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# THE HILLTOP REVIEW

A Journal of Western Michigan Graduate Students' Research

Volume 11  
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Fall 2018



“Filter” by Elizabeth R. Johnson

## **The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Student Research**

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## NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

I am excited to present the fall 2018 issue of *The Hilltop Review*, which showcases the excellent research and creative work of graduate students at Western Michigan University. This issue contains a wide array of topics—from introversion to self-defense to religion’s influence on sexual affect—that reflect the diverse interests and projects of our academic community. *The Hilltop Review* aims not only to provide a platform for these projects, but to bring them into conversation with the work of graduate students across the University and beyond. Accomplishing this mission is not possible without strong submissions and attentive readers, and it is my hope that the *Hilltop* continues to find both in the future.

The *Hilltop* offers several monetary awards in recognition of graduate student achievement. Congratulations to the winners of this issue’s awards! Ryan P. Castillo will receive \$500 for the paper “There’s No ‘Me’ in ‘Imgur’: Applying SIDE Theory and Content Analysis to Viral Posts on Imgur.com;” Kirsten Welch will receive \$250 for the paper “An Application of Risk Analysis to the Doctrine of Self-Defense;” and Brody Van Roekel will receive \$150 for “The Christianization of Judith: Considering the Hieronymian Translation of *Liber Iudith* and Jerome’s Christianizing Agenda.” For creative work, Elizabeth R. Johnson will receive \$250 for the photograph “Filter” and Steven J. Maloney will receive \$250 for the poem “Autumn.”

Throughout my first semester as the director and editor of the *Hilltop*, I have been fortunate to work alongside fellow students, faculty, and staff whose diligence and wisdom shaped the following issue. First, I would like to thank former editors Zahra Ameli Renani and Damon D. Chambers, along with GSA President Amaury Pineda, for helping me transition into this position. I am also grateful for the authors and artists who submitted their work, as well as the cast of peer reviewers who worked intently to secure outstanding research and creative work for publication. Special thanks to this issue’s Editorial Board: Andrew Bassford; Aneudy Mota Catalino; Damon D. Chambers; Diana Charnley; Alisa Heskin; and Marilyn Markel. Your prompt and insightful feedback was invaluable. Finally, I would like to thank Maira Bundza, our ScholarWorks Librarian, for assisting with our online publication and Dr. Charlie Kurth for his guidance in navigating the life of a journal.

I look forward to working with authors and reviewers as we prepare for the spring issue of the *Hilltop*. The deadline to submit work or apply for the position of peer reviewer is February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please email me at [gsa-hilltop@wmich.edu](mailto:gsa-hilltop@wmich.edu) with any questions about the submission or peer review process. Thank you for your interest and enjoy this issue.

Sincerely,

Adam Waggoner  
Director and Editor, *The Hilltop Review*

# **There's No "Me" in "Imgur": Applying SIDE Theory and Content Analysis to Viral Posts on Imgur.com**

*Ryan P. Castillo*

## **Abstract**

The Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) asserts that social (i.e., collective) identities are more salient under conditions of anonymity, prompting "deindividuation" as group members place more focus on community standards and downplay individual differences. As a result of deindividuation, social standards become the driving force of group interaction, and the successful practice of group norms identify individuals' in-group status while reinforcing the social identity of the community. The current study applies the SIDE model to the anonymous image-sharing platform Imgur.com to ascertain whether self-referential posts are assessed more negatively than other-referential and non-directed content, and to examine whether posts of varying referential-type occur more frequently across post-type subcategories. A content analysis of 42 posts to Imgur's "front page" revealed that self-referential posts receive significantly more "downvotes" (i.e., negative assessments) than non-directed content and substantially more downvotes compared to other-referential posts. Further, self-referential content was most common within the subcategories of "capitalizing" and "social support," as compared to "community identification" and "information / mobilization" for other-referential, and "visually appealing" and "humor" for non-directed posts. The findings suggest that the Imgur community engages in voting habits that favor the maintenance of social identity over the sharing of individuating information, providing sustained support for the applicability of SIDE in anonymous online contexts such as Imgur.

## Introduction and Literature Review

Throughout the past several decades, the growing prominence of the Internet in everyday life has profoundly shaped the ways in which we communicate and assemble, consequently altering the means by which individuals draw upon available networks for social, emotional, and informational support. In addition to major online social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, an ever-growing expanse of niche virtual communities provides users with a wealth of opportunities for the formation and maintenance of interpersonal ties, both casual and intimate, including online dating sites, gaming communities, and image- and video-sharing platforms (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2011; Kobayashi 2010; Maghrabi, Oakley, and Nemati 2014). Similar to popular social networking sites in terms of increasing popularity, communicative utility, and the extensive, heterogeneous user-bases of which they are composed, image-sharing platforms present fruitful and, to date, under-studied online arenas wherein users can contribute to, and self-select into, a network of like-minded individuals (Hale 2017; Mikal et al. 2014). However, unlike dominant social media, image-sharing sites are most often anonymous in nature, an element of online interaction that not only stifles self-presentation but raises questions regarding the determination of group membership in the absence of individuating information (Lea and Spears 1991; Postmes et al. 2001). Given the scarcity of research examining group dynamics in anonymous online communities, the current study adopts the Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) and applies content analysis to better understand the ways in which users of the image-sharing platform *Imgur.com* uphold a social (i.e., collective) identity through their assessment of shared-content.

### *Imgur.com*

*Imgur.com* is a popular image-sharing website that has been online since 2009. Currently, the platform is ranked as the 13<sup>th</sup> most-visited site in the U.S., hosting over 250 million monthly-active users (i.e., *Imgurians*) who, in addition to casual visitors, account for billions of post views per month (Alexa 2018; *Imgur.com* 2018). Although *Imgur* may be broadly categorized as social media owing to users' ability to share a wide-range of content (e.g., text, pictures, GIFs, hyperlinks, etc.), publicly respond to others' posts, and send personal messages to other community members, *Imgur* differs from dominant social networking sites in two integral aspects: anonymity and bidirectional voting.

Unlike, for instance, Facebook and Twitter, *Imgurians* are unlikely to share personal, identifying information over the platform and instead assume anonymous (and often humorous) usernames, such as "AFrustratedRetailStaffMember" and "PiggyStarDust." Further, *Imgurians* are often admonished for sharing "selfies" (i.e., photos of oneself) over the platform, and it is widely-understood among the community that posting such pictures is only acceptable during major holidays,

particularly Christmas and Halloween. Regarding Imgur's bidirectional voting system, users are able to either "upvote" (positively assess) or "downvote" (negatively assess) any content publicly-posted to the site, including both the posted content itself and individual comments on a given post. This bidirectional voting is in stark contrast to, say, Facebook's "likes" and "reactions," which do not allow users to explicitly assess content in an either positive or negative fashion. Importantly, Imgur's bidirectional voting system is responsible for filtering posts through one of three daily-updated content galleries: "user-submitted" (recently submitted posts with few votes), "rising" (posts that are rising in popularity), and "most viral" (the most popular posts of the day). While all content publicly-posted to Imgur.com is archived and remains available unless otherwise removed by the original poster or site administrators, content that reaches the "front page" (i.e., "most viral" content) is most likely to be viewed by users and those casually visiting the site, though only Imgurians registered to the site are able to utilize the voting system.

In sum, Imgur constitutes an anonymous social media platform wherein the popularity of shared content is decided via a bidirectional voting system. The anonymous nature of the site, however, makes it difficult to determine exactly who comprises the Imgur community, and how users' personal characteristics correlate with posting and voting behaviors. Yet, the few available studies examining group dynamics on Imgur.com suggest that a "common voice" exists among Imgurians, such that users exhibit "a generally cohesive tone, characterized by overall consistent responses, and overt behavior correction" (Mikal et al. 2014:506). Interestingly, previous research posits that anonymity is precisely the communicative element responsible for the occurrence of common voice on Imgur, with the lack of individuating information in tandem with the interactive structure of the site giving rise to standard communication practices that serve to solidify in-group membership and strengthen social identity among users (Hale 2017; Mikal et al. 2014). Thus, regardless of whether objective, identifiable similarities or differences can be observed between individual Imgurians, a collective identity is likely upheld on Imgur.com, one that may be indicated by the posting and voting behaviors of its users.

### **The SIDE Model**

The Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) was developed as an alternative explanation to deindividuation, or "loss of self," that has been meaningfully applied to computer-mediated interaction (Hale 2017; Lea and Spears 1991; Postmes et al. 2001). Whereas classical deindividuation theory posits that anonymity among group members causes a loss of self-awareness and identity, which leads to non-normative behavior, the SIDE model predicts that

anonymity is likely to result in group conformity (Spears and Lea 1994). The SIDE model hinges on the assumption that individuals balance multiple identities, including both individual personalities and social (or collective) identities. In keeping with identity theory, SIDE conceptualizes *identity* as internalized expectations for the social positions held by a given individual and contends that such internalizations are not only predictive of behavior, but that the probability of invoking a given identity (i.e., identity salience) is both contextually and interactively contingent (Lea and Spears 1991; Stryker and Burke 2000). Contrary to personal identity, which may be shaped by both psychological and contextual determinants, social identities are constructed and maintained in accordance with standards predetermined by a group of interest. Consequently, individuals who gain membership into a given group develop an understanding of group norms and construct a social identity that corresponds and conforms to the group dynamic (Stryker and Burke 2000). From the SIDE perspective, deindividuation occurs when a social identity becomes more salient than an individual identity under conditions of anonymity (Lea and Spears 1991). Not only does deindividuation downplay members' personal motives and characteristics, but its effects prompt individuals to focus on group activities and social maintenance (Lea and Spears 1991; Postmes et al. 2001). In other words, social norms become the driving force for group interaction, and the successful practice of group norms identifies an individual's in-group status while reinforcing the social context and social identity of the group.

Previous research has demonstrated the applicability of SIDE in a variety of virtual settings, including social networking sites, online games, and image-sharing sites such as Imgur.com (Attrill 2012; Hale 2017; Hughes and Louw 2013; Mikal et al. 2014). Studies of Imgur in particular suggest that the site not only facilitates deindividuation via users' anonymity, but that this process is evidenced by the communication of, and adherence to, community standards in comments and posted content (Hale 2017; Mikal et al. 2014). Mikal et al. (2014) refers to these posting and commenting practices as "common voice," and found that users respond to posts using formulaic language, such as common terms, repetitious jokes, and references to previously posted content. Further, Mikal et al. (2014) found that both posts and comments exhibiting features of common voice are rewarded with "upvotes" and positive feedback, suggesting that users expect other Imgurians to understand specific types of responses and intend to capitalize on references to a shared culture. Findings from Hale's (2017) study of commenting practices on Imgur both support and extend Mikal et al.'s (2014) research, showing that comments conveying disapproval/disagreement with content featured on the front page of the site are more likely to be sanctioned with "downvotes," and that common voice is most evident across particular post categories, including "community identification," "capitalizing," and "humor."

Taken together, the findings from previous research suggest that users of Imgur.com actively maintain a social identity through the use of group-centered language and the sanctioning of content and comments that fail to reflect shared community standards, ultimately providing strong evidence for the applicability of the SIDE model to this platform. However, although past studies have successfully categorized posts and examined the differential reception of content and comments that are in accordance with a “common voice” upheld by the community, research has yet to examine whether posts are assessed differently according to whether the content explicitly references the original poster rather than the community at large or no one in particular. In other words, how do Imgurians react to self-referential information under the effects of deindividuation? The following research questions and expectations are posed, and subsequently explored through a content analysis of posts on Imgur.com:

**RQ1:** Are self-referential, other-referential, and non-directed posts assessed differently by the Imgur community?

**H1:** Self-referential posts will be assessed more negatively by the Imgur community than both other-referential and non-directed content.

**RQ2:** Do referential-types vary across post-type subcategories?

## **Method**

### **Sampling**

Because the aim of the current study involves comparing self-referential, other-referential, and non-directed posts in terms of their relative level of acceptance by the Imgur community, a constructed week sampling strategy with elements of stratification was employed. Constructed week sampling was chosen to avoid potential bias toward posts submitted on certain days of the week or during significant events, while stratification was incorporated in order to ensure that posts of each referential-type were represented in the sample. The sampling frame for this study encompassed a six month period, from December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 through May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Each day of the week (Monday through Sunday) was selected at random from the frame to create one constructed week. Once the days were selected, two posts of each referential-type were purposively chosen from the “gallery” (i.e., archived posts) for each randomly chosen day (see below for how posts were coded into referential subcategories). This sampling strategy resulted in a total of 42 posts to be analyzed.

## Coding

To test the hypothesis, two a priori categories were developed and used to code each post: *reference-type* and *negative assessment* (i.e., level of acceptance). Additionally, a third category, *post-type*, was adapted from previous studies of Imgur content. To assess intra-coder reliability for both nominal categories in the current study (*reference-* and *post-type*), the analyst re-coded the sampled posts four days after the initial coding and a percentage of agreement was calculated for each category; these percentages are reported below.

As previously mentioned, the *reference-type* category (percentage of agreement = 100%) includes three subcategories: self-referential, other-referential, and non-directed. Although content submitted to Imgur.com may incorporate any combination of images, GIFs (i.e., animated images), and text, posts were coded into the *reference-type* subcategories based only on text contained in the post title or description, since these aspects of posted content are intended for users to explicitly state the subject/purpose of the post and direct viewers' attention to particular elements of the post. Thus, the coding unit for this category was the entire post, while the context unit was the text contained therein (i.e., post titles and descriptions). Posts were coded as self-referential if either the title or description made explicit reference to the original poster (OP). References made by the OP to him- or herself were indicated either by the use of a first-person personal pronoun (e.g., I, me, my, mine) or popular acronyms that include personal pronouns, such as "MRW" ("my reaction when") or "TIL" (today I learned). Conversely, posts were coded as other-referential if either the post title or description included a second- (i.e., you, your, yours) or third-person pronoun (e.g., he she, they, them), or made use of a first-person plural pronoun (e.g., us, we, ours). Non-directed posts were those that made no explicit reference to the OP or other individuals/groups within the post title/description. Table 1 below shows several examples of post titles and descriptions used to code posts by *reference-type*.

**Table 1.** Examples of Post Titles/Descriptions Coded for Reference-Type.

Reference-Type	Example
Self-referential	"Had one of those I hate my job days, then I read this..." (title)  "Why I don't take selfies" (title) "My first and last selfie." (description)

**Table 1.** (Continued)

Other-referential	“Because you asked for it..” (title/description) “Some weird-ass music videos for you freaks in usersub” (title)
Non-directed	“Expect the unexpected” (title) “Santa made out of chocolate” (title) “Danny DeVit..OHHHH” (title)

Because posts were sampled from Imgur’s “most viral” page for each day selected into the constructed week, incorporating upvotes into a measure assessing relative acceptance would not be expected to yield meaningful results. In other words, the posts sampled in the current study had already been well-received by the Imgur community and, for this reason, the relative acceptance of each post was best indicated by how *poorly* it was received when compared to other “viral” content. Thus, rather than “level of acceptance”, the category *negative assessment* was measured by calculating the number of downvotes per 1,000 views. No percentage of agreement was calculated for this category given the objective values used to compute *negative assessment* scores.

In addition to the two categories developed for the purposes of this study, a third category, *post-type* (percentage of agreement = 95.23%), was adapted from previous content analyses of Imgur postings (Hale 2017; Mikal et al. 2014). Mikal et al. (2014) identified six categories under which content posted to Imgur can be coded, including: *community identification* (inside jokes, popular interests, community policing, shared experience), *social support* (social support, confessions), *capitalizing* (positive experience, original art), *humor* (general humor), *visually appealing*, and *information / mobilization*. However, in the current study, rather than treating each of these as separate categories and allowing for cross-coding of Imgur content under two or more of these types, each of Mikal et al.’s (2014) original categories were treated as subcategories of *post-type* in order to maintain mutual exclusivity. The coding unit for this category was the entire post and, to code for *post-type*, all content contained in each post was taken as the unit of context; in other words, unlike the *reference-type* category, the post title, description, and body (i.e., pictures, GIFs, etc.) were used to categorize the posts. In considering the graphical displays when coding into the *post-type* subcategories, each image/GIF was scanned for indicators that could be reasonably subsumed under one of the six headings. For example, a GIF of a wide-eyed dog stumbling around a living room under the heading “Morphine is a hell of a drug” was

understood as an attempt at humoring the Imgur community. On the other hand, a post titled “Achieved my 3-year goal” showing a before-and-after picture of a man who had lost a significant amount of weight clearly reflects a positive experience that, consequently, would be coded under the “capitalizing” subcategory. In cases where categorization was not as obvious, such as a GIF of a bee being offered a small amount of liquid through a straw with the heading “Giving a bee sugar water on a hot day,” the post descriptions were helpful in coming to a coding decision; in this case, while the post might have been considered either “information / mobilization” (by showing *how* to feed a bee sugar water) or “capitalizing” (by depicting the *positive experience* of saving the bee), the caption stating “video credit: the bee rescuer is Reddit [user] BadBoiJackson” led to the decision to code the post as the latter, with use of the term “rescuer” indicating someone’s (BadBoiJackson’s) positive experience. Figure 1 below presents an example of how post titles, descriptions, and graphical content were used to code posts into each *post-type* subcategory.

Title: “A going away gift from one of the staff. Please help me embarrass him by making him internet famous.”



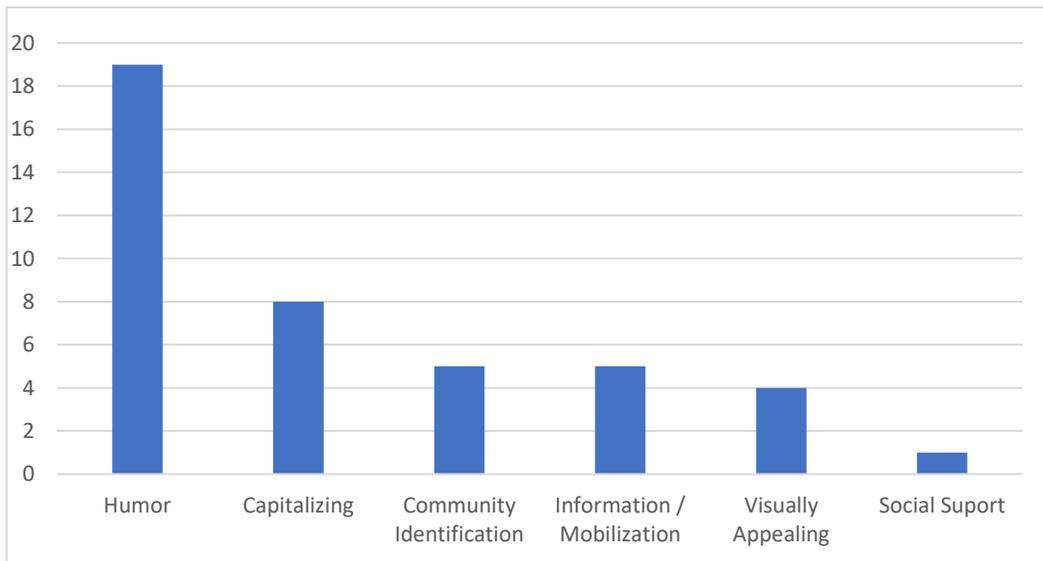
Description: “I just left my employment to move to Brazil. My staff gave me an amazing going away party. This wonderful gem was given to me on my last day. Not only will it haunt my dreams, but I don’t think I will be able to achieve an erection ever again. Please help me repay him by making him internet famous.”

**Figure 1.** Example of Post Coded as “Information / Mobilization”.

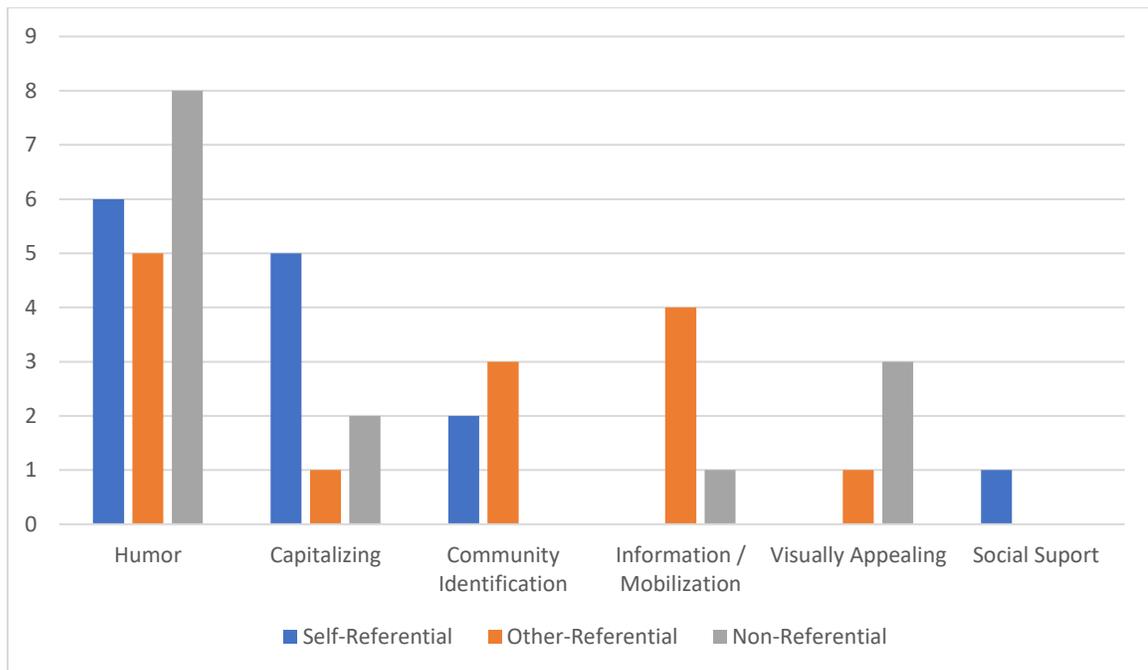
Note: underlined words taken as indicators of the post-type subcategory

## Results

In total, 14 posts of each *referential-type* were coded, resulting in a total of 42 posts analyzed. Descriptive statistics for *post-type*, *referential-type* by *post-type*, and *negative assessment* are shown in Figures 2 and 3, and Table 2, respectively. As shown below, the most common *post-type* subcategory was “humor” (n = 19, 45.2%), followed by “capitalizing” (n = 8, 19%), “community identification” (n = 5, 11.9%) and “information / mobilization” (11.9%), “visually appealing” (n = 4, 9.5%), and “social support” (n = 1, 2.4%). Non-directed posts were the most common within both the “humor” (n = 8) and “visually appealing” (n = 3) subcategories, occurred less frequently under “capitalizing” (n = 2) and “information / mobilization” (n = 1), and were not observed within the “community identification” and “social support” subcategories. Self-referential posts were the most frequent within the “capitalizing” subcategory (n = 5), the second most commonly occurring under both “humor” (n = 6) and “community identification” (n = 2), and were the only *referential-type* to occur within the “social support” subcategory (n = 1); no self-referential posts were coded as either “visually appealing” or “information / mobilization.” Finally, other-referential was the most commonly coded *reference-type* within the “community identification” (n = 3) and “information / mobilization” (n = 4) subcategories, occurred frequently under “humor” (n = 5), and was the least common within the “capitalizing” (n = 1) and “visually appealing” (n = 1) subcategories; no other-referential posts were coded as “social support.”



