An Analysis of the Influences of Culture, Gender, and Media:

A Dialogue on *Game of Thrones*

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"I'm a slow learner, it's true. But I learn."

> — Sansa Stark
> *Game of Thrones* Season 7 Episode 7

"All my life men like you've sneered at me,
 and all my life I've been knocking men like you into the dust."

— Brienne of Tarth
Game of Thrones Season 2 Episode 8

0. Abstract

This paper uses feminist theory, gender theory, media theory, and theories of meaning to examine how individuals view gendered norms and characteristics. The highly popular HBO television show, *Game of Thrones*, was used as a case with which to examine this, due to its position in ongoing dialogue about feminism and gender portrayals on the show. The primary research question being examined was, "Is an individual more likely to have preference towards a *Game of Thrones* character that deviates from gender norms or embodies/adheres to these norms?" The secondary research questions being examined were, "Do individuals who watch *Game of Thrones* differ in their views on societal roles for men and women from non-viewers?", and "Do people identify more often with traits attributed to characters of their own gender?" The project was intended to be researched utilizing a mixed-methods approach, but, due to various factors preventing the use of mixed-methods, this was not able to occur. Research for this project was therefore done using quantitative methods (an online survey), having a total of 72 responses. The findings of the study were that people more frequently prefer characters who appear to deviate from expected gender norms; *Game of Thrones* viewers and non-viewers do not tend to differ in their expectations of different genders; and individuals identify with a variety of both masculine and feminine traits, and frequently identify with characters who align with their own gender identity, separate from these characters' gendered characteristics. This research, therefore, adds new, contemporary data to existing and continuing dialogue on the intersections of feminism, media, and culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Introduction

On April 21st, 2019, the HBO television show *Game of Thrones* reached a new level of relevance: 2020 Presidential Candidate Elizabeth Warren published an essay in magazine *The Cut,* where she discusses two of the prominent political leaders in the show— both of them being women. These two female figures (for those familiar with the show, Daenerys and Cersei) are placed in opposition to one another both in the show and in Warren's essay. Warren's discussion alludes to her self-identification with who she, at the time, perceived to be the more likable of the two characters— Daenerys —and allowed her to spin a narrative which elevated her own status and aptitude for a leadership position Warren (2019). Upon watching the final season, Warren, in a video interview along with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (a Democratic Representative of New York) lamented her "disappointment" at Daenerys going "nuts" (as Daenerys had finally gained the political power fans had wanted for her, but had gotten it through terrorizing and brutalizing the capital city, killing many in the process) Benioff, Weiss, & Sapochnik (2019); Hains (2019). Warren and Ocasio-Cortez then both went on to agree that HBO needs assistance in "feminist analysis"— implying that they believe that HBO and the male writers of the show did an overall poor job of creating dynamic feminist plotlines for their fan-favorite female characters Hains (2019).

The ways in which *Game of Thrones'* depicts gender and gender relations is a topic that tends to be analyzed, criticized, and acclaimed through popular media (such as blogs, online videos, and social media posts) as well as through academic papers— and, Warren's comparison of two political leaders, both of whom are female, (and her later public disappointment at the fall of one of these female characters) is an apt example of the popularity of the topic with regards to

the show Clapton & Shepherd (2017); Hains (2019); Mitchell (2018); Scharl,

Hubmann-Haidvogel, Jones, Fischl, Kamolov, Weichselbraun, & Rafelsberger (2016); Westeros

Sentinel (n.d.). With the variety of female characters, *many* of whom are in leadership positions

politically and militaristically (and must work alongside and against a cast of male characters), it

is not difficult to then see how *Game of Thrones* holds relevance in multiple fields of study, but

is of particular importance when discussing gender Clapton & Shepherd (2017). These on-screen

depictions of gender relations, in addition to the extensive array of gender analyses and

feminism-related commentary available through both online and textual discourse, makes *Game*

of Thrones a model object of study by which to research viewpoints on gender.

The broad topic of gender and media studies, while a fairly new concept, is important in

analyzing such models of entertainment as music, novels, and television— of which *Game of*

Thrones is included in. Seeing how different genders are expressed in media is an integral part of

understanding how society views forms of gender expression and identity, and how separate

identities between genders are created, performed, and reinforced Buonanno (2014). In short,

understanding the growing field of gender and media studies is to comprehend how the concepts

of meaning and identity are created in different societies, and how these concepts affect people's

relationships with each other and themselves.

I.I. Situating This Study

This study will be analyzing the concept of gendered characteristics in media (using

Game of Thrones as the object of study) and where ideas about fixed societal roles for men and

women may come from, and will be discussing socio-cultural structures and theories in order to

do so. This study will add to the field of gender and media studies in providing additional information about the impact of cultural and societal views/values (and the impact on these values by media) at both the individual and group levels.

The remainder of the literature review is as follows: the rest of section one will be discussing the history of women's studies and feminism, particularly in relation to expectations of the genders and how media relates to feminism. How these then relate to the field of science, technology, and society will also be discussed. Section two will analyze theories and ideas on the ways culture can be created and changed by media, and vice-versa. Section three will discuss theories that are specific to gender and the way we understand it on a personal and societal level. Section four will discuss how gender theories might *currently* be viewed and discussed. Section five will explore how *Game of Thrones,* specifically, is relevant to topics relating to gender, media, and culture, and why, therefore, it will act as a case with which to adequately study these topics for this project. Section six will conclude the literature review.

Section seven will explain the research questions explored in this project, as well as detail the outline and methods used to gather data to answer these questions. Section eight will provide the data gathered and an analysis of this data, and section nine will conclude this project. Section ten then offers an appendix, for a full copy of the data-gathering methods developed for this project, in the case of further interest or study.

I.II History of Women's Studies and Feminism

Studies within the field of gender and media began with the history of feminism. Modern gender studies began to emerge from the second wave of feminism, in the 1960s. While the first

wave of feminism was mainly concerned with women's legal rights (most notably, the right to vote), the second wave of feminism then considered other aspects of a woman's life, including her place and her image in her social world Freedman (2007); Kroløkke & Sørenson (2005). Betty Friedan's work *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she analyzes the role of the housewife (her happiness as advertised by male-run media and perpetuated by societal expectations of women; versus women's overall dissatisfaction with their role and their lack of a sense of self), widely influenced and encouraged second-wave feminists due to its candid discussion about women's contentment (or lack thereof) in their given role, and its scrutiny of the effect of cultural pressures on a person's sense of self Friedan (1963); Kroløkke & Sørenson (2005); Trier-Bieniek & Leavy (2014). Indeed, the pressure for women to adhere to their given role in the home was so pervasive that one critical commentary on the second wave of feminism was that it focused perhaps *too* much on bettering the lives of married women, or focused too much on the *idea* of marriage entirely (in rejecting it wholly or in trying to figure out how to be more independent within the confines of marriage) Moran (2004). The most important aspect of second-wave feminism in the discussion of its effects on gender studies and media studies (both separately and together) is the growing discontent feminists in this era felt with the sexist messages society was giving to them regarding their worth and their purpose in life Freedman (2007); Friedan (1963); Kroløkke & Sørenson (2005). Third wave feminists, too, often refer to the societal expectations for women that are encouraged by the media, simply because in the modern day and modern sense of feminism, there is more media to consume than ever before— from print advertisements, to songs on the radio, to television shows and movies— that all add up to a cultural picture of what a "woman" looks and acts like. Indeed, despite this, third wave

feminists often espouse the importance of a woman's *choice* to embrace traditionally "feminine" appearances or hobbies (which can be seen by others as "giving in" to patriarchal society's expectations), or to reject this entirely Snyder (2008). Says Rachel Fudge on feminism and how femininity has been adopted and used as a tool for media consumerism in a 2005 article for Bitch Media (a company whose mission is, "to provide and encourage an engaged, thoughtful feminist response to mainstream media and popular culture"):

> The reclamation of makeup and other girly accoutrements, and the validation of traditionally female activities like cooking, crafting, and talking about sex, [Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, in their 2000 book *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* concluded], is a valid way to express the desire for equality—valuing the inherently female aspects of life, rather than trying to erase them. Unfortunately, the tenets of girlie feminism—that women's work is valuable; that crafts are a powerful link to female history; that sexual experimentation is a potent means of feminist expression—have been easily co-opted by market forces and, in many cases, diluted by the resulting slew of consumer products About Us (n.d.); Baumgardner & Richards (2000); Fudge (2005).

This shows that media is an ever-growing issue in discussions on feminism, past and present, and is not likely to cease being a large part of the overall discussion anytime soon.

Out of feminist studies— which focuses on the history of rights and equality in society for people of different genders— then comes gender studies. Since the ancient Greeks, there

existed claims that women and men were built for divergent roles, and were each better suited

for certain activities LeGates (2001). During the so-called Post-industrial Revolution (when labor

shifted, and many jobs began to emerge outside of the home), this became the justification for

placing men in leadership roles in the public sphere while women were placed in charge of

maintaining their home— in their private sphere Adams (2011); LeGates (2001). Gender studies

was then borne out of a need to discuss and debate colloquial and commonly accepted

knowledge and viewpoints about the differences and similarities between the genders LeGates

(2001); Scott (1986). Scholarly curiosity in these viewpoints about the differences between

genders culminated in the first accredited women's studies course being held in 1969 at Cornell

University Kahn & Meyer (2006). Today, there are numerous women's and/or gender

studies-related programs available across the United States for those interested in studying how

gender relates to larger historical and social contexts Maguire (2019).

    Media studies in relation to gender is also deeply intertwined with feminist theory and

history. As second-wave feminists criticized the uneven representation of men and women in

artistic and social enterprises, female representation through modes of media such as music and

television then began to shift in an attempt to include more diverse depictions of women's lives

Trier-Bieniek & Leavy (2014). As the viewpoint of commonly lauded artistic works has been,

traditionally, that of a white male, this shift was particularly significant. With the view of a white

male being historically dominant in media, the viewpoints of women and non-white people have

been largely ignored, often helping to perpetuate the white male *idea* of women and minorities,

but not the reality of their lived experiences Parmar (1984); TIFF Talks (2016). Gender and

media studies then sought to examine both the pervasiveness of the white male viewpoint and its

effects on our media and sense of self, and the emergence of women and minority voices in creating media that is an accurate representation of their lives Kroløkke & Sørenson (2005); Mulvey (1975); Parmar (1984); Trier-Bieniek (2015).

I.III Science, Technology, and Society Discussion of Gender and Media

The topics of gender and media studies are relevant to the broader field of science, technology, and society (STS) in the sociological implications of these topics. The use and discussions of forms of media will provide the integration of the technological aspect of this study; the survey gathering data on individuals' cultural and social backgrounds will provide a sociological perspective. Media's significant influence on the creation and regulation of societal standards (from the macro to the micro) means that the technological and social are intrinsically linked, and one may be remiss in ignoring this relationship Federman (2004); Hust, Rodgers, Ebreo, & Stefani (2019); Seabrook, Ward, Cortina, Giaccardi, & Lippman (2017); Wright (2013). The relevance to STS, then, is in the intersection of technological studies and social studies.

The following discussion is about theoretical perspectives. Each of these perspectives reflect theories on culture, media, and gender, within their own specialized fields of study. When these theories are examined together, they assist in forming the structure for the combined field of gender and media studies. Each perspective or theory included aids in providing a well-rounded analysis of the most important theories in each relevant subject in order to examine different viewpoints of the relationship between society and the media.

II. Social Shaping of Culture by Media

Individual people's social worlds are heavily impacted by their culture, which, in turn, is shaped by the media they consume. Media is defined in the *Dictionary of Media Studies* as "the various means of mass communication considered as a whole, including television, radio, magazines and newspapers, together with the people involved in their production" Anderson, Bateman, Harris, & McAdam (2006). Media then, is, in short, all of the different ways people can communicate news and ideas to each other, oftentimes not limited by the degree of distance between the idea and the person receiving it. Media theory presents how we view the world in relation to the media we consume.

Culture, then, is defined by the *Dictionary of Media Studies*: as "the beliefs, customs, practices, characteristics and social behaviour of a particular nation or people" Anderson et al. (2006). Therefore, culture can be referred to as the way through which groups of people are brought together and established as one unit. It can then be said that a culture can be created through (or, at least, can be influenced by) the shared experiences that the consumption of particular media brings forth.

In order to understand the concept of gender and media studies in relation to cultural creations of meaning, one must first examine the philosophical and sociological viewpoints which contribute to the understanding of what culture is, how it is formed, and how it regulates and controls societies and the individuals within them. Culture will be discussed in the following sections in terms of how it shapes people, how media is an instrument of culture, and how identity can be analyzed through the study of culture. The following discussion considers the theories of Marshall McLuhan, Michel Foucault, and Erving Goffman on culture and media,

particularly relating to power, gender, society, and the self. These scholars were chosen due to

their focus on societal creation of meaning, with the scales at which they work being different

yet supportive of one another. Foucault's theories on societal systems and structures that produce

and reinforce "norms," including those related to gender and the media, supports McLuhan's

ideas on media producing and reinforcing specific meanings— which, in turn, supports

Goffman's inclusion in this analysis, due to television, print, and other forms of media being

framing devices with which individuals can observe and absorb those cultural/structural ideas of

norms and meanings Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995); Foucault (1988);

Goffman (1986); McLuhan (1994).

II.I. McLuhan on Medium

In his work, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan states,

"The medium is the message"— defining "medium" as anything that is an extension of the self,

and "message" as change. As such, things that would colloquially be defined as a "medium"—

such as filmed media, literature, and other forms of entertainment— are included, as are things

such as basic building tools, and even language. All things that are an extension of the self fall

under the McLuhan category of "medium," however simple or complex they may seem. The

"message" is not, then, the content of the medium (the plot of a story; the communication of a

person through spoken word), but is instead defined as the way the medium changes the way a

person would interact with the world around them, especially with regards to other people. The

medium is the way through which change emerges; the message is that change McLuhan (1994).

Therefore, McLuhan's relevance in the world of gender and media studies is that his theories

suggest that there is more than one layer to being a consumer of media— in addition to absorbing the surface-level message, the importance of that media is measured by how we are affected by it. Additionally, McLuhan's theory suggests that the change we experience from consuming media affects our understanding of our surroundings— so, in constantly experiencing different forms of media, the media is then shaping our individual perceptions, and therefore our community structure (and the power structures that come with it) Federman (2004); McLuhan (1994).

II.II. Foucault and Behavior

French philosopher Michel Foucault discusses in his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* the societal structures of power that govern individual lives within cultural bounds. These power structures aim to control people by labeling actions and traits as good and bad; as desirable and undesirable; as normal and abnormal. In labeling specific traits this way (for example, in certain societies and time periods: being straight as being good and normal, versus being gay as being bad and abnormal), people are taught what they should and should not do in order to be socially accepted Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995). This is especially evident in lawmaking, which seeks to punish amoral or abnormal behavior. After defining what behavior is unwanted, then, everything else is, by default, good, and wanted. Rules and standards set out by governing bodies or religious institutions are typically the markers for what traits and people are wanted Foucault (1995). However, where Foucault's ideas become relevant in the world of gender studies is in a newer marker for desirable traits: the mass media. With mass media having an ever-growing influence on people's lives, it then becomes a larger

factor in defining desirable attributes— traits which are wanted can be glorified by being given to protagonists, while undesirable traits can then be given to antagonists or tertiary characters, implying that these traits are either negative or unimportant. Foucault's theories, then, take on a wider influence in the modern age of media.

In relation to his theories about power, Foucault discusses gender and sexuality in his four-volume work, *The History of Sexuality.* He discusses the widespread misconception that discussions about human sexuality were limited between the 17th and 20th centuries due to societal repression. Foucault suggests that these conversations *were* happening, but they were occurring within societal power structures, rather than freely. These power structures included organized religion and lawmaking— sex and sexuality then being regulated through the confession of sexual desires (solely applicable to religion), the moral and lawful regulation of birth control, and the emphasis on sexual relations being exclusive to the monogamous, heterosexual marriage union Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1988). Foucault specifically discusses the societal change in viewpoints about homosexuality; while before the 19th century, homosexuality was seen almost solely as a sin, after the 19th century, homosexuality began being seen more as an identity. As Foucault states, "[...H]omosexual was now a species." This shift in some societies regarding the opinion of homosexuality— from homosexuality as a choice to sin, to a homosexual person as an entirely different "type" of person, to homosexuality being just one of many different sexual identities— is representative of shifting cultural norms. Foucault's work here suggests that a person's identity and the perception of what identity is "different" can be regulated by larger (macro) power structures; but, these power structures, in attempting to regulate identity, are also at the mercy of the individual and

the group (working together to form micro-power structures) to define identity. In other words, power structures are everywhere, on both the small and large scale, and both work together to create, maintain, and sometimes *shift* what is considered socially acceptable behaviors and beliefs. In this way, a person's identity can be validated or invalidated, and placing a value on an individual identity allows for certain identities to be given more respect and authority, depending on their existing societal power structures. Foucault's ideas, then, imply that all identities, including those relating to gender and gender expression, would also be defined and regulated by larger power structures, which would dictate what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of gendered behavior and expression Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b).

II.III Goffman on Frames

An individual's identity can take on multiple meanings, as one's "identity" can be considered to not only consist of a person's *self*-identification, but also how those around them perceive and acknowledge facets of their identities. Erving Goffman, in his work, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, discusses the theory of framing. Frame theory suggests that the manner in which something is presented to an audience directly influences how an audience processes this information. For example, if one were to be shown a picture of a man, giving the man a label such as "criminal" or "hero" would affect a person's understanding and opinion of this man, either negatively or positively. Giving other frameworks of understanding (e.g., "Reformed criminal volunteers at animal shelter;" "Former hero steals from bank") additionally affects one's understanding of this image. Therefore, the way in which things are presented affect our understanding of images that may otherwise be neutral. In this

way, frame theory gives us an understanding of how meaning is directly influenced by the framing of media presentations Goffman (1986). Goffman's connection to gender and media studies, then, is in the way people of different genders are framed in media— men often being framed as active, and women often being framed as passive characters (with people identifying outside of this binary largely being excluded) Mulvey (1975); TIFF Talks (2016). This is further affirmed and explained through the perspectives through which media is created, which will be further discussed in Section IV.

