption that the child absolutely requires consistent nurture by a single primary caretaker and that the mother is the best person for the job."

A good mother is defined as a woman who devotes all her time and energy to supporting her children, regardless of personal aspirations or the taxing nature of the job.

Iyer personally attested to the presence of "intensive mothering" in her early years. "Growing up, my mom did what a lot of people would agree is an unreasonably high standard for working mothers. Though my parents were together, my dad frequently traveled for work, so the responsibility fell on my mother to practically raise me and my brother while simultaneously working full-time. My mother was able to do it, but it definitely wasn't easy and shouldn't be expected of all women."

Many women face the same scenario; an exhausting balancing act between home and

work. But why does this conflict of time and effort seem to only affect women?

Caitlyn Collins, Ph.D., assistant professor of sociology at Washington University and author of "Making Motherhood Work" addressed the ever-present expectations reserved for women, "We consider childrearing to be largely women's domain in the U.S.," she stated. This natural role of care puts a lot of pressure on women. The ingrained expectation of a perfectly balanced work life while somehow prioritizing family and housework is tough to poise.

But the pressure is exponentially exacerbated for single mothers, who are often unsure how to prioritize work and a steady income versus children and familial duties.

Senior Kenzie Ruge and her two sisters are supported by a single mother. Ruge commented on the difficulties single mothers often face because of their heightened responsibilities. "I think it's hard for single mothers to balance their work life and their children because single mothers are the sole provider for their kids. They have to choose between showing up for their children or a paycheck," she stated. "My mom personally feels like she felt she missed out on a lot because she had to work. She couldn't give us some opportunities like traveling, sports, dance and even being a mom in the PTA or school parties because she had to work."

Single mothers are truly expected to do it all, but often feel a sense of disappointment when they are not able to match the high expectations of society. So when the occasional run to a fast food store rather than a home-cooked meal, or forgotten homework assignment or late pick-up from daycare emerges through the cracks, mothers are judged more harshly by themselves and by others. "Because, again, women are supposed to be 'naturally' capable caregivers in a way we don't assume for men," Collins explained.

Women face immense pressure to parent "right." But oftentimes, single dads are seen as less capable of being a parent, therefore are celebrated much more. Picture a single dad pushing a stroller in the park with a phone in hand.

He would be seen as a monumental father, working around his busy day to take his children out and spend some quality

time. Now picture a single mom pushing the same stroller in the same park with the same phone in hand. No one would bat an eye, in fact, some might even condemn the mother for prioritizing her phone over her kids.

Daniel Ortega, a 34-year-old dad and founder of Single Parent Society, has sole custody over his three kids. As a single dad, he finds it usual for strangers to act surprised that a father is present in parenting, frequently hearing things like, "Mom have the day off?" or "Looks like you have your hands full!"

"I always feel compelled to tell them I am a single father, that I am doing it on my own. My insecurity about it all made me feel like I had to explain myself," stated Ortega. But he too has seen the parental double standard. "When they learn I was a single dad, that's when all the praise comes. 'Good for you!' 'I don't know any man who would do what you are doing.' 'Those kids are lucky.' I've never encountered a mom who received the same praise."

Single dads are cut some slack when it comes to parenting mistakes, solely because they are not expected to be the primary parent. This is acutely seen throughout the infrastructure of society. The lack of basic childcare needs like paternal leave, to even changing tables in men's restrooms, are all signs of the intended parental roles. Subsequently, fathers are greatly disadvantaged legally in terms of custody battles. Women are seen as the natural caregivers, so custody battles often go in the woman's favor.

According to the US census, the percent of children living with two parents decreased from 88% to 69% between the years of 1960 and 2016. During that period, the number of children living with only a mother increased from 8 to 23 percent. The number of children living with only a father increased from 1 to 4 percent.

From the presence of changing tables in a woman's bathroom, to the impossible work-home life balance, to the defaultation of Mother as the primary caregiver in a child's life, it's clear society expects women to do it all, and do it all perfectly.



Entertainment's purpose, whether it be television, film or music, is to create a sense of enjoyment within its audiences, but the behind-the-scenes of media creation can be a negative space for women in the industry. In every aspect of entertainment, women face a double standard that is not always apparent in the finished product, but shines through in public and industry responses.

