

# RhetTech Journal



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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The *RhetTech* staff is elated to present you with the 6th volume of our undergraduate journal. We are JMU students who dive hands-on into the practice of editing and design. *RhetTech*, a student-led journal, advised by Professor Anna Maria Johnson, spotlights the creative prowess of undergraduate individuals across various academic disciplines. In the past two semesters, we have curated and designed a showcase for these diverse creative works, all centered around the theme of “Emerging Trends in Rhetoric and Technical Communication.”

We chose this year’s theme to reflect the ever-evolving landscape of rhetoric in academia and the shifting advancements in AI technology and communication. The accepted works range in topics, from exploring AI as a tool for research to identifying the nuance of modern language and universal design.

We have spent the last eight months pouring our time and love into this edition, working tirelessly throughout the fall and spring semesters. Our team has reviewed a wide array of work and has compiled six pieces from authors located across the United States. To all of the authors who submitted your work to us, we cannot thank you enough for the effort and passion you put into your pieces. Thank you to our editors and designers; your dedication has not gone unrecognized. And to our readers, we hope you enjoy this volume of *RhetTech* as much as we enjoyed creating it.

Sincerely,  
The *RhetTech* Undergraduate Staff



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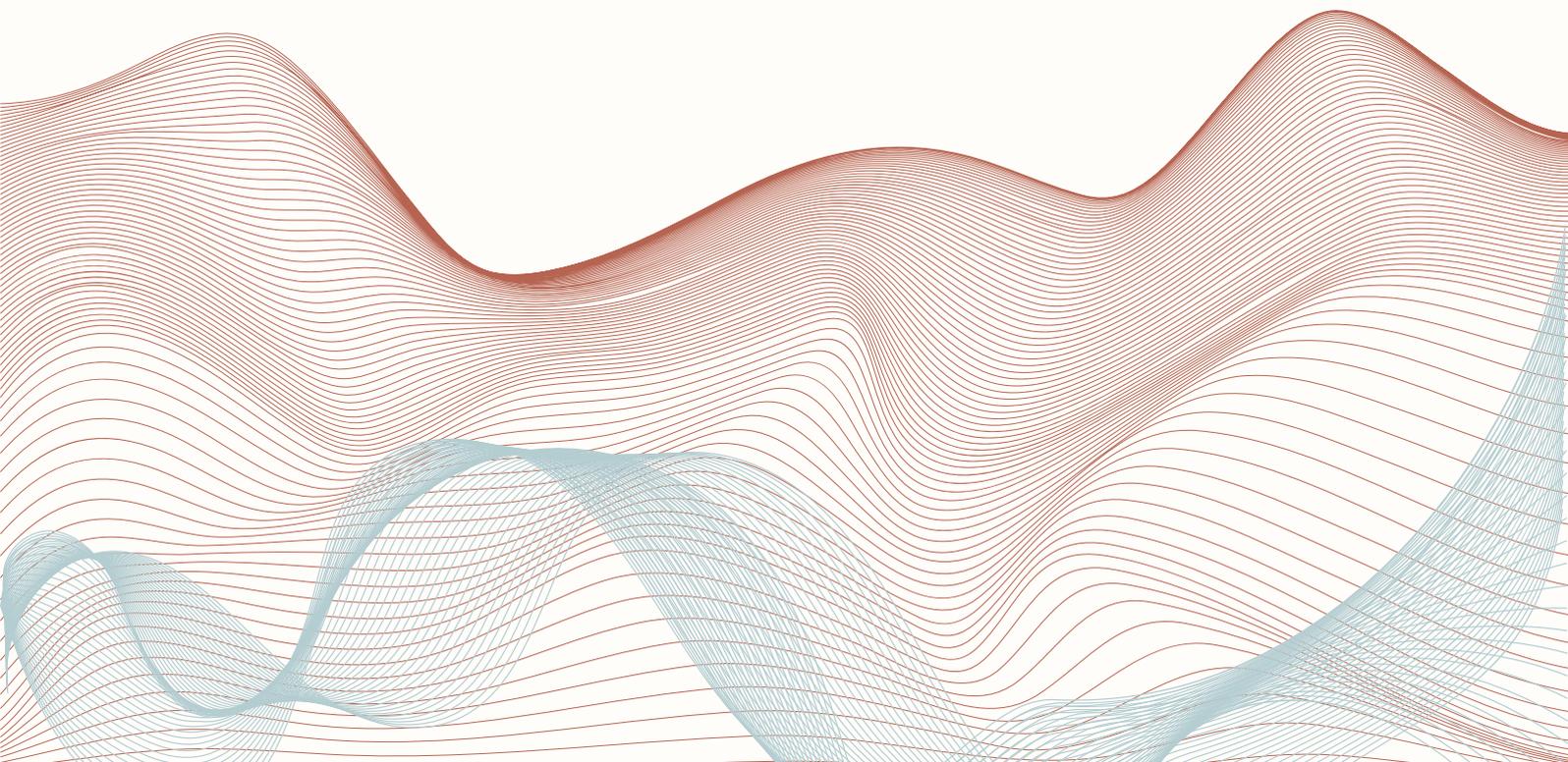
**FACING MY OWN  
MISOGYNY:**

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF  
PERSONAL ESSAYS ON THE  
SUBREDDIT R/EXREDPILL

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**TRIGGER WARNING:** mentions of self-harm and suicide/suicidal  
ideations, sexism/misogyny



## Introduction

Although misogyny has existed for centuries, the internet has enabled its spread into new contexts and communities. Most digitized misogyny is housed under the “manosphere,” a collection of digital subgroups known for anti-feminist and traditional masculine ideologies (Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022). Influencers like Andrew Tate (Lawson, 2022) and Jordan Peterson (Han & Yin, 2022) have brought the manosphere into the public sphere alongside the growing popularity of incelism and the Red Pill (TRP) (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019). The internet has globalized TRP ideology, but most members are young white men from the United States (Scotto di Carlo, 2022; O’Malley et al., 2020). The manosphere is united by an ideology known as the Red Pill (TRP), which takes inspiration from *The Matrix*, where “taking the red pill” provides the ability to see the world as it really is (Han & Yin, 2022); TRP has adopted this as their ideology, but rather than seeing through a simulation, “Red Pillers” see how feminism has ruined society and women (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Online, “taking the red pill” is synonymous with being initiated into potentially radical misogyny (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019; Han & Yin, 2022) via extensive misogynistic, nihilistic, and violent rhetoric. While most of TRP is nonviolent, TRP’s consequences can be observed with the notable increase in misogyny-based violence, where men, such as Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian, commit violent acts in the name of anti-feminist and incel ideology (Baele et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2020).

Progression into anti-feminist ideology can be rapid and all-encompassing (Thomas & Balint, 2022), making it more difficult for believers to disengage from these communities. While there are online resources that disprove manosphere ideology, they may not be widely accessible or deemed trustworthy, meaning that there are few ways to escape this ideology. Additionally, oppositional narratives and information that outright disproves and argues against manosphere ideology may not be taken seriously by manosphere members (Thorburn, 2023a). However, there is a growing number of online communities remedying this gap. Subreddits like *r/IncelExit* and *r/ExRedPill* provide resources and emotional support for people trying to unlearn the Red Pill ideology. In particular, personal essays posted on *r/ExRedPill* enable community members to share their stories and get help from other former and questioning Red Pillers. Despite the need for rehabilitation and disengagement resources, research regarding such efforts is scarce. To date, Joshua Thorburn (2023a; 2023b) is the only individual to study *r/ExRedPill*, and while others have studied similar communities like *r/IncelExit* (Gheorghe & Clement, 2023; Davis & Kettrey, 2024), there is still much work to be done to address rehabilitation efforts from TRP and online misogyny. This study examines the content of personal essays on *r/ExRedPill* and what role they may play in the authors’ healing process. I pull from sociology, media studies, and feminist research on the manosphere and

behavioral studies of self-help groups to frame my analysis of r/ExRedPill essays as a means of community engagement and disengagement from TRP.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The Red Pill***

Most of TRP's ideology pertains to relationships — particularly heterosexual ones. TRP's content is concerned with two ideas: anti-feminism and self-improvement. In TRP's eyes, feminism has ruined society and modern-day women, making the ideology both anti-feminist and anti-women (Ging, 2019; Mountford, 2018). TRP often pulls from pseudo-evolutionary psychology, claiming women are evolutionarily prone to promiscuity and sexual selectivity (Ging, 2019; Krendel, 2020). These warped perceptions are typically paired with objectification and dehumanization of women (Scotto di Carlo, 2022; Van Valkenburgh, 2018). However, amidst their near-constant degradation, TRP still sees women as powerful. The group believes that feminism has given women too much power, and men are suffering because of it. Preston and colleagues explain, "It is not a problem that women are objects, the problem is that they have become overpriced" (2021, p. 835). The unjust female power that TRP refers to tends to manifest in the "sexual marketplace," which is the manosphere's explanation for who has power in the dating scene (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). According to TRP, the proper dynamic in this marketplace places strong, dominant men at the top, meaning they have the most control, dating success, and decision-making capabilities. However, TRP argues that feminism has turned the sexual marketplace on its head and women are now the ones making the decisions, placing men at the mercy of women (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). This supposed male oppression legitimizes male aggression and violence against women and facilitates the spread of anti-women rhetoric (O'Malley et al., 2020; Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

Since TRP considers women to be unfairly authoritative, much of TRP content addresses ways for men to improve themselves (Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022), and in doing so, takes power away from feminist women (Van Valkenburgh, 2018). This self-improvement includes working out, dieting, and becoming emotionally distant (Lawson, 2022; Mountford, 2018; Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022) to become more dateable. TRP is not interested in correcting social issues resulting from feminism but rather in giving men strategies to overcome them (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019; O'Malley et al., 2020). These goals focus on becoming an alpha male or a Chad: a sexually desirable, physically attractive, and financially successful man (Scotto di Carlo, 2022; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). A contrasting, undesirable status is a beta male: a weak, emasculated man who overly supports women and is more likely to get cheated on (Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022; Preston et al., 2021). These subordinate men are often ridiculed, being called anything from "soyboys" and "manginas" to

“cucks,” referring to the likelihood of their partner cheating (Jones et al., 2020, p. 1916). Alpha males are at the top of the social hierarchy and, therefore, have more success in the sexual marketplace (Marwick & Lewis, 2017), meaning that alpha status is something that most of TRP aims to achieve, whereas beta status is vilified and avoided at all costs (Baele et al., 2019). TRP’s self-improvement guides men towards becoming alpha males or, at a minimum, a more attractive version of themselves. Most of TRP believes that alpha male status can be worked towards and achieved (Han & Yin, 2022; Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022), but there is some disagreement between different manosphere subgroups.

The manosphere began as the Men’s Rights Movement, which was a response to 1970s feminist movements and argued that sexism and gender roles harm both men and women (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). It has since shifted to largely digital content housed in different subgroups (Farrell et al., 2020; Han & Yin, 2022), with TRP being both a subgroup and the unifying ideology of the manosphere (Ging, 2019). Other manosphere subgroups include Men’s Rights Activists who aim to restore high status to heterosexual men (Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Scotto di Carlo, 2022); Pick-Up Artists, who see relationships as sexual conquest (Han & Yin, 2022; Scotto di Carlo, 2022); and Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), masculinist separatists that abstain from relationships with women altogether (Jones et al., 2020; Krendel, 2020). TRP content seeps into all of these communities as it addresses the primary concepts of the manosphere: self-improvement, relationship dynamics, and anti-feminism (Ging, 2019; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Thus, each of these communities — including TRP itself — is part of the greater manosphere, which is united by the Red Pill ideology. TRP is both a distinct subgroup and an overarching ideology within the manosphere, but most manosphere community members refer to the ideology rather than the specific community when discussing TRP.

A direct offshoot of TRP is the Black Pill, a nihilistic version of the Red Pill ideology (Preston et al., 2020; Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022). Members of the Black Pill are more commonly known as incels rather than “Black Pillers,” but members may self-identify by either term (Preston et al., 2020). Incel, short for “involuntarily celibate,” is a self-deprecative identity for men frustrated with their lack of romantic, sexual, or platonic relations (Ging, 2019; Preston et al., 2020). Incels are at the bottom of the sexual hierarchy; they rank below beta and alpha males due to a severe lack of success with women (Glance et al., 2021; Preston et al., 2021). However, incels are not concerned with self-improvement — largely because they see it as an unattainable standard given their status in relation to other men (Preston et al., 2021; Thorburn et al., 2023). Black Pillers also believe that feminism has ruined society beyond recovery, which means they have no hope of overcoming women’s present equal status in

society (Baele et al., 2019). Baele and colleagues explain, “Where the ‘red pill’ keeps category boundaries permeable and permits hope, the ‘black pill’ closes them and only produces nihilistic despair” (2019, p. 1675). While most incels are nonviolent, incel-based violence is increasing — examples of this include the cases of Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian, both of whom cited failed relationships with women as the motivation behind their deadly attacks (Baele et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2020). Though Rodger and Minassian are extreme examples, the continued glorification of these men (Baele et al., 2019) shows that manosphere-based violence is not only accepted but praised.

Most TRP ideology is disseminated within digital communities over social media platforms (Han & Yin, 2022; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). These sub-groups foster a sense of camaraderie while sharing a common enemy: feminism (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019). Given the reported feelings of isolation amongst its members — often caused by a lack of relationships, friends, or social skills — subgroups like TRP are often based on a rejection of social norms (O’Malley et al., 2020; Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022). These manosphere groups offer a sense of community that their members lack in other spaces because they address concerns about masculine gender performance and sexuality that would otherwise be dismissed (Thorburn et al., 2023). Community membership is not only dependent on agreeing with their ideology but also on meeting the standards and practices set for its members. Farrell and colleagues (2020) argue that manosphere jargon is a means of separating the ideology — and, by extension, its members — from mainstream society, as only “in-members” can understand the language. TRP uses jargon to describe their concepts, teachings, and community member ranks; and, the proper use of these terms illustrates and facilitates a sense of belonging within the subgroup and greater manosphere discourse. While community-based jargon is not unique to the internet or Reddit, it spreads more rapidly within these sub-groups where members share similar interests and backgrounds (McCulloch, 2019). This suggests that newcomers to TRP quickly grasp the language because of their identification with other TRP members. It is nearly impossible for audiences to engage with and begin to adopt TRP ideology without internalizing its harmful values, which perpetuates this networked harassment (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). Even though TRP often calls for violence towards women, most engagement with the manosphere encourages passive harassment and anti-women ideology as opposed to threats that are actually acted on (Jones et al., 2020). This rhetoric legitimizes and normalizes violence against women regardless of the author’s true intentions (O’Malley et al., 2020).

Red Pillers do not become misogynists overnight; rather, engagement and identification with manosphere content are gradual (O’Malley et al., 2020). People are

introduced to this content because it is pushed by social media algorithms (Thomas & Balint, 2022) but also because they are desperate for advice on how to be happy in a world that they believe does not care about young white men. Manosphere influencers like Andrew Tate (Lawson, 2022), Roosh Valizadeh (Marwick & Lewis, 2017), and Jordan Peterson (Han & Yin, 2022) have made TRP mainstream by presenting their philosophy and advice as ways to make sense of and succeed in an uncertain world. TRP is a reaction to societal shifts and is often the only answer these disenfranchised men can find. Jugl (2022) explains that uncertainties and ambiguities may draw people to extreme views due to their craving for structure and black-and-white explanations. Not only does TRP offer explanations for men's struggles, but it also offers simple and seemingly concrete solutions.

### ***Unlearning via Support Groups***

Red Pill ideology is harmful, but that does not mean it cannot be unlearned. There is a severe lack of literature surrounding disengagement from the manosphere despite the growing body of literature surrounding the development and influence of the greater manosphere. Thorburn has been the first to address TRP rehabilitation and deradicalization. His work (Thorburn, 2023a; Thorburn, 2023b) classifies r/IncelExit and r/ExRedPill as communities aiming to help members overcome manosphere ideology. He argues these communities, "promisingly demonstrate that some individuals appear to be able to move past these misogynistic belief systems" (Thorburn, 2023b, p. 2). Both r/ExRedPill and r/IncelExit are potential avenues for manosphere rehabilitation, though they differ slightly in focus, with r/IncelExit being aimed at incels; whereas, r/ExRedPill is a community for anyone in the manosphere (Gheorghe & Clement, 2023). Participation in these communities encourages introspection in addition to simply offering counternarratives to TRP content, making these subreddits important spaces that support unlearning to at least some degree. However, Davis and Kettrey (2024) argue that even if these exit spaces are separate from the greater manosphere, these communities still keep members connected to manosphere ideology, which raises concerns about whether true unlearning and rehabilitation are possible within these communities. Regardless, communities like r/ExRedPill and r/IncelExit illustrate an important shift as former Red Pillers use community engagement to aid others and their own rehabilitation.

Although limited scholarship addresses disengagement from TRP and the manosphere, there is established literature regarding extremism deradicalization. Most Red Pillers are not radicalized, extremist misogynists, but their gradual indoctrination into hatred is similar (O'Malley et al., 2020), meaning the unlearning processes may also overlap. Even if every member of TRP is not radicalized, Baele and colleagues (2019) explain that the worldview this ideology constructs reflects

that of extremist groups — namely the overemphasis on impenetrable groups and the consequential “us versus them” mentality. Additionally, TRP certainly has the potential to radicalize its members, given the several cases of incel-based violence (Jones et al., 2020; Baele et al., 2019). Research about terrorist groups (Bjørge, 2011; Jugl, 2022) and white supremacists (Bubolz & Simi, 2015) has explored the possibility of deradicalization from hate groups. Bubolz and Simi (2015) define deradicalization as a change in values, which takes more cognitive work than mere disengagement. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to deradicalization and disengagement from hate-based groups (Bjørge, 2011), but self-help groups may provide a path toward unlearning hate, particularly for less radical beliefs.

