Marked Superheroes and Villains: 21st Century Embodied Rhetorics of (Dis)Abilities and (Hyper)Masculinity

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Introduction

Comic book superheroes often have been presented as the masculine ideal, and while the first two chapters deal with this more explicitly, the third chapter demonstrates superheroes of the 1970’s DC Comics issue are portrayed as the ideal that neither Indigenous Peoples nor the villains measure up to. Woven in with the discussions of masculinity are the depictions of different mark(er)s of identity. Another thread that runs through the three chapters is appropriation. In a broader sense, all three pieces are a deeper exploration of the DC Comics Green Arrow canon. There are comparisons of Green Arrow to similar DC and Marvel superheroes, the inclusion of comic book history, as well as an extension which ventures out beyond the mainstream comics. As a whole, the three chapters provide what can only amount to a small fraction of analysis regarding the comic book genre and the embodied rhetorics of the superhero.

My approach to this research was engendered when in one of my first graduate classes, Cultural Rhetorics, I began to explore the Arrow “Hey Girl” promotional campaign. From there, my interest in the rhetorics of masculinity, superheroes, audiences, film/television adaptations, and bodies developed. Personally superhero film/television adaptations were, more or less, a staple of my childhood, from Batman films by Tim Burton to the X-Men franchise and more. However, beyond an initial interest in the comic book genre I had carried over an interest in gender/masculine studies and cultural studies from my undergraduate research, as well. These interests began to merge together leading me to explore a different aspect of superhero masculinity than I was familiar with. The superhero commonplace hyper-masculine ideal of excessive musculature seemed relatively self-explanatory in a number of ways. However, the more I learned of the similarities between The CW’s Arrow and Christopher Nolan’s Dark
Knight trilogy the more I began to consider the representation of masculinity within the darker aspects of these adaptations. Reviewing the episodes of the two seasons of Arrow, the Dark Knight trilogy, and the four films incorporating Iron Man/Tony Stark, connections formed about these characters suffering from psychological traumas, specifically Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Survivor’s Guilt. Thinking back to my examination of hegemonic heteronormative masculinity, I began to think about the way that male bodies are portrayed in countless forms in popular culture today. Then my research questions started to grow. What were the connections between scars and physical and psychological trauma? Was there a connection between masculinity and scars? Did that connection pertain to these representations? What do these connections have to say in the larger sense? And so forth. My continued research associated tattoos with scars, as they have both have similar natures: they are both the tangible result of skin being penetrated.

My research stems from an interest in the history of the Green Arrow comic books. On a whole, my experience with comic books up to that point had only been with film/television adaptations, but I was continuously coming across articles, chapters, and books that discussed the comic books themselves. During my research that I came across the cover of “Ulysses Star is Still Alive” and then pursued that comic as my final project for Native Writing and Rhetorics course. These avenues of research lead me to further explore the history of the Green Arrow comics themselves, as well the representations of Indigenous Peoples within mainstream comics. The result was a paper that allowed me to familiarize myself with writing within Indigenous Rhetorics through the Green Arrow canon and the evolution of that canon into contemporary representations. Thus, when it came time to put together my thesis, I had the pieces that would ultimately weave together, but there were many avenues to clarify and explore further.
The different film and television sources referenced for this research were multiple episodes from seasons one and two of *Arrow*, episodes of *Smallville* that pertained to the character of Oliver Queen/Green Arrow, Christopher Nolan’s *Dark Knight* trilogy, the *Iron Man* trilogy, *The Avengers*, and an episode of *Teen Wolf* that specifically, though briefly, discussed tattoos and the nature/history of tattoos. This collection of media allowed an opportunity to explore these various characters in similar situations and with a similar idea in mind. How are their bodies marked in ways that emphasize their masculinity? Do these mark(er)s have a connection to their traumas? Under what conditions were these mark(er)s generated? Roughly, the characteristic similarities these three characters have in common are that they are white, male, billionaire superheroes/vigilantes. They go about the way they conduct their lives differently, but they evolved into their superhero/vigilante alter-ego as a result of psychological trauma that developed from war-like conditions. Queen was marooned on a military island in the Pacific Ocean, and Stark was held captive in the Middle East and then later on had a near death experience saving New York alongside the other Avengers. Wayne, though he was witness to the murder of his parents as a child, immersed himself within the criminal underworld and training within the League of Shadows, a group of assassins. In addition to Wayne’s choices, Gotham is often referred to as being a war zone between the criminals and the authority. Thus, each character was continuously exposed to situations that required them to become survivors.

When looking into The CW, *Arrow*, and the “Hey Girl” promotional campaign, I examined The CW website (cwtv.com) and focusing the *Arrow* page had to say about the show and what it said about the character of Oliver. I was also interested in the typical audience that The CW network targeted. The CW’s Blog provided more about the promotional campaign. These particular sources demonstrated The CW’s penchant for targeting a female audience, a
summarization for what the show and character are about, and the beginning pieces of understandings of why and how the promotional images were portraying masculinity in relation to the perceived female audience.

I was curious about the success of Arrow and another superhero show that was running concurrently with Arrow. An article on the ratings of Arrow, Tim Molloy’s “Ratings: ‘Arrow’ is CW’s Most-Watched Show in 3 Years; ‘Nashville’ Solid,” James Hibberd’s “‘Agents of SHIELD’ ratings stabilize and…improve?,” looked at the possibility of renewal for the 2014-2015 season. TV Guide News reported in “Fall 2014 TV Scorecard: Which Shows Are Returning? Which Aren’t?” that Arrow had already been renewed as of February 24, 2014, and that Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. had not been renewed yet, but appeared to be in a good position of getting renewed.

While familiar with television from a viewers’ perspective, there was a need to understand more about the decisions made in pre-production. For that I found Steve Craig’s “Selling Masculinities, Selling Feminities: Multiple Genders and The Economics of Television,” Felicia D. Henderson’s “The Culture Behind Closed Doors: Issues of Gender and Race in the Writers’ Room,” Jason Mittell’s “Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television,” John Fiske’s Television Culture, Lester Faigley’s “Material Literacy and Visual Design,” and Willaim M. Keith and Christian O. Lundberg’s The Essential Guide to Rhetoric to be most helpful. The different perspectives brought a better understanding of how decisions are made for the production of a show beyond cast, plot, and characterization. Rather, they gave insight to how decisions on how to portray genders and the way that despite the way audiences are essentially manipulated into finding something interesting there is also the fact that producers cannot simply create a space where audiences will find something interesting, but rather there
has to be an existing space for it in society already. It was also interesting to have an explanation of the different interactions with audiences that in person speeches provide verses a television program, where the speakers cannot have that same intimacy and connection with the audience. That aspect of the research provided a different perspective for me, to see the production of a program from both perspectives, that of the audience and producers.

My exploration of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Survivor’s Guilt, and/or psychological trauma was developed through Anne Harrington’s *The Cure Within: A History of Mind-Body Medicine*, Sheena M. Eagan Chamberlin’s “Emasculated by Trauma: A Social History of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Stigma, and Masculinity,” Sharon Parker’s “The Wounded Warrior: Post-Traumatic Strength Disorder,” Paul D. Shinkman’s “Veteran Advocates Caution Against Pinning Navy Yard Shooting on PTSD,” and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website on the Symptoms of PTSD. Before I began my research I knew the very basics of PTSD. These materials provided a history of PTSD and the previous classifications of it such as Shell Shock and Battle Fatigue. In learning about these classifications I also acquired an understanding of the stigmas and stereotypes that have existed and still exist of PTSD. It was through an understanding of these stigmas and stereotypes that indicated because of these doubts associated with psychological disorders that the superhero identity could be questioned. However, scars or mark(er)s depicted on the bodies of these particular superheroes as a character of hyper-masculinity off set the doubts that the stigmas and stereotypes could potentially raise about their ability as superheroes. Through Susan M. Griffin’s “Scar Texts: Tracing the Marks of Jamesian Masculinity,” and Page duBois’ “The Tattoos of Epimenides” I began to correlate scars and tattoos with masculinity, which helped allow me to correlate the idea of scars, tattoos, and/or mark(er)s as an enhancement of masculinity in the face of uncertainty. An interview with
Stephen Amell, who plays Oliver Queen in *Arrow*, discusses the understanding behind the scenes that Queen does suffer from PTSD. Thus, I concluded that there is a perception that Queen has PTSD among the creators and producers, yet it is not explicitly mentioned on screen.

Further exploring the rhetoric of bodies, I referenced Sharon Crowley’s “Afterword: The Material of Rhetoric,” and Judith Butler’s *Bodies That Matter*. Crowley’s words were what provided me with the belief that I was on a viable path when she discusses the rhetoric of bodies and the evaluations that can be made of bodies. Butler had more information about the female body, but little on the male body. Still Butler’s germinal work in rhetoric of the body gave me ideas for thinking about the male body.

After having worked through the connections of my thinking, I then wanted to explore further masculinity, masculine characteristics, and how that applies specifically to comic book superheroes. To do this I referenced Aaron Taylor’s “‘He’s Gotta Be Strong, and He’s Gotta Be Fast, and He’s Gotta Be Larger Than Life’: Investigating the Engendered Superhero Body,” Norma Pecora’s “Superman/Superboys/Supermen: The Comic Book Hero as Socializing Agent,” Stephen Brauer’s “‘Men is What We Are’: *Fight Club*, the Authentic Masculine, and the Politics of Style,” Rob Lendrum’s “Queering Super-Manhood: Superhero Masculinity, Camp and Public Relations as a Textual Framework,” Deborah Tannen’s *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, Diane Barthel’s “When Men Put on Appearances: Advertising and the Social Construction of Masculinity,” and Robert Hanke’s “Redesigning Men: Hegemonic Masculinity in Transition.” This collection of resources was helpful for a number of reasons. They provided information on the characteristics of masculinity, as well as the cultural constructions of masculinity and how those two different perceptions may or may not differ. They also provided me with the type of masculinity that is expected of a superhero, and what
those expectations say and tell about audiences. Taylor’s article supported the body builder-esque hyper-masculinity that I was most familiar with. I also gained insight to the exclusion of gay superheroes within the comic book genre. Over all, various kinds of masculinities contributed to the analysis of the “Hey Girl” promotional campaign.

To learn more about the history of the Green Arrow canon and comic books in general I turned to Alan Kistler’s “The History of Green Arrow from Golden Age to ‘Arrow’,” and Shirrel Rhoades A Complete History of American Comic Books. Kistler provided a relatively brief overview of the history of Green Arrow, but noted the different origin stories of Oliver Queen/Green Arrow and Roy Harper/Speedy through the different ages. Though there was an inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, they were described as fitting the familiar stereotypes and then overtime were progressively written out of the origin stories, as well as the film/television adaptations. Rhoades’ book was helpful in explaining the “what” and “when” of the different periods of comic books. Kistler’s history was helpful building my own base knowledge of the comic book genre.

Two articles from the collection Multicultural Comics: From Zap to Blue Beetle, Leonard Rifas and Margaret Noori discuss the marginalized comics and the representations of different races in comics. Reading Rifas’ chapter revealed the loopholes that comic book writers and artists maneuver in order to shed any responsibility of portraying marginalized ethnicities in negative, stereotypical, and/or racist ways, as merely being a reflection of society. Noori’s was more positive in that it discussed the ways in which Native writers and artists are looking to portray Indigenous Peoples within comics that are in direct opposition to the mainstream, white writer and/or artistic depictions.
Understanding this information led to exploring the representations of Indigenous Peoples within the 1970’s “Ulysses Star is Still Alive,” Arigon Starr’s 2012 *Super Indian: Volume One*, and Jeff Lemire’s 2014 “Justice League United #0.” The back cover of the Dennis O’Neil and Neal Adams collection claims the relevancy of the 1970-1971 comics, and the Overview of this collection on barnesandnoble.com claims that the text depicts a fight against racism. However, on a superficial analysis of “Ulysses Star” suggests otherwise. Derald Wing Sue’s explanation of various types of microaggressions in *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* provided more evidence of the ways in which “Ulysses Star” utilized racist imagery, language, and depictions. Philip J. Deloria’s *Playing Indian*, Cornel Pewewardy’s “From Subhuman to Superhuman: Images of First Nations Peoples in Comic Books,” and Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr.’s *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* demonstrated the different ways that Native Peoples have been misrepresented and what to look for. Finding those same kind of misrepresentations in the mainstream comics gave me a foundation of what to look for when investigating the ways in which Native writers and artists oppose these views, specifically *Super Indian*. Further investigation revealed Lemire’s creation of a new Cree, teenaged superhero in Russ Burlingame’s “New Cree Superhero Revealed In Justice League United,” and Andrew Wheeler’s “Cree Superhero Equinox to Debut in ‘Justice League United’ from Lemire and McKone’,” before issue #0 was release in April. The two articles composed a little bit of background on Equinox and some more particulars behind her creation. Since there is only one issue in publication at the moment there is not a lot of information on Equinox at the moment.