III. Theories of Gender

In order to answer any questions about cultural impositions on gender, one must first define what gender is, and how it differs from sex. Sex is commonly referred to as the biological makeup of a person, split into two categories— male and female— based on genitalia Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013). Gender, then, is commonly referred to as the expression of one's sex, either in acceptance or rejection of the societal expectations placed upon the sex they were assigned at birth Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013). The following discussion considers four themes that are relevant from the standpoint of gender and media studies: sex as a social construct, gender as a performative action, the subconscious imitation and analysis of actions relating to gender expression (social cognitive theory), and the intersectionality of an individual's identities within their social world Collins (2015); Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013); Bussey & Bandura (1999); Butler (1990).

III.I Social Construction of Gender

Using Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet's discussion of sex and gender in

their 2013 work, *Language and Gender,* it is clear that the way society thinks about sex and

gender has deep roots in cultural beliefs and structures. At first glance, the concept of sex may

seem to be purely scientific, while the concept of gender seems to be purely sociocultural.

However, the definition of sex largely excludes those who may not biologically conform to this

binary, whether it be through higher or lower than average hormone levels, different

chromosomal formation, or some sort of anatomical abnormality regarding their genitalia and

reproductive organs, which would label these individuals as intersex. Sex, then, cannot wholly be

separated from the concept of gender— for it is the social insistence on categorization into the

binary which constitutes the labeling of "male" and "female" based on genitalia, and the

"othering" of those outside this norm. The cherry-picking of the biological constructions which

make up gender (genitalia) and the ignoring of other biological constructions is what makes sex

both a scientific structure and a cultural one. *Both* sex and gender are therefore (at least in part)

seen as socially constructed in this framework Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013).

III.II Gender as Performative— Butler

Philosopher Judith Butler, in her 1990 book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the*

Subversion of Identity, was one of the first authors to present the idea of constructed gender as

being performative. Butler's theory suggests that what people view as "gender" is really just a

series of actions people take (in the way they dress, speak, and otherwise go about daily life)

that, when combined, create the *effect* of being a "man" or a "woman." The impression being

given off of being a man or a woman is not a reflection of innate processes governed by

biological sex; instead, the implication of this is that gender is constantly being produced and

*re*produced within individuals by cultural expectations. This— the idea of gender being

reproduced over and over again— is why Butler's theory is that gender is made up of

performa*tive* actions, rather than gender being a perform*ance*; the word "performance" would

imply that one is given a script of specific gendered responses to follow. Instead, the idea of a

performative gender suggests that gender is more like an improvised show, where an individual

pulls from various influences to create the performance as they go, rather than following a script.

Gender, then, to Butler, does not exist; it exists only as an idea, and it is this idea on which Butler

asserts people base their concept of self Butler (1990). This idea is most relevant when

examining it against the ideas of Foucault; cultural expectations set out by macro and micro

power structures allows ideas of masculinity and femininity to constantly be reproduced, and the

imitation of gendered expectations perpetuates what is considered to be "normal" in society—

hence, why Butler and ideas related to Butler's were included in this analysis Butler (1990);

Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995); Foucault (1988).

III.III Social Cognitive Theory of Gender — Bandura & Bussey

Albert Bandura and Kay Bussey (1999) then offer their "Social Cognitive Theory of

Gender Development and Differentiation" in order to analyze social cognitive theory in relation

to gender. One of the tenets of the social cognitive theory is that individuals are able to learn by

imitating those around them, *and* by analyzing and categorizing the outcomes of events they

observe other people experiencing. In this way, people are able to be self-aware and

self-reflective of how their actions may be received in particular situations. People are likely to

imitate those in positions of authority, and they are also likely to reflect trends found in media

(once again connecting gender theory to media theory) Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b);

Foucault (1995); Foucault (1988); Goffman (1986); McLuhan (1994). Bandura and Bussey state

that ideas of gender norms— especially of the gender binary of "male" and "female"— are

perpetuated through the imitation of what one sees in their home, in their social circles, and in

the media they consume from a young age. Therefore, based on this theory, the portrayals of

gender in media are integral in informing an individual's perception of their gender.

Additionally, this theory would suggest that gender relations are dictated by this imitation; the

way individual men and women interact would be heavily influenced by the various male-female

relationships one would see onscreen (and through other forms of media) Bussey & Bandura

(1999). This theory is then important in understanding how repetitive images of gender relations

as perpetuated by media spread ideas of what is culturally "normal" and "acceptable" for people

of different genders— relating directly back to Foucalt's ideas, in considering media a pervasive

power structure Bussey & Bandura (1999); Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault

(1995); Foucault (1988).

The "gendered sexual script" theory is a subset of social cognitive theory. This theory

suggests that cultural messages directly affect one's given role in intimate relationships Seabrook

et al. (2017). Adherence to the gendered sexual script has been measured in multiple research

studies; one done in 2017 measured acceptance of this sexual script by how often an individual

woman consumed television media, and how likely she was to believe that what she viewed was

an accurate representation of real life. This likelihood was found to negatively influence how

likely she was to use protection during sexual intercourse, her self-esteem, and her general physical and emotional safety during sexual encounters Seabrook et al. (2017). A 2019 study found that a person's exposure to the themes of masculinity present in men's magazines is correlated to the likelihood of then engaging in particular power-seeking behavior in sexual relationships, such as coercion; and, in surveying people between 1973 and 2010, another study found that an individual's consumption of pornography is related to his or her perception of sexual behavior and definitions of sexual norms (e.g., sex outside of marriage versus within marriage; number of partners; having partners outside of one's marriage) Hust et al. (2019); Wright (2013). In this, the individual's sense of self is shown to be heavily influenced or impaired by the media he or she consumes. The gendered sexual script theory and its root, social cognitive theory, then, are crucial in understanding media's importance in culture and in the lives of individuals, and reflect common trends among those who view specific media Seabrook et al. (2017). This, again, relates back to cultural/media theory; the sexual script theory is heavily related to Goffman's frames, in that framing certain aspects of media as "realistic" or "ideal" is likely to affect how an individual approaches that media, and will, in turn, affect how that person feels about themselves and their world Goffman (1986).

III.IV. Intersectionality of Gender — Collins

While examining how gender influences one's place in the social world, seeing how gender works with or against other identities is also of note. This is where the theory of intersectionality becomes relevant. Early discourses on feminism and gender equality were almost exclusively referring to white women in the middle class. Women of color and of

different classes were often excluded from this discussion— as were other facets of their

identities that would affect how they are perceived in the world Collins (2015); Trier-Bieniek &

Leavy (2014); Wood (1994). Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, in providing a definition of

intersectionality and a guideline for discussing the concept, states: "Race, class, gender,

sexuality, age, ability, nation, ethnicity, and similar categories of analysis are best understood in

relational terms rather than in isolation from one another" Collins (2015). She then states that

these "categories of analysis" contribute to the creation of power structures. In this case, she cites

both racism and sexism as relevant power structures that dictate lived experiences. Difference, in

her analysis, is key— varying time periods and cultures will produce differing experiences for

two people having the exact same identity across all labels Collins (2015). Additionally, she

posits, people will analyze research and media through the perspective of their own social

standing; therefore, work they contribute to these fields will be (whether consciously or

subconsciously) reflective of their own life experiences (reminiscent, again, of Goffman's

framing theory) Collins (2015); Goffman (1986). Intersectionality is important to note in

discussions about gender, because a person's experience regarding his or her gender can never be

fully extracted from the experience of being a person of other particular identities. Therefore, all

aspects of a person's being must be examined to see how their gender-related experiences vary

from others with differing identities Collins (2015).

IV. Current State of Gender in the Media

Examining how concepts related to gender, culture, and media present themselves in

more tangible, modern contexts is also vital to the understanding of the field of gender and media

studies as a whole. The following section, then, discusses the male and female gazes, as well as gender representation, to show the prominent ways through which media is colloquially and, often, still, academically, studied alongside gender.

IV.I The Gazes

In exploring how media is created, it is important to look at the perspectives through which it is made. Two of these perspectives are known as the "male gaze" and the "female gaze" Mulvey (1975); TIFF Talks (2016). Each are vital in understanding the importance of diverse gender representation of media, and how media representation affects the Foucaultian power dynamic of gender.

IV.I.I The Male Gaze

In her 1975 essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey first presents the concept of the "male gaze"— one of the frames through which one can create and view media. The male gaze is the way in which the majority of media (particularly filmed media) is presented to viewers. There is a consistent dichotomy in filmed media of male versus female, of seeing versus being seen. Mulvey pulls from Freudian psychoanalysis of scopophilia (the pleasure one feels from the act of looking) in her discussion, stating that scopophilia, while not inherently negative, acts as the basis for people viewing other people as objects, especially as objects of sexual gratification. In Mulvey's analysis, women in film are "coded," through their casting, dress, blocking, and dialogue, as being an erotic object— nothing more than a pin-up poster, a thing to be looked at but not interacted with Mulvey (1975). Therefore, women in film,

framed, as Goffman would say, as objects, are inherently passive, and removed from aspects of action Goffman (1986); Mulvey (1975). Men, then, are the heroes, given the task of plot development and the role of "doer." Since on-screen women are not "doing" anything, and the action that is assigned for them is to be "looked at," the onscreen men and audience are then assigned the action of "looking," which contributes to societal viewpoints of women as a whole being objects. Cinema offers a way to experience the act of watching in a socially acceptable way— in an outwardly public, but systematically private sense Mulvey (1975).

Since Mulvey's initial introduction of the term "male gaze," she has been a staple in discussions of gender and media. Mulvey's discussion, while initially applied to filmed media, has also been utilized for discussions about other forms of contemporary media, such as photography, and, (in one case) retroactively, for an analysis of ancient Roman paintings. In these images (particularly, the paintings), there commonly exists portrayals of either men "gazing" at women, or men perpetuating violence against women— creating a similar dynamic as Mulvey argues the male gaze creates within filmed media Fredrick (1995); Ritland (2018). In this way, Mulvey's theory transcends the conversation about the original intended medium, and implies that, a) a form of the male gaze can exist in all forms of media, and b) the male gaze is not necessarily a new phenomenon, and can potentially be seen across cultures and time periods.

The film theorist Mary Ann Doane suggests that female characters in filmed media made by the male gaze are metaphors for male fears and desires. For her analyses in her works, *Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator* (1982) and *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (1991), she references the use of the trope of an antagonistic woman who is ultimately defeated by a male hero. In this, men are able to reaffirm their desire

for control and dominance over femininity; for when the female who is given agency ultimately fails, it reinforces the idea that a woman will succeed only up until there is a better, more able person (a man) to stop her. Additionally, she posits that female viewers exist in limbo when it comes to identification; for, with there traditionally being few fully-conceived, independent female characters, it is up to women to decide whether to identify with that female character (a flimsy representation of her experiences) or a male character (who, while given full agency, is, of course, not representative of the female experience). In this way, women learn through filmed media how to empathize and identify with male characters, while men are not given the opportunity to learn through a woman's perspective— which has allowed men to then view women as "other" Doane (1982); Doane (1991).

Doane's work on the male gaze and female response has remained relevant into the 21st century, particularly within discussions about Doane's "antagonistic woman," "femme fatale" (a character who is aware that she is the object of the male gaze and seeks to work within this structure for her own gain), and mother figures. Doane can be seen referenced in critiques and essays on a variety of film genres, including horror and films labeled as "feminist"; in particular, her work is seen when discussing both thematic elements and filmmaking techniques Palmer (2011); Peirse (2015); Staiger (2010). Doane, then, as well as Mulvey, continue to be important, oft-cited sources when discussing gender dynamics in media-making.

IV.I.II The Female Gaze

In a lecture on September 11th, 2016, filmmaker Jen Solloway presented to viewers her definition of the "female gaze," in direct opposition to Mulvey's "male gaze." Solloway's female

gaze focuses on making filmed characters and audience members have an emotional response to something, rather than simply passively enjoying an action. Solloway's implication in this analysis is that there is a sense of emotional catharsis involved in storytelling created with the female gaze which is not so prominent in storytelling created with the male gaze. Solloway means to say, as well, that the male gaze is the default setting in the formation of most filmed media, and the female gaze must be actively utilized as a statement of rejection. The objectification of people in art and the tendency for external action-based narrative is something that is present on the subconscious level, as people (through no fault of their own) tend to create art based on events occurring within their own lives and through their own perspectives. As men are in the majority in the film industry, most stories that are being produced are from a male perspective— and are then more likely to be created through the viewpoint of the male gaze, due to this perspective being culturally valued, according to Solloway. This analysis is important in studying the relationships people of different genders have historically had with their stories and experiences being reflected in filmed media. Additionally, knowing the definitions and implications of both theories of "the gazes" is important in subsequently understanding how gender tropes are created and maintained in media TIFF Talks (2016). Doane's initial response and additions to Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, along with Solloway's novel discussion in the 21st century presenting a counter to the male gaze, show that Mulvey's theory has remained applicable throughout modern discourse on the relationship between gender and different forms of media.

IV.II Representation

The idea of the representation of people's identities within various forms of media is a particularly modern discussion and debate. The portrayal of women on-screen is widely discussed amongst academics and casual media enthusiasts— but, oftentimes within this discussion, it is accepted that it is not enough for a woman to simply appear in a piece of media for that media to then be considered female-positive or inclusive Scheiner-Fisher & Russell (2012); Wood (1994).

The Bechdel test is one of the most commonly cited analyses for gauging female representation in a form of media (not, notably, female- or gender- *positive* content) Agarwal, Zheng, Kamath, Balasubramanian, & Dey (2015); Garcia, Weber, Rama, & Garimella (2014); Scheiner-Fisher & Russell (2012). The test, first introduced in 1985 by comic artist by Alison Bechdel (as illustrated in one of her comic strips), simply asks whether a piece of media portrays two female persons who speak to each other about anything other than a man The Rule (2005). A surprising number of modern films and television shows have failed to pass the Bechdel test— including *Finding Nemo* (2003), *Iron Man* (2008)*, and *Avatar* (2009) Bechdel Test Movie List (n.d). *Game of Thrones,* surprisingly, for all its female characters in leadership roles, passes the Bechdel test in only just over 25% of its episodes from seasons one through seven (the eighth and final season not being counted in this analysis) Ritchey (2019).

Representation is an issue that is also related to intersectionality— or, the instances where multiple facets of one's identity may meet. Pratibha Parmar, in her 1984 article "Hateful Contraries: Images of Asian Women in the Media" poignantly states that all women in media are typically presented as mothers and/or as desirable objects— serving children in the case of the

former, and men in the latter. In this, Parmar is referencing Mulvey's idea of the male gaze, and

adds the issue of women being characterized as both caretaker and an object of desire. Parmar's

focus is on the portrayal and representation of Asian women in media—with Asian women

having to deal with both sexist and racist interpretations. Where, Parmar states, white women

have a passive, submissive characterization of them in media, Asian women are often left out

altogether, and Western societal perceptions of them then tend to then rely on cultural

stereotypes and implicit racism Parmar (1984). It may be easy for one to dismiss Parmar's

analysis on representation as irrelevant, as it is currently over thirty years old. However, the

portrayal of Asian people in media, and specifically of Asian women, is still an issue that finds

relevance in the 2010s. In January 2015, it was announced that a white actress (Scarlett

Johansson) would be portraying the lead character in the movie *Ghost in the Shell*— a movie

which is of distinctly Asian influence, which many critics believed should have been the impetus

for the casting of the lead character to lean towards a person of Asian descent, rather than a

person of mostly European descent Berman (2017). This is certainly not the only instance in

which women of color have found a lack of media representation, or representation that ends up

being more harmful than helpful DuCille (1996); Wood (1994). This directly relates back to the

theory of intersectionality— media and representation issues cannot be examined through only

one lens. Instead, as Parmar suggests, an analysis of the representation of white women in media

will consistently differ from an analysis of Asian women, or Black women, or Hispanic women.

Therefore, aspects other than gender are important to address when considering gender in the

media, as some experiences or trends in representation may be applicable to smaller groups of

females, males, and individuals of other genders, based on other aspects of their identity that make their experiences more unique Parmar (1984).

This final piece, then, relates back to the original discussion of cultural/media theory— the power structures which have dictated certain societal positions and expectations for both women and people of color/non-people of color (Foucault) have helped create stereotypes, or frames (Goffman), in which to place both women as a whole and women within other additional instances of categorization Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995); Foucault (1988); Goffman (1986); Mulvey (1975); Parmar (1984). In turn, the media with which these stereotypes can be created and continually reflected can affect an individual's perception of self, society, and culture (McLuhan)— thereby making specific forms of media, such as *Game of Thrones,* worth studying both as a measure of how people may approach and analyze forms of media, and also how specific media may affect/change culture and societal expectations as a whole McLuhan (1994).

V. Relevance of *Game of Thrones*

The world of HBO's *Game of Thrones* is a highly gendered one, wherein the aforementioned theories can be used for varying levels of analysis. "I may be small. I may be a girl, but I won't be knitting by the fire while I have men fight for me," says small pre-teen leader Lyanna Mormont (the head of her family name) in season 7, episode 1 Benioff, Weiss, & Podeswa (2017). "I've known a great many clever men. I've outlived them all. You know why? I ignored them," says aristocratic family matriarch Olenna Tyrell to then-up and coming political leader, Daenerys Targaryen in just the following episode Cogman & Wylod (2017). The show

(as I have chosen to omit the novels, in order to focus on only one form of media for this project to make the process simpler to analyze) is quite varied in its display of gendered characteristics, as characters in the show may adhere to or deviate from what may be expected of them, from character to character, of course, but also within the portrayal of one singular character depending on their circumstances. Three ways in which *Game of Thrones* is often referred to in the context of gender analysis is in its usage of the "male gaze"; in the way it fits into a broader discussion of intersectionality; and in the utilization of gender tropes.

