TRANSGENDER IN INDIA: A SEMIOTIC AND RECEPTION ANALYSIS

OF BOLLYWOOD MOVIES

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The transgender community in India, commonly known as *hijras*, consists of people who were born as males but address themselves as females. They have been considered as the third gender in India for millennia and have had specific religious and sociocultural values and roles, but are forced to live in shadows in this day and age. Isolation of this community is also reflected in the way transgender characters are represented in Indian entertainment media. The study analyses two transgender themed films semiotically and the audience reception of those representations by 20 members of the transgender community. Semiotics is a helpful tool to understand the ways signs communicate ideas to viewers. This study applies syntagmatic and paradigmatic analyses to understand how images are used to represent and relay information to the audience. Reception theory along with double colonization has been incorporated in this study to analyse the ways in which the transgender community interprets the representations in entertainment media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Transgender people in India, commonly known as *hijras*, identify themselves as people

originally born as males but address themselves as females. They have long existed in Indian

society, having specific religious and sociocultural values and roles (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015).

They are described as the third gender in the ancient Indian texts of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain

origins (Reddy, 2005). The construction of hijra or transgender identity draws its inheritance

from strong historical fairy-tale inceptions, mostly resulting from the portraits of hijra characters

playing significant roles in Indian mythology. For example, Arjun, who is the hero of the Hindu

epic called Mahabharata, is exiled and lives in a disguise of a eunuch-transvestite (Goel, 2016;

Hiltelbeitel, 1980; Nanda, 2014). The significance of transgender people was also noted during

the Mughal period, where they were referred to as *khawjasarias*, protecting the royal harems and

being confidantes of the royalty (Rehan, Chaudhary, & Shah, 2009). Therefore, in the historical

context for millennia, hijras have formed a key part of rituals in Hindu culture to celebrate

marriages and childbirth. However, since the days of British colonization, hijras have been

ridiculed and subjected to prejudice and forced to live in shadows (Chakravorty, 2007; Goel,

2016; Hinchy, 2014; Hunt, 2011; Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Nanda, 1999, 2014; Patel, 2012;

Reddy, 2005). The attempts to erase the hijra identity as a visible sociocultural category and

gender by the colonizers is still reflected through the lack of representation of the transgender

community in Indian entertainment media with very few transgender-themed movies.

Most studies (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2015; Chakrapani et al., 2017; Goel, 2016; Kalra &

Shah, 2013) on the hijra community attempt to understand what it means to take on the hijra role

and the process involved in becoming a hijra. The studies also explore the social stigma faced by

this community, which has forced its members to lead a life in fear and poverty-stricken conditions along with implications of prostitution on their health. In addition, the attitudes of the general Indian audiences remain negative (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015).

The hijra identity has often been viewed as closest to the Western transsexual identity: born in the wrong body with the wrong sex (Kalra & Bhungra, 2015), which also corresponds with the prejudice faced by the trans community in the West (Flores et al. 2018; McInroy & Craig, 2015a; McInroy & Craig, 2015b; Nagoshi et al., 2008; Wargo, 2015). However, some hijras claim that they don't belong to either sex and say that they belong to the third sex (Nanda, 2014; Reddy, 2005). Therefore, the descriptions of being accepted into the hijra community and subsequent emasculation and rituals in previous research suggest a keen hunt for identity (Kalra & Bhungra, 2015; Nanda, 1999). Moreover, some rumours circulate about the hijras indulging in kidnapping and castrating male children as a mechanism to increase the membership of their community (Patel, 2012). However, little evidence exists to support this claim. In reality, this community attracts different kinds of people who join voluntarily (Nanda, 1986). In other words, although Hinduism's historical references were quite explicit and positive in terms of representations of gender-variant deities and mortals (Hunt, 2011), the country's gender non-confirming youths are targets of various forms of mistreatment that mirror those suffered by their Western counterparts (Elischberger, Glazier, Hill, & Verduzco-Baker, 2017).

Kalra and Bhugra (2015) explore a spectrum of various types of negative representations of transgender characters in Bollywood movies. Hijras have been portrayed in Hindi films for several decades, playing minimalistic roles that are often not highlighted and hence ignored. "Such roles often portray them as the villains; as a passing reference or focus of fun, where the trans identity is constructed through abjection and ridicule" (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015, p. 164).

Films with positive representations generally belong to the art genre that deals with various subjects like transsexuality in a much more sensitive way than Bollywood and are often confined to cosmopolitan cities. But the effects of mainstream Bollywood movies' portrayals on viewers may confirm one's beliefs and prejudices toward this community as a whole. Portraying them as shadows in Bollywood film plots may help perpetuate myths about this community, resulting in further marginalization of hijras.

The depictions of transgender people in Bollywood cinema explored by Kalra and Bhugra (2015) share similarities with portrayals of transgender community in Western cinema. "From the first representations of LGBTQ identities on television in the 1960s to contemporary representations, LGBTQ people have consistently been stereotyped as comic relief, villains and/or criminals" (McInroy & Craig, 2015a, p. 34). Although their representations have increased, these stereotypes still remain prevalent in traditional media, feeding homophobia and heterosexism into society (Davis, 2008; Padva, 2008; Raley & Lucas, 2006).

Along with research on media representations of transgender identity, DiFulvio (2014), and Arrington and Wilson (2001) explore the social context of both risk and resilience in the face of violence. Comparable to cisgender sexual minorities, transgender people experience numerous gender-based distal stressors, including high rates of discrimination, victimization, and rejection in various environments, such as the workplace, schools, public restrooms, and even home (James et al., 2016). Similar to homonegativity, transgender people may internalize transgender negativity as a result of social stigma placed on transgender identities (Rood et al., 2017). Research emphasizes that resilience is essential in moving beyond the awareness of risk to actively finding ways to promote growth and well-being of a marginalized population (Meyer, 2015). The studies also reveal that community belonging is an important component of building

resilience among transgender individuals (Barr, Budge, & Adelson, 2016; Singh, 2013; Singh & McKleroy, 2011).