Over all, this research enriched my understanding of the comic book genre and allowed an exploration of different avenues of study within the comic book canon, woven with common
threads. It has also left me with a number of ideas for further study. My analysis contributes to the larger field of composition and rhetoric in its discussion about psychological disabilities within the comic book genre. With further study of psychological disorders/disabilities in comics and film/television adaptations resulting questions can examine what impact these non-explicit depictions of PTSD in these fictional and exaggerated worlds have on society and culture.

Originally, I would have said that these portrayals were beneficial to the everyday person who is combating psychological disorders like PTSD, but after having gone through my research I am not entirely sure that I believe that any more. Given Parker’s argument about Post-Traumatic Strength Disorder, which I expand upon more within Chapter two, I now think that these adaptations portray an unattainable nature to reach for in an effort to overcome psychological struggles. Perhaps the superhero that successfully overcomes their disability in ways that ordinary people seemingly cannot is that socially constructed ideal that suggests how psychological disabilities should be overcome, or a perception that they can be temporary. The problem I see in this, is the moment that this becomes the ideal, much like hegemonic heteronormative masculinity, it devalues the reality. However, what also needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that scars, as well as tattoos, can stand for a variety of things. Scars can be symbols of survival and living, or the scars from the everyday accidents. On the other hand, tattoos can be used to empower their bearers, as well as used as memorials. Thus, considerations of these representations need to be specifically considered given the specific situations with which they are portrayed to audiences. This then may argue that psychological disabled communities could potentially find an escape in these fantastical worlds through characters that have similar symptoms to their own, yet at the same time these adaptations can be problematic in that these ideals could become a hegemonic misrepresentation of psychological disorders. With
the extent of my research thus far, I do not believe that I have a clear enough picture of what these initial findings could and do mean, but I do think that it is an interesting starting point that could expand into more in depth investigations and discussions about psychological disability representations within popular culture. This could potentially be an interesting expansion on the discussions of hyper-masculinity and physical disabilities that already exist.
Appeals of Multiple Masculinities: Maintaining Hegemonic Heternormative Masculinity in the 21st Century Comic Superhero Adaptation *Arrow*

*Television is, above all else, a popular cultural medium. The economics that determine its production and distribution demand that it reaches a mass audience, and a mass audience in western industrialized societies is composed of numerous subcultures, or subaudiences, with a wide variety of social relations, a variety of sociocultural experience and therefore a variety of discourses that they will bring to bear upon the program in order to understand and enjoy it.*

- John Fiske, *Television Culture*, Page 37

Prime-Time television has become a battleground of who can produce a show with more staying power than the rest, who can pull in the largest audience, and the like. The major contributors in this contest are some large and well-known names such as CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox, however, as the number of cable channels has grown with other networks like the CW, FX, and AMC, so to has the number of programs vying for viewership. In addition, the different ways in which audiences can view their favorite television shows, such as Netflix and DVRs, the number of viewers tuning in on a weekly basis at the allotted time slot has shrunk as well, thus “networks and channels have grown to recognize that a consistent cult following of a small but dedicated audience can suffice to make a show economically viable” (Mittell 31). The longevity of a television series that achieves seasons in the double digits becomes more difficult with each passing year. Prime-Time television shows that can garner a quality fan-base, such as *Smallville* and *NCIS* have had multi-season successes. Longevity is the ideal that many strive for, but cannot attain. Thus each season the countless players that are all vying for longevity are playing to the various “subcultures” within their audiences in an effort to build their own “cult following”.

Each season there is a promotional campaign before any pilot episode airs, which is geared toward a targeted audience to garner stronger numbers for the pilot episode. The sooner a
series can capture and establish its own “cult following,” the better chances it has for multiple seasons. To best achieve that goal decisions are made behind the scenes with executives, producers, creators, etc. as to the kind of audience the show, or perhaps even the network as a whole, is looking to attract. With a specific target audience in mind the episodes, characters, story lines, and promotional campaigns can be tailored to draw in that particular audience.

Felicia D. Henderson claims that the writers’ room: “[is a] space [where] ideas are negotiated, consensus is formed, and issues of gender, race, and class identities play out and complicate the on-screen narratives that eventually air on network and cable television” (146). Similar decisions are made in regard to promotional campaigns as a way to draw in that initial audience.

The CW’s now sophomore show Arrow went on to be one of the network’s biggest hits: “The premiere of the DC Comics-inspired “Arrow” was the most-watched show on the CW in three years” (Molloy). Molloy goes on to report “No CW show has earned such a large audience since the debut of “The Vampire Diaries” in September 2009”. Arrow’s success is intriguing for two reasons: first, numerous comic book heroes, and their film/television adaptations, have represented the ever-evolving ideals of masculinity. Second, The CW self-proclaims itself as “America’s fifth broadcast network and the only network [specifically] targeting women 18-34” (“About The CW”). On one hand this could seem counter-productive to launch a show that falls under a genre in which has historically captivated an “overwhelmingly young male audience” (Pecora 61). On the other hand this could be a case of The CW “trying to branch out…after ratings were down in 2011-12” (Molloy). However, neither speculation could be entirely correct, especially given The CW’s history with comic book adaptations and the current popularity of the copious 21st Century comic book film/television adaptations. While The CW found success with Smallville, the launch of a near all female cast of Birds of Prey, when the network was still
identified as The WB, only lasted one season. Creating a show from a comic book, even with the en masse of Marvel and DC film adaptations, does not automatically mean success. Marvel/ABC’s *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* is a current example of this. While the show had a strong premiere that earned it the title “No. 1 new fall show” the ratings declined with each new episode (Hibberd), and only recently have the ratings begun to improve some (Hibberd). TV Guide News was predicting, as of February, that *S.H.I.E.L.D.* was looking good for a 2014-15 renewal, but nothing has officially been announced.

While, the success of *Arrow* cannot be denied, the claim that The CW is trying to reach audiences beyond its traditional targeted audience may fall short, especially when one takes into account the continued promotion of *Arrow*. In the following promotional images, it is quite clear that The CW still targets the 18-34 female audiences. As most of us are aware, promotional images are used to advertise shows and to entice viewership, however, they are also much more than that. Promotional images are a way for the network to have some kind of control over the audience and the kind of audience the show accumulates. They create a kind of mark(er), if you will, that identifies not only the snow, but the network, as well. Part of the need for this is that when people watch a TV show, they are not an audience in the same way that people attending a speech are: the viewers and ‘speakers’ can’t interact via TV in the same way, the diversity of TV viewers may be much greater than that of an audience listening to a speech, there is no way of ‘reading’ the audience during the show to adapt to it, and the TV relationship is much more about consumption than interaction or dialogue. (Keith and Lundberg 15)
By marketing a show to a particular demographic, the promotional images are the first testament to who the audience is going to be and in turn suggests the best ways in which to keep the audience interested. These decisions construct parameters that allow the show to play to its strengths. Thus statements on gender, race, class, and so forth are already decided prior to even the release of the promotional images. It is in a way a preemptive strike. Nowhere is this clearer than the promotional images that were released of the Arrow-Inspired “Hey Girl” Pinterest Sweepstakes five days before the series’ pilot premiered. This source of promotion was released on The CW’s blog page, as well on Arrow’s official Facebook page, and likely on other locations as well, where audiences were encouraged to enter the Sweepstakes by “Creat[ing] a Pinterest board called “Arrow” and repin[ning] the five “Hey Girl” images from “The CW’s board onto [theirs]”.

These promotional images exemplify what an up-and-coming, popular prime-time television show looks for in a target audience, how it appeals to that audience, and what that says about today’s culture and society. An analysis a better inference can be made as to what these portrayals, shifts and variations say about preferred viewership of comic book television
adaptations. Steve Craig states that “the concept [of] television viewing is a gendered activity” (17), meaning that television shows are going to gear entire shows, episodes, scenes, and/or promotions toward particular genders. The five “Hey Girl” images are examples of viewership as a gendered concept and show how programs play to various genders. Craig supports this when he writes, “television programming...portray[s] multiple genders – masculinities and femininities – and tailor[s] these portrayals to please particular audiences in order to attract viewers” (Craig 15). However, in regards to having control over which audiences are most desired this is not a one-way street. Promotion campaigns cannot simply create an advertisement that may successfully attract an audience, they need to move within the cultural and societal constructions surrounding the demographic of the target audiences. In other words “[a]dvertisers are both manipulators and manipulated, because they must interject their product into an ongoing system of signs. Their effect depends on extending a set of cultural associations” (Faigley 191). In order to be successful promotional campaigns need to maneuver within the boundaries of their desired audiences. If they stray from what is believed to attract that audience the predictability of success decreases and could become more of a hindrance. The probability of launching a successful show increases if the parameters are set firmly within an already existing “set of cultural associations” (Faigley 191). The “Hey Girl” images set the boundaries of Arrow’s target audience, and in turn suggest the cultural and societal identifying elements of a successful promotional campaign. The identification markers of this campaign can then be taken as markers of comic book film/television adaptation advertisements and the markers of a network that specifically targets presumably heterosexual, female audiences.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

Each of the five images portrays a different aspect of Oliver Queen/Arrow’s masculinity,
thereby allowing the show to draw in as vast an audience as possible. As previously mentioned, the target audiences of this campaign are the original focus of women 18 to 34. The title of the campaign and the language within the images are blatant in their directive opening “Hey Girl,” motif. The text and single image of Queen speak to the specific female audience being targeted: heterosexual. While society is progressing toward marriage equality, many television programs will still recycle the heterosexual male lead to garner a female audience as a course of achieving and maintaining prime-time success, thereby maintaining and reiterating a hegemonic and heteronormative standard. John Fiske states,

\[\text{Television is a conventional medium – its conventions suit both the audiences with their needs for familiarity and routinization and the producers, for established conventions not only keep costs of production down, they also minimize the risks in the marketplace. (37-8)}\]

Following the heteronormative construction of production lowers the risk of failure, since that is the formula that has proved successful for decades. Following the heterosexual, heteronormative within the comic book genre appears to be a requirement for success, despite the number of contemporary television shows that are challenging the heterosexual standard. Historically comic books have not been known for homosexual heroes. By launching a comic book adaptation The CW has to contend with a culture that is seeing societal progress, but still maintains a heterosexual-masculine-normative ideology. As Rob Lendrum notes, “To some, the inclusion of homosexuality in the comic book medium is seen as an invasion and even a perversion of cultural icons” (287). The preconception of heterosexuality within the comic genre is a factor in gearing this promotional campaign strictly toward heterosexual women.
However, it cannot be ignored that these images could appeal to both heterosexual women and homosexual men. A decision to target a female audience does not automatically mean that only heterosexual women will find these varying images of Queen attractive. This choice, however, does imply the privileging of one group of people over others and in turn reinforcing heterosexual normativity and the marginalization of homosexual viewers. It raises questions about whether or not it is possible to advertise to male and female audiences (heterosexual and homosexual) when walking a precarious line between the more mainstream prime-time culture and the comic book subculture. Were the network to advertise to an all-inclusive audience, could it successfully be done while staying true to the origin and history of The Green Arrow while maintaining a sense of authenticity? Has society reached a period where doing justice to the original does not necessarily mean marginalizing particular audiences? While The CW has not excluded homosexual characters within other shows, a fleeting inclusion of a lesbian relationship between Sara Lance (Black Canary) and Nyssa (a member of the League of Assassins) portrayed for one episode ends with Lance entering a heterosexual, romantic relationship with Queen (“Heir to the Demon”).