V.I. *Game of Thrones*: The Male Gaze

Laura Mulvey's term, "male gaze," is often used in discussions of *Game of Thrones* and gender Mandracchia (2016); Mulvey (1975); Uçan (2017). The use of nudity (often explicitly with females) has been called out by viewers as being "unnecessary," with some sexual scenes and actions being shown when it was not needed for the furthering of any plotline or for the creation of a richer scene Davies (2014); Gil (2013); Orr (2015). One such instance of an unneeded sexual scenario is in the rape of Daenerys Targaryen on her wedding night by her husband, Khal Drogo, in Season 1. Her seeming to forget about her rape in later episodes, and falling in love with her husband/rapist (and, eventually, developing a more loving relationship that positions each of them as relatively equal with one another, once Daenerys has "proven" herself to be capable of taking charge, particularly and notably, sexually), has been noted as unrealistic and odd, especially since it is not subsequently dealt with in a way that contextualizes the experience *as* rape Elwood (2018). It seems to exist as an instance where a woman is seen and treated as an object in a heteronormative context— and this abuse is then treated as a

necessary step on her character's journey of personal growth in becoming a leader, where the rape was unnecessary to use as a catalyst for her discovering her sexual power.

This is one of multiple occurrences in *Game of Thrones* of sexual assault or abuse being used to justify a woman's personal and political rise Davies (2014); Elwood (2018). Other instances of less violent exploitation of the female body in a way that is merely meant to catch the attention of viewers and normalize female nudity in a primarily sexual context is in the numerous scenes involving prostitutes (especially in much of the early seasons). As previously noted, at least some of these scenes did not require the portrayal of sexualized women to get the creator's points across, nor were they necessarily always required to adequately "set the scene" Davies (2014); Gil (2013); Orr (2015).

The show's portrayal of the female nude form (and, it should be noted, the female nude form in its most commonly-accepted sexually desirable form— that is, pale, slim, with average to large-sized breasts and long hair)— is inarguably a facet of the creation of this media through the lens of male fantasy, and therefore, the male gaze Baumgardner (2019); Uçan (2017). This, in addition to the show's criticized way of dealing with instances of sexual assault and rape (as mentioned here; and as will be further discussed subsequently) continuously perpetuate the masculine and heteronormative *expectation* of women and their bodies, sexualities, and viewpoints Baumgardner (2019); Uçan (2017).

It should also be noted that, contradictorily, the show can *also* be seen as feminist, *even* in some of the same instances that other critics deem reflective of the male gaze. For example, the scenario described above, with Daenerys and Khal Drogo, after he rapes her and she decides to "prove herself" in a sexual context, has also been analyzed through a feminist lens. Daenerys

figuring out how to utilize her sexual power to please Khal Drogo (and, therefore, avoid being

raped while also earning the respect of the Khal), has been discussed as an instance of a female

character taking ownership of her body and sexuality to leverage her power and manipulate the

men (and world) around her to her advantage Mandracchia (2016); Nae (2015). It is important to

mention this, as differing analyses of the same scenario show that critics and viewers are

oftentimes split in interpretations of *Game of Thrones* as feminist or antifeminist material— both

as a whole, and on a scene-by-scene basis Gil (2013); Uçan (2017).

V.II. *Game of Thrones*: Intersectionality

Intersectionality is another important discussion within the context of *Game of Thrones.*

There are not very many people of color in *Game of Thrones*— indeed, most of the cast is white,

with people of color often being from "other," or, that is, from a kingdom or even continent that

is explicitly different (and even foreign) from the overwhelming whiteness of Westeros (the

western continent in the *Game of Thrones* universe; with Essos being the easternmost continent,

and the place where the show places most of its characters of color) Bollinger-Deters (2018);

Smith (2019). This "othering" of people of differing races, often with darker skin tones, is most

readily apparent, once again, in the character arc of Daenerys Targaryen (due to the plot of her

character arc, as well as the fact that her particular arc required her to spend much of her

on-screen time on the continent of Essos) Nae (2015). Referencing, again, Daenerys's rape scene

(whether the aftereffects of this scene being feminist or antifeminist being unimportant, and

instead analyzing the scene itself), Andrei Nae, in their paper, "Remediating Pornography in

Game of Thrones: Where Sex and Memory Intertwine," echoing Goffman's frames, analyzes

Daenerys's status as a white woman against her "foreign" husband, Khal Drogo (of the Dothraki people, from the continent of Essos):

> By encouraging the audience to empathize with Daenerys, whose agony during the sex act is highlighted by the close shot on her crying face, Khal Drogo is perceived in a negative light as an abusive husband. Because he is the leader of the Dothraki, therefore the most representative member of the community, the audience's resentment is projected form Khal Drogo onto the entire community and their rigid patriarchal social order. Nae (2015); Goffman (1986)

This, in essence, plays with Daenerys's race and gender (white woman) against Khal Drogo's race and gender (man of color)— which then creates a problematic juxtaposition wherein Khal Drogo and the people of the Dothraki may be seen as more violent and less civilized than the "whiter" people of Westeros, especially in an instance of gendered power imbalance Gil (2013); Nae (2015).

Another instance where one can analyze intersectionality in the show is in the cross-section of gender and sexuality. The show has multiple characters who can be analyzed as LGBTQ+. Loras Tyrell and Renly Baratheon are perhaps some of the most well-known gay characters of the show Tan (2018). The show addresses their sexualities within the context of political and social worlds— with Renly wrestling with the political effects of his sexuality (with him being married to Loras's sister, Margaery, who knows about both Renly and Loras's sexualities and relationship with one another), while Loras deals in later seasons with the social

effects (with him ending up being on trial in an increasingly religiously passionate culture)

Kawale (2019); Tan (2018). Their sexualities are not seen as good or desirable within the context

of the *Game of Thrones* universe (with homosexuality being condemned, and seen as a sin, in

Westeros), but the show itself does not necessarily take a hard negative stance on gay characters,

as might be shown through highlighting specific negative traits these characters have Taite

(2018). Loras and Renly, specifically, embody a variety of both positive and negative traits, with

Renly acting as a charismatic politician (while also holding a certain measure of arrogance), and

Loras being an incredibly skilled athlete and fighter (while also being, at times, spoiled and

mean-spirited) Loras Tyrell (n.d.); Renly Baratheon (n.d.); Pages & Kinane (2015); Taite (2018).

They are treated by the show as many other characters are, with their sexuality being a notable

part of their plots and characters, without the characters themselves being one-dimensional.

This is not to say, of course, that the show is completely infallible in its representation of

any of its LGBTQ+ characters, in any given scene, including Renly and Loras. In some critiques

of the latter, in fact, he is described as being "overly effeminate," and therefore, a bit reductive in

gay representation Pages & Kinane (2015). Yara Greyjoy, the show's most well-known lesbian

character, can also be discussed as problematic in her development, as, in addition to holding

such positive traits such as courage and loyalty, she also embodies some negative traits usually

associated with masculinity, such as aggression and ruthlessness Tan (2018).

Other LGBTQ+ *Game of Thrones* characters include the bisexual Oberyn Martell and

Ellaria Sand, who are in a committed, though open, relationship with one another. They both

have additional relationships, on and off-screen, with male-presenting and female-presenting

characters Tan (2018). Oberyn is a skilled fighter, and Ellaria, a passionate and intelligent person

Ellaria Sand (n.d.); Oberyn Martell (n.d.); Rebane (2019). Notably, both of these characters are from Dorne, a southernmost area of the *Game of Thrones* geographical map— an area which has some of the continent of Westeros's only people of color, including Oberyn and Ellaria Rebane (2019). While bisexual representation in television is important (and the show, again, treats Oberyn and Ellaria as three-dimensional, and portrays their relationship as one of utmost loyalty and love), the intersection of race and sexuality in this instance can be said to perpetuate the idea of non-white people (particularly, a non-white *woman*) being the primary media representation of bisexuality (and *open* sexuality)— and, therefore, the norm for white people being reinforced as overwhelmingly straight, or otherwise decidedly gay Del Castillo (2015). In these ways, it is clear how gender norms are additionally played upon within the bounds of both race and sexuality, in both positive and negative ways.

V.III. Archetypes

The most important aspect of *Game of Thrones* when thinking about its relevance to the study of gender is, perhaps, in its use of archetypes— or, commonly-seen and often-expected character types Archetype (n.d.). The utilization of archetypes in the portrayal of its characters offers insight on how *Game of Thrones* both perpetuates cultural expectations for men and women, and deviates from expected societal norms. In the following paragraphs, the show's archetypes for some of its main female characters are discussed, as it is the cultural and societal expectations and frameworks for *women*, specifically, that have formed the crux of this research project. The most important/relevant archetypes to consider when examining the show within expectations of its female characters, drawing from Anne Gjelsvik and Rikke Schubart's work

(as editors) in <u>Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, *Game of Thrones,* and Multiple Media Engagements</u> are "mother" (often co-occuring with the expectations of "wife"; this can be further split into "good" or "heroic" mother and "bad" or "vain" mother); "warrior" (the younger version sometimes being labeled "tomboy"); and "virgin" (who is often in direct opposition to a "whore," "slut," or "seductress" character) Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016).

The archetype of mother can be found in the characters of Catelyn Stark and Cersei Lannister Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017). Catelyn and Cersei— each married to men with significant political power, with Cersei's husband being king, and Catelyn's husband being the closest friend of the king— are both "mothers" in the archetypal sense Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017). Both show immense care for their children— indeed, a character of high religious and political standing, The High Sparrow, said of Cersei to her son in season 6, episode 3, "When she speaks of you, the mother's love outshines it all. Her love for you is more real than anything else in this world because it doesn't come from this world" Benioff, Weiss, & Sackheim (2016). Catelyn Stark knows and loves her children and family very well— even following her eldest, Robb, into war with him, and acting as an advisor for him. Catelyn is very loyal to, and has the utmost devotion for, Eddard Stark, her husband— so much so that she continually shows hatred towards Jon Snow, an illegitimate child understood to be conceived while Eddard was off at war. As stated in <u>Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, *Game of Thrones,* and Multiple Media Engagements</u>, this would make her seem to be a "bad" wife or mother— however, it is her devotion to her husband and her hatred of anything that might compromise the relationship they have cultivated that reinforces her position as a "good" wife and mother Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). Cersei will do anything for her children, even going so far as to consider poisoning her

youngest son when she believed someone had come to kill him in a much harsher, more violent way Cersei Lannister (n.d.); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). Both mothers seek safety for their children in their world that is increasingly unsafe, as well as security in their relationships with their husbands (or, in the case of Cersei, her lover *outside* of her political marriage)— because an incredibly important aspect of their identities lies within successful and close familial relationships Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016).

The warrior archetype can be found in Arya Stark and Brienne of Tarth Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017). Arya Stark and Brienne of Tarth both present "warrior-like" (re: masculine) characteristics in their personalities as well as their physical appearances. Brienne and Arya both have short, boyish haircuts which are not common amongst female characters in *Game of Thrones* (Tyene Sand being another "warrior female" character who has short hair; Cersei Lannister having short hair in later seasons due to a plotline regarding religious-based ceremonial shaming) Cersei Lannister (n.d.); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017); Tyene Sand (n.d.). Brienne, additionally, is a physically large woman, who often towers over other women and is about the same height as many of the men she encounters. She is seen as unattractive by many in the *Game of Thrones* universe, with some nicknaming her "Brienne the Beauty" with derogatory intention Bro (2017). Arya Stark, on the other hand, is smaller in stature, and remains smaller than most even as she goes from child to teen to young adult Arya Stark (n.d.); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). Brienne, therefore, is presented as "mannish," and Arya as "boyish" Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). Both women are interested in and skilled at fighting, with Arya (having previously shown interest and skill in fighting) having trained extensively with the assassin group, the Faceless Men, throughout Seasons 5 and 6; and Brienne

having such known skill, as well as such friendship and rapport with the knight, Jaime Lannister, that he truly feels as though she deserves knighthood, and knights her himself, in the final season Arya Stark (n.d.); Brienne of Tarth (n.d).; Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017).

Brienne and Arya, both being confirmed virgins throughout much of the show (until the final season for both of them, in fact), could have been portrayed as belonging to the "innocent virgin" archetype Arya Stark (n.d.); Brienne of Tarth (n.d); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017). However, because both of them defy conventional femininity, and appear and act in ways that are conventionally more "masculine," they would not be able to be seen as "innocent," and instead more neatly fall into the "warrior" archetype Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017). With this in mind, *Game of Thrones* viewers' reactions to these characters' individual sex scenes is notable.

Brienne's sex scene was not immensely surprising to viewers, as the show, over the course of seasons, had been building towards this event throughout her character development and the course of her relationships with other (particularly male) characters Brienne of Tarth (n.d.); Bruney (2019). Heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships were always things that Brienne clearly wanted, but were often denied to her due to her physical appearances and masculine traits (it should be noted, however, that Brienne's sexuality and desire is absolutely not her most defining character arc, with Brienne's actress, Gwendoline Christie, admitting in a 2019 interview with *People* that she loved that "[...] how [Brienne's story] ends is not about her relationship with a man, but about her fulfilling her destiny and her work. And that's delighted me. That the woman goes back to work!") Brienne of Tarth, (n.d.); Bruney (2019); Perry & Corinthios (2019).

On the other hand, Arya Stark's sex scene seemed, to some viewers, to be forced, as she had not previously indicated much or any interest in any kind of sexual or romantic relationship. Viewers were, therefore, split in their opinions on this scene, with some of the opinion that it was not believable given Arya's previous development, and others of the opinion that this scene was not necessarily reflective of Arya's sexual desire, but of her curiosity about this human experience (as the scene occurred, plotwise, the night before one of the show's largest battles, wherein no character was certain they would survive into the next night) Gutowitz (2019); Hibberd (2019); Maxim Staff (2019); Toomer (2019). With the former group's analysis, then, this scene could then be interpreted as an instance in which the male gaze is most easily visible— while this sex was consensual between both characters (one of the most consensual scenes in the show, in fact), as well as discussed and agreed upon between the actress Maisie Williams and the showwriters, there was little to solidly justify the scene's existence (even *if* justified with Arya's curiosity) Gutowitz (2019); Hibberd (2019). Therefore, it seemed to some viewers and critics that the scene was simply there to fulfill some sort of male heterosexual expectation that Arya, as a woman, would want to have (or even be curious about) sex, when little to none of her character development had indicated so, and a voyeuristic desire to see one of the last virginial young characters on the show finally have a sexual experience Gutowitz (2019).

Where the archetype of virgin *can* be found is in Arya Stark's elder sister, Sansa Stark Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). Sansa Stark's storyline starts as one of innocence, where she is only concerned with winning the attention (and eventual hand in marriage) of Prince Joffrey, as she, in her young teenage perception, finds him attractive, and sees marrying him as a necessary step

to fulfilling her dreams of finding love and becoming Queen Sansa Stark (n.d).; Gjelsvik &

Schubart (2016). A young Sansa fits this trait of "innocence" throughout the show, even during

her marriage to (a much-older-than-her) Tyrion Lannister, who does not consummate his

relationship with her due to both her young age and her hesitance; she remains "innocent" until

her marriage to Ramsay Bolton, who, upon their wedding night, rapes her— her first (though

unwanted) sexual experience. Upon her innocence (conflated with her virginity, in this case, as

in many/most cases in the show) being taken away (in addition to other forms of abuse that

happened to her previously), she becomes resentful, but also more aware of how her

engagements/marriages to these men are part of a larger political game, and therefore, she

becomes more knowledgeable about how to play this game Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Kawale

(2019). This sends a message to viewers that Sansa would not be able to be a political leader

without losing this "innocence"; it is only upon her experiencing various forms of abuse that she

can lead, which, unfortunately, places value on her abuse, and has actually caused much debate

amongst viewers as to whether the screenwriters used her rise to justify the preceding abuse, or

to showcase Sansa as a character stronger than her victimhood who is reclaiming her identity

Hall (2019); Kang (2019); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016).

Daenerys Targaryen, too, is presented at first as an innocent young woman Gjelsvik &

Schubart (2016); Tan (2018). Upon marrying Khal Drogo, a foreign political leader, she loses

her "virginity," as previously discussed, through the act of rape. Daenerys is uncomfortable with

her sex life with her husband, and soon seeks advice from other women as to how to please him.

Her learning to please Khal Drogo sexually turns his opinion of her, from that of sexual object to

that of loving (and "good," in the aforementioned archetypal way) wife Gil (2013); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Nae (2015).

Unlike Sansa's storyline, however, it is not Daenerys' virginity that will come to define her political power, but it is in her relationship to Khal Drogo (with her becoming widowed early on in the series), as well as her owning and raising three dragons— the last that are definitively known to the seen inhabitants of *Game of Thrones*— that inspires fear and respect amongst those she wishes to rule Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). In this way, Daenerys traverses the lines of "virgin," "good mother/wife" (earning the moniker "Mother of Dragons" for the loving relationship she cultivates with them), and even "warrior," as she uses her dragons in acts of bravery and/or brute violence against her enemies Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Tan (2018). Daenerys fits most closely in the "good mother/wife" trope due to her motherly relationship with her dragons and her loyalty and love for Khal Drogo being the most significant factors in her growth as a person and political leader— but this interesting combination/character arc of Daenerys as virgin, wife/mother, *and* warrior shows a blending of both masculine and feminine characteristics given to at least one of the main female characters on the show.

Another main female character who embodies different archetypes is Cersei Lannister, who, in addition to being a "good mother/wife," as previously mentioned, is also a "seductress, " or "whore," who uses sex for both pleasure and political purposes, unapologetically— the antithesis of the virginal character Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). Her use of her sexuality may be expected to be as a means to continue being a good mother/wife— however, this is not true all of the time for Cersei, as she confesses to another character (as Cersei tortures her as retribution for that character's own actions against Cersei) in season 6 episode 10, "I drink because it feels

good. I killed my husband because it felt good to be rid of him. I fuck my brother because it feels

good to feel him inside me. I lie about fucking my brother because it feels good to keep our son

safe from hateful hypocrites" Benioff, Weiss, & Sapochnik (2016); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016).