Self-help groups are a popular resource for many topics and recovery methods. Powell (1975) defines these groups as voluntary “organization[s] of individuals who are personally affected by a distressing psychological or social condition” (p. 757). These groups are built around shared experiences (Powell, 1975), and their goals can range anywhere from total recovery to temporary support (Adair & Luna-Rose, 2022; Smith-Merry et al., 2019). Group members connect with and learn from each other, and this exchange of knowledge and experience enables self-directed learning, in which people take individual, directive actions to understand and act on something (Herod & Kop, 2017; Smith-Merry et al., 2019). Support groups offer a space for collaborative reflection where members learn from collective and individual experiences, which should lead to new perspectives and behavioral changes (Gold et al., 2015). Gold and colleagues (2015) studied the effectiveness of a self-help group on empowerment and perspective shifts among male batterers. These men made positive changes because they were socially accepted rather than rejected (Gold et al., 2015). Although manosphere-exiting research is still in its infancy, these analogous cases show that hateful ideology can be unlearned, and self-help groups may be a viable method for doing so. The articles written by Thorburn (2023b) and Gheorghe and Clement (2023) echo Gold and colleagues’ (2015) sentiment that community members in r/ExRedPill and r/IncelExit are effective at encouraging and supporting new members. Former right-wing extremists expressed a similar idea, in which intervention from “formers” would have been seen as more credible and, therefore, more successful in actually intervening in individuals’ radicalization (Scrivens et al., 2019, pp. 671-674). Self-help groups also foster a positive social space that many participants may not have otherwise, particularly when there is little support from friends and family (Chung, 2013). Extremism relies on othering groups from each other (Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Scrivens et al., 2019), but having a positive social space made up of members that one identifies with could prove beneficial for disengagement and deradicalization from hateful ideology like TRP.

Recently, online self-help groups have become a popular alternative to in-person ones. Online forums provide instant, asynchronous access to community support that members could not access otherwise (Herod & Kop, 2017). People who seek support are often socially isolated, and online groups provide easy and constant access to a community with similar experiences (Chung, 2013; Smith-Merry et al., 2019). Chung (2013) found that online self-help groups were preferred over in-person ones. The anonymity of online groups also fosters a non-judgemental safe space with fewer repercussions than in-person interactions (Herod & Kop, 2017; Smith-Merry et al., 2019). Thus, online support groups may be particularly useful for those who are isolated or have issues communicating offline (Adair & Luna-Rose, 2022). Digital deradicalization sources can be tailored to individual needs (Jugl, 2022), making these support groups potentially more engaging, as there is not a forced one-size-fits-all approach.

On and offline, sharing personal stories is essential in self-help groups. Since these groups are built on shared experiences, group members can learn from each other through personal narratives (Gold et al., 2015). However, these personal narratives also perform identity work. As Cain posits in her explanation of learning within Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), “Stories do not just describe a life in a learned genre, but are tools for reinterpreting the past, and understanding the self in terms of the AA identity. The initiate begins to identify with AA members, ... and to reinterpret her life as evidence” (qtd. in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 84). Sharing and engaging with others’ narratives helps frame group discussions and learning so they can change their identity and behavior rather than continuing to use destructive strategies and ideas (Gold et al., 2015; Smith-Merry et al., 2019). Participants no longer need to feel defined by their pain. Instead, they can find identity in their community membership and camaraderie (Powell, 1975). While self-help groups are not the only solution or resource, they heal by giving members a place to belong amongst people with similar experiences.

### **Present Study**

The present study explores the Reddit-based self-help group r/ExRedPill, which describes itself as being “for former redpillers and others who recognize the damage caused by redpill” (*Former Red Pillers*, n.d.). Thorburn (2023a) explains that r/ExRedPill could provide important firsthand insights into TRP and the harm it can cause, making this community all the more important to study. This subreddit was founded in May 2014 and as of October 2023, has over 22,000 members. While it is impossible to know definitive information about all subreddit members, r/ExRedPill appears to be made up of former Red Pillers, questioning manosphere members, outsiders aiming to provide advice, trolls, and critics of the manosphere who have no clear

connection to the group (Thorburn, 2023b). Members of r/ExRedPill are not required to post, so members trying to disengage from TRP typically post to garner support, input, or advice from fellow community members. Like many online support groups, people can share as much or as little as they are comfortable with, and Reddit's inherently anonymous structure makes this privacy almost effortless. Users may gain a reputation or familiarity with each other, but any identifiable information about their offline identities is protected unless they choose to share it. Anyone can post and share their story, no matter how new they are to TRP or r/ExRedPill. While these posts are made within a specific community, r/ExRedPill is public, meaning anyone could read these stories, regardless of whether they are an actual community member.

This content analysis focuses on the personal essays on r/ExRedPill. In a personal essay, community members detail their experiences with TRP and its adverse effects. The genre allows authors to externalize their struggles and communicate with people who have similar experiences. Thorburn's (2023b) study is the only other investigation of r/Ex= posts and focuses on all kinds of posts, not just personal narratives. I opted to focus on these personal narratives as a genre within r/ExRedPill, given their detail and narrative aspects that provide greater insight into individual recovery processes than more discussion-based content on the subreddit. Based on textual analysis of these essays and research on adjacent online self-help groups and testimonials, this study examines how this writing possibly facilitates unlearning TRP ideology.

## **Method**

### ***Participants and Text Selection***

The sample r/ExRedPill texts were collected from September 30, 2022 to December 23, 2022, with sample text publishing dates ranging from September 11, 2022 to December 23, 2022. I focused on posts I found on the "Hot" page, which included the most recent posts with the most upvotes, because more recent posts provide a better sense of what communication is currently happening in the subreddit. I did not post or comment on the subreddit during the sample selection period, but rather regularly checked r/ExRedPill for new posts that met my sample requirements. There are many types of posts on r/ExRedPill, but personal essays were often titled with short statements referring to TRP's adverse effects, such as "RP messed me up..." and "Trying to detox from redpill ideology." I defined a personal essay as an individual post that is longer than one paragraph; about the author rather than a friend, sibling, or partner; indicative of the author's extended involvement with TRP; and narratively written. Following Fisher's (1984) explanation of the narrative paradigm, a narrative post had to describe at least two events, organize said events in some way, have a

relationship between the events, and contain a unified subject. I also chose to exclude examples written by women who identified with TRP ideology. While there are women who belong to TRP (Jarvis & Eddington, 2020), they often have different experiences with and perceptions of the group. So, I decided to only select posts written by individuals presenting as men. There were also no essays composed by women that met my selection criteria during the data collection period.

The 13 selected texts can be found in the **appendix**, where they are copied with my coding scheme in bold and brackets. These posts varied from 289 to 1134 words long with an average length of 600 words. The body text and title have been recorded, but I chose not to link the original posts to maintain author privacy and preserve the text, should the post or user be deleted. Although Thorburn (2023b) opted to alter his sampled texts to protect user anonymity via the prevention of reverse search-ability, I maintained the text's original structure, diction, and grammar. As such, all grammatical or spelling errors in the **appendix** and quotations reflect the original text. Since I focused on the content of these narratives, I did not want to risk altering the authors' tone and meaning by paraphrasing the content. Maintaining the authors' safety and privacy is of the utmost importance, but given this study's emphasis on the original structure and diction, it was necessary to preserve the original text to have a more concrete understanding of the content housed in these narratives.

### ***Qualitative Analyses***

When beginning this project, I collaborated with one of my classmates to ensure validity in the coding. We worked with the same data set and compared our codes. We began with a rough list of patterns, such as misogyny, self-esteem, and connection to TRP. But we did not limit ourselves to those codes. Rather, we used open coding, enabling the creation and revision of codes as we worked. We first coded each text individually, then read through the text together and compared our codes. Each grammatically independent clause or thought that seemed to be functioning as a separate idea was coded individually. Some clauses were assigned multiple codes, which were separated with a slash. For example, this excerpt was coded as follows:

If my 13-19 year old self saw me say that, he'd most likely try to hit me with a brick **[SE/F]**. I may be alone with this one but for a long, long time **[SE]**. I did not see woman as people **[M]**. Just pussy **[M]**. Something you text sometimes when you're bored **[M]** and play off when you don't feel like dealing with them **[M]**. (Ex. 5)

Then we compared our classifications and discussed the addition or refinement of codes. We repeated this individually, then comparatively coded for each sample text meaning that our coding scheme continued to evolve throughout the entire coding process. Since we added new codes based on patterns that became more obvious in later texts, we often doubled back to texts we had already coded to revise some classifications.

After finalizing our set of codes and their definitions, we coded each text again individually to maintain reliability and to account for code usage and definition shifts. This ensured that we were applying the same coding process to all texts, and any variation was due to our interpretations rather than the coding scheme. When there was any variation, we discussed the rationale for our classification and decided how it should be coded together. After discussing variations, we read through each text again to ensure we agreed on each code application. The codes fell into five categories: Introspection, Discussing the Red Pill, Commentary on Women, Narrative Information, and Positivity. The full coded texts can be found in the **appendix**. Table 1 outlines the codes, definitions, frequencies, and examples from the data set.

[See Table 1.](#)

## Findings

### *Introspection*

Self-evaluation (14.2%) is the most frequent practice in these essays. While it encompasses a wide range of behaviors, its primary function is to facilitate personal reflection. The authors frequently evaluate their personality traits, beliefs, and behaviors through self-critique. They are often very critical, which may indicate the continued harm of TRP or the initial motivation for seeking it out:

I think if you are the strongest version of yourself you're datable **[SE]**. The problem is I haven't been anywhere near my strongest and best self for years **[SE/D]** (Ex. 4).

The only reason I wasn't a total asshole **[SE]** or like your stereotypical alpha male grindset guy **[SE/CRP]** was the mere fact that I am very open minded (hopefully **[SE]**) and non-judgemental **[SE]** (Ex. 7).

These critiques address the author's personal traits and values, many of which have been 'tainted' by TRP. Some authors are complimentary of themselves, but most of the self-evaluation instances are negative. Not all of these self-evaluations make specific reference to TRP ideology, but many critique things like the author's physical appearance, social skills, and personal insecurities, which are indirectly related to TRP content that addresses these traits. These subjects are also frequent points of

discussion within TRP itself, suggesting that the authors' fixation on appearance, social skills, and insecurities could have drawn them to TRP or been heightened due to engaging with TRP in the first place. Regardless, even without explicitly mentioning TRP, evaluating oneself based on these criteria is a clear reflection of TRP's tenets of self-worth. Self-evaluation addressed both past and present beliefs, meaning that these men are actively reflecting on who they were and are.

Introspection also includes emotional expression, namely frustration (9.5%) and despair (9.5%). These emotions refer to past and present feelings and apply to frustration with relationships, TRP, and themselves, which reflect the inner turmoil many of these men have experienced:

I'm expected to be a rock **[F]**, and always be there to lift the girl up **[F/SE]** but I myself am not allowed to be sad, or show any weakness **[F/D]**. I often wish I was born the other gender **[F/B]**, even though I know I'm a dude at heart **[SE]**. It's just that the life of a man is so lonely **[D]**, and depressing **[D]**, and so much hard work with little pay off **[F/D]** (Ex. 2).

While frustration and despair often appear alongside each other, these codes do very different work. Frustration shows these authors' anger towards their past and present circumstances, which they feel are both in and outside their control. Despair is a much more defeated aspect of the narrative, where the authors show how much TRP has affected them. Many applications of despair are linked to mental health concerns, as some users refer to suicidality, depression, and anxiety — many of which occur at least partially because of TRP. Overall, this emotional expression enables further reflection via externalizing negative emotions. The act of writing and reflecting encourages members to process their own emotions and inner conflict, even if it does occur in a public setting. In addition to facilitating emotional reflection, these expressions also provide clear evidence of the harm TRP can cause:

I can't help myself letting those intrusive TRP/MGTOW thoughts get in the way of this happiness **[D/EF]**. ... I just still always have those intrusive TRP thoughts **[CRP/EF]** "she thinks your a pussy **[SE/D]**" "here comes alpha chad to fuck your girl **[M]** while your at work because you decided to break down emotional barriers that you've had built for years **[SE/D]**" (Ex. 9).

While many of these men indicated that mental health issues were a motivation for engaging with TRP, these issues also seem to be exacerbated by the ideology. Even for users who did manage to find relationships while engaged with TRP, they all express that TRP mindsets lead to or eventually will cause their failure. From these

narratives, it is clear that TRP takes advantage of its members and teaches men to internalize unhealthy conceptions of masculinity and self-image.

### ***Discussing the Red Pill***

Since this community advertises itself as a resource for people grappling with the Red Pill ideology, it is assumed that members have some connection to TRP. However, to establish themselves as a former member and present victim of TRP, authors must reference their familiarity and connection with the community. This is often performed by using Discourse-specific terminology that demonstrates the writer's engagement with TRP Discourse. Commenting on TRP is also common in these essays, making up 9.7% of the text. After all, it is impossible to talk about TRP's effects without bringing up TRP. Authors vary in how they comment on TRP, as they critique and praise it alongside comparing it to their present beliefs. Much of this commentary occurs when the author describes what he believes in connection to TRP. Additionally, authors must acknowledge the Red Pill concepts to justify participation in this community rather than another self-help group. Thus, commenting on TRP illustrates familiarity and potential internalization of the ideology while also legitimizing the author's participation in r/ExRedPill.

Explanations of their experience with TRP (5%) often prelude commentary on TRP (9.7%) to provide context for how much the authors engaged with TRP. Many describe watching videos that appeared in their algorithm and being unable to look away. Eleven of the thirteen essays make specific references to the type and quantity of TRP content they consumed. Authors' explanations of their TRP experiences often include when and whom they started watching:

Well, I can't remember why or how, but RP content started appearing in my YouTube recommended **[ERP]**. And being the naïve 16yo I was **[SE]**, not knowing anything about dating at all really **[RE]**, I took to it **[ERP]**. I was watching all day long to podcasts and videos about RP while I was doing HW and such **[ERP]**, reading the Rollo books and everything **[ERP]** (Ex. 1).

After the end of a 3-year relationship back in February this year **[RE]**, I came across self-improvement/redpill channels such as Hamza, 1stMan, Fresh&Fit and Andrew Tate **[ERP]** (Ex. 11).

Several authors reference specific manosphere communities like Pick-Up Artists, MGTOW, and the Black Pill. Even though none of them specifically use the word "manosphere," it is clear that they are familiar with the manosphere subgroups and how they are related to each other. Explanations of TRP experience are often toward

the beginning of the essays, indicating that the authors feel they need to establish their engagement with TRP before showing how they are affected by it.

Effects of TRP (5.3%) reflect the authors' additional introspection and establish them as victims of TRP. While r/ExRedPill does welcome those still engaged with TRP, actively communicating in a support group like r/ExRedPill invokes victimization. Authors illustrate TRP's effects differently:

RP has simultaneously helped me see that there are so many ways to view the world **[EF]**, but also degraded my self-esteem **[SE]**, view on women **[M]**, and confused me in terms of how to date **[RE]** (Ex. 1).

I can't help myself letting those intrusive TRP/MGTOW thoughts get in the way of this happiness **[D/EF]**. I guess I'm asking for assistance or stories from everyone here **[ASC]** in how they finally broke that tumor the TRP mindset grows in the subconscious **[EF/D]** (Ex. 9).

This practice reflects the merging of the authors' engagement with TRP and their introspection and reflection. Discussing TRP's effects enables the author to reflect directly on the community's consequences. While introspection is important, this practice frames the author's struggle not as a personal one but as one at least partially caused by TRP. In other words, discussing the experience and effects of TRP are both narrative elements that establish the authors' ethos as victims, which further justifies their participation in the community in the first place.

Although these personal essays appear to be a means of unlearning TRP ideology, the authors only refer to their attempts of unlearning it 4.2% of the time. Some authors specifically describe resources they have explored and why those were ineffective, whereas others are more reflective and focus on what the author has learned. Authors vary in describing their unlearning, from recounting non-TRP sources to a change in mindset:

I've desperately tried to find articles and videos debunking Blackpill talking points **[AU/D]**, but ones that bring up actual scientific rebuttals are few and far between **[AU]**, and most amount to nothing but ad-hominem attacks and nothing of substance **[AU]** (Ex. 3).

I realized my scope of reality has been crafted in a way that prevents me from being a complete person **[AU/SE]**. Crippled by fear of rejection **[D]**, albeit painful is a part of life **[AU]** (Ex. 5).

Many of these attempts did not seem totally successful, as the authors often pair their previous attempts with frustration and residual TRP effects. Only two of the authors seem content with their stage in recovery. The range in learning success is unsurprising, given the personal nature of this genre. Individuals are at different stages of unlearning TRP ideology, so some authors have had more experience with it. Given that for many of these men, recovering and unlearning this ideology has been an individual and reflective endeavor, completely recovering from TRP is no easy task. However, the very discussion of prior unlearning attempts illustrates that these men are actively working on improving themselves.