Women in the television and film side of the entertainment industry are subject to inequalities throughout every step of their career, but it's unfortunately a necessary evil if they desire success in media. In the beginning stages of a young actress's career, she is often seen as the sum of her appearance rather than performance accomplishments. Her success ratings are based on her appeal to her project's male audience.

In HBO's acclaimed series "Euphoria" up-and-coming actress Sydney Sweeney was granted her big break. Sweeney was given the chance to portray a complex female character, and did so beautifully. Her performance in the show's second season was so emotionally intense that she was awarded an Emmy for her abilities. However, reviews of her performance on social media seldom mention her character's exploration of friendship or romance, but rather they describe her sensual scenes or provocative outfits. The majority of Sweeney's male supporters are not interested in her amazing acting, but rather her conventionally attractive appearance.

While Sweeney is a current example of the sexualization of young actresses, the same phenomenon occurred for dozens of women before her. Actresses like Scarlett Johanson or Margot Robbie's talents are reduced to their presentation, and audiences value

THE MEDIA AND MEN: ENTERTAINMENT'S DISSERVICES TO ITS WOMEN

BY MAKENNA LEIBY

their sensual scenes over ones of character exploration.

The film industry further pushes gender distinctions by presenting actresses with infantilized roles, where their character is portrayed as ditsy or desperately in need of the help of her stronger male counterpart. Think Margot Robbie's character in "The Wolf of Wall Street." She lacks intelligence and relies heavily on Leonardo DiCaprio's character, but her character is coined as a "dream girl." The entertainment industry has promoted to male viewers that men should be searching for a woman with no sense of direction, one that accepts that their purpose is to sit and look pretty.

The emphasis on a woman's appearance in the media is the silent killer for actresses entering their 40's. The second that first wrinkle or gray hair appears, an actress's commercial value decreases. Senior actors like Tom Hanks and Will Smith are still being offered consecutive mainstream roles while they are well into their 50's and 60's. Meanwhile, actresses like Jennifer Aniston and Julia Roberts have not been given a serious role since entering their 50's.

A man's tainted perspective of women is encouraged by all forms of media, but especially by the pornography business. Young men often begin seeking out explicit content in their adolescent years, when romance starts becoming an object of their desire. However, including pornography into a developing brain's regular consumption can change a teenager's perspective on relationships, and more importantly women. Women are no longer human beings, but rather sexual fantasies waiting to be explored.

Senior Sarah Chen has observed the unfortunate effects of pornography on the lives of women in media as well as her classmates, "It's disturbing to see the effect that media has on the portrayal of women—it's something I've witnessed a lot in high school with comments made all the time between males. The entertainment industry has normalized the sexualization of women including public figures, ac-

tresses and especially their own peers."

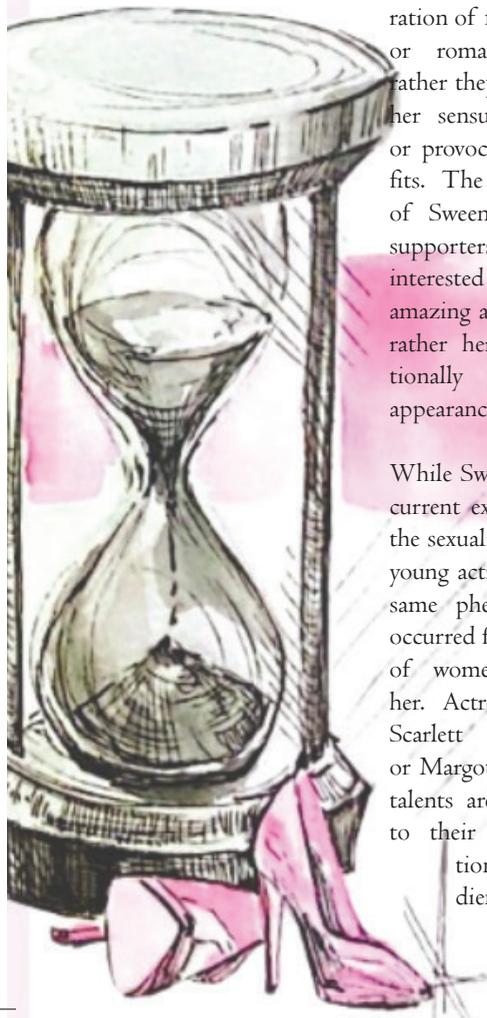
The image of a typical woman being attractive and created for the attention of men is heightened by pornography consumption, and reinforced by entertainment stereotypes. The women cast in films targeted toward a majority male audience are often alluring or seductive, so if men are rarely introduced to the true female experience on screen, why would they place any interest in it in real life?