This shows that she enjoys sex for her own pleasure, without regard for her *also* being a good

wife or mother. This blending of archetypes is, again, interesting, as one may not expect a

mother or wife to be a very sexual being— though the "good mother/wife" and "seductress"

archetypes are both primarily seen as feminine, and, therefore, Cersei differs slightly from

Daenerys in the sense of characters who blur or blend the lines of female archetypes with both

feminine and masculine characteristics Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Tan (2018).

The characters, especially the female characters in *Game of Thrones,* embody a variety of

archetypes that traverse the lines of masculine and feminine, or otherwise fully lean into one or

the other Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017); Tan (2018). These archetypes provide

frameworks within which the audience can interpret these characters, as good or bad, or as

deviant or conforming Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995); Foucault (1988);

Goffman (1986); McLuhan (1994). Indeed, the archetypes mentioned here do not fully embody

the variety of character types, both masculine and feminine, that the show offers; however, the

analysis above provides an introductory evaluation to only some of the character types and traits

that can be found in the show's main cast Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Rai (2017); Tan (2018).

Additionally, the show's undeniable indulgence of the "male gaze," and the way it tackles

intersectionality (only briefly mentioned here across race, sexuality, and gender; but also in a

variety of instances across class, ability/disability, and other forms of categorization), puts the

show in a position wherein it is analyzed as both inclusive and feminist content, *as well as*

exclusive and male-centered Gil (2013); Nae (2015); Pages & Kinane (2015); Rai (2017). As

such, the HBO television series offers a particularly useful object of study with which to analyze

people's reactions to gender roles and characteristics— to study whether people prefer to see

Game of Thrones characters embody traits which are expected, or if individuals prefer to

embrace the *un*expected.

VI. Conclusion of the Literature Review

The effect that a) culture has on shaping gender, b) concepts of gender have on forming

media, and c) media has on influencing people on the individual level, is undeniable. In sum,

culture, in defining structures of dichotomies such as good/bad, creates the framework for the

gendered binary of sex, and the attribution of particular traits to both genders Foucault (1990a);

Foucault (1990b;) Foucault (1995); Goffman (1986). Media, then, rather than wholly reflecting

what attributes society ascribes to people of different genders, is an active participant in altering

and shaping these attributes. Media is therefore one of the most prominent influences on our

perception of self and of what characteristics we should have based on our gender identity, and

also influences our perceptions of others, and how willing we are to accept someone who does

not fit any images we have previously seen Bussey & Bandura (1999); Mulvey (1975); Seabrook

et al. (2017). With *Game of Thrones'* wide societal engagement, it then presents itself as an ideal

form of media through which to analyze the above topics.

PROJECT

VII. Outline and Methods

For this project, I have studied the idea of performance of gender, not only in (drawing from the work of Judith Butler) the performative nature of gender, but also in the Foucaultian idea that a person has been conditioned by societal power structures to conform to normalcy or expected behaviors in *many* aspects of their lives Butler (1990); Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995). As the social cognitive theory suggests, cultural perceptions of expected gendered behaviors are heavily influenced by available media— and, as an offshoot of this theory, the gendered sexual script theory then posits that there are direct correlations between the consumption of certain media and an individual's preferences or actions based on their gender Bussey & Bandura (1999); Hust et al. (2019); Seabrook et al. (2017); Wright (2013). Because these theories suggest that there can be nuances in the way people perform gender depending on their relationship to certain forms of media, the nuances and differences then become a way to examine an individual's beliefs about gender, how it can or should be performed, and where certain characteristics tend to be coded on a gender spectrum (that is, as more masculine or feminine).

The focus of this research is gender expression and belief, with the HBO television show *Game of Thrones* acting as a specific case with which to study this. The wide variety of characters present in the show (despite their clearly individualized characteristics and plotlines) tend to find themselves categorized, where they are remembered, or remarkable, for having one or two of a myriad of traits: athletic (often coded as having additional masculine traits, such as Brienne of Tarth or Arya Stark), intelligent/cunning/"booksmart" (often referenced as having, if not overtly feminine, then non-*masculine* traits, such as Tyrion Lannister), and/or sexual (such as

Margery Tyrell— or, conversely, definitively *non*-sexual, such as Varys, whose castration is a

significant aspect of his characterization) Bem (1974); Forbish (2019); Gjelsvik & Schubart

(2016). A viewer's relationship to these characters, then, may be dependent on whether or not

they individually view these traits in a positive light, and, then, whether or not they agree that

any given trait ascribed to a particular character is in line with their own views on gender.

The primary research question for this project is:

1. Is an individual more likely to have preference towards a character that deviates from

   gender norms or embodies/adheres to these norms?

Secondary research questions are:

1. Do individuals who watch *Game of Thrones* differ in their views on societal roles for

   men and women from non-viewers?

2. Do people identify more often with traits attributed to characters of their own gender?

With this project, I have utilized quantitative methods for data collection via online

survey due to the expectation of receiving a wide collection of data, and having to determine

recurring trends within this data within a specified time frame.

Additionally, I felt that the pursuit of qualitative methods (such as focus groups) would

be worthwhile, in order to gain more in-depth ethnographic information that would add detail

and additional information to my data and data analysis, as well as providing a way to see if a

participant's answer (particularly regarding the primary research question) would change or

remain the same if placed in an in-person, group dynamic Cresswell (2014). However, I was not able to secure a focus group in time for adequate data analysis due to scheduling conflicts. The script created for the intended focus groups is listed in the appendix for transparency and in the case of further interest.

The online survey was disseminated via Google Forms, and was sent primarily to college students or recent graduates between the ages of eighteen and thirty from New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and Rutgers University - Newark. New Jersey Institute of Technology is a public research institution located in Newark, New Jersey, with over 8,000 enrolled undergraduate students as of the Fall 2017 semester. The undergraduate population is mostly white (35.5%), with significant Hipanic and Asian- identifying populations, as well (20.3% and 23.3%, respectively). Additionally, NJIT's undergraduate population is overwhelmingly male-gendered, at 76.5% (though the other 23.5% is comprised of female-gendered students, which excludes students who do not identify within this binary) New Jersey Institute of Technology (2018). Rutgers University - Newark is another public research university, also located in Newark, New Jersey, with an approximate undergraduate population of 8,500 students. As Rutgers-Newark provides their publicly available Institutional Profile (which holds their demographic information) in conjunction with Rutgers - New Brunswick and Rutgers - Camden, I was not able to find general demographic information on Rutgers - Newark specifically. However, the combined enrollment of all three Rutgers campuses contains an overall undergraduate population that is 52% female and 48% male (again, excluding various other gender identities) Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (2018).

The use of these particular student populations is due to convenience sampling, as I believed I would be able to gain the most responses from these groups due to my own personal involvement in these communities. The link to the survey was sent out to possible participants via email, Facebook, and Instagram, and was spread to participants' social networks in a similar fashion (through sharing on social media, email, and group chats). Through this use of snowball sampling, additional responses then likely came from individuals outside of these two colleges. However, I tried to keep the participant groups under the age of thirty to minimize any generational differences between age groups, in order to better focus on gender.

The survey asked respondents questions of three different categories: demographic information, questions regarding *Game of Thrones* (including their familiarity with *Game of Thrones*-related content, as well as their reactions to gendered tropes/traits within *Game of Thrones*), and questions indirectly gauging their opinions on general gendered characteristics and actions. In doing this in three sections, I was able to look for correlations between one's demographic background (such as their gender identity), their reactions to *Game of Thrones*' portrayal of gender, and their self-reported behaviors and beliefs that may not always be explicitly thought of as "gendered."

Some sample survey questions were as follows (see Appendix for the survey in its entirety):

<u>Demographic Information</u>

1. What is your age?

2. What gender do you most closely identify with?

3. What is your major/occupation?

4. What is your ethnicity?

5. What religious group(s) do you most closely identify with?

6. What political group(s) do you most closely identify with?

<u>Game of Thrones</u>

1. Are you familiar with *Game of Thrones* characters or plotlines?

2. (If yes) What character do you identify the most with?

Using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory as a reference, I gave participants a list of characteristics considered masculine, feminine, and neutral, and then showed them different pictures displaying *Game of Thrones* characters and asked them to select any/all characteristics they believe could be attributed to that character to gauge their tendencies when ascribing gender to characteristics. I also asked participants to ascribe characteristics to themselves, given the same list, to examine how individuals tend to define themselves (along gendered divides, or not) Bem (1974).

Additionally, I showed participants six pairs of two characters, one who was coded as having "masculine" characteristics and one who was coded as having "feminine" characteristics (regardless of portrayed gender *identity* as male or female); *or,* one whose gender identity was male, and another whose gender identity was female. Participants were then asked to indicate the initial preference they had between the two Bem (1974).

Both people who have viewed the show and people who have not viewed the show participated in this section in order for me to see if there was a correlation between one's familiarity with the show/characters and their perceptions/preferences of characters' gender performances.

Gender Norms

1. Which three options [from a given list] are most important to you when considering a job or internship opportunity?

2. How do you contribute to your household?

3. Please briefly describe a recent experience where you took care of a person, animal, or other living thing.

Questions relating to gender norms such as these are based on data which indicates that aspects of job opportunities and preferences for certain benefits from work can differ between genders, as well as data which indicates that preferences for household chores has tended to be split up depending on gender Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson (2000); Jones, Howe, & Rua (2000). Men and women, additionally, tend to generally use different language to discuss particular things, such as care and stress (which are both explicitly inquired about in the survey) Beagan & Saunders (2005); Bianchi et al. (2000); Merchant (2012); Turton & Campbell (2005). Therefore, participants' responses to such questions are likely to give more information about how they view "normal" displays of gender in themselves and others Beagan & Saunders (2005).

My hypotheses for the trends I expected to observe during this process included:

1. Men/Women will be more likely to have positive reactions towards characters and traits that align with their own performance of "masculinity/femininity," and/or their own gender identity, regardless of any other factor.

2. Those unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* will more clearly be divided by gender identity regarding character preferences. Those unfamiliar will be more likely to rely on gendered expectations presented through the characters' appearances (and these expectations, whether positively or negatively geared toward those conforming to gender norms, will be clearly divided and seen); while those familiar will be more likely to make judgements based on the characters' personalities as presented in the show, and will therefore be more homogenized across all genders in the *Game of Thrones*-familiar group.

3. There will be no difference between those familiar with *Game of Thrones* and those unfamiliar with the show regarding self-reported patterns of gendered behavior/preferences; differences will correspond to demographic information, instead.

There was also, of course, the possibility that there would be absolutely no correlation between a person's various identities (gender, viewer/non-viewer, etcetera) and the way they view gendered characteristics or indicate preference towards gendered behavior; though I did not believe this to be likely, simply due to already existing differences in the way language is seen and utilized by those in the gender binary Beagan & Saunders (2005); Merchant (2012); Turton & Campbell (2005).

In doing this analysis through the use of quantitative methods, I was able to draw conclusions about gender performance in relation to an individual's consumption of *Game of Thrones* as a form of televised media. Despite not being able to pursue a mixed-methods approach, the use of quantitative methods was valuable in and of itself, as I was able to gather a significant sample size and data with which to adequately explore my research questions.

VIII. Data and Analysis

The following is the data/data analysis section. It is organized by research question—these research questions being, "Is an individual more likely to have preference towards a character that deviates from gender norms or embodies/adheres to these norms;" "Do individuals who watch Game of Thrones differ in their views on societal roles for men and women from non-viewers;" and "Do people identify more often with traits attributed to characters of their own gender?"

It should be noted before the section begins that statistical significance was not found in most cases. Cases in which statistical significance *was* found are noted; otherwise, the data was analyzed based on frequency of responses.

Additonally, it should also be said that two individuals who identify as nonbinary participated in the survey; however, they are often not mentioned when the analysis is broken down into gender, though they may have been included in overall totals when discussing total respondents or viewers/nonviewers. This is not to exclude these individuals, but is instead to avoid making generalizations about the views of nonbinary people based only on two respondents.

VIII.I Research Question #1

Is an individual more likely to have preference towards a character that deviates from gender norms or embodies/adheres to these norms?

In order to examine the above research question, a person's indicated preference for character (as demonstrated by indicating a preference when given two different character images; for those unfamiliar with the show, this presumably being one of the first times they've been asked to give preference for these characters based on first impression) was analyzed against the gender they most identify with, as well as with where they would place themselves the previously-mentioned "masculinity/femininity" spectrum, in addition to their familiarity with the *Game of Thrones* universe. Additionally, respondents familiar with *Game of Thrones* were asked to list their favorite character (coded by individual character, and also coded by whether the indicated character or characters were male, female, or "other," in the case of individuals listing the dragons present in the series or other animal characters). This was then analyzed against, once again, the gender respondents most identify with and where they feel their gender identify falls on a masculinity/femininity spectrum.

All individuals involved in the survey, whether they were familiar with the show or not, were asked to indicate a preference between six pairs of two characters; these character pairings being Brienne of Tarth/Jaime Lannister; Arya Stark/Sansa Stark; Jorah Mormont/Oberyn Martell; Yara Greyjoy/Bronn of the Blackwater; Renly Baratheon/Stannis Baratheon; Margaery Tyrell/Tyene Sand. Each of these characters are unique in their displays of masculinity or

femininity, which will be further discussed briefly within the breakdown of each pairing. For this

section, 14 females unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* participated; as well as 12 men unfamiliar

with *Game of Thrones,* 2 nonbinary individuals unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones*, 24 women

familiar with *Game of Thrones,* and 20 men familiar with *Game of Thrones,* for a total of 72

respondents. The pairings which were found to be statistically significant were Arya/Sansa (only

when analyzed against respondents' familiarity with *Game of Thrones*) and Yara/Bronn

(analyzed against both respondents' familiarity with *Game of Throne* and the gender

respondents' most frequently identified with— male, female, or nonbinary).

Brienne of Tarth (as discussed previously in the literature review) fits the archetype of

"warrior woman." She is overtly masculine in both physical appearance (tall, large, and strong,

with a short haircut) and personality, being quite skilled at sword fighting and other physical

tasks. The most feminine characteristic Brienne has, in fact, is her stalwart loyalty to those who

treat her with kindness, particularly men, as she is used to often being ridiculed by that particular

demographic group Brienne of Tarth (n.d.); Bro (2017).

Jaime Lannister is a masculine character, as well, being a male who is a knight and

skilled fighter. He, like Brienne, is fiercely loyal, though he is more loyal to his family (in

particular to his sister Cersei), while Brienne's loyalties are more likely to be outside of the

bounds of family. Over the course of the series, Jaime has a character arc that is filled with

growth and setbacks— but, he seems to continually move towards being more of a feminine

character, or at least showing more of his feminine characteristics, than in the beginning. In the

beginning of the series, he only really showed warmth, gentleness, and care to Cersei, but by the

end of the series, he's developed different kinds of close relationships with his younger brother,

Tyrion, and even Brienne. He is even shown to be slightly more parental at times, being able to have a tender moment with his illegitimate daughter (Myrcella) before her untimely death Jaime Lannister (n.d.); MacInnes (2019). Therefore, while Brienne seems to stay fairly masculine throughout the series, Jaime shows far more character growth, and develops more feminine characteristics, than Brienne.

Individuals more frequently indicated preference for Brienne of Tarth over Jaime Lannister (46/72), with a higher percentage of males indicating preference for Brienne (75% of men, versus 52% of women). 75% of masculine-identifying people preferred Brienne, while 48% of feminine identifying people preferred her; therefore, feminine-identifying people more frequently (though only slightly) indicated a preference for Jaime. Women who were *un*familiar with the series were slightly more likely to indicate preference for Jaime over Brienne than men unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* or anyone familiar with *Game of Thrones,* which indicates that familiarity with a character may make one more likely to appreciate the character as a whole, even if they deviate from expected norms. Additionally, it reflects that, with no previous familiarity with the character, women have slight preference for a primarily masculine man (with some more feminine characteristics) over a primarily masculine woman.

Table 1. *Preferences for Jaime and Brienne broken down by gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

			JaimeVsBrienne		
AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Brienne of Tarth	Sir Jaime Lannister	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	6	8	14
		Male	10	2	12
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		18	10	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	14	10	24
		Male	14	6	20
	Total		28	16	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	20	18	38
		Male	24	8	32
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		46	26	72

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * JaimeVsBrienne * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

Arya Stark, again, is traditionally masculine, or "boyish," similarly to Brienne Gjelsvik &

Schubart (2016). Arya, from the beginning of the series to the end of the series, does not change

as drastically as her sister, Sansa; over the course of the series, Arya loses some faint traces of

femininity that she may have had in the beginning of the series (particularly, in showing warmth

and gentleness towards her family and dire wolf pet) and retains many or most of her masculine

characteristics, such as her need for independence and to be without ties Arya Stark (n.d.); Rai

(2017). This separation of Arya from her sister is exemplified in the series finale, when, of the

four remaining Stark siblings (Jon, Sansa, Arya, and Bran), Arya is the only one to choose

individualistic adventure, with the remaining siblings choosing to return to areas they'd already

had familiarity with, where they had previously known the most familial or interpersonal connection McCluskey & Chow (2019).

Sansa, on the other hand, gains more masculine characteristics while retaining her overall femininity. By the end of the series, she'd become much more ruthless, and unflinching in the face of blood and gore, even going so far as to murder her abusive husband by setting his own dogs on him; and tricking a manipulative man into attending his own trial, where he was sentenced to die immediately by Arya's hand. By the end of the series, Sansa had become the leader of her familial territory of Winterfell, now, under her hand, an independent state. However, she had to shed aspects of her more feminine characteristics (such as warmth, ability to trust, and innocence) in order to justify her becoming a leader— though, as previously stated, she is far more feminine in both her appearance (with long hair, jewelry, and long, skirted outfits) and her skillset lying in less commonly agreed-upon physically challenging scenarios (such as in the outdoors, or in violent scenarios, such as war) than Arya at any given point in the series Franz & Kumar (2019); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016).