Some Western research about the role of new media (McConnell et al. 2018; Wargo, 2015) explores the complex relationships between outness, network structure of platforms like Facebook, and online experiences for the transgender youth. The results of these studies reveal that the young people who are closeted are more likely to be isolated from the transgender community (McConnell et al., 2018).

Indian society's views about the transgenders are slowly changing, especially after the recognition provided to this community in 2014 under a third gender category and the 2018 abolishment of Section 377 of the Indian penal code, and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019. However, a paucity of research persists on the perspectives of the transgender individuals regarding their representations. Additionally, transmen are almost nowhere to be to be seen in the research done so far on the hijra community. The aim of this study is to find out how transgender people interpret the images of transgenders in media in context of their real-life identities and experiences.

Because the various factors in transgender representations might affect the Indian transgender identity development, the theoretical framework guiding this research is reception theory (Ang, 1982; Cavalcante, 2017; Hall, 1973; Hartley, 2002; Hay, Grossberg, & Wartella, 1992; Heath, 1990; Joyrich, 1996; Morrison, 2010; Nightingale, 2011; Procter, 2004; Radway, 1991), which focuses on how audience interacts with media texts and argues that contextual factors, more than textual ones, influence the way spectators view television.

The media texts are analysed using semiotics, a study of sings and symbols (Barthes & Heath, 1977; Berger, 2019; Pierce, 1931; Saussure, 1966) to understand the way in which the

structural representation of transgender characters in the films represents and relays the information to the audience and influences their reception. Because of the country's history with British imperialism, the study mentions double colonization (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998; Mohanty, 1988, 1991; Oyewumi, 1997; Suleri, 1992). Double colonization, by definition, studies the oppression of women by both patriarchy and the colonial power. When combined with intersectionality, (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Urdang, 1979) that is, the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they applied to an individual or a group, creating interdependent systems of discrimination, have been adopted to study the pernicious effects of colonization on the transgender community. Lastly, this study also aims at providing literature for the study of factors responsible for transprejudice, as well as identity development of transmen through transgender representations in entertainment media.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the historically Euro-American cultural context, individuals are socially identified as "homosexuals" or "heterosexuals" as if their sexual orientation encapsulates their total personality and identity, which is not the case in many other cultures (Nanda, 2014). As Nanda (2014) explains,

> While sex/gender diversity describes cultural categories, it is also a matter of personal identity. Ethnographic research resoundingly demonstrates that even individuals included in the same alternative sex/gender categories often experience themselves differently. And although the term "identity" implies a certain consistency or continuity in subjective experience, they are dynamic and change with the situation over time, affected by both social and individual factors. (p. 5)

The Euro-American view that only two genders exist and the distinctions between male and female are natural and unchangeable was reflected in popular culture and dominated the biological and social sciences until the mid-20th century (Herdt, 1996). It has been argued that one-sex model of "a male/masculine body and mind inscribed on the incomplete and subordinate female body" stems from ancient Europe and persisted up until the Middle Ages (Laqueur, 1990). The one-sex model existed in ancient Greece, as conceptualized by Aristotle. In his view, this model was an ascending ladder of perfection, where women and girls were at the bottom of the ladder, further up were boys and young-adult men, and aristocratic men were at the top (Bullough, 1993).

Other models of gender diversity emerged in different periods across the history. European cultures identified three sexes: male, female, and intersex. All the three sexes were assumed to have sexual relations with males and females, although each gender was presumed to have a sexual relation with the opposite gender (Nanda, 2014). As Nanda (2014) states,

> It was believed that those born biologically intersexed could change their gender, but if

hermaphrodites [*sic*] continually switched and took sexual partners of both genders, they were treated as having committed the crime of sodomy. The interest of the state and the church in upholding the dominant hierarchical and patriarchal sex/gender system was a key factor in European attitudes toward sex/gender diversity which resulted in the execution of intersexed gender switchers. (p. 106)

The early encounters between Europeans and Native Americans in the 15th through 17th centuries brought together cultures with vastly different sex/gender systems (Lang, 1996; Roscoe, 1996). Western Catholic explorers used the term *berdache* for Native American men who performed the work of women, dressed like women, and had sexual relations with men (Roscoe, 1996). This term was inaccurate as it derived from the European view of unnatural and sinful practice of sodomy, and it was insulting as it overlooked the specialized and spiritual functions of these roles that have positive values in Native American societies (Lang, 1996).

In contrast to male gender variants, female gender variants occurred more frequently among Native Americans (Blackwood, 1984; Jacobs, Wesley, & Lang, 1997). Female gender variants can be explained by the fact that in many Native American societies, women adopted aspects of the male gender role, like engaging in warfare or hunting. They would often dress in male clothing and would pass as males (Blackwood, 1984; Lang, 1996).

Similar to the Native American societies, many European cases of women dressed as men in order to engage in male occupations came to light by around early 1700s. Such women were generally stigmatized for undermining the authority of the regular gender order (Nanda, 2014).

However, in the Middle Ages, the role of transvestite females had gained cultural approval. Despite the mainstream ideology that was against dressing up as the opposite sex, transvestite female saints were significant in the history and were considered as legends, fulfilling the words of St. Jerome that "a woman who wishes to serve Christ more than the world, will cease to be a woman and will be called a man" (Gregg, 1997, p. 151). One of the female

transvestite saints was Pelagia, who was said to have been a prostitute who changed her ways, converted to Christianity, changed her name to (the male) Pelagius, and dressed as a man. Only her death revealed her to be a woman (Bullough, 1993). Additional examples of female transvestite saints are of St. Eugina and Theodora, who would cross-dress for joining male dominated religious communities (Gregg, 1997; p. 23). An analysis of these stories reveals that the patriarchal society gave leeway to cross-dressing of women who gained a higher status, but not for men who lost their status. No cross-dressed male saints has existed (Bullough, 1993).