**Figure 2.** Post Type Frequencies.



**Figure 3.** Post Type by Referential Type.

Regarding *negative assessment*, self-referential posts received the highest number of downvotes per 1,000 views (.760), followed by other-referential (.541), and non-directed posts (.365), lending support to the research expectation (see Table 2 below). The difference in the mean number of downvotes per 1,000 views was statistically significant between self-referential and non-directed posts ( $t = 3.349, p < .01$ ), lending additional support to the hypothesis; as an aside, a significant difference was also observed between other-referential and non-directed content ( $t = 1.746, p < .10$ ). However, no significant difference was found between self- and other-referential posts with regards to negative assessment, though this difference approached statistical significance ( $p = .105$ ); it is likely that this nonsignificant finding can be attributed to the considerably small sample size in the current study ( $n = 42$ ). A two-way ANOVA did not reveal any significant interaction effects among the *reference-* and *post-type* categories on the downvote rate. Overall, then, the findings regarding negative assessment support the research expectation that self-referential posts are assessed more negatively by the Imgur community.

**Table 2.** Mean Downvotes per 1,000 Views (Negative Assessment) for Referential- and Post-Type Subcategories.

Category	Mean Downvotes per 1,000 Views (SD)
<i>Referential-Type</i>	
Self-referential	.760 (.38)
Other-referential	.541 (.31)
Non-directed	.365 (.22)
<i>Post-Type</i>	
Humor	.562 (.39)
Capitalizing	.692 (.35)
Community Identification	.446 (.18)
Information / Mobilization	.556 (.20)
Visually Appealing	.255 (.20)
Social Support	1.10

Note: The *post type* subcategory “social support” has a frequency of one and, thus, no standard deviation. For each *referential type* subcategory, n= 14.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the findings from this study lend support to the applicability of SIDE in anonymous online contexts and add to the scarce body of knowledge regarding how deindividuation operates on Imgur.com. Self-referential posts were found to have a significantly higher number of downvotes per 1,000 views than non-directed posts, with the difference approaching statistical significance when compared to other-referential content, lending support to the research expectation and suggesting that Imgurians perceive individuating information more negatively within the anonymous online context of the site. Notably, posts categorized as “visually appealing” and “community identification,” which were most commonly of a non-directed and other-referential nature, respectively, had the lowest rate of downvotes among the post-type subcategories. Conversely, posts categorized as “capitalizing” and “social support,” which were most often of a self-referential nature, received the most downvotes per 1,000 views. The difference in the mean number of downvotes per 1,000 views across the post-type subcategories, however, may simply be due to the higher number of self-referential, other-referential, and non-directed posts falling under each post-type rather than any practically important interaction effect, as evidenced by the nonsignificant results from the two-way ANOVA conducted in the analysis.

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that deindividuation is facilitated on Imgur and, due to the salience of a social identity which is valued and

upheld on the site, self-referential content that highlights individuating information is more likely to be sanctioned by community members than other-referential and non-directed posts. These findings not only support past studies of the platform (Hale 2017; Mikal et al. 2014), but further elucidate the communicative and behavioral mechanisms that reinforce in-group status, group standards, and collective identity in anonymous online contexts. The current study, however, is not without its limitations. First, the considerably small sample of posts may have led to nonsignificant findings that would have reached statistical significance given an adequate sample size. For this reason, the findings from this study should not be considered generalizable to the entire platform and future studies should strive for substantially larger samples. Second, selection of posts from Imgur's "front page" may pose issues of sampling bias in favor of well-received posts. Although the current study addresses this issue by comparing posts based on downvotes per 1,000 views (i.e., relative *negative* assessment), future studies should seek to sample from the "user-submitted" and "rising" galleries to ascertain whether differences in reception exist at various stages of the "virality" process. Finally, while mutual exclusivity is a necessary condition of quantitative content analyses, the current research design did not permit cross-coding into multiple subcategories, a constraint which may detract from the nuance and complexity of content posted to Imgur.com and, thereby, the exhaustiveness of the coding scheme. For this reason, future studies should carefully weigh the relative benefits of mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness when constructing or adapting the categories into which content is coded.

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# **An Application of Risk Analysis to the Doctrine of Self-Defense**

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## **Abstract**

Although it is an unavoidable aspect of any self-defense situation, risk is an underdeveloped concept in the self-defense literature. In this paper, I argue that the existence of objective risk can justify the use of self-defense, even in cases in which defensive action is not clearly necessary. To accomplish this, I first introduce the concept of risk, seeking a definition that incorporates both objective and subjective elements in a manner appropriate to a discussion of self-defense. In section two, I make a case for the appropriate way to carry out and apply risk analysis in self-defense situations, addressing questions of perspective, types of threats, and availability of alternatives to the use of defense of force. Based on this discussion, I will suggest that it is unjust to require a person to take on extra risk when that risk can be transferred to the person responsible for the creation of the risk. In section three, I discuss some significant implications the consideration of risk as suggested by my analysis has for current approaches to self-defense doctrine. Most importantly, my analysis indicates that self-defense can be justified even if using violent force against an aggressor is not strictly necessary.

Consider the following two scenarios:

Case 1: Dr. Maleficus, an evil scientist, has forced Bill into a game of Russian roulette. Dr. Maleficus, being the brilliant scientist that he is, has created a gun that is bigger on the inside and has a thousand chambers, only one of which actually contains a bullet. Dr. Maleficus is about to pull the trigger. May Bill kill him in self-defense?<sup>1</sup>

Case 2: Westley has been captured by the Dread Pirate Roberts, who has the reputation of killing all his hostages without mercy. The Dread Pirate Roberts, however, being in an amiable frame of mind, has decided to let Westley live one more night. Before retiring, he says, “Good night, Westley. Sleep tight. I’ll most likely kill you in the morning.” During the night, Westley discovers that his door is unlocked and that the Dread Pirate Roberts carelessly left his sword lying on the deck. May Westley kill the Dread Pirate Roberts in self-defense?<sup>2</sup>

Does Bill or Westley have a higher chance of dying if he does not choose to act in self-defense? We do not have an exact numerical probability by which to estimate the chances that the Dread Pirate Roberts will kill Westley in the morning, but it is probably safe to assume that the probability is higher—indeed, significantly higher—than the one in one thousand chance of dying that Bill faces. Arguably, then, if Bill should be able to act in self-defense in Case 1, Westley should be able to act in self-defense in Case 2, given his chance of dying is much greater than Bill’s. The problem, though, is that current self-defense doctrine as employed in many jurisdictions demands a different evaluation: according to the rule of self-defense, Bill may kill Dr. Maleficus, but Westley may not kill the Dread Pirate Roberts in self-defense.

In this paper, I will make the case for the claim that Westley should be able to employ self-defense against the Dread Pirate Roberts. In doing so, I will focus my discussion on a concept that has so far been underdeveloped in the self-defense literature: the concept of risk. I will argue that the existence of objective risk can justify the use of self-defense, even in cases in which the possibility of death or serious injury is not imminent and situations in which defensive action is not clearly necessary. To accomplish

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<sup>1</sup> Russian roulette cases crop up frequently in the self-defense literature. For an example of how a Russian roulette case can contribute to constructing a theory of self-defense, see Kimberly Kessler Ferzan, “Justifying Self-Defense,” *Law and Philosophy* 24 (2005): 711-749.

<sup>2</sup> This case, in its essential features, is a slightly more theatrical version of Paul Robinson’s hostage scenario. See Paul Robinson, *Criminal Law Defenses 2* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1984): 77. Note that one way to accommodate the intuition that the hostage character should be able to act in self-defense in these sorts of cases is to claim that self-defense is being employed not directly against the threat of future death but rather against the ongoing harm resulting from loss of freedom and violation of rights. For this sort of response, see Onder Bakircioglu, “The Contours of the Right to Self-Defense: Is the Requirement of Imminence Merely a Translator for the Concept of Necessity?” *Journal of Criminal Law* 72 (2008): 161. Whether or not Bakircioglu is correct in his analysis, for the purposes of this paper I believe we can safely disregard this objection, as some real-life cases I will examine later on will make it clear this sort of analysis does not always solve the problem.

this, I will first introduce the concept of risk, highlighting the epistemic difficulties inherent in self-defense situations. In section two, I will make a case for the appropriate way to carry out and apply risk analysis in self-defense situations, suggesting a person should not be required to take on extra unjust risk when that risk can be transferred to the person culpable for the creation of the risk. In section three, I will discuss some significant implications the consideration of risk as suggested by my analysis has for current approaches to self-defense doctrine.

## 1. What is Risk?

Risk is most simply understood as a probability of harm.<sup>3</sup> When we engage in risky behavior, we understand we are creating the chance that a certain negative outcome will materialize as a result of our conduct.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in order to understand risk, we need to grasp its two main constituent concepts: probability and harm.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this project, we can treat harm as a fairly straightforward idea: anything that serves to provide a setback to a person's interests can count as a harm.<sup>6</sup> Probability is quite a bit more complicated. We need to distinguish between two different types of probability, and hence two different approaches to the notion of risk.

Probability can be objective or epistemic. A common way of describing objective probability is the use of relative frequencies. On this view, the probability that an event will occur is determined by the rate at which the event occurs in similar situations.<sup>7</sup> This frequency is simply an objective fact about the world, independent of whether anybody can come to know that fact. On the other hand, epistemic conceptions of probability appeal to at least some degree of subjectivity when making probability assessments. Epistemic conceptions of probability fall on an objective/subjective spectrum, and the view of epistemic probability with which we will be concerned for this project combines objective and subjective elements. This view is what Stephen Perry calls the "reasonableness account" of epistemic probability, and he claims this account is grounded in two fundamental assumptions: first, relative frequencies as hypothesized by the purely

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<sup>3</sup> John Oberdiek, "Towards a Right Against Risking," *Law and Philosophy* 28 (2009): 369.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen R. Perry, "Risk, Harm, and Responsibility," in *Philosophical Foundations of Tort Law*, ed. David Owen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 322.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> This definition comes from Stephen Perry, *id.* Interestingly, on this definition, it seems that risk itself could be a harm, as being forced to live with risk could be a setback to a person's interests on many levels. Some scholars have made arguments that risk itself is a harm along these lines: for an argument based on the negative value of risk, see Vera Bergelson, "Self-Defense and Risks," in *The Ethics of Self-Defense*, ed. Christian Coons and Michael Weber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 134-135; for an argument grounded in the concept of autonomy, see Oberdiek, "Towards a Right Against Risking," 367-392; for an argument centered on the claim that risk makes a person worse-off than he would have been otherwise, see Claire Finkelstein, "Is Risk a Harm?" *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 151 (2003): 963-1001. If risk itself is a harm, this assertion might further support the claim that the existence of risk can legitimize the use of self-defense. This is a controversial stance, however, and so I will not make use of it in my own argument.

<sup>7</sup> Perry, "Risk, Harm, and Responsibility," 323.

objective account really do exist; second, people are capable of estimating those frequencies.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the reasonableness account of epistemic probability incorporates the objectivity of relative frequencies and a subjective assessment supported by those relative frequencies.

When applying these two conceptions of probability to the concept of risk, it becomes clear that we can approach our analysis of risk in two different ways. If we make use of the purely objective account of probability, then risk is a relative frequency calculated by the function of the number of times the risk is manifested in actual harm divided by the total number of relevantly similar situations. An epistemic conception of probability, on the other hand, will yield a conception of risk in which risk is a subjective estimation of the chance the harm threatened by the risk will come to fruition. Using a purely subjective epistemic account, risk is nothing more than what the person at risk believes it to be, but the reasonableness account of epistemic risk leads to a subjective but evidence-driven estimation of the relative frequencies posited by the objective view.

For the purposes of this project, we will be concerned with the reasonableness account of epistemic risk. Both the purely subjective epistemic version and the purely objective version include pitfalls that significantly undermine the concerns of the self-defense doctrine under consideration. When working with a purely subjective conception of risk, the chance the harm will materialize is divorced from reality. On the other hand, it seems questionable that we could ever achieve a useful assessment of risk that is purely objective—indeed, the very process of a person assessing the probability that a harm will materialize necessitates the inclusion of a subjective element.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Assessing Risk for Self-Defense

Now that we have a grasp of the main features of risk, we can apply this concept to the theory of self-defense. An essential feature of self-defense situations is that, given our epistemic limitations, these situations always involve a certain degree of uncertainty, some more so than others.<sup>10</sup> We can never be sure whether self-defense is truly necessary or not.<sup>11</sup> As a result, every case of self-defense demands an evaluation of risk. Given this,

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 325.

<sup>9</sup> Claire Finkelstein argues we do not ever have access to truly objective probabilities: “[T]here is no such thing as an objective probability. There are only degrees of belief or confidence about the likelihood of a certain event occurring ... Thus although an agent’s degree of belief will be based on real observations he can make, likelihoods cannot be a matter of objective facts.” Finkelstein, “Is Risk a Harm?” 973. Larry Alexander and Kimberly Kessler Ferzan support a similar view, claiming that “objective probabilities are illusory.” See Alexander and Ferzan, *Crime and Culpability: A Theory of Criminal Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 31.

<sup>10</sup> As Larry Alexander observes with respect to self-defense, “Only God can see the future with absolute certainty.” Larry Alexander, “A Unified Excuse of Preemptive Self-Protection.” *Notre Dame Law Review* 74 (1999): 1478. Because we cannot see the future, self-defense is always preemptive, and as a result, uncertainty will always be present to some degree. See Bergelson, “Self-Defense and Risks,” 132.

<sup>11</sup> This surety goes for the defender at the moment of self-defense as well as for the court after self-defense has taken place. In fact, the only situations in which it seems we can be sure that self-

it might seem surprising that risk has received relatively little attention within the context of self-defense.<sup>12</sup>

In section one, I explained the conception of risk this project will be utilizing. This explanation gives us a structure with which to proceed, but it does not tell us how we ought to go about assessing the level of risk present in a scenario on a practical level or how that risk should be employed when thinking about situations of self-defense.<sup>13</sup> From what perspective should we assess risk? What sort of threats should we take into account when estimating the level of risk? To what degree should we take into consideration alternatives that might allow the potential victim to dispel the risk? I will address each of these three questions in turn.

## 2.1 Perspective

I endorsed the “reasonableness” account of epistemic risk for two reasons: first, because it maintains a tie to objectivity in that it attempts to estimate accurately the important relative frequencies; second, because it recognizes the fact that whenever a person carries out a risk evaluation, that evaluation will be conducted from a certain perspective. The question at hand, then, is what perspective is the appropriate one to consider in self-defense scenarios. I want to evaluate three possible answers to this question, rejecting two and tentatively accepting the other. I will not consider the perspective of the aggressor, because considering this perspective ceases to assign meaning to the concept of risk in the first place: since the aggressor is in control of the situation, from his perspective the risk to the victim will essentially be either 100% or 0%, depending on whether or not he truly intends to kill.<sup>14</sup>

First, consider the perspective of the defender. In most situations, it seems that the defender will form a belief that he is at risk based on the presence of certain behaviors or threats manifested on the part of the aggressor. In other words, the defender’s belief that he is at risk will not come out of thin air. But is this belief enough? Even if the defender forms his belief based on evidence that he is at risk, it seems that in many situations, such a belief will also be influenced—in fact, perhaps influenced even more greatly—by subjective factors such as fear or hate.<sup>15</sup> Human beings are emotional creatures, and as

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defense was necessary are situations in which the potential defender chose *not* to use self-defense and was afterwards killed by the aggressor.

<sup>12</sup> Bergelson observes that “the current law of self-defense seems to ignore the degree of risk that the target of an offense may be actually hurt.” Bergelson, “Self-Defense and Risks,” 141.

<sup>13</sup> Ferzan addresses this question, concluding the perspective of the defender is the only appropriate starting point from which to assess the risk present in a self-defense situation. See Ferzan, “Justifying Self-Defense,” 739-748.

<sup>14</sup> I suppose it could be argued that the aggressor cannot know if he is about to suffer a fatal heart attack in the five seconds before he intends to pull the trigger, but I think that we can safely ignore this sort of objection here.

<sup>15</sup> People who have been under a great deal of stress or have dealt with abuse for a significant amount of time might be especially likely to estimate risk based on their subjective fears rather than objective evidence. For a discussion of how chronic pressure can affect people’s judgment, see Richard

such, we are radically subject to distorted perceptions of reality. A potential defender will probably be able to discern that he is facing some sort of threat, but he might not be able to evaluate accurately the nature and degree of the riskiness in his situation. For this reason, I believe that making the defender's perspective the only one we take into consideration when evaluating risk is implausible.<sup>16</sup>

Next, consider the perspective of a "reasonable" defender. The "reasonable person" standard is incredibly muddled, and it seems no one really knows what it is supposed to mean.<sup>17</sup> For this project, though, consider the following scenario and the meaning of 'reasonable' it entails:

Vulcan Bob has been incarcerated in a human prison for obnoxious theorizing. As is typical of a Vulcan, Vulcan Bob is extremely rational: his emotions do not lead him astray in his decision-making processes, and he is capable of accurately evaluating the probable outcomes of many situations. Unfortunately, Vulcan Bob has been placed in a cell with another prisoner, Evil Joe, who has a reputation for sexually abusing his cellmates – especially those with strangely shaped ears. Within the first day in the cell, Evil Joe begins to threaten to rape Vulcan Bob in the middle of the night. Vulcan Bob evaluates the risk he faces and calculates that there is (roughly) a 90% chance that Evil Joe will actually attempt to rape him within the next week.

In this scenario, Vulcan Bob is still assessing the risk from a subjective perspective; that is, he is assessing it based on the access he has to the evidence that he is indeed at risk. However, Vulcan Bob is assessing risk *purely* based on the objective data about this particular situation.<sup>18</sup>

The sort of risk assessment in which Vulcan Bob engages would probably be an excellent standard by which to evaluate risk. It is objective in that it is concerned with the available evidence, and it is subjective in that it is still conducted from a limited epistemic

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Lippke, "Chronic Temptation, Reasonable Firmness, and the Criminal Law," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 34, no. 1 (2014): 75-96.

<sup>16</sup> Ferzan accepts the perspective of the defender as the proper perspective for assessing risk. However, she does so only after establishing that what she calls "objective triggering conditions" exist in the particular situation. On her view, once objective triggering conditions have been established, any possibility of risk is enough to merit self-defense on the part of the potential victim; as a result, it does not significantly matter whether or not the victim's perceptions are being distorted by emotional factors. My project is slightly different, in that I want to determine the correct perspective from which to decide whether the triggering conditions in fact create risk. For Ferzan's discussion of triggering conditions, see Ferzan, "Justifying Self-Defense," 733-738.

<sup>17</sup> For a brief overview of some of the approaches to the "reasonable person" and a discussion of the problems associated with the vagueness of the standard, see Andrew Ingram, "Parsing the Reasonable Person: The Case of Self-Defense," *American Journal of Criminal Law* 39 (2012): 430-433.

<sup>18</sup> For an argument in support of this sort of approach, see Michael J. Zimmerman, *Living with Uncertainty: The Moral Significance of Ignorance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): ix-xi, 97-117. Vera Bergelson rejects this approach for practical reasons similar to mine: see Vera Bergelson, "Self-Defense and Risks," 137.

perspective. I believe, however, that this approach to risk assessment is also implausible, mainly because it is, arguably, impossible. No one, whether the defender or a third party, will be able to assess truly impartially the risk associated with an isolated situation. Vulcans, in real life, do not exist.

Finally, I want to consider the third-party perspective. Vera Bergelson argues for the use of what she calls a “contemporaneous objective standard” when evaluating the degree of risk present in a situation.<sup>19</sup> The key question for this approach is this: “What is the likelihood that, *in the ordinary course of things*, this risk will materialize?”<sup>20</sup> This approach combines both objective and subjective elements in a way that seems to fit well with the purpose of the self-defense doctrine. On the one hand, it accounts for the limited epistemic perspective of the person assessing the risk, as such a person must try to answer the key question based on whatever evidence he has about the situation, and similar situations, at that time. It also recognizes the difficulty of precisely assessing the degree of risk when human agents are involved.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, it makes use of the concept of relative frequency by use of the notion of “the ordinary course of things.”<sup>22</sup> Despite our limited epistemic perspective, we can still access statistical information that will help us estimate the likelihood that a risk will come to fruition.<sup>23</sup>

There is an objection to this approach that is worth considering. The contemporaneous objective standard demands that we compare the current situation with other similar scenarios. The problematic question is as follows: what counts as the set of similar scenarios? This question is a generality problem, a problem of reference class. It seems we could infinitely redraw the relevant reference class by specifying different levels

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<sup>19</sup> Bergelson, “Self-Defense and Risk,” 137.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* Note also that either the defender or the trier of fact could ask this question, but doing so would involve a detached, third party perspective in either case.

<sup>21</sup> This is the case even in instances of Russian roulette, when we can calculate some portion of the probability with complete precision. If we know how many chambers the gun has and how many bullets are in the chambers, then we can calculate the exact probability that the victim will be killed if the gun is fired. But it does not tell us anything about the probability that the gun will, in fact, be fired: “To be clear, this approach does not allow for the precise calculation, mainly because of the difficulty in predicting the choice of a free moral agent, particularly the choice to act wrongfully; however, it gives us at least a general sense of high and low probability and it does so from the objective perspective required by the justificatory nature of self-defense.” *Id.* at 137-138.