Sexist scenarios are not limited to the television and film side of media; female musicians experience them too. Female artists must go to drastic lengths to keep themselves relevant in pop culture. In singer Taylor Swift's documentary "Miss Americana," she explained this musical phenomenon. "Female artists have reinvented themselves 20x more than male artists. They have to, or else you're out of a job. Constantly having to reinvent, constantly finding new facets of yourself that people find to be shiny."

Chen observed the gender-based double standard present in the music industry, "When have male artists like Drake ever been expected to "rebrand" themselves? They haven't because males, especially in the rap/trap/country genre have never had any expectations to change their look or music."

Musicians like Swift, Miley Cyrus, Madonna and Lady Gaga have been big names in music for years, but they are also continually doing things that force people to talk about them. They "ruin" their reputation so that people will have a reason to keep listening to their music and caring about their performances. While male performers are applauded for simply standing on a stage and singing, female performers are expected to choreograph dance routines and sudden outfit changes to keep audiences looking at them.

The media's continuous disregard of female talent and experiences further perpetuates gender disparity and encourages men to continue their disrespectful habits.



BOYS *WILL* BE ~~BOYS~~ HELD *ACCOUNTABLE*

BY ERIN MCGREGOR

little to the imagination. My father is also almost 70 years old so I think that is just how his generation was raised. I don't really think that's fair because the clothes I put on my body are my decision."

This is the perfect example of the way we are taught to cover up due to the ideals of other people, the preponderance of which are men.

"Can I get some strong boys to help me move these chairs?" a sentence the majority of girls heard growing up. This differentiation of ability—based purely on gender—is just one small example of the different roles girls are assigned throughout childhood. Although comments like this are normalized, they do not go unnoticed.

Surveying Spartan women around the school gave me the opportunity to ask an important question, "What were you taught growing up as a girl that was biased or unfair by gender, or that boys were not taught?" This question was unanimously greeted by a sigh followed by something along the lines of "Where do I start?" A list of 30+ answers gave me the disappointing, yet unsurprising insight I needed to share.

Many girls brought up the role of self defense in their life, it has become a near necessary player in a young women's education, placing close behind reading and writing. 86% of girls said they carried mace or a self-defense tool of some kind, due to feeling unsafe alone, even when in public spaces. Those without a safeguard spoke of using the "key claw" technique, holding their car key or key fob between their fingers, forming a claw and makeshift weapon.

From day one women are taught to constantly play defense. When women are alone, they are taught to look over their shoulders to make sure they are not being followed. Other ingrained precautions include avoiding smiling at strangers (especially males), not walking alone at night, not wearing revealing clothes and being aware of trafficking tricks.

Simple things such as shopping carts behind cars in the parking lot are not something men think twice about but for wom-

en, this occurrence would send them into high alert. Paying attention to surroundings is vital to a woman's survival but is something that men generally are not as concerned about. Trafficking awareness is very normalized in society nowadays. Scrolling on Tik Tok or Instagram you will find accounts and posts dedicated to raising awareness of "new and improved" trafficking techniques. The truth is, women have to look out for each other in any way they can. Men on the other hand don't feel as threatened in public. Being bigger on average men already have the physical advantage, while societal roles bring men to the top of the food chain.

In addition to fearing for the safety of their bodies, women also have to worry about their level of acceptability. Closely related to the inability to wear revealing clothes out, women are in fear of having clothing used against them. In many cases of sexual assault, clothing is used to justify the assaulter's actions. Often, judicial officials or commentators ask, "What was she wearing?" instead of, "Did she give consent?" in sexual assault cases. This objectification based on clothing alone sparks a fear of wearing anything remotely revealing without dangerous repercussions, and this fear surpasses just choosing an outfit for a night out.