An examination of the five “Hey Girl” images reveals the apparent pattern of hegemonic masculinity. Robert Hanke observes, of hegemonic masculinity, that there is not one central image of masculine power, but rather heterogeneous elements of masculinity (190). The multiplicity of hegemonic masculinity allows the “Hey Girl” campaign to appeal to the different aspects of masculinity that many different women may find attractive. It also designates each

1 The exclusion of those that are subordinated by hegemonic heteronormative masculinities is not due a lack of awareness, or understanding, that such an exploration is equally important to study and analysis. However, for the purpose of this essay that avenue of study veers from the intent of exploration. Though for future study has a valid position within the comic book genre and in relation to the television adaptation *Arrow*. 
image as markers of different elements of heteronormative masculinity. Some attributes of hegemonic masculinity are “athletic, breadwinner, sexually aggressive, unemotional, logical, and dominating” (Chafetz qtd. in Craig 19). Craig also gathers and expands

three major dimensions of perceived masculinity: ‘status,’ which relates to ‘men’s need to achieve status and others’ respect’; ‘toughness,’ ‘that men should be mentally, emotionally, and physically tough and self-reliant’; and ‘antifemininity,’ ‘the belief that men should avoid stereotypically feminine activities and occupations’. (Thompson and Pleck qtd. in Craig 19)

Queen’s exhibiting these qualities of hegemonic masculinity in these images enforces the heteronormative in a hyper-masculine way. Since each image places a significant emphasis on Queen’s masculine appeal, the promotion becomes a hyper-accentuation of heteronormativity. Each of these five images are tailored to women who have a different ideal of masculinity: mystery, a soldier for his community, abundantly wealthy, physically defined, and the faithful/loyal man in need of feminine comfort. These images embody the attempts of television to homogenize [these “subaudiences”] so that the one program can reach as many different audiences as possible. It tries to work within what these different audiences have in common, but it also has to leave a space for their differences to come into play in their readings of the program. (Fiske 37)

The campaign has selected and targeted the heterosexual female audience with the hope that women have one thing in common: an attraction to the masculinity of Oliver Queen. The campaign then uses that commonality and breaks down the different aspects of Queen’s masculinity within the different images to best appeal to the varying ideologies of heterosexual
female audience.

**The Varying Masculinities of Oliver Queen**

The five promotional “Hey Girl” images will be analyzed in the order that they appear on The CW’s blog. The images will be explored through the text, the physical markers such as facial positions and/or expressions, clothing, the background and other inclusive elements, because as Craig asserts “Clothing choice, hair style, the use of make-up and jewelry, even subtle body motions such as gesturing or the manner of walking thus become signifiers of one’s sex within a particular culture or sub-culture” (19). Each aspect of the images subtly suggests something to that target audience about Queen’s multiple masculinities.

**Mysterious**

The first image, which will be referred to as “Green,” presents Queen as a masculine mystery. “Green” shrouds him as a James Dean-esque *bad boy* persona. The combined use of the slight shadow on the left side of Queen’s face, the gradated green background, and the black suit jacket suggest a tough, aggressive, masculine tone, while the slight forward tilt of Queen’s head asserts his masculine dominance and intimidation. The tilt of his head causes Queen to look at the audience through the tops of his eyes. The combination of these aspects with the rugged coating of facial hair, which draws attention to the definition of his jaw line, and the intense look on his face, communicates a
hard, almost harsh, attitude. This image emphasizes Queen as “unemotional” and “dominating” (Craig 19). The lack of a tie, in this case, also feeds the bad boy persona. It presents the idea that Queen is not conforming to the cultural expectations that accompany the pairing of a button down shirt and suit jacket. At the same time “Green” is meant to tempt heterosexual women. By specifically drawing attention to the slightly open white button down shirt, which is cloaked by the black suit jacket “Green” is inviting the female viewer to learn more about Queen. The invitation works on multiple levels: first, it invites the viewers to find Queen attractive. Second, to learn the mystery and complexity of Queen. Third, to tune in and find out more about Queen’s story and the show, and finally to look at the other images and explore the other aspects of Queen’s masculinity.

Adding to Queen’s mystery is the language choice. The phrase “Think this looks good?” solidifies the invitation to find Queen’s mysterious masculinity attractive. It is posed as a rhetorical question, as if to suggest an understanding that not everyone is going to find this dominant image of Queen attractive. Yet, at the same time it is almost issuing a dare to the viewer to find him attractive anyway. Between the looming stare, the shadow, the dark tonality of the image, and the like, “Green” wants to appeal to the heterosexual women that cannot say no to the bad boy, the ones that find an appeal non-conformity. The phrase “You should see me in green” lends an intimacy that suggests the audience is aware of an inside joke. The language and the green background are obviously cueing the viewer to Queen’s vigilante status, which accentuates his mystery, as his vigilante alter-ego is a secret identity. The dominant and determined expression on his face also suggests that there is more to him than meets the eye. The white shirt is blanketed by the black suit jacket, which suggests that there is light at the end of the tunnel in the darkness that has taken over Starling City (Queen’s hometown). However, it
also suggests that there is a black/white, bad/good dichotomy within Queen’s character that may not always be clear. Queen is embraced by the three colors: green, the color of his secret, and the black and white that could be representative of the advantages and disadvantages of his choices, or perhaps even the positive/negative qualities of his masculinity.

**Soldier for the Community**

This second image, which will be referred to as “Saving the City,” plays on a couple of masculine threads. Once again it is a dark image, though here there is a more prominent shadow over Queen’s face. However, his identity is not otherwise obstructed. “Saving the City” does not mask his identity with the paint around his eyes that is a regular aspect of Queen’s vigilante identity. His facial expressions are softer here than they are in “Green,” which is emphasized by the hint of vibrant blue eyes peeking out from underneath the hood of the vigilante uniform. The image suggests that while he is dressed as the vigilante there is still humanity under the disguise. It goes with the idea that there is a gentler side of Queen behind the more violent actions he takes when saving Starling City. While Queen is “saving room for you in [his] heart,” the image suggests a desire that the viewers save room in their heart for him as well.

While Queen’s features are softer in “Saving the City” he is not feminized. He is depicted as the vigilante encased in dark leather, with the tools of his trade over his shoulder (his quiver of
arrows), and the placement of a skyscraper in, presumably, Starling City with what appears to be debris flying around. Despite the gentler gaze here, his facial hair that again highlights his jawbone gives a sense of determination. There is an atmosphere of chaos going on in the background that he is responsible for fixing. As the vigilante Queen’s goal is to fix the city where the present authority has failed. This role as the figure that is out to fix, or “save” the city emphasizes his masculinity, because “many men see themselves as problem solvers” (Tannen 52). This role also presents him as a challenge to authority, thereby enhancing his own “authority and mastery.” Queen, as the vigilante, is “operat[ing]...outside of the official law, helping powerless but worthy people to defend themselves against criminal and evil forces in areas where the official system of law and order is ineffective” (Fiske 201). He has taken the authority away from the normative authority in order to save a city that has been failed by those of power, be it the top 1%, city officials, or the law. Archery is not a skill that can simply be picked up and operated at the level in which Queen operates. To have an authority over the criminals in the city his skill has to be precise and superior to most. His masculinity is elevated by the fact that he has a near perfect mastery of archery and the athleticism that accompanies both his skill set and his drive to “save the city.” It is difficult to be “a crime-fighting vigilante looking to clean up the streets of Starling City” without being an athletic and physically fit person (“Cast: Stephen Amell”).

**Wealthy**

This third image, which will be called “Billionaire,” obviously presents Queen’s masculinity through his class and economic status. Diane Barthel asserts, “For most status-conscious middle-class men, competitive dressing focused on the cut and fabric and the quality of the tailoring” (138). While, Queen’s economic status is well above that of middle-class, the
clothes that he is dressed in, says just as much about him. He is wearing a charcoal-grey suit jacket and a white button down shirt. Even though the audience does not get an extensive look at his clothing, what is seen suggests high quality and likely expensive fabric that fit Queen very well. The image Queen presents to the audience is that of a confident man, who is well aware of his station in society. Again, Queen is dressed in a white button down shirt with the top two buttons undone, sans tie. This time, however, it speaks more of his comfort with his wealth and status rather than speaking to his physical and sexual appeal, or his non-conformity. His economic and societal position gives Queen the power to break the cultural expectations of a suit and tie without any significant fallout. This is also a bit of a nod of acknowledgement to the playboy/prodigal son that Queen was before his time on the island.

This time his facial hair, while still drawing attention to Queen’s jawline, appears more groomed. It adds to his character, while still showing an attention to detail about his public image. Queen is aware that as a billionaire he has to look the part. While he is not the “breadwinner” in the sense that most viewers are typically familiar with, he has to present himself to others accordingly with his station and status within society. As Barthel claims, “Clothes make the man’ is an adage with some truth to it. Dressing for success took the point to the extreme as the acquisition of the ‘power look’ came to precede the acquisition of power
itself” (139). Queen already has the social and economic power, though now his “power look” is needed to maintain that power. There is also a slight smirk on Queen’s face that alludes to his confidence. He is well aware that he is wealthy and what that means for him professionally and personally, this is supported by the blasé language used in “Billionaire” to declare his economic status: “I’m a billionaire. Just saying.” Queen’s money is meant to hold the most appeal here. This side of Queen is not looking for emotional entanglements. He can attract women with his money and therefore does not need romantic involvement with women. His money can guarantee him another woman whenever he wants one, in that his wealth can elicit competition among women for his attention. This is supported by the fact that aside from that small smirk, there is no other indication of feelings or emotions in this image. Overall, there are two colors present here: grey and white. Neither color brings a sense of warmth to the image, nothing to suggest that there is something beyond his economic status that is important. By making Queen’s wealth the focal point, of the images appeal, “Billionaire” plays to a stereotype of heterosexual women that they desire a man with money and if he is deemed attractive it is an added bonus.

“Billionaire” is an interesting image because Queen fits numerous characteristics of power and privilege: he is a white, heterosexual, wealthy, adult male who speaks English (though it is later revealed that Queen speaks a variety of other languages as well, such as Russian and Mandarin). He was presumably born in the United States and he is the son of two heterosexual parents and so on. By qualifying for so many of these attributes “Billionaire” is not trying to sell the appeal of Queen’s physical masculinity. Instead it is selling the status-quo of wealth and power. Though more importantly it is selling an abundance of hegemonic, heteronormative wealth.
Physically Defined

This fourth image, which will be called “Abs,” is reliant on women finding Queen’s physicality and physical appearance sexually appealing. Queen’s physical toughness and strength is depicted in his use of the salmon ladder. This image shows Queen’s masculine power through his dedication to a rigorous, disciplined workout that factors into the creation and sustainability of Queen’s muscular definition. This is also the first time that viewers are getting to see Queen’s scars in this campaign. The scars are brutal and appear to have been inflicted as painfully as possible, telling the audience that Queen is not just physically tough, but emotionally and mentally resilient as well. Despite these scars, “Abs” is, once again, portraying Queen’s confidence. Despite his scars, his confidence comes from his ability to successfully perform and maneuver difficult training techniques. Rather his scars are evidence of his strength, toughness, and survival:

Pain is the classical epistemological example of an experience that cannot be shared, that must be represented in order to be reported. For the unwounded observer, wounds, which pierce the body’s interior, and, later, the scars that mark the past piercing, signify the soldier’s felt experience. (Griffin 64)

His scars are a visual representation of hegemonic masculinity for Queen by accentuating his
survival skills, as they suggest the kind of pain he had to have felt in order to bare such scars. His “scars [are] the traces of past pain [and can be used] to explore the constructed and changing character of maleness” (Griffin 62): Queen’s scars mark his transition from the playboy/prodigal son to the soldier/vigilante/hero. Ultimately, his marked body does not disfigure or feminize him, but rather emphasizes his masculinity, while potentially eliciting sympathy from the women in the audience.

The environment around Queen, in “Abs” provides a masculine tone of power, strength, and dominance to the image. Everything around him is very industrial, from the beams and the railings behind him to the metal bar he is using to climb the salmon ladder, which is made of a strong, angular metal. Queen has the power to be equally as strong as the surrounding metal that he is climbing. This location is an outward representation of his mental and emotional toughness, which is equal to his physical strength. “Abs” intends to appeal to women who find their ideal in a man that prides himself on a well-toned, muscular body, as well as on more than just physical strength. The language is a playful way to bring some humor to an image that is representative of a lot of pain in Queen’s past: “Am I the guy for you? Ab-solutely.”

**Faithful/Loyal**

The fifth and final image, which will be called “Island,” could be argued to depict Queen at his weakest moment. It is the only image to depict Queen in opposition to the ideal hegemonic heteronormative image of masculinity. His appearance is representative of a castaway that has had no access to modern amenities, which Arrow’s description supports: “After a violent shipwreck, billionaire playboy Oliver Queen was missing and presumed dead for five years before being discovered on a remote island in the Pacific” (“About”). Queen’s masculinity is
ultimately derived by a demand for respect in having survived, and being “self-reliant” as he maneuvered a way home (Thompson and Pleck qtd. in Craig 19). Though the island is where Queen developed a significant portion of skills to defend himself, this is also the place where he has lost the majority aspects that made him who he had grown up to be. The transformation the island forced him to go through may have made him a stronger individual in some aspects, but in others it has also made him vulnerable. Upon his return he will face obstacles in re-acclimating himself to the world he once lived in, and the fact that he will not fit the mold that he left behind leaves him in numerous vulnerable positions where he is forced to learn to trust people again. “Island” is playing toward romantics, the woman that gravitates to a man who could love them enough to be thinking of them “The whole time [he] was stuck on [a remote] island.” It is working on the audiences’ sympathies. It is interesting that the image that does not adhere to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity is presented last. This suggest that the order of the images is representative of a hierarchy as to which masculinities are valued more, have more status and/or power to successfully draw in a heterosexual female audience. The placement of the “Island” could also be emphasizing Queen’s non-conformist attitude. Once he returns home the societal and cultural constructions that once dictated his life no longer matter to him, instead he manipulates those constructions as best he can to benefit him. “Island” could be taken as the image that exemplifies
the extent of his non-conformity to society, authority, and rules, thus creating an additional appeal of his masculinities to the women in the audience.