<sup>22</sup> The phrase, “in the ordinary course of things,” is, admittedly, a bit vague. A comment in *Roy v. U.S.* clarifies what Bergelson means by this phrase in the context of the contemporaneous objective standard: “The phrase “in the ordinary course of things” refers to what may reasonably ensue from the planned events, not to what might conceivably happen, and in particular suggests the absence of intervening factors.” *Roy v. U.S.*, 652 A. 2d 1098, 1105 (D.C. Ct. App. 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Schroeder suggests that statistical evaluation, when applied to a large enough sample, can give us an excellent estimate of the chance that risky behavior will result in harm: “Once the probability of harm associated with a risky action can be gauged, an axiom of statistical theory holds that a sufficient number of repetitions of that action practically guarantees that the harm actually will occur.” See Christopher Schroeder, “Rights against Risks,” *Columbia Law Review* 86 (1986): 500. Given the difficulty of predicting the behavior of human agents, this claim might be overly optimistic, but it seems that statistical information certainty can help us make accurate estimations of risk.

of generality for the similarity requirement.<sup>24</sup> To illustrate this problem, at this point it will be helpful to introduce a few real-life cases that will continue to form a basis for this discussion. These cases are all concerned with threats of death or serious bodily harm in prison contexts.<sup>25</sup>

*State v. Schroeder*: Schroeder shared a cell with Riggs, who had a reputation for violence and forcing sex upon fellow inmates. For a while, Riggs had been coercing Schroeder into gambling with him, and, as a result, Schroeder owed Riggs a large debt, which Riggs had been threatening to collect in the form of homosexual favors. On the night in question, before going to sleep, Riggs said that he might “collect some of this money I got owed me tonight.” While Riggs was asleep, Schroeder stabbed him in the back with a table knife.<sup>26</sup>

*U.S. v. Haynes*: Haynes, an inmate at a federal prison, was convicted of assault after he poured scalding oil on the head of a fellow inmate, Nelson Flores-Pedroso, while Flores-Pedroso was sitting in the prison cafeteria. Flores-Pedroso had a reputation for coercing weaker inmates, and for about a month prior to this assault, Flores-Pedroso had been threatening Haynes with forced homosexual acts if Haynes did not use his position as a member of the food preparation staff in the kitchen to do favors for Flores-Pedroso.<sup>27</sup>

*U.S. v. Bello*: Bello, an inmate who was working in the food line at the prison cafeteria, denied second helpings to the victim Santana-Rosa as not all the prisoners had been served yet. Santana told Bello that he was going to “crack open [Bello’s] head,” and after the meal was over another inmate came up and told Bello

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<sup>24</sup> John Oberdiek observes that if we can infinitely redraw the reference class and have no guidelines as to how to specify the correct reference class, an objective account of probability becomes every bit as indeterminate as a subjective account. See Oberdiek, “Towards a Right Against Risking,” 368.

<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that the question of whether prison inmates should be able to plead self-defense at all has been answered in different ways. A negative answer to the question might be motivated by the intuition that, as prison inmates are responsible for ending up in prison in the first place, they are indirectly responsible for the threat that motivates acting in self-defense. As a result, they should not be able to plead self-defense at all. For example, in *Rowe v. DeBruyn*, Rowe was denied self-defense as a complete defense by prison officials at a disciplinary hearing after having been involved in a brawl with another inmate, Michael Evans. Evans, who occupied the cell next to Rowe, made sexual demands upon Rowe, and the morning after making these demands, Evans entered Rowe’s cell and attempted to rape him. Rowe responded by striking Evans on the head with a pot. The circuit court held that the prison officials did not violate Rowe’s due process rights under the Fourteenth Amendment by not allowing him to plead self-defense as a complete defense. See *Rowe v. DeBruyn*, 17 F.3d 1047 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1994). For an argument in support of the right of prison inmates to employ self-defense in general, see Anders Kaye, “Dangerous Places: The Right to Self-Defense in Prison and Prison Conditions Jurisprudence,” *University of Chicago Law Review* 63, no. 2 (1996): 693-726.

<sup>26</sup> *State v. Schroeder*, 199 Neb. 822 (1978).

<sup>27</sup> *U.S. v. Haynes*, 143 F.3d 1089 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1998).

that Santana planned to assault him in the recreational yard later on. Later, during the recreational period, Bello attacked Santana, who was playing dominoes, with a broom handle and gave him a serious concussion.<sup>28</sup>

These cases have many similarities: all involve verbal threats, all involve a fellow inmate with whom the potential victim had some prior contact, etc. But significant differences exist as well. Schroeder and Riggs were cellmates. In *Bello*, the threat was reiterated through another individual, which was not the case in *Schroeder* or *Haynes*. Schroeder and Haynes both faced repeated threats, whereas Bello's situation seemed to be a one-time occurrence. So, what should the criteria be for determining the relevant reference classes for these situations?

One approach might be to make the reference class as narrow and specific as possible, thereby restricting the question of what might happen in the ordinary course of things to cases with essentially all the same features. This approach, however, seems to be unhelpful in that it simply does not give us enough comparative information, as the variation between cases will be great enough to restrict the reference class to an extent that will make it useless. In fact, if the reference class were restricted far enough, the meaningfulness of the objective contemporaneous standard would dissipate. Rather than focusing on the minute details of the case, I suggest that the appropriate way to establish the reference class is with broader criteria, using essential features as the means by which to include similar cases. So, in the above three cases, it might be appropriate to separate *Schroeder* and *Haynes* from *Bello*, as in the former two cases, the defendant faced repeated threats that were backed by the reputation of the aggressor. It is unrealistic to assume that we can establish indubitably clear lines for reference classes, but I believe that we are capable of distinguishing enough relevant similarities between cases to render the concept a useful tool.

## 2.2 Types of Threat

We have established that an objective contemporaneous standard for assessing risk is the best one we have at our disposal. Next, we must determine what the appropriate inputs are for this method of assessment. In other words, what sort of things should we consider when determining whether relevant risk exists in a self-defense situation?

Some of the most important indicators of risk, at least for situations of self-defense, are threats. A threat is something that indicates the possible existence of future harm.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *U.S. v. Bello*, 194 F.3d 18 (1<sup>st</sup> Cir. 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Within the context of war and international self-defense, Dapo Akande and Thomas Lieflander define a threat in the following way: "A threat is a situation where a causal chain can lead from the status quo (no attack) to an undesired future (attack)." See Akande and Lieflander, "Necessity, Imminence, and Proportionality in the Law of Self-Defense," *American Journal of International Law* 107, no. 3 (2013): 564. At least in the context of domestic self-defense, it might be more appropriate to think of a threat as an *indication* of a situation that could lead to the realization of harm. Ferzan provides a definition to this effect: "[T]hreats are actions that appear to present a risk of harm." Ferzan, "Justifying Self-Defense," 736. When an aggressor holds a gun to a victim's head, that situation itself does not cause the future harm; rather, the situation indicates that the future

Given this definition, threats are closely tied to risk assessments, as threats are the means by which a potential defender can evaluate the degree of risk he faces. Generally, however, the only sorts of threat that have consistently been given weight in self-defense cases are ones that involve immediate physical violence. Examples of such threats might be an aggressor putting a loaded gun to a victim's head or an aggressor advancing upon a victim with an arm poised to strike.

One type of threat (interestingly, the type of which we often think when using the word "threat" in everyday language) has been almost entirely excluded from self-defense: verbal threats.<sup>30</sup> This restriction is understandable: we do not want to broaden the type of threat considered legitimate to the extent that a joking or impulsive utterance of, "I'm going to kill you!" should justify someone in employing self-defense. Mere utterances, most of the time, will not be enough to make a potential aggressor liable to defensive harm.<sup>31</sup> In light of the discussion of risk in which we have been engaged, though, I suggest that it is appropriate to push back against this restriction as it stands. In doing so, we need to distinguish between two different types of situations: ones in which a verbal threat is the *only* indication of the existence of risk, and ones in which the risk evidenced by a verbal threat is confirmed by other information.

Consider the cases of *Schroeder* and *Bello*. Recall that, in *Bello*, the facts of the case report that the reason Bello thought he was in danger was because Smith had verbally threatened him. In *Schroeder*, the defendant also faced verbal threats from an aggressor, Riggs, but this threat was not the only reason Schroeder considered himself to be at significant risk. Rather, Schroeder had both the evidence of the verbal threats and of the fact that Riggs had a reputation of abusing fellow inmates the way he was threatening to abuse Schroeder. Thus, in Schroeder's case, Riggs's utterances were confirmed by excellent evidence that Riggs was not simply making idle verbal threats; in fact, even without the direct verbal threat, it does not seem completely unreasonable for Schroeder to have considered himself in danger. So, for Schroeder, verbal threats confirmed what already would have been likely when evaluated under the contemporaneous objective standard: similar situations involving the very same aggressor indicated that Schroeder truly was in danger.

An objection to this approach is that it seems unfair to the aggressor: should a person really be liable to defensive harm even without engaging directly in physically

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harm is likely by conveying the intentions of the aggressor and providing the means by which the aggressor can act on those intentions.

<sup>30</sup> For a court decision reflecting this view, see *People v. Lucas*: "[T]hreats alone, unaccompanied by some act which induces in defendant a reasonable belief that bodily injury is about to be inflicted, do not justify a homicide." *People v. Lucas*, 160 Ca. App. 2d 305, 310 (1958). It is safe to assume that the wording of the opinion in this case meant "verbal threats" when referring to "threats."

<sup>31</sup> Liability is a complicated topic that has attracted tremendous scholarly attention in recent years. Two primary accounts of liability frame the debate: internalism, on which a person is liable to defensive harm only if such harm is necessary; and externalism, on which a person can be liable to defensive harm even if such harm is not necessary. I believe that externalism is a better approach. For a defense of a version of externalism, see Helen Frowe, *Defensive Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 88-120. Rather than focusing on the internalism/externalism debate, though, my question deals with what sorts of things can make someone liable to defensive harm.

abusive action? I suggest that the right answer to this question is “yes.” At least in the sorts of situations we are discussing, it seems undeniable that most aggressors are aware that their verbal threats will place their victims in a difficult situation; in fact, this is probably exactly why they choose to make the verbal threats. So, liability is still being assigned based on the choice of the aggressor to initiate a game of risk.<sup>32</sup> If anything, it seems unjust to the potential victim to force him to assume that the aggressor might not have meant what he said.

This distinction between a threat that consists *only* of words and a verbal threat that is confirmed by other evidence gives us a tool with which to allow consideration of verbal threats while at the same time preserving reasonable restrictions on the type of threat that legitimizes self-defense. The existence of verbal threats creates risk, and this risk is often not negligible. Considering some verbal threats in addition to physical threats allows us to treat risk assessment with a greater level of seriousness and concern.

### 2.3 Availability of Alternatives

Another concern that often arises in self-defense situations is whether the defender had other alternatives to employ besides violent self-defense. If a person can choose a course of action that can dispel the risk he faces and does not involve harming somebody else, that person should act in the non-harmful manner, even if the person against whom he is defending himself is fully culpable and liable to defensive harm.<sup>33</sup> One of the ways this idea has been most clearly articulated is in the duty to retreat that is often demanded of potential self-defenders.<sup>34</sup> I agree that, if safe retreat is an option, that option should be the most preferable one for the potential defender to use; however, in some situations retreat is not an option, and one of the reasons I have been considering prison violence cases is for that very reason. So, the question becomes whether a person must seek alternative methods of averting the threat and dispelling the risk even when retreat is not an option.

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<sup>32</sup> Ferzan emphasizes the importance of the choice of the aggressor when defining what she thinks are appropriate “triggering conditions” for the use of self-defense: “Now, it is true that we are allowing preemptive action based on prediction, but we are also allowing preemptive action based on the *aggressor’s prior choice*. The aggressor controls whether she will decide to injure another person and she controls whether she will act on that intention. At that point, the game is on. It is a game of risk, and a game of prediction. But the person who culpably initiates the situation can hardly be heard to complain that the other actor takes her at her word.” Ferzan, “Justifying Self-Defense,” 731.

<sup>33</sup> There are ways to affirm the wrongness of inflicting harm on an aggressor even if that aggressor is culpable and liable. See Frowe, *Defensive Killing*, 89.

<sup>34</sup> The duty to retreat entails that if a person has a way to retreat from the violent situation in safety, he has an obligation to do so rather than use self-defense. The Model Penal Code reflects this requirement, stating that an actor may not justifiably use deadly force if he “knows that he can avoid the necessity of using such force with complete safety by retreating.” MPC § 3.04(2)(b)(ii).

The duty to retreat has been questioned on several different levels: exceptions include the so-called “castle doctrine” and “stand your ground” legislation. For a recent argument in defense of the “stand your ground” approach, see Heidi Hurd, “Stand Your Ground,” in *The Ethics of Self-Defense*, ed. Christian Coons and Michael Weber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 254-273.

In the prison violence cases under discussion, all three of the defendants were convicted. Two of them were condemned on the grounds that they did not seek assistance in their respective situations.<sup>35</sup> Theoretically, there was an alternative way for each of them to dispel the risk they faced rather than preemptively taking action and attacking their aggressors: each could have sought help, reported the abuse, or simply waited things out.<sup>36</sup> *Theoretically*, there was an alternative, but consideration of the reality brings risk into play again. In many situations involving prison violence, inmates are reluctant to report abuse for several reasons, including fear of retaliation from the aggressor, being labeled a “snitch” by fellow inmates, which would very likely lead to a higher level of abuse, or the belief (and very likely a justified one) that no help would be given even if requested.<sup>37</sup> Thus, even though these are alternatives to self-defense, they are not alternatives that unquestionably serve to avert the threat or dispel the risk—in fact, it is arguable that reporting abuse could actually increase the level of risk a person faces. We do not demand fulfillment of the duty to retreat unless the person can do so in safety. Why, then, do we always require the pursuit of alternatives to self-defense when doing so sometimes carries with it a risk of decreasing rather than increasing safety?

I suggest that requiring a person to take on additional risk as an alternative to employing self-defense is unjust. The person who should bear additional risk in a violent situation is not the victim of the situation, but rather the person who culpably creates the situation.<sup>38</sup> When possible, risk should be transferred to the person responsible for the creation of that risk. If safe alternatives exist, the potential defender should pursue those alternatives, but if those alternatives themselves are risky, he should not be required to do so.

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<sup>35</sup> In *Bello*, the opinion stated, “Bello could have reported the incident to the guards and requested the protection they were required to provide.” See *U.S. v. Bello*, 194 F.3d 18, 27 (1<sup>st</sup> Cir. 1999). This reasoning was based off of the court’s decision in *U.S. v. Haynes*, in which the opinion claimed that “absence of lawful alternatives is an element of all lesser-evil defenses, of which self-defense is one.” See *U.S. v. Haynes*, 143 F.3d 1089, 1091 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1998). Interestingly, though, in the case of *U.S. v. Biggs*, the circuit court ruled as follows, in opposition to the decisions in *Bello* and *Haynes*: “Evidence that a defendant had no reasonable opportunity to avoid the use of force is relevant only to a defense of justification, whether labeled duress, coercion or necessity, and is not an element of a claim of self-defense.” See *U.S. v. Biggs*, 441 F.3d 1069, 1071 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006). This opinion demonstrates that there is some hesitancy regarding the requirement that all available alternative must be exhausted before self-defense becomes a legitimate option.

<sup>36</sup> Some scholars suggest that the “wait and see” course of action is the appropriate one, because something might change that would render the use of self-defensive force superfluous. See Bakircioglu, “The Contours of the Right to Self-Defense,” 161. I think this approach places an unjust burden on the potential victim.

<sup>37</sup> For example, in *Haynes*, the aggressor had slammed the defendant down to the floor in front of a prison guard, and the guard had ignored the violence. See *U.S. v. Haynes*, 143 F.3d 1089, 1090 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1998). In *Schroeder*, the defendant had requested that Riggs be moved to a different cell several days before, but no action was taken. See *State v. Schroeder*, 199 Neb. 822, 824 (1978).

<sup>38</sup> Richard Rosen also argues for this claim in “On Self-Defense, Imminence, and Women Who Kill Their Batterers,” *North Carolina Law Review* 71, no. 2 (1993): 390-411.

### 3. Implications for Self-Defense Doctrine

Throughout this paper, I have tried to avoid appealing to discussions about two of the central elements of the traditional (and still widely accepted) doctrine of self-defense: imminence and necessity.<sup>39</sup> I deliberately avoided invoking these two features of the self-defense doctrine, as doing so would have brought the argument to an abrupt halt. Starting with imminence and necessity severely limits the range of discussion possible. Yet, the latter two issues considered above—types of threats and availability of alternatives—are grounded in concerns about these two main features of most self-defense doctrines.<sup>40</sup> Now that I have established methods for thinking about types of threats and availability of alternatives in light of risk assessments, we are in a position to confront the requirements of imminence and necessity, examining what the implications for these two features of self-defense might be given the conclusions reached above.

First, consider imminence. When we take risk assessments into account, it is clear that substantial risk can exist even when the danger to the potential victim is not imminent. Why, then, should we refuse to include these assessments of risk in our evaluation of the legitimacy of self-defense? Defenders of imminence might answer that the imminence requirement serves two purposes with respect to risk: to help provide a truly accurate assessment of risk, and to help ensure that the level of risk is high enough to merit self-defensive action.<sup>41</sup> I will consider the former response first. True, in most situations, it will be easier to assess risk with confidence that our assessment is accurate when imminence is present; after all, the shorter the time frame between the birth of the threat and the expected manifestation of that threat, the less we have to worry about factors that might intervene during that time frame. I think this point would not be easy to dispute, and I will not attempt to do so; however, this, in itself, provides little reason to reject other valuable methods of risk assessment. The contemporaneous objective standard explored above, in many situations, could yield an accurate assessment of risk even when the threatened harm is in the future.

Turn next to the latter objection on the part of the imminence defender: imminence helps ensure that a very high level of risk is present. The problem with this response is

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<sup>39</sup> As an example, here is Illinois's statute: "A person is justified in the use of force against another when and to the extent that he reasonably believes that such conduct is necessary to defend himself or another against such other's imminent use of unlawful force." 720 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/7-1 (West 2014).

<sup>40</sup> The imminence requirement has been under fire in recent years. For example, see Rosen, "On Self-Defense," 371-411. Reflecting these concerns, some jurisdictions have done away with the imminence requirement. For example, see Texas's self-defense statute: "[A] person is justified in using force against another when and to the degree the actor reasonably believes the force is immediately necessary to protect the actor against the other's use or attempted use of unlawful force." Tex. Penal Code Ann. § 9.31 (West 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Anthony Sebok suggests the belief that the level of risk cannot be high enough without physical confrontation is what motivated the decision in *Schroeder*: "[Judges] ultimately do not believe the probability of the infliction of a  $\phi$  is ever as high in a nonconfrontational circumstance as it is in a confrontation." Anthony Sebok, "Does an Objective Theory of Self-Defense Demand Too Much?" *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 57 (1996): 741.

twofold. First, given our discussion of risk, it seems we can reasonably claim that a very high level of risk is present in a situation even when imminence is absent. Second, this objection seems to be assuming that only an extremely high level of risk—one approaching a certainty of harm—is sufficient to merit self-defensive action. Imminence gives the benefit of the doubt to the aggressor rather than the defender, thereby shifting the burden of risk further into the defender’s court.<sup>42</sup> But, given the above conclusion that the burden of risk should be shifted to the person responsible for the creation of the risk, this approach seems faulty. As a result, imminence is a questionable requirement to put on the use of self-defense.

Many scholars have suggested that the real reason imminence is generally considered to be important is because it shows us when self-defense is truly necessary.<sup>43</sup> This point brings us to another foundational element of self-defense doctrine. The necessity prong of traditional self-defense doctrine says that a person may act in self-defense only when defensive action is necessary to avert the harm in question.<sup>44</sup> Now, as noted above, necessity is never absolute, because our limited epistemic position makes it impossible for us ever to be completely sure that defensive force is the only way a threat can be averted. Nevertheless, we strive to as close an approximation of necessity as possible, and it continues to serve as the measuring stick by which we evaluate claims to self-defense.<sup>45</sup> Despite recognition of the fact that necessity cannot, practically, be absolute, I suggest self-defense doctrine has still failed to appreciate fully the difficulties posed by our limited epistemic status at the expense of many potential victims in threatening situations.

In most of the prison violence cases we have been considering, it would be a stretch to say that the use of self-defensive force was truly necessary. The exception to this statement might be *Schroeder*: since the defendant had already sought help, to no avail,

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<sup>42</sup> This reading is how Ferzan interprets the role of the imminence requirement: “Importantly, the imminence requirement, or absence thereof, shifts the risk of harm between the aggressor and the defender.” Ferzan, “Justifying Self-Defense,” 719.

<sup>43</sup> This is a very common view of the role of imminence in the self-defense doctrine; scholars often refer to imminence as a “proxy” for necessity. See Richard Rosen, “On Self-Defense,” 380. Ferzan, however, defends the imminence requirement with different reasoning, claiming that getting rid of imminence leads to a failure to separate acts of self-defense from acts of mere self-preference and that imminence is not merely a proxy for necessity but serves an independent purpose—to determine when aggression is actually present. See Kimberly Kessler Ferzan, “Defending Imminence: From Battered Women to Iraq.” *Arizona Law Review* 46 (2004): 213-262. Ferzan’s account of aggression seems to indicate that only physical attack can function as aggression, but I think verbal threats, at least when backed by known reputation, should count as aggressive action as well.

<sup>44</sup> Or when a person “reasonably believes” the action is necessary. As we are trying to work within an objective framework, I will simply deal with an objective necessity requirement here.

<sup>45</sup> For example, Stephen Morse suggests using an extremely close approximation to necessity: “If death or serious bodily harm in the relatively near future is a virtual certainty *and* the future attack cannot be adequately defended against when it is imminent *and* if there really are *no* reasonable alternatives, traditional self-defense doctrine ought to justify the pre-emptive strike.” See Stephen Morse, “‘New Syndrome Excuse’ Syndrome,” *Criminal Justice Ethics* 14 (1995): 12. I believe, however, this level of “virtual certainty” is still unrealistic and is therefore unjust to the potential victim.

we might be comfortable with asserting that Schroeder had no other option open to him and that the risk was high enough (in that it was a close enough approximation to necessity) to legitimize self-defense when the necessity requirement is in place. In the other cases, however, the defendants could have sought help, reported the threats, or simply waited things out to see what would happen. But, as discussed above, requiring the defendants to follow any of these other paths arguably would have exposed them to an even higher level of risk than they already were facing. If we want to maintain that it is unjust to force a person who is already a victim to take on additional risk in order to protect the person responsible for imposing risk, then we must say that such persons should not be forced to absorb any additional risk when doing so could be avoided. And, if the only way to avoid absorbing additional risk is to transfer that risk to the aggressor, then we must say that the victim should transfer the risk to the aggressor. And if the only way to transfer the risk to the aggressor is to act in preemptive self-defense, then the victim should be able to act in preemptive self-defense, *even if such self-defense is not clearly necessary*.

This train of reasoning makes it clear that my analysis of risk assessment carries with it a major implication for self-defense doctrine: it seems there are some situations in which a person should be able to act in self-defense even if we conclude self-defensive action did not really seem necessary. In the prison violence cases described above, we cannot be sure that self-defensive action was necessary, but our level of confidence is even less when we consider whether the potential victim could have pursued an alternative course of action without thereby incurring a greater level of risk. This undermining of necessity is a serious consequence, and it might be that it is a cost too great to justify using risk assessments in the way I have suggested. Addressing this difficulty, however, is beyond the scope of this project, so I will consider it sufficient to point out the problem and leave the weighing of the costs and benefits for another time. From this discussion, however, it is clear that taking risk seriously in self-defensive situations has deep consequences for self-defense doctrine as it is currently written and generally accepted.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Let us return to the pair of cases that motivated this exploration of the concept of risk. Recall that in Case 1, Dr. Maleficus was playing Russian roulette with Bill, holding a gun with one thousand chambers to Bill's head. In Case 2, the Dread Pirate Roberts had threatened to kill Westley in the morning, but during the night Westley had a chance to kill the Dread Pirate Roberts first. Current self-defense doctrine would be able to absolve Bill but not Westley, and I suggested this outcome seems wrong.