Individual respondents preferred Arya Stark over her sister, Sansa Stark, with 52 out of 72 people indicating a preference for Arya. 75% of men indicated preference for Arya versus 71% of women. 72% of masculine identifying people indicated a preference for Arya, and, similarly, 71% of feminine identifying people indicated the same. Notably, however, individuals unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones*, both male and female, tended to prefer Sansa over Arya, showing that both men and women preferred, in this case, a more feminine-presenting woman than a more masculine-presenting woman. This continues the trend of women unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* slightly preferring feminine characteristics over masculine ones. As previously

mentioned, this was one of the only pairings found to be statistically significant, with a

chi-square test showing a p-value of .000 when the pairing preference was analyzed against

respondents' familiarity with *Game of Thrones*.

Table 2. *Preferences for Arya and Sansa broken down by gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * AryaVsSansa * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			AryaVsSansa		
			Arya Stark	Sansa Stark	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	5	9	14
		Male	4	8	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		10	18	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	22	2	24
		Male	20	0	20
	Total		42	2	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	27	11	38
		Male	24	8	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		52	20	72

Table 3. Chi-square test showing statistical significance for the Arya/Sansa pairing when analyzed against respondents' familiarity with Game of Thrones.

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines * AryaVsSansa

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.440[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	27.535	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	32.311	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	72				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.78.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Jorah Mormont and Oberyn Martell are both fairly masculine characters. They are both skilled fighters— though, Jorah has more of a traditionally masculine sense of fighting, while Oberyn's style of fighting is much more visually similar to a sort of dancing style. Additionally, they both have loyalty to those they are close to— Jorah, to the leader he serves, Daenerys Targaryen, and Oberyn, to his lover and his family Makjanić (2018); Pimentel (2016); Rebane (2019). Oberyn can be seen as a more feminine character than Jorah, due to Oberyn's characterization as "passionate" (re: emotional; one of the first scenes with Oberyn portrays his rage at Lannister soldiers, when he attacks one with a dagger for a perceived slight) Benioff & Weiss (2014); Forbish (2019); Rebane (2019). Additionally, what may separate Jorah and Oberyn the most is Oberyn's open bisexuality. While his openness about sexuality and his sexual appetite may be interpreted as masculine, his divergence from a heteronormative storyline may

additionally affect viewer perception of him; Jorah, therefore, with a more traditionally

masculine and heteronormative story than Oberyn, may therefore be seen as less feminine Del

Castillo (2015); Rebane (2019); Tan (2018).

Individual respondents indicated preference for Jorah Mormont over Oberyn Martell

more frequently (46 out of 72 individuals). A higher percentage of women preferred Jorah (68%

of women, with 59% of men indicating a preference for Jorah). 60% of masculine-identifying

people preferred Jorah, with 65% of feminine-identifying individuals indicating the same. Jorah

was preferred amongst all those both unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* and familiar with *Game*

of Thrones, showing an overall preference of male-presenting masculinity over a male character

with slightly more feminine characteristics and a non heteronormative storyline.

Table 4. *Preferences for Oberyn and Jorah broken down by gender identity and familiarity with*
Game of Thrones.

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * OberynVsJorah * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Jorah Mormont	Oberyn Martell	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	8	6	14
		Male	8	4	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		17	11	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	18	6	24
		Male	11	9	20
	Total		29	15	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	26	12	38
		Male	19	13	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		46	26	72

Yara Greyjoy and Bronn of the Blackwater are both very similar in characteristics—perhaps the most similar of any two characters in the show, and therefore on this list. Neither of them move closer to the realm of femininity throughout their tenure on the show. They both remain solidly masculine characters, who are individualistic, opportunistic, and careful about choosing where their sparse loyalties may lie. Yara can be said to be a bit more loyal than Bronn, in that she is more connected to her family, and even defies her father's will in an (unsuccessful) attempt to save her brother from a hostage situation. Bronn, meanwhile, does not have any close familial ties— therefore, just as with Brienne, Yara's most defining feminine characteristic is her loyalty, making her overall masculine, but slightly more feminine than Bronn Bronn (n.d.); Rebane (2019); Yara Greyjoy (n.d.).

The Yara/Bronn pairing, when analyzed against participants' familiarity with *Game of Thrones*, had a p-value of .034 using the chi-square test. Yara Greyjoy presented against Bronn of the Blackwater was the only instance in the section of indicating character preference where men and women were split— in every other instance, the majority of men and women in individual brackets matched the overall preference. In the case of Yara versus Bronn, 60% of women preferred Yara, while only 31% of men preferred Yara over Bronn. Additionally, 66% of masculine identifying people preferred Bronn while only 37% of feminine identifying people preferred Bronn. Women tended to prefer Yara when they were unfamiliar with the series, while men tended to prefer Bronn whether they were unfamiliar or familiar. Women familiar with the series were split, 50/50, on preference for Yara or Bronn. This was found to be statistically significant, with a chi-square test showing significance of .017 when the pairing was analyzed

against participants' gender identity (the only pairing found statistically significant when analyzed against this variable).

Yara being the slightly more feminine character, despite her overall masculine characterization, points to women unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* preferring, in each instance, a female character who is slightly more feminine than her male or female counterpart. Brienne of Tarth may seem like an exception to this at first, but she is more overtly coded as masculine than Jaime is, and, as women unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* indicated a slight preference for (more femininely characterized) Jaime over Brienne, this statement is, so far, consistent Bro (2017).

Males both familiar and unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* indicated a more frequent preference for Bronn, which shows, once again, a preference of male-presenting masculinity, this time solely amongst male respondents.

Table 5. *Preferences for Yara and Bronn broken down by gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * YaraVsBronn * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation					
Count					
			YaraVsBronn		
AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Bronn	Yara Greyjoy	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	3	11	14
		Male	7	5	12
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		10	18	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	12	12	24
		Male	15	5	20
	Total		27	17	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	15	23	38
		Male	22	10	32
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		37	35	72

Table 6. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for the Yara/Bronn pairing when analyzed against respondents' familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines * YaraVsBronn

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.506[a]	1	.034		
Continuity Correction[b]	3.538	1	.060		
Likelihood Ratio	4.555	1	.033		
Fisher's Exact Test				.052	.030
N of Valid Cases	72				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.61.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 7. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for the Yara/Bronn pairing when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * YaraVsBronn

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.135[a]	2	.017
Likelihood Ratio	9.026	2	.011
N of Valid Cases	72		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .97.

Renly and Stannis Baratheon, though brothers, are very much differentiated (much like Arya and Sansa Stark; though, perhaps not as drastically). Renly, in additon to being one of the show's few gay male characters, is fairly feminine in his characteristics. Renly is not a skilled fighter; indeed, he appears to actually hate fighting, preferring the field of political discourse. Renly shows great care for his lover, Loras; and even shows warmth towards his wife, Margaery, though he is not attracted to her, and Brienne, who serves him for part of the series Pages & Kinane (2015). Stannis, on the other hand, is a ruthless leader, willing to fight in any way possible (including both traditional sword fighting as well as using witchcraft) in order to further his own agenda. Stannis even goes so far in his Macbethian search for power as to murder Renly, before murdering his own daughter. Stannis shows little care for his loved ones, having strained relationships with his wife, daughter, and close friends Karimova (2018); Stannis Baratheon (n.d.). Stannis, therefore, is decidedly the more masculine of the two, although he certainly showcases such masculine traits which are not entirely positive.

Renly Baratheon was most frequently chosen as the preferred character of this pairing, with 78% of women preferring Renly and 68% of men indicating the same. Correspondingly, 80% of feminine identifying people preferred Renly, with 66% of masculine identifying people preferring him, as well. Renly was the more frequently preferred character for all people, regardless of gender and regardless of familiarity with the show. This is surprising, as respondents, particularly male, previously more frequently indicated preference for a more masculine-characterized man; however the preference for characters with slightly more feminine traits continues to be consistent amongst females non-familiar with *Game of Thrones*.

Table 8. *Preferences for Renly and Stannis broken down by gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * RenlyVsStannis * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Renly Baratheon	Stannis Baratheon	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	12	2	14
		Male	7	5	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		20	8	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	18	6	24
		Male	15	5	20
	Total		33	11	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	30	8	38
		Male	22	10	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		53	19	72

Margaery Tyrell, compared to Tyene Sand, is a more traditionally feminine-appearing woman, who is fully aware of the power of sexuality, and uses it to her advantage— most notably to gain the trust of her young husband, King Tommen Baratheon, whose mother, Cersei, seeks to continue to control the realm through him Forbish (2019); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016); Kawale (2019); Margaery Tyrell (n.d.). Margaery is a more minor player, and we do not get to see as dramatic of a character arc for her— she is firmly in the realm of femininity, then, for the entire time the audience gets to see her.

Tyene Sand is a warrior woman, around the same age as Margaery, who, along with her sisters, is adept at fighting and killing people Tyene Sand (n.d.). Tyene, like Margaery, is not

around enough in the series to see her develop either more masculine or more feminine

characteristics; instead, she is primarily masculine, and does not really budge from this

categorization. It should be noted that viewers' preference for Margaery may well be attributed

to the overall popularity of the character, as the audience spends more time with her and her

family due to their direct relation to events occurring with other primary characters (whereas

Tyene and her family, being more isolated in a different geographic region, spend much less

screen time interacting with other primary characters), rather than this particular preference

being an individual statement about preferred gendered characteristics Eriksen (2017); Margaery

Tyrell (n.d.); Tyene Sand (n.d.). Non-viewers, however, presumably have no familiarity with

either character; and as such, are then more likely to be reacting to the characters' projected

characteristics rather than personalities or likeability as presented on the show.

Respondents more frequently indicated a preference for Margaery Tyrell over Tyene

Sand, with 81% of women and 78% of men preferring Margaery. This was about the same on the

masculine/feminine scale, with 82% of feminine identifying people and 75% of masculine

identifying people preferring Margaery. All respondents, regardless of gender or familiarity with

the show, preferred Margaery over Tyene. The preference for female non-viewers of *Game of

Thrones* for more feminine characters then continues to be applicable; additionally, including

this pairing in the analysis, male non-viewers more frequently indicate a preference for a more

feminine-presenting female character. For the remaining groups of women and men familiar with

Game of Thrones, this pairing becomes a bit of an outlier, then. Margaery's popularity may then

be attributed (amongst viewers, at least), as previously mentioned, to her more prominent role in

the central narrative.

Table 9. Preferences for Tyene and Margaery broken down by gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * TyeneVsMargaery * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Margaery Tyrell	Tyene Sand	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	11	3	14
		Male	9	3	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		21	7	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	20	4	24
		Male	16	4	20
	Total		36	8	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	31	7	38
		Male	25	7	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		57	15	72

Respondents more frequently preferred characters who, in some way, defy gender norms, with four out of the six pairings of preferred characters indicating more frequent preference towards characters deviating from what is expected of their gender. Of all twelve of these characters, viewers spend the most time with Arya and Sansa Stark, and Brienne of Tarth and Jaime Lannister. It is notable, then, that of the characters viewers see the most (and are therefore the most familiar with), the more frequently favored characters are those who are both more masculine women, as well as characters who do not change or grow as drastically towards either femininity or masculinity as those they were paired against. Of six female characters (not always paired together), masculine women were more frequently favored (except in the case of

Margaery Tyrell versus Tyene Sand); and, notably, this differed slightly when respondents were not familiar with *Game of Thrones*. In particular, women unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* did *not* prefer masculine women more often, instead choosing Jaime over Brienne, Sansa over Arya, and Margaery over Tyene. Women unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones*, therefore, more frequently chose the slightly more feminine character (even if the more feminine character was male-identifying) as their preference. Women and men familiar with *Game of Thrones* tended to favor Brienne and Arya over Jaime and Sansa— or, the more masculine, but still female, characters in those pairings. Male non-viewers of *Game of Thrones* slightly more frequently listed the more feminine female characters (Sansa and Margaery) as their preference, with this group more frequently choosing Brienne over Jaime being a slight outlier.

Frequency of preference for male characters was much more varied, with male characters regardless of masculinity/femininity leanings losing out to women in male/female pairings. Frequency of preference for male characters was varied amongst separated groups of male and female viewers, as well as overall. With the favored male characters of all the pairings being Jorah Mormont and Renly Baratheon; the former of whom is more masculine, the latter of whom being more feminine; as well as a variety in response from male and female viewers, it is a bit more difficult to pinpoint the type of male portrayal of gendered characteristics that viewers are picking up on and responding to.

Interestingly, however, when all the characters are analyzed together, male and *Game of Thrones*-familiar respondents most frequently indicated preference towards characters (regardless of character gender; additionally, barring the outlier pairing of Margaery and Tyene) who seem to have fewer familial ties, regardless of other non-familial loyalties. This may explain

in part male and *Game of Thrones*-familiar respondents' more frequent favor towards Bronn of the Blackwater over Yara Greyjoy; while they are fairly evenly comparable as characters, Yara has slightly more familial ties and loyalty than Bronn does. This apparent differentiation between characters who are more family-oriented, or have a sense of familial loyalty, and characters who do not, may point to male characters identifying being family-oriented as a more feminine characteristic, and being more individualistic as a more masculine one Bem (1974); Bronn (n.d.); Tan (2018); Yara Greyjoy (n.d.).

Of a separate group of 44 people who identified as familiar with *Game of Thrones* (whether through pop culture, the book series, or the television series), 24 women and 20 men answered questions about their favorite characters, and which character they most identified with. Statistical significance was found when both favored characters and characters respondents identified with (separated by character gender) were analyzed against respondents' gender identities. When a person self-identified as male, they were more likely to choose a favorite character that was also male (over 90% of males in this group preferred male characters). The majority of people who preferred female characters identified as female, but there was a clear majority, with a little over 65% of people (both male and female) preferring male characters over female. This harkens back to aspects of the male and female gaze (particularly Mary Ann Doane's contribution to this idea, as previously discussed in the literature review), wherein women have often been able to relate to male characters due to the traditional richness in the writing and well-roundedness in the characterization of male characters when compared to female characters Doane (1982); Doane (1991). In other words, women have been relating to aspects of male characters far longer and far more often than men relate to female characters—

and so, perhaps one reason for the majority of male characters being favored in a show with a bigger than average range of gender and gender expression across characters is that female viewers are analyzing the characters in a differing, perhaps less overtly gendered and more characteristic-oriented way. This is also reflected in the differences in females familiar with *Game of Thrones* versus females unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* with regards to preferences, as previously discussed, with there being a slightly clearer pattern of favor/disfavor amongst female non-viewers, specifically with regards to gendered characteristics, than amongst female viewers.

Table 10. *Table depicting instances of viewers identifying favorite female characters, broken down by respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarFaveFemale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarFaveFemale		
		.00	1.00	Total
Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	12	12	24
	Male	19	1	20
Total		31	13	44

Table 11. *Table depicting instances of viewers identifying favorite male characters, broken down by respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarFaveMale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarFaveMale		
		.00	1.00	Total
Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	13	11	24
	Male	2	18	20
Total		15	29	44

Table 12. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for noting a favored male character when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarFaveMale

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.471[a]	1	.002		
Continuity Correction[b]	7.607	1	.006		
Likelihood Ratio	10.357	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.003	.002
N of Valid Cases	44				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.82.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 13. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for noting a favored female character when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

WhatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywithC * VarFaveFemale

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.612[a]	1	.001		
Continuity Correction[b]	8.561	1	.003		
Likelihood Ratio	12.201	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.002	.001
N of Valid Cases	44				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.91.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Tyrion was a favorite amongst both men and women (with 13/44 of all participants of this section listing him as a favorite), with Jon Snow (9/44) and Arya Stark (7/44— with all of those 7 being women) following closely after (the remaining answers for "favorite character" received no more than 4.5% percent of the vote each, or 2/44). Tyrion being not a wholly masculine man (with him rarely fighting, and being better skilled at wordplay), and Arya being a decidedly unfeminine woman, the tendencies for these characters to be listed as favored are then of special interest Forbish (2019); Gjelsvik & Schubart (2016). Tyrion, especially, as the most frequently listed favored male character, is interesting; he rarely fights, and is often judged on a different playing field than that of his peers, due to his dwarfism being seen by the outside world as a hindrance. He is far more skilled at witty remarks than swordsmanship (with, referring back to the use of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, Athleticism and Aggression being more masculine-coded characteristics, and the *lack* of them, therefore, being more feminine) and is one

of the kindest and warmest male characters on the show (with Warm and Gentle being more feminine-coded), and therefore can be analyzed as one of the more feminine male characters (while retaining the "masculine" label overall) Bem (1974); Forbish (2019). This, in addition to the data in this section analyzed above, may be indicative of individuals' preferences for characters deviating from gender norms being more frequent. To be completely transparent, this *could* be attributed to the overall popularity of each of the characters due to their individual characteristics; however, the fact that this seems to be a trend across two different levels of analysis (choosing between characters and an open response), points to this same pattern being likely to be seen in a larger group.

People who listed at least one female character as their favorite fell at the feminine end of the spectrum (7, 8, and 9), though each bracket within the feminine end of the scale was fairly evenly split between an indicated preference for male and female characters (with 47.82% of feminine-identifying people indicating a preference for female characters). People who listed at least one favorite male character fell across the gender spectrum, with the most clear differentiation found in people who identified in the male end of the spectrum (1, 2, and 3), with over 80% of masculine-identifying people in each bracket preferring male characters, while between 37% and 50% of feminine-identifying people in each bracket indicated preference for male characters. It should be noted that for this sub-group of survey respondents, no one indicated that they identify with either a 5 or 6 on the gender-identification scale. Only one individual indicated that they identify as a 4— or, slightly masculine-identifying on the more neutral section of the spectrum.

Table 14. *Table depicting instances of viewers identifying favorite female characters, broken down by respondents' self-identification on a masculinity-femininity gender identity scale.*

Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontends tofal * VarFaveFemale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarFaveFemale .00	VarFaveFemale 1.00	Total
Wherewouldyousayyourg enderidentityexpressionte ndstofal	1	8	0	8
	2	5	1	6
	3	6	0	6
	4	0	1	1
	7	6	6	12
	8	4	4	8
	9	2	1	3
Total		31	13	44

Table 15. *Table depicting instances of viewers identifying favorite male characters, broken down by respondents' self-identification on a masculinity-femininity gender identity scale.*

Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontends tofal * VarFaveMale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarFaveMale .00	VarFaveMale 1.00	Total
Wherewouldyousayyourg enderidentityexpressionte ndstofal	1	1	7	8
	2	1	5	6
	3	0	6	6
	4	1	0	1
	7	6	6	12
	8	5	3	8
	9	1	2	3
Total		15	29	44

Respondents tended to identify more often with characters of their own gender, with 85% of male-identfying people indicating they identify with at least one male character; and 70% of female-identifying people indicating they identify with at least one female character).