### ***Commentary on Women***

Romantic and sexual experience (10.3%) is the second most common code, suggesting that the authors are concerned with their sexual and romantic prowess as well as TRP's connection to it. Many men reference their lack of romantic experience as motivation for seeking out advice from TRP, with four essays making specific references to the author's virginity. Discussing romantic and sexual relationships follows two patterns: failure prior to engaging with TRP and TRP's effects on subsequent relationships. This practice can be seen in the following two examples:

My First relationship ever was very toxic **[RE]** and it somehow ended in engagement **[RE]**. I was cheated on and burned hard **[RE/F]**. So obviously my next logical step in life was to find TRP **[ERP]** (Ex. 9).

The first girlfriend I ever had was perfect **[RE/H]**, but I had it in my mind that because I was a man **[CRP]**, I HAD to be into hookup culture **[F/CRP]**, HAD to be fucking as many women as possible **[F/M]**, or I was lesser **[SE]**. So I refused to commit **[RE/M]**, led her on **[M]**, and she put up with me for about 2 years before we broke up **[RE]** (Ex. 12).

Discussions of relationships are often intertwined with discussions of the Red Pill content, as early failed relationships were a motivation and justification for TRP involvement, and subsequent relationships were tainted because of TRP ideology. Relationships are often used as a narrative tool, where the author's progression in and out of TRP is based on their relationship experience. TRP overemphasizes relationships in its own content, so these essays mirror the perceived importance of experience — or lack thereof — with women.

Misogyny (8.7%) appears less in relationships and sexual experiences. While this could stem from the essay's focus on the authors' personal experiences rather than general societal critiques, it also indicates shifting priorities. Most of these authors

are part of r/ExRedPill because they want to unlearn TRP beliefs, so it would be counterproductive to put these undesirable ideas into an essay meant to help these men move on from them. This separation between the author's underlying beliefs and what he *wants* to believe is reflected through their expression of misogyny. For instance, some make repeated, detailed remarks about women's promiscuity and physical appearance, seemingly because they feel that information is essential to the narrative:

I had just gotten rejected again [RE/F] by an unattractive lady [M] whom I went on a date with ... This woman was an overweight but kind woman [M]. Probably 400lbs but I loved her personality and positive energy [M] (Ex. 6).

Of course, commenting on a woman's appearance is not inherently misogynistic. However, the emphasis on these details shows that the author is still in the habit of objectifying women and critiquing their sexuality and appearance — practices that are nearly inseparable from TRP ideology. However, other authors' misogynistic writing refers to their past beliefs. While still misogynistic, it is a critique of themselves and their own beliefs rather than women:

Although I am a hypocrite for wanting casual sex [SE], I couldn't see a woman with a high bodycount as good material [M] as she likely has a lot of emotional baggage [M] and is more likely to cheat on me [M] (Ex. 8).

Well, my mindset was "oh she fucked all these other dudes back then but won't fuck me now on the first date, fuck this" [M] and basically never talked to her again [RE]. What the fuck was wrong with me [SE/F]? (Ex. 12).

This variation reinforces that these authors are at different stages of unlearning TRP ideology. Most authors avoid directly criticizing women when referring to their present beliefs but rather focus on the issues regarding their misogynistic mindsets. While this is not the case for every author, most misogynistic content illustrates the author's growing disillusion with TRP content. In other words, by discussing their former misogyny, the authors show they are unlearning it.

### ***Narrative Information***

Narrative information (8.9%) enables the storytelling aspect of these essays. This code includes personal information like age and narrative details, which work together to provide context for the rest of the post. Ten of the thirteen essays begin with the author introducing himself, often with his age, gender, and identity as a TRP victim. The narrative information through the essays provides more detail about the

authors' relationships, life history, and path in and out of TRP. This code often appears alongside stories about relationships and experiences with TRP:

I was just being an asshole [SE], after those events she went cold and didn't speak to me in one month [I/D]. I just texted her: "is everything alright?" [I] And left it there to don't appear too eager so I'd look like a creep [I/SE] (Ex. 10).

Since these posts are personal testimonials, telling stories helps make these narratives more detailed and personal. It is one thing to say that TRP harmed the author, but providing detailed narratives of how it did so supports his victimhood, encourages deeper reflection, and enables a more engaging story for the author and reader.

### **Positivity**

Positive content is the least common practice in this sample, making up only 3.4% of the content. This low frequency suggests that authors are not prioritizing expressions of hope and happiness (1.7%) or aspirations (1.7%). Since these essays are often a way to work through distress or vent, it makes sense that there is not much positivity. When authors do express happiness or aspirations, it is often juxtaposed with present despair:

She was smart, gorgeous, kind, I mean, just perfect [H]. Everything was amazing [H]. Then, the Redpill kicked in [EF] (Ex. 10).

I'm legitimately afraid for my future right now [D] because I want to have a girlfriend [ASP], I want to be married [ASP], and I want to have kids in the near future [ASP]. I really don't want to fall down this rabbit hole [D], but it feels like I'm one stiff breeze away from falling and never coming back [D] (Ex. 3).

By expressing past or future happiness, only to claim that TRP destroyed it, the author reinforces their claim that TRP harmed him. It also illustrates that recovery is not a linear process. Even for authors who may feel like they have made progress, TRP's effects are vast and do not disappear overnight. However, while there are very few expressions of present happiness, there are some more positive posts written by those seemingly further along in their recovery, showing that life beyond TRP is possible:

It isn't all hopeless though [H]. It's looking like I'll move out eventually [H], there's some new opportunities coming [H] and I'm making new friends here [H]. I have coworkers I really get along with [H] (Ex. 4).

Though positive content was the least frequent practice, authors use it to highlight TRP's persistence, as the overall lack of positive content shows how distressed these men are.

## **Discussion**

While r/ExRedPill classifies itself as a discussion forum, it also functions as a self-help group. Smith-Merry and colleagues (2019) consider forum-based peer support to be based on individual reflection via storytelling and providing support to others. These personal essays are a few of the many examples of this reflective storytelling on r/ExRedPill, and the rhetorical moves within them signal the aims of the group: to collaboratively reflect, learn, and heal. While the essays more clearly indicate individual reflection, they also illustrate community support. Several make specific requests for advice from community members, but it also seems like merely posting invites community support. Every essay in this sample has several responses offering advice and empathy from other members, even if the author did not directly ask for it.

These personal narratives enable identity and emotional work for the authors and r/ExRedPill as a whole. Within self-help groups, sharing stories is a way to reinterpret and learn from the past (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which, in turn, informs the author's identity. The introspection and discussions facilitate active reflections about the author's beliefs and TRP itself. The commentary on women illustrates shifting priorities as these authors learn from successful strategies and relationships to lessen their hatred. Not only do these essays enable the author to share his stories, but they also cultivate their identity as a former Red Pill. Even if they are still struggling to unlearn this ideology, classifying and shaming their former beliefs is a key step in moving forward. Both these narratives and r/ExRedPill as a whole also reflect the greater harm of the manosphere (Thorburn, 2023a). Many of the sampled texts made specific references to how TRP has affected their self-esteem, self-worth, and relationship success. As Thorburn (2023a; 2023b) also notes, rehabilitation-based communities like r/ExRedPill and r/IncelExit are not only valuable data sets regarding efforts to disengage from the manosphere but also provide first-hand accounts of the actual effects TRP can have on its members.

Online self-help groups like r/ExRedPill are becoming a more popular and viable option for support and recovery (Chung, 2013). TRP preys on men's insecurities and loneliness (Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022), so having a community that provides actual support, advice, and camaraderie is essential for their recovery process. The subreddit r/ExRedPill is a relatively small but thriving self-help group that provides a community for former misogynists to help and support each other. It has a constant

influx of discussions, debates, and questions in addition to these essays. These posts and comments develop into vibrant discussions as group members offer their advice and support to each author. While posting an essay on r/ExRedPill seems to benefit an individual, the author also helps other community members. He shows other TRP victims that they are not alone. Thorburn (2023b) and Gheorghe and Clement (2023) consider groups like r/ExRedPill and r/IncelExit to be successful because they are created and facilitated by people actually affected by TRP. Having a community of people with analogous experiences seems to facilitate a welcoming and supportive community where members, who are perhaps most disparaged by TRP, feel comfortable being emotionally vulnerable — a practice that TRP so often ridicules. Given that r/ExRedPill is made up of former and present Red Pillers, having regular, active support from former ideology members further facilitates disengagement and unlearning. Scrivens and colleagues (2019) explain that collaboration between former and present members of an extreme ideology enables recovery because former members have an ethos within these communities as ‘one of us.’ This subreddit mimics this relationship, where both active and former Red Pillers work together to help each other disengage and maintain their distance from this harmful ideology.

However, r/ExRedPill is not a complete or the only solution to TRP indoctrination. While having a community to vent and converse with is certainly important, TRP’s harm may extend beyond what a support group can treat. Several sample texts make reference to depression, anxiety, and suicidality, which are more serious ailments that warrant professional advice. Community members are aware of this and often reply to these narratives with suggestions for therapy and other resources. Thorburn (2023b) notes similar limitations regarding the effectiveness and extent of mental health support that r/ExRedPill may provide. This is by no means saying that the work r/ExRedPill and other online communities do is worthless, but they do have a limited scope.

### **Limitations**

While this study continues to fill the vast gap regarding manosphere rehabilitation, we are far from understanding the full rehabilitation process and what role communities like r/ExRedPill could play in such processes. This study provides insight into a small subset of r/ExRedPill, and while this data set does illustrate composition and engagement trends regarding this particular type of post on r/ExRedPill, the subreddit contains many other types of posts besides personal essays. This study aimed to be an initial investigation into this particular genre, but as we begin to focus more on manosphere rehabilitation, r/ExRedPill warrants more in-depth inquiry. Thorburn (2023b) explores different types of posts and comments on r/ExRedPill, but

his analysis is also limited to a relatively small data set. Additionally, both my and Thorburn's work on r/ExRedPill, along with the investigation into r/IncelExit (Gheorghe & Clement, 2023; Davis & Kettrey, 2024) is largely qualitative. It is possible to see how members of r/ExRedPill engage with this community based on their posts, but their posts do not provide any quantitative information regarding their rehabilitation, engagement, and perception of TRP and r/ExRedPill. This subreddit is also just one example of manosphere rehabilitation-based communities. Other groups, like r/IncelExit, could serve a similar purpose for their members. All of these communities deserve investigation so that we may gain a more well-rounded understanding of how different individuals and groups approach rehabilitation efforts.

Regarding methodology, the biggest limitation is the difficulty regarding the anonymity of the data set. Ethics regarding the use of online posts in research are still debated, but there is a general consensus that researchers should attempt to protect user information as much as possible. Given that retrieving consent from every author would be nearly impossible, the best practice is to anonymize data; I have done so by excluding URLs and author usernames, but it is still quite easy to locate the original posts based on quotations, as shown in Reagle's (2022) investigation into the efficacy of researchers' source disguising. However, given the lack of research in r/ExRedPill as a whole, I felt that illustrating the application of my coding scheme to the original text was necessary to truly illustrate what work these narratives are doing. Though more effective in protecting users, Thorburn's (2023b) alteration of the original text did seem to degrade the form and style. Maintaining the stylistic integrity of the data is a top priority for communication, rhetorical, and content inquiries. Future studies could benefit from excluding the source texts and, instead, crafting example quotations that mimic the sampled texts; doing so could present the same type of content without quoting users. With research regarding rehabilitation from the manosphere and other online extremist groups, it is vital to consider novel ways of maintaining data safety, particularly given the personal nature of the content.

## **Conclusion**

The community r/ExRedPill serves a unique purpose for a small but growing group of people victimized by TRP and the manosphere. While there is not yet definitive data about recovery rates from TRP-based misogyny, this subreddit illustrates that there are places where unlearning is taking place and succeeding to some degree. These personal essays offer a glimpse into the inner turmoil of these men and show the importance of community for their recovery and overall well-being. Authors can do important rhetorical and healing work that helps them externalize internal struggles,

share experiences, and educate themselves and others. The personal essays are evidence of this emotional and cognitive work on an individual and a community level. Each author seems to use their essay to reflect on their own choices, disposition, and behavior while framing it around TRP.

There is much more work to be done in studying this genre and community. Future research should further explore the authors' motivations and how this writing has helped them. We also need to understand how this community affects its members as a whole; interviews or surveys would be effective, as textual analysis is largely inference-based and qualitative. It would also be worthwhile to study r/ExRedPill as a whole, along with similar subreddits like r/IncelExit. Though such inquiry has begun, it lacks quantitative data. These personal essays are just one type of post, but people also share resources, ask questions, and provide commentary on manosphere content. All of these posts work together to create a writing-based, online self-help group, and it is crucial to develop a more holistic understanding of this discourse community. TRP ideology is harmful, and while r/ExRedPill provides one avenue for unlearning it, this disengagement and deradicalization is a demanding and alarmingly understudied consequence of TRP ideology. As we continue to grapple with the effects of hate groups like TRP, communities and resources like r/ExRedPill will only become more important. We are finally coming to terms with the danger of the manosphere, but now it is time to understand how we can help people escape it.

**References**

**Appendix**

**Loyola Marymount University**  
**University Honors**  
**Program**



**High-Profile Antisemitic  
Rhetoric, Social Media, and  
Generative AI**

**Jimmy Warshawsky**

**TRIGGER WARNING:**  
xenophobia, antisemitism



For a brief period towards the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023, it seemed like every day I would wake up to news that someone, almost always with an extremely large following, had said something antisemitic. I do not remember it being like this before. When you grow up going to Passover seders, Yom Kippur services, and Rosh Hashanah celebrations, you hear countless stories about how much suffering and hatred the Jewish people have lived through in their 3,000-year history, but I never really experienced that hate for myself. Quite frankly, I can only remember one or two comments from my entire childhood that struck me as antisemitic. I knew that the Jews had been persecuted for centuries, but it seemed like all of that was over. It was in the past; it was not something that would ever truly affect me in my lifetime. I was very wrong.

In college, I realized that antisemitism was far from over. I began hearing stories from my family members and friends about how they were teased, insulted, or even physically harmed because of their Jewish identity. When I started to travel more to different parts of the country and the world, I was warned to keep my Jewishness to myself and to never wear my chai necklace in public in some of these places.

I began seeing more and more attacks on the Jewish community online, both verbally and physically.

Some of them were not far away at all; some seemed like they were right in my backyard. It felt like, all of a sudden, America had a president who not only associated with hateful people and known antisemites but he, himself, perpetrated antisemitic ideas and conspiracies left and right. I am not sure when it stopped surprising me to hear news that a politician or celebrity said something hateful toward Jewish people, but now, it really does not surprise me anymore.

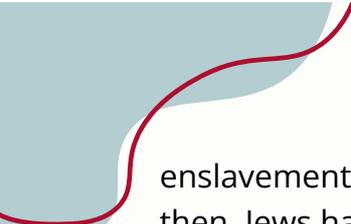
A large portion of this content comes directly from these people to our eyes and ears through social media. Between October of 2022 and March of 2023, I noticed a particular increase in the amount of these posts that I was seeing. This paper serves to analyze these posts from four notable influencers who have come under immense fire for their antisemitism, either directly or indirectly. The influencers are Kanye West, a rapper who now goes by the name of Ye; Kyrie Irving, a star NBA basketball player; Nick Fuentes, a young political commentator; and Donald Trump, the former president of the United States of America. There have been countless instances of antisemitism before this current time period from other people and away from direct social media, but this paper will be focusing on the Twitter, Instagram, and Truth

Social posts from West, Irving, Fuentes, and Trump between October 2022 and March 2023. There are multiple reasons for these selections. This period spans the length of Kanye West's antisemitic outbursts, beginning with the posted screenshots of his conversations with Sean "Diddy" Combs and ending with his very interesting apology post after he watched Jonah Hill in *21 Jump Street*. These four people were chosen because they each have very big followings, play a very different role in this country, have posted antisemitic messages in the chosen time period, and are all connected to each other in various ways. I am focusing solely on the social media posts of these individuals (rather than including news media clips, press statements, etc.) because social media is one of the largest contributors to this recent rise in antisemitism, in addition to keeping the scope of this research project narrow.

In this paper, I will first discuss the history of antisemitism in America to give important and relevant context to my study. I will then explain the recent rise in antisemitism and address viewpoints from various experts and contributors regarding what, why, and how this is happening. Next, I will go over each of the selected influencers' connections with antisemitism and how the public has reacted to them. To finish the literature review, I will discuss previous research on antisemitism and hate on social media and in the recent rise. I will identify the different forms of antisemitism and their distinctions from each other and give examples as to when these have been used in times outside of my study. I will then go through my methods for this study, which include identification and coding of the set of posts and testing with generative artificial intelligence. I wanted to use generative AI in this research as it is a relatively new tool that has not been applied widely in this context but may provide some interesting and helpful data. The act of identifying hate speech is hard to do as a human without being biased, but AI is much closer to being truly unbiased, eliminating human subjectivity. I will conclude by presenting my results, discussing them, and noting the limitations of this paper and the need for future research. The purpose of this study is to discover what specific antisemitic tropes these influencers have been using in their rhetoric and to determine the severity and explicitness of their posts. As a young Jewish person living in America, I find it is important to acknowledge my identity and implicit bias in dealing with such a sensitive topic that affects me deeply, but I will attempt to be as unbiased as possible in this study.