Given my argument regarding the proper application of risk analysis to cases of self-defense, we now have the tools to make a case for the claim that Westley should also be able to act in self-defense. Westley faces risk of death, and as judged by a contemporaneous objective standard, that risk is significant. The threats of the Dread Pirate Roberts have been given in verbal form, and as of yet, he has not physically threatened Westley; however, those verbal threats contain a high level of credibility given the other evidence Westley has about the merciless history of the pirate. Westley, arguably, has some alternatives he could pursue rather than acting in self-defense: he could simply wait things out, he could try to escape on a lifeboat, or he could hide someplace on the ship and

hope he is not discovered before the ship reaches the next port. But, even if any of these alternatives have a chance of success, they all require Westley to absorb additional risk. Given these considerations, it seems that the level of risk Westley faces is sufficient to merit him acting in self-defense, despite the facts that the threat he faces is not imminent and that it is not clear that acting in self-defense is truly necessary. Thus, if Bill is justified in killing Dr. Maleficus, despite the low level of risk Bill faces, Westley should be able to kill the Dread Pirate Roberts in self-defense.

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# **The Christianization of Judith: Considering the Hieronymian Translation of *Liber Iudith* and Jerome's Christianizing Agenda**

*Brody Van Roekel*

## **Abstract**

I will consider Jerome's translation using gendered analysis while considering carefully how hints of his own preoccupations and Christianizing agendas can be found within. In *Liber Iudith*, Jerome gives a night's work to a text illustrating the story of the Hebrew widow Judith single-handedly overcoming the seemingly unassailable Assyrians. By comparing Jerome's translation to the earlier Septuagint text, a number of significant departures can be located. These departures demonstrate Jerome's conception of proper Christian widowhood, related too to his qualms with femininity. The Hieronymian changes then appear to be both culturally-motivated and implemented in response to the demands of an increasingly Christian world.

## Notes on Methodology and Thesis

This project seeks to examine the Christianizing undertones of patristic writers related to translations of the Vulgate Bible and the role of widows in the Christian schema. Specifically, I will consider Jerome's translation of the Book of Judith using gendered analysis while considering carefully how hints of his own preoccupations and Christianizing agendas can be found within. In *Liber Iudith*, Jerome, working in the fourth- and fifth-centuries, illustrates the story of the Hebrew widow Judith single-handedly overcoming the seemingly unassailable Assyrians. The Septuagint, written in Greek and not Hebrew, may be the original text for the Book of Judith. Alternatively, it may be a translation of a now-lost Hebrew text. By comparing Jerome's Latin translation to the earlier Septuagint Greek text, a number of significant departures can be located. These departures demonstrate Jerome's conception of proper Christian widowhood, related too to his qualms with femininity. The Hieronymian changes related to Jerome then appear to be both culturally motivated and implemented in response to the demands of an increasingly Christian world.<sup>1</sup> The Hieronymian translation of *Liber Iudith* demonstrates Jerome's commitment to translating the Biblical text *sensus e sensu*. While much of the "sense" of earlier texts is essentially present, the Christianization of the Hebrew woman, Judith, is apparent in Jerome's noticeable alterations.

### Introduction: *Hebraea illa*

As the nearly ubiquitous Christianization of the Mediterranean world proceeded between 100 CE and 500 CE, the early architects of the burgeoning religion sought paradigmatic and often pre-existing figures to tie to their novel worldviews. Renegotiated mores necessitated that the Church Fathers refashion some of those figures in order that they be better suited to their values. Many of the patristic writers, educated in pagan schools, had a fondness for classical literature, as many were trained in classical works. Among other patristic authors, Augustine spoke in his *Confessions* of the lasting impact classical literature had upon him.<sup>2</sup> The appreciation led some of them to consider many classical authors as progenitors to Christianity and to depict them as such. Moreover, patristic authors needed to reconsider the Jewish texts with which Jesus was so familiar. The Church

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<sup>1</sup> K. F. B. Fletcher, "Hyginus' *Fabulae*: Toward a Roman Mythography," in *Writing Myth: Mythography in the Ancient World*, ed. S. Trzaskoma and R. Scott Smith (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 135; although Fletcher applies this theoretical approach to the first-century BCE author Hyginus, the framework can also be applied to Jerome's translation of the Latin Vulgate.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. J.G. Pilkington, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1887), IV.7.

Fathers' religion was something novel, neither Greco-Roman nor Judaic, but a combination of various extant frameworks from around the Mediterranean.

The legalization of Christianity by Constantine in the fourth century precipitated an even greater push to formalize the institutions and orthodoxy of Christianity, as the faith provided another opportunity to consolidate political power. With that formalization, notions of gender hierarchy also crystalized. Church Fathers generally co-opted classical structures of feminine submission. However, certain aspects of Christianized conceptions of gender allowed for possible expansions of female agency. Women could give up sexuality altogether, entering a life of voluntary celibacy. The roles of women in specific situations were also reconsidered. Widows, a commonplace reality given the youth of most wives in the ancient world, constituted a unique position. Likely older upon their husbands' death, widows were left in a precarious position for a variety of reasons. Already second-class citizens, widows had left their father's protection. Widows who did not have children were in an even more problematic situation. Without a daughter to marry into the expanded protection of another man or a son to command the household, widows were essentially alone in the world.

One such widow, the Jewess Judith, was alone except for her servants.<sup>3</sup> Following her husband's death, she remained single, but not for lack of suitors. Her pious disposition earned her great respect from her community.<sup>4</sup> The author of Judith's account also made her beauty exceedingly evident. The wealth left to her by her husband allowed her to maintain a home filled with servants.<sup>5</sup> All of these factors combine to both legitimize and make possible Judith's salvation of her homeland. Additionally, the original character of Judith appears to be soundly a product of Jewish and Hellenistic perspectives.<sup>6</sup> In his translation of *Liber Iudith*, Jerome uses the virtuous qualities of the Jewish woman Judith, such as chastity, elegance, and status, to his advantage.

In order to better depict her as an example of widowhood to Christian women, Jerome departs in various instances from the earlier Septuagint text. He insists that Judith's chaste living is an important factor in her success, tying it

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<sup>3</sup> When referring to Latin phrases or sentences, I have employed the *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, edited by Robert Weber et. al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007). English translations from the Vulgate have been rendered by myself, along with the MDVL 6000 class. English translations from the Septuagint come from *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Göttingensis editum VIII.4: Iudith* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979). In order to easily differentiate between the Jerome's Vulgate translation and the Septuagint version of the same text, I will henceforth refer to both Jerome's text and its respective translations with "Judith" and English translations from the Septuagint with "Ioudith."

<sup>4</sup> Judith 8:8.

<sup>5</sup> Judith 8:7.

<sup>6</sup> *Judith*, Deborah Levine Gera, Loren T. Stuckenbruk, and Hermann Lichtenberger, ed. (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2014).

intimately with her piety. While Judith's beauty remained an explicit detail, the Hieronymian translation also asserted that her beauty was blessed by the Lord and not intended for the pollution of seduction. Finally, Jerome portrays the memory of Judith almost as if she were a canonized Christian *sancta*. The changes adopted by Jerome demonstrate the conscious and subconscious, culturally motivated reflections underlying his translations. New Christians of all contexts and situations were looking for examples upon which to base their lives. For widows, then, the Hieronymian Christianized Judith provided the perfect model.

### **Judith's Chaste Widowhood and the Masculine Overpowering of Womanhood**

An especial focus on chastity constitutes the most significant addition in Jerome's rendering of *Liber Iudith*. Examining the growing prevalence of chastity in the increasingly Christian world, it is unsurprising that Jerome puts such significant effort into depicting Judith as such. While chastity was largely expected for women in the ancient world, at least until marriage, social regulations on men's sex lives generally were more loosely guarded. Christianized late antique perspectives slightly altered this reality. Sexual purity began to govern proper masculine behavior along with proper feminine behavior. The imperative to subjugate the body to the mind had roots in the classical school of thought, Stoicism.<sup>7</sup> Adapted by early Christians, chaste living mutated from an essentially feminine virtue in the ancient world into one that was increasingly masculine.<sup>8</sup> This mutation is best shown in tying Christ, the perfect man, closely to chastity. Ambrose, the fourth-century bishop of Milan, explains in *De virginibus* how virginal chastity is both essentially freedom from sin and an imitation of the immaculate Son of God.<sup>9</sup>

Both the command to live continently and the connection between masculinity and chastity are found in *Liber Iudith* as Hieronymian additions. Jerome's *Prologus* offers a useful and unadulterated view into the translator's apparent agenda. As words penned by Jerome himself without the obligation of

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<sup>7</sup> Mathew Kuefler, "Desire and the Body in the Patristic Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender*, ed. Adrian Thatcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 243.

<sup>8</sup> Julia M. H. Smith, "The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe c. 780-920," *Past & Present*, no. 146 (1995): 18. Though this article considers a later context, looking to solidified examples of femininity in Carolingian Europe can supplement our understanding of earlier contexts.

<sup>9</sup> Ambrosius Mediolanensis - *De uirginibus* (CPL 0145) - LLT-A, lib. : 1, cap. : 5, par. : 21, linea : 1: "Quid autem est castitas uirginalis nisi expers contagionis integritas? Atque eius auctorem quem possumus aestimare nisi immaculatum dei filium, cuius caro non uidit corruptionem, diuinitas non est experta contagionem? Videte igitur quanta uirginitatis merita sint."

translation, they provide essentially a single-remove from the patristic author. Moreover, the *Prologus* contains two of the four instances of *castitas*, “chastity,” in the Book of Judith. After expressing the initial disinterest he held towards the account of Judith, Jerome implores readers to receive the story of the widow Judith.<sup>10</sup> He also commands readers to make the Hebrew widow known through everlasting praise.<sup>11</sup> For most readers, such praise may certainly be warranted. The enthralling tale of a single woman overcoming insurmountable odds in order to save her city grabs readers’ attention. Yet, Jerome interestingly does not explicitly mention this main theme from *Liber Iudith* in his prologue.

Rather than depict her as a victorious hero of her people, Jerome opts to dub Judith an *exemplum castitatis* or an example of chastity. Here, the translator alludes to his inherent cultural motivation. Judith must be a paragon for the new chaste ideal so integral to Jerome’s work. Indeed, Jerome himself also notes that she provides an archetype to which both women and men need to aspire.<sup>12</sup> The translator also suggests that her *castitas* should be ascribed exceedingly great “virtue.”<sup>13</sup> These examples demonstrate the importance of continence to Jerome and chastity’s new masculinization. Judith is an obvious paradigm for women, but the suggestion that she may also be imitated by men is striking. This fact is especially prescient with Jerome’s inclusion of *virtus*, or “virtue,” and its use to describe the Hebrew woman. Jerome and other architects of the early church utilize the theme of *femina virilis* or *virago* for women whose ascetic prowess transcends their gender.<sup>14</sup> Patristic terminology tied masculinity to virtue. For women to be virtuous, they needed to become masculine.<sup>15</sup>

While cenobitic monasticism was only beginning to crystalize in the fourth century, Jerome had a ready example of female monasticism in Judith. Women ascetics were often represented as adopting forms of domestic asceticism in which they conducted their renunciations in their familial household.<sup>16</sup> Judith’s ascetic home life provides a good foundation upon which Jerome can expand her general piety into specific sexual purity, a relatively short jump considering Jerome’s cultural milieu. In addition to the instances of *castitas* in Jerome’s prologue, the translator introduces the same phrase into his Latin rendering, while also tying the virtue of chastity to masculinity outright. In the final chapter of *Liber Iudith*, the

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<sup>10</sup> Jerome, “Prologus” for *Liber Iudith*, in *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. Robert Weber et. al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 691: “Accipite Iudith viduam.”

<sup>11</sup> Jerome, “Prologus,” 691: “triumphali laude perpetuis eam praeconiis declarate.”

<sup>12</sup> Jerome, “Prologus,” 691: “Hanc enim non solum feminis, sed et viris imitabilem dedit.”

<sup>13</sup> Jerome, “Prologus,” 691: “castitatis eius remuneratore, virtutem talem tribuit.”

<sup>14</sup> Smith, “Problem of Female Sanctity,” 18.

<sup>15</sup> Gillian Cloke, *The Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450* (London: Routledge, 2005), 218.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, “Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History, and the ‘Linguistic Turn’” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 3 (1998): 416.

author describes how the hero Judith spends the remainder of her days in Bethulia. Following the downfall of Holofernes and Israel's salvation, the protagonist returns to her home to renew her cloister-esque domesticity.

Yet, a few important differences can be seen between the texts. Though it is implicit, Jerome introduces a subtle voice change in his translation. The Septuagint text relates that "no man knew her in all the days of her life since the day Manasses her husband had died."<sup>17</sup> This example assigns agency to the men who wanted to know Judith. Jerome, however, reverses this agency and depicts Judith as the active subject. He writes, "she was knowing no man for all days of her life, from the day when Manasses died, her husband."<sup>18</sup> It is also important to note that, had Jerome made *cognosceret* passive in voice, there would be no essential difference. However, Judith is the subject of the active verb, and thus, the actor herself.

Moreover, Jerome replaces entirely the sentiment preceding the line examined above. The Septuagint notes that "many [men] desired" Judith.<sup>19</sup> Jerome's understanding of the sexual nature of this desire necessitated his need to add to his translation. In lieu of men lusting after the Hebrew widow, Jerome adds that Judith was included in the "virtue of chastity."<sup>20</sup> The Church Father connects closely *castitas* with *virtus*. With the etymological connection between the Latin word for "man," *vir*, and *virtus* or "virtue," one can then see the logical association between manliness and chastity. Purity was now a moral imperative, and this absolute divide between male and female likewise divided virtue and vice.<sup>21</sup> The divide and Judith's uniqueness can be best seen in Jerome's final inclusion of *castitas*.

Immediately following the Bethulian victory over the Assyrians, the head priest Joachim and all of his elders travel from Jerusalem in order to meet Holofernes' bane. The following quotations from the elders require special attention. Instances of direct speech are useful as they are obviously chosen by the author, putting words in the subject's mouth. Upon meeting Judith, Joachim and the elders extol Judith as the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, and honored by her people.<sup>22</sup> After these praises, the elders speak a number of conditional statements. They commend Judith for acting in a manly way.<sup>23</sup> They note how she

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<sup>17</sup> Ioudith 16:22.

<sup>18</sup> Iudith 16:26: "[Iudith] non cognosceret virum omnibus diebus vitae suae."

<sup>19</sup> Ioudith 16:22.

<sup>20</sup> Iudith 16:26: "Erat enim virtuti castitatis adjuncta."

<sup>21</sup> Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 19.

<sup>22</sup> Iudith 15:9-10: "Joachim autem summus pontifex de Jerusalem venit in Bethuliam cum universis presbyteris suis ut videret Judith. Quae cum exisset ad illum, benedixerunt illam omnes una voce, dicentes : Tu gloria Hierusalem; tu laetitia Israhel; tu honorificentia populi nostri."

<sup>23</sup> Iudith 15:11: "fecisti viriliter."

loved *castitas* in her heart.<sup>24</sup> They recognize that Judith has known no other man after Manasses died.<sup>25</sup> Each of these factors were prerequisites for their final statements. Because Judith had acted *viriliter*, had maintained her chaste heart, and had remained a widow, the Lord strengthened her. Moreover, from these virtues and the Lord's strength, she would receive eternal blessing.<sup>26</sup> The Septuagint text details a similar blessing by the Lord, but beyond this similarity, the other aspects of v. 11 are wholly introduced by Jerome.<sup>27</sup> The alterations in this verse constitute perhaps the most explicit revelation of Jerome's agenda. Only by acting in a manly fashion, demonstrated in masculine chastity, could Judith overcome Holofernes, receive the Lord's comfort, and gain eternity.

Although Jerome's translation of *Liber Iudith* provides a plethora of evidence for his culturally motivated rendering, a few other texts solidify the arguments. In a letter from Jerome and a work from Ambrose, the prominent Church Fathers further disclose their conception of chaste Christian widowhood. These works mention Judith specifically. In an epistle, Jerome relates the account of Judith as an example to the newly widowed Furia. The encouraging account of "woman vanquishing men" and "chastity beheading lust" represents Jerome's dichotomized views.<sup>28</sup> By juxtaposing these two sentiments, Jerome suggests that Judith, only through her chastity, is able to overcome the lust of Holofernes. Additionally, in the opinion of Ambrose, it is only through her chastity that Judith

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<sup>24</sup> Iudith 15:11: "et confortatum est cor tuum, eo quod castitatem amaveris."

<sup>25</sup> Iudith 15:11: "post virum tuum, alterum non scieris."

<sup>26</sup> Iudith 15:11: "ideo et manus Domini confortavit te, et ideo eris benedicta in aeternum."

<sup>27</sup> See the full passages for both the Vulgate and the Septuagint: Iudith 15:9-12: "(9) Moreover, Joachim, highest priest from Jerusalem, came into Bethulia, with all his elders, in order to see Judith. (10) Who, when she had gone out to him, all blessed her in one voice, saying: you are glory of Jerusalem; you are joy of Israel, you are honored of our people. (11) **Because you have done with manly virtue, and your heart was strengthened, in it because you love chastity and after your man, you knew no other: therefore, the hand of the Lord also strengthened you, and therefore you shall be blessed in eternity.** (12) And all people said: Let it be, let it be." Compare these verses to Iudith 15:8-10: "(8) And Ioakeim the great priest and the senate of the sons of Israel, those residing in Ierousalem, came in order to view the good things which the Lord had accomplished for Israel and to see Ioudith and to speak peace with her. (9) Now when they came to her, they all blessed her with one accord, and they said to her: "You are the exaltation of Ierousalem; you are the great pride of Israel; you are the great boast of our race. (10) **You accomplished all these things by your hand; you accomplished good things with Israel, and God was pleased on account of them. Be blessed before the omnipotent Lord for all time.**" And all the people said: "So be it."

<sup>28</sup> Hieronymus - Epistulae (CPL 0620) - LLT-A epist. : 54, vol. : 54, par. : 16, pag.: 484, linea : 3: "uincit uiros femina et castitas truncat libidinem."

overcomes the Assyrians.<sup>29</sup> The triumph of Judith's preserved chastity equals the achievement of delivering her country.

For Ambrose and Jerome, the quality of Judith lies in her chastity. Their sentiments are explicit in their own works, which readily reflect their opinions. Moreover, the prologue to *Liber Iudith* allows Jerome to disclose some of his preoccupations. Jerome's opinions, however, become more problematic when rendered in translation. In translation, the prescription of chastity for the Hebrew widow Judith appears in various facets of the text. These occurrences represent marked departures from the earlier Septuagint text. Even in translating, then, Jerome's agenda shines through. Whether made consciously or not, the translator chooses specific instances to paint the text with his own hue. For the solidifying Christian religion, chastity was paramount, and for Jerome, Judith's story was useful in depicting that virtue.

### **Elegance and Not Seduction: Depicting Judith as an Unadulterated Beauty**

The account of Judith absorbs readers with compelling characters and a relatable story. It is understandable why Jerome rendered it in Latin, even considering his apparent reluctance evidenced by his prologue to *Liber Iudith*. The most substantial translation variance used to Christianize Judith stems from Jerome's *castitas* additions. Given the importance of sexual continence to early and later Christians, these additions should be largely unsurprising. Other slight changes are also discernable in the texts. In both the Vulgate and Septuagint the beauty of Judith is well-attested. However, the Septuagint characterizes Judith's beauty almost as a tool for sexual temptation. Jerome's bowdlerizing sensibilities compel the translator to curtail the alluring nature of the Hebrew woman, depicting her elegance instead of her seductive nature.

Jerome's translation demonstrates instances of the translator smoothing over Judith's beauty. The Vulgate entails a widow, just as stunning as her Septuagint counterpart. Yet, there is a careful delineation of Judith's beauty and her use of it. An aesthetically pleasing appearance represents a central trait for good women and men in the ancient world. This centrality was adopted by Christianity's architects and remained a defining feature of virtuous people in the Middle Ages. However, beauty was not simply skin deep. Indeed, a beautiful body denoted a beautiful soul.<sup>30</sup> The most important difference stemmed from the employment of attractiveness. As seen in the previous section, many of the Church Fathers

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<sup>29</sup> Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *De uiduis*, (CPL 0146) - LLT-A cap. : 7, par. : 39, linea : 2-5: "abstinentiae meritum, pudicitiae gratiam reseruet. Nec cibo enim, ut legimus, maculata, nec adultero, non minorem seruatae castitatis ex hostibus reuexit triumphum quam patriae liberatae."

<sup>30</sup> Dick Harrison, *The Age of Abbesses and Queens: Gender and Political Culture in Early Medieval Europe* (Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 1998), 345.

regarded purity of the body as an imperative for all adherents. Jerome's inclusion of *castitas* throughout shows this preoccupation.

Thus, Jerome is faced with the prospect of keeping Judith's beauty intact, while also depicting her as unquestionably pure. The tying of Judith's beauty and piety is largely accomplished through *castitas*. Yet, other instances stand out in Jerome's translation upon its comparison to the Greek text. Following her admonishment of Bethulia's elders, Judith returns to her home in order to prepare for her mission. In a montage akin to arming oneself for battle, Judith strips off the garments of widowhood and washes herself in preparation. The widow dons charming clothes and striking ornamentations. She, along with her servant girl, also packs supplies which were in keeping with Hebrew food guidelines. The two set out and find Ozias, the high priest of Bethulia, at the city gates.

In the midst of Judith's preparations, Jerome deems the situation a fitting location for a slight but noticeable departure from the original text. The Septuagint summarizes her aesthetic preparations succinctly and sharply. "She made herself up provocatively for the charming of the eyes of men," reads the text, "all who would cast eyes upon her."<sup>31</sup> This verse shows how the main purpose of Judith's beauty was for the provocation of men. Jerome, at least, appears to have read the verse in this manner. He surely rails against this sentiment in his translation. Going beyond simply truncating the problematic text, Jerome instead decides to inject his own preoccupations.