The immediate faith in an assaulter's story perpetuates the victim-blaming seen in society. This mistrust in victims usually leads to rapists and assaulters not being held accountable for their actions, as well as creating a culture where victims are scared to come forward about being assaulted.

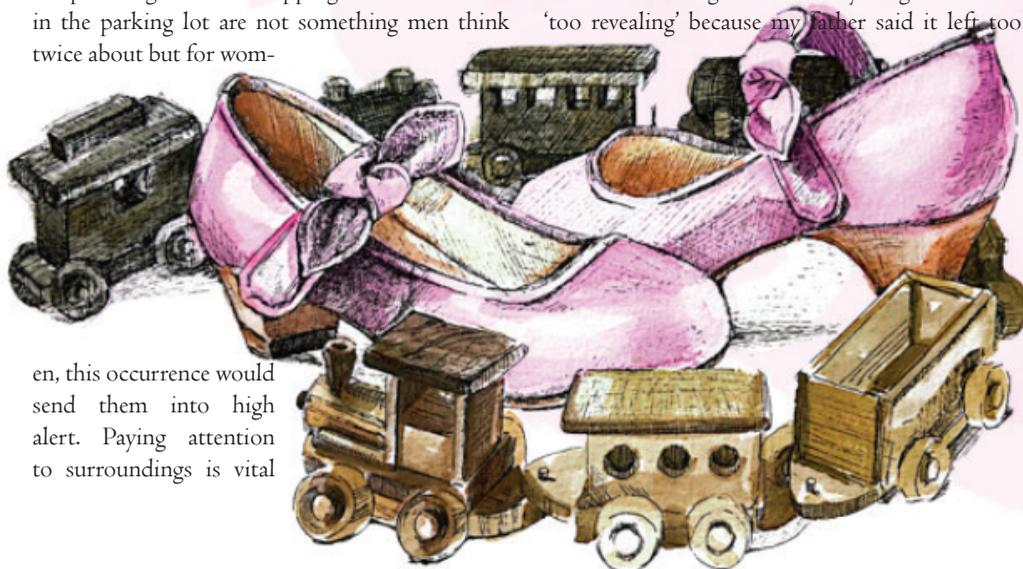
PV junior Annabelle Knaack was one of the vast majority of girls who was told what to wear, overriding her choice of clothing. Knaack commented about her experience with appropriate learning attire, "I was taught to wear anything that wasn't 'too revealing' because my father said it left too

Despite the stereotype that women are allowed to be emotional while men are not, women do tend to hide their emotions for a number of reasons. As girls enter their teenage years and start to mature, they are taught not to show their emotions as much, in fear of coming off as over-emotional or sensitive. Bottling everything and crying alone in their room becomes the new form of expression. The emotion is to be expected, just not at times where it may inconvenience a man. When it comes to being visibly upset in public, all of the sudden women become attention seeking. Being upset turns into being too outspoken and loud.

Emotion should be allowed to be felt without judgment based on gender. Although this does go both ways, women continuously remain confused about when, where or how they are allowed to feel. Especially in relationships, it is becoming increasingly difficult to know when opening up is appropriate.

In elementary school, boys are taught from a young age that being mean to a girl is an indication of attraction. This acceptance of violence as a representation of love, combined with a victim shaming society makes it very difficult to want to speak up at any time. According to USAfacts.org, 52% of domestic violence cases go unreported. Women should not have to live in a world where they are scared to come forward as victims. Girls everywhere are taught to not be too outspoken at any given time. This greatly impacts confidence in speaking out against a man who has a higher likelihood of being believed than she does.

The lessons women are taught have become more modernized, but the theme stays true. Society does not teach growing boys how to defend themselves or wear pants that go past their knees just so they do not distract their peers. Internalized misogyny carries through generations, it causes fathers to be concerned about potential smaller versions of themselves while mothers understand the fear that they were also taught. As a result, there becomes a clear distinction between the acceptability of actions of both genders. Instead of teaching girls to be scared and to defend themselves, we should be teaching men to view women as human beings.