"Cultures vary in their response to the 'problem' of people with sex/gender anomalies — individuals who do not fit into the sex/gender binary or who wish to be of a sex and gender category different from that which is consistent with their anatomy" (Nanda, 2014, p. 112). In the Euro-American cultural context, the solution to this dilemma was the invention of the "transsexual" that served the purpose of defining the belief of a biologically normal person of being a member of the opposite sex (Kessler, 1978, p. 115). Nanda (2014) explains as follows:

> While the term is used in popular media to refer to a person who is in transitional status, moving from one sex to the other, the reconstructive genital surgery that transsexuals desire aims at moving them from just such a transitional state to the status of a "real" man or woman, a gender reversal ultimately confirmed by surgically constructed sex organs and secondary sexual characteristics of the opposite sex. (p. 112)

History of Transsexualism/Transgenderism in Indian Context

Indian and U.S. cultures differ drastically in terms of their conceptualizations of gender. In comparison to the male-female gender binary model, which is still common in the United States (Elischberger et al., 2018), Indian culture and law recognize a third gender. The most visible manifestation of the third gender is the hijra community, a group of male-assigned people who adopt feminine gender expression and live together in communities that are defined by kinship and religious practices (Dutta, 2012; Goel, 2016). In contrast to prevalent gender binary

system, South East Asia has "deeply entrenched and broadly institutionalized traditions of pluralism with respect to gender and sexuality" (Peletz, 2006, p. 311).

In India, the history of the hijra community goes back millennia is a testament to India's gender diversity which is forgotten (Lal, 1999). Nanda (2014) explains the acknowledgement of sex/gender variants celebrating sexual ambiguities as follows:

> This Hindu propensity towards androgynous thinking underlies the interchange of male and female qualities, transformations of sex and gender, the incorporation of male and female within one person, and alternative sex and gender roles among deities and humans as meaningful and positive themes in Hindu mythology, ritual and art. (p. 28)

Hinduism is one of the world's most ancient and diverse religions (Bhaskarananda, 1998). The Hindu universe is highly accustomed to the flexibility of divine beings and other creatures that often change their appearance (Bhattacharya, 2018). History suggests that castration was an act of divinity that encouraged men to enter hijrahood and become legitimate and recognized members of the community who were viewed to have committed the ultimate sacrifice (Hossain, 2012).

In India, the sex/gender diversity is mainly associated with Hinduism, though the transgender community also has an important connection to Islam as khwajasarais were eunuchs appointed as guards for the royal harem during the Mughal rule (Hossain, 2012; Nanda, 2014; Reddy; 2005; Rehan, Chaudhary & Shah, 2009). Ancient Hindu origin myths feature androgynous or intersex ancestors. Multiple sexes and genders are acknowledged, although sometimes ambivalently as possibility among both humans and deities. Ancient poets often expressed this concept with intersex images, such as a male with a womb (Nanda, 2014). "As early as the eighth century BCE, Hinduism recognized alternative sex/gender persons, who were primarily sexually impotent males, unable to procreate" (Zwilling & Sweet, 1996, p. 361). This concept is quite similar to the contemporary English translation of "hermaphrodite." Thus,

transgender people are identified by themselves and by others not only as neither man nor woman but also as both man and woman (Nanda, 2014).

The hijra community is a unique group of people having distinct gender identities with a socio-religious underpinning to their existence in India where sexuality is often associated with notions of purity and chastity, possession, shame, cultural pride, and even national identity and statehood (Chandiramani & Berry, 2005). The community identifies with Arjun from Mahabharat, whose trans identity is visually explicit by his representation in sculptures and popular drama as a vertically divided hijra, in the image of half man/half woman. Another historically significant representation of the hijra community is of *Shiva*, the sexually ambivalent diety, whose female aspect symbolizes his union with female energy—*Shakti* or *Parvati* (Bhaskarananda, 1998; Hiltelbeitel, 1980; McComas, 2013; Nanda, 2014). The united form of Shiva and Parvati, popularly known as *Ardhanarisvara* or *Ardhangini*, depicts male on one side and female on the other side (Bhattacharya, 2018).

McComas (2013, p. 164) and Nanda (2014, pp. 30–31) suggest that Shiva is associated with the Hindu concept of asceticism, which is the core of hijra identity and power. Nanda's (2014) study explores a story of Shiva, explaining that the hijra identity's association with asceticism is believed to transform sexual impotence into procreative power.

After emerging from being underwater for thousands of years, Shiva discovered that the entire universe had already been created. After this realization he broke off his linga (phallus) and threw it into the earth, claiming that it no longer had any use. This story is the source of asceticism, which gives hijras the power to bestow fertility (Nanda, 2014).

The power that results from sexual abstinence paradoxically becomes an essential feature in the process of creation. "Viewed in this manner, gender appears to be fluid [rather] than a

static or fixed category reflecting diverse manifestations of a single underlying unity" (Bhattachrya, 2018, p. 154).

Further, the history of literature, religion, and sexual practices of pre-modern Indian civilization contains several instances of transgendering and multiple sexualities, as suggested by Bhattacharya's (2018) analysis of the works of two poets from 15th to 17th century CE: Surdas and Mirabai. Their works contain much evidence of gender fluidity. This period gave rise to the bhakti movement, which reframed the purpose of god and divinity. The gods were no longer worshipped as superior beings but were rather seen as friends, lovers, or spouses. "This opened up fluid intimacies [*sic*] and a fluidity of the gendered structure between the deity and the devotee" (Bhattacharya, 2018, p. 155). These studies try to tell the readers that transgender people were not considered as outcasts.

Khwajasarais, another eunuch group during British India, were eunuch slaves, or the protectors of the feminine quarters of elite homes (Rehan, Chaudhary, & Shah, 2009) and held positions of prominence in the Mughal empire (Lal, 2005, pp.195–196). Khwajasarais had diverse duties, but they had a specific prominence in intelligence, diplomacy, and military. They were identified as males, and in spite of their slave status, they were considered as having a higher social standing than hijras. Nonetheless, both of the communities had a similar structure of hierarchy, like the teacher-desciple and non-biological kinships (Dutta, 2012; Goel, 2016; Nanda, 2014; Rehan et al., 2009).

Over time, India has come to believe that its biggest strength is unity in diversity. But underneath this strength lies a caste system as an inextricable part of the social landscape in India (Bhaskarananda, 2002; Khatri, 2017). Inception of the caste system originates from Hinduism along with Indo Aryans. The motive of this subdivision was to categorize people based on their

inherent qualities or career potential (Bhaskarananda, 2002). These castes were *Brahmins* (teachers and Vedic scholars), *Kshatriyas* (kings and administrators), *Vaishyas* (traders and business owners), and *Shudras* (farmers and artisans) (Majumdar & Raychaudhuri, 1948). Non-Aryans or the progeny of Aryans who violated the laws of Aryan society were usually considered outcastes (Buhler, 1964).