After ornamenting herself, Jerome writes, "To [Judith], truly, truly, the Lord bestowed brilliance: since all that arrangement was depending not from lust, but from virtue: and therefore the Lord augmented this woman in that beauty, in order that she was appearing in unique elegance in the eyes of all men."<sup>32</sup> A number of aspects of this translational addition require examination. The first, and most important, lies in the genesis of Judith's beauty. The Septuagint text relates that Judith made herself more beautiful, implicitly through her dress and jewelry in addition to her already lovely appearance. Jerome describes her splendor as having come from the Lord, instead of Judith herself. Moreover, the "arrangement" depended not upon *libido* or provocation from Judith's appearance as related in the Septuagint. Rather, *virtus* is the basis of her plans. Because the plot rested upon *virtus* and not *libido*, then, the Lord provides for the augmentation of Judith's beauty.

Finally, Jerome appears to smooth out the description of Judith's appearance in the eyes of men. She looks "uniquely elegant" in the eyes of all men. The sharpness of the manly lustful gaze is dampened, and Judith emerges as an

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<sup>31</sup> Judith 10:4.

<sup>32</sup> Judith 10: 4: "Cui etiam Dominus contulit splendorem : quoniam omnis ista compositio non ex libidine, sed ex virtute pendebat : et ideo Dominus hanc in illam pulchritudinem ampliavit, ut incomparabili decore omnium oculis appareret."

elegant beauty instead of a provocative seductress. The Septuagint translator writes that as Judith dresses, she puts on clothes “with which she was accustomed to dress in the days of the life of her husband Manasses.”<sup>33</sup> While there is nothing explicitly related to seduction in this remark, the mentioning of Judith’s deceased husband apparently disturbs the Latin translator. This sentiment is entirely missing from Jerome’s translation.

The purpose for this omission is twofold. On the one hand, Jerome’s subordination of marriage to virginity is well-known.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Jerome considers marriage as a lesser good than chaste widowhood. Judith’s purity bound with her widowhood yields a good far beyond marriage. On the other hand, many patristic writers considered marriage to be the only legitimate outlet for sexual activity. By reminding readers of Judith’s marriage to Manasses, the Septuagint writer also prompts readers of Judith’s story to remember aspects of her sexuality. Jerome must do away with Judith’s sexuality while also elevating her as an archetypal chaste widow, the second highest spiritual yield behind virginity.

The translator carefully delineates between Judith’s beauty and her usage of it. The Hebrew widow’s beauty must remain intact, as a physically pleasing appearance was a prerequisite for her virtue. Jerome has, however, pared away any notion of a connection between beauty and lust. The Lord imparted beauty unto Judith and ultimately blessed her mission due to her *virtus*. A good Christian widow engaging in seduction would have been unthinkable. The extraction of beauty from seduction essentially connects back to Jerome’s attempts to depict Judith’s continence. She was elegant, not sultry. Furthermore, in Jerome’s mind, marriage was largely without benefit. It seems that the only benefit of Judith’s marriage for Jerome is the status it imparts unto the Hebrew widow, an aspect of Judith’s account which is considered in the final section.

### **Memory of the Hebrew Woman: Status, Confrontation, and Holy Days**

Jerome elucidates most explicitly the important facets of Christian widowhood, continence and untainted beauty. He finally moves to illustrate other aspects of Judith’s Christian-widow exemplarity. The translator maintains certain criteria of Christian widows, including social status and confrontation with the elders, and also adds the ascription of holy days to paradigmatic Christian figures to Judith’s narrative. Admittedly, the addition of feast days in Jerome’s translation is an argument from silence regarding the Septuagint text. Yet, there does not seem to be an analogous piece in the Septuagint text that is comparable to the inclusion

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<sup>33</sup> Judith 10:3.

<sup>34</sup> Hiero, *Epist. 48, “ad pammachium.”* In this letter, Jerome defends his exaltation of virginity against opinions that his reverence had come at the cost of marriage. See also Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 42.

of Christian holy days. Moreover, social status and confrontation simply appear in both the Vulgate and Septuagint, and thus these considerations diverge slightly from the main thrust of the paper.

These aspects of the Hieronymian rendering of *Liber Iudith* are nonetheless important. The growing need for institutionalized orthodoxy and orthopraxy necessitated a full examination of widowhood in the case of Jerome's translation. The Jewess Judith needed to look as Christian as possible, while also providing an idealized vision to Christian widows. The consistency of certain characteristics facilitates this appearance. References to Judith's extravagant wealth and status occur unambiguously in both the Septuagint and Vulgate.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, part of her plot against Holofernes requires her to be sumptuously dressed.<sup>36</sup> In addition to her wealth, Judith's social positionality rings through the Septuagint text as well as Jerome's translation.<sup>37</sup> Her lineage and previous marriage also precedes her account, only adding to her understood status.

Only after sketching her as the epitome of wealth and status in the Bethulian community does the author feel confident enough to describe her encounter with the town's authorities. Jerome consciously follows this pattern as it coincides well with his agenda for Judith. Status for women derived from their vast inherited wealth and social position.<sup>38</sup> A danger of that status, however, was expanded agency on the part of widows. Increased agency could lead to attention and resulting consequences, which was especially a problem in a society that did not value women as full members. Such clout led to guards on their actions.<sup>39</sup> Judith needed her status accorded to her by wealth and position in order to confront the doubting Ozias. Yet, after the Assyrians are dealt with, she resumes her life of domestic asceticism.

Judith's return to her previous life connects well with what seems to be Jerome and others' ideal for female ascetic practice. Women ascetics were often represented conducting their renunciations in their familial household.<sup>40</sup> The earliest stages of Christianity could provide women with an opportunity for rebellion as the burgeoning religion was at first at the margins of society like women. Jerome, though, carefully avoids support for women in leadership or clerical privilege.<sup>41</sup> Yet, a subtle message remained: generally excessive female

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<sup>35</sup> Iudith 8:7, 15:14; Ioudith 8:7, 15:11.

<sup>36</sup> Iudith 10:3; Ioudith 10:4.

<sup>37</sup> Iudith 8:8; Ioudith 8:8.

<sup>38</sup> Clark, "Holy Women, Holy Words," 414.

<sup>39</sup> Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 181.

<sup>40</sup> Clark, "Holy Women, Holy Words," 416.

<sup>41</sup> Gail Streete, "Women as Sources of Redemption and Knowledge in Early Christian Traditions," in *Women & Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 342.

agency contravened the boundaries of tolerable diversity. It was one thing to admire women such as Judith, but another thing entirely to imitate her.<sup>42</sup> The good Christian widow could not assume a public role that would overstep “certain clearly felt limits and thereby contradict that within her which remains female.”<sup>43</sup>

Admiration for holy persons could take a variety of forms, one of which entailed feast days in remembrance of especially holy individuals. The Catholic holy calendar is ripe with paragons and sainted men and women. A prominent Hieronymian addition in the final verse of Judith’s account requires a final note. Judith had done the impossible against Holofernes and the Assyrian hordes. The widow challenged the men of her city who questioned God’s protection. She had remained a prominent figure in Bethulia after her success. Even the high priest of Jerusalem had commended her on her *virtus* and accomplishment. She returned to a life of domestic asceticism and lived out the remnant of her life in continence and sanctity.

Were Judith a Christian, her name may have been included in the list of Catholic saints. But Judith was obviously Jewish. However, Jerome could not forego the opportunity to give her a Christian hue one last time. The Septuagint text closes with Judith’s burial and the assurance that none accosted Israel during Judith’s life and “for many days after she had died.”<sup>44</sup> The Vulgate follows this reading, declaring to readers that none disturbed Israel. This verse does not close the Latin translation though. In his prologue to *Liber Iudith*, Jerome appended to his rendering, “Moreover, the day of this victory obtained a holiday by the Hebrews in the number of holy days, and it was maintained by the Jews from that time, up into the present day.”<sup>45</sup>

Hebrews celebrated various holy days. One for Judith probably would have been out of the ordinary, at least for someone with a cursory understanding of Jewish practice. The addition would not be unusual at all except for its glaring absence in the Septuagint. One can only guess at Jerome’s specific motivations here. The notion of a holy day tangentially dedicated to Judith might have been reminiscent of the litany of Christian *sancta* and their feast days. Jerome might have been giving encouragement to Christian widows, showing the possibilities of dedicating their lives to piety and chastity using the widow Judith. Regardless of specific motivations, Jerome’s general agenda remains the same in this final alteration as it has been throughout the translation.

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<sup>42</sup> Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca. 500-1100* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 407-408.

<sup>43</sup> Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 166.

<sup>44</sup> Judith 16:25.

<sup>45</sup> Judith 15:31: “Dies autem victoriae hujus festivitatem ab Hebraeis in numero dierum sanctorum accepit, et colitur a Judaeis ex illo tempore usque in praesentem diem.”

### Conclusion: *Christiana illa*

Throughout Jerome's translation of *Liber Judith*, the patristic writer works to sketch Judith in the manner of an idealized Christian widow. This agenda, as has been shown, appears explicitly when comparing Jerome's translation to the earlier Septuagint text. In his additions, glosses, and occasional textual removals, Jerome fully demonstrates his intentions for the Hebrew widow. Even certain continuities between the Septuagint and Vulgate texts show a consciousness in attempting to sketch Judith as a character upon which Christian women, especially widows, could draw.

The character trait for Jerome's Judith was *castitas*. The term only appears four times in Jerome's translation, two of which occur in the *Prologus*. The prologue gives readers an idea of Jerome's main intent for the text. Judith ought to be viewed as an example in many ways, but most importantly as an *exemplum castitatis*. The additions in his translation are stark and their placement significant. The first use comes in the form of a direct quote from the high priest of Jerusalem, Joachim. Direct speech is especially useful as the author can impart vital ideas from the mouths of important characters. The character being quoted also requires thought. One of the highest-ranking authorities in all of Israel commends Judith for her *castitas*.

The second usage of the term ties to *virtus* and the masculinization of Judith. Continenence increasingly was viewed as a masculine value. Moreover, for Christian women to become virtuous, they needed to shed their femininity. Both of these notions are demonstrated in Jerome's Judith. Her abstinence is on display due to Jerome's work. She is also connected to *virtus* throughout. Additionally, Joachim explains how Judith's success was based on her masculinization and her chastity. Only with these prerequisites could Judith overcome the Assyrians and Holofernes. Finally, Jerome and his contemporary Ambrose show their undiluted perceptions of widows generally and Judith specifically in their own works.

Jerome also understands how Judith's beauty was imperative to both her success and her virtue. In various departures from the Septuagint, Jerome carefully maintains Judith's incredible beauty, while also depicting it as a gift from God. As a blessing from God, then, her exquisiteness and her plot against Holofernes needed to be based upon *virtus*. God could not bless anything connected to *libido*, and so all notions of seduction needed to be washed from the text. The dress and ornamentation from her marriage might even be misconstrued as invoking her sexuality, as marriage was the only legitimate outlet for sexuality. Jerome goes as far as downplaying Judith's marriage to Manasses in order to maintain her unadulterated beauty.

That marriage, though, holds a slight use for bolstering Judith's status. Along with her inherited wealth and her irrefutable piety, Judith's social standing

in the Bethulian community looms largely in her story. This standing makes her confrontation with the city's elders possible. Yet, Judith understands her place well. Once the threat of annihilation has passed, the Hebrew woman returns to a life of domestic cloister. She is not forgotten though. According to Jerome's translation and not the Septuagint, her deeds live on as a holy day amongst the Hebrews. Such an honor, outside of someone as accomplished as Judith, befitted only the most holy of Christian men and women. While not the strongest point for Judith's Christianization, this conspicuous addition at the close of his translation leaves careful readers emphatically and enduringly cognizant of Jerome's program.

The story of Judith offers an exemplary picture of virtuous widowhood. With an obvious awareness of this fact, Jerome had few qualms about adapting her to his personal and institutional agenda. Making decisions that were culturally motivated, Jerome depicted Judith in a manner more befitting an increasingly Christianized world. Demands for Christian *exemplum* in that essentially novel world also necessitated examples be drawn from many sources, Christian or not. For these reasons, Judith may no longer be viewed as she was in the eyes of Holofernes, who called her "Hebraea illa," or "that Hebrew woman." Instead, Judith may better be thought of as Jerome must have seen her, as *Christiana illa*.

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# Pleasure in Virtue: The Possibility of Willful Virtuous Behavior

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## **Abstract**

Virtuous behavior has often been construed as having three requisite elements: right action, done for the right reason, and also carried out with the “right feeling,” i.e. without the contrary inclination of Aristotle’s merely continent individual. Some have argued that even if the right motivating reason(s) for action might not be directly within our power to act on at will, there are a number of steps we can take in order to make ourselves more responsive to the appropriate reasons – thus giving us indirect control over which reasons we take to be compelling. However, I believe that such accounts emphasize the importance of right action done for the right reason at the expense of giving a complete account of right feeling – and are thus incomplete pictures of both virtuous behavior and the way in which it is, to a degree, within our control, rather than solely a matter of moral luck. In this paper, I elaborate on these views, arguing that if we can control our reasons-responsiveness, it follows that we can likewise influence our sensitivity to what we have reason to desire. If we can make ourselves responsive to the best reasons in support of what we ought to desire, then in doing the right action for the right reason we will presumably satisfy a desire of ours, and thus we will take pleasure in acting virtuously, without a contrary inclination to do otherwise. And, I think this is true regardless of the outcome of debates surrounding the nature of both motivation and desires. In this way, then, I argue that the necessary components for virtuous behavior – doing the right action, for the right reason, and especially with the right feeling – are truly “up to us” in large part, and not merely to chance.

## 1. Moral Luck and the Possibility of Virtuous Behavior

Discussing moral luck, Thomas Nagel says that:

A person may be greedy, envious, cowardly, cold, ungenerous, unkind, vain, or conceited, but behave perfectly by a monumental effort of will. To possess these vices is to be unable to help having certain feelings under certain circumstances... people are morally condemned for such qualities, and esteemed for others equally beyond control of the will: they are assessed for what they are like.

To Kant this seems incoherent because virtue is enjoined on everyone and therefore must in principle be possible for everyone. It may be easier for some than for others, but it must be possible to achieve it by making the right choices, against whatever temperamental background. One may want to have a generous spirit, or regret not having one, but it makes no sense to condemn oneself or anyone else for a quality which is not within the control of the will.<sup>1</sup>

He goes on to point out that Kant's view "rules out moral judgement of many of the virtues and vices," as these are ostensibly out of our control. However, Nagel believes that such a conclusion is "intuitively unacceptable"; even if one becomes convinced that it is unjustifiable to judge agents based on virtues and vices supposedly not within their power to influence, such evaluative sentiments "reappear involuntarily as soon as the argument is over."

Two things become immediately clear from this discussion. The first is that, as I believe Nagel rightly points out, we have a natural tendency to praise individuals with certain character traits, dispositions, inclinations, and so on, and to blame those with others. The second is that it seems to be of the utmost importance, morally-speaking, whether or not these characteristics are in any way within our ability to control. Both Nagel and Kant seem to believe that they are not, due to certain apparent facts about the nature of both moral luck and our moral psychologies; therefore, they think that we must look elsewhere than virtue and vice when assigning moral blame or praise.

On this picture, then, those who possess unvirtuous dispositions, feelings, and attitudes – or, vices – are stuck with them, so to speak, and are thus routinely subject to our (un)reflective moral blame. While they might be able to overcome said dispositions via a "monumental effort of the will" and still act in conformity with what the virtuous individual would do, and perhaps even do so for the right reason(s), they still do so in the face of a contrary inclination to act otherwise. Per traditional conceptions of virtue, this ultimately prohibits them from being considered fully virtuous. Instead, this person is akin to Aristotle's continent individual, whose "rational principle... urges them aright and towards the best objects; but there is found in them also another element naturally opposed... which fights against and resists that principle."<sup>2</sup> So, the merely continent – and not virtuous –

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<sup>1</sup> Nagel, Thomas. "Moral Luck." *Mortal Questions*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Print. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by W.D. Ross, Batoche Books, 1999. Print. 19.

person “acts with choice, but not with appetite”;<sup>3</sup> they deliberately choose to act in the right way for the right reason but fail to actually desire or take pleasure in doing so, instead possessing a contrary inclination to act other than the way that they actually are. Thus, they lack the right *feeling*<sup>4</sup> generally considered necessary for virtuous behavior.

So, we can formulate three necessary conditions for fully virtuous behavior: (1) doing the right action (2) for the right reason(s) and (3) with the right feeling, i.e. desiring to act as such, taking pleasure in doing so, and/or without having a contrary inclination to act otherwise.

At this point I have given a general definition for virtuous action, one that has three requisite components. It seems plausible to assume, as I will for the rest of this essay, that merely choosing and doing the right action (the one consistent with what virtue requires, or what the virtuous individual would do) is something that is directly within our power. In that sense, we have the ability, and thus presumably the moral responsibility, to at the very least perform virtuous action(s)<sup>5</sup> – fulfilling the first necessary condition for virtuous behavior.

But of course, the right action can still be done for the wrong reason. Following that, the extent of our abilities is less obvious when it comes to the second necessary condition for virtuous behavior – acting on, from, or for the right reason(s), meaning those reasons that are appropriate to and consistent with virtue, virtuous behavior, and/or what the virtuous individual would do. Consider an example: we ought to help a friend in need because we know that beneficence is a virtue (the right, appropriate, or virtuous reason), and not because doing so might mean that said friend will owe us a favor in the future (the wrong, inappropriate, or unvirtuous reason). Aristotle seems to assume that we are capable of controlling our reasons for action, or what reasons we ultimately take to be motivating and choose to act on.<sup>6</sup> This is exhibited in his discussion of the continent individual, who acts rightly merely on the basis of having adequately exercised their “rational principle.” As Robert Audi<sup>7</sup> has argued, however, it is far from clear that we are actually able to do this in such a direct way, as Aristotle assumes. I will turn to this potentially troubling possibility, as well as Audi’s discussion of it, in the next section.

Finally, what about satisfying the third and last necessary condition for virtuous behavior – acting with the right *feeling*, as I have been putting it? Aristotle seems to believe

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 37.

<sup>4</sup> I will refer to the complex set of dispositions, inclinations, attitudes, and affective states that characterize what Aristotle takes to be constitutive of the virtuous individual simply as possessing the right “feeling.” I do so for simplicity’s sake – admittedly, though, potentially missing some of the possible complexities involved.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, there are often external constraints on our ability to act in a certain way, including and especially in the way that morality mandates. Keeping in mind the “ought-implies-can” principle, I will merely be considering cases where there are no such constraints on our ability to act virtuously. I will also not be addressing the normative issue of what sort of actions virtue enjoins in this essay.

<sup>6</sup> This is in direct conflict with the Humean view of the relationship between desire, reason, and motivation. On such a view, the only real reasons to act are dependent in some way upon the desires of the agent. I return to this debate later on.

<sup>7</sup> Audi, Robert. “Moral Virtue and Reasons for Action.” *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1-20.

that adequate reasoning (i.e. seeing what the right reason to act is) and habituation (i.e. acting rightly for the right reason consistently and routinely) is sufficient for one to eventually take pleasure in acting virtuously, without the contrary inclination or desire that would make them merely continent. If what Nagel says is true, however, this right feeling requisite for truly virtuous behavior is in fact *not* directly within our power to regulate due to facts about our moral psychologies and/or moral luck that are seemingly beyond our control. This would put willfully being virtuous out of our reach. And, this would be true no matter how much effort we expend and even if we do the right action(s) for the right reason(s). I will return to this worry towards the end of my paper.

## 2. Reasons-Responsiveness: Influencing Our Sensitivity to Reasons for Action

Assuming that the capacity to act in some way that we have chosen – namely, to do the action consistent with what the virtuous person would do – is within our power, we have satisfied the first necessary condition for virtuous behavior. Let us now turn to the second condition, which requires that one acts for, on, or is ultimately motivated by the right reason(s). On the one hand, philosophers since Aristotle have presupposed that in some sense we have the ability to willfully determine what reason(s) to act on. Robert Audi, however, has argued that we in fact do not have the ability to exert such direct control over our reasons for action – and if that “disturbing... even paradoxical” conclusion is true, then virtue is not completely “up to us,” as commonly presupposed.

Instead, Audi believes that we actually have *indirect* control over our reasons for action. This is because we are able to influence, via a number of means, our responsiveness to reasons, including and especially the ones that are consistent with virtue. I will return to Audi’s argument explaining why he thinks this but will first draw out the problem a bit further.

Audi uses a number of examples to highlight the disparity that can, and often does, arise between what we see as either good or bad reason(s) to act, and which reason(s) we are actually inclined, compelled, and ultimately motivated to act upon. He characterizes this relationship as follows:

Suppose, for instance, that I am inclined to A [where A is a virtuous action] for a bad reason [i.e. one not in line with virtue] but have a good reason [i.e. one in line with virtue] to A. If I can bring it about at will [my emphasis] that either (1) I believe I should A for the good reason or (2) I want (strongly enough) to A for a good reason, I can thereby causing [sic] acting virtuously, i.e. A-for-r, where r is a good reason to A and of a kind appropriate to some virtue. This would mean we could sometimes act virtuously, and perhaps contribute to becoming virtuous or to strengthening our virtuous character if we already have it, just by a kind of mental exertion: what some would call a volition.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, he takes this to be a technical characterization of the sort of capacity presupposed in virtue theory since Aristotle: if we adequately understand that some reason

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 15.

is the one consistent with virtue and thus the one that we ought to act on, then by some internal process we can will ourselves, as it were, to actually take said reason to be the overridingly motivating one by acting on it. If such a process is possible, he believes, then it must be formulated as such. Audi concludes, though, that so characterized “[i]t is doubtful that we have the kind of direct voluntary power just illustrated.”<sup>9</sup> As he points out, the truth of this apparent fact about our moral psychologies worryingly entails that being completely virtuous is not attainable solely by some amount of mental effort. Instead, the ability to actually take the good reasons to be motivating is merely a matter of our happening to have the correct sorts of temperaments, personalities, dispositions, and inclinations – in other words, the things constitutive of virtuous character. Audi does believe that this claim about our (in)ability to “harness” or “unharness” certain reasons voluntarily is true. But he also believes that “how virtuous our actions are... can be very largely up to us.”<sup>10</sup> How can he possibly hold both of these views?

Audi thinks that instead of having direct control over our reasons for action, we actually have *indirect* control over them, via our ability to influence which reasons we are sensitive to. He believes that this is possible because he considers our understanding of our reasons for action to be beliefs about the grounds supporting doing the action in question. Likewise, this entails that influencing our reasons for action involves influencing our beliefs about the “grounds supporting the action... [t]his is because what we believe, especially in normative matters, tends (if we are rational) to affect our actions, and is (other things equal) more likely to do so if vividly in consciousness.” Simply put, Audi takes our perception of the motivating strength of a reason for action to be belief(s) about the strength of the grounds that support performing the action. So, while we might not be able to directly control our reasons for action in the same way that we cannot simply will ourselves to believe something, it certainly is the case that we can influence our beliefs by making ourselves more responsive to certain justificatory reasons. In the same vein, then, Audi believes that we can influence which reasons for action we take to be motivating by making ourselves more responsive to the reasons supporting having some belief about the grounds supporting doing some action – namely, those good reasons that are consistent with those that the virtuous individual would act on.