Table 16. *Table depicting instances of viewers indicating male characters they identified with, broken down by respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarIdentityMale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarIdentityMale		
		.00	1.00	Total
Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	21	3	24
	Male	3	17	20
Total		24	20	44

Table 17. *Table depicting instances of viewers indicating female characters they identified with, broken down by respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarIdentityFemale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarIdentityFemale		
		.00	1.00	Total
Whatgenderdoyoumostcl oselyidentifywith	Female	7	17	24
	Male	19	1	20
Total		26	18	44

Table 18. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for participants noting a male character they identified with when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

WhatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywithwithVarIdentityMale

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.128[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	20.296	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	25.639	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	44				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.09.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 19. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for participants noting a female character they identified with when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

WhatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywithwithVarIdentityFemale

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.559[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	16.930	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	22.619	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	44				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.18.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Though Jon Snow was a fan favorite, only one male identified with Jon, with that male identifying at the far end of the masculine spectrum, at 1. More people tended to identify with other fan favorites— Tyrion (7/44, with 6 of those 7 being male, all identifying as between 1 and 3 on the gender-identification scale) and Arya (6/24, with all 6 identifying as female, and 5 out of those six identifying between a 7 and 9 on the gender-identification spectrum, the other one identifying as a 4).

Three out of 24 female respondents identified with at least one male character; those characters were Ned Stark, Davos, and Tyrion (the latter of which has already been described; the former two having loyalty, familial devotion, and militaristic skill), who each had at least one other male-identifying person indicate that they most closely identified with that character, as well Davos Seaworth (n.d.); Eddard Stark (n.d.).

Three female-identifying people (each at bracket 7 on the gender-identification scale) indicated that they identify with no character, while one male-identifying person (at bracket 1 on the gender-identification scale) indicated the same.

Women overall were most likely to identify with either Arya (as previously mentioned), or Sansa, with 6/24 women identifying with Sansa. Those who identified with either Sansa or Arya identified between 7 and 9 on the gender-identification scale, except for one person who identified as a 4, and indicated that they identified more closely with Arya, as previously mentioned.

Masculine-identifying people were more likely to identify with male characters, and feminine-identifying people were more likely to identify with female characters. Additionally, the variety of characters listed as ones individuals identified with were so varied in their displays

of masculinity and femininity that a character's gender, rather than their gender expression, seems to be the distinguishing factor in individuals identifying with them. Based on the data above and the charts shown below (Tables 20 and 21), people identifying as more feminine related to male characters *slightly* more frequently than masculine-identifying people were to relate to female characters. The numbers are a bit too small to draw conclusions from; however, one can consider that, with a larger group of participants, one may be able to see a clearer pattern of female viewers favoring or relating to male characters at a higher rate than male viewers to female characters, as was previously mentioned.

Table 20. *Table depicting instances of viewers indicating female characters they identified with, broken down by respondents' self-identification on a masculinity-femininity gender identity scale.*

Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontends tofal * VarIdentityFemale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarIdentityFemale		
		.00	1.00	Total
Wherewouldyousayyourg enderidentityexpressionte ndstofal	1	8	0	8
	2	5	1	6
	3	6	0	6
	4	0	1	1
	7	3	9	12
	8	3	5	8
	9	1	2	3
Total		26	18	44

Table 21. Table depicting instances of viewers indicating male characters they identified with, broken down by respondents' self-identification on a masculinity-femininity gender identity scale.

Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontends tofal * VarIdentityMale Crosstabulation

Count

		VarIdentityMale		
		.00	1.00	Total
Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontendstofal	1	2	6	8
	2	1	5	6
	3	0	6	6
	4	1	0	1
	7	12	0	12
	8	6	2	8
	9	2	1	3
Total		24	20	44

Based on the data gathered, people more frequently prefer characters who appear to deviate from expected gender norms. From the instances of choosing preference between two characters, there is a more clear frequency of preference for masculine female characters amongst those familiar with *Game of Thrones;* those unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* showed a slight preference for more feminine female characters. Based off of individuals' most frequently listed favorite and preferred characters, it appears as though there is about equal preference for masculinity and femininity in male characters amongst those familiar with *Game of Thrones* (with those familiar with *Game of Thrones* frequently preferring the masculine characters of Jorah and Bronn; while also listing preference/favoritism for Renly and Tyrion; and favoritism

for Jon Snow, who is traditionally masculine with some secondary feminine personality traits) Jon Snow (n.d.).

Additionally, the preference male viewers had consistently for characters who are more individualistic and less family-oriented is notable; female viewers of the show were almost the same, though they were split evenly on their preference for Yara versus Bronn, which makes this observation a bit less consistent than if Bronn had been preferred more frequently, as he had been by men familiar with the show. This does indicate, however, that the one more masculine characteristic of self-sufficiency/individualism may be important in forming an opinion of a character for the majority of all viewers Bem (1974). Having this prominent male characteristic, then, is seen as more positive than being loyal to one's family to most viewers.

Viewers' self-identification with characters seems to be a bit more separated by gender, which may indicate that viewers, themselves, are a bit more likely to identify with characters of their own gender than favor them; while those unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* more frequently preferred characters who deviated less from gendered expectations. This will be discussed further in later sections.

VIII.II Research Question #2

Do individuals who watch Game of Thrones differ in their views on societal roles for men and women from non-viewers?

In order to examine the above research question, an individual's stated gender, and their familiarity with the *Game of Thrones* universe (questioned by a simple "yes or no"; as well as what specific *kind* of familiarity— the HBO television show, the book series, and popular culture— for those who indicated they *did* have familiarity) was analyzed against multiple factors which are typically representative of gendered scenarios, based off of other, outside data and research Bianchi et al. (2000); Jones et al. (2000). These factors are: what is most important to an individual when considering a job or other professional opportunity, and how the individual contributes to their household; additionally, how an individual might define instances of "care" was also analyzed to see if this differed across the genders Merchant (2012). Nothing was found statistically significant when these variables were analyzed against respondents' familiarity with *Game of Thrones*. Only two variables (both related to how respondents contributed to their household) were found statistically significant when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.

Of the 72 respondents, 44 reported being familiar with *Game of Thrones* in some sort of way, whether it was through the HBO show, the book series, or through its presence in popular culture, with the remaining 28 reporting being unfamiliar with the *Game of Thrones* universe. 41 of the 44 familiar with *Game of Thrones* were familiar with the HBO series. Therefore, with the

vast majority of the "familiar" group being familiar with one of the three listed forms of experiencing media, any difference found between the listed forms of media can most likely *not* be attributed to this difference in consumption. 24 of the 44 familiar with the *Game of Thrones* universe identified as female, with the remaining 20 identifying as male. 14 of the 28 unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* identified as female, with 12 identifying as male, and the remaining two identifying as nonbinary.

When asked what the most important thing when considering a job was, answers were widely varied. Respondents could choose as many of these options as were applicable to them.

The structure for this section was pulled from a study titled *Gender Differences in Students' Experiences, Interests, and Attitudes toward Science and Scientists*; within that study, responses used in *this* research project included "being able to make my own decisions," "gaining new knowledge and/or skills," "overall ease of job," "experiencing excitement with job," "helping other people," "having time for my own interests/hobbies," "making and inventing new things," "earning money," "feeling secure," "having time for friends and family," "being able to utilize my talents," and "working with people rather than things"; where "overall ease of job," "helping other people," "making and inventing new things," and "earning money" were the most statistically significant variables in the Jones study Jones et al. (2000). Of these options within the Jones study, males indicated a higher frequency of selecting "ease of job," "making and inventing new things," and "earning money." Females in the Jones study indicated a higher frequency of selecting only "helping other people" Jones et al. (2000).

In the research tackled in *this* paper, most options for answers received less than 50% of respondents, with the only clear majority for any option being "Gaining new knowledge and/or

skills" (22/28 unfamiliar, 36/44 familiar). This was most frequently listed as important for all

respondents, whether male or female, whether or not they were familiar with *Game of Thrones.*

Table 22. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Gaining new knowledge and/or skills" as something that is important to them when considering a job or internship opportunity, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * GainingNewKnowledgeAndOrSkills * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation			GainingNewKnowledgeAndOrSkills		
Count					
AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			.00	1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	3	11	14
		Male	3	9	12
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		6	22	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	5	19	24
		Male	3	17	20
	Total		8	36	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	8	30	38
		Male	6	26	32
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		14	58	72

Only "earning money" was the option which was more frequently chosen by respondents

that was also listed as statistically significant in the Jones study, with 32/72 respondents

choosing this option. Earning money was slightly less frequently important to females both

familiar and unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones,* and was split 50/50 between all men, both

familiar and unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones*. This is consistent with the expected outcome

based on the Jones study Jones et al. (2000).

Table 23. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Earning money" as something that is important to them when considering a job or internship opportunity, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * EarningMoney * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			EarningMoney .00	EarningMoney 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	8	6	14
		Male	6	6	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		15	13	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	15	9	24
		Male	10	10	20
	Total		25	19	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	23	15	38
		Male	16	16	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		40	32	72

"Experiencing excitement with their job" was the third-most chosen option, at 30/72, with women being unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* being the only group to slightly more frequently select this option. Even though it was not statistically significant in the Jones study, female respondents *did* more frequently indicate this as important to them than male respondents Jones et al. (2000).

Table 24. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Experiencing excitement" as something that is important to them when considering a job or internship opportunity, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * ExperiencingExcitementWithJob * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation					
Count					
			ExperiencingExcitementWithJob		
AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			.00	1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	5	9	14
		Male	9	3	12
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		16	12	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	15	9	24
		Male	11	9	20
	Total		26	18	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	20	18	38
		Male	20	12	32
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		42	30	72

The only category in which there was a noticable difference between *Game of Thrones* viewers and non-viewers was in "having time for my own interests/hobbies" (6/28 unfamiliar noted this, versus 18/44 familiar— that is, 21.4% of all those unfamiliar versus 40.9% of all those familiar). However, all females, both familiar and unfamiliar, less frequently chose this option. Again, even though this option was not *statistically* significant in the Jones study, male respondents did more frequently indicate this option as important to them than female respondents Jones et al. (2000).

Table 25. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Having time for my own interests/hobbies" as something that is important to them when considering a job or internship opportunity, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * HavingTimeForMyOwnInterestsHobbies * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			HavingTimeForMyOwnInterestsHobbies .00	1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	9	5	14
		Male	12	0	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		22	6	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	17	7	24
		Male	9	11	20
	Total		26	18	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	26	12	38
		Male	21	11	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		48	24	72

The fact that the notable differences between *Game of Thrones* viewers and non-viewers can be better attributed to respondents' gender and their adherence to more common gendered expectations, rather than attributed to their familiarity with the series, means that there was no difference in this section between *Game of Thrones* viewers and non-viewers on work-related expectations and views for specific genders.

The question requesting individuals to indicate how they most frequently contribute to their household was inspired by the research done in the paper, *Is Anyone Doing the Housework? Trends in the Gender Division of Household Labor* Bianchi et al. (2000). Responses included in the Bianchi paper that were also included in this research were "cooking meals," "housecleaning (vacuuming, dusting, etcetera)," "laundry/ironing," "repairs (plumbing, carpentry, etcetera)," "outdoor care (mowing)," "garden care," "paperwork (bills/financial accounting)" Bianchi et al. (2000). The paper indicated that women were overall more likely to participate in household tasks than their male counterparts— but, as the paper examined trends over the course of thirty years, that gender gap shrunk each decade. Even throughout that 30-year difference, however, there were some tasks that women more frequently did than men, and vice-versa. Women were consistently more likely to cook meals, houseclean, and do the laundry/ironing than men; while men were consistently more likely to take care of outdoor and garden care. Men were also slightly more likely to take care of the bills and other paperwork, though this particular variable did not have as large a gap as others by the end of the 30-year study, and so could indicate a trend of that particular chore growing more equally distributed amongst the genders in more recent years Bianchi et al. (2000).

Within the realm of *this* project, the majority of both familiar and unfamiliar respondents reported contributing to their household by cooking meals (46/72), doing house cleaning (vacuuming, dusting, etcetera) (62/72), and doing laundry/ironing (55/72). It should be noted, again, that respondents could choose as many of these options as were applicable to them. Each of the familiar and unfamiliar groups reported about the same level of contribution in each category, with *Game of Thrones*-familiar individuals reporting only slightly higher levels of

contribution for cooking meals, laundry/ironing, doing repairs, doing outdoor care, and doing

paperwork (the other categories— garden care and house cleaning— having slightly more

responses from unfamiliar people). Again, nothing was statistically significant when analyzed

against participants' familiarity with *Game of Thrones*; however, statistical significance was

found when participants' responses to contributing to their household by doing housecleaning

and doing repairs were analyzed against respondents' gender identity (with chi-square tests

noting p-values of .044 and .003, respectively).

Females familiar with *Game of Thrones* were the group which most frequently indicated

that they contribute to their households by cooking meals. All female respondents more

frequently reported cooking meals than all male respondents— which aligns with the earlier data

in the Bianchi study Bianchi et al. (2000).

Table 26. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Cooking meals" as a way they often contribute to their household, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * CookingMeals * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation					
Count					
			CookingMeals		
AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			.00	1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	6	8	14
		Male	5	7	12
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		11	17	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	4	20	24
		Male	11	9	20
	Total		15	29	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	10	28	38
		Male	16	16	32
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		26	46	72

All females, regardless of their familiarity with *Game of Thrones,* more frequently

reported participating in housecleaning (approximately 94% of female respondents, versus

approximately 78% of male respondents). Females regardless of familiarity *slightly* more

frequently indicated doing laundry/ironing, as well (76% of female respondents versus 75% of

male respondents). Once again, this aligns with the expectations set forth in the Bianchi study—

both that female respondents would be more likely to respond to these particular options, *and*

that these responses may have smaller gaps between the genders than would be indicated in the

Bianchi study, due to the passage of time Bianchi et al. (2000).

Table 27. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Housecleaning" as a way they often contribute to their household, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * Housecleaning * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Housecleaning .00	Housecleaning 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	0	14	14
		Male	2	10	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		3	25	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	2	22	24
		Male	5	15	20
	Total		7	37	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	2	36	38
		Male	7	25	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		10	62	72

Table 28. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for individuals indicating that they contribute to their household by doing housecleaning when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * Housecleaning

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.251[a]	2	.044
Likelihood Ratio	5.960	2	.051
N of Valid Cases	72		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .28.

Table 29. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Laundry/Ironing" as a way they often contribute to their household, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * LaundryIroning * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			LaundryIroning .00	LaundryIroning 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	4	10	14
		Male	3	9	12
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		7	21	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	5	19	24
		Male	5	15	20
	Total		10	34	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	9	29	38
		Male	8	24	32
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		17	55	72

Male respondents familiar with *Game of Thrones* were most likely than any other group to indicate that they contribute to their household by doing repairs— though, all male respondents reported doing repairs more frequently than all female respondents (approximately 10% of all female respondents versus approximately 46% of male respondents). Men regardless of familiarity were also slightly more likely to report doing outdoor care (approximately 21% of all female respondents versus 37.5% of male respondents) and garden care (approximately 18% of all female respondents versus approximately 21% of male respondents). This, once again, reflects what was suggested by the Bianchi study, and is therefore unsurprising Bianchi et al. (2000).

Table 30. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Repairs" as a way they often contribute to their household, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * Repairs * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Repairs .00	Repairs 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	12	2	14
		Male	8	4	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		21	7	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	22	2	24
		Male	9	11	20
	Total		31	13	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	34	4	38
		Male	17	15	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		52	20	72

Table 31. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for individuals indicating that they contribute to their household by doing repairs when analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * Repairs

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.947[a]	2	.003
Likelihood Ratio	12.499	2	.002
N of Valid Cases	72		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .56.

Table 32. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Outdoor Care" as a way they often contribute to their household, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * OutdoorCare * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			OutdoorCare .00	OutdoorCare 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	12	2	14
		Male	7	5	12
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		21	7	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	18	6	24
		Male	13	7	20
	Total		31	13	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	30	8	38
		Male	20	12	32
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		52	20	72

Table 33. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Garden Care" as a way they often contribute to their household, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * GardenCare * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			GardenCare .00	GardenCare 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	11	3	14
		Male	9	3	12
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		22	6	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	20	4	24
		Male	16	4	20
	Total		36	8	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	31	7	38
		Male	25	7	32
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		58	14	72

Regarding paperwork and other clerical work, there was no notable difference between viewers and non-viewers; 36% of female respondents indicated contributing to their household by doing this task, versus 34% of all male respondents. This still aligns with the Bianchi study, simply reflecting that men and women *consistently*, through both the Bianchi study and this one, are almost as equally likely to contribute to their household by doing this task— and, in this research project, with women being only *slightly* more likely to complete this one task, while the data is more or less consistent with expectations for other tasks, this variable, then, is not of particular note Bianchi et al. (2000).

Table 34. *Table depicting instances of respondents indicating "Paperwork" as a way they often contribute to their household, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * Paperwork * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			Paperwork .00	Paperwork 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	11	3	14
		Male	7	5	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		19	9	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	13	11	24
		Male	14	6	20
	Total		27	17	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	24	14	38
		Male	21	11	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		46	26	72

Finding no difference between viewers and non-viewers in responses in either this category or the one previous, and only finding significant differences that can be attributed to respondents' gender rather than to familiarity with the show, it can then be stated that there is no difference between viewers and non-viewers on their perception of societal roles for men and women.