### **Literature Review**

To begin the body of this paper, I am going to provide context on American antisemitism, particularly American antisemitism from influential people on social media. The Jewish people have faced persecution in almost every part of the world for thousands of years, whether you place the start date in biblical times with Jewish



enslavement in Egypt, or in the first few hundred years of the Common Era. Since then, Jews have been mistreated, scapegoated, expelled, and slaughtered in hideous ways, primarily in Europe. In fact, the reason that Jews came to America in the first place was to get away from the horrors they were facing in Europe and beyond. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is a global NGO based in the United States that specializes in civil rights law and fighting antisemitism. They have an extensive database of texts and research that I will be drawing on in multiple sections of this paper. In their guide to American antisemitism, they write, “The history of Jews in America is a history of the ongoing negotiation between hard-won legal freedoms and the lingering social effects of racial and religious prejudice as it persists and reignites in this country” (ADL, n.d.) While the first Jews to immigrate to America did not find full religious tolerance as they might have expected, by 1740, less than a hundred years after they first landed in New Amsterdam in 1654 after fleeing from Brazil, naturalization laws included Jewish residents, which offered them a legal status that would not have been possible in Europe for another half century (ADL, n.d.). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European Jews continued to immigrate to the United States in the hopes of escaping antisemitism and finding economic opportunity.

### ***Early American Antisemitism***

Even though they largely found freedom here, “as outsiders bearing a history of condemnation by Christianity and by emergent racial science, Jews still found themselves scapegoated in America” (ADL, n.d.). In Civil War times, both sides of the fight made baseless accusations that Jewish people were aiding the other side. After more than two million Jews from Eastern Europe immigrated to America between 1881 and 1914, including members of my family, “some Americans balked at the Jewish minority and resented their presence in urban life, expressing discomfort about Jewish immigrants’ foreign mannerisms, customs and their pronounced drive to succeed in America” (ADL, n.d.). It was also around this time that I found the first accounts of a conspiracy in this country that, as I will discuss later in this paper, is still being widely distributed today. When the economy took a hit in the late 1800s, agrarian populists of the South and Midwest seized on conspiracy theories, claiming that urban Jews were “exploiting markets and the federal government as a whole” and “some such populists condemned Jews as a national threat, as an entire corrupt class of international financiers who owned the banks and ruined small family farms by promoting the gold standard” (ADL, n.d.). While much of this hatred occurred on the fringes of society, Jewish people also faced antisemitism in the mainstream, including “educational quotas [at universities], discrimination in the professional sphere, restriction from residential and recreational communities and continued acts of outright physical violence” (ADL, n.d.).

Jewish people have always faced a unique challenge in navigating their identity. What I have gathered throughout my lifetime is that everyone views it a little differently. Some think of Jewishness as a race or an ethnicity, while to others it is purely a religion. Others view it as closer to a nationality, which can create a lot of tension for Jewish Americans. I will write further on these issues and how they relate to antisemitism at later points in this paper. In *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, Eric L. Goldstein (2006) wrote, "The question of whether Jews ought to fashion themselves as a race or merely a religious denomination became one of the most hotly debated issues of early-20th-century Jewish communal discourse." Many Jewish people felt that they deserved racial protections, not only religious ones which they had been granted previously. While many Jews could and did assimilate into whiteness, it only happened sometimes, and always in a racist system (ADL, n.d.).

### ***The Original Influencers***

One hundred years before Donald Trump took office, primarily by way of using social media to spread his controversial ideas and mobilize his supporters, the popularity of mass media was growing rapidly with the invention of the radio and the public's fixation on press. This heavily influenced the social climate in the United States. Using mass media, "some of the most influential people in the country used their national platforms to stoke hatred and fear of Jews in the interwar years" (ADL, n.d.). One of these people was Henry Ford, one of the most well-known and praised businessmen of all time. Zach Beauchamp (2022), senior correspondent for Vox, writes that "he was also a hardcore antisemite, blaming Jews for everything from World War I to an alleged decline in the quality of candy bars." He purchased his hometown newspaper, the Dearborn Independent, and used it to publish and promote antisemitic conspiracy theories in 91 consecutive issues (ADL, n.d.). Because he required his Ford Motors dealers to distribute the paper, it became the second-largest newspaper in the country and his hatred reached a massive number of people. Ford drew from "*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an infamous Russian forgery that purported to be records of the Jewish conspiracy's worldwide activities" and "he reprinted much of this content in his four-volume *The International Jew*, which saw hundreds of thousands of copies distributed" (Beauchamp, 2022; ADL, n.d.). Historian Norman Cohn (2018) stated, "*The International Jew* probably did more than any other work to make The Protocols [of the Elders of Zion] world famous" (as cited in Beauchamp, 2022). Adolf Hitler, when asked about the portrait of Ford hanging over his desk by a Detroit News reporter in 1931, answered that he regarded Henry Ford as his inspiration (Beauchamp, 2022).

Ford was arguably the most well-known antisemite in America during his time, but he was not the only one. Beauchamp (2022) notes that “Ford’s propaganda set the stage for a wave of American antisemitism in the runup to World War II, including the rise of infamous antisemitic demagogue Father Charles Coughlin.” Coughlin was a Catholic figure who had a weekly radio show with 15 million listeners. On his show, he “propagated antisemitic beliefs, justified Nazi violence against Jews overseas, and provoked his American followers to paint swastikas on Jewish businesses and gang up on Jews in the streets” (ADL, n.d.). In the 1930s, physical violence towards Jews increased as a result. American antisemitism was reaching an all-time high. In one poll from 1939, it was shown that “fewer than 40 percent of Americans believed Jews should be treated ‘as any other Americans’” (ADL, n.d.). Charles Lindbergh, American aviator and activist, claimed in 1941 that the real endangerment to the American people was the Jewish control of “our motion pictures, our press, our radio and our Government” (ADL, n.d.). There is that conspiracy again. Towards the end of the war, the country had become very used to the normalized and mainstream antisemitism.

### ***Post-War Feelings***

After World War II, the American public became more aware of the reality of the Holocaust and Nazism and the fact that the thousands of Jewish soldiers fought for the United States, which led to the steady decline of antisemitism and anti-Jewish sentiments (ADL, n.d.). With the civil rights movement, “Jews gradually were loosened from the grip of discrimination that had blocked their entry into universities, success in the job market and access to the housing market,” and by the 1970s, it was definite that “antisemitism ... was shifting to the margins of American society” (ADL, n.d.). Even though it mostly went away in the mainstream of this country, antisemitism never went away completely. There are multiple examples in the years between the war and 2015 that show that. The ADL (n.d.) writes, “widespread anxiety about globalization, mass migration and economic inequality — especially after the 2008 financial crisis — have created the conditions in which antisemitism has always festered.” Whenever those things are present, people will fall back into conspiracy and hatred and use Jews as an easy, albeit very wrong, answer to the reasons behind their difficult and complex problems. It is almost a universal truth throughout history that when something goes wrong, Jewish people will be blamed. Some people who genuinely feel hatred for the Jewish community and some people who do not know any better will use terms like “globalist”: a derogatory code-word for Jews that evokes an “antisemitic myth, falsely accusing mysterious agents of multiculturalism and international cooperation of weakening America from within” (ADL, n.d.). It is important to understand that although it seemed like antisemitism went away for 70 years, these sentiments still persevered but not in the American mainstream. Today, we see the mainstream return to these sentiments.

## ***The High Tide***

R. Amy Elman (2022), a professor of political science and Jewish studies, says that we have to change the way we look at antisemitism in this country, writing that we must reject “‘American exceptionalism’ in which antisemitism happens elsewhere — in other states, political parties, professions, campuses, and communities.” Elman continues, “Antisemitism so understood occurs only to the unfortunate, in places we don’t frequent, and at the outer edges of the political spectrum [... however] I suggest American antisemitism is so pervasive — so utterly mainstream — that it hides in plain sight” (Elman, 2022). Understanding antisemitism’s existence in America is crucial to working through and attempting to fix it. The recent rise of antisemitism that we have seen in these examples can be traced directly to the timeline of the presidency of Donald Trump. The most pronounced examples of this have been from those on the far right of the political spectrum. These people “have been emboldened by President Trump’s adoption of specific elements of their rhetoric and his dismissal of their hate, such as his use of terms like “globalist” or “migrant caravans” or even his campaign slogan, “America First” (ADL, n.d.).

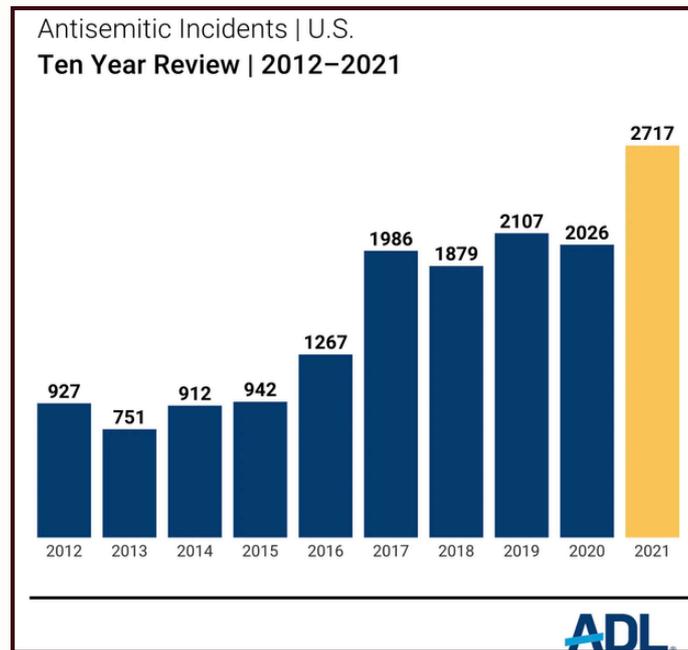
In 2018, hate crimes reached their highest point in 27 years, and Jews were shown to be the most frequent target of religion-based incidents. Jamie Moshin (2018) writes:

While one can point to the rise of antisemitic acts since the inception of Trump’s presidency — an increase of 86 percent — one cannot prove that Trump’s rhetorics have caused this rise [and] I believe that President Trump is tapping into, and bringing forth, a deep wellspring of systemic antisemitism that many (incorrectly) assumed to be either extinct or nothing more than the expression of a radical individualism.

Marin Cogan (2022), a senior correspondent at Vox, summarizes the prevalent attacks on Judaism in America in the last six years that have made antisemitism much harder to ignore:

To consider it one way, there was nothing particularly new or notable about antisemitism in the United States in 2022. After all, to be Jewish in the United States during the last five years has meant being confronted with evidence of the hatred lurking in our neighbors’ hearts. We saw it in 2017, when polo-shirted Nazis chanted “Jews will not replace us” as they unleashed terror on the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia; in 2018, when 11 Jews were massacred at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; in 2019, when a shooter killed one and injured three others at the Chabad of Poway in California; and in smaller attack

perpetrated in between, on streets and subways, at restaurants and rallies, outside shuls and sukkot.



The ADL published a report of antisemitic incidents in the past ten years that showed record numbers. It is nearly impossible to say now that antisemitism has not risen again in the United States. Pamela Nadell (2022), historian and director of the Jewish studies program at American University, says, “Historians have called the period between World War I and World War II the ‘high tide’ of American antisemitism. I think we may have to rename that: I think we are at the moment living in the high tide of American antisemitism [emphasis added]” (as cited in Beauchamp, 2022). While Donald Trump is not as explicitly antisemitic as someone such as Henry Ford was in his day, it’s important to remember that Ford was never the President of the United States. Ford was never as popular or as influential as Trump is today. The American people didn’t elect Henry Ford, but they elected Donald Trump.

### ***Trump, West, Irving, and Fuentes***

In November of 2022, Donald Trump, Kanye West, and Nick Fuentes all sat down for dinner together at Mar-a-Lago. This was problematic for many reasons — too many of these individuals’ histories with antisemitism, in addition to Kyrie Irving’s, as the fourth selected member of this study. I’ve already discussed how Trump opened the door for the resurgence of many themes of hate including antisemitism, but what specific actions has he taken? Again, Trump has never outwardly expressed a hatred, or even a dislike, of the Jewish people, but he has perpetrated antisemitic tropes and conspiracies more times than one can count. Aaron Blake, senior political reporter for the Washington Post, tracked many of these instances, and I have added them here. For one, Trump consistently speaks about American Jews as if their country is

Israel and not the United States (Blake, 2022). During the White House Hanukkah Party in 2018, a Republican Jewish Coalition event in 2019, and a call after Rosh Hashanah in 2020, he repeatedly referred to Israel as “your country”; Benjamin Netanyahu as “your prime minister”; and David Friedman, Trump’s ambassador to Israel, as “your ambassador.” Trump has also mentioned many times that he believes American Jews are largely disloyal to Israel and that they are insufficiently appreciative of how he has handled the United States-Israel relationship. He has stated that when a Jewish person votes for a Democrat, “it shows either a total lack of knowledge or great disloyalty” (Blake, 2022). I will cover why this idea of dual-loyalty perpetuates antisemitism when I cover the multiple forms of antisemitism in a later section. We already know that “The most popular antisemitic trope in politics is that Jews control things behind the scenes — often by virtue of their money and cunning [and] Trump has also leaned into this” (Blake, 2022). In 2015, he told Republican Jews that he didn’t want their money, although they “stupidly” wanted to give him money. Further down the road in his campaign, he “tweeted an image of Hillary Clinton surrounded by money with the words ‘Most Corrupt Candidate Ever!’ inside a six-pointed star, the shape of the Star of David [and he] ran an ad featuring several prominent Jews — George Soros, Janet L. Yellen, and Lloyd Blankfein — while warning of “global special interests” (Blake, 2022). Trump also stated in a 2021 interview, “It used to be that Israel had absolute power over Congress, and today I think it’s the exact opposite” (as cited in Blake, 2022). He has also suggested multiple times that any ethnic allegiance should extend to him because his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, is Jewish, and therefore so are his grandchildren. Despite this excuse for his previous antisemitic comments, he has since posted on social media threats to the Jewish community.

From what I remember, Kanye West used to be a pretty normal, unproblematic individual. He made a lot of very successful music, some of which I listened to regularly, and was many people’s favorite artist. At some point, he became very problematic. His pop culture controversies eventually turned into political ones, especially with his outright support of Donald Trump. Cogan (2022) writes,

“It’s hard to overstate the importance of Kanye West’s transformation from one of hip-hop’s most salient rappers into one of the country’s most prominent Jew haters.”

Beginning in October of 2022, West “went on a spree of public appearances and interviews in which he spouted antisemitic comments and conspiracy theories,

criticized Black Lives Matter, ended business relationships, and was blocked on social media platforms, leading to widespread criticism and disavowal by industry peers” (Dellatto & Porterfield, 2023). At his Yeezy fashion show, he wore a shirt that read “White Lives Matter,” which is a phrase associated with a Neo-Nazi group of the same name (Dellatto & Porterfield, 2023). He then began to post very troubling screenshots around the internet about his relationship with the brand Adidas and LVMH CEO Bernard Arnault. He was interviewed on Fox News and spewed baseless claims about abortion and obesity. Then, on October 7th, he mentioned Jews publicly for the first time by posting a screenshot of his texts with Sean “Diddy” Combs. He continued to post wildly antisemitic statements on social media that were primarily hinged on two antisemitic conspiracy theories, that Jewish people control the media and that Jewish people stole the identity of Black people. Then, footage was posted and leaked online of various clips of West discussing these conspiracy theories among others and even praising Adolf Hitler, saying he “likes Nazis” and can see “good things about Hitler” (Dellatto & Porterfield, 2023). What finally got him kicked off of Twitter for good was when he posted an image of a swastika combined with a Star of David.

Kyrie Irving didn’t contribute nearly as much to the recent rise of antisemitism as West did, but he did in his own way. His controversy — and praise from West — resulted from posting a link on Twitter on October 27, 2022 to a documentary that was filled with highly antisemitic tropes and stereotypes (Ganguli & Deb, 2022). For a week afterward, he didn’t apologize or condemn antisemitism. Due to this lack of apathy, he was promptly suspended indefinitely from his NBA team, the Brooklyn Nets. Nike also suspended their relationship with him. He then spoke at a press conference and backed up what he had posted, stating, “History is not supposed to be hidden from anybody ... I’m not going to stand down on anything I believe in. I’m only going to get stronger because I’m not alone. I have a whole army around me.” (Irving, 2022 as cited in Ganguli & Deb, 2022). On November 3, Irving apologized in an Instagram post and he was eventually traded to another NBA team, the Dallas Mavericks.

Finally, the biggest antisemite of our chosen four individuals is Nick Fuentes. Fuentes is a 24-year-old political commentator who hosts a webcast called America First, which has a very large following online. Fuentes is a known Holocaust denier and proponent of antisemitic conspiracies. Beauchamp (2022) writes, “Fuentes’s smirking, ‘just kidding’ demeanor on his America First webcast barely hides his eliminationist antisemitism — and sometimes the mask falls off entirely.” In one of his broadcasts in November 2022, he said, “The Jews had better start being nice to people like us, because what comes out of this is going to be a lot uglier and a lot worse for them

than anything that's being said on this show" (Fuentes, 2022, as cited in Beauchamp, 2022). Fuentes, alarmingly, has been gaining traction in the Republican party recently. He hosted an America First Political Action conference in February of 2022 and got prominent GOP representatives Marjorie Taylor Greene and Paul Gosar to attend. His biggest win to date was his dinner with the "highest-profile proponent of antisemitic conspiracy theories in the country," Kanye West, and the nation's former leader, Donald Trump, who reportedly came away impressed (Beauchamp, 2022).