Because Audi takes our reasons for action to be beliefs about the grounds we have for acting in some way, he also thinks that the methods we use for regulating our beliefs are also capable of allowing us to influence our reasons for action. If he is right in this, then it seems within our ability to make ourselves more amenable to certain reasons for action, ideally making the good reasons for action more forceful and thus overwhelmingly motivating to us. And crucially, our ability to indirectly control our reasons for action via directly influencing our reasons-responsiveness would put virtue back within our reach. This is, again, because virtue requires that we act from, for, or on the right reason(s) – something which does now appear to be within our power. For Audi, we merely have to fulfill the five “domains of moral responsibility” that he lays out, which are really just methods of regulating belief-formation.

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<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 17-18.

The five domains, per Audi, are as follows.<sup>11</sup> The first is the seeking of relevant reasons and counter-reasons for action that are “relevant to whatever matter is at hand,” as doing so “can give wider scope to nature in regulating conduct and richer content to our discourse in explaining or justifying our actions.” The second is the seeking of reflective equilibrium, or consistency amongst our set(s) of beliefs. The third is the clear and deliberate identification of, emphasis on, and assessment of reasons; in this way, we can better understand what beliefs and thus reasons for action we actually have and/or ought to have. The fourth is interpersonal comparison of reasons for action so that we can share evidence, erase bias, and ultimately have stronger agreement and communication about the grounds supporting acting in some way. The fifth and last is both recognizing and removing “a degree of motivation disproportional to the [actual] normative strength of our grounds.” This is akin to seeing that one holds a belief with “unjustified confidence,” then understanding that one ought to not do so.

I hope the point of this discussion is clear. Recall that the second necessary condition for virtuous action requires that it be done for the right reason. Audi argues that while we have good reason to think that we do not have direct control over our reasons for actions, we luckily seem to be capable of influencing which reasons we find compelling. So, although we cannot directly, willfully, and deliberately (un)harness the (in)appropriate reasons – those that are (in)consistent with virtue – we can, instead, epistemically conduct ourselves in such a way as to make ourselves more responsive and sensitive to, and thus more likely to be motivated by, the reasons consistent with virtuous behavior. If what Audi has said thus far is correct – which I take it to be and will assume it is for the rest of this essay – getting ourselves to be motivated by the right reasons is, albeit indirectly, something that we are capable of deliberately doing.

### 3. Taking Pleasure in Virtuous Action

Thus far, I take myself to have given a definition of virtuous behavior that lays out its three constitutive components. I also hope to have, invoking Audi’s research, shown that at this point two out of those three elements are, more or less, within our ability to ensure: namely, that both right action and acting for the right reason(s) are “up to us,” rather than relegated to the domain of Nagel’s moral luck. So far, then, this at least partially preserves the possibility of willful virtuous behavior as traditionally characterized.

Yet, Audi peculiarly fails to explicitly mention anything regarding how one feels when doing the right action for the right reason. But as previously discussed, this is often considered the third and last necessary condition for virtue.

Let me get clearer about how I believe Audi conceives of virtuous behavior. Admittedly, he never explicitly defines his conception and only does so “implicitly.”<sup>12</sup> In his own words, “acting virtuously... is acting on the basis of motivation [sic] and beliefs whose content has a sufficiently close relation to the elements essential in the trait constituting the virtue in question.” In other words, Audi thinks that virtuous behavior is only virtuous insofar as it is rooted in virtuous character. In this way, it looks as if he is

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<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 10-11.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 5.

positing another necessary condition essential to virtuous behavior: that the agent also possesses the virtue qua specific character trait, quality, disposition, inclination, etc. relevant to the situation, action, and reason(s) at hand.

However, when requiring that an agent have the relevant virtue necessary for the behavior to be considered virtuous, I believe that Audi likely has something in mind akin to my conception of right feeling. I think this interpretation of Audi's view is plausible because it seems fair to assume that if an agent has a temperamental propensity to act in a certain manner, then they will by definition not have a contrary inclination against acting in the way consistent with said disposition. If the disposition is a virtuous one, it follows that they will also not have a contrary inclination to act unvirtuously and will thus act without the desire to do otherwise, making their behavior fully virtuous. So rather than stipulating a fourth necessary condition, I take Audi to actually be offering a different formulation of the third necessary condition for virtuous behavior that I have been discussing throughout this paper – namely, that the right action done for the right reason be performed with the right feeling.

Returning to the possibility of virtuous behavior, then, if my interpretation of Audi is correct, the question now becomes: *are our dispositions within our control in a way such that we can willfully influence ourselves so as to not have a contrary inclination against acting in a way consistent with virtue? Are we able to cultivate within ourselves, despite whatever we have or have not been granted by the deliverances of moral luck, the capacity to desire to act virtuously and to thus take pleasure in doing so?* While the first version of the question emphasizes merely not having a contrary inclination and the second actually taking pleasure in acting virtuously, I believe that both are accurately captured by the term “right feeling.” If one is disposed to act in some way and is able to act in a way consistent with that disposition, then by definition one does not have a contrary inclination.<sup>13</sup> Suppose I have a disposition to act beneficently towards my friends and that I am confronted by a situation in which I am able to act in a beneficent manner towards a friend of mine; a contrary inclination to act non-beneficently is presumably nowhere to be found, and I will also likely take pleasure acting in accordance with my disposition, as it were, by acting in a beneficent way.<sup>14</sup>

To frame the issue another way: the earlier passage from Nagel suggested that “to possess... vices is to be unable to help having certain feelings under certain circumstances”

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<sup>13</sup> In other words, I believe it would be contradictory to say that an agent can have two concurrent but contradictory dispositions; while we certainly can have conflicting *reasons* for action, it does not seem to be the case that we similarly can have contradictory propensities to act in certain ways. For example, I might have two different reasons to act beneficently towards a friend – a self-interested one and an altruistic one, perhaps. However, it does not seem plausible in this case that I could have both a disposition to act beneficently towards my friends in conjunction with a disposition to not act beneficently towards my friends. In some sense, then, reasons seem specific to instances, while dispositions to act in some way are by definition less instance-specific and more general in nature.

<sup>14</sup> While we clearly can have dispositions that we do not take pleasure in acting upon, it seems that such cases are limited to those dispositions that are already decidedly unvirtuous – because we recognize them as such. Conversely, I find it plausible that we take a sort of second-order pleasure in acting in consistency only with our dispositions that are virtuous.

and that “people are morally condemned for... qualities, and esteemed for other equally beyond control of the will: they are assessed for what they are like.” From this he characterizes the Kantian view as saying that “it makes no sense to condemn oneself or anyone else for a quality which is not within the control of the will.” In these few phrases, there are a number of claims and assumptions about morality and agency that I believe are not as obvious as Nagel and Kant take them to be. Specifically, I doubt it really true that having a vice is simply being “unable to help having certain feelings” and that certain qualities of character are really “beyond control of the will.” I believe, contra Nagel, that these things are (to an extent) *not* beyond control of the will and that further, we are able to play an active role in what feelings we have when acting – because of our ability to effect which reasons we are responsive to.

To explain why I think this, we need to return to Audi’s views. I believe they are accurate yet incomplete in virtue of not adequately addressing the requirement for virtuous behavior that one act with the right feeling. If my interpretation of Audi’s views is correct, he only satisfactorily describes the way in which willfully becoming continent – but not virtuous! – is within our control. He explains how we can get ourselves to be motivated by the right reasons when doing the right action, but says little to nothing about ridding ourselves of any contrary inclinations against doing so; he only gestures at the role of virtuous character in meeting the requirements for virtuous behavior, which as I have argued is plausibly his attempt at discussing the requisite right feeling I am concerned with. Thus, I believe Audi has only gotten us two-thirds of the way in justifying the view that virtue is “up to us” and not a matter of moral luck. To give a complete account of the way in which it is within our ability to deliberately satisfy the three necessary conditions for virtuous behavior, one must effectively explain the way in which we can willfully conduct ourselves so as to have the right feeling(s), the lack of which prevents Aristotle’s continent individual from becoming a truly virtuous one. I now turn to that task.

#### 4. Desiring Virtue

My current aim is to show that we are capable of willfully conducting ourselves such that we can have some version and amount of control over our inclinations and dispositions – including, importantly, those that are contrary to virtue – in order to show that we are capable of intentionally and deliberately doing not just the right action for the right reason, but also ensuring we do so with the right feeling requisite for virtuous behavior.

It has traditionally been held by philosophers discussing virtue that routinely acting in the right way for the reason is generally sufficient to cause an agent to lose their contrary inclinations to act otherwise. For example, in Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle discusses what he takes to be the necessary role that habit(uation) plays in the cultivation and development of virtue. Similarly, Audi briefly mentions that “... as with most kinds of virtuous actions, regularly acting generously [or in some other virtuous manner] is likely to lead to developing the trait in question...”<sup>15</sup> These are empirical claims, but I think it is fair to say that they are likely accurate ones. So, if it is true that regularly acting doing the

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<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 5.

right action for the right reason will likely lead one to acquire the trait or disposition that constitutes having some virtue, then it follows that habituation is the means by which one can ultimately behave in a virtuous manner.

However, Aristotle can be interpreted as simply assuming this to be the case in regard to our moral psychologies. Audi also appears to be making a similar move in presuming the legitimacy of this method. And although I agree that habituation is likely the means by which we develop the dispositions qua virtues of character that allow us to act without the contrary inclinations of the merely continent person, in the remainder of this essay I would like to give a more fine-grained analysis of just what this process involves. Moreover, I want to give such an account whilst keeping in mind that I, along with Aristotle and Audi, am arguing that virtue is “up to us” in large part. I want to demonstrate that it is within our power to willfully conduct ourselves in such a way so as to lose our contrary inclinations against acting virtuously and to consequently take pleasure in doing so – in other words, to show that we can largely control our dispositions and thus feelings, and consequently satisfy in a very deliberate manner the last necessary condition for virtuous behavior by desiring to act as such. Habituation is certainly the crux of not just cultivating virtuous action and increasing sensitivity to the right sort of reasons, but also (perhaps most importantly) of ridding ourselves of inclinations. However, I also believe that there is more to be said about just what occurs during habituation than is discussed by Aristotle and Audi. I believe that we have the ability to rid ourselves of contrary inclinations against acting virtuously. But just why do I think we are capable of doing this in a way above and beyond merely acting habitually<sup>16</sup> in a certain way for certain reasons?

## 5. The Cultivation of Virtuous Desires

In the remainder of this essay, I will offer a brief sketch outlining the way in which I believe that transitioning from being merely continent to fully virtuous is something that is, to an extent, within our power rather than a matter of the moral luck discussed by Nagel and Kant. Just like we have control over which actions we choose to do and which reasons we are responsive to, I also take it that we likewise have a modicum of control over how we feel when doing the right actions for the right reasons. If what I say is correct, then all of the necessary components for virtuous behavior are at least partially within our ability to willfully influence and ultimately attain if we are purposely aim at doing so – especially including the way we feel when acting. In other words, the potential problem Audi initially raised for virtue theory, which I take him to have only partially dissolved, can be adequately accounted for. This, in turn, readmits the possibility of virtuous behavior, putting it out of the skeptic’s reach and back within our own. What follows is a short argument as to why I think this is the case.

Recall Audi’s view that our understanding of our reasons for action are really just

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<sup>16</sup> While habituation is a coherent means of actively and willfully cultivating virtue, it does not by any means guarantee it; Audi himself notes this. For example, it seems entirely possible that one could grow to dislike acting in a certain way the more one does it, and that the strength of one’s contrary inclination(s) will increase accordingly. I want to argue, therefore, that there are steps we can deliberately take that reduce the likelihood of this decidedly unvirtuous possibility.

constituted by our beliefs about the strength of the grounds that support performing some action. From this, he argues that via being able to influence our beliefs, we can likewise influence our responsiveness to certain reasons, namely the right or appropriate ones that are consistent with acting virtuously. In this way, we have indirect control over what reasons we ultimately take to be motivating. We cannot at will choose to act on a reason, even if we know it is the one that we ought to be acting on; however, there are certain epistemic procedures we can routinely practice so as to make ourselves more responsive to the reasons that we really ought to be acting on.

So, per Audi let us grant that we can influence both which reasons we are responsive to and, because of that fact, what we believe. Broadly speaking, like Aristotle's continent individual we can presumably use our "rational principle" to see what action(s) virtue requires of us, as well as what the virtuous reason for doing said action is. By understanding those facts and then fulfilling some or all of Audi's five domains of moral responsibility qua epistemic practices, we can make the right reason(s) actually motivating to or for us. But again, what about how we *feel* when acting in accordance with virtue by doing the right actions for the right reasons(s)? If we act whilst still feeling a contrary "appetite," or inclination, then we are merely continent and not truly virtuous. If Audi's account is correct, we can see what the good, right, and appropriate reasons for action are *and* make ourselves more sensitive to and motivated by those reasons that are consistent with virtue. However, his views, while accurate as they stand, are incomplete because they only demonstrate the possibility of willful continence, and not willful virtue.

Building on Audi's analysis, though, I believe that it follows from his discussion of our ability to influence our reasons-responsiveness that the right *feeling* requisite for behavior to meet the criteria for being virtuous is something that we can willfully cultivate, because of the relationship between reasons, beliefs, and desires.

My central point is that, similarly to the way in which we can apparently influence our receptivity to reasons for belief and action, we can therefore: see what we have reason to desire, including and especially per the dictates of virtue; make ourselves more responsive to and motivated by those reasons; instill within ourselves those appropriate, virtuous desires; and then, ultimately act in accordance with those desires whilst lacking any contrary inclination(s) and thus presumably taking pleasure in doing so. In other words, it seems that via our ability to influence our reasons-responsiveness, we can plausibly influence our responsiveness to the reasons supporting not just we have reason to do or believe but also what we have reason to desire. And if we desire to act in some way for some reason, and then actually do act in said way for said reason, we necessarily do so without a contrary inclination (because we desire to act in this way rather than another) and presumably take pleasure (broadly speaking, desire-satisfaction results in some sort of pleasure) in doing so – making the behavior virtuous rather than merely continent.

Per Audi our comprehension of our reasons for action is constituted by beliefs regarding the grounds supporting doing some action, and because we have the ability to influence what we believe, we can thus influence our proclivity to be motivated by the right reasons – not just those supporting certain beliefs and actions, but also desires. Further, I take there to be a parallel between beliefs and desires in the sense that they are both intentional states – we believe *something*, just as we desire *something*. In this way, if something is true about beliefs, then in a general sense it is *prima facie* plausible to think

that that same thing holds regarding desires as well. And, one thing that seems true about our beliefs is that they are informed by reasons; we often believe what we believe on the basis of the strength of the grounds qua reasons in support of believing that thing. Likewise, I want to argue as intentional states akin to beliefs, desires are in some sense similarly influenced by reason(s). Of course, this prompts the question: are desires directly informed by reason(s), or are desires informed by beliefs which are themselves informed by reason(s)? This can be respectively formulated in two different ways: one, with desires being directly informed by reasons alone, without any mediating beliefs in between; or two, with desires being influenced by beliefs and then with desire-informing-beliefs themselves informed by reasons. For my purposes, I will leave this as an open question. My main claim is that our ability to influence our reasons-responsiveness realistically entails that we can influence our desires; because reasons and our sensitivity to them play an essential role in each interpretation, I take it to be one of the upshots of my argument that it can accommodate both of the above formulations about the relation between reasons, beliefs, and desires.

To summarize, my primary assertion is this: we have the ability to influence our reasons-responsiveness such that we can willfully be more sensitive to those reasons that are consistent with virtue, and because of this ability we can deliberately influence our sensitivity to reasons regarding what we have reason to desire, and thus willfully guide our desires themselves (to an extent). In turn, by being able to cultivate within ourselves the desire to act in consistency with virtue and in conjunction with then doing the right actions for the right reasons, we will likely take pleasure in doing so, without any contrary inclinations, ultimately making us fully virtuous rather than merely continent in a way that, above and beyond the deliverances of moral luck, is actually “up to us.” And while only a preliminary outline, I believe that my view as presented is a plausible one on its face. In that spirit, I now turn to and will spend the remainder of this essay responding to two preliminary objections.

## **6. Humean Motivation and Belief-Desire Bootstrapping**

Thus far, I have proposed that we can actively cultivate the appropriate virtuous desires that would allow us to satisfy the third and last necessary condition for virtuous behavior: taking pleasure in acting virtuously, without a contrary inclination against doing so, because we have a desire to act virtuously – or, acting with the right *feeling*. I have argued that this is because, per Audi’s arguments, it seems that even if we cannot willfully choose what reasons we act on, we can influence and increase our responsiveness to the right reasons, which will then, in turn, cause us to have the appropriate beliefs and desires that are requisite for both being motivated by the right reason(s) and for carrying out the action with the right feeling. In this way, the satisfaction of all three necessary conditions for virtue – including and especially the last one – are within our power, to a degree, to actively, willfully, and deliberately cultivate.

However, there are two objections that come to mind when considering my proposal that our desires and thus the capacity to take pleasure in acting virtuously is something that is within our control. The first comes from a set of views regarding the relationship between reason, desire, and motivation, taking after Hume’s belief that “reason

is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions” and arguing that any account – including mine – that claims reason can in some way motivate behavior is mistaken from the outset; rather, only desires can be motivating, and reason both cannot and should not have any prominent role in explaining motivation. The second objection says that just as seeing what we have reason to do is often not enough to actually motivate us to act in that way and/or on the basis of that reason, merely seeing what we have reason to desire is not sufficient, on its own, to actually cause us to have that desire.

The first objection to my proposal, then, arises out of the Humean view regarding motivation.<sup>17</sup> I will only briefly describe the view, as my aim is not to refute it but rather show how my proposal is entirely consistent with its picture of the relationship between reason, desire, and motivation. Briefly put, and substituting Hume’s “passions” for desires, the Humean picture is as follows: regarding our practical, means-end reasoning about how to act, desires are the only thing able to produce ends, while reason, on the other hand, can only produce beliefs. Because of this, desires are the only sort of thing that can be and actually are motivating; reason on its own is insufficient to “generate... [the] impulse”<sup>18</sup> necessary for action. A key part of my proposal is that we both can and should use reason, via influencing our reasons-responsiveness, to cause ourselves to carry out the right action on the basis of the right reason and with the right feeling, the latter of which I argued arises from having the right desires. Such a proposal, then, is clearly at odds with Hume’s claim that our rationality and actions are beholden to our desires.

I believe, however, that my proposal is entirely consistent with the Humean view of motivation, and that this is true regardless of whether or not that view is in fact true. Recall that I am arguing that because of our ability to play an active part in influencing our reasons-responsiveness and thus belief formation, we can make therefore make ourselves see what we have reason to desire and actually take those reasons to be compelling, which conceivably eventually instills those desires within us. Hume’s view is that only desires can be motivating, but it is compatible with such an outlook that our reasons can and do inform our desires, as I am claiming. In other words, for Hume using reason to arrive at a belief regarding what ends we ought to have is insufficient; we also need to actually desire that end in order to be motivated to act in such a way as to attain it. Yet, we often use reason to deliberate about what we ought to desire, and it is consequently entirely plausible that reasoning about what we ought to desire actually informs what desires we ultimately end up possessing. My proposal is that we can make ourselves responsive to the appropriate reasons in support of beliefs about what we ought to desire, with the underlying implication that we ought to desire to act virtuously.<sup>19</sup> That is, we do the epistemic practices that make us sensitive to the best reasons; we become sensitive to those reasons, which support having some beliefs about what we ought to desire; we then end up with the belief about what we

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<sup>17</sup> I rely on Amy Schmitter’s interpretation of Hume here. Schmitter, Amy M., "17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Winter 2016 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> That is, I am referencing the widely-held view that the dictates of morality and virtue are in some sense reason-granting. While accounts as to the source of that granting of reasons for action and belief differ, the stance itself is widely held as a constituent feature of moral discourse.

ought to desire; and because we are actually compelled by those reasons, the belief about what we ought to desire often results in our actually having that desire.<sup>20</sup> And because we now actually have the desire to act virtuously, we satisfy the Humean condition requisite for actually motivating us to act in that manner. Just as Hume thinks it is impossible to even use rationality itself without the prior desire to do so, I hold that it is likewise incoherent to think that reason plays no part in informing or creating our desires.<sup>21</sup> If the Humean view of motivation is true, my proposal can accommodate it; if it is false, then so much the better for me.

The second objection turns out to be closely related to the first, and I have already partially addressed it. It holds that merely seeing what we have reason to desire – in other words, having a belief about what we ought to desire – is insufficient on its own to actually cause us to have the desire in question. This certainly occurs; we often have beliefs about what we ought to desire but fail to have the corresponding desire itself. I believe, though, that this is more unlikely and implausible when it comes to matters concerning morality and virtue. By definition, ethics deals with agency and normativity – specifically regarding what we ought to do, but as I have discussed there is a close relationship in virtue theory between what we ought to do and what beliefs and desires we ought to have. Generally speaking, I take there to be a common awareness qua belief that morality involves reason-giving imperatives, and that therefore most people have some sort of a set of beliefs and desires regarding what we ought to do – maybe just a belief that there are some things we ought to do, and just a desire to do the things that we ought to do. Assuming the truth of the objection, it is still plausible that we can bootstrap up, as it were, from those aforementioned initial desires and beliefs to arrive at the higher-order beliefs and desires necessary for virtue, by using our agential reason-responsiveness-influencing capacities (a la Audi) to create these “new” beliefs and desires. In this way, it is not as if the beliefs and desires essential for virtue need to be spontaneously generated; rather, they can be grounded in broad, general beliefs and desires that we all already have merely in virtue of being agents with agency participating in moral practice and discourse. And this is

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<sup>20</sup> This, of course, is the controversial part of my thesis. I admit that there is likely no necessary connection here; there do seem to be cases where we have a belief about what ought to desire without actually having the corresponding desire. I do believe, however, that my thesis does generally hold in the context of morality generally and specifically virtue. Presumably, if one arrives at the belief that one ought to desire to act virtuously, then the aforementioned sort of disjunction will not occur. If one is not just aware that it is commonly held that that one ought to desire to act virtuously but actually believes that they ought to desire to act virtuously, then I take it to be fair to say that one will then actually have that desire. The key elements here are actually having the belief, and the parallel that I take there to be between beliefs regarding acting in some way and beliefs regarding desiring something; if I have a belief about what I ought to have a belief about, then I almost assuredly actually end up having that latter belief – it makes no sense to say that I would not. Similarly, if I have a belief about what I ought to desire (namely, acting virtuously), it seems likely that I will actually end up with that desire.