**Collective Analysis**

Ultimately, “Billionaire” and “Abs” contradict the other images by suggesting what you see is what you get, unless, these images are analyzed as not just different sides of Queen, but rather different masks. While, there are a number of masculinities that Queen presents of himself in *Arrow* it is possible to say that those masculinities are also a part of his dualism as he has multiple faces throughout the series. There is pre-island Queen (the playboy, prodigal son), island Queen (naïve, in the process of training and transforming), post-island Queen (jaded, overprotective, skilled, secretive), vigilante Queen (The Hood), maintaining his playboy image Queen, hero/not-vigilante Queen (Arrow), CEO Queen, and the list goes on. None of these are individually representative of Queen or his masculinity, but rather a collective of masks that depict different aspects of his masculinity for viewers to learn and discover over the duration of the series.

“Saving the City” and “Island” on the other hand are the two images that depict Queen as what Barthel calls *The New Man*: “Men’s liberation has emphasized the need for men to invest themselves emotionally in relationships” (146). The ending phrases “I’m saving room for you in my heart” and “I was thinking of you” show Queen’s masculinity as more than just the physical toughness of “Abs,” economic status in “Billionaire,” or mystery in “Green.” While, there are many physical and political aspects to Queen throughout these images, “Saving the City” and “Island” specifically emphasis emotional layers as well. He may be wrapped up in his work as the vigilante, playing the role of the prodigal son, successful club owner, and later CEO of
Queen Consolidated, but he has a tender side as well. He is in need of someone to ground him in reality and to keep him from doing something impulsive. Both images are attempting to appeal to heterosexual women that want to be there for him, as he has been through hell and then voluntarily puts himself through another kind of hell as he fights for his city. This display of tendering Queen does not feminize, rather it seems to round out his masculinity. He can be tough and fun, but he can also be sweet and affectionate – he can be a romantic.

Conclusion

The representation of masculinity and to whom that masculinity is aimed at gets muddled in the case of The CW’s 21st Century adaptation *Arrow*. In a society and culture that is progressing (and admittedly still has a long way to go) toward marriage equality and shows, like Fox’s *Glee*, that have openly gay main characters, *Arrow* falls into a cultural gray area. While it may be more economical for networks to produce shows that play to societal and cultural norms, doing so just perpetuates the cycle of heterosexual heternormativity. *Arrow*’s ‘Hey Girl’ promotional campaign falls into this cycle not only by the message it promotes about the show and the characters, but also through the nature of the sweepstakes. The re-pinning and sharing of these images contributes to the perpetuation of heternormativity. This then does not just make the campaign a statement about the show, but also a cultural assertion that fans unconsciously sustains. Therefore, the ‘Hey Girl’ campaign becomes more akin to heteronormative propaganda rather than an advertisement.

The film/television adaptations of comic books are scrutinized in similar ways that book to film adaptations are criticized. However, there has been less acceptance of homosexual character within the comic book canon, therefore it can be inferred that there is equally lower
acceptance of homosexual characters in the film/television adaptations, as well. The maintenance of hegemonic heteronormative masculinity is strongly present within both the comic book canon and The CW network. It does not take a lot of regular viewing of CW shows to see a larger emphasis on heteronormative gender roles, which allows the network to balance the precarious boundaries of societal and cultural prime-time acceptance with comic book canon authenticity. The question then becomes is it possible to create a change not only in the portrayal of homosexual characters and perceptions of masculinity on The CW, but also within the comic book genre? Prime-time television is an area where much of societal and cultural reiteration and progress can be explored. It would then stand to reason that prime-time television is also a location where the change of societal and cultural norms within the comic book genre can begin.
Marked Bodies: Physicalist Manifestations of Superhero Strength, Character Evolution, and Mental and Emotional Dis/Abilities

* A person’s own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal, perceptions spring.

  - Sigmund Freud, qtd. in Sharon Crowley’s “Afterword: The Material of Rhetoric”, page 360

  Frueđ’s elision of body-mind also suggests that the private mental space accorded to ‘the self’ on modern models of identity, the space of fantasy, is produced to some extent by the body’s being-in-culture.


  Not only [do] bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appear[s] to be quite central to what bodies ‘are!’

  - Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, page viii

  The comic book superhero’s body is often a point of emphasis used to enhance the characteristics of strength that allows him/her the means to conquer a disability, by turning a physical flaw into great feats of physical abilities. A male superhero’s disability, specifically, becomes a characteristic that emphasizes and engages their masculinity, while negating the contemporary western cultural ideal of the masculine identity. The comic book genre covers a vast range of disabilities: from the X-Men’s Professor Xavier (Image 1),

  Image 1: The X-Men’s Professor Xavier – Source: Bing Image Search “Professor Xavier”

  The Fantastic Four’s Ben Grimm/The Thing (Image 2), and Dr. Bruce Banner/The Hulk (Image 3). The commonality that these characters have is the physical representation of their disability, such as the permanent representation of Xavier’s wheelchair or Ben Grimm’s orange/stone body,
or the temporarily visible representation of
The Hulk’s Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde-esque
transformation as he maintains his superhero
identity. More importantly, these
representations are examples of characters that
have physical disabilities. There are few
superheroes that have physical representations
of mental/emotional disabilities. The bodies of
the male superheroes have evolved to reflect
the continuously changing image of the western cultural
masculine ideal, which has resulted in the hyper-
masculinity of rigidly defined muscles that are
reminiscent of the body builder physique, or as Aaron
Taylor phrased it, “musculature [of] Schwarzeneggerian
proportions” (346). The problem with this progression is
more apparent when adapting comic book characters to
the film/television screen. Even if one starts only as far
back as 2000, one will find the X-Men franchise, which in
turn fostered the Wolverine franchise, the Iron Man
trilogy, and the Dark Knight trilogy, just to name a few.

Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) can only go so far before a live action film/television
adaptation becomes less realistic and more animated than perhaps originally intended. Due to
this the superhero’s body has had to evolve in different ways, which demands that there be
another aspect of the body that must successfully convey a certain degree of hyper-masculinity, while still maintaining a safe, healthy, natural, believable, and realistic structure to the actor’s body.

The evolution of the comic book superhero body throughout the different eras has shown time and again that “the bodies represented in superhero comics are malleable, plastic, and subject to all kinds of wild reconfigurations and metamorphoses” (Taylor 347-8). While, human bodies cannot be “reconfigured” to the same extent, as artistic drawing permits, the “metamorphoses” of origin story traumas and the corresponding character evolutions enables the exploration of mental and emotional influences. For example, Christopher Nolan’s *Batman* trilogy explores the darker depths of Bruce Wayne’s (Christian Bale) emotional turmoil, without detracting from his masculinity. The body of Wayne’s alter ego (Batman) then becomes a convergent site for embodied masculine strength, ability, and emotional trauma. Sharon Parker makes a small note that Wayne “suffers from perpetual PTSD [(Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), because] He witnessed the death of his parents when he was a child” (239). A closer look at Batman’s uniform suggests a transformative representation of his physical ability and his mental/emotional disability, albeit a temporary one as Wayne is continually transporting his body back and forth between the Batman uniform and the Wayne uniform (a suit and tie). Wayne is already a physically-fit man and the military-esque body armor of the Batman uniform creates the hyper-masculine ideal so frequently found among superhero alter-egos. On the other hand the hard lines and mid-night black armor, cape, and cowl are not just utilized in camouflaging him throughout Gotham City at night, but are reflective of Wayne’s psychological disorder. The choice to embody the image of a bat plays out until the full armor is revealed for the first time,

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2 Appendix 2 has more information on the symptoms of PTSD, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
and Wayne, as Batman, claims “I’m Batman” (*Batman Begins*). When Alfred (Michael Caine) asks “Why bats, Master Wayne,” Wayne’s response is “Bats frighten me. It’s time my enemies shared my dread” (*Batman Begins*). This moment illustrates how the body depicts the trauma that cannot necessarily be seen. Identifying this representation as transformative is important because it creates a clearer emphasis and distinction on the differences that will be seen between the temporary-transformative and the permanent-transformative depiction of hyper-masculinity, physical ability, and mental/emotional disability.

The CW’s contemporary adaptation *Arrow* explores this combination of masculine representation and mind/body dis/ability connections in ways that few other film/television adaptations have done. Though the character of Oliver Queen/Green Arrow has not been adapted to film and/or television screens as often as other superheroes, *Arrow’s* depiction of Queen needed to be vastly and authentically reimagined, as it premiered within a year of the end of *Smallville* and the popularity of Justin Hartley’s portrayal. With a significantly different back/origin story...
than that of *Smallville, Arrow* explores the darker character depths of trauma-induced mental
disabilities immediately within the pilot episode. In the pilot episode, upon Queen’s return to
Starling City after five years, Queen’s attending doctor tells his mother, Moira Queen (Susanna
Thompson) that “Twenty percent of his body is covered in scar tissue [with] second degree burns
on his back and arms [while] x-rays show at least twelve fractures that never properly healed
[and that] The Oliver [she] lost might not be the one they found” (“Pilot”). Greg Berlanti, Marc
Guggenheim, Andrew Kriesberg, and David Nutter, the creators of *Arrow*, have made the body
of Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell) a site of rhetoric that goes beyond the script, the choreography
and the stage directions. As Sharon Crowley claims:

> The body ↔ mind continuum also complicates modern notions of identity and
the self. Bodies are sexed, raced, gendered, abled or disabled, whole or
fragmented, aged or young, fat, thin, or anorexic. In other words, bodies are
marked in ways that carry a great deal of cultural freight. Identities are also
marked by cultural constructions of bodies, and hence cultural evaluations of
bodies extend to the subjects who inhabit them and with whose limits they are
supposedly coterminous. (361)

Therefore, similar to the way in which the temporary transformative alter ego of Wayne becomes
a site of embodied rhetoric, Queen’s own body has been permanently transformed to reflect the
evolutions of his identity. His musculature, scars, and tattoos do not represent a temporary
change that will lessen over time. Rather they depict aspects of his identity that have been gained
over a five-year period. His physically-fit frame is evidence of his acquired knowledge, ability,
and skill mastery of fighting and archery, while his scars and tattoos represent not just his mental
and emotional disabilities, but the permanency in which they, and his ongoing battle with them,
have become as much a part of his identity as his need to avenge his city. He is not Queen and/or the vigilante, regardless of his disabilities. He is Queen and/or the vigilante, with mental/emotional disabilities. They do not give, or detract from, Queen’s character, masculinity, or ability anymore, or any less, than any other person.

*Arrow* uses Queen’s scars and tattoos “to extend narratives back into the past…, serve as means of identification…, and mark the connections between past experience and present identity” (Griffin 62). Queen’s tattoos need to be considered in the same manner as his scars, because, by the very nature of a tattoo, they mark the body by penetrating the skin, as a weapon wounds and leaves behind a scar. Page duBois, in *Out of Athens*, notes, “that Epimenides…bore his own verses tattooed on his skin, like a scar, the record of a wound” (68), while MTV’s *Teen Wolf*, discusses the tattoo of its main character noting that “In Samoan, [tattoo] means ‘open wound.’” (“Tattoo”). In essence Queen’s tattoos are the same as his scars, and *Arrow* reveals this analogous relationship in the episode “Birds of Prey.” This episode shows Slade Wilson’s (Manu Bennett) continued endeavor to make Queen suffer for the choices he made, which resulted in Shado’s (Celina Jade) death (“Birds of Prey”). As part of Queen’s punishment Wilson marks him with the same tattoo, in the same place, that Shado had, as a constant reminder of her and what Queen’s choices had cost both men and Shado: “In Roman times, a criminal was branded to identify his crimes to the world and to forever remind him of what he’d
done” (“Birds of Prey”). The fact that Wilson substitutes the tattoo for a branding scar also aligns tattoos as a scar. A tattoo is not aesthetically the same as a burned section of skin, but the paralleled comparison is still there, as they both permanently mark skin. For all intents and purposes, Queen’s body is a kind of rhetorical map that tells the story of five hellish years of his life. Every scar and tattoo has a story behind it that makes up the story of his identity. Yet, at the same time his scars and tattoos are located in places that can easily be concealed, by clothing, which allows Queen to move effortlessly between the different aspects of his identity (CEO, Brother, Son, Friend, Vigilante, etc.), and in turn this gives him the ability to heavily influence others’ evaluations and which constructions he wants to be viewed through, for different times and in different situations. Queen has a similar temporary transformative representation as that of Wayne’s, however, the distinct difference between the two character adaptations is that Queen’s Arrow uniform does not heighten his masculinity to a hyper level, rather it is Queen’s body that achieves this. Queen’s Arrow uniform, while leather, does not emphasis his musculature in the way that Batman’s uniform does. While, the superhero uniforms provide a temporary transformation for both characters, it is Queen’s scars and tattoos that provide a permanent representation of his transformative masculinity, physical ability, and mental/emotional disabilities. *Arrow* employs Queen’s scars and tattoos as “traces of past pain, to explore the constructed and changing character of maleness” (Griffin 62). Queen’s scars and tattoos are not simply plot devices for future storylines, but they are also a declaration of his
strength to survive physical, mental/emotional pain and trauma. As Queen says in a conversation with Sebastian Blood (Kevin Alejandro), “Living is not for the weak” (“Crucible”). Thus, Queen’s scars and tattoos are sources of confirmation of his masculinity, in that he is “mentally, emotionally, and physically tough” (Thompson and Pleck qtd. in Craig 19), which is emphasized by the fact that the majority, if not all, of the scenes that show Queen’s scars and tattoos are during his training sessions with John Diggle (David Ramsey), his stringent workout, and/or when his masculinity is being emphasized by the femininity of a female character.