MANIC PIXIE DREAM GIRLS: DREAM OR NIGHTMARE? BY JAE JEPSEN

This girl is like no other, she is quirky and whimsical. She dresses and acts differently from anybody else you've ever met, which makes her all the more compelling. Maybe she sings in public, or dyes her hair a different color each week--either way, the girl is unpredictable. Free from the weights of society, and yet wise to its nuance, she has endless lessons to teach you. This girl is the coveted Manic Pixie Dream Girl, who has been making appearances in the media for as long as it has been around. But where did she come from? Is she real? How has her looming presence caused a shift in society?

The Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG) archetype is characterized by an eccentric female devoid of her own ambitions, whose only purpose is to teach life lessons to the male protagonist. She is usually a love interest and almost always remains undeveloped. This trope has been around since the 1960s, but became especially popular during the 2000s and 2010s in films such as "500 Days of Summer," "Scott Pilgrim vs the World" and "Elizabethtown."

The easiest explanation for the Manic Pixie Dream Girl's origin is male fantasy. The men who wrote and directed many early films were inspired by the woman they dreamt of. This fantasy woman was not like the other girls in their lives -- she had the capabilities to make them a better person. She was unattainable, beautiful and sensitive, making her highly desired by her creators. She also was dedicated solely to the men in her life, which is Junior Pratima Khatri's main problem with the trope, "Using women as a means to serve a goal, such as furthering the male characters' life, can be very demeaning," she shared. Portrayal of women in this way- as a means to reach an ultimate achievement- devalues their importance in society. The presence of the MPDG was wildly popular with male audiences, allowing more and more material to feature them.

One especially germane aspect of the MPDG is her age. In most of her forms, she remains young, either by dying tragically or refusing to mature. The trope's persistent youthfulness serves as a reflection of dating culture as a whole. The expectation of women is to look and behave juvenile for as long as they wish to be desired. Once their novelty and youth wears off, they are no longer wanted. Nobody has the ability to stay young forever- not in body nor spirit- so men especially were drawn to the characters who did.

The popularization of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl had many consequences, specifically the impression it left on many young girls. An MPDG's charm attracts all the men around her, which incentivized many audiences to change their behavior in ways that reflected their favorite characters.

The traits adopted during this movement ranged from subtle quirks to drastic transformations. More than anyone else, young girls participated in character alterations, skewing the ideal character. The sudden mainstream desire to be perceived as "different" or "mysterious" culminated in a generation of girls who did irrational things in order to appeal to men in the way a MPDG might.

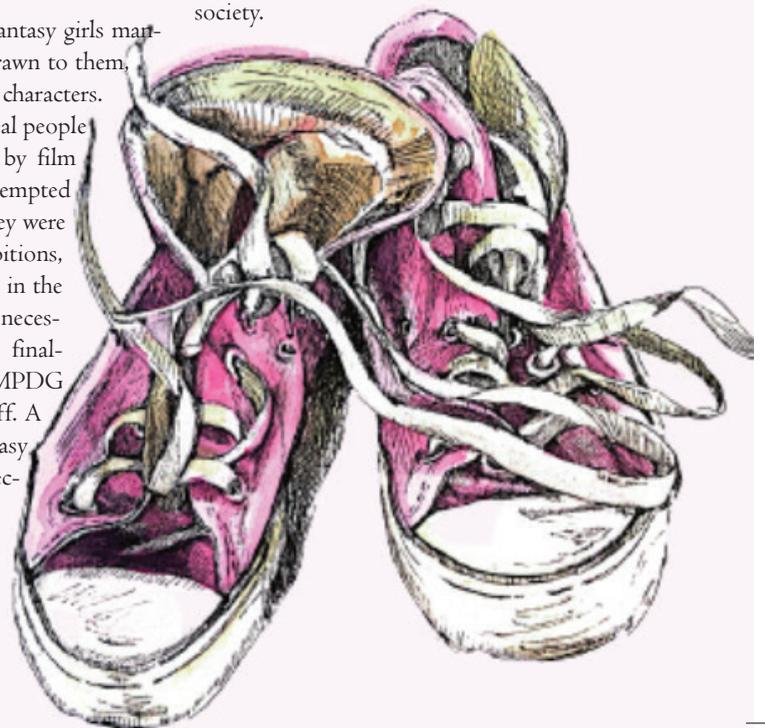
For example, TikTok user [@_alrighty_aphrodite_](#) shared how she attempted to be mysterious; "I sit down at 10:00 pm with a glass of black coffee... Is my activity a book? No, I bring a dress from a thrift store that I needed to hem, and I hand stitch it." This unconventional behavior was far more than a single girl's idiosyncrasy, it was the manifestation of her desire for male attention. There's nothing wrong with doing unusual things, as long as someone is doing it for themselves. The only way this girl knew to gain the affection she craved was by acting like a MPDG. The broad trend of new habits was representative of a shift in culture towards favoring curated personas mimicking MPDGs. The new demeanor some girls took on turned out to be successful in attracting men, who had been similarly impacted by recent media. They were more inclined to like "quirky" and "whimsical" girls like the ones they had seen on the screen. Khatri believes the main problem with media tropes such as the MPDG is how they alter perceptions, "I think tropes in general widely affect the way women are perceived, especially and most often in harmful ways ... when you portray characteristics rather than people ... you oversimplify and in some cases objectify women," she shared.