Originally, every caste was given equal importance but as time passed, vested interests crept in and caste, originally used for determining the qualities and aptitudes of individuals, was made hereditary by people in position of power and authority (Bhaskarananda, 2002). As a result, the caste system degenerated into a hierarchical system of oppression.

Brahmins, who belonged to the highest caste, comprised the learned priestly class. Although they were not rich, they held positions of respect and honor in society. Kshatriyas, the second highest caste, could enjoy wealth and power as they held positions of kings, administrators, or warriors. Vaishyas belonged to the next lower caste who could never be priests or military officers, but they had a fair share of wealth earned through trade. But Shudras were reduced to the lowest caste, were denied many privileges, including Vedic and other higher education, and suffered the most (Bhaskarananda, 2002; Khatri, 2017). However, the English translation of *Manusmruti* or Laws of the Manu (Buhler, 1970), one of the most ancient legal Hindu texts about the code of conduct for Hinduism, states that "Eunuchs and outcasts, (persons) born blind or deaf, the insane, idiots and the dumb, as well as those deficient in any organ (of action or sensation), receive no share" (p. 372). Scholars (e.g., Nanda, 2014, 1999; Hinchy, 2014; Khatri, 2017; Goel, 2016) states that in the ancient times, although induction into hijrahood did require renunciation of family and caste, hijras still held a position of respect in the Hindu society because of their sacrifice.

A shift in the perception of the transgender people began with the rise of the British Empire (Jami, 2005). Hijras are generally considered as people who were assigned the male sex at birth but undergo an initiation rite called *nirvaan*, which means castration. The rite is vital to be a part of the hijra community. They wear feminine clothing and have the socio cultural role of performers during childbirths and at weddings, but "to the British in nineteenth-century India, hijras were habitual sodomites and gender deviants. Their performances were an obscenity, according to colonial officials, while their public presence was a normal [moral] outrage" (Hinchy, 2014, p. 274). When a child was born or a wedding took place, hijras visited the house, sang, and danced, and received a payment from the family. Hijras claimed a right to alms because their role had religious significance: As infertile people, they had the power to either bless or curse the fertility of others (Nanda, 1999, 2014; Reddy, 2005). Hijras also performed their songs and dances in public spaces, such as markets and religious fairs, and for the entertainment of Indian rulers. Yet, hijras were often considered outcastes, not criminals, due to their castration. The transgender group was loosely categorized as eunuchs under the law during British Raj, even though some of them had not gone through the hijra rite of passage.

Hijras have been known for challenging the gender binary for ages (Elischberger, Glazier, Hill, & Verduzco-Baker, 2017; Hinchy, 2014) and describe themselves as neither man nor woman (Chakravorty, 2007; Kavi, 2007; Nanda, 1999). Even then, the colonial officials referred to hijras as men (Hinchy, 2014). Hinchy (2014) states that "The use of the masculine pronoun was, in fact, a linguistic strategy to erase hijras as a distinct gender category and restore the binary division of gender which was challenged by hijras. Masculinity was central to the British construction of the category of 'eunuch'" (p. 275). This historical fact highlights that normative masculinity was vital to the definition of being a eunuch in British India.

Masculinity of the colonisers is one of the outcomes of historical encounters, representations, inequalities, and power struggles (Newell, 2009). Sinha (1995) explores "colonial masculinity" to describe the relational construction of British and Indian masculinity on the lines of power and difference "among or within the colonisers and the colonised as well as between the colonisers and colonised" (p. 1). Hinchy (2014) states that with British men represented as the masculine ideal, the colonised men were characterised as inherently inferior but were differentiated through a hierarchy of manliness. Ethnic groups like the Sikhs and Pathans, called the "martial tribes," were placed at a higher level of hierarchy compared to Bengalis, who were deemed less manly or rather were called an "effeminate race." Hinchy (2014) remarks that "Interestingly, homosexuality was usually associated in colonial discourse with the 'martial races', not with 'effiminate' Bengalis" (pp. 275–276). Yet the colonisers perceived the figure of the hijra as effeminate and sexually impotent at a time when masculinity was on a pedestal.

When India was under the British rule, the British discovered a community of trangender eunuch performers, the hijras, and legislated for their surveillance and control under the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 (Hinchy, 2014). Under this act, the eunuchs were defined as "all persons of male sex who either define themselves, or on medical inspection, appear to be impotent" (Criminal Tribes Act, 1871).

By laying down these laws and regulations, the aim of the British officials was to erase hijras as a sociocultural category of gender identity. For example, the act criminalized transgender practices for up to two years of imprisonment. Additionally, the act robbed away the hijra community's primary source of income by prohibiting them from dressing up as women in public places, or in any other place, and by prohibiting them from performing any dance or

music or taking part in any public exhibition, thereby criminalizing all the activities that were sources of their incomes. They were also deprived of civil rights, including the right to write a will or be a guardian of a child (Criminal Tribes Act, 1871).

Hinchy (2014) highlights how the discourses of masculinity were bound up with concepts of hygiene and obscenity. She also suggests that according to the British, "the performances and transvestism of hijras posed a great threat of moral and sexual contagion to both Indian men and colonial public space" (p. 276).

According to Banerjee (2005), Gupta (2010), and Sinha (1995), masculinity was intimately bound up with colonial policies, social reforms, and Indian nationalism. Hinchy (2014) explores to what extent the heteronormative ideology of the British transformed even the small details of hijras' gendered practices and public acts, which in turn affected their identity.

Solomon (1994) highlights that British censorship laws were specifically framed to deal with sedation, and sexually explicit theatre was not a key concern. Hinchy (2014) further questions why exactly British officials criminalized the public presence of hijras. Colonial officials' actions were mainly due to the following three reasons. First, the feminine embodiment of hijras was evidence of innate sexual and gendered deviance. Second, hijras often offended the colonisers' definition of acceptable public conduct by their alms collection, which was seen as begging. Third, their defaming talk and their wandering habits were the reasons for the British colonisers' censorship of hijras (Hinchy, 2014).