Based on data that indicated that men and women tend to use different language when describing care or stress, participants were asked to describe a scenario wherein they cared for someone or something, in the form of a free-response question Merchant (2012); Turton and

Campbell (2005). This was done in order to examine if there was any difference between viewers and nonviewers, or males or females. Most people indicated that they cared for a family member or friend (40/72), and most often used language which described it as a one-off experience (37/72). People also tended to care for animals or plants (25/72), or described their care as a consistent experience (26/72). People familiar with *Game of Thrones* showed a preference for caring for friends and family (61% of all familiar respondents, versus 46% of all unfamiliar respondents) while people unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* showed a preference for caring for plants and animals (about 39% of all unfamiliar respondents; compared to 31% of all familiar). Additionally, 38% of all familiar respondents reported instances of consistent care versus 32% of unfamiliar respondents; conversely, 57% of unfamiliar respondents reported instances of one-off care versus 47% of familiar respondents. However, these differences are better attributed to gender breakdowns, rather than familiarity with the show, as will be seen subsequently.

People who were unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones,* regardless of gender, were split 50/50 on caring for family or friends, while those familiar with *Game of Thrones,* regardless of gender, were more likely to indicate instances in which they cared for their family members or friends. Female viewers were only *slightly* more likely to indicate instances in which they cared for family members or friends (at 62% of all female viewers, versus 60% of all male viewers; and at 57% of all female participants, versus 56% of all male participants). This would be consistent with the trait "Parental," or, more familial-related tasks and inclinations, being characteristics more often attributed to women, as previously noted (with the trait "Parental" being a rephrasing of the feminine characteristic "Loves children" from the original Bem Sex-Role Inventory) Bem (1974). The fact that, overall, people familiar with *Game of Thrones*

more frequently describe instances of caring for people might indicate that those familiar with

Game of Thrones may be more likely to be family- or people-oriented. This can best be

attributed to the fact that the largest subgroup, when split between gender and familiarity with

the series, is females who are familiar with the show.

Table 35. *Table depicting instances of respondents describing personal experiences caring for family members or friends, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * CareFamilyorFriend * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation					
Count					
				CareFamilyorFriend	
AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			.00	1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	7	7	14
		Male	6	6	12
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		15	13	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	9	15	24
		Male	8	12	20
	Total		17	27	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	16	22	38
		Male	14	18	32
		Nonbinary	2	0	2
	Total		32	40	72

As previously mentioned, those who were unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones* were more

likely than all those familiar with *Game of Thrones* to indicate instances of care for plants and

animals. *Male* respondents, however, were the group *most* likely to indicate this option (at 34%

of all male respondents, versus 31% of all female respondents). This, again, relates back to being

family-oriented being considered a more feminine task Bem (1974); Rai (2017). The fact that

caring for people is more frequently described by women, and caring for animals or other living,

non-human things is more frequently described by men, points to this being a split between, once

again, participants' gender, rather than their familiarity with *Game of Thrones*.

Table 36. *Table depicting instances of respondents describing personal experiences caring for plants or animals, broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * CarePlantOrAnimal * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			CarePlantOrAnimal .00	CarePlantOrAnimal 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	9	5	14
		Male	8	4	12
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		17	11	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	17	7	24
		Male	13	7	20
	Total		30	14	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	26	12	38
		Male	21	11	32
		Nonbinary	0	2	2
	Total		47	25	72

Respondents familiar with *Game of Thrones*, regardless of gender, were more likely to

indicate instances of care which would be described as consistent (38% of all those familiar

versus 31% of all those unfamiliar). This gap is wider when considering gender— 42% of all

female respondents indicated instances of consistent care, versus 28% of all male respondents.

Table 37. *Table depicting instances of respondents describing personal experiences of care that could be categorized as "Consistent," broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * CareConsistent * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			CareConsistent		Total
			.00	1.00	
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	9	5	14
		Male	9	3	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		19	9	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	13	11	24
		Male	14	6	20
	Total		27	17	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	22	16	38
		Male	23	9	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		46	26	72

57% of unfamiliar respondents described instances of one-off care versus 47% of familiar

respondents. Males, regardless of familiarity with the show, were most likely to describe

instances of one-off care, rather than consistent care (44% of all females described this, versus

59% of all men). Since instances of consistent care versus one-off care have a clear gender

divide, this split can, once again, best be explained by differences in gender, rather than differences between viewers and non-viewers.

Table 38. *Table depicting instances of respondents describing personal experiences of care that could be categorized as "Singular," or "One-off," broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * CareOneOff * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			CareOneOff .00	CareOneOff 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	7	7	14
		Male	4	8	12
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		12	16	28
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	14	10	24
		Male	9	11	20
	Total		23	21	44
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	21	17	38
		Male	13	19	32
		Nonbinary	1	1	2
	Total		35	37	72

Therefore, to answer my research question, *Game of Thrones* viewers and non-viewers do not tend to differ in their expectations of different genders. Any differences found between viewers and non-viewers in gender performance can be best attributed to gender differences between the participants, rather than to their familiarity with the show.

VIII.III Research Question #3

Do people identify more often with traits attributed to characters of their own gender?

In order to examine the above research question, a person's gender identity as well as their self-identification as masculine or feminine on the previously discussed scale were analyzed against an individual's self-identification with the same list of traits (inspired by the Bem Sex-Role Inventory) given to them to examine *Game of Thrones* characters with, as well as their favorite character, and the character they most identify with (the latter two of which were discussed previously, and will be briefly mentioned again here) Bem (1974). Only two traits (that of "Parental" and "Practical") were found to be statistically significant when analyzed against an individual's gender identity.

A net of 45 people (individuals who indicated that they did not want to take part in a focus group) answered questions about their personal identification with particular characteristics inspired by the Bem Sex-Role Inventory Bem (1974). Of these 45, 23 identified as female (10 unfamiliar with *Game of Thrones,* 13 familiar) and 22 identified as male (9 unfamiliar, 13 familiar). This group was fairly evenly split when identifying with characteristics— with the difference between genders being approximately plus or minus five (or, more often, less) individuals for each category, whether they all tended to identify with the characteristic or not. The majority of people (that is, over 22.5 people out of the net of 45) tended to identify with the characteristics of Understanding, Analytical, Warm, Loyal, and Practical. The traits of Understanding, Warm, and Loyal are typically female-attributed characteristics, while Analytical

and Practical are typically male-attributed characteristics Bem (1974). Most people tended not to identify as Self-Assured, Conventional, Aggressive, Gentle, Secretive, Parental, Unpredictable, or Athletic. The traits of Gentle and Parental are typically female-attributed characteristics; Self-Assured, Aggressive, and Athletic are typically male-attributed characteristics, while Conventional, Secretive, and Unpredictable are gender-neutral Bem (1974). When discussing these attributes, it may be easier for people to identify the more negatively-connotated ones (Aggressive, Secretive, Conventional) as belonging to a third person— the characters. However, it might be a bit more difficult for one to honestly identify oneself as one of these characteristics if they perceive it to carry negative implications.

The only characteristics that had a clear gender divide were Practical, for men (with 17/28, or 60%, of those identifying as "practical" being male) and Parental for women (with 15 out of 21, or 71%, of those identifying as "parental" being female). As previously noted, these were also the only two traits to have statistical significance (with chi-square tests showing p-values of .042 and .011, respectively).

Table 39. *Table depicting instances of respondents self-identifying with the trait "Practical," broken down by respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarCharPersonalPractical Crosstabulation

Count

| | | VarCharPersonalPractical | | Total |
		.00	1.00	
Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	12	11	23
	Male	5	17	22
Total		17	28	45

Table 40. *Table depicting instances of respondents self-identifying with the trait "Parental," broken down by respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith *
VarCharPersonalParental Crosstabulation

Count

		VarCharPersonalParental		Total
		.00	1.00	
Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	8	15	23
	Male	16	6	22
Total		24	21	45

Table 41. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for individuals indicating that they identify with the trait "Practical," analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarCharPersonalPractical

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.148[a]	1	.042		
Continuity Correction[b]	2.990	1	.084		
Likelihood Ratio	4.243	1	.039		
Fisher's Exact Test				.065	.041
N of Valid Cases	45				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.31.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 42. *Chi-square test showing statistical significance for individuals indicating that they identify with the trait "Parental," analyzed against respondents' gender identity.*

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarCharPersonalParental

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.505[a]	1	.011		
Continuity Correction[b]	5.070	1	.024		
Likelihood Ratio	6.681	1	.010		
Fisher's Exact Test				.017	.012
N of Valid Cases	45				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.27.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The same is true across a gender self-identification chart participants were asked to rank themselves on, on a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being masculine, 5 being gender-neutral, and 9 being feminine. It should be noted that, of the 45 people in this group, 11 people identifying as male placed themselves at the far end of the masculinity-femininity spectrum, at 1, while only two people identifying as female placed themselves at the far feminine end of the spectrum, at 9. Additionally, no one identified as 4 or 5— that is, in the middle of the spectrum. Only one participant identified at number 6, which, while solidly in the middle part of the spectrum, leans slightly feminine.

Those on the more "feminine" end of the spectrum (7 through 9) identified more frequently as being Parental (making up 66.67% of all those identifying with the characteristic), while those on the more "masculine" end of the spectrum did not identify more often as being

Parental (making up 66.67% of all those who did *not* identify with the characteristic). Those

identifying strongly with the masculine spectrum, at 1, (totaling 11 men), were the least likely of

those identifying on the masculine end of the spectrum (totaling 22 men) to identify with the trait

Parental.

Table 43. *Table depicting instances of respondents self-identifying with the trait "Parental,"*
broken down by respondents' self-identification on a masculinity-femininity gender identity
scale.

Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontendstofa I * VarCharPersonalParental Crosstabulation

Count

		VarCharPersonalParental		
		.00	1.00	Total
Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontendstofal	1	9	2	11
	2	3	3	6
	3	4	1	5
	6	1	1	2
	7	2	7	9
	8	4	6	10
	9	1	1	2
Total		24	21	45

This data point might be expected to reflect back on those being more familiar with

Game of Thrones (particularly, men) tending to indicate preference towards characters who were

less likely to be family-oriented or family-loyal— characteristics of which Parental would

certainly be reflective of. All women, whether they were viewers or non-viewers, were most

likely to think of themselves as Parental, and all men, whether they were viewers or non-viewers, were less likely to think of themselves as Parental. This implies that men more frequently perceive being connected with family to be a more feminine thing, and so, are less likely to prefer characters who they perceive to be feminine— or, in other words, *un*like how they perceive *themselves* to be, at least in this aspect. Female viewers previously *also* indicated slightly more frequent preference for more individualistic characters— perhaps indicating slight preference for those they perceive to be *un*like them in some aspects.

Table 44. Table depicting instances of respondents self-identifying with the trait "Parental," broken down by respondents' gender identity and familiarity with Game of Thrones.

Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith * VarCharPersonalParental * AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines Crosstabulation

Count

AreyoufamiliarwithGameofThronescharactersorplotlines			VarCharPersonalParental .00	VarCharPersonalParental 1.00	Total
No	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	3	7	10
		Male	8	1	9
	Total		11	8	19
Yes	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	5	8	13
		Male	8	5	13
	Total		13	13	26
Total	Whatgenderdoyoumostcloselyidentifywith	Female	8	15	23
		Male	16	6	22
	Total		24	21	45

For the trait of Practical, the more likely someone was to identify at the far end of the masculine spectrum, the more likely they were to also identify as Practical, which seemed to be

true for people at the farther ends of the feminine spectrum, as well, though people identifying as

feminine were less likely overall to identify as Practical (it should be noted that the sample size

of those who identify at the farthest end of the feminine spectrum is much smaller than the

sample size of those who identify at the farthest end of the masculine spectrum, and is therefore

more difficult to make broader generalizations about). While most people are a bit varied in their

self-identification with gendered characteristics, it does indicate that individuals are *slightly*

likely to identify more frequently with at least a few traits commonly associated with their

gender.

Table 45. *Table depicting instances of respondents self-identifying with the trait "Practical," broken down by respondents' self-identification on a masculinity-femininity gender identity scale.*

Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontendstofa l * VarCharPersonalPractical Crosstabulation

Count

		VarCharPersonalPractical		Total
		.00	1.00	
Wherewouldyousayyourg enderidentityexpressionte ndstofal	1	2	9	11
	2	1	5	6
	3	2	3	5
	6	1	1	2
	7	6	3	9
	8	5	5	10
	9	0	2	2
Total		17	28	45

One of the more interesting observations from analyzing how people self-identify is that most people do not think of themselves as Conventional, even though more than half of people (29 out of 45, or 64%) consider themselves to be either a 1 or 2 on the masculinity end, or an 8 or 9 on the femininity end, of the given gender-identification spectrum. This may be because the word "conventional," defined in part by Merriam-Webster as, "according with, sanctioned by, or based on convention; lacking originality or individuality; ordinary, commonplace" may be perceived as negative, due to individuals wanting to feel unique in their thoughts and experiences Conventional (n.d.). Only four people of the 45 identified as Conventional, and those people identified as 2, 3, 8, and 8, respectively.

Table 46. *Table depicting instances of respondents self-identifying with the trait "Conventional," broken down by respondents' self-identification on a masculinity-femininity gender identity scale.*

Wherewouldyousayyourgenderidentityexpressiontendstofal * VarCharPersonalConventional Crosstabulation

Count

		VarCharPersonalConventional		
		.00	1.00	Total
Wherewouldyousayyourg enderidentityexpressionte ndstofal	1	11	0	11
	2	5	1	6
	3	4	1	5
	6	2	0	2
	7	9	0	9
	8	8	2	10
	9	2	0	2
Total		41	4	45

As previously discussed, participants more frequently favored male characters over female characters, and more often preferred characters which deviated slightly from gendered characteristics associated with that character's gender. However, also as previously discussed, people *also* tended to more frequently self-identify with characters of their own gender. For example, Jon Snow, Tyrion Lannister, and Arya Stark were the three most frequently listed favorite characters of respondents; however, people did not often list Jon as a character they identified with. Tyrion and Arya were far more frequently mentioned, with Sansa Stark *also* being frequently mentioned as a female character female respondents frequently identified with. The fact that Sansa, an overtly feminine character, was mentioned as one viewers self-identify with, but is not favored by viewers; as well as viewers self-identifying with Arya at approximately the same frequency (with 6 out of the group of 24, or 25%, identifying as Arya, and another 25% identifying with Sansa), points to a possible greater gendered divide, in which viewers (rather than nonviewers) regardless of their own gender-identity, tend to *have preference for* male characters and characters which deviate slightly from expected gender roles, while also *identifying* with characters who align with an individual's gender, regardless of whether that character has more masculine or feminine characteristics. While viewers may tend to indicate preference towards characters who deviate from gender norms, they may also be slightly more likely to adhere to gendered conventions, themselves, as demonstrated by the most frequently self-attributed characteristics for men and women overall being in accordance with expectations of their gender, as well as respondents more frequently self-identifying with characters of their own gender (regardless of that character's masculinity or femininity; but with a *wide* variety of listed characters individuals self-identified with).

Therefore, to answer my third research question, individuals identify with a variety of both masculine and feminine traits (with the majority of individuals identifying frequently with only a few traits aligning with their traditional association with masculinity/femininity), and seem to identify with characters who align with their own gender, separate from these characters' gendered characteristics. Separate from *identifying* with a character, men tend to slightly *prefer* characters who they perceive as somewhat like themselves (at least with regards to some characteristics, such as Parental), while women tend to slightly prefer characters who they perceive as somewhat *un*like themselves.

IX. Conclusions

The intersection of culture, media, and gender is fascinating, in that culture and media both reflect and alter the other in both minor and major ways Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995); Foucault (1988); Goffman (1986); McLuhan (1994). These reflections and changes then become so commonplace, they slowly become accepted and seen as "normal," thereby creating standards of behavior separated by various ways of differentiating individuals— gender being but one of several of these possible ways Foucault (1990a); Foucault (1990b); Foucault (1995); Foucault (1988).

The conclusions drawn here based on the theories studied and data gathered is that 1) People generally prefer characters who deviate from expected gender norms— and, this is most frequent among individuals who are familiar with the characters in a specific example of a form of media. Those *un*familiar with characters in a specific media, basing their response on image or first impression alone, are slightly more likely to prefer more feminine female characters; 2) Viewers of specific examples of media and non-viewers of that form do not tend to differ in expectations for men/women— expectations are more clearly seen in behavior differences of the genders; and 3) Viewers of specific examples of media more frequently identify with characters that align with that individual's gender. All individuals identify with a variety of masculine and feminine characteristics, while simultaneously identifying more strongly with some characteristics associated with their specific gender identity. Additionally, traits, activities, and behaviors associated with familial presence are most often seen as feminine, and therefore are more frequently preferred by women and less frequently preferred by men.

Therefore, the overarching conclusion of this project is that media affects how gender and gendered characteristics are perceived (with viewers and non-viewers differing in opinion), but singular forms of media, on their own, are not likely to alter one's perception of self outside of accepted gender norms, nor patterns of behavior directly related to gender.

Limitations of this research included the sample size being too small to be able to draw definitive conclusions about society as a whole; as well as the respondents being drawn from convenience sampling, thereby slightly limiting this study's geographical and social diversity. Areas of further research I'd like to examine using this model are the research questions, "What difference, if any, exists between one's self-reported views on gender versus their observed/demonstrated views on gender?", "What traits given to *Game of Thrones* characters do individuals identify with?", and "What factors of an individual's identity other than their gender influence their perceptions of gender roles as presented in *Game of Thrones*?". Within the given allowances and restrictions regarding this research, however, I have been successful in creating a model with which to further study culture, media, and gender utilizing both quantitative and mixed-methods formats.

X. Appendix

X.I. Full Survey

The full survey developed and used for this project begins below. Please note that circular bullets indicate questions in which participants could choose only one answer from the given list; check-boxes indicate questions in which participants could choose multiple answers from the given list.

Additionally, there are some questions here which were not discussed within the overall document; the basis/rationale for these questions can be found in the bibliography Adams & Hambright (2004); Barnett & Hyde (2001); Bem (1974); Turton and Campbell (2005).