_Arrow_ is contesting the construction of the contemporary images of the ideal male body, much like Stephen Brauer claims that the film _Fight Club_ does. However, Brauer contends that _Fight Club_ confronts “manufactured bodies with masculinity and potency…[by depicting] not the picture of male beauty but of male violence” (99). _Arrow_ follows a similar suit, with representations of the ideal male body in Diggle and Roy Harper (Colton Haynes), however, it is Queen’s body which asserts that masculinity is not just depicted through male beauty, but male survival, as well. Just like the character of Tyler (Brad Pitt) in _Fight Club_, Queen’s “arm[s], chest, and abdominal muscles are rippled and tight” (Brauer 99), but
instead Queen’s chest, abdomen, back and shoulders are permeated with evidence of his survival in war zone conditions.

The same could be said for the Iron Man franchise in which Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) is taken prisoner in the Middle East where he builds a reactor to not only save his own life, but also to enable him to escape captivity (*Iron Man*). The reactor marks Tony’s body as evidence of not only his survival in captivity, but also his ongoing survival as he would die without the reactor, as it keeps a piece of shrapnel from making its way to Stark’s heart (*Iron Man*). That same life saving reactor becomes a weapon that is killing him from the inside out, until he can find a new way to safely power the reactor (*Iron Man 2*). Then the reactor is safely and surgically removed at the end of *Iron Man 3*. The Iron Man franchise appears to tell stories of Stark’s life with a correlation between what he is going through mentally and emotionally and the way that the reactor is impacting his life in some way, shape, or form. Equally significant is that fact that *Iron Man 3* portrays Stark as dealing with an assumed, but undiagnosed, PTSD, because of his near death experience roughly six months prior in *The Avengers*.

Conversely, Nolan does not start revealing Wayne/Batman’s scars until *The Dark Knight Rises*. In *Batman Begins* Wayne is cut on the arm when he is going through one of the last steps of his training with The League of Shadows. Then in *The Dark Knight* Wayne is in search of an

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3 It is not made clear, in *Iron Man 3*, if Stark has a scar left behind after his surgery that removes the reactor and the piece of shrapnel. Further study of this would be interesting to explore if this is addressed in one, or more, of the future Avenger movies.
altered armor as it is revealed that the existing armor leaves his body severely bruised. This is also around the time that Wayne stitches one of his wounds up himself, after a fight sequence where the constrictions of the armor hinders him from effectively and efficiently guarding himself during hand to hand combat (*Dark Knight, The*).

However, the extent of Wayne’s scars and physical disabilities (a damaged leg and the need of a can to assist in walking) are not revealed until *The Dark Knight Rises* after he has experienced the trauma of losing his childhood friend/love, his face off with Joker (Heath Ledger), and allowing the citizens of Gotham City to blame Batman for the death of Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) and the people that Dent was responsible for killing (*Dark Knight, The*). The fact that his scars become more visible in the final stretch of the trilogy suggests that the culmination of all of his traumas have left their mark over time.

Neither Queen’s scars or tattoos, Stark’s life-saving reactor, or Wayne’s scars and/or physical handicaps detracts from their masculinities, yet they are seemingly in direct violation of the cultural construct of the ideal male body. Where Queen’s scars are more of a story of his traumas, as they happen, Wayne’s scars are presented as a kind of subliminal reminder of the copious traumas he has experienced since his childhood, and Stark has the one specific physical manifestation of any trauma he experiences. As Amell says of *The Dark Knight Rises*: “I just saw the new ‘Dark Knight,’ and it wasn’t as exciting as a movie, but I liked how damaged Christian Bale was as Batman. He never fixed his leg. He’s getting older. He’s mortal” (MacKenzie, original emphasis). Nolan and Bale’s depiction of the physical toll that the traumas,
of Wayne’s life, have taken on him is emblematic of the fact that he has been suffering from PTSD since he was just a boy. Stark’s trauma is similar to Queen in that his traumas have been condensed into a set time frame in which all of these things happen to him. Stark reacts differently than either Queen or Wayne does, by announcing to the world: “I am Iron Man” (*Iron Man*), where Queen and Wayne attempt to keep their alternate identities a secret. The reactor is the marker of his invisible scars, but as a way to combat the lethal and/or debilitating side effects of with these traumas, he throws himself into the spotlight and relishes in the distraction the media can give him.

The contemporary, western ideal image of the masculine body is visible just about anywhere: an Abercrombie ad, Prime-Time television, etc. No matter where the images are seen they all have the same physical characteristics: “hairless, lacking any flab, blemishes, or noticeable flaws. They seem to have been airbrushed clean not only of imperfections but of the reality of what most male bodies look like” (Brauer 99). However, this so-called flawless image creates more limitations on the “cultural freight” that a body can possess (Crowley 361). The portrayal of the ideal male body through an image of flawless physical strength is in spite of the old adage that young boys continue to hear: “Chicks dig scars.” In regards to the connection between scars and masculinity, Griffin makes two claims, the first being: “in Victorian society, a man’s scars may mark him as military, as having experienced aggression, as, in short, masculine” (Griffin 75). Though Griffin is discussing Victorian masculinity, the sentiment can be applied to contemporary masculinity, especially within the fictional superhero world, because many of the conflicts superheroes face are partaken in war-like conditions. Beyond that, the language Griffin uses in association with masculinity is similar to the contemporary cultural view of masculinity. Craig uses the phrase “sexually aggressive” in describing the characteristics
of masculine identity (19), therefore, the close parallel language suggests that the flawed masculine body, is a more accurate example of embodied masculinity. Griffin’s second claim that, “Scars testify to the struggles and losses entailed in making masculine identity, to its painful history” (76), speaks to Queen’s physical, mental, and emotional transformation. Queen’s evolution came with a price, not just physically, but psychologically as well. Queen has experienced the loss of innocence that only a pampered, privileged, playboy billionaire can understand: a price that was paid with the deaths of his loved ones (his father, Yao Fai, Shado, and Tommy), and the acquired knowledge of what it means, and costs, to take another human life. Yes, Queen suffered physically, but he also benefited physically, as well. It is the mental/emotional scaring that he will carry with him for the rest of his life that cripples Queen.

Western “physicalist culture” likely affects how audiences perceive Queen’s mental and emotional scaring (Chamberlin 359). Attempting to categorize PTSD and its predecessors as physical illnesses were done to “[provide] an honorable explanation of symptoms and behaviors that served to remove blame and stigma from the individual soldier” (Chamberlin 360). Given the current events of the Navy Yard shooting on September 16, 2013 and the news media’s decision to quickly to report that the shooter, Aaron Alexis, had a “troubled mental history, which included post-traumatic stress” (Shinkman), it is unfortunately easy to see how the stigmas and stereotypes of PTSD are difficult to shed. As Ducard (Liam Neeson) tells Wayne, “men fear most what they cannot see” (Batman Begins). The level of difficulty to portray and depict a mental and emotional disability is heightened exponentially by past stigmas and stereotypes,

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4 This is not to say that Alexis’ actions were “honorable” (Chamberlin 360). Rather the inclusion of this example is to show how quickly PTSD is brought into a discussion when a criminal act has been committed, as an argument used as a defense, or reason, why someone is unfit to stand trial, or as an explanation of why someone is psychologically not responsible for their actions. The exploitation of PTSD in this way maintains the negative, and often times criminalized, stigmas and stereotypes that are associated with it.
however, when the conversations surrounding that disability are still relevant, and ongoing, an entirely new layer of difficulty must be taken into consideration. While, it is easy to see that the original purpose of Queen’s scars and tattoos was to enable the use of flashbacks, secret revelations, and backstory, they also served the purpose of addressing the allusion to Queen’s psychological traumas in episodes such as the “Pilot” and “Three Ghosts”. The first time that audience is shown the full extent of Queen’s scars is a scene that is roughly three minutes prior to Queen’s dream flashback of the Queen’s Gambit sinking. Moira tries to wake him up from, but he responds by waking up violently in an unconscious action to defend himself against a potential threat (“Pilot”). The physical evidence of his trauma becomes a crucial element of his identity, which allows the audience to move past the potential instability of his mental/emotional health. Had the flashback sequence been shown before audiences got a first-hand account of his scars, the reception of the show, and character, could have been very different. Although Arrow plays into the “physicalist culture,” as a justification of Queen’s actions, reactions, and choices, through visible scars and tattoos, the adaption challenges the ideal physical masculine image. At the same time it is challenging the stigmas and stereotypes of mental/emotional disorders/disabilities, by acknowledging Queen’s condition, establishing that his disorders are an ongoing obstacle that he contends with, and that these disorders do not lessen his honor or masculinity.
Parker attempts to grapple with the conflicting perceptions of a superhero being equal parts extraordinarily physically-able and mentally/emotionally traumatized. Due to the fact that the superhero origin stories more often than not being a traumatic event, Parker argues that superheroes ultimately experience “a positive [PTSD] that [she calls] ‘post-traumatic strength disorder’” (238). This PTSD is an ability that only superheroes have that allows them to convert their post-traumatic stress into post-traumatic strength (236). This argument, though it has significant evidence of traumatic events being a catalyst of character transformations, it is still perpetuating the heteronormative, hyper-masculine ideal. This is especially true when Parker notes: “[The superhero] recovers from trauma, picks up the broken pieces, […] becomes stronger either in spite of or because of the injury [and] exemplifies the old adage about ‘that which does not kill me only makes me stronger’” (238). There is example after example of these superheroes that fit this mold, many of which Parker points to in her chapter “The Wounded Warrior: Post-Traumatic Strength Disorder.” However, the issue with this is if we simply perceive these ordinary men who became superheroes, after they have suffered their mental/emotional traumas and then turned their unseen trauma into a physical, visible, positive PTSD then we are really saying that PTSD still carries a negative connotation. Thus, it continues to perpetuate the stigmas and stereotypes of PTSD, maintains a history of conforming PTSD as a physical illness, and continues to shame men with PTSD for “fail[ing] to live up to culturally constructed notions of the ideal male” (Chamberlin 358). At the same time, the emphasis on the hyper-masculine ideal that overcomes PTSD in ways that ordinary people cannot, suggests another failure that devalues the individual achievements of the everyday person.

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5 To try and clear up any confusion there will be a distinction between the different kinds of Post-Traumatic Stress/Strength Disorders, by using PTSD for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and PTSD for Post-Traumatic Strength Disorder.
Western “physicalist culture” goes beyond the image of the masculine, and/or feminine, ideal (Chamberlin 359). It is also indicative of “physicalist medicine” (Harrington 17), where people “lacking clear physical markers of disease, are generally not taken seriously by their doctors” (Harrington 16). This is why investigating the marked bodies of superheroes who have represented the masculine ideal for nearly three-quarters of a century, in some way, shape, or form, is so important. Their bodies are challenging the physical, masculine ideal, as well as forcing a new examination of the stigmas and stereotypes of ‘invisible’ scars/disorders/disabilities. Much like Stark, Queen’s PTSD and Survivor’s Guilt is not officially diagnosed, but it is strongly suggested. Yet, in an interview, in 2012, Amell reiterates a perception of Queen that he and the creator’s have: “David Nutter has said […] Oliver has PTSD, and we have not seen its full potential yet” (MacKenzie). There could be an argument made that Queen was diagnosed given what his attending doctor said in the “Pilot,” however, the diagnosis is never explicitly acknowledged within the fictional world of Arrow. The scars that are visible are meant to lend credibility to Queen’s masculinity, to offset the questions, or doubts, that the stigmas and stereotypes of PTSD bring about. By simultaneously representing Queen’s strength and the unseen scars of his mental and emotional trauma, Queen is justified, and legitimated, as a superhero.