The impact of changes brought by the colonisers is still felt in post-independence India, along with the divisive nature of its caste system that crept into the sociopolitical strata of the country, developing a social hierarchy that continues to plague nearly every aspect of the Indian society (Khatri, 2017).

Transformed from being heralded as semi-devine beings for centuries to being forced out of the mainstream society and living as prostitutes or beggars, hijras are exiled at a young age (Khatri, 2017; Reddy, 2005). They are found living in a world secluded from mainstream settlements, being continually subjected to harm and ridicule. With growing numbers, they live a relatively deserted life and are not incorporated into the Indian society (Goel, 2016; Nanda, 2014, 1999; Reddy, 2005). Their social ostracization has grown over time to such a scale that today hijras are treated as the 21st century untouchables of India (Khatri, 2017).

Reddy (2005) argues that the image of the hijra identity is constructed as dirty and socially marginal outcastes, a perception that partially stems from the Indian notions of *sharam* (shame) and partially from the notions of their behavioral conduct in public settings. Those ideas are deeply rooted in the Indian psyche because of the colonial history. As a result, the hijra community has always been on the fringes of society, dwelling in abject poverty (Goel, 2016, p. 536).

Problematic Western Conceptualization of Sexuality for India

Western understandings of sexuality have been inappropriately imposed on other cultures (Nanda, 2014). A cross-cultural lens is a way to look at the different ways societies organize their thinking about sex, gender, and sexuality. "Perhaps the sex/gender diversity just like sex gender binary is also universal" (Nanda, 2014, p. 2). Sex refers to the biologically differentiated status of male and female, whereas gender refers to the social, psychological, and cultural constructions of biological differences of sex (Nanda, 2014).

Since the trans identity is a psychological conviction, where transgender people believe that they have transformed into the opposite sex, this explanation of gender identity can be used to see how transsexuals see themselves (Kessler, 1978). Until the 20th century, gender identity

was associated with the mind, or the soul. However, the advent of transsexual surgeries confirmed a correspondence between the physical transformation and the psychological transformation for a sceptical public and sustained the view that gender, just like sex, is dichotomous and can be changed (Nanda, 2014).

Bolin (1988) states that psychological professionals were pivotal in defining transsexual identity as woman or man who was trapped inside the body of their opposite sex. The notion of transsexuals as people who have always seen themselves as the opposite sex is not supported by ethnographic data, which indicates that transsexuals do not begin the process of transformation with a well-rounded idea about the identity of the opposite gender (Bolin, 1996). Rather, they gradually acquire transformed identities as they become involved in transgender groups and go through the various steps that are part of the process of a sex change.

Soh (2017), on the other hand, expresses contradictory views and suggests that the sex differences in the brain are influenced by biology, as opposed to being learned or socially constructed. Additionally, Soh (2017) claims that banning conversion therapy is misguided as gender identity is different and is flexible in children who identify as the opposite sex.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, U.S. psychological and medical professionals closely monitored this process at prestigious, university-affiliated gender clinics that were connected with hospitals where most transsexual surgeries were performed (Selvaggi & Giordano, 2014). These clinics only offered male-to-female transsexual surgeries, after prescribing them the preoperative hormones and two years of counselling. Those who expressed ambivalence about their gender identity would get disqualified (Nanda, 2014; Selvaggi & Bellringer, 2011).

As an example of discrimination against the transgender community in all realms of the society, Latham (2013) raises the ethical issue concerning the way people with gender dysphoria

are approached by healthcare professionals. He argues that people who seek gender-reassignment

procedures because of gender dysphoria are compulsorily referred to undertake psychological

counselling compared to those whithout gender dysphoria who are seeking similar procedures.

The compulsory psychological counselling is a form of unjust discrimination against people with

gender dysphoria seeking gender-reassignment surgery (Selvaggi & Giordano, 2014). Latham

(2013) suggests that discrimination occurs because gender-reassignment surgeries violate social

norms.

On the contrary, Selvaggi and Giordano (2014) argue that assistance of mental health

professionals is vital for gender-reassignment surgeries because the counselling helps transsexual

patients evaluate functional and social expectations before and after the surgeries. It is vital for

gender-dysphoric people to be able to convince the mental health professionals that they have

experienced themselves as the opposite sex from childhood, as far back as they can remember.

They also have to provide evidence that they can live full time and be socially accepted as

transwomen or transmen (Monstrey, Vercruysse, & De Cuypere, 2009; Nanda, 2014; Selvaggi &

Giordano, 2014).

Transsexualism has largely been a male phenomenon, partly because female-to-male sex

reassignment surgery developed much later than male-to-female sex reassignment surgery

(Bullough, 2007). The emphasis on male transsexualism also results from different social

pressures on gender conformity because it is easier for female transsexuals as masculine women

than it is for males who identify themselves as females before the surgery to adapt to a male-

oriented society (Nanda, 2014).

It is evident that transsexualism reinforced the Euro-American cultural view that genitals

were the defining feature of gender. In spite of many other invisible determinants of biological

sex, such as hormones and chromosomes, it is the genitals as the visible indicators of sex that determine people's gender identity and presentation. Therefore, medical and mental health professionals, along with transsexuals themselves, put a lot of emphasis on gender-reassignment surgeries (Bolin, 1996; Bullough, 2007).

The dominance of transsexualism as a sex/gender alternative role is now sharing the stage with transgenderism, a concept now well-established in the Euro-American popular culture. Transgenderism is both an individual and a collective phenomenon. Individuals experience alternative sex/gender identities while transgender voices have become a part of activist movements with implications in law, sports, employment, healthcare, social class, and many other aspects of American life (Nanda, 2014; Williams, 2011).