<sup>21</sup> While clearly some, perhaps many, of our desires are a-rational or irrational, it is similarly clear that many of our desires arise as the result of rational deliberation and/or on the basis of reasons. I desire to write and complete this essay because there are many reasons in support of why I ought to desire to do so: to get a good grade in my seminar, to think carefully about an interesting philosophical topic, to have a potential writing sample for doctoral applications, and so on.

precisely what I think is implicitly occurring in both Audi and Hume's accounts, as for morality to even get off the ground, as it were, we have to have certain beliefs and desires, as well as the means to rationally navigate them during practical deliberation whilst aiming at behaving virtuously.

### **7. Conclusion: Is Virtue Up to Us?**

In this paper, I wish to have accomplished a number of things. Mainly, I hope to have convincingly demonstrated that taking pleasure in virtuous action by desiring to act virtuously is something that we can deliberately and willfully cultivate, which would mean that virtuous behavior is "up to us," to an extent, and not purely a matter of moral luck. I gave an account of what virtuous behavior is and what it requires: right action, done for the right reason, and done with the right feeling. Drawing on Audi's work, I showed that the first two of these three elements is indirectly within our power to ensure. I then argued that in the same way we can make ourselves responsive to virtuous reasons for action, we can similarly make ourselves more responsive to reasons regarding what we ought to desire – namely, to act virtuously. In this way, I concluded that we can conceivably cause ourselves to have the desires necessary for one to take pleasure in virtuous action, without a contrary inclination to do otherwise that prevents the continent person from being a virtuous one. And, I think this is true due to the nature of morality and agency itself, and regardless of the outcome of debates surrounding motivation and desires.

Briefly put, I have argued that the actions, reasons for action, and now desires requisite for virtuous behavior are not merely a matter of moral luck and are rather, in large part, under our control, if we choose to put in the effort – and of course, we ought to. This leads to an affirmative answer to the question posed in the title of this section: virtue is, in fact, largely up to us.

# Subjective Religiosity and Organized Religiosity as a Predictor of Sexual Affect among African Americans

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## **Abstract**

Historically, religiosity and attendance at a church with a majority African American or Black population was of practical value for African Americans. These branches of practicality extended to sexual health, such as delayed sexual intercourse and higher instances of using contraception. Overall, however, public sexual discourses show some African American communities as “at risk” regarding sexual health, which can make an African American individual feel negatively about their sexual experiences. The current study aimed to understand how subjective religiosity and organized religiosity influenced African Americans to experience a positive, negative, or shameful sexual affect. We found that higher levels of subjective religiosity, meaning a personal form of religion and not just physical attendance at a religious institution, was positively correlated with a positive sexual affect among our sample of African Americans ( $N = 725$ ,  $r = .11$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Through regression analysis, subjective religiosity was more influential in predicting sexual affect than organized religious involvement. The implications show that to gain support for sexual decisions and behaviors, African American individuals in religious communities will pick and choose what principles remain beneficial and applicable from religious teachings and utilize them to form their own subjective religiosity that supports their sexual experiences.

Religious traditions and beliefs, such as holidays with religious backgrounds and the American Pledge of Allegiance, pervade American society, but for African Americans, religion is historically of specific personal value. This is marked by individual importance, using the church as a place of solace, and the creation of a community that endorses common beliefs (Taylor & Chatters, 2010). Religiosity is operationalized and will be further defined in two ways: organized religiosity and subjective religiosity. Sexual affect, an individual's feelings about their own sexual experience, encompasses those subjective emotions, and it is necessary to understand the factors that influence sexual affect, which is what this study aims to accomplish. Moreover, it is important to include African Americans in research about sexual affect and religiosity because much research portrays African Americans to be at a deficit rather than a strength-based position regarding sexual health (Fletcher et al., 2015).

The aim of this research is to identify emotions among African Americans about sexuality and sexual decisions concerning religiosity, which can help religious communities identify shortcomings and facilitate better support for their community members. Subjective emotions regarding personal sexual experiences are defined as an individual's sexual affect. Sexual affect is a factor of emotional sexual health. Consequently, African American sexual discourses that are influenced by religion have the potential to be a platform to promote a healthy or positive sexual affect that will facilitate sexual communication, awareness of contraception, and religious community support based on sexual decisions and behaviors (Taylor & Chatters, 2010). The current study aims to create a holistic picture of sexual health and seeks to give importance to sexual affect as a factor of sexual health.

### **Sexual Health and its Relation to Religiosity**

According to the Pew Forum (2018), 79% of African Americans reported their belief in God as "absolutely certain" compared with reported numbers of 48% White, 25% Latino, and 17% Asian American. Such reported numbers are why African Americans are of particular interest for this study. Many times, morals and values that are facilitated through religion and spirituality generally have protective effects on African Americans as a whole (Gutierrez, Goodwin, Kirkinis, & Mattis, 2014; Udell, Donenberg, & Emerson, 2011; Wills, Gerrard, Murray, & Brody, 2003). These protective effects of religiosity and spirituality also extend to aspects of sexual health, such as delayed first sexual intercourse and greater self-regulation (Vasilenko, Lefkowitz, & Welsh, 2014; Watterson & Giesler, 2012).

## **Organized Religiosity**

Diener, Tay, and Myers (2011) found that subjective well-being was principally brought about when participants felt social support, respect, and purpose from their religious communities. Therefore, if support, respect, and purpose were conveyed by organized religiosity, then subjective well-being was facilitated in African American religious institutions and attendance was retained. Conversely, if support, respect, and purpose were not shown, then African American individuals were more likely to leave the institution or practice personal forms of the religion outside of the institution (Diener et al., 2011).

When individuals feel like their sexuality (e.g., gay, lesbian, premarital sex) is incongruent with their religious communities, they are more likely to rely on personal beliefs instead of religious communities to resolve emotional conflicts. (Sherry, Adelman, Whilde, & Quick, 2010; Vasilenko, Lefkowitz, & Welsh, 2014). This emotional conflict can cause a negative or shameful sexual affect when a religious community does not support or respect an individual's sexuality or sexual behavior.

## **Subjective Religiosity**

Although African Americans repeatedly report a higher level of importance of religion than do Caucasians, it does not mean that their church attendance follows suit. In fact, Hudson, Purnell, Duncan, and Baker (2015) found no significant differences in levels of church attendance among each ethnic group, but African Americans still report higher levels of subjective well-being than do Caucasians. Therefore, if African Americans choose to take their religion outside of the brick and mortar of an institution, they may practice their personal beliefs, like accepting homosexuality and premarital sex, instead of traditional institutional morals, like exclusively heterosexual relationships and marital sex.

Placing a larger importance on subjective religiosity instead of organized religious involvement does not mean that African Americans do not think about the beliefs and religious sexual code of conduct they were taught in a religious institution. African Americans who reported having significant involvement in church as adolescents still thought about religious beliefs they were taught as they grew older (Taylor, Chatters, & Joe, 2011). Often, African Americans report that not returning to their religious institutions is to avoid gossip and rejection from their religious communities about their sexuality and sexual decisions (Quinn, Dickson-Gomez, & Kelly, 2016).

## **Religiosity as a Predictor of Sexual Affect**

Individuals can experience negative sexual affect because of the collaboration of religiosity and sexual decisions. For example, if an individual feels as if they are not representing their religion properly on account of their sexual choices, they may feel ashamed or guilty about of their sexual experiences (Jardin, Sharp, Garey & Zvolensky, 2016). Moore et al. (2015), explored an African American Christian church-based youth group to understand the messages about sex the youth were receiving from their parents and church. They found participants to be at sexual risk based on their reported sexual behavior. Participants reported high levels of organized religiosity (e.g., frequent attendance to church and church involvement) and high levels of subjective religiosity (e.g., thinking about God, praying outside of church, and reading scriptures outside of church), but about one-third reported vaginal sex experience at about 14.7 years of age and were inconsistent with condom use. While the church spoke against premarital sex and deemed it as sinful or wrong, participants felt that the God they ascribed to was loving and supportive of their own decision-making; participants felt no reported upset about their sexuality and sexual experiences. Therefore, participants' sexual affect was overall positive (Moore et al., 2015). The sexual experiences of the participants caused them to personalize and reconcile religious messages they were receiving if they differed with those of the church and religious leaders (Moore et al., 2015).

Higher levels of religiosity delay sexual behavior, but once an individual engages in sexual behavior, levels of religiosity might lessen, showing that sexual behavior may influence attitudes of religion, not because they chose to stop being religious, but because social support is lacking (Vasilenko, Lefkowitz, & Welsh, 2014). Using longitudinal data from before first sexual intercourse to after first sexual intercourse, Vasilenko et al. (2014) investigated the importance of religion (i.e., subjective religiosity) and attendance at religious services (i.e., organized religiosity) to determine if there were fluctuations in either of these two facets of religiosity. Generally, for both aspects, participants' religiosity levels did not change within 6 months of reported first sexual intercourse, but within a year of reported first sexual intercourse, levels of importance and service attendance decreased. Participants who continued engaging in sexual behavior inconsistent with religious doctrine experienced shameful sexual affect, which caused a decrease in service attendance.

Many religions speak against premarital sexual behavior and promote heterosexual relationships over homosexual relationships (Altemeyer, 2004; Barnes & Meyer, 2012; Regnerus, 2007; Sherry et al., 2010; Vasilenko & Lefkowitz, 2014). Today, many people are beginning to accept the idea of sexuality being fluid or being able to explore one's sexual preferences whether it be lesbian,

gay, or bisexual. In such cases, their religious identities may be at odds with sexual identity (Sherry, Adelman, Whilde, & Quick, 2010). Sherry and colleagues found that levels of negative and shameful sexual affect were reported when participants self-defined as religious while participating in homosexual behavior. Participants who were prepared to explain their sexual experiences to their religious community often felt rejection and exclusion from the community (Sherry et al., 2010). An African American male participant journaled,

[W]hen I realized that I was ultimately going to fail being heterosexual, and sleep with a man, I tried to kill myself by smashing my car into a bridge pylon. No one figured it was a suicide attempt I guess because I was let right out of the hospital as soon as they decided I didn't have a concussion. I then decided that I could not be homosexual AND Christian, and dropped out of all church services (Sherry et al., p. 116, 2010).

A negative or shameful sexual affect can cause a decrease in organized religious activity (Barnes & Meyer, 2012; Sherry et al., 2010).

A similar study by Quinn, Dickson-Gomez, and Kelly (2016), involving African American males who reported homosexual behavior, found that participants felt the need to stay physically present in church because of significant organized religiosity as a youth. Generally, all participants saw their church as a "church family," recognized homosexuality as being against the beliefs of the church, and experienced their sexuality as a topic of gossip at the church (Quinn et al., 2016). A participant said, "If God created everyone how they are, perfectly, like, he doesn't make mistakes as people," (Quinn et al., 2016, p. 533). Participants often felt guilt or shame based upon their sexual decisions and sexuality but did not want to depart from their church families; therefore, they tailored their religiosity to reconcile their sexuality by postulating that their sexuality is not a mistake. African American pastors were also interviewed to explain their stance on conflicting views of religion and sexuality. A reverend stated,

[A]ll I can say is what the Bible says relative to that lifestyle and the Bible refers to it as an abomination. Now, I don't take that and beat them over the head with it. I tell them God loves them. He loves the criminals, the murderers, he loves all people. And he can change them (Quinn et al., 2016, p. 533).

Religiosity can influence the sexual affect of African Americans because it becomes salient when the religious community from which they are conditioned to receive love and acceptance is now gossiping, looking down on, and in some cases, rejecting them because of their sexual decisions and sexuality.

## **The Current Study**

This correlational study assessed how organized and subjective religiosity predicted African American individuals experiencing positive, negative, or shameful sexual affect. Previous research has focused on sexual health as quantifiable variables like contraception usage, quantity of sexual partners, or frequency of STI testing; however, a comprehensive sexual health assessment must include subjective emotions. Organized religiosity and subjective religiosity were chosen to predict sexual affect because, as an ethnic group, African Americans historically and repeatedly report religiosity at increased levels over other ethnic groups (Taylor & Chatters, 2010). A sample of self-identified African Americans answered a comprehensive survey that included questions about their organized religiosity, subjective religiosity, and experiences of positive, negative, and shameful sexual affects. The first hypothesis was that higher levels of subjective religiosity will be positively correlated with positive sexual affect, but negatively correlated with negative and shameful affects. The second hypothesis was that organized religiosity would be negatively correlated with positive sexual affect, but would be positively correlated with shameful and negative affects. On account of the more personal aspect of subjective religiosity, it was hypothesized that subjective religiosity would have more influence on sexual affect than organized religiosity.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from a large Midwestern university. Participants were contacted through introductory psychology courses and African American and Hispanic/Latino students were directly recruited from the campus registrar during 2005 to 2010. The ethnic representation of the university population at the time was 65% European American, 12.1% Asian American, 5.8% African American, and 4.1% Hispanic American. From the larger sample, 725 participants reported to be African American with 72.8% females and 27.2% males. The participants ranged from ages 18 to 24 years ( $M = 19.95$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ). All were undergraduate students, and class year was not collected. From the larger sample, 80.7% reported to be exclusively heterosexual, 1.3% reported exclusively homosexual behavior, and 1% reported some homosexual behavior. Some participants declined to report sexual orientation.

## Measures

***Sexual affect.*** This measure assessed experiences of sexual affect or emotions in regards to their own sexual experiences. This included 16 adjectives to describe sexual affect (e.g. satisfied, frustrated, ashamed). Participants indicated their levels of emotion experienced about their current sexual experiences and behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0= “not at all” to 4= “a lot.” A principle component factor analysis (utilizing Oblimin rotation) showed a 3-factor structure. Then reliability analyses were conducted to corroborate the three subscales: positive ( $\alpha = .91$ ; 6 items; “satisfied”), negative ( $\alpha = .85$ ; 5 items, “frustrated”), and shame ( $\alpha = .78$ ; 3 items, “ashamed”). Reported higher scores showed that the affect was experienced concerning their own sexuality and sexual behavior.

***Religiosity and Spirituality.*** The Religiosity and Spirituality measure (Mattis, Hearn, & Jagers, 2002) was intended to assess participants’ attitudes towards religion, personal involvement, and how they felt about religion as children which was interpreted by four subscales. For this study, the two subscales or Subjective Religiosity and Organizational Religious Involvement were utilized. Pertaining to subjective religiosity, participants selected the response that best related with their feelings and beliefs about religiosity and spirituality on a 5-point Likert scale 1= “not at all important” to 5= “very important” regarding their subjective religiosity ( $\alpha = .89$ ; 4 items; “how important is religion in your life today?”) to understand how they felt about using religion in their daily lives. Higher scores indicated that participants found religion to be important an important aspect in their lives—from daily prayer to reading Scriptures, all of these activities were done on their own accord outside of an institution.

To measure participants’ organizational religious involvement ( $\alpha = .74$ ; 9 items), they circled “yes” or “no” to questions such as, “are you are member of a church or religious institution” and “do you presently hold a leadership role in a religious institution?” A mean of the number of “yes” responses was created to rate organizational involvement, which could have included having a leadership role in the religious institution, regularly attendance weekly, or involvement in a religious group (that may not be an institution, but a group with a common religious aspect).

## Procedure

The data were taken from a larger ongoing study on positive sex and gender socialization in undergraduates. Approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at the university of its origin. The participant’s grade was contingent upon completion of the study, but there was an alternative writing

option for those who chose to not participate. Data were collected from 2005 to 2010 during each academic semester and successfully received a large portion of African American participants, though all non-Caucasian students were encouraged to participate.

The duration of each session lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour, with five to 10 participants per session. Participants were informed that they could ask questions or skip any question that they did not want to answer. After indicating willingness to participate on consent forms, they were given questionnaire packets. Then a debriefing form was given to each participant giving information about the study and the questions they had answered.

## **Results**

### **Overview of Plan of Analysis**

Descriptive analyses were completed to evaluate the means of continuous variables and frequencies of categorical variables. Then inferential statistics were conducted to test hypotheses. Analyses focused on participants' sexual affect in regards to their levels of subjective religiosity and organized religion. Utilizing correlational analyses, relationships between sexual affect (positive, negative, and shameful) and religiosity (subjective and organized) were investigated. By conducting Pearson correlations, to note if positive, negative, or shameful sexual affect was related with either or both subjective and organized religiosity, none of the sentiments regarding sexual affect were significantly correlated with organized religiosity (Table 1). After finding significance between the positive and negative sexual affects and subjective religiosity, a regression model was created to better understand what influenced the positive and negative sexual affects (Table 2).

### **Characteristics of Sample**

Through descriptive analysis, it was found that the sample of African Americans was highly religious. Notably, 74% of participants reported some type of subjective religiosity and 71% reported some type of organized religiosity. Table 1 shows demographic sexual factors that influenced sexual affect in this sample were age in years at first sexual experience ( $N = 14.1$ ), if contraception was used at last intercourse, and ties to ethnic identity.

### **Subjective Religiosity and Sexual Affect**

It was hypothesized that higher levels of subjective religiosity would be positively correlated with a higher positive sexual affect but would be negatively

correlated with shameful and negative affects. Thus, subjective religiosity was a predictor of positive sexual affect. As can be seen in Table 2, Pearson correlations indicated that a positive sexual affect is positively correlated with higher levels of subjective religiosity ( $r = .11, p = .02$ ). Additionally, subjective religiosity is negatively correlated with negative sexual affect ( $r = -.11, p = .02$ ), partially supporting hypothesis 1. Although subjective religiosity had significant correlations with positive and negative sexual affects, there was no significant correlation between subjective religiosity and a shameful sexual affect.

### **Organized Religiosity and Sexual Affect**

It was hypothesized that organized religiosity would be negatively correlated with positive sexual affect and would be positively correlated with shameful and negative sexual affects. The second hypothesis was not supported. Therefore, organized religiosity was not a predictor of shameful or negative sexual affects. Table 2 depicts that no significant correlations were present.

### **Demographic Factors that Influence Sexual Affect**

Because subjective religiosity has a more personal aspect than organized religiosity, it was hypothesized that subjective religiosity would be more influential in determining positive and negative sexual affects than organized religiosity. Table 2 shows that organized religiosity had no significant correlation with sexual affect; therefore, organized religiosity was not included in the regression analysis model, and the third hypothesis of subjective religiosity being more predictive than organized religiosity was supported. To further understand what influenced sexual affect among the sample, a regression model was created including demographic factors that were significantly correlated with positive, negative, or shameful sexual affect (Table 1).

Table 3 shows the results of a regression analysis model to address this hypothesis. The Pearson correlation also indicates other factors that influence sexual affect. (e.g., age of first intercourse, ethnic identity, reported levels of depression, and subjective religiosity).

Again, there were no significance in any correlations with organized religiosity, so it was not included in the regression analysis model since it does not have any influence or predictive value in this sample's sexual affect. Other than subjective religiosity, ethnic identity, age of first sexual experience, experience of depression, and the use of contraception at last sexual encounter were significant correlations that were controlled for in the model. Overall, controlling for 4 sexual factors contributed an additional .54% to 1.2% of variance for positive sexual affect and .50 to 1.19% of variance for negative sexual affect.

**Table 1.** Bivariate Correlations Between Demographic Variable to Predict Positive and Negative Sexual Affect.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Age at first sexual experience	--	.06	.11*	.03	.08	-.27**	.12
2	Subjective Religiosity		--	.07	.12*	.24*	-.11*	.11*
3	Used contraception at last intercourse			--	.09	.04	.05	-.17**
4	Ethnic identity				--	.12*	.23**	-.17**
5	Reported depression					--	-.31*	.42**
6	Positive Sexual Affect						--	-.17**
7	Negative Sexual Affect							--

\*\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level

\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level

**Table 2.** Bivariate Correlations Between Subjective Religiosity, Organized Religiosity Negative Sexual Affect, Shameful Sexual Affect, and Positive Sexual Affect.

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Negative Sexual Affect	--	.67*	-.45**	-.11*	-.04
2	Shameful Sexual Affect		--	-.51**	.00	.08
3	Positive Sexual Affect			--	.11*	.06
4	Subjective Religiosity				--	.60**
5	Organized Religiosity					--

\*\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level

\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level

**Table 3.** Regression Analyses Predicting which Factors are Most Influential in Predicting Positive and Negative Sexual Affects.

	Positive Sexual Affect	Negative Sexual Affect
Age at first sexual experience	-.27**	.12
Subjective religiosity	.11*	-.11*
Used contraception at last intercourse	.05	-.17**
Ethnic identity	.23**	-.16**
Reported depression	.31**	.42**

**Table 3.** (Continued)

<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	.054	.118
<i>F</i>	1.444*	2.033**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level

\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level

## Discussion

This study sought to investigate the role of organized religiosity and subjective religiosity in predicting emotions about sexual experiences among African Americans. In particular, organized religiosity focused on the element of frequency of attendance to religious services and regular involvement with religious extracurricular activities, but subjective religiosity was focused on taking the elements learned during attendance to religious services and activities and using the morals learned outside of the church walls for personal growth, gain, and sustainability. In other words, subjective religiosity is how an individual chooses to implement religion during their daily lives without formally or physically going to church.

As expected, it was found that participants who practiced subjective religiosity felt positively about their sexual experiences. But, most surprising was that organized religiosity had a negligible role in predicting sexual affect in this sample, even though much of the existing literature suggested that organized religiosity can be a reoccurring factor for African Americans experiencing negative or shameful sentiments about their sexual experiences. If participants had their first sexual experience at a younger age, their sexual affect was usually negative. On the other hand, if reported contraception was used during last intercourse and if participants had a strong sense of ethnic identity, their sexual affect was usually positive.

### Subjective Religiosity as a Predictor of Positive Sexual Affect

A common theme from our analyses was, like historical evidence shows, that African Americans in our study found religion to be important for daily life. Many implemented regular prayer and Scripture readings on their own accord. This one-on-one time spent forging a relationship with the deity to whom they worship could have resulted in validating and feeling confident about their sexual experiences. Subjective religiosity predicted positive emotions concerning sexual experiences, which is positive sexual affect. If there were negative emotions felt about their sexual experiences, it was useful to combat negative emotions about sexual experiences with the principles of subjective religiosity.

## **Organized Religiosity and Sexual Affect**

A possible explanation for subjective religiosity, rather than organized religiosity, being a predictive factor of sexual affect in this sample is that sexual experiences and subjective religiosity both involve personal decision-making. For example, if a religious African American individual decides to engage in homosexual behavior, they can internally validate the sexual behavior through subjective religiosity. The individual can decide that, personally, their religion does not hinder them from pursuing these sexual experiences.