### ***Public Opinion and Fear***

Personally, I was abhorred and disturbed when I found out about most of the things I outlined above; I can say the same for most of the Jewish Community. This violence and hatred has eroded the sense of safety and security that American Jews had been feeling for decades (Cogan, 2022). Gil Preus (2022), the CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, said that the events of the months leading up to the end of 2022 had been extremely challenging for Jewish people:

The fear that people have, when they see swastikas or other things put up in their neighborhoods or see it online, has arisen in a way that it shouldn't. Each time that we see one of these antisemitic acts, it feels like the culture around antisemitism has been changing. It's affecting every part of Jewish communal engagement. (as cited in Cogan, 2022)

One of the main differences between antisemitism today versus that of before is well-put by op-ed columnist for the New York Times, Michelle Goldberg (2022):

For most of my adult life, antisemites ... have lacked status in America. The most virulent antisemites tended to hate Jews from below, blaming them for their own failures and disappointments. Now, however, anti-Jewish bigotry, or at least tacit approval of anti-Jewish bigotry, is coming from people with serious power: the leader of a major political party, a famous pop star, and the world's richest man.

Social media provides some context to understand the general sentiment of the public. For the most part, the public has denounced Trump, West, Irving, and Fuentes for their antisemitic comments and actions, but some are defending them. In analyzing reactions to their controversial statements, Jikeli and Soemer (n.d.) found that "more than 80 % of the top 20 retweets of these five weeks were related to antisemitism, past or present, mostly denouncing antisemitism. However, the sixth most popular tweet (retweeted 10,785 times) suggested that Ye might have been right that "Jews control everything." After Elon Musk took over Twitter, the first peak

of conversations about Jews occurred on October 30, 2022. Most of these tweets “denounced antisemitism, but 18 % of conversations about Jews were antisemitic, an unusually high percentage [and] on that day, 23 % of the top 20 retweets (7,611 retweets altogether) defended Ye’s explicit or Kyrie Irving’s implicit statements about Jews” (Jikeli & Soemer, n.d.). The fact that these highly influential people are spewing antisemitic comments and conspiracy theories makes people believe it is okay to share them as well, which creates a very dangerous atmosphere for Jews on and offline. They are called social media influencers for a reason.

## **Methods**

For my research in this study, I’ll first be compiling the social media content of Donald Trump, Kanye West, Kyrie Irving, and Nick Fuentes between October 2022 and March 2023 that relate in any way to Jewish people. This task is more difficult than a traditional social media content gathering because almost all of these posts have since been deleted or the accounts that posted them have been deleted, restricted, suspended, and/or removed. I’ll be searching through various news publications, web archives such as the WayBack Machine, and even image search engines to find screenshots and recordings of these past tweets and posts. Originally I was going to record the amount of interaction, such as likes and comments, that these posts received, but since many of them were deleted or had interactions disabled by the platforms, this won’t be possible. For determining if a post relates to Jewish people, I will be pulling any content that includes the words “Jews,” “Jewish,” “antisemitic,” “semitic, [sic]” “Israel,” or “Hebrew(s).” In addition to these words, I will also be using common codes for Jews such as “globalist.” Any posts that use a visual related to Judaism, such as a Star of David or a swastika, will also be pulled. Finally, I will select posts from any of these four individuals that reference each other’s previous actions. These posts will be compiled in a spreadsheet, with written content copied over, visual content described through text, and the date and platform noted.

Once all of the content is compiled, I will code each post for the antisemitic tropes that they rely on. Jikeli et al. (2022) provide a method for classifying antisemitic content which I will be relying on in this study. The goal of their research was to provide a method for annotating antisemitic tweets that was less biased and more concrete, especially because antisemitism can have a broad and confusing definition. They chose to use the definition set forth by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which they refer to as the working definition. The working definition “has been endorsed and recommended by more than 30 governments and international bodies and is frequently used to monitor and record antisemitic incidents,” which makes it the best definition to use for my study as well (Jikeli et al., 2022). The working definition that the IHRA (n.d.) writes provides 11

examples of contemporary antisemitism, which I labeled 1-11. Trump, West, Irving, and Fuentes seem to rely on only a few of them, outlined here:

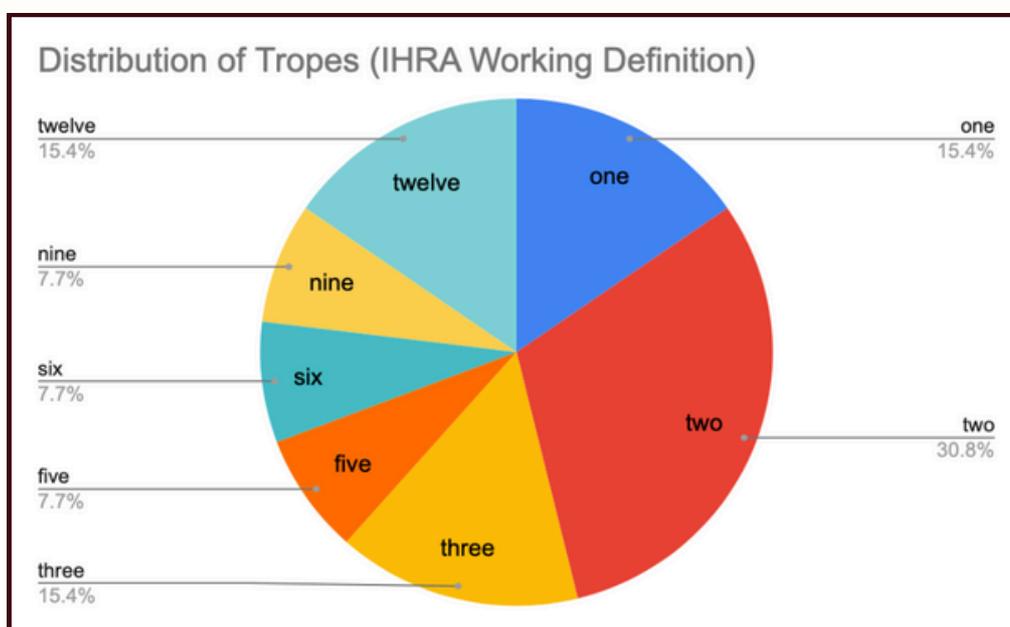
- 1: Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- 2: Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- 3: Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non Jews.
- 4: Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- 6: Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.\*
- 9: Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis. (IHRA, 2022)

The IHRA also states that antisemitism includes but is not limited to these examples, so it is important to remember that a piece of content can be antisemitic without falling exactly into one of these 11 examples. I anticipate there will be posts that the general public and I view as antisemitic but don't fit with the working definition. For those instances, I will label them 12, referring to something obviously antisemitic but doesn't fit in with labels 1-11. For Label 6, the definition is focused on accusations of loyalty to Israel, so I will be applying it to any accusations of loyalty or disloyalty to Israel.

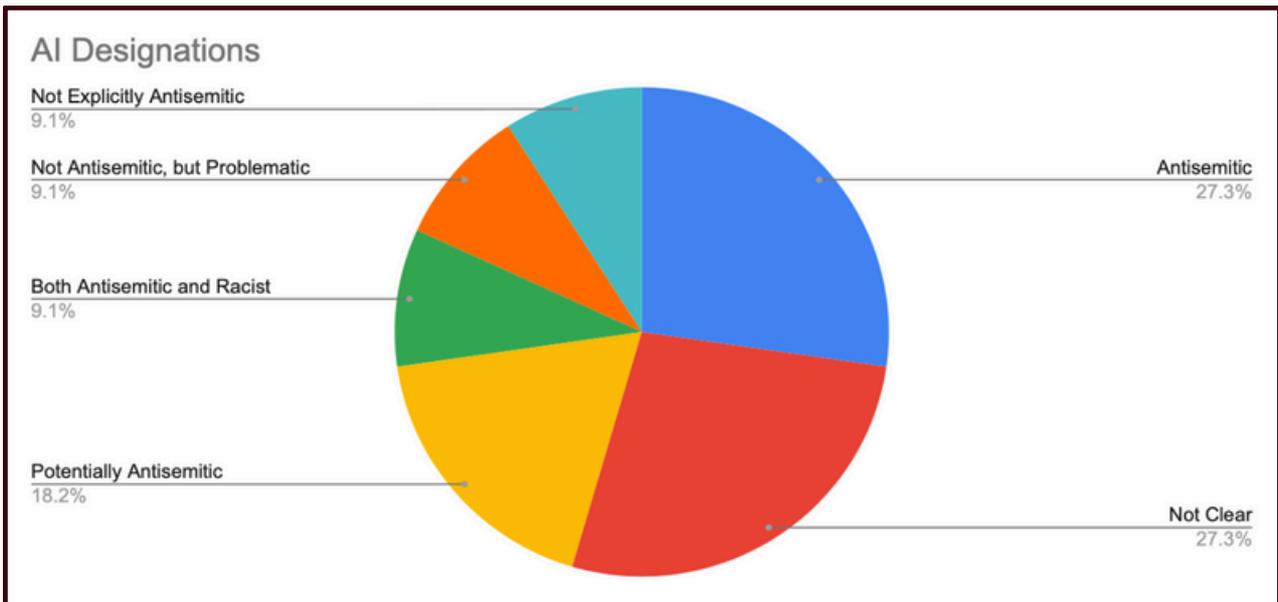
As another form of annotation and coding, I will be inputting the gathered social media content into ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence, and asking it to explain whether each post is antisemitic or not. I'll first prompt the AI by saying, "I am going to provide a description of a social media post, and I would like you to decide if this post is antisemitic or not and explain why. Do you understand?" followed by a description of the post after it responds. I believe that this method might be less biased than human annotation, and could provide alternative definitions and examples to the IHRA working definition. At the very least, it will serve as an additional set of annotations to compare our original set to.

## Results

After searching the internet for social media posts from Donald Trump, Kanye West, Kyrie Irving, and Nick Fuentes that related to Judaism between October 2022 and March 2023, I found 12 posts to analyze. Of these 12 posts, seven were posted in October, one in November, two in January, and one in March. Eight of the posts were made on Twitter, three were made on Instagram, and one (the only post from Donald Trump) was made on Truth Social. The biggest contributor to the data set was Kanye West with seven posts, followed by Kyrie Irving and Nick Fuentes with two posts, and Trump with one post. Of the 12 posts, only two remain on the platforms today, due to removal by the user or the platform, account deletion or removal, or suspension by the platform.



Upon coding the content for antisemitic tropes laid out by the IHRA working definition, I found that the most common trope used was Trope 2: “Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions” (IHRA, 2022). Three of the posts received multiple labels and two of them received none, signifying that of the 12 posts relating to Judaism, 10 of them — or 83% — were antisemitic. The distribution of tropes is shown in the figure above.



When input into ChatGPT, each post generated a result that included a designation on how antisemitic it was and explanations for why it felt that way. The most common designations were “antisemitic” and “not clear,” with each being applied to three of the 12 posts. Other designations included: “not explicitly antisemitic,” “not antisemitic, but problematic,” “both antisemitic and racist,” and “potentially antisemitic.” The full transcript of my conversation with ChatGPT is in the **appendix** of this paper. The spreadsheet I used to track this data is below.

Name	Username	Platform	Date	Content	Reference	IHRA Codes	AI Designation
Kanye West	kanyewest	Instagram	10/07/2022	Photo: Screenshot of text to Sean Diddy Combs which reads "This ain't a game / Ima use you as an example to show the Jewish people that told you to call me that no one can threaten or influence me / I told you this was war / Now gone get you some business [sic]" Caption: "Jesus is Jew"	<a href="https://twitter">https://twitter</a>	2	Potentially Antisemitic
Kanye West	kanyewest	Twitter	10/09/2022	"I'm a bit sleepy tonight but when I wake up I'm going death con 3 On JEWISH PEOPLE The funny thing is I actually can't be Anti Semitic because black people are actually Jew also You guys have toyed with me and tried to black ball anyone whoever opposes your agenda"	<a href="https://web">https://web</a>	1	Antisemitic
Kanye West	kanyewest	Twitter	10/30/2022	Photo: black and white headshot of Kyrie Irving, Caption: "There's some real ones still here"	<a href="https://twitter">https://twitter</a>	12	Not Clear
Kanye West	kanyewest	Instagram	10/31/2022	Screenshot of text with Def Jam Recordings co-founder Russel Simmons which reads, "I'm staying in America / I gotta get the Jewish business people to make the contracts fair / Or die trying."	<a href="https://www">https://www</a>	2	Potentially Antisemitic
Kanye West	kanyewest	Twitter	11/04/2022	"I'm starting to think anti Semitic means nigger"	<a href="https://www">https://www</a>	12	Both Antisemitic and Racist
Kanye West	kanyewest	Twitter	12/01/2022	"YE24 LOVE EVERYONE #LOVESPEECH" Photo: Screenshot of a Swastika combined with a Star of David	<a href="https://finan">https://finan</a>	5	9 Antisemitic
Kanye West	kanyewest	Instagram	03/25/2023	Photo: 21 Jump Street Poster, Caption: "Watching Jonah Hill in 21 Jump Street made me like Jewish people again / No one should take anger against one or two individuals and transform that into hatred towards millions of innocent people / No Christian can be labelled antisemite knowing Jesus is a Jew / Thank you Jonah Hill I love you"	<a href="https://www">https://www</a>		Not Antisemitic, but Problematic
Donald Trump	realDonaldTrump	Truth Social	10/16/2022	"No President has done more for Israel than I have. Somewhat surprisingly, however, our wonderful Evangelicals are far more appreciative of this than the people of the Jewish faith, especially those living in the U.S. Those living in Israel, though, are a different story — Highest approval rating in the World, could easily be P.M.! U.S. Jews have to get their act together and appreciate what they have in Israel - Before it's too late!"	<a href="https://www">https://www</a>	6	Potentially Antisemitic
Kyrie Irving	KyrieIrving	Twitter	10/27/2022	Link to a documentary called "Hebrews to Negroes: Wake Up Black America," which has been deemed as wildly antisemitic and is filled with antisemitic tropes	<a href="https://forw">https://forw</a>	2	3 Not Explicitly Antisemitic
Kyrie Irving	KyrieIrving	Twitter	10/29/2022	"I am an OMNIST and I meant no disrespect to anyone's religious beliefs. The "Anti-Semitic" label that is being pushed on me is not justified and does not reflect the reality or truth I live in everyday. I embrace and want to learn from all walks of life and religions. / Héla"	<a href="https://twitter">https://twitter</a>		Not Clear
Nick Fuentes	NickJFuentes	Twitter	01/25/2023	Gif: Ye24 presidential bid which then fades into a sign that reads "DEFCON 3"	<a href="https://twitter">https://twitter</a>	1	Not Clear
Nick Fuentes	NickJFuentes	Twitter	01/25/2023	"Globalist American Empire" "Zionist Occupied Government"	<a href="https://www">https://www</a>	2	Antisemitic

## Discussion

When designing this study, I had originally assumed that there would have been more content, but while doing research I realized that although each individual post was very powerful and caused lots of harm, there were actually not that many. Their ability to make headlines and generate reactions made it seem like there were way more of them than there were. Also, lots of the antisemitic comments that were said

during the recent rise came from places such as the news or other independent sources, which were not the focus of this study. Social media arguably plays the biggest role in recent antisemitism; however, it operates in a system that has many moving parts. It is important to remember that every bit of content created makes it to social media, where it is put into algorithms and echo chambers for people to interact with as they please.

As expected, the most antisemitism that I studied centered around tropes and conspiracies of Jewish control, whether that be of the media, the government, or something bigger.

This tracks with what I have felt as a Jewish person living through these times, and is proved by this research. West, Irving, and Fuentes all perpetrated ideas that Jews control things that they do not control, as evidenced by the fact that more than 36% of their tweets about Judaism in the time period relied on that trope. Donald Trump, however, did not ever promote this idea and instead played on the more classic and less mainstream trope of dual loyalty in his lone tweet. Remember, though, that most of Trump's antisemitism has come from outside of social media. I also discovered through this study that many social media posts don't come off as antisemitic without further context. Some of the content seemed not antisemitic at all, but when placed in the context of the world at the time it was posted, we can see how clearly antisemitic it is.

The fact that a majority of the posts in this study came from a rather small time period provides some hope that this rise in antisemitism could just be a spike and it will not persist, but the numbers of attacks and antisemitic sentiment that we have discussed previously would suggest otherwise. Even if it does die down after this spike, antisemitism is not going to go away fully. This becomes even more true when we do not acknowledge the hatred and we just let it go away naturally. Censorship and restrictions on hate online are definitely important, but there is a fine line to walk between censorship and sweeping hate under the rug. If we do not expose it and learn from it, then nothing will ever change for the better. It is not clear to me if the fact that it was so difficult to find most of this content online is a good or a bad thing. Only time will tell if we are now on the downslope of this high tide in antisemitism or not.

I found the most interesting part of my research to be my conversation with the generative artificial intelligence, ChatGPT. I was surprised at how well it was able to

interpret my descriptions of these posts without any context, and I was impressed with its ability to explain exactly why they were antisemitic. I believe it did a better job than I could've personally done in laying out the exact reasons behind why it gave the designation to each post. It felt very unbiased, and it rarely asserted anything without a disclaimer, generally calling for the reader to use additional context before reaching a final answer. I would highly recommend that others read parts of my conversation in the **appendix** of this paper, as they not only demonstrate the incredible functionality of AI, but also explain the ways that these social media posts are extremely problematic in terms that are easy to understand. One of the biggest problems that social media platforms have is not being able to identify hate speech because their algorithms lack the human-like intelligence that is required to spot more covert instances (Baider, 2022). In addition, hate speech is challenging to measure because of human subjectivity. However, this study shows proof that artificial intelligence, when used alongside human annotations, may be a suitable solution for identifying and explaining hate speech online. AI can also be a tool for researchers to conduct additional studies in the future, as it does well in eliminating human subjectivity, despite not being perfect.