The episode “Three Ghosts,” explores mental/emotional traumas and disabilities without the physical support of Queen’s scars and tattoos. Queen has hallucinations of people who were on the island and/or died. Originally, his hallucinations are believed to be “pharmacological [but are later proved to be] psychological” (“Three Ghosts”). Nevertheless, this forces Queen, as the

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6 Further study could be conducted to further explore why these film/television adaptations do not officially diagnose their superheroes onscreen, but rather only allude to it, or know it as true within the character/story production, behind the scenes.
vigilante, to acknowledge to Officer Lance (Paul Blackthorne) that he’s “been compromised [and that he’d] be a liability” (“Three Ghosts”). After the first two hallucinations a conversation reveals Diggle’s own struggles with Survivor’s Guilt upon his return from Afghanistan. The episode then becomes a testament to the individual triumphs and the ongoing obstacles with mental/emotional disabilities, and how Diggle’s experiences were different from Queen’s, but no less significant. These hallucinations both hinder and help Queen, as his third ghost comes in the form of Tommy Merlyn (Colin Donnell) who tells Queen that he is “a hero, [and to] get up. And fight back” (“Three Ghosts”). By not featuring Queen’s scars and tattoos, the depiction of Queen’s masculinity, physical ability, and mental/emotional transformations fall to the temporary markers of his vigilante uniform. The addition of a mask to the hood that he wears in honor of Yao Fei (Byron Mann) and Shado (“Three Ghost”), suggests a triumphant battle of a single, isolated conflict with his disabilities, as they cover the area of his body that harbors his invisible scars.

Queen’s character and masculinity is as flawed as his physical body, but his masculinity is not negated by the fact that his mental/emotional health is not magically cured after one episode. While, this episode can be used as more evidence to support Parker’s claim of post-traumatic strength disorder, it is also an example of individual efforts, successes, moving forward, and working every second to achieve another triumph. Queen’s victory does not take away from
Diggle’s individual achievements, and exemplifies Queen as a regular, everyday guy dealing with the same illnesses as others.

Ultimately, *Arrow* utilizes the demands of western “physicalist culture” to challenge the cultural norms that are ingrained within western society. It is challenging the boundaries of hyper-masculinity, or perhaps, more accurately, it is creating more realistic boundaries. In doing so, the representation of hyper-masculinity puts the contemporary masculine ideal in direct opposition with a more pragmatic and viable image of the male body. As Queen embodies masculinity, physical ability, and an extraordinary mastery of skills he is still grounded in the fact that the ongoing obstacles of his mental and emotional traumas limit him. *Arrow*’s Queen physical representation is the polar opposite of *Smallville*’s rendition; where Amell’s Queen is physically marked and flawed, Hartley’s Queen conformed to the flawless image of the ideal masculinity. Yet, Amell’s Queen does not appear to inhabit a reduced sense of masculinity, by comparison. Instead, the fact that Amell’s Queen still exudes masculinity, even a hyper-masculinity, it is directly questioning the stigmas and stereotypes that are still plaguing those with varying degrees of confirmed diagnosis of PTSD. The very idea that a single choice to embody a more realistic
image of the masculine body, and to further explore the characters depths of a contemporary popular DC Comics superhero, emphasizes the importance of the rhetorical statements that these superheroes bodies have been making and are continuing to make. One could argue that *Arrow* was able to achieve these assertions, because there have been fewer live/action film/television adaptations made where Oliver Queen/Green Arrow is a prominent figure within the main cast. However, that brings into question whether this character’s popularity is a problem or not. With a less notably set image and idea of the character within film/television adaptations allows the opportunity and ability to make challenging cultural and societal statements. On the other hand, it also means that there is still a struggle to get the normative image and portrayal of more recognizable, familiar, and/or popular characters to challenge the normative ideas and ideals within contemporary culture and society.
Savage! Vanished! Appropriated!: Misrepresentations of Native Americans in Green Arrow

Since the original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere neither called themselves by a single term nor understood themselves as a collectivity, the idea and the image of the Indian must be a white conception. Native Americans were and are real, but the Indian was a White invention and still remains largely a White image, if not stereotype.

- Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. The White Man’s Indian, page 3

The previous two sections have discussed the mark(ER)s of the multiplicity of masculinity and the physical representations of psychological disorders/traumas in relation to masculinity. This section will instead engage the mark(ER)s of cultural appropriations. The analysis of the 1970 “Ulysses Star is Still Alive,” the 2012 “Super Indian,” and the 2014 “Justice League United #0” will illustrate the ways in which Indigenous Peoples are negatively, stereotypically, and/or (mis)represented within mainstream comics, as well as the ways in which Native Peoples are working to combat these (mis)representations. Further investigation of the origin stories in the Green Arrow canon will show the evolution of the “White Man’s Indian” to the perpetuation of the vanishing of Native Americans in the Green Arrow stories, retellings/adaptations, and such that supports the depiction of Native Peoples in “Ulysses Star.” Some significant ways that these stereotypes are presented are through different variations of Derald Wing Sue’s description of microaggressions: linguistic microaggressions, linguistic microassaults, and environmental microaggressions.

“Ulysses Star is Still Alive”

Dennis O’Neill and Neal Adams originally published this issue in September 1970 in DC Comics’ Green Lantern Co-Starring Green Arrow series. The premise of the issue is that the Green Lantern (Lantern) and the Green Arrow (Arrow) break up a confrontation between two white men and an unidentified Native American, who is said to have been trespassing. The two
white men are Theodore Pudd who is in charge the Lumbermen’s Union (O’Neil 84), and Pierre O’Rourke, who claims the trees that an unnamed tribe has had “exclusive rights [to],” for 100 years (O’Neil 84). The only documentation proving the rights to the land has either been destroyed, or was taken by the now unheard from son of Ulysses Star, Abe (O’Neil 84-5).

Lantern and Arrow utilize different methods in an attempt to resolve this conflict. Lantern tracks down Abe Star, only to find Abe’s home on fire and the documents destroyed. Arrow on the other hand travels to “The Indian town” (O’Neil 93), where the Black Canary (Canary) is endeavoring on “A noble task [by] working with the children on the reservation” (O’Neil 86). In a discussion with Canary, Arrow develops a plan to impersonate the spirit of Ulysses Star in an attempt to frighten off the white men who are claiming Native land and to give the tribe “a symbol [that would] put some starch into [it]” (O’Neil 102). The story ends with the antagonists being arrested for the involvement in the fire that destroyed Abe Star’s home, but with no apparent resolution to these types of ongoing conflicts, or a suggestion of which method may have proved more effective.

The villains and superheroes all use racist language, however, the language is utilized in two different ways. The superheroes use linguistic microaggressions, whereas the villains use linguistic microassaults. Sue defines microgressions as

the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group. (28)
These microaggressions are presented as sociably acceptable and normative as Arrow, donned in a knee length headdress, is seen using these aggressions on the cover: “My Redskin brothers find you guilty!” (O’Neil 81, original emphasis). In image 2 Lantern and Arrow continue to use these microaggressions when they are having a conversation with Pudd and O’Rourke: “Okay, you bargain, basement Custers – Drop the weapons… [Arrow to the villains] – Or we make a like a couple of Sitting Bulls! [Lantern to the villains]” (O’Neil 84, original emphasis). The microaggressions of “Custers” and “Sitting Bulls” also invoke a historical battle that has been going on between Whites and Natives for centuries. “Ulysses Star” differentiates between which language is acceptable, or associated with, superheroes and villains, by depicting the microassaults, or overt racism, onto the villains. Sue defines microassaults as conscious, deliberate, and either subtle or explicit racial, gender, or sexual-orientation biased attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that are communicated to marginalized groups through environmental cues, verbalizations, or behaviors. They are meant to attack the group identity of the person or to hurt/harm the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions. (50)
This overt racism is blatant from the beginning pages of the comic, but is seen after Arrow uses the microaggressions of the cover, which sets up the differentiation for the readers as to which language is deemed acceptable by societal standards. The use of the pejorative linguistics microaggressions by the superheroes and the microaggressions terms, such as “Injun [and] Redskin” are sending a message to the readers as to which language is acceptable, when in reality both are offensive (O’Neil 83). This message is continued when Pudd is conversing with Lantern and Arrow about the unnamed Native man that he and O’Rourke had been ready to physically assault: “I don’t like Animals! This…creature was on Pierre’s Property! We shoot trespassers!” (O’Neil 84, original emphasis). These microassaults are more readily associated with the villains of the story due to the nature of microassaults, which “are most similar to “old fashioned” racism: they are the type the public generally associates with “true racism”: direct, deliberate, obvious, and explicit. There is no guesswork involved in
their intent, which is to harm, humiliate, or degrade people or color [and other marginalized
groups]” (Sue 51-2). While, initially the ways in which Arrow and Lantern are using this kind of
language given the overt racism that the Pudd and O’Rourke are using, the linguistic
microaggressions go unchecked, because they are being used without a belief that they are
wrong. The reason that microaggressions are difficult to curb is due to the fact that they are
“Subtle [and often] invisible [forms of racism that are] daily common experiences” (Sue 45).
Microaggressions are phrases that are used so often that they become ingrained in social and
cultural sayings, such as “going off the reservation,” or “low man on the totem pole”. When this
happens, microaggressions are used without “realizing and[/or] confronting [the] complicity in
creating psychological dilemmas for minorities” (Sue 46). Essentially the use of “Custers” and
“Sitting Bulls” are perpetuating a negative perception of Native Peoples that does not seem
offensive, but when they are said often enough they can become “harmful to the well-being, self-
esteeem, and standard of living of many marginalized groups in society” (Sue 45), similarly to the
way if a child hears frequently that they are stupid then they will come to belief that they are
stupid. Whereas, in this case the use of racist microaggressions will influence the way in which
Indigenous Peoples perceive themselves. As readers see the superheroes using this type of
language it becomes viewed as socially acceptable and not doing any harm, when in reality they
are reinforcing a negative image of Native Peoples that has been created and sustained by White
people. What is worse is that the Green Lantern Co-Staring Green Arrow collection overview
claims that the “Green Arrow, was confronting menaces of a different kind: racism, poverty,
drugs, and other social ills!” In reality, Arrow and Lantern may be battling overt racism, yet they
are supporting subtle and covert racism, or as Leonard Rifas claims “Comics supply evidence of
widely shared assumptions and also teach particular ways of looking at things” (27). As a source
of significant popular culture influence, comic book superheroes are meant to be figures that tell their readers what is socially acceptable, what characteristics and mannerisms identify someone as a good person, and so forth. Added to this the fact that the cover, and the language Arrow is using on it, are the first images that audiences are introduced to then the cover is deeming the microaggressions and appropriations as acceptable and inconsequential.

“Ulysses Star” further perpetuates the idea of the helpless/hopeless Indian, as well as the white savior. Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. references a number of settler sources that describe Native Peoples as either “ferocious” and savage (7), or “cowardly and timid” (12).

The following two scenes emphasis this cowardly timid nature, as well as generates the perception that because of this “meek” nature (Berkhofer 12), White Americans need to step in. This belief is highlighted within these scenes. The first scene is between Lantern and Abe Star, during Lantern’s search for the tribe’s documentation:

*Lantern:* Is your name *Star…Abe Star*?

*Star:* It is…me…the son of a mighty chief…been livin’ in this rathole…couldn’t take seeing my people cooped up on a reservation — couldn’t think of any way to help ‘em…so I lit out – like a yellow-belly cur—
Lantern: Maybe it’s not too late…do you have any documents – any legal papers?

Star: Had a whole box full…includin’ some stupid deed to a lotta trees! A few minutes ago, I watched ‘em burn… (O’Neil 91, original emphasis)

Now that the last copy of the proof the tribe could use to help themselves maintain their land is destroyed, it is up to the White superheroes to come up with a solution to resolve this issue. However, more significantly is that the emphasis on having documentation also dehumanizes Native Peoples. As Cornel Pewewardy notes, “the United States required a court case and legal documentation in order to prove that First Nation peoples were, indeed, real human beings” (2).

Currently there are still government requirements that need to be met for Native Peoples to prove in order to be named an official member of a tribe, both in the United States and in Canada. The comic’s use of a land conflict and the need for documentation reiterates issues that have been relevant for Native Peoples for centuries: the ownership of land, proof through legal documentation that deems Indigenous People as legitimate. The destroyed documents contribute to the perception that Indians have no real claim, and thus their land is free for the taking.