An Analysis of Sociological Factors and Game of Thrones

Section 1 of 41: Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to assess sociological factors that would affect an individual's responses to *Game of Thrones* characters. This is a research project being conducted by Alexis Telyczka at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

The process involves filling out an online survey that will take approximately 10 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name or IP address. The survey questions will be about your demographic information, your responses to *Game of Thrones* characters, and the way you view yourself. Knowledge of *Game of Thrones* is neither expected nor required for this project. You will not be penalized for not being familiar with *Game of Thrones*.

Additionally, the end of the survey will ask if you would like to participate in a follow-up focus group for this project. If you select yes, you will be required to provide an email address or other form of contact information. Participation in a focus group is neither expected nor required, and

you will not be penalized for not participating. Your submitted responses will be used for data analysis regardless of your participation in a focus group.

We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with NJIT representatives.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Alexis Telyczka at amt42@njit.edu.

Clicking on the "I consent" button below indicates that:
- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "I do not consent" option.

Electronic Consent - Please select your choice below:
- I consent to my data being used with the knowledge that responses will remain anonymous in data analysis. *[those who indicated "I consent" continued to Section 2]*
- I do not consent, and would not like to continue participating. *[those who indicated "I do not consent" continued to submit the form]*

Section 2 of 41: Demographics

What is your age?
- 18-19
- 20-21
- 22-23
- 24-25
- 26-27
- 28-29
- 30+

What gender do you most closely identify with?
- Female
- Male
- Transgender Male
- Transgender Female
- Nonbinary
- Prefer not to say
- Other *[write-in]*

What is your major/occupation?
Short answer open response

What is your ethnicity?
- ❏ Asian
- ❏ Black/African
- ❏ White/Caucasian
- ❏ Hispanic/Latinx
- ❏ Native American
- ❏ Pacific Islander
- ❏ Prefer not to answer
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 3 of 41: Demographics

Which religious group do you most closely identify with?
- Catholicism (ex: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, etc.)
- Protestant, other forms of Christianity (ex: Evangelical, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc.)
- Judaism
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Sikhism
- Non-religious
- Other *[write-in]*

How important has the presence of religion in your upbringing been in forming the way you view the world?

	1	2	3	4	5	

Not at all important/impactful ——————————— Very important/impactful

How often do you attend religious services or ceremonies?
- Never (0 times per year)
- Occasionally (1 - 11 times per year)
- Sometimes (once per month)
- Often (once per week)
- Very often (more than once per week)

Section 4 of 41: Demographics

What political group do you most closely identify with?
- Left-leaning political group
- Centrist
- Right-leaning political group
- Apolitical
- Prefer not to say
- Other *[write-in]*

Are you registered to vote?
- Yes
- No

How central do you feel change is to the success of a country?

$$1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5 \quad 6 \quad 7 \quad 8 \quad 9 \quad 10$$

Not at all important _____ Very important

Section 5 of 41: Demographics

A previous question asked you to state your gender identity. With the following question, please indicate where you feel your gender expression (the way you dress, act, and otherwise display your gender) falls between "masculine" and "feminine".

Where would you say your gender identity/expression tends to fall on this scale, with 5 as "gender-neutral"?

$$1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5 \quad 6 \quad 7 \quad 8 \quad 9$$

Masculine _____ Feminine

Section 6 of 41: Demographics

Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?
Short answer open response

_____

Section 7 of 41: Demographics

Do you identify as a feminist? Why or why not?
Short answer open response

_____

Section 8 of 41: Demographics

What other group(s)/movements might you strongly identify with? (ex: Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, National Rifle Association)
Short answer open response

_____

Section 9 of 41: Game of Thrones

Are you familiar with *Game of Thrones* characters or plotlines?
  ● Yes *[those who indicated "yes" continued to Section 10]*
  ● No *[those who indicated "no" continued to Section 11]*

Section 10 of 41: Game of Thrones

Are you familiar with the book series (A Song of Ice and Fire), the HBO series, or Game of Thrones in popular culture (memes, articles, etcetera)? (Please check all that apply.)
- ❏ Book series
- ❏ HBO television series
- ❏ Popular culture

What is the latest season you have seen episodes from?
- ● I have not seen the show
- ● Season 1
- ● Season 2
- ● Season 3
- ● Season 4
- ● Season 5
- ● Season 6
- ● Season 7
- ● Season 8

Which character is your favorite?
Short answer open response

Which character do you identify the most with?
Short answer open response

Section 11 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

For the following section, you will be shown pictures of different characters from Game of Thrones. Please select all adjectives that you feel may be applicable to the character. If you have a strong feeling that a character can be associated with a particular trait that is not listed, please describe it in the "other" column, as well as selecting any other applicable traits.

Section 12 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Sansa Stark]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 13 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Varys]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 14 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Myrcella Baratheon]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 15 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Ramsay Bolton]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 16 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Gilly]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 17 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Samwell Tarly]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 18 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Arya Stark]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 19 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Petyr "Littlefinger" Baelish]*? (Select all that apply.)

- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 20 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Brienne of Tarth]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 21 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Davos Seaworth]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 22 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Daenerys Targaryen]*? (Select all that apply.)

- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 23 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters

What traits would you ascribe to the character above *[Tormund]*? (Select all that apply.)
- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 24 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters, Continued

For the following section, you will be shown pictures of two different characters from Game of Thrones. Please select the character you had/have a more positive INITIAL response to. If you are familiar with these characters, please select the character you preferred when you were first introduced to them, regardless of your feelings about them now. Please indicate a preference, whether it be strong or slight.

Section 25 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters, Continued

Brienne of Tarth   Jaime Lannister

Please indicate which character you had a more positive initial response to.
- Brienne of Tarth
- Jaime Lannister

Section 26 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters, Continued
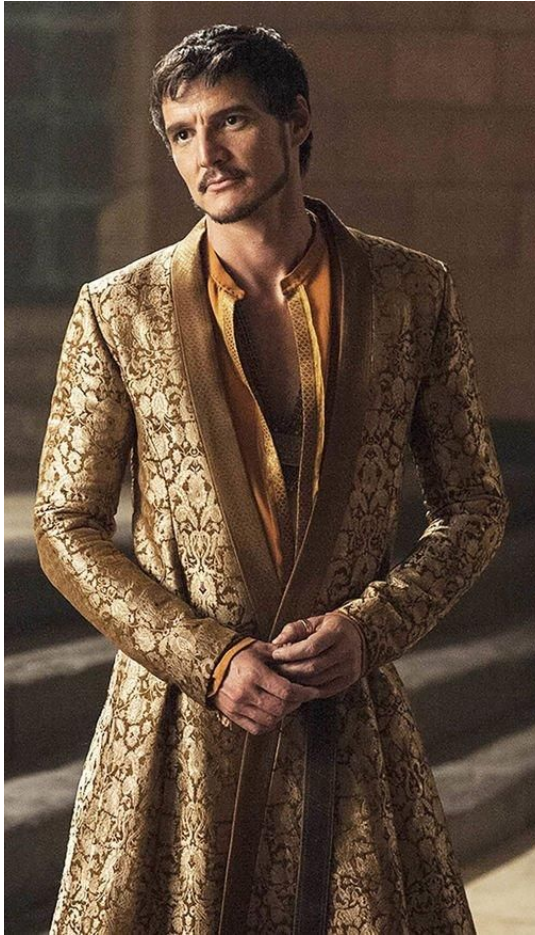
Oberyn Martell   Jorah Mormont

Please indicate which character you had a more positive initial response to.
- Oberyn Martell
- Jorah Mormont

Section 27 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters, Continued

Arya Stark   Sansa Stark

Please indicate which character you had a more positive initial response to.
- Arya Stark
- Sansa Stark

Section 28 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters, Continued

Bronn of the Blackwater   Yara Greyjoy

Please indicate which character you had a more positive initial response to.
- Bronn of the Blackwater
- Yara Greyjoy

Section 29 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters, Continued

Stannis Baratheon

Renly Baratheon

Please indicate which character you had a more positive initial response to.
- Stannis Baratheon
- Renly Baratheon

Section 30 of 41: Game of Thrones Characters, Continued

Margaery Tyrell

Tyene Sand

Please indicate which character you had a more positive initial response to.
- Margaery Tyrell
- Tyene Sand

Section 31 of 41: Personal Experiences

Of these options, which three are most important to you when considering a job or internship opportunity?
- ❏ Being able to make my own decisions
- ❏ Gaining new knowledge and/or skills
- ❏ Overall ease of job
- ❏ Experiencing excitement with job
- ❏ Helping other people
- ❏ Having time for my own interests/hobbies
- ❏ Making and inventing new things
- ❏ Earning money
- ❏ Feeling secure
- ❏ Having time for friends and family
- ❏ Being able to utilize my talents
- ❏ Working with people rather than things

Section 32 of 41: Personal Experiences

How do you contribute to your household?
- ❏ Cooking meals
- ❏ Housecleaning (vacuuming, dusting, etcetera)
- ❏ Laundry/Ironing
- ❏ Repairs (plumbing, carpentry, etcetera)
- ❏ Outdoor care (mowing)
- ❏ Garden care
- ❏ Paperwork (bills/financial accounting)
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

Section 33 of 41: Personal Experiences

The options presented in the following question are not all of the ways a person experiencing a stressful situation can react. Please choose the option you feel fits you the best.

When confronted with a stressful situation, what are you most likely to do/how are you most likely to feel?
- I am likely to seek physical affection (hugs, kisses, etc.)
- I am likely to become moody or grumpy
- I am likely to try to hide my stress from others
- I am likely to try to care for others
- I am likely to partake in alternate activities in order to distract myself
- I am likely to try to resolve the stressful situation calmly and rationally
- I am likely to turn to friends for support

Section 34 of 41: Personal Experiences

Please briefly describe a recent experience where you feel you overreacted in an academic or professional context:
Short answer open response

Section 35 of 41: Personal Experiences

Please briefly describe a recent experience where you took care of a person, animal, or other living thing:
Short answer open response

Section 36 of 41: Personal Experiences

Please briefly describe an experience where you feel you were discouraged from pursuing something you were interested in (an extracurricular activity, a field of study, a job):
Short answer open response

Section 37 of 41: Personal Experiences

Do you feel that people in your life are generally encouraging of you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Generally very discouraging _____ Generally very encouraging

Section 38 of 41: Focus Group

Would you be interested in participating in a focus group for this project?
- Yes *[those who indicated "yes" continued to Section 39]*
- No *[those who indicated "no" continued to Section 40]*

Section 39 of 41: Focus Group

Please provide an email or phone number where you can best be reached:
Short answer open response

Those who completed this section continued to Section 41.

Section 40 of 41: Additional Personal Questions

Please provide an email or phone number where you can best be reached:
Short answer open response

(Section 40 of 41: Additional Personal Questions, cont'd.)

Which of the following characteristics do you most strongly identify with? (Please select all that apply.)

- ❏ Understanding
- ❏ Analytical
- ❏ Self-Assured
- ❏ Conventional
- ❏ Warm
- ❏ Aggressive
- ❏ Gentle
- ❏ Secretive
- ❏ Parental
- ❏ Loyal
- ❏ Unpredictable
- ❏ Practical
- ❏ Athletic
- ❏ Other *[write-in]*

What aspects of your own personal identity do you feel influence your perceptions of television characters?
Short answer open response

Do you feel that you, personally, are more likely to have a positive or negative reaction to a character who deviates from traditional gender norms?
Short answer open response

Do you feel that asking directly about gender would alter your perceptions of *Game of Thrones* characters?
Short answer open response

Section 40 of 41
Thank you for your participation!

X.II. Focus Group Script

Please note that anything written within the italicized brackets are my own notes, not meant to be shared with participants.

Hello! My name is Alexis Telyczka, and I will be moderating and recording this focus group for my senior thesis.

Your individual identities will be held anonymous, even from the NJIT faculty members who are overseeing this research. I will only refer to you in my thesis by pseudonyms, and I will not use quotations from the survey or this focus group which could identify you personally.

Before we begin, I will ask you to sign a consent form so I can record this session. The recording will be used privately for this research project, will not be shown to anyone outside of the research project, will be kept secured, and the recording will be destroyed once the project is completed. If you have any questions, please ask them after we've gone over the consent form together.

[Distribute and read consent form aloud.]

Are there any questions?

[Allow time for questions.]

You may stop participating at any time during this focus group. Additionally, if you are uncomfortable with a question, please feel free to say "skip," or to tell me you are uncomfortable and do not wish to reply. You won't be penalized, and it is absolutely fine.

As you all filled out the survey, you know that I'm studying people's reactions to *Game of Thrones* characters.

I'm going to show you a couple of clips from the show, and we're going to discuss them. This is not a test, so there is no way to have a right or wrong answer or response. You won't be

penalized and you won't be wrong just for stating your opinion. Before we start, does anyone have any questions?

[Allow time for questions.]

I will ask that you please allow each person around the table to answer individually. Please do not comment on each other's responses until everyone has gotten the chance to respond to the prompt. It is fine to consider how your opinion may be different or similar to someone else's, but please make your statement about your own perspective. After everyone goes around the table once, we can open it up for you to respond to each other, so you can ask questions about each others' interpretations. This will help me to see what aspects of the discussion are most interesting or important to you all. Please do not direct questions at individuals— instead, please try to pose them as questions or statements said to the group as a whole or to me, the moderator.

Finally, I ask that you all be respectful. Please try not to interrupt each other or speak over each other, and everyone's opinion is equally valid in this space. Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

[Allow time for questions]

Here is a clip from season 1, episode 2, *[3 minutes long]* showing Robert Baratheon and Ned Stark: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEB5t1qRdmY *[The characters talk about having sexual relationships with women during wartime. They also speak about Daenerys Targaryen getting married.]*

- Which one of these characters do you have a more positive response to?
  - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
  - What aspect of this interaction do you think is most indicative of one of these characters' "essences"— who they are as a person, overall?

- What differences do you see in the way Robert and Ned speak about women?

Here is a clip from season 3, episode 2, *[3 minutes long]* showing Catelyn Stark and Talisa: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdD1p_MlzH0 *[The characters talk about how Catelyn hated Jon Snow, her husband's illegitimate child, and wished him dead.]*

- Which one of these characters do you have a more positive response to?
    - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
    - What aspect of this interaction do you think is most indicative of one of these characters' "essences"— who they are as a person, overall?
- Do you get a sense that Catelyn is a good wife?
- Do you get a sense that she is a good mother?
- What characteristics of motherhood or womanhood do you think the show presents here as normative?

Here is a clip from season 3, episode 7 *[5 minutes long]*, showing Margaery Tyrell and Sansa Stark: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=va2OJK-j-VE *[The characters speak about Sansa's upcoming marriage to Tyrion Lannister, a man much older than her and who is a member of the Lannnister family, who are essentially keeping Sansa hostage. Margaery tries in this scene to comfort her.]*

- Which one of these characters do you have a more positive response to?
    - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
- Do you recognize one of these characters as acting more like a woman? *[Sansa's innocence, youth, and virginity versus Margaery's maturity and implied sexual experience]*
    - Why might that be?
- What do you think of what Margaery tells Sansa about men?
    - Do you think she's right?

Here is a clip from season 4, episode 1, *[3 minutes long]* showing Bronn, Tyrion Lannister, and Podrick Payne: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzqRWHxPhho *[The three men wait for the Martells, a powerful family from another part of the country. Tyrion tries his hand at diplomacy.]*

- Which one of these characters do you have a more positive response to?
    - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
- Do you recognize one of these characters as acting more like a man?
    - Why might that be?

Here is a clip from season 4, episode 2, *[2 minutes long]* showing Margaery Tyrell, Cersei Lannister, and Brienne of Tarth: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aj9mYwmlmFU *[Cersei is rude to Brienne during a wedding because of Brienne's personal loyalty to Cersei's brother.]*

- Which one of these characters do you have a more positive response to?
    - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
- What do you think of Cersei's interaction with Brienne?
    - Is she making fun of her?
- Would you expect Brienne to pursue a romantic relationship with Jaime?

Here is a clip from season 4, episode 10, *[3 minutes long]* showing Cersei Lannister and Tywin Lannister: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay_t-WLlXik *[Father and daughter argue about her place in their family— he wants her to marry to continue the family legacy, and she does not want to. Clip needs to stop at "I will burn our house to the ground before I let that happen"— right before they discuss the legitimacy of Cersei's living children.]*

- Which one of these characters do you have a more positive response to?
    - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
- Based on this scene, how much power do you think Cersei has over her life?

Here is a clip from season 4, episode 10 *[3 minutes long]*, showing Brienne of Tarth, Arya Stark, the Hound, and Podrick: *[Brienne first meets Arya.]*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3XOgfnKbKc

- Which one of these characters do you have a more positive response to?
    - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
- Which of these characters do you think you identify with more?
- What is a trait they might have that you might identify with?
- What do you think of their aesthetics/the way they all look?

Here is a clip from season 7, episode 5, *[5 minutes long]* showing Daenerys Targaryen, Tyrion Lannister, and Dickon and Randall Tarly:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHj45r8vl9Q *[Dickon and Randyll refuse to acknowledge Daenerys as their leader; she has them burned alive after Tyrion fails to dissuade her.]*

- Do you have a positive response to Daenerys in this scene?
- Do you have a positive response to Tyrion in this scene?
    - Do you have a sense of why that might be?
- Do you prefer Tyrion's approach or Daenerys' approach to the Tarlys?

What was your favorite character of all the ones you saw?

Did you see any differences in the ways the male and female characters were portrayed?

Did you see any similarities in the ways the male and female characters were portrayed?

In essence, this project was developed as a way to understand this research question: "Is an individual more likely to have a positive or negative reaction towards a character that deviates from gender norms or embodies/adheres to these norms?"

Regarding this question, then, do you think your gender identity or performance affects your perception of these characters?

Are you more likely to have a positive reaction towards people who look like you or act like you, with regards to gender, specifically?

I'd like to have an open discussion now— about the scenes, about your perception of gender, perceptions of *Game of Thrones,* perceptions of *Game of Thrones* and gender, together; anything you'd like to discuss with me or each other, let's take a moment to discuss that right now.

[Allow time for open discussion.]

Thank you all for coming! I really appreciate you taking the time to participate in this. If you have any more questions, you can ask me now, or you are welcome to send me an email at a later time.

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