## Conclusion

This study was very helpful in collecting the instances of antisemitism in recent months on social media from high-profile influencers, but there were some limitations. For one, the sample size was rather small, so it is hard to know if this data could be extrapolated properly to other individuals or time periods. Because so much of the content studied was deleted, it was impossible to gather more data on it like interactions with the public.

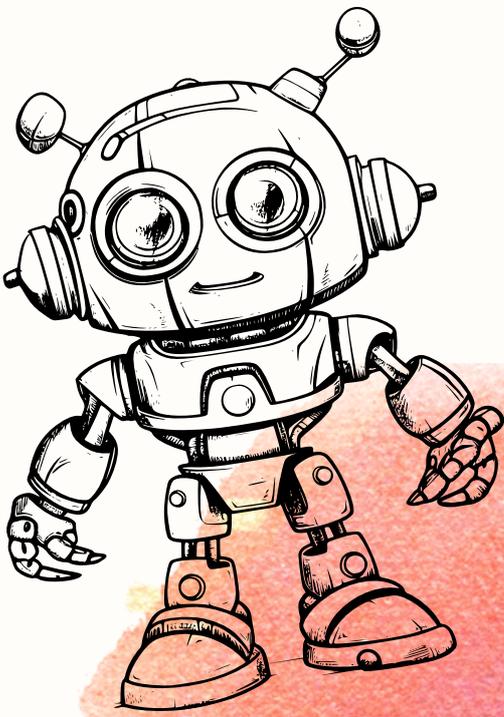
Antisemitism is also a very broad topic with many definitions, and none of them are perfect.

The IHRA working definition served as a good base for this study, but it doesn't include everything and feels slightly out-of-date now. It is also confusing when dealing with anti-Jewish sentiment versus anti-Israeli sentiment as some organizations, including the ADL, would classify both of these as antisemitic, while many others would not. In addition, working with AI always poses certain limitations. It doesn't operate with an up-to-date database and lacks recent and relevant context for this and similar studies and is also known to generate false data at times. It is possible, though, that AI may be a viable solution, or perhaps even the best solution, to the problem social media platforms and other institutions are having regarding

identifying and explaining hate speech online. Future research on this topic should continue to expand the scope of this project, studying more content from influencers and the public. If possible, the interactions and impact should also be measured and studied. It would be beneficial to study antisemitic content outside of social media as well. Finally, researchers should ask the question of what the proper way to deal with antisemitic and other hateful social media posts is. The general consensus today seems to be that they should be deleted with the account that posted them suspended, but it is not clear that this is the best way to combat hate. Further research must be done to find out the best way to proceed, in the hopes of minimizing antisemitism as much as possible and making sure that this is the last high tide this country ever has to go through.

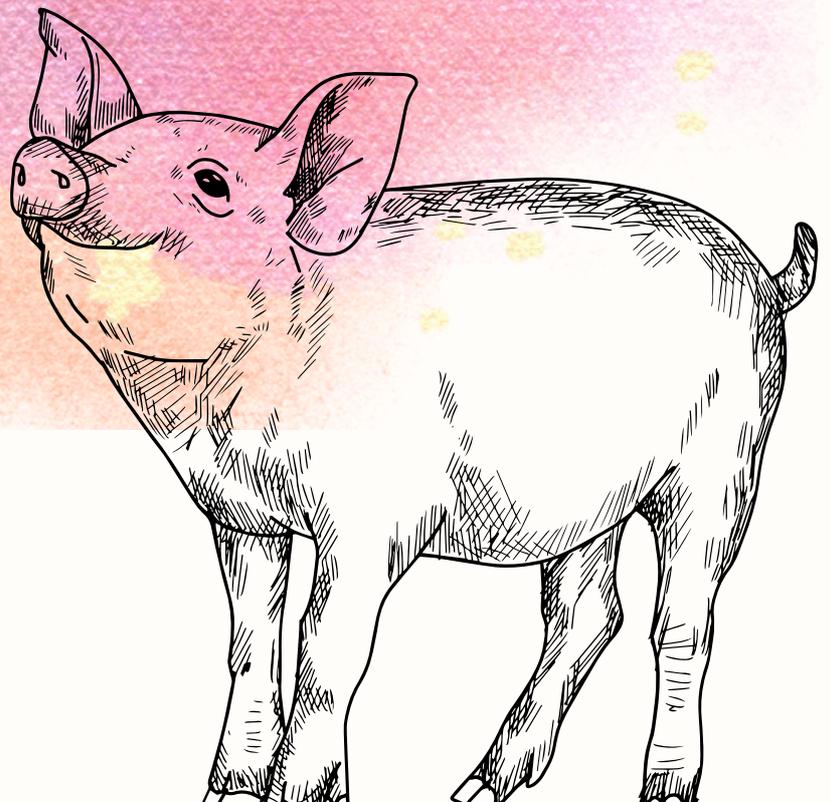
**References**

**Appendix**

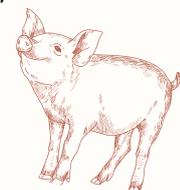


# My Literacy Adventure with People, AI, and a Piglet

By: Shota Maeda  
Soka University of America



A pink piglet is curiously looking at me from the small window. He might want to become friends with me. I look back at his eyes and realize that he is captured in the green cover of a tiny book. This was my first encounter with books and the moment I embarked on the adventure of literacy development. Since then, I, the adventurer, have overcome countless challenges through guidance from people around me. Now, I have discovered a secret key that empowers me to survive in the era of digitalization and globalization.



When I was as young as three years old, I opened a treasure box filled with sparkling pieces of an unknown world. My parents started reading me a book believing it would improve my language ability and make me smarter. I was absorbed in those bedtime stories under the orange light of a table lamp, which had the magical power to turn an ordinary preschool kid into an adventurer who explores a new world of imagination every night. As my mother was exhausted from her daily housework and often fell asleep before she finished reading an entire book, I had to wake her up again and ask her to read it from the beginning.

I couldn't read the books by myself, but I gradually memorized the sentences by ear and learned to recite them. My parents' look of amazement when I successfully memorized the whole book became a strong motivation for me to practice reading even harder. I still recall my favorite part from one of the books (see Fig. 1): "My dad is a pig. My mom is a pig, too. Therefore, I'm a piglet" (Otosan wa buta. Okasan mo buta. Dakara, boku wa kobuta-chan: おとうさんは ぶた。おかあさんも ぶた。だから、ぼくは こぶたちゃん。) (Kitayama, 1987, p. 3-8).

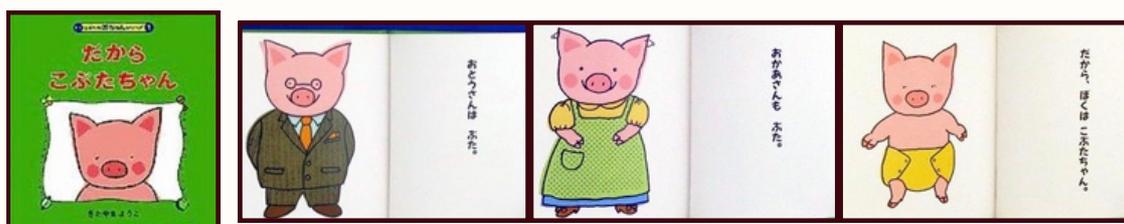
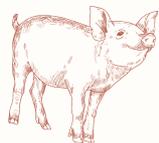


Fig. 1. Dad pig, mom pig, and piglet

It might sound silly, but I found these sentences beautiful and humorous. For me, this small green book about a pig family was a textbook that I put my best effort into reciting perfectly.

Because I loved reading books, my vocabulary expanded enormously. By the time I entered kindergarten, I was already familiar with *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*, which Japanese children usually learn in elementary school. While many children

unwillingly practice writing those characters, I simply enjoyed writing down random words in a notebook, such as the names of vegetables, furniture, and friends. Now that I think about it, I feel sorry for my mother, who, while preparing our meals, was often bothered by my ceaseless questions about *kanji*. However, every time I learned new words like *chair* (*isu*: 椅子), *Sunday* (*nichiyobi*: 日曜日), and *radish* (*daikon*: 大根), I was proud of myself and felt like I had become a grown-up.



By the time I entered elementary school, I had already become a bookworm. It was a great joy entering the world of dinosaurs, pyramids, or the moon in novels every day, after coming home from school. My unflagging desire to find new books was like an ambitious explorer searching for new islands. Just as a map and a compass helped the sailor to navigate the oceans, my mother took me to the nearby library every weekend to help me choose interesting books.

However, once summer break started, my ambitions grew more extensive, which is to say, I started reading more books faster, compelling her to bring me to the library more often. Being busy, she devised the strategy to borrow ten books at a time, so that I didn't finish reading too quickly. Contrary to her intention, I ended up reading all the books in one day as if I were competing with her.

For me, my summer homework to read fifteen books was easy, and in fact, my mother consulted my teacher for advice: "My son is reading too much and doesn't play with friends in the park. Should I break his habit?"

Despite my abundant experience in reading and practicing *kanji*, writing composition was my weak point. In particular, I detested the picture diary homework assigned during long holidays, in which I had to write down what happened every day and draw a picture related to the event. One of the reasons I hated the picture diary assignments was simply because I was embarrassed to show my terrible artistic drawings to my classmates, but more than that, I was too shy to explain my daily events and reveal my feelings through writing. As a little child, I felt embarrassed and stressed, so I seriously thought the diary assignment invaded my privacy.

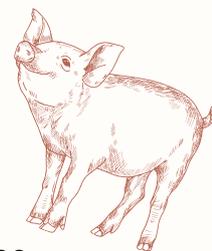
A turning point in my attitude toward writing arrived when I encountered a great literature teacher in 6th grade. She gave me detailed feedback and praised me whenever I submitted compositions or diaries. Moved by her sincerity, I gradually began to open up to her and share my experiences and thoughts to please her. The exchanges between my writing and her feedback continued like a letter:

*Me: I went to the aquarium last Sunday.*

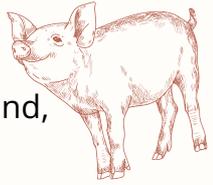
*Teacher: That's great! Who did you go with? What did you enjoy the most?*

*Me: I went with my family and enjoyed watching the dolphin show.*

*Teacher: Oh! It must be so much fun! Tell me more about it!*



After having these conversations for a year, I finally found pleasure in writing, and my weakness became my strength.



As my passion for learning went beyond the boundaries of the tiny Japanese island, my passion for acquiring English emerged. My first exposure to English was in elementary school, while most Japanese students started studying a second language in middle school. The main activities in the classes were singing songs, watching movies, and playing games in English, and I never felt like I was studying. Rather, I naturally had fun with my classmates and teachers using English.

I also loved chit-chatting with a teacher from Canada after each class, and I joined the English club just to talk with her. We chatted about our favorite foods, families, and cultures of Japan and Canada, and I imagined living abroad and speaking English fluently. Looking back, I wonder how I communicated with my poor English level, as I did not even know basic grammar back then. It was certainly not because of my courage but because of her kindness and patience that allowed me to speak English without fear of making mistakes.

A few years later, I started practicing English intensely out of necessity; I was determined to study at Soka University of America (SUA). Since a high score on an English exam was an application requirement, I had to prepare for academic reading and writing. As I memorized a long list of academic vocabulary and wrote essays with time limits, learning English suddenly changed its character from a fun activity to a hardship.

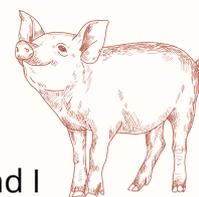
However, at that time, an English teacher generously offered to help me and enabled me to keep moving forward again. She corrected my essays and gave me advice almost weekly, pushing me to practice writing constantly. At first, even finishing one short essay was draining and painful, but her face came to my mind whenever I was about to escape from my desk, and I was determined to return the favor to her. As a result of my continual training with her for more than two years, my literacy in English became comparable to that of Japanese.

While my English acquisition has been going smoothly, one episode changed my mindset toward language learning. A teacher of mine who had studied abroad told me, "Your English level is amazing, and you can be confident in it. But, you must deeply consider what opinions you want to convey using English. Otherwise, once you go to the States, you'll be just a person who can speak." His words were eye-opening because I was somewhat satisfied with my language skills and almost forgot

the true purpose of learning English: to convey my feelings and opinions to people outside my country and learn from them.

Afterward, I started taking online conversation lessons, in which I read news articles and discussed the topics with tutors from different countries. These lessons allowed me to think about complicated global issues and exchange opinions using English. This was when I started to put English learning into practice based on reading and discussion.

An aspect of my literacy development is digital literacy. Western Sydney University (2024) defines digital literacy as “having the skills you need to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information is increasingly through digital technologies like internet platforms, social media, and mobile devices.” According to this definition, digital literacy has two aspects: communication and information.

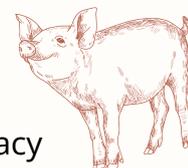


My parents bought me my first smartphone soon after entering middle school and I started communicating digitally with my family and friends. At first, they did not allow me to use chat apps like LINE, which many of my friends in Japan used, and my only way of communicating with them was by email. Having felt inconvenienced, I asked my mother the reason for the rule. She answered that writing an email takes longer than writing a chat, giving me more time to carefully consider how the person I'm writing to would feel when reading my message.

Even after the rule was removed, she continuously told me to be very considerate when communicating with someone online, as if I were actually talking to the person looking at their eyes. This advice taught me that digital communication sounds easy but requires a high capability to empathize and understand the person, just like a face-to-face conversation, which became the foundation of my digital literacy.

As I started using a smartphone and a computer, I gained more information through the internet and social media. Being impressed by how easy it is to acquire knowledge, I thought it would be a much better option than reading a book. My life as a bookworm seemed to end and was replaced by the life of a technical person.

However, my history teacher explained why reading textbooks in the digital age was essential in his class. He said, “The internet is certainly convenient, but it is overflowing with misinformation. To figure out if it is true or not, you need to build up the foundation of knowledge through secure sources, such as books. Only then



can you make effective use of the internet.” His words convinced me that my literacy skills in Japanese and English would never be wasted, even in the digital days.

As the world becomes increasingly digital, it is also becoming global. Accordingly, a sense of global citizenship is crucial to solving today’s intertwined global issues. While the definition of global citizenship varies, ChatGPT, which symbolizes state-of-the-art technologies today, suggests an interesting perspective:

Global citizenship is a concept that refers to the idea that individuals, regardless of their nationality or cultural background, have a sense of belonging to a larger global community. It involves recognizing that we are all interconnected and interdependent in an increasingly globalized world. (ChatGPT)

This definition implies the importance of literacy in globalization. High literacy ability is indispensable to gaining correct information beyond one’s community and understanding the interconnectedness of every human being on the earth.

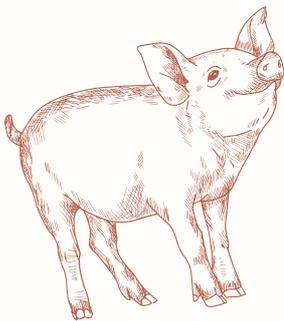
In 1996, Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of SUA, delivered a speech about global citizenship at Columbia University’s Teachers College. In his remarks, he suggests “the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life” is an essential quality to be a global citizen (Ikeda, 1996, p. 6).

These two definitions, which were given by AI and a human author, respectively, reminds me of when I learned about the Russian invasion of Ukraine last year. I imagined and empathized with the lives of people suffering there and felt connected to them. At the same time, it reminded me how an event in a distant country could politically and economically affect my country. In this way, I understood the world’s interconnectedness by synthesizing information from various sources, including TV, newspapers, and books.