The word *transgender* took on its current meaning in 1992 when it appeared in the title of a small but influential pamphlet by Leslie Feinberg (1992), *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come*. The first usage of the term is generally attributed to Virginia Prince, a Southern California advocate for freedom of gender expression. Prince (1967) used the term to refer to individuals like her whose personal identities she considered to fall somewhere on the spectrum between transvestite and transsexual (Stryker & Whittle, 2006, p. 4). Feinberg (1992) called for the participation of all individuals who were marginalized or oppressed because of their difference from social expectations of gendered roles. He inspired them to group together to fight for social, political, and economic justice. Transgender, in this sense, was a *pangender* umbrella term for an imagined community encompassing transsexuals, drag queens, butches, intersex people, cross-dressers, masculine women, effeminate men, sissies, tomboys, and anybody else willing to be interpolated by the term, who felt compelled to answer the call to mobilization (Stryker & Whittle, 2006).

Transgenderism stems from the ancient tradition of androgyny, which is particularly relevant to the transgender community according to the anthropological data gathered across cultures and over the years (Nanda, 2014). Valentine (2007) explored the emergence and institutionalization of transgender as a category of collective identity and political activism. He conducted ethnographic research among male-to-female transgender people at drag balls, support groups, and cross-dresser organizations, discovering that many of the people labelled transgender by activists did not know the meaning of the term or insisted on not using it. Instead, they self-identified as gay or transvestites, a category of sexual rather than gender identity. Also, Valentine (2007) found examples of individuals who did identify themselves within the wider transgender community. Thus, transgenderism can be defined as an inclusive term for those who may alter their anatomy with hormones or surgery but also those who retain a lot of characteristics of the sex that they were assigned at birth. Transgender identities vary widely, but the philosophy of transgenderism refers to the idea that a person no longer has to fit into a box. Being a transgender person can range anywhere on the spectrum from non-gendered to fully transsexual (Bolin, 1996).

Nanda (2014) further explores the varying degrees of institutionalization. "Cultures vary in the extent to which sex/gender diversity is governed by relatively consistent and well-known norms that clearly mark gender variant roles as different from man and woman" (p. 122). She further highlights that genitals (and now other, more invisible biological traits) are central in Euro-American cultures, though transgender and intersex activist movements provide different approaches to genital surgical interventions as the solution to gender ambiguity (p. 121). On the other hand, because hijras in India were not born intersexed (and few are), a surgery transforms an impotent male into a hijra.

The extent to which sex/gender variant roles, especially exaggerated feminine performances by some transgender women and drag queens in the West, are challenging the sex/gender binary is a subject to debate. Although Euro-American transsexuals or drag queens appear to reinforce the heterogender, patriarchal sex/gender binary ideologies in their respective societies (Nanda, 2014), some gender theorists hold that the cross-gender behavior of sex/gender variants always highlights the social construction of sex and gender (Butler, 1990). The socially constructed nature of sex and gender seems true of the contemporary transgender identity in the United States. However, this debate is misguided in terms of societies like the Hindus because gender/sex diversity and sex/gender transformations are considered as natural as the sex/gender roles of male and female (Nanda, 2014).

Although some research conducted on transmen in the United States exists, they are still made invisible through conceptions of gender as dualistic and impermeable (Cromwell, 1999). The themes that research in the West explores are about gender and sexual identity, gender inequality, masculinites, and attitudes of gay, straight, and non-monosexual groups toward transmen and transwomen (e.g., Cavanaugh & Ladd, 2017; Cromwell, 1999; Gardiner, 2013; Rowniack & Chesla, 2012; Tree-McGrath, Puckett, Reisner, & Pantalone, 2018)

Cavanaugh and Ladd (2017) explored the struggles of transmen and transwomen through qualitative research method of phenomenology. The study provided an opportunity to understand how people identifying as themselves as transgender viewed changes in familial, friendship, and adult relationships as they recalled various stages in their lives. Cavanaugh and Ladd (2017) present that the research participants described their lives as a series of struggles to fit in the social landscape. These struggles were about knowing that they were different inside, being confused about their identity, and knowing that a mistake was made during their gender

assignment at birth. The findings described the strategies used for coping with the struggles, which were often destructive in nature, like alcohol consumption, drug use, and suicide ideation. The purpose of this research is to provide therapists and counsellors with some insights into trans people's daily struggles through first-person narrative.

One of the pioneering studies about identities of transmen was conducted by Cromwell (1999), who argues that female-bodied individuals who have transgressed gender boundaries have typically been presented as pathological or engaged in misguided efforts to seek male privileges. Drawing upon his own experiences, along with extensive participant observations and interviews, Cromwell (1999) addresses the marginalization of female-bodied gender deviance. Examining previous cross-cultural, historical, and contemporary studies and a critique of the medico-psychological construction of female gender variance, Cromwell (1999) confronts the erasure of female-bodied men's identities and experiences.

Cromwell (1999) suggests that transmen are people who may "conceive of themselves as men with vaginas or as female-bodied men, or even as transsexuals or transgendered" (p. 121). Cromwell (1999) believes that transgender discourses have been developed to neglect or misrepresent the identities and histories of female bodied men. He argues that "once transpeople begin articulating their own trans subjectivities, new discourse and thus the expansion of binaries can begin" (p. 136).

Gardiner's (2013) study, inspired by Cromwell (1999), analyzes paradoxes and contradictions in discourse about treatments of masculine psychology in men, masculine women, and female-to-male transgendered people through her study. One fundamental paradox discussed by Gardiner (2013) on writings about female masculinity in women and about masculinity in female-to-male transmen was their implication that women made better men than men-born-men

did. "Such discourse avoided psychological theories on the grounds that psychologies of the non-normative must inevitably pathologize and hence demean their subjects" (Gardiner, 2013, p. 123). As a result, a consequence of such views was that transgendered people were accorded little interiority, hence little psychological or emotional complexity.

Studies conducted by Rowniak and Chesla (2012) and Tree-McGrath, Puckett, Reisner, and Pantalone (2018) show transmen's experiences of transition and sexual orientation before and after the gender reassignment surgery and hormone therapy. The studies discussed the effects of affirming one's social identity marginalizes transmen as sexual minorities promoting adherence to strict gender norms.

Compared with the research done in the West, India has a limited amount of research about the identities of transmen. Moreover, the vast history of transgenderism in India does not provide any information about female to male transgenders.