The second scene further contributes to the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples and the need for White Saviors, as Arrow and Canary discuss the tribe’s needs:

Arrow: You’ve spent time with these people…what’s your diagnosis? Do they need food? Medicine?
*Canary:* Those things, certainly! – And *more*! They need something no one can give – They’ve been under the white man’s heel for so long they’ve lost *faith* in themselves – They no longer believe in themselves as a *tribe* – a *society* – or even as *human beings!* (O’Neil 93-94, original emphasis)

This scene confronts the consequences of using the microaggressions and microassaults previously discussed. As Canary says Native Peoples have “been under the white man’s heel” and therefore have continually heard these insults and perceptions of themselves that it becomes a way that Indigenous Peoples were essentially made to belief about themselves. The image of the desolate Natives depicts the psychological toll that these indignities have impressed upon Indigenous Peoples, however, this conversation between two characters that by their very definition embody the image of white saviors. In this case the perception that the only people who can resolve problems for Native Peoples are these fictional, White superheroes, or the White audiences. The attempt to bring awareness to the troubles still facing Native Peoples, yet there is no discussion about the survivance of cultures, beliefs, and customs. These two scenes emphasis the White, Euro-American authority that dehumanizes Native Peoples through a positional power structure.

The power structure is further emphasized when Arrow impersonates the spirit of Ulysses Star, which suggests that the only way to motivate Indigenous Peoples to take action for themselves is through a white savior. Arrow is trying to make the tribe believe that “the spirit of
[their] former greatness is in [their] hearts” (O’Neil 97). The depiction of Ulysses Star is the “conception […] of the Indian […] as a result of the power of Whites and the response of Native Americans” (Berkhofer 3). However, this act can also be seen as an ulterior motive on Arrow’s part. The history of non-Natives impersonating Indians has shown that “non-Indians [end up] benefiting from taking on pseudo-Indian identity” (Pewewardy 3). In this case, if Arrow successfully motivates the tribal members he will then be viewed as the hero that helped the tribe. Arrow plays Indian on the cover without fully disguising himself, similarly to how European Americans impersonated Natives during an 18th Century lumber conflict that Phillip Deloria discusses in his book Playing Indian (10-1). As Deloria says, “In the years before the American Revolution, colonial crowds often acted out their political and economic discontent in Indian disguise” (12). This story is meant to be Arrow’s fight against Native racism, however, as we have seen his attempts to do so falls short by reinforcing the same stereotypes that he, and the comic, is trying to deter.

Further imagery continues the idea of the inferior or subordinate native, specifically on the front cover, where Arrow is defending/fighting for the members of the tribe, while the tribesmen sit on the ground around a fire. The cover presents the Native American stereotypes of
submission to the authority of the white savior. While the comic is intended to fight against racism, it still maintains racist imagery, and because of this an argument would likely be made against looking for racist imagery in comics, [because] ‘racism’ exhibits a dual status as something outside the bounds of polite discussion (so that imputing the creation of racist cartoon to a cartoonist becomes a vile slur), but also as a once-basic assumption of our society (so that any racism found on the page must merely be a ‘reflection’ of the common sense of the period, for which the cartoonist bears no personal responsibility). (Rifas 28)

Although, mainstream comics can reflect what is going on in society at that time the rhetorical statement that the images of the subordinate natives cannot simply be taken as a reflection of society.

The comic continually builds images of the helpless/hopeless Indian, with particular emphasis on the elderly and children population of the tribe.

Firstly, through the elderly Abe Star who left the reservation, and took the deed to the tribe’s tress with him, when he no longer knew how to help the tribe (O’Neil 85-91). When Lantern finally finds Star, his tenement is on fire as a result of an arsonist that was hired by Pudd and O’Rourke

7 The image of the Arrow on the front cover is also reminiscent of the way in which Berkhofer notes that “the symbolic pictures applied to title pages and to maps, but the same meaning lay behind the more prosaic written descriptions and discourses on the peoples of the world” (24) The depiction of America was through a person who “usually wore a feathered headdress and carried a bow and arrow” (Berkhofer 24). This image is also seen when Arrow is impersonating Ulysses Star. These images are again perpetuating the image of the Indian that was developed by White settlers ultimately generated as the picture of the so-called authentic Indian.
It is in that fire that Star’s copy of the deed is burned (O’Neil 91). Secondly, through the images of the young and the elderly do not have enough supplies, which are first shown by a young girl getting medical attention from Canary. While, mainstream comics can reflect societal views of the time this particular image has been repeated over and over again in popular culture. When the comic addresses the needs of the tribe it does so by presenting the medical and essential material needs of the children and the elderly: “our kids go shoeless [and] our old folks don’t have decent medical attention” (O’Neil 102). “Ulysses Star” does not just depict societal reflections on racism and the economic and societal standings, of Native Americans, it makes a rhetorical statement as it dehumanizes, places the collective native population in a subordinate/feminized position, and reinforces the Eurocentric power structure.

**Green Arrow Canon Origin Stories and Contemporary Adaptations**

Furthermore, the fact that this statement is being made within the world of Green Arrow canon is particularly significant. The Green Arrow canon has incorporated Native Americans in the origin stories of Arrow and his sidekick Speedy. During the Golden Age of comics, which lasted “from 1938 through the mid-1950s” (Rhoades 21), Oliver Queen a.k.a. Green Arrow “was a museum curator and an archeologist specializing in Native American cultures and hunting techniques” (Kistler). Roy Harper, who is Arrow’s sidekick Speedy, was a survivor of a plane crash that killed his parents. Fortunately, the Harper family’s Native American servant Quoag also survived the crash, teaching [Roy] archery

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8 The fact that Star’s tenement was set on fire by an arsonist contributes to the erasure of Indigenous Peoples.
9 The emphasis on the lack of what the tribe has and what needs to be done for them verges on the line of presenting to the readers the equivalent of poverty porn, which is meant to entice viewers to feel sorry for those in need and to provide some kind of assistance in order to alleviate that initial sentiment.
and other skills so they may survive on Lost Mesa. Unfortunately, Ollie’s [who had traveled to Lost Mesa “to search for artifacts” (Kistler)] been followed by criminals who believe he can lead them to hidden Native American treasures. They wind up killing Quoag, so Ollie and Roy use their archery skills to fight the evil men who are soon conveniently crushed to death by a big golden idol. (Kistler)

This version of the origin stories is another reinforcement of stereotypes and the Eurocentric power structure. The next evolution in these origin stories came during the Silver Age of comics, which ran from the mid-1950s to roughly the early to mid 1970s (Rhoades 69-97). “Ulysses Star” was published relatively close to the end of the Silver Age, which saw the disappearance of Native Americans from the Green Arrow canon. During the Silver Age, Queen no longer had a connection to indigenous people. He is no longer a museum curator, but rather a playboy billionaire who fell off his yacht and found himself on a deserted island. Roy on the other hand went through two different origin story revisions during this period. The first revision kept to the idea that Roy’s parents died in a plane crash, “However, this time [Roy] is subsequently raised on a reservation and mentored by Chief Thunderhead” (Kistler). During the second revision, Roy was raised by a single-father, forest ranger, Roy Sr., who saved a Navajo reservation and the “medicine chief Brave Bow” from a fire (Kistler). This revision situates Roy Sr. as another example of the white savior, within the canon. Brave Bow in turn raised Roy “encouraging his natural skill for archery and marksmanship” (Kistler), and it was only when Brave Bow’s health declined that Oliver meets Roy and takes him “under his wing” (Kistler).10 Again this era of

10 Research has thus far not presented another origin story for Roy Harper, thus his connection to Indigenous People still appears to be his entrance into the Green Arrow canon. However, thus far
comics is confirming stereotypes and the Eurocentric power structure, but now it is reiterating the stereotype of the vanishing Indian, as this is the end of the characters to Native Americans. It is also interesting to realize that despite Arrow’s enthusiasm to help the tribe, the character that has the most significant connection to native peoples, Roy, is not present in “Ulysses Star”

It has been thirty plus years, since “Ulysses Star” was published. However, as Archie Goodwin says, in his assessment of Dennis O’Neil and Neal Adams’ work, “Today, over 20 years later, the material is still strong, still has the power to grip and involve. Partly this is because some of the many issues raised are still relevant.” Racism and stereotypical representations of Native Peoples is still a relevant issue, yet the Green Arrow canon has vanished indigenous people from its canon, even in the contemporary adaptations that have attempted to stay true to the canon has left out such a connection. As a viewer of these adaptations it was only through this research that this connection to Natives Peoples was realized. In Smallville Arrow’s origin story follows the canon of Queen having a conflict with his yacht and ending up alone on a deserted island for two years, where he taught himself archery in order to survive (“Toxic”). Smallville also does not include Arrow’s sidekick Speedy. In Arrow follows in similar steps, however, this time the Queen family yacht is sabotaged and Queen ends up on a military island where he is trained by a former Japanese Military officer Yao Fei, and then later on by a former member of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, Slade Wilson, and Yao Fei’s daughter Shadow. Roy Harper is a character that Arrow is still in development and has yet to reveal too much of his background story. The canon that one would think would be better positioned to bring relevant issues into the light the connection to Native Americans have vanished from the contemporary retelling of this canon. On the other hand, these adaptations still

within Arrow has yet to indicate whether or not that origin story will still stand in the new adaptation.
adhere to the stereotypical Russian and Asian villain representations. It is also at this point when the question begins to arise about which is worse: bringing awareness of ongoing issues through negative/stereotypical ways and actually talking about it or not talking about it at all and allowing the stereotype of the vanishing Indian to persist?

**Super Indian**

Arigon Starr humorously and effectively combats the mainstream comic stereotypes from page one of *Super Indian*. She utilizes all of the stereotypical images, storylines, mystical powers, and the like to proclaim what will *not* be found within the succeeding pages (Starr 1). Starr also appropriates the superhero name, and alter ego images of the DC Comics’ Superman, in her own way, but does so in a way that not only allows her to reflect a Native interpretation of the superhero image rather than the hegemonic White image of Superman. At the same time she is creating an Indigenous superhero that can stand side by side with an image, of Clark Kent/Superman, and have equitable relevance. Also, Starr does not adhere to the stereotypical Indian with supernatural, mythical abilities, but rather creates an origin of Hubert Logan’s/Super Indian’s abilities in a similar fashion to many mainstream superheroes: he “consumed mass quantities of commodity cheese tainted with “Reziium”” (4). Thus, his superhuman abilities are pharmacological and not mythical or metaphysical. The rest of her supporting characters represent a plethora of differing images of Natives Peoples, thus debunking the idea, or belief, that all Indians fit one image (Starr 4-6).
Starr also has an eclectic set of villains ranging from robots to German anthropologists to another boy from the Leaning Oaks reservation to “A wealthy Scottish playboy” (6).

The conflicts that Super Indian faces are among the same kind of that can be found within mainstream comics, such as greed, a desire for world domination, and the like. However, the dangers are events that threaten the tribal community of Leaning Oaks, as a whole. In the first major conflict Logan assumes the Internet identity Rez Boy and with his blog begins reporting negative things about different residence of Leaning Oaks, which branched into the topic of cyber bullying and its effects. As the story moves forward the conflict evolves into the dangers of appropriating someone else’s identity and the consequences that can come with doing so. The story also questions how far a person should go in order to get noticed (Starr 12-35). Ultimately, what Starr does with Super Indian is that through these conflicts is to present situations where the citizens of Leaning Oaks are not in need of saving, but rather everyone is given the opportunity to learn a lesson and to step up as the resolver of a situation, even Logan/Super Indian.

The second half of Volume 1 has a more familiar and mainstream type conflict with the villain, Derek Thunder, who developed his own extraordinary abilities from the same cheese that affected Logan (Starr 6). Thunder wants to prove he is a better villain than Wampum Baggs and to change the way of life of the Leaning Oaks citizens. There is the underlying conflict of whether or not being Native American is a good or bad thing, and then the return of Leaning Oaks folds back to themselves from being forced to fit the image of someone else’s invention (Starr 38-60). Yet, at the same time Starr utilizes the evolving superpowers of Super Indian and Derek Thunder, with the new ability to fly. The way that Starr presents these two sets of events in another way in which she is allowing her comic book characters to be held on the same level,
to be perceived as equal superheroes, with mainstream comic book characters. In doing this Starr still does not allow for Logan/Super Indian to lose his identity as a Native Person in the effort to make him as relevant a superhero, as say Superman. The other encouraging aspect of Starr’s publication is that after each conclusion she provides the information of an Indigenous person that has made history in one way or another (Starr 36 & 61). Where mainstream comics of the past have marked Native Peoples in a negative light, Starr has instead marked her superheroes as legitimate and authentic individuals and community members, but also as Superheroes and Villains in their own rights.