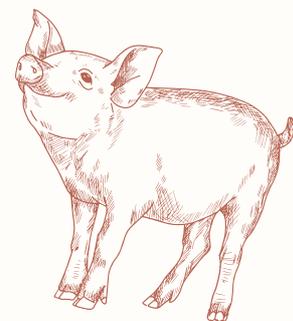
On the other hand, false information and lack of literacy can lead people to make poor judgments and misunderstand the relationships among countries and people. In fact, during the invasion, the Russian government propagated disinformation in the country to justify its inhumane actions against Ukraine (“Countering Disinformation with Facts,” 2022). Consequently, most people in Russia who believe in government controlled TV news support the invasion (Kolesnikov & Volkov, 2022). These examples show how the literacy to tell if the information is true is essential to be a global citizen who can grasp the world correctly. As the wars and conflicts continue throughout the globe, including the Israel-Hamas war, the attitude to listen

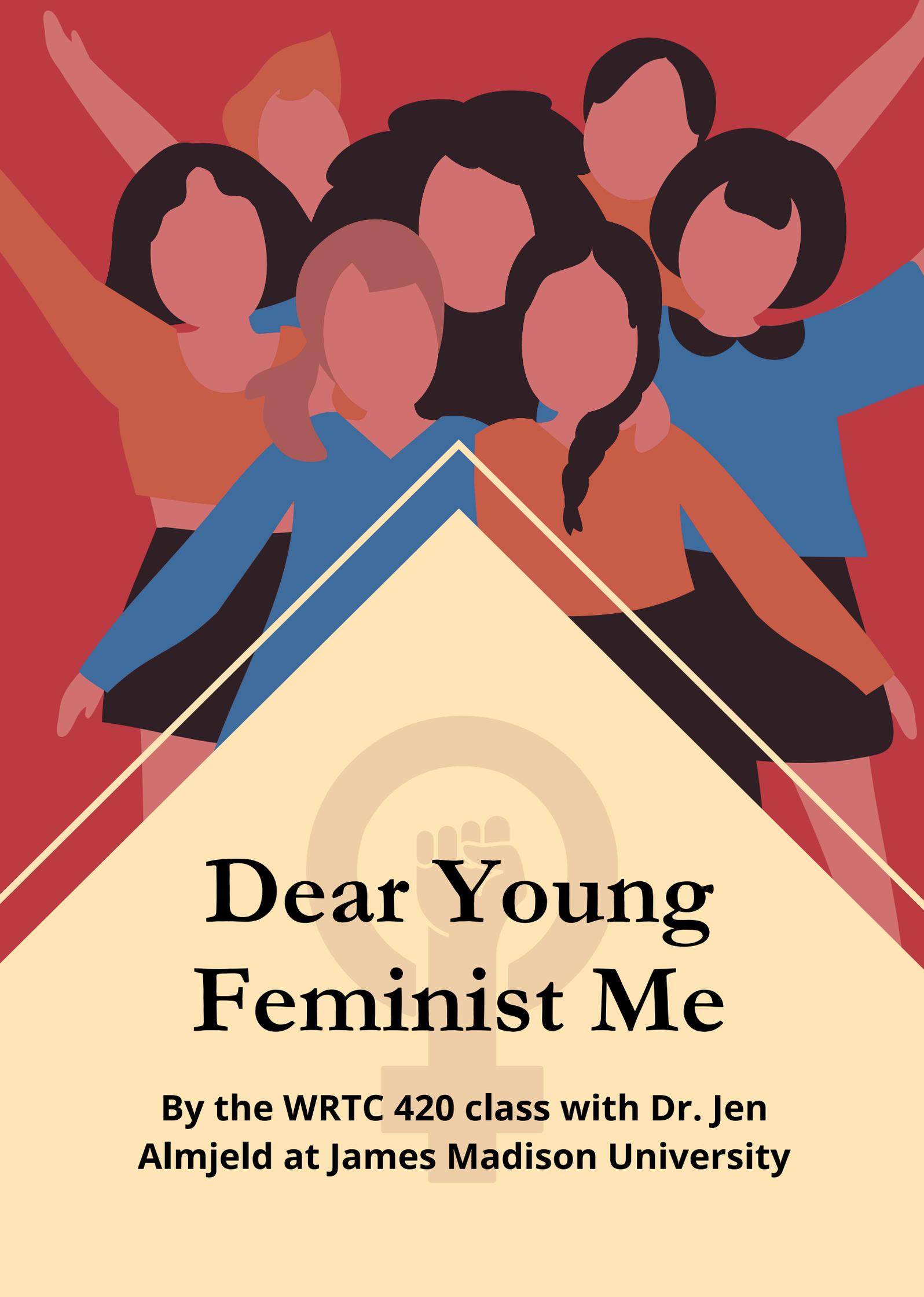
to both sides without bias and make informed decisions is becoming even more critical.

In retrospect, my lifelong literacy adventure began with blank pages, a picture of the piglet's lovely face on its first page. Since then, other pages have been colored with the memories of interactions with my parents and teachers. In the middle of my journey, I, the hero in the story, was equipped with gears of digital and global literacy, and I leveled up successfully. Now, the book's second chapter starts; my exploration of the unknown world as a global citizen never ends.



## References





# Dear Young Feminist Me

**By the WRTC 420 class with Dr. Jen  
Almjeld at James Madison University**

## Hey, Young Feminists!

We are a group of college students in a Feminist Rhetorics class, reaching out to share our stories and to tell you about some pretty cool feminists. We take up this work as an act of feminist rhetoric, guided by the feminist ideals of giving voice to fellow rhetoricians and challenging norms when sharing this work. Images shared here lead back to official websites or spaces for further information about feminist stars, and we hope you take some time to learn more about them all.

## Feminist Work

*This is a space for you to learn, find encouragement, and feel validated in your experience as a feminist.*

## Dear Young Feminist Me Letters

Check out the letters we wrote to our younger selves about the things we wish others would have shared with us. In this section, we will talk about many topics. Some have heavier content within them, but all topics were selected with intention, as we feel many young people share these experiences.

## Feminist Yearbook

After reading about feminist topics, we invite you to check out some amazing feminists in our Feminist Yearbook! We include singers like Taylor Swift, Boygenius, and Hozier; politicians like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ruth Bader Ginsburg; actresses like Emma Watson and Jennette McCurdy; athletes like Megan Rapinoe; and feminist letter writers like ourselves.

## Rhetoric and Feminism

As we consider feminism and rhetoric together and how they can be transformative, it seems important to begin with a few grounding definitions. **Feminism** is understood as the evolving practice of dismantling socially constructed gender/sex, race, socio-economic, sexuality, and ability-level norms and the redistribution of power to historically marginalized groups using an intersectional lens. The ultimate goal of feminist work is to cultivate unity and human rights for all. We can understand **rhetoric** as communicative acts aimed at persuading an audience.

### Camille

Dear Younger Me,

These are some of the things I wish I knew. I graduate in a little over a month and although I haven't fully processed that, there are some things I've learned on this journey. I've spent time appreciating things that don't hold me back anymore. You'll be happy to know we've grown up with much more joy in who we are. We are so much better at translating our negative thoughts into positive ones and relying on faith to do so.

Give your brain a rest from overthinking about how you look or what you wear. You don't have to dress to fit into a standard or because you're afraid of judgment. Wear what is comfortable to you in any space and for any condition of your body. The beauty standards that you think rule, are not everything. Actually they're nothing and how you portray yourself can't fit into a post on a screen. There's so much more to consider and spend your time thinking about. Being short, not super skinny, with curly hair coils and kinks is beautiful. You don't need to compare yourself to the people you pass in the halls that are deemed pretty and popular. The weight of comparison mentally is showing you a skewed inaccurate version of who you really are. Make space to think about the positive things you've experienced and all the blessings that are to come.

All the anxiety and stress built up is weighing heavy on you and needs to be released. Let yourself release both by talking to the people you love about your feelings. It's okay to be vulnerable and to be afraid of what the future is going to look like, but know that everything works out. You're so independent but that doesn't have to control your mental state in situations either. It's okay to ask for help and be patient with the change that comes from that.

Remind yourself that you are loved and that your identity isn't dependent on how you look, your grades, or how others perceive you. Your performance in school or in sports cannot give you a true identity so keep your eyes up and keep praying. Let things go and find balance in the busyness of school, work, and sports. Take time for yourself to feel re-energized. You're not lazy, your mind and body need the rest so validate and prioritize that time. Don't get so disappointed by lows because there are so many doors opening for you that you can't see.

Be comfortable making decisions without overthinking every outcome. Here are some tips that may be easier to understand if you read them: journaling is cool, talk things out, see yourself as fearfully and wonderfully made, treat yo self, take self care days. Craft, spend more time doing puzzles, and writing music. Remember that you're not wasting time because the work will always be there. Keep going and breathe knowing that life gets lighter.

Love,  
Future You

Rhetoric has been a conduit for feminist thought and work for centuries, characterized by subtle resistance and the malleability of tradition.

In her 1983 critique of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, feminist scholar Alice Walker discussed the way female writers of color can look to their mothers and, despite the lack of overt tradition, still find inspiration in the legacies of love and passion that women throughout history have exhibited through storytelling and craft: "And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on that creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read" ([Walker, 1993, p. 407](#)). Walker exemplifies the necessity of rhetoric's simultaneous subtlety and power to fulfill feminist ends.

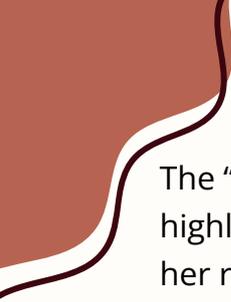
### **Motivations for the Project**

The students of JMU's 2023 Feminist Rhetorics class developed this project to communicate the importance and hallmarks of feminist rhetoric to a younger audience. "Dear Young Feminist Me" aims to educate and entertain young people about important rhetorical acts and contributions of feminist scholars and activists. Feminist rhetorician, Cheryl Glenn, famously took on the project of reclaiming "Our Mother Rhetoric" in her 1997 *Rhetoric Retold*. Like Glenn's work, and the work of other feminist rhetoricians dedicated to creating "new maps" of feminist rhetorical practice and contributions, we hope this project serves as a rhetoric map for writing students and feminists by, "taking us more places, introducing us to more people, [and] complicating our understanding" ([Glenn, 1997 p. 4](#)) of both feminism and rhetoric.

This goal was produced by reflecting on our younger feminist selves by answering these questions: What lessons do we wish we had learned? What advice would we have given to our younger feminist selves? Why is understanding feminism at a young age so important?

With this in mind, each contributor on "Dear Young Feminist Me" wrote a letter to their younger feminist selves with the specific focus to explore topics like mental health, bodies, social media, relationships, leadership, gender, and sexuality.

All letters are written through an embodied voice that educates future feminists and celebrates the many rhetorical approaches to be a feminist — especially in girlhood. Girlhood and adolescence can be one of the most complicated, confusing, and critical times in our lives; our project aims to validate these feelings, combat detrimental societal norms, and encourage self-exploration.



The “Feminist Yearbook” component of the “Dear Young Feminist Me” platform highlights both historical and modern feminist rhetoricians including Bell Hooks and her reclamation of the “Homeplace” (1990), and author, artist, and transfeminine social media activist Alok. The individuals featured in our yearbook have made a variety of contributions to the field of feminist rhetoric that should not go unnoticed.

### **A Discussion of Genres**

Using a digital space allows us to create a project that lives beyond us, doesn't require maintenance, and can be expanded over time. It lets us better organize our feminist letters with categories and add a search bar so young feminists can search for something that will resonate with them the most. “Dear Young Feminist Me” features multiple written components, namely a creative yearbook and personal epistolary pieces. We feared that users would have to jump between different formats because of this. Our best solution was to create a digital space that showcases all of these components in one place. The digital space also expands our reach to young feminists outside our local community at JMU. A physical copy may be better in some aspects, but the point of this project is to share with a wide, young audience.

### **Feminist Socials**

We want to thank all of the feminists who participated in creating our yearbook. It is because of your hard work and dedication that we are able to create such a valuable resource that showcases these powerful feminists. Feminism is more than just a word; it's a movement. We've linked social media accounts and websites so you can support these feminists. There are also various articles and autobiographies that highlight their lives and achievements.

### **And thank you...**

For taking the time to read all of our stories and learn about all the cool feminists in our yearbook! We have all worked extensively on this project as the course has come to its close and are happy it is in good hands with you all! As we all move on in life from James Madison University, this project will stay in our memories here.

It is important to us that viewers take away the idea that feminism is for everyone and should be celebrated as such.

Check out the link to their full website to read through all of the *Dear Young Feminist Me Letters* and the *Feminist Yearbook*!

Website

# Spanglish as a Discourse

**By: Stephanie Sanchez**  
**California State University, Fresno**



I chose to analyze the discourse of children of Mexican immigrants as it is something that has been deeply ingrained in my life. Specifically, I will analyze the literacy aspects surrounding the discourse because of the weight and the power that language carries. I see discourse as what I present to those around me. What I show to one discourse group may be different from what I show to another. I believe that calling this discourse “Spanglish” is simplifying it because there is such an enormous range of language that it could encompass, but that is exactly what this discourse is. It is an uncertain meeting of two “Lifeworld Discourses,” creating one that lives in between (Gee, 1996, p. 154). As a child of a Mexican and born in the USA for a better life, I feel that there is a sense of urgency to show my parents that the decision they made to come here was for the best. The Spanglish Discourse is a complex blend of two discourses colliding and creating a discourse that stands on its own.

As a child of Mexican immigrants, I am stuck in this in-between space. I do not know if I should greet people by saying hola and giving them a hug and a kiss, or if I should just shake their hand and say hello. I may have a preferred language, but that does not mean that it is the easiest way to be understood or to speak to people. Sometimes I forget words in one language, and I can not always use the other to compensate, because not everyone speaks that language. I am stuck going to Google Translate, knowing that growing up with both languages was a blessing but at the same time realizing that I may not have these issues if I had grown up listening to only one. I distinctly remember once in my adult life while working at a bank, I spoke to clients in Spanish instead of English when I did not mean to. I had heard them speaking in Spanish to each other, so my mind automatically responded in like, despite them not having requested it. I was originally mortified when it happened because people are often offended when they are spoken to in something other than English.

This discourse gives allowances, but it also takes. It gives opportunities to the speaker, but it may take credibility when someone hears the accent that they speak with.

Elizabeth B. Moje (2009), a college professor and one of the authors of “Literacy and Identity: Examining the Metaphors in History and Contemporary Research,” describes how literacy can be a social construct (p. 417). People will judge how literate I am by how I look or sound. When I sound different, society takes note, and I am judged on this. Some people do their best to avoid being different, but an accent is not easy to change. Being different due to an accent in the U.S. sometimes means that I am an

outcast. Most of the population speaks English, and many speak two languages, but showing more than one nationality is frowned upon in some circles. It takes practice and a separation from our Lifeworld Discourse to speak English like most do in the USA. This Lifeworld Discourse is the primary discourse in most cases. It is something that I have developed in order to face all parts of our world and our lives. Changing something so vital to the way I have portrayed myself to the world seems like giving up a part of myself (Moje et al., 2009, p. 427), as if I am turning my back on the culture where I was raised because I do not want to be viewed as different in society.

James Paul Gee (1996), an ASU professor and successfully published academic author, speaks on this in *Ideology in Discourse*, stating that, "Discourses are resistant to internal criticism and self-scrutiny since uttering viewpoints that seriously undermine them defines one as being outside them" (p. 159). The way that he describes it, I am an outsider to the discourse of those who had Spanish as a first language, and to those who had only English as a first language.

Spanglish speakers are straddling two discourses and are creating one that exists between the two in the process.

I stand alone as a first-generation Mexican American, but am still surrounded by others who share my experiences. I am not just Mexican and I am not just American, so I will never fit into those groups. Instead, I must stand in the doorway of both rooms with one foot on each side. I am in a constant state of change because I want to be better at speaking Spanish and not stutter through the sentences even though I am considered "fluent." All the while, I am complimented by those who do not understand and are teased by those who understand too well that I do not fit. Gloria Anzaldua (1987), the author of *Borderlands = La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, explains the concept well when she says, "Alienated from her mother culture, 'alien' in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can't respond, her face caught between *los intersticios*, the space between the different worlds she inhabits" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 20). She is describing the way it is to be stuck between two discourses, two cultures, and not be fully accepted into either.

Moje et al. (2009) state, "...[T]he self exists because people are aware of their relation to the social process as a whole and to the other individuals participating in it with them; they are reflexive, taking the attitude of the other toward themselves and consciously adjusting themselves to that social process" (p. 423). I see the authors'

point about the "Social Formation of the Self" as wishing that languages could flow without intermingling. It depends on who I am speaking to at any given moment; if I am talking to a person who only speaks Spanish, I am more likely to be embarrassed if I mispronounce words. On the other hand, if I am speaking with someone who resides in the Spanglish Discourse and I stumble over my words or use both languages cooperatively, it is not as embarrassing. As it happens, many people expect it and will help by making suggestions for words. As a member of the discourse, I have conversations where I blend the two languages, much like Gloria Anzaldúa does in *Borderlands*. She even offers a term to explain the blending and combining of the two languages when she says, "We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 55). That forked tongue may sound something like, "Vamos a parkear la troka aquí." *Parkear* and *troka* are not considered real words in Spanish or English. They are a blend of the two languages, not fitting in either discourse.

Even though I am in this border space alongside every other child of immigrant parents, I am also alone because there is such a wide spectrum of language.

Some know only basic Spanish and speak it with a thick accent; others prefer Spanish and will taunt people like me. This is because while I do not speak with an accent to my ears, I do not know the proper words or pronunciations, so I start creating them. There are sentences that I remember speaking to my family in Mexico that were a mix of an English and a Spanish word mashed together. Words like "parkear" or "toallita," were met with strange looks and requests for clarification. I do not know the proper terms for many things, so I am stuck performing charades and showing examples when I want to communicate with my family. At home with my family and friends, I constantly speak in this Spanglish slang, with Spanish and English intermingling. I forget that along with entering a new country, I am also entering a completely different discourse.

Although the Spanglish Discourse may be difficult to navigate, it is also where I find my community. I find people who share many experiences with me as children of Mexican immigrants. I have heard many of us comment about being in the same, or in a similar situation when our report cards would come back as kids. Because of the contradicting languages, we struggled in the required English classes at school, and it showed in our grades. Our parents all seemed to have the same reactions, which we find funny now as we look back. They would ask us how we could speak English every day and still fail it. There are also similar situations when our parents would

ask us to translate something that came in the mail. As children we often did not deal with professional documents at school, so we found this request difficult. However, when we explained that to our parents, they were always confused. Speaking and connecting with others in this complicated discourse helps us feel heard. Developing these relationships with others and reminiscing about our similar childhood experiences feels somewhat therapeutic.

The Spanglish Discourse is extremely complex and has many moving parts. In this way, it contains almost too many facets to fit under the umbrella of discourse at all. The discourse feels more like a place where the children of Mexican immigrants can find others who understand the struggles they resonate with. It is difficult to be part of this discourse, but the benefits of having two languages outweigh the challenges that may come from it. Sharing the weight and the triumphs of those who are Spanglish speakers is what paves the way for others to try.