When men witnessed fictional fantasy girls manifesting in real life, many were drawn to them, expecting people exactly like the characters. They soon came to realize that real people contain complexities unreached by film and TV. The more real girls attempted to become MPDGs, the more they were forced to sacrifice their own ambitions, until the trend finally died down in the late 2010s. Though it was not necessarily eradicated, many women finally began to see the harms of MPDG culture years after it first took off. A resentment formed for the fantasy they had played into and the expectation to satisfy an impossible standard. A new archetype was formed: the "pick me" girl. The "pick me" girl is a variation of the MPDG, but perhaps better

resents the pursuit of being one -- she wants to be different from the women around her so that men will notice her.

Pick-me girls are almost universally hated by other women for their self-centered behavior. Freshman Andie VanDerSchaaf noted, "A 'pick me' girl is a girl who is very attention seeking," specifying the most aggravating part of the persona is that, "what she does to seek attention may have a bad effect on others." One common opinion of these women is the insistence that her own unique behavior is superior to everyone else's. The idea of needing male approval is centuries old, but pursuing approval by being different descends from the MPDG.

The lasting impact of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl is seen all over society today, from the parodies of her archetype seen in media to the characteristics still being desired by men. In order to combat the damage done, there needs to be a broader societal understanding that the MPDG is just that: a dream. Nobody is going to come fix the brooding male protagonist, but that is good- it allows girls to live their own lives free from the burden of needing to heal others. Real people, in all their imperfections, are far more interesting than a simple trope ever could be. To have one's own hopes and dreams is more meaningful than the attention of a man, and an authentic girl is even better than the manufactured fantasy she might have tried to be. In reality, the Manic Pixie Dream Girl may be more of a nightmare in the greater perspective of society.



A MAN'S FAITH: SEXISM DISGUISED IN RELIGION BY AYAH ALSHEIKHA

Female oppression lies within the roots of human existence, woven throughout religious texts and cultural traditions worldwide. Women have fought and suffered for their rights, but the question is: Does religion continue to enforce gender disparity despite women's efforts?

Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are the three most practiced religions globally, accounting for 70% of the world's practiced religions. To fully examine the sexism ingrained in modern society, it is necessary to observe the practices the majority of the population abides by and the ways in which women are forced to function in different cultures and religions apart from Western philosophy.

Rooted in the Middle East and Northern Africa, Islam has numerous passages meant to depict the genders as equal, such as the maintenance of spiritual balance between men and women and the standards of modesty upheld by both genders. However, practices in Islamic Saudi Arabia lead observers to note strong sexist traits of the religiously-governed country, with comparisons that women are essentially treated as, "permanent legal minors."