<center>Theoretical Framework</center>

Reception theory and double colonization form the theoretical framework guiding this study. Reception theory explains media audiences' perspectives or interpretation in making meaning from media texts. Double colonization explains the status of women in the postcolonial era. However, the theory is vital for this research, because India as a former British colony faced British prohibitions on local opinions, and the vestige of British values still exists. Since masculinity was central to British rule in India, the laws defined any non-procreative sexual activity as a taboo. This research seeks to unravel the effects of postcolonialism and intersectionality on representations of transgender people in Indian media, which in turn could be a contributing factor to the stigma that this community currently faces, and the dominant

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readings of the stereotypical representations that they have internalized or resisted in their readings of Bollywood movies.

Reception Theory

Reception theory asserts that the media texts are encoded and decoded. The creators encode messages and values into the media content created by them, which are then decoded by the audience. However, different audience members will decode the media in different ways and possibly not in the ways the creators originally intended (Hall, 1973; Nightingale, 2011).

Stuart Hall (1973) explains reception theory by developing the encoding/decoding model of communication. The model posits that the message encoded by the author would not necessarily be the same as the audience's interpretation of the media text. Hall (1973) tried to establish the relationship between the sender and the receiver, stating that a number of steps play a role in the sending and receiving of a message. Hall (1973) thought that the audience played a large role in the success of delivery of the message. He compared the encoding/decoding model of television discourse with the communication process. He stated that text presented in the form of media, book, or other creative work, is not accepted passively by the audience but is interpreted actively by them based on their own cultural background and life experiences (Procter, 2004).

Hall (1973) further suggests that encoding is the sending of a message in a way that the receiver can understand it. Encoding is about shared rules or symbols, and it is important for the sender to think of their audience and the way they will interpret the message. When a message is created, it is important for the sender to pay attention to the uses of verbal cues, signs, and body language that the audience will be able to understand. Though the message creator may believe that they are being clear, the meaning of the content is generally shaped according to the creator

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of the content, because the encoding process is usually the result of one sender, who encodes their ideologies and beliefs (Hall, 1973; Procter, 2004).

Once the message is created, the recipients are presented with messages, cues, and signs that have been pre-coded (Hall, 1973). However, because the message is never interpreted in just one way, audience must add meaning and rebuild the message (Hall, 1973). Regardless of whether the message is sent to an individual or to a crowd, decoding involves receiving, interpreting, and understanding the information that is being passed on. Hall (1973) proposed three categories of readings, which are dominant, oppositional and negotiated. Dominant readings are the most widely accepted interpretations of text. Oppositional reading is the audience rejecting the dominant reading, creating their own meaning for the text. Negotiated Reading is a compromise between the dominant and oppositional readings, where the audience accepts parts of the producer's views, but has their own views on parts as well.

Hall (1973) also constructed the theory of systematically distorted communication. He argues that the encoded message in the content corresponds with the dominant ideology, even though most of the media text can be interpreted in different ways. In some cases, the audience might interpret the text in a completely different way as opposed to the dominant reading, which is also known as aberrant decoding (Eco, 1976).

Television studies was intertwined with the growing impact of cultural studies, because cultural studies often dealt with television discourses to demonstrate issues of contemporary culture and everyday life (Hay, Grossberg, & Wartella, 1996). Hay, Grossberg, and Wartella (1996) further suggest that cultural studies was more interested in understanding media as cultural form and media's relation with everyday life, and it devoted considerable attention to the issues of the audience as cultural studies emphasized audience' implication in broader

hegemonic formation and a complex, unstable cultural politics in daily life. The conjunction of television studies and cultural studies continues through into reception theory where we can see examples of the impact of culture on the ways media texts are perceived.

The application of Hall's reception theory was first done by Morley (1980). His study, which served as the foundation for further reception studies, comprised of groups of people belonging to different strata of the British society. The occupations of the 29 groups ranged from business managers to trade unionists and apprentices. The groups were asked to view an episode from *Nationwide*, the British news magazine show that assessed political analysis and discussion with consumer affairs. After viewing the show, the groups were asked to discuss the show and how they interpreted it.

Morley (1980) concluded that the dominant opinion of the decoding belonged to the upper-class group of business managers who thought of *Nationwide* as nothing more than an entertainment and had no complaints about the views it offered. The second category mainly had people who offered a negotiated reading, but some provided oppositional readings, and very few articulated the dominant opinion. This group comprised of teacher trainees, liberal arts students, and apprentices. Union shop stewards found the show to be sympathetic toward the middle-level management and also failing to address basic economic issues. These decodings were labelled as oppositional.

Alasuutari (1999) divides reception studies into three different stages: (1) Hall's (1973) focusing on the encoding of the message and the meaning-making done by the audience; (2) Morley's (1980) pioneering empirical research revealing the systematic and consistent influences of viewers' social conditions on decoding practices; and (3) viewers' ability to subvert media texts to oppositionally redefine that content for themselves.

Radway's (1991) was the pioneer of feminist reception studies. Her study breaks away from textual analysis and presents the role of the audience in meaning-making, challenging the myths about why romantic fiction garners the interest of millions of women. Radway's (1991) approach involves reader-response criticism combined with feminist psychology. The study encourages the readers to explore their own reading habits and motives. Radway (1991) conducted interviews with 42 romance novel readers in a Midwestern town.

Radway (1991) discovered that the women she interviewed had devoted most of their time to their families and thus received in return insufficient devotion and nurturance from their families. Romance novels not only provided them with an escape from their tiresome routines but also a hero who provides them with admiring attention that they have learnt not to expect.

Radway (1991) explores the relationship between women, text, and culture by arguing that women read romances both to escape from and protest the role prescribed for them by the patriarchal culture. Her work, Radway (1991) says

> was less an account of the way romances as texts were interpreted than of the way romance reading as a form of behaviour operated as a complex intervention in the ongoing social life of actual social subjects, women who saw themselves first as wives and mothers" (p. 7).

Romance readers in Radway's (1991) study seemed to reject preferred meanings and instead engaged in negotiated and oppositional decoding. The studies conducted by Ang (1982) and Radway (1991) brought the notion of interpretive communities, which consist of, people sharing a similar life situation and develop specific interpretative patterns, to the mass communication theory landscape.