## References

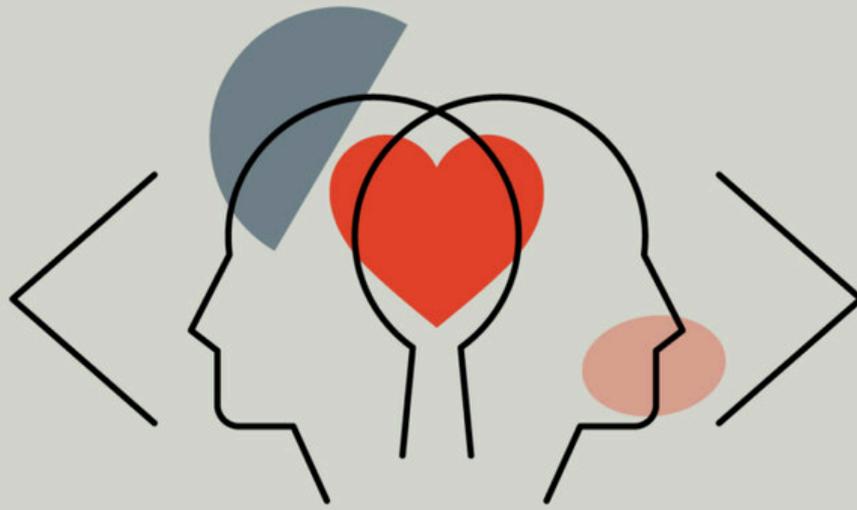


# The Need for Redesign of the SHSU Website

Usability & UX Report: An Analysis of the SHSU  
Active Minds Website

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# BEST MENTAL HEALTH WEB DESIGN

Picture Retrieved from: <https://strongrootswebdesign.com/best-mental-health-website-design/>

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## **i. Introduction**

Contemporary college students are constantly struggling with mental health issues. They must reach out to organizations around campus to find support and counseling to solve these problems. It is evident that Active Minds, a website dedicated to improving students' mental health, is easily accessible for a variety of students and is intentional with their resources and information. If not, it risks leaving students feeling helpless or misunderstood. The website introduces the Sam Houston State University (SHSU) Active Minds website as a part of the larger organization, Active Minds, which is dedicated to addressing mental health concerns. As a user, I found that its homepage design does not have the valuable information organized, causing me to feel confused or lost while navigating the website. I also noticed a lack of diverse representation of gender and BIPOC. Many students attend SHSU and experience mental health issues at various levels regarding their gender, race, or ethnic background, and they should be represented on the website. In this report, I offer suggestions to add organizational strategies that implement new and diverse sections to links and information, which allows a variety of users to easily find help.

As I read further into the SHSU Active Minds website, I interpreted the language as presenting mental health as a singular problem that can be solved with limited resources or counseling that were difficult to find on the website. However, I found that there are layered assertions connected to oppressive systems; these assertions influence additional risks for experiencing stigma and consequent mental health disorders among people of different genders and BIPOC (Zelaya, 2022). As an organization, I urge the website to investigate sources that suggest methods for counseling individuals based on their gender and cultural background. This report's primary purpose is to bring attention to ways to progress the website's design and affirm the user's identity to increase positive user experience.

## **ii. Methods**

For this report, the research used to conduct this analysis was presented through a think-aloud protocol for usability testing and attained through published articles by scholars and professionals. According to the SHSU Active Minds website, 39% of students in college experienced a significant mental health issue, and 76% of young adults turn to a friend first when they are struggling instead of institutional help. The main question that guided this research was as follows: Why do most students not turn to their college campus resources for mental health support, and what can the Active Minds website do to increase engagement to help fix this? To gain more information about this question, I looked into SHSU's library database through a website channel like "doi.org," and ".edu" to ensure that the data I collected communicated professional and educationally researched perspectives.

### **iii. Research Behind Gender & Race in Mental Health**

The bulk of my research measures the impact of gender and race on mental health. Those identifying as non-binary, transgender, agender, and others along the gender spectrum are not directly referred to or represented in these studies. In my report, I use the term “women” as those who identify with the female sex, identity, anatomy, or biological structure. The scope of my research addresses women generally, which presents a limited view of the gender spectrum. This raises questions on the matter of research pertaining to non-binary individuals. I endorse the argument that gender roles, social structures, and fear of racial discrimination exacerbate the mental health of certain individuals.

College students experience increased rates of stress and anxiety due to their efforts in pursuing higher education. Additionally, college students experience differences in mental health due to gender. According to Kasper Burger and Diego Strass (2023), disparities in life experienced between young men and women often occur due to macro-structural forces, such as the result of unequal socialization experiences, social norms, cultural values and ideologies, institutional arrangements, political trends, and economic and welfare systems. In addition to gendered differences, there are sociocultural determinants such as national policies, living standards, working conditions, etc. that cumulatively impact different populations’ experiences. These populations have higher exposure to risk factors and less access to opportunities that protect their mental health (Anand, 2020). For example, recently the U.S. overturned *Roe v. Wade*, allowing states to prohibit abortions, and limit women's access to healthcare. This directly affects cis-gendered women, and heightens their stress and anxiety with regard to potential pregnancy, rape, and sexual assault. This case does not directly affect cis-gendered men or their healthcare to the same extent, and therefore would have less of an effect on their mental stability.

To deal with these conditions, men and women respond differently to developmental challenges, or they develop gender-specific strategies to cope with mental health. In a recent study, it was found that “self-esteem [and] self-efficacy [were] significantly lower among women than among men, [and] levels of negative affectivity were significantly higher...” (Burger and Strassman, 2023). The difference in self-esteem, self-efficacy, and negative affectivity aids the consideration that gender related to sociocultural and external factors affects our internal states and compasses which conceptualize how each gender copes or interacts with the stress and adversity affecting their mental health.

Moreover, my research regarding race stems from a post-quarantine and COVID-19 social sphere. Heather Dahl (2022) investigates BIPOC students at universities living in low-income and high-density geographical areas that disproportionately face inequities. She refers to Khazanchi et al. (2020), noting how historical racial segregation downpour factors contribute to BIPOC risk factors as differential quality and distribution of housing, transportation, economic opportunity, education, food, air quality, health care, and more. Through her findings, Dahl reveals that mental health, since the pandemic, has been exacerbated amongst BIPOC students, but there was no significant increase in their anxiety or feelings of depression in their white counterparts. Dahl says, "...while a White individual might experience COVID-19 as a single event or trauma, a Person of Color might experience COVID-19 compounded by higher incidents of implicit racism, racialized trauma, and healthcare inconsistency" (Dahl, 2022). Additionally, an increase in racial discrimination since the pandemic has magnified anxieties and stresses among Black and Asian individuals due to an increase in racially motivated hate crimes. Fearing or having experienced discrimination worsens mental health among BIPOC students, leading to issues of substance abuse, alcohol use disorder, and major depressive disorder (Zelaya, 2022). Overall, BIPOC have additional risks, stresses, and anxieties that influence and accompany their mental health struggles due to their social and living conditions.

My research firmly highlights how gender, racial, and ethnic determinants impact individuals' mental health and should be assessed on the SHSU Active Minds website. It is more reason to provide further resources that address these issues for students at SHSU.

#### **iv. Limited Accessibility for Users**

In web design, there are seven principles of universal design associated with plain language structure that ensure any user can easily access information. There are two potential issues with this website regarding its user accessibility. First, the website does not utilize two universal design principles: perceptible information and low physical effort. This complicates how the user interprets the website and gains important guidance from the website. Moreover, the website does not acknowledge the broader social context behind mental health. There is an inattention to the influence that gender and race have on certain mental health concerns. With this, the website fails to consider various users or audiences, leading to user discouragement.

##### ***a. Lack of Universal Design Principles***

Starting on the website's home page, I would like to point out that this page does not fully utilize the universal design principles of perceptible information and low physical effort, meaning it does not prioritize the necessary information for a user

who is battling mental health. In plain language, the universal design principles benefit users when wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and utilize that information. Currently, the resources for the user are at the bottom of an extensive article linked to the homepage, making it difficult for a user to find. It would be best for the website designers to relocate the resources to the front of the homepage and integrate a navigational toolbar at the top or side for better guidance. In doing so, it essentializes the plain language structure by offering enough detail to limit questions and dividing key information.



Figure 1: Picture retrieved from: [SHSU Active Minds Website Article](#)

One way to increase the **ability to perceive vital information** is by moving rhetorical artifacts (images) and text around. If a student is not aware of current events that will improve their mental health, then they might lose sight of what to do next. As a user, I found it quite difficult to find details on events, workshops, or contact information. I found an event calendar for Mental Health Awareness week (see Figure 1 pictured right) that I believe would function best on the homepage so a user can find support easily. Another element that could be moved to the front of the homepage are the parts of text in the second to last paragraph which say, "Students may also find various resources throughout the year at the Counseling Center such as a Helpline" and "Those seeking assistance can reach the Helpline at...". These indicate where a user can go and provide significant contact information if the user needs to reach out. This information is not helpful to a student at the bottom of a lengthy article where they may not make it to.

Additionally, to **reduce the amount of effort used to find information**, the website could implement a navigation toolbar or drop-down menu. There are two

supplementary links on the homepage with no heading, title, or description attached to it. The lack of directory details hinders usability because it means a user must scavenge the website to find what they are looking for, leaving them feeling discouraged. To help the user identify information, a toolbar with descriptive links should be displayed at the top of the homepage to give users a preview of each link. Additionally, to follow plain language conventions, supplementary links should include brief, descriptive headings and a short paragraph with a clear topic sentence that reflects the focus to help users read easily.

### ***b. Perpetuation of Male Mental Health Stigma***

The homepage and articles associated with the website are informative and helpful, however, they do not discuss gender-related issues in mental health or show representation for male-identified students. For some reference, the photos under the “Recent Events” section on the homepage display mostly female-presenting students. Only two out of the eleven photos capture male students; one is part of the Active Minds chapter, captured in a group photo, and the second is engaging with the “Send Silence Packing” event. The nine other photos all capture female students. Holistically, the homepage does not depict male-identified students as a group who struggle with mental health, nor does it implicate gender differences in mental health. In this sense, the inability to display and communicate gender differences in mental health undermines the diverse challenges that affect men and women, and perpetuates the male-oriented mental health stigma that disaffirms male mental health. The website could highlight an array of photos that show **survivors, stories, and subjects of all genders and infographics with information** regarding gender as a factor in mental health. This way it encourages both men and women to seek support.

Sam Houston State’s population is made up of **63.8%** women and **36.2%** men, meaning that men make up the minority. This does not mean that men should be represented less, but that men should have more representation. Mental health studies relate to four factors: stability, suspicion, anxiety, and tension. There are significant gender differences in three out of four of these factors. According to an empirical analysis by Renbao Liu (2021), men with borderline personality disorder are more vulnerable than women and have a higher risk of death by suicide. Furthermore, male college students “often ... [are] indecisi[ve], fickle, weak in self-control, evasive from reality, easily restless or tired” which is significantly different from female college students. Thus, male mental health must be equally addressed as a concern but with a different form of outreach.

Through this analysis, Liu (2021) offers a suggestion on two accounts: First, college students should learn and understand the gendered differences that affect their mental health to help with self improvement, and second, **college educators should fully grasp the specific gender differences and implement gender-specific, personalized, and targeted education and guidance** when counseling students with mental health concerns. In this aspect, the website does not engage with targeted education or counseling which characterizes solutions to help mental health as simple and universal. I offer the idea of developing an infographic that explains the previously mentioned data, in simplified and digestible terms, along with resources for counseling and self-care forums that accommodate men and women's mental health differences alike.

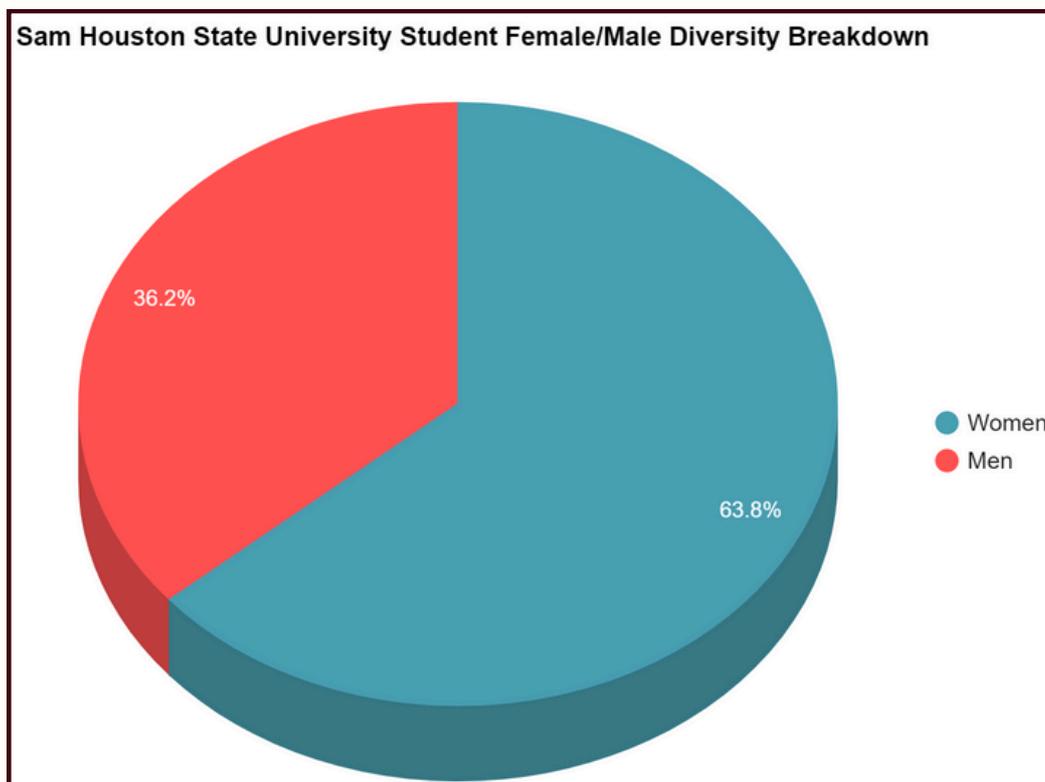


Figure 2: Picture retrieved from: [College Factual](#)

### ***c. Inattention to Racial/Ethnic Diversity***

As a part of the BIPOC community, I felt that the website did not **illustrate many different students of color and ethnicity**. Half of SHSU is made up of BIPOC, while **48%** are white students. There is a lack of BIPOC students in photos, videos, and rhetoric. The majority of the photos are white students. A student user with a non-white identity may not feel understood or seen, therefore, they will not be motivated to seek help or benefit from the resources that the organization offers. Additionally, with no discussion or consideration of BIPOC student-related fears, anxieties, and stresses that are connected to certain social determinants and socioeconomic factors such as education, income, and employment, these communities of students are at risk for further struggle.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Active Minds website with links for 'active minds', 'about us', 'our programs', 'about mental health', 'get involved', 'donate', 'shop', 'sign up', and a search icon. Below the navigation is a large image of a diverse group of six young adults standing outdoors in front of a flowering tree. They are holding a light blue sign that reads: 'We are committed to advocacy and education that creates a supportive and inclusive environment.' To the right of the image is the heading 'empowering you to take action' in a blue, italicized font. Below the heading is a paragraph of text: 'With a presence at more than 800 campuses, schools, communities, and workplaces each year, we're reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, creating communities of support, and saving lives. Our proven approach is unique to Active Minds – reaching 1.8 million people nationwide last year alone.' Below this is another paragraph: 'Mental health issues among young adults are on the rise. They are especially pronounced among Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) young adults.' This paragraph has several words highlighted in yellow. Below that is a paragraph: 'Through award-winning programs and services and with a health equity lens, we're inspiring and empowering a new generation to change the mental health culture on campuses, in schools, in the workplace, and across communities.' At the bottom of the text area is a link: 'Explore our unique programs and resources below. Or, check out our alphabetical listing.'

Figure 3: Picture retrieved from: [Active Minds Website](#)

As a solution, it would strongly benefit the website to **add a tab/link section along with a new navigation toolbar that contains designated resources** like help-lines, awareness articles, self-care lists, etc. If you refer to Figure 3 (pictured above), you can also see how Active Minds has a clickable bar menu at the top. This is the design element that would best suit SHSU's page, along with a breakdown of the mental health issue, facts, and a link to external resources at the bottom. For some context on the race and ethnic issue on mental health, it is found that "disparities in mental health status between racial/ethnic minority and White populations occur at the intersection of race/ethnicity" in which they are more likely to have increased stress and anxiety (Zelaya, 2022). The Active Minds organization includes these insights on their website, which I have highlighted in Figure 3. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, discrimination against BIPOC communities has heightened, and it worsens the mental health of BIPOC, leading to issues of substance abuse, alcohol use disorder, and major depressive disorder (Zelaya, 2022). This is why I believe it is detrimental to address the race and ethnic issues in mental health by providing further resources on the website. SHSU Active Minds could motivate underrepresented students who face additional risks of experiencing stigma and consequent mental health issues or substance use disorders.

## v. Conclusion

I strongly urge that the website reorganize helpful information for the user and place it at the top of the website with navigational tools to indicate its significance. It would also benefit both the website and user if they included more visuals and rhetoric that

display male and BIPOC students to assure that all student mental health concerns are understood and represented. As previously mentioned, a new section or infographic on gender and race should contain additional online resources. Here are some to consider:

### **Gender**

- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/women-and-mental-health>
- <https://www.bethedifferencescv.org/resources-for-men.php>

### **Race/Ethnicity**

- <https://www.csusm.edu/counseling/race.html>
- <https://www.theprojectlotus.org/>

Altogether, these actions will improve the website's usability and user-experience by making it more comprehensible and fostering a sense of compassion from a variety of users.

## References



Photo courtesy of James Madison University