**Justice League United – Miiyahbin/Equinox**

The first issue of the *Justice League United*, which became available on April 23, 2014, published more than thirty years after “Ulysses Star is Still Alive” has one major difference: the setting and tribal identification. “Ulysses Star” identifies the Native People’s home as “the Indian Town” (O’Neil 93), and as O’Neil never gives a specific recognition of a particular tribe, or individual persons, there is the suggestion that O’Neil’s depiction of Native Peoples is a representation of all Indigenous Peoples. As Berkhofer claims, when one image, on representation, one name marks numberous “cultures and societies […] the] conception denies, or misrepresents the social, linguistic, cultural, and other differences among the peoples so labeled, it lapses into stereotype” (3). Thus, the fact that O’Neil designates the reservation as an “Indian Town” (93, emphasis added), perpetuates the “White conception” of the naming, collective, and perception mark(er)s of Native Americans (Berkhofer 3). Berkhofer argues along this very idea:
Not only does the gender term *Indian* continue from Columbus to the present day, but so also does the tendency to speak of one tribe as exemplary of all Indians and conversely to comprehend a specific tribe according to the characteristics ascribed to all Indians. (26)

Conversely, Jeff Lemire, who revealed the introduction of his new female, teenaged, Cree superhero in March 2014, (Burlingame), did not just create a new, unnamed character. Lemire has given her a name (Miiyahbin), a location (Moose Factory Island), and a tribe (“Home to the Moose Cree First Nation”) (13). In other words he has given her a presence not just within the fictional world of the comic, but within the contemporary real world as well. By comparison, O’Neil is essentially providing readers with an environmental microaggression, which “refers to the numerous demeaning and threatening social, educational, political, or economic cues that are communicated individually, institutionally, or societally to marginalized groups […] Environmental microaggressions often are packaged in symbols and even mascots” (Sue 47-8). Ultimately, “Ulysses Star” is a microaggression of collectivity and anonymity.

The significance of Lemire’s new character Miiyahbin/Equinox is that, even before the premiere of issue #0, she is “one of the few First Nation heroes currently appearing in superhero comics” (Wheeler). To help assist him in creating Miiyahbin, “Lemire visited the Moose Factory community and spoke to Cree teenagers…and spoke to residents to hear their ideas” (Wheeler).
Miiyahbin has “nature-based powers” (Wheeler), but she is not “a tracker nor a shamanistic magic user like [other Indigenous characters]” (Wheeler). Issue #0 is Miiyahbin’s premiere, thus not much is known, or revealed, about her. Her four-page introduction unveils what her superhero uniform looks like (Lemire 15), that she lives with her grandmother (Lemire 13), and that her first recorded conflict is against a Whitago (Lemire 16). In addition to this Lemire locates Miiyahbin and her community within contemporary times, with a modern day appearance, cars, buildings, amenities, and the like (13-6). Ultimately, a stronger and more in depth analysis can be conducted once more issues are published, but for now there is a relatively significant difference between these two mainstream, DC Comics issues and portrayals.

**Conclusion**

Including this chapter under the umbrella of the thesis title “21st Century Embodied Rhetorics of (Dis)Abilities and (Hyper)Masculinity” serves two purposes: the linguistic mark(er)s within mainstream comics is reflected in the images of Indigenous Peoples. O’Neilis not just showing a perceived hierarchy of ethnicities, but another perceived hierarchy of masculinity as well. “Ulysses Star” places the White superheroes at the epicenter of the masculine ideal. The numerous efforts of assimilation and appropriation of Native Peoples are efforts to put, specifically Native men, on the course toward the ideal White masculine ideal. However, the continued use of microaggressions and microassaults, and the like subordinate any and all Natives in a neither nor perspective that seems insurmountable: neither White nor legitimate. As a result this disables Indigenous Peoples, though perhaps not in the way one may typically think of. Their disabilities reside as a socially constructed disability, because the perpetuated and maintained stereotypes can hind their ability to negotiate society economically,
fiscally, educationally, and more, which can in turn affect their psychological and emotional health, particularly with self-esteem and such.

The way that Starr portrays her Native superhero challenges the “generalized ‘Indians’ who fit romanticized stereotypes” (Noori 63), as well as the idea that Indigenous masculinity somehow does not measure up to White masculinity. It could be argued that the appropriation of Clark Kent/Superman-esque imagery and powers, is making a statement that Indigenous masculinity is just as capable of fulfilling the male superhero role. It also presents the true socially constructed disability not as being a Native American, but in the assimilation and/or appropriation of another’s invented image. By “saturat[ing] the pages with recognizable detail [and] not posing the natives as non-natives expect to find them” Starr is (Noori 63), with each page, arguing for Indigenous ability and a true, authentic representation of Native masculinity.

The interesting twist of Lemire’s Miiyahbin/Equinox is that she is an embodiment of marginality: she is a non-white female, she is Native, and she is a teenager. In many ways all of these aspects can be considered to be forms of socially constructed disabilities. Yet, there is an argument in the fact that historically indigenous cultures and/or societies have been matriarchal, in opposition to the Western patriarchal society and/or culture. As Lemire is but one of many to note, “Most superheroes are white males” (Wheeler), Miiyahbin/Equinox could be analyzed as an opportunity to critique western patriarchal society in a similar fashion to the way the Enlightenment’s “use of the Noble Savage, and the American Indian …to criticize existing social institutions and to propose reform” (Berkhofer 76). Since “The Justice League United roster is not short on white dudes – it includes Hawkman, Green Arrow, Animal Man and Adam Strange” (Wheeler), can Miiyahbin/Equinox’s presence be analyzed as a review of the western masculine
ideal? As a commentary of western patriarchal society? As an evaluation of minorities as a socially constructed disability?
Epilogue

Although, this thesis explores a number of different interesting perspectives of research there are a number of places that I believe that this research could be expanded upon, or where further study could be explored. One particular avenue of research that is more of a personal interest of exploration of the evolution of hegemonic masculinity representation in Green Arrow, from the introduction of the canon up until present. It would make for an interesting case study of masculinity within the comic book genre of a character that does not have the supernatural additives like those of Superman. A continued comparison between the like characters within DC and Marvel in regard to their masculinity would equally be interesting to see (i.e., Green Arrow, Batman, Iron Man, and so forth). Continuing with the comparison between these three particular characters, a further investigation of the fact that Queen, Stark, and Wayne are not officially or explicitly diagnosed with PTSD, within the respective contemporary film/television adaptations, and whether or not that lack of a diagnoses further impacts the way psychological disorders are represented, and the statements that makes. My initial thoughts are that the hesitancy to diagnose these characters perpetuates the uncertainty, stigmas, and stereotypes associated with PTSD. However, I believe that an examination of the fact that it is comic book superheroes that do not have an official diagnosis is a key aspect to focus on.

I do discuss villains to some extent, the consideration of scars/mark(er)s and/of psychological traumas in relation to the villains has a lot of potential. It would be interesting to see if there is a correlation in the way that villains and superheroes are represented given similar circumstances. Where are the lines blurred between villain and superhero when psychological disabilities are taken into consideration? Is the line that separates these two groups of individuals thinner than originally perceived? If this is the case, what does that say about the perception of
psychological disorders within popular culture? Jumping off of this idea, I came across two articles in my research that really interested me and really got me thinking about the criminalization of psychological disorders and the criminalized perspectives that shroud vigilantes and villains. The two articles that I found were Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson’s “Rethinking Rhetoric through Mental Disabilities,” and Catherine Prendergast’s “On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability.” Together these articles touch upon the history of criminalization and voicelessness that those dealing with psychological disabilities have and do face. I found some materials that could potentially support this line of thinking in Lennard Davis, Anne Harrington, and David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder. While, I did not explore this approach further, I think that continued investigations along these lines are important. I believe that more research in this area could potentially provide more answers, questions, and complications along the lines of what I hope this thesis has begun to generate. While, I think that physical disability studies within comic book studies is important I believe that the clear lack of voice, power, and representation that psychological disabilities have within popular culture is detrimental to the everyday perception of those same disabilities/disorders. Some ways in which further research could be conducted could be through the language, perception, and classifications of vigilantes and villains. The concept of the vigilante is always portrayed in a one or the other way, not only within popular culture, but also within reality. The challenge to authority that vigilantes present could also reveal more insight to the representation of psychological disabilities. Even the *Dark Knight* trilogy muddles the definition of vigilante, when Batman is required to stop impersonators (*Dark Knight, The*). Beyond that numerous popular criminal investigation programs present the vigilante as a criminal figure, which makes the connection between psychological disorders/disabilities and these superheroes/vigilantes all the more interesting.
Another place of further interest would be to further analyze future issues of *Justice League United* and what Miiyahbin/Equinox’s role is. Does she present a critique on contemporary patriarchal society? Is her representation a profession from the typical portrayals of Indigenous Peoples in mainstream comics? If yes, is it enough of a progression? If no, what needs to be done to further contradict hegemonic, stereotypical, misrepresentations of Native Americans in mainstream comics? Having the opportunity to explore the way Indigenous writers and artists represent Native Peoples is fantastic, but the appraisal of how marginalized characters are portrayed in contemporary popular culture and society, in comparison to previous representations, are needed indicators for where society has evolved to and where we still need to go and the advancements that still need to be made.

Overall, I think that this thesis is more of a jumping off point for further research. It is the starting point of interests that will ultimately lead to more significant revelations down the road. In that sense I think that beginning here was important for me, because it allowed me to discover where my interests truly lie and also to see where I can take that research further in the future. What is presented here is not the end all, be all of my research. I do not believe that I found concrete answers, but rather I established valid and plausible ideas for further research that has begun to lead me on the path of where I see my academic research progressing. I have developed an eclectic group of interests from my research, including gender studies, comic book studies, disabilities studies, cultural studies, ethnic studies, and potentially more. I have appreciated the expansion of my interests throughout this whole process and I look forward to seeing where my own research grows from here.
Appendix 1: Appeals of Multiple Masculinities Images Citation


Appendix 2: The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs: Symptoms of PTSD

* Taken Directly from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Website:

PUBLIC This section is for Veterans, General Public, Family & Friends

Symptoms of PTSD

Available in Spanish: Síntomas del TEPT | Ver todos

It is normal to have stress reactions after a traumatic event. Your emotions and behavior can change in ways that are upsetting to you. Even though most people have stress reactions following a trauma, they get better in time. But, you should seek help if symptoms:

• Last longer than three months
• Cause you great distress
• Disrupt your work or home life

What are the symptoms of PTSD?

Symptoms of PTSD may disrupt your life and make it hard to continue with your daily activities. You may find it hard just to get through the day.

There are four types of PTSD symptoms:

1. **Reliving the event (also called re-experiencing symptoms)**

   Memories of the traumatic event can come back at any time. You may feel the same fear and horror you did when the event took place. For example:

   • You may have **nightmares**.
   • You may feel like you are going through the event again. This is called a **flashback**.
   • You may see, hear, or smell something that causes you to relive the event. This is called a **trigger**. News reports, seeing an accident, or hearing a car backfire are examples of triggers.

2. **Avoiding situations that remind you of the event**

   You may try to avoid situations or people that trigger memories of the traumatic event. You may even avoid talking or thinking about the event. For example:

   • You may avoid crowds, because they feel dangerous.
   • You may avoid driving if you were in a car accident or if your military convoy was bombed.
   • If you were in an earthquake, you may avoid watching movies about earthquakes.
• You may keep very busy or avoid seeking help because it keeps you from having to think or talk about the event.

3. **Negative changes in beliefs and feelings**

   The way you think about yourself and others changes because of the trauma. This symptom has many aspects, including the following:

   • You may not have positive or loving feelings toward other people and may stay away from relationships.
   • You may forget about parts of the traumatic event or not be able to talk about them.
   • You may think the world is completely dangerous, and no one can be trusted.

4. **Feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal)**

   You may be jittery, or always alert and on the lookout for danger. You might suddenly become angry or irritable. This is known as hyperarousal. For example:

   • You may have a hard time sleeping.
   • You may have trouble concentrating.
   • You may be startled by a loud noise or surprise.
   • You might want to have your back to a wall in a restaurant or waiting room.

**What should I do if I have symptoms of PTSD?**

PTSD symptoms usually start soon after the traumatic event. But for some people, they may not happen until months or years after the trauma. Symptoms may come and go over many years. So, you should keep track of your symptoms and talk to someone you trust about them.

If you have symptoms that last longer than four weeks, cause you great distress, or disrupt your work or home life, you probably have PTSD. You should seek professional help from a doctor or counselor.

*Date this content was last updated is at the bottom of the page. JANUARY 3, 2014*
Appendix 3: Marked Bodies Images Citation


Appendix 4: Savage! Vanished! Appropriated! Images Citation


Works Cited


“Tattoo.” *Teen Wolf*. MTV. 3 June 2013. DVD.