## **Limitations and Further Implications**

Although our findings presented essential steps to understanding what religious aspects can help facilitate positive emotions about sexual experiences in the African American community, there are some limitations that contextualize our results. First, we did not examine what religious messages participants were receiving from religious institutions. Second, our sample was predominately females, so it is unclear how applicable our results are to African American males. For future research, it would be useful to understand what facets of subjective religiosity (e.g., prayer, personal reconciliation, Scripture reading) are helpful in predicting positive sexual affect. Although subjective religiosity was more predictive of sexual affect, it remains imperative to understand the effects that predominately African American religious institutions have on the community in generating sexual affect.

As a way to shift previous research from sexual health research that tends to focus on the many sexual risk factors that African Americans face, it is crucial to apply religiosity, which is historically advantageous for African Americans, making it a suitable factor for predicting positive sexual affect, which in return might facilitate holistic sexual health. When, as a community, African Americans are encouraged to feel positive about their unique sexual experiences, a comfortable culture in speaking positively about sex and sexuality is created.

Religious institutions that are predominately African American can be a practical community starting point to begin positive socialization about sex and sexuality. Socializing or speaking positively about sex and sexuality means that an individual is able to be assertive about protected sex, express what is needed to feel comfortable in a sexual situation, and clearly convey unwanted sexual experiences (Hobern, 2014). Nurturing positive feelings about sexual experiences within African American religious communities through acceptance and honest communication can place African Americans at an advantage for achieving greater holistic sexual health.

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# ***Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking:*** **A Book Analysis**

*Molly Goaley*

## **Abstract**

The topics addressed in Susan Cain's *Quiet* are important to nonscholarly and academic audiences because introversion is a universal personality trait that affects us all in some way. If we are not introverts ourselves, we have colleagues, supervisors, family members, friends or children who are. Studies of extroversion and introversion in organizational teamwork (Zanin & Bisel, 2018), office environments (McElroy & Morrow, 2010), and leadership (Grant et al., 2011) therefore have practical implications regardless of personality type. The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast Cain's work with the existing scholarly research in order to gain a deeper understanding of introversion's role in the workplace, as well as identify limitations in the research literature.

Introverts living under the Extrovert Ideal are like women in a man's world, discounted because of a trait that goes to the core of who they are. Extroversion is an enormously appealing personality style, but we've turned it into an oppressive standard to which most of us feel we must conform (Cain, 2012, p. 4).

These are the sentences that introduce Susan Cain's (2012) passionately argued and expertly researched book, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. At least one third of the people we know are introverts: those who listen intently (Grant, Gino & Hofmann, 2011) and concentrate best in quiet spaces (McElroy & Morrow, 2010), who prefer working individually more than on teams (Henningsen & Henningsen, 2018), and who dislike self-promotion and attention (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009) but thrive on focused conversations. Cain argues that we dramatically undervalue this creative, self-motivated personality type (Hazel, Keaten & Kelly, 2014) and that we lose much in our organizations by doing so. Even in less obvious introverted occupations like law, politics and activism, she argues that some of the biggest leaps forward were made by people who "achieved what they did, not in spite of, but *because of* their introversion" (Cain, 2012, p. 6).

Cain addresses the rise of what she calls the Extrovert Ideal, or the omnipresent belief that the ideal self is gregarious, alpha and comfortable being the center of attention. She explains that our cultural focus on extroversion permeates our organizations to the point that introversion has become a second-class personality trait, "somewhere between a disappointment and a pathology" (Cain, 2012, p. 4). To embrace the Extrovert Ideal so unthinkingly is a costly mistake, as we miss out on the significant contributions that come from introverts who create and innovate by tapping into their inner worlds. The "New Groupthink" structure, or the idea that teamwork should be elevated above all else, stifles productivity for those who need solitude to get the real work done (Cain, 2012, p. 75). Additionally, failure to recognize the potential of introverts in leadership roles is a major disservice to organizations, as less extroverted leaders are more apt to listen to employees' ideas and consider their opinions in decision-making (Grant et al., 2011).

The topics addressed in *Quiet* are important to nonscholarly and academic audiences because introversion is a universal personality trait that affects us all in some way. If we are not introverts ourselves, we have colleagues, supervisors, family members, friends or children who are. Studies of extroversion and introversion in organizational teamwork (Zanin & Bisel, 2018), office environments (McElroy & Morrow, 2010), and leadership (Grant et al., 2011) therefore have practical implications regardless of personality type. The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast Cain's work with the existing scholarly

research in order to gain a deeper understanding of introversion's role in the workplace, as well as identify limitations in the research literature. I will focus on *Quiet's* concepts of teamwork, leadership, communication styles and physical environments by providing a literature review regarding introversion in organizational communication and conclude with an evaluation and critique of the book.

## **Author and Book**

### **Author Biographical Sketch**

Susan Cain is a self-described introvert who brings a wealth of personal and professional experience to *Quiet*. She is the chief revolutionary behind Quiet Revolution and the author of two bestsellers, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* and *Quiet Power: The Secret Strengths of Introverts*.

A former Wall Street lawyer, Cain was inspired to write *Quiet* after noticing the vast amounts of untapped potential that existed in personality types like hers in the workplace. For Cain, *Quiet* is not just a book but a mission to change how we think about introversion; to reshape workplace culture and design; and to steer away from groupthink in favor of environments that support deep reflection and focus. In addition to writing, Cain is now a public speaker on the topic of introversion and her record-breaking TED Talk has been viewed more than 19 million times (Cain, 2012).

Cain is influenced by the idea that introverts are constantly being forced to engage in practices that go against their innate nature and have been doing so their whole lives. She is particularly interested in empowering introverted children, as well as educating parents and teachers about their unique needs. She deliberately uses "introversion" as a broad term, drawing insight from Big Five psychology, Carl Jung, Jerome Kagan, Elaine Aron, and many other scholars and researchers (Cain, 2012, p. 269-270).

### **Book Summary**

*Quiet* is written in a style that appeals to readers of all types, is thoroughly supported by research, and offers many true stories of unforgettable introverts like Rosa Parks, Warren Buffett, and Steve Wozniak. The book's main arguments focus on the following ideas: that much of the world embraces the Extrovert Ideal and thus undervalues introversion, and that today's schools and organizations neglect to provide an environment in which introverts can thrive and produce their best work.

*Quiet* is broken into four parts based on the following concepts: the Extrovert Ideal, biology as it relates to temperament, introversion as it relates to culture, and introversion as it relates to communication and relationships.

Part One explores how extroversion rose to become the cultural ideal, as well as the history and shortcomings of charismatic leadership. As American culture increasingly came to idolize the Cult of Personality over time, biases toward extroversion intensified. Early citizens of our country depended on our founding fathers to be “loudmouths” about liberty, while qualities of the more reserved were regarded with a growing disdain (Cain, 2012, p. 30). As a culture, we have been taught to idolize the charismatic, while qualities of introversion (e.g., being soft-spoken or contemplative) have traditionally been viewed as weaknesses. This section concludes with a critique of what Cain calls the “New Groupthink,” the idea that our best and most creative work comes solely from collaboration (Cain, 2012, p. 75). Cain adamantly makes the point that for at least one third of the population (introverts), solitude is a vital key to creativity. While school systems and organizations should be teaching people to work independently and providing plenty of space for solitude, they increasingly do the opposite. Moreover, when organizations force members to participate in groupthink and teamwork above all else, it consequentially stifles productivity and intellectual achievement for many (Cain, 2012).

Part Two transitions into biology’s role in temperament and how free will can be channeled into making the naturally introverted more comfortable in communicating. Cain explores developmental psychologist Jerome Kagan’s work regarding high and low reactivity in infants, which provides a tremendous amount of evidence that high reactivity is one biological basis of introversion (Cain, 2012). The temperament we are born with, Cain concludes, mixed with cultural and life experience, forms our individual personality and our likeliness to be introverted or extroverted.

Part Three explores Cain’s concept of “soft power” in the context of Asian-Americans navigating the Extrovert Ideal, and how culture plays a role in the way we perceive personality type. Without encouraging rigid national or ethnic stereotyping, Cain acknowledges the cultural differences in personality between East and West, and how qualities of introversion are often revered in Asian countries (Cain, 2012).

Part Four concludes the book by offering advice to introverts on when to act more extroverted, how to address the communication gap between the opposite types, and perhaps most importantly, how to empower quiet children. Introverted youth, she argues, are typically encouraged by well-meaning parents and teachers to act against their nature in social situations. By allowing quiet children to be themselves, however, we empower them with the confidence necessary to navigate the world in meaningful ways (Cain, 2012)

*Quiet* is heavily researched, with Cain citing 271 total sources in the notes section of the book. She supports her conclusions with a plethora of academic literature in psychology, sociology, and communication. In addition, she offers many anecdotal stories from popular biographies and autobiographies on introverts such as Warren Buffett, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mahatma Gandhi, Bill Gates, and others.

### **Literature Review and Evaluation**

Though *Quiet* explores introversion mainly through the lenses of psychological and social sciences, the book's concepts go hand-in-hand with organizational communication. The following section will focus on relevant and contemporary research related to these concepts and will compare and contrast the literature to Cain's work.

#### **Major Concepts**

Teamwork, leadership, communication style, and environment are main concepts found within contemporary research related to introversion in organizational communication.

Teamwork (e.g., group work, brainstorming) is based on the idea that collective action and thought processing are more effective and efficient than individual thought and action. Additionally, as dependence on teams has increased in organizations, research has begun to examine the role of leadership in fostering team success (Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010). However, extroversion's role in team satisfaction has been found to be insignificant (Medina & Srivastava, 2016). Contrarily, despite its widespread use in organizations, social scientific research has generally been unsupportive of the claimed benefits of brainstorming (Henningsen & Henningsen, 2018).

It has long been assumed that extroversion and personality trait dominance are indicators of effective leadership. While true in some cases, existing literature increasingly proves the opposite. Anderson and Kilduff (2009) suggest that dominant individuals tend to display competence-related communication cues – such as assertiveness, direct eye contact, and expansive posture – regardless of their actual level of competence. These cues in turn shape others' perceptions of the dominant individual as self-confident and highly capable of managing tasks, therefore allowing the individual to achieve influence over groups. If highly dominant individuals are perceived as competent regardless of ability to accomplish tasks, this suggests that competent individuals who display low dominance can be unjustifiably overlooked for certain positions (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009).

The way introverts and extroverts vary in communication style has a strong impact on the effectiveness of messaging (O'Carroll, 2015). Within the context of organizations, group members' collective understanding is improved when they have similar expectations about the appropriate way to communicate with one another (Park, 2008). In turn, group communication research could benefit from understanding more introverted qualities of communication style, such as politeness and efficiency, and applying them to a group work context (Park, 2008).

Finally, the environment of an organization has a strong effect on how different personality types communicate and accomplish work (Real et al., 2017). While organizations increasingly adopt open office structures to reduce costs and foster collaboration, employees are affected quite differently depending on a variety of factors such as age, espoused values and personality type (McElroy & Morrow, 2010). While one individual may thrive in an open office environment, another may feel constantly distracted and as a result, become ineffective.

## **Evaluation**

*Quiet's* main concepts compare well with those found in the research literature, especially in terms of undervaluing introversion's role in the workplace. Cain claims that the New Groupthink overstates the value of working in teams rather than individually, which is supported by a number of studies. For example, Zanin & Bisel (2018) illustrate employees' need for autonomy, often best achieved by working alone, in order to negotiate identity and shape their organizational experience.

Cain emphasizes the power of quiet leadership and how embracing introversion's traits in leadership roles can provide tremendous value to organizations. In line with this view, research indicates that less extroverted leaders are more apt to listen to employees' ideas, involve them in decision-making, and make them feel like a valued part of the organization (Grant et al., 2011). Such behaviors benefit organizations by empowering employees to be more proactive and stake a greater claim in the organization's success.

Cain asserts that introverts exhibit a higher level of sensitivity among groups, and therefore demonstrate a greater need for deep, one-on-one communication style as opposed to group conversation. Similarly, Ervin et al. (2017) suggest that task accomplishment is improved when meetings are structured by topical expertise rather than letting the most dominant or extroverted personalities take the lead.

Cain consistently emphasizes the need for introverts to have quiet spaces, such as closed office structures, in which to be productive. Many studies substantiate this claim, indicating that office structure is a key factor in accomplishing tasks. For example, McElroy and Morrow's (2010) study illustrates

how employees will have very different reactions to open versus closed office structures based on a number of variables (e.g., personality type, age).

Although the concepts in *Quiet* align well with the research literature, there are also substantial differences that should be addressed. Cain argues the many benefits of working individually, yet largely disregards the vast amount of research that points to the value of teamwork on organizational outcomes. For example, one survey of high-level managers reported that 91 percent of them agreed that teams are central to organizational success (Martin & Bal, 2006, as cited in Morgeson et al., 2010). This suggests a high level of value in teamwork, regardless of personality type.

Cain's concept of quiet leadership is indeed an undervalued attribute in organizations, yet she fails to address instances of when it is better to have extroverted leaders at the helm. For example, Grant et al. (2011) suggest that employees who are less proactive respond to and accomplish tasks more efficiently under extroverted managers. Communication behavior and style is a major concept explored throughout *Quiet*, however it gives little mention of technology's role as a communication channel and introverts' level of satisfaction with it. As organizations increasingly depend on online communication for both daily operations and team projects (Medina & Srivastava, 2016), this area warrants further research.

The final contrast pertains to Cain's claim that quiet work spaces are a vital key to creativity for introverts. However, research has shown that open office spaces have been effective in increasing collaboration, employee altruism, and company support (McElroy & Morrow, 2010). *Quiet* makes the case for more autonomous work spaces in schools and organizations yet does not address the values of open office structures.

## **Critique**

As clearly indicated in *Quiet* and supported by the research literature, society would be wise to tap into the power of introverted personalities. *Quiet* offers an insightful look into the benefits of introversion for both nonacademic and academic audiences.

The layperson will find the concepts in *Quiet* relatable, as we all have colleagues, friends, and loved ones who are introverted and many of us are introverts ourselves. Perhaps the largest benefit to the layperson is that the book is thoroughly supported by research yet is not bogged down with complicated academic language. It is presented in a simple style with many interesting examples from real-life introverts. It provides a tremendous amount of insight into how this personality type communicates while still being enjoyable to read.

A potential weakness is that *Quiet* sometimes fails to address when it is better to lean on extroverted personality types in certain situations. A section on extroverted leadership's role in combat or crisis situations, for example, would add value to Cain's arguments by adding a contrasting perspective.

A major benefit of *Quiet* is that it offers insight of this personality type from an introvert's perspective. Remarkably, while a plethora of research is said to exist on extroversion and introversion, many of the studies found for this project focused primarily on the perspective of extroversion (Hazel et al., 2014). This indicates a greater need for more research that specifically examines introversion, which Cain does well. A potential weakness is that academics may be frustrated by Cain's failure to acknowledge the benefits of extroversion that abound in scholarly research (Grant et al., 2011). While the book's intentions are to provide insight specifically on introversion, Cain's arguments could be more beneficial if they offered a contrasting perspective.

Overall, I would rate *Quiet* with four out of five stars and label it a must-read for anyone who identifies as or knows an introvert (which is everyone). My rating is based on how I felt when reading this book. I personally identified and agreed with nearly every point that Cain made in her arguments, and came away with a better understanding of myself and how to communicate better with others. I would absolutely recommend *Quiet* to my classmates. Not only does it provide a wealth of information about people in general, it relates to a multitude of concepts we have explored in organizational communication. Managers and employees alike could become better communicators simply by understanding the differences between introverts and extroverts.

## Conclusion

A major takeaway is that Cain clearly points out society's tendency to embrace the Extrovert Ideal and downplay the positive aspects of introversion. Remarkably, much of the existing scholarly research also has a tendency to focus on the negative or stereotypical aspects of introversion. Dismissing the power of introversion so unthinkingly does a major disservice to society. Additionally, there is a critical need for schools and organizations to shift toward understanding and supporting this personality type through consideration of leadership roles, working environments, etc. By letting introverts be themselves instead of pressing them to conform to a certain standard, our work lives could be much improved.

In conclusion, *Quiet* is a remarkably insightful book that successfully makes the case for embracing the power of introversion, especially in organizational settings. Thanks to researchers like Cain and others, there has been a recent, significant shift in our perception of introverts and their capabilities. However, there is still much work to be done in empowering introverts, especially in

leadership roles, and allowing them to reach their true potential through embracing their unique needs.

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**Book Review of King & Ety's**  
*England and Scotland, 1286-1603*

*Austin M. Setter*

Andy King and Claire Etty. *England and Scotland, 1286-1603*. London: Palgrave, 2016. Pp. ix, 236. \$104.00.

Authors Andy King, lecturer in history at the University of Southampton, and Claire Etty, senior assistant researcher at the Oxford English Dictionary, came together to write a new book in the ongoing series *British History in Perspective*. Their book, *England and Scotland, 1286-1603*, acts as an easy to read introduction to and current synthesis on the relationship between England and Scotland from Alexander III's death (1286) to the ascension of Scotland's King James VI to the English throne (1603). Through this synthesis, the authors successfully provided an introductory text accessible for non-academics and entry-level historians while also subtly answering questions concerning the period such as what prevented peace, how the relationship influenced each society, and how could a Scottish king rise to power on the English throne after 250 years of constant war.

The book began with a brief historiographical section that addressed the regular English bias due to the availability of extant medieval sources. Following that, it traced the trends of the field that culminated in what King and Etty argued is the current romanticized idea of the relationship between England and Scotland. They explained that this relationship was heavily based on surviving notions from the historiographical traditions of both Whiggish and Romantic history. Thus, King and Etty, in the writing of this book, attempted to offer a more holistic interpretation of medieval relations based on both primary and secondary source material that would also appeal to a wide audience. Their hope was to provide the foundation for a better understanding of the complexities of the English-Scottish relationship throughout history that is not beholden to Scottish nationalism or English overlordship but instead is based on an analysis of their relationship with one another, as well as with the rest of the world, throughout history.

King and Etty defined their book's scope of time between the death of Alexander III, and Britain's renewed claim to overlordship of Scotland, and the ascension of Scotland's King James VI to the English throne. This selection offers over 300 years of relations to explore, all of which led King and Etty to conclude that the Anglo-Scottish relationship depended heavily on the Anglo-French relationship first and later the French-Hapsburg. Within this frame of reference Scotland and England defined themselves socially, politically, and religiously depending on the power and relevance of the kingdom of France. Scotland defined their relationship with England as one of oppression and unwarranted involvement and would take advantage of war between England and France to expand their holdings; however, England defined their relationship with Scotland in the context of overlordship of Britain and would actively engage in war with Scotland when they were not at war with France. These shifting relations enabled Scotland to conduct opportunistic raids and prevented England from fully subjugating their

northern neighbor. Towards the end of the book, the French relationship was redefined as France attempted to impress themselves upon Scottish rule and Scotland and England grew closer through their acceptance of Protestantism, which culminated in the unchallenged ascension of the king of Scotland to the English throne.

The book's chosen timeframe worked perfectly for King and Etty's examination. It excluded the relations before 1286 as Alexander III's death sparked renewed English involvement in Scottish rule, and the timeframe ends with the ascension of Scotland's king to the English throne, an event that shifted the interactions between the two kingdoms. The timeframe also allowed King and Etty to develop their argument/synthesis in an easy-flowing historical narrative that was inviting to those with little to no experience in the field as well as those newly established within the field. They complemented this narrative with a thematic examination in the second part of their book focused on specific types of interaction such as armies and warfare, relations between peoples, and national identity and propaganda. These areas provided a more complex look at how England and Scotland interacted throughout the chosen years and how the history of their interactions both influenced and continue to influence modern England and Scotland.

In keeping with their easy-to-access approach, King and Etty relied on endnotes as opposed to footnotes giving the readers a more uniform structure throughout the book. They also provided useful maps and both Scottish and English succession charts to help familiarize the reader with the many names and family connections. This approach continued into the bibliography and was one of the few criticisms of the work. While it was helpful by pointing towards other, more specialized secondary works, it would have benefitted greatly from a brief discussion or list of the most common primary sources for the benefit of new scholars.

Overall, King and Etty presented an easy to read history of English-Scottish interactions throughout the late Middle Ages. Their book provided not only a synthesis of the previous research but also a thematic approach that opened new questions and possibilities for research. The book succeeded in examining the questions of why peace was unobtainable and how the relationship shifted to allow for the king of Scotland to ascend the English throne. It also outlined inconsistencies that help further develop the framework for new research into medieval border communities, use of the medieval past, and the role of medieval Scotland in a global setting.

# Autumn

*Steven J. Maloney*

Autumn

Crossing the bridge from summer to winter  
like some obscure Hokusai, a Keats Ode  
rings in the mists of memory; the road  
not taken beckons, its damp leaves colder  
than before. Musty texts read well again,  
and sweet cooking smells waft through my window,  
bringing a bright moon along now and then,  
(honored guest), while gull anthems presage snow.  
That old saint under the bridge doesn't seem  
to care he'll be needing blankets soon; he  
just sits there, paper in hand, glad to see  
the passing show, knowing it's all a dream.  
Autumn: a return to where we've once been,  
a time to ponder the spaces between.

# Sweet Avaline

*Tavia Lloyd*

Sweet Avaline

This world doesn't deserve you but the earth will preserve your every step  
Every breath in you take will be a breath out of love I'll leave in the air for you  
To breathe in kindness and taste laughter in the little lungs your chest confides

I will nourish your self-worth and teach you confidence to feel for centuries  
I'll teach you the beauty of stillness and how colors sound in the night  
I will grow trees of compassion and history for you to read through in its roots  
I'll play movement for you so you can experience  
the fluid motion of body and mind  
I will bake love and wisdom into foods so divine you'll crave  
the goodness of soul  
I'll lift you high in the air to feel raindrop bliss on your plush colored skin

At bedtime I'll hold you while reading from trees  
of various knowledge and talents that go unseen  
At night I'll listen to the sound of your slumber  
while I smile in the mist of your wonderful dreams

I'll teach you the gifts of the earth and the elation  
of hearts beating to the ravine of humility  
I will build curiosity out of the night stars above  
you teaching you the way of constellations  
I'll show you the bravery and courage of strong people  
someday you might idolize  
People from all nations, all talents, all intellects and feverish might

You'll teach me to love the simplicity in life  
and the present moment you gift into my sight  
Sweet Avaline, I cannot wait to teach you such marvelous things.

# Laws of Genetics

*Sydney N. Sheltz-Kempf*

Laws of Genetics

My life is a concoction of chromosomes,  
a carefully controlled mishmash of heterochromatin and  
euchromatin intoxicated on a cocktail of power chased with  
genius, declaring I am legally bound by laws  
of genetics which I never had the right to vote on.

Society feasts on my spaghetti strands of DNA and  
nicknames me Pinocchio while they independently assort  
who I am and what I must be into boxes.

I settle for an equal segregation of my talents and my dreams  
with no regard for any nurturing that my biological  
mother could have done – but never did.

Nature is a terrible mother  
but at least she tells me  
exactly who I am.

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI



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