Direct correlations can be made between these Saudi Arabian policies and Islamic traditions themselves, such as the law that women cannot marry without consent from a male legal guardian. This idea stems from Islamic traditions of a father's blessing being required in a marriage. In addition, domestic abuse was criminalized only in 2013, and there have been complaints that the government lacks implementation of this law, which also stems from an ancient Islamic Hadith that permitted husbands to beat their wives, however, this is no longer practiced with good morality is Islam. The Quran is the religious text read and followed by Muslims. Specific passages stand out to feminists, one from The Hadith Regarding Concealment of Voice During Prayer states that "Women can not speak during prayer to correct an Imam [men can] because their voices are too distracting." The insinuation that women not only have one less right than men in Islam, but also cannot speak or input their opinions due to their distracting voice is based solely on a male's perception of "distracting." When a man's lack of self-control dictates a woman's right, their blatant sexism becomes glaringly ap-

parent. The idea of a woman being dictated by the male eye plays a role in a woman's dress, also a controversial subject of Islam. Modesty is valued among both genders in Islam; however, a woman's modesty is the center of discussion among feminists. Women are generally held to a higher standard of modesty than Muslim men, as men must only cover past the knee, whereas traditionally, women are expected to cover their hair and conceal their figure completely. This contrast contributes more to the sexism in religion targeting women, as they are once again held to higher standards of modesty determined by a man's perception.

Christianity, similar to Islam, comes from a distant hearth in the Middle East. Many parallels can be found between the two religions, especially in women's traditional--often sexist--roles, namely, the roles of wives. Ephesians 5:22-5 states, "Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." Verses like these depict the woman of a marriage to be submissive to her husband, a common thread among the Abrahamic religions, which include Judaism and Islam. This expectation of the wife's submission enforces gender disparity within the household.

Another controversial biblical verse essentially outlines a woman's role and significance in society compared to a man's. Timothy 2.12 states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." This verse highlights the truest perception of women in Christianity to a tee: "she is to remain quiet."

Women are repeatedly depicted as the secondary, incapable gender, made for men and their every action must revolve around or be dictated by them. Otherwise, she is essentially expected to remain quiet and have no contribution if that contribution suggests authority over a man. Even more so, the natural functions of a woman's body are seen as unholy and impure. Islamic passages force a woman to abstain from praying and she cannot be considered clean until the end of her menstruation. Similarly, Hinduism includes traditions of claiming menstruation as impure, as a

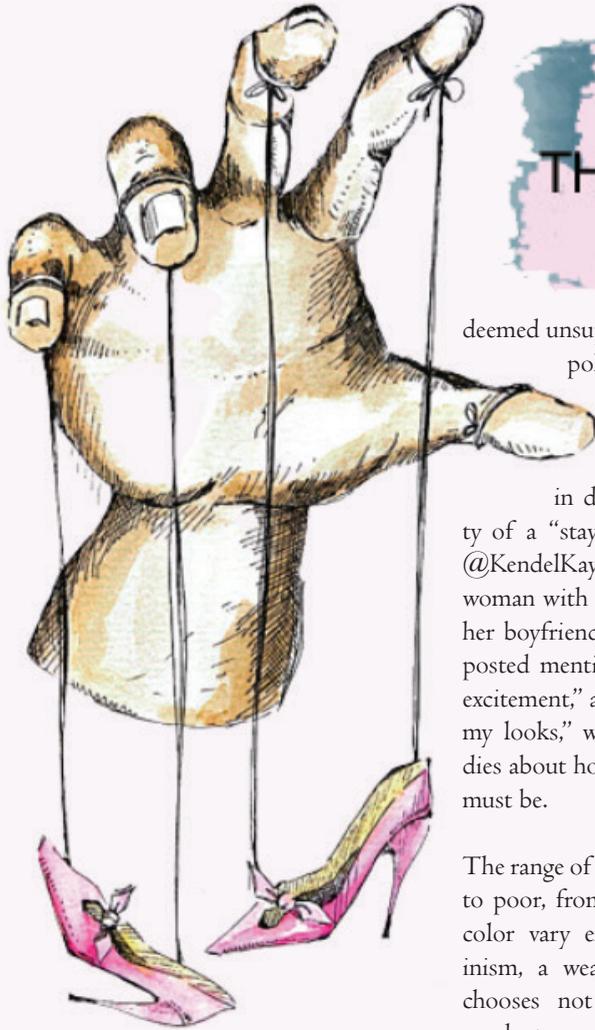
translated segment of Hindu text states, "Women shouldn't touch anything sacred and pure because of their lack of physiological impurity each month." Even the uncontrollable existence of a woman's period is viewed as unholy, begging the question: who is interpreting religious text and enforcing these traditions today?

The answer to this question, unsurprisingly, is men. For centuries, only men could be Rabbis and Pastors, and even today, the positions of religious leaders like Priests and Imams are solely reserved for men. Men have been the delegators, translators and interpreters of religion for years. Religions themselves are inherently sexist, but the lack of women in religious leadership continues to promote religious inequality.

There are recent religious reparations meant to bring about equality, such as a woman's ability to be a Rabbi or Pastor, but this does not mend the years of sexism women faced in religion. Perhaps nothing can mend the deaths of the women accused of being Satanists by Christian leaders during the religious awakening of 1740. Perhaps nothing can mend the deaths of women in Iran fighting for bodily autonomy from the Islamic regime. Perhaps there are no adequate reparations to mend the suffering of women at the hands of male religious leaders and their fanatic followers.

Religion has and continues to place women secondary to men. Despite modern adaptations or interpretations of religion that may promote equality, at their very roots, the most practiced religions around the globe are sexist.





THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE IN FEMINISM

BY NORA ZIMMERMANN

deemed unsupportive, “bad” feminist. But the political and social calls for change halt.

TikTok users recently took part in discourse surrounding the validity of a “stay at home girlfriend,” when user @KendelKay detailed a day-in-the-life of a woman with no job, financially dependent on her boyfriend. A screenshot of her diary she posted mentions a “lack of fun/social life/excitement,” as well as being “unsatisfied with my looks,” which brought on satirical parodies about how destitute the stay-at-home life must be.

The range of choices in daily life from wealthy to poor, from white people to people of color vary extremely. In choice feminism, a wealthy white woman who chooses not to buy luxury beauty products or clothing may be praised for her rejection of societal norms, whereas a woman of color purchases said items out of survival, because of current and past culture’s relentless torment. “Nothing can be more elementary and universal than the fact that choices of all kinds in every area are always made within particular limits,” says Indian philosopher Amartya Sen. Not every choice reflects agency.

Sexual liberation and the reclamation of derogatory terms are key components of third wave feminism. The concept of choice being equivalent to power is dangerous frequently, particularly regarding sex work. A choice-feminist may argue that sex work remains dignified so long as the worker has willingly volunteered herself for it. However, there are boundaries to choices.

In Nivedita Menon’s *Seeing Like a Feminist*, reports show that 71% of women have willingly chosen sex work as a means of financial stability. But upon further investigation, it was found that incentives to do so were low pay from other jobs, the seasonal nature of work, and the inability to support dependents

from low-income jobs. Notably, a majority of sex workers come from impoverished and economically disadvantaged families. If prostitution is a last resort as opposed to other less economically appealing options, is it even a choice?

Choice feminism allows all parties involved to become complicit with oppression. Pretending that the choices society influences women to make are all genuinely their own will not suddenly rescue them from oppression. The social context of one’s life is much more relevant respecting life choices than the individual themselves.

Nothing can be more elementary and universal than the fact that choices of all kinds in every area are always made within particular limits,”
-Amartya Sen

Bright eyed and bushy tailed, new age feminists with eye-liner “sharp enough to kill a man” are taking part in a fashionable contemporary feminism known as “choice feminism,” wherein life choices are justified and politically correct. Modern celebrities and everyday women make bold choices to sexualize themselves at heightened levels. But how much of this sexualization is their own free will, and how much comes from desire to conform to the patriarchy comfortably?

At surface level, the warm embrace of tolerance and acceptance is inspiring, but with time, recedes into a lack of critical debate that leads to political hampering. Choice feminism cultivates neoliberal virtues, such as individualism and consumerism, while simultaneously minimizing the urgency of collective action against systemic gender inequality.

Choice feminism arises in three ubiquitous critiques of feminism; feminism is too radical, feminism is too exclusionary and feminism is too judgemental. In the absence of these elements, the difficulty of demanding change of friends and family eases in the face of being