Ang's (1982) study presents similar findings about the female viewers of the famous soap opera *Dallas*. Letters about *Dallas* sent to a women's magazine were analyzed to study the different ways the show was interpreted by women. The analysis suggests that a variety of

viewing practices can co-exist even in the same subject and the diversity of positions of the viewers can be arranged into two groups: (a) immersion into the characters, who are perceived to be real by the viewers; and (b) the spectator's approach to the show as an object of explicit commentary.

Ang (1982) concluded that women interpreted the texts very differently from men. For Dallas female fans, the show provided a tragic structure of feelings, which resonated with the ups and downs faced in real life.

The notion of interpretive communities for LGBT audience reception can be explained with *mediatized linked fate*: the sense that one's own everyday life experiences, chances, and potentialities, as well as and those of their social group, are tethered to a media text or character (Cavalcante, 2017, p. 544).

Cavalcante (2017) explores transgender audiences' interactions with films Boys Don't Cry (1999) and *Transamerica* (2005), which are known for breaking representational paradigms. *Boys Don't Cry* and *Transamerica* afforded the research participants an opportunity to act as cultural interpreters as the films sparked cultural conversations in the United States and made transgender life a relevant topic. As a result, participants not only read and interpreted the films for themselves but also reported and shared their thoughts with others.

Some of the research participants in Cavalcante's (2017) study revealed that *Boys Don't Cry* was a crucial resource that helped them fully explore and actualize their transgender identity. In case of some of the transmen, the queer identity work that the research participants performed with the films was a self-clarifying experience as the film helped shape their gender identities. However, the same did not apply to other transmen participating in the research as they

remembered seeing only representations of transgender women. The films lacked the discursive tools to make the feeling meaningful and intelligible.

Cavalcante (2017) points out that the essence of breakout media texts lies in the interactions between audience and the media, in the summoning of mediatized linked fate, in the positioning of viewers as cultural interpreters and in the identity work performed as a result of the media encounter.

Morrison (2010) studies how LGB and non-LGB communities interpret Zoe, a transgender character in *All My Children*. The study suggested that intragroup conflict or minority stress (Meyer, 1995) within the LGBT community exists, which might affect the way gays, lesbians, and bisexuals would interpret the transgender character in *All My Children.*

The study showcased that the LGB viewers had low levels of empathy with the trans character and the character's relationship, compared with non-LGB viewers. Although the show was trying to sell a queer romance under the label of lesbian romance, those non-hetero, non-trans viewers showed resentment because of the concerns over the lack of true lesbian romance on air. "The smaller ingroup category of 'lesbian' and the sexuality-defined rather than gender-defined LGB ingroup were given particular salience, above and beyond any larger community sense of an LGBT ingroup" (p. 660).

The reaction to the transgender character, Zoe echoes the LGBT intragroup tension where low-status group members re-categorize themselves as members of a higher-status group to attain greater power, where the transgender people were deemed as low-status, and non-trans LGB people were given the higher status (Morrison, 2010). "Trans-inclusion was perceived (by non-transpersons) to come at a loss to non-trans group members" (p. 661). With Zoe, the LGB community feared the lack of media representations of homo-normative romance and lesbian

role model. Morrison's (2010) study indicated that LGB viewers consider transgender group as a part of their ingroup or an outgroup. The results indicated both, but with a clear prioritization of LGB over LGBT.

Hence, mediatized linked fate informs the viewers' perceptions and interactions with the transgender community, because everything that heteronormative viewers know about the transgender community is through media.

<div align="center">Double Colonization and Reading Transgender Media Texts</div>

Double colonization primarily refers to the status of women in the era after independence, which states that women are still oppressed by both colonial power and patriarchy in many countries (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998).

Ashcroft et al. (1998) also explore the role of feminism, which is vital for postcolonial discourse for two major reasons. First, both imperialism and patriarchy can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination over those who are subordinate to the colonisers. Second, people in many colonized societies vigorously debate whether gender or colonial oppression is a more important political factor in the lives of those who have been marginalized. "This has sometimes led to division between Western feminists and political activists from impoverished and oppressed countries; or alternatively the two are inextricably entwined, in which case the condition of colonial dominance affects, in material ways, the position of women within their societies" (p. 102).

In the 1980s, some feminist critics (e.g., Mohanty, 1991; Suleri, 1992) began to argue that Western feminism, which makes a hidden, universalistic assumption that gender overrides cultural differences to create a universal category of the womanly or the feminine, is operating

from a middle-class, Eurocentric bias. Therefore, feminism was charged with failing to consider the experiences of Third World women. For instance, Mohanty (1984) criticizes

> the assumption that all of us of the same gender, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogenous group identified prior to the process of analysis. Thus the discursively consensual homogeneity of 'women' as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women. (p. 338)

The overlap between patriarchal and racial oppression has always been difficult to negotiate, and the differences between the political priorities of First and Third World women have persisted to the present (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Such differences exist because the interconnection of different forms of social oppression materially affects the lives of all women.

The histories of the colonized, as well as the colonizers, have been written from the male point of view, and thus women and the marginalized others are peripheral if they appear at all (Oyewumi, 1997). "The colonial process was sex-differentiated insofar as the colonizers were male and used gender identity to determine policy, but in more recent times feminist scholars have sought to rectify the male bias in the discourses on colonization by focusing on women" (p. 340).

Some feminists scholars (e.g., Mohanty, 1984, 1991; Suleri, 1991; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins, 2000) argue that gender may sometimes be ignored within the larger formation of the colonial, and the postcolonial theory tends to omit gender differences while constructing a single category of the colonized when colonialism operated differently for women and men. The varying operation of colonialism resulted in double colonization where women were subject both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and specific discrimination as women. Even post-independence practices of anti-colonial nationalism are not free from gender bias and the masculinist bias falsely represents native women as subordinate.

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The division between Western feminists and feminists from impoverished, oppressed countries can be seen through Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) concept of intersectionality that identifies how different aspects of social and political discrimination overlap with gender. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) explains that intersectionality places "black women at the centre of discrimination and subordination" (p. 140).

Crenshaw (1989) analyzes three court cases where black female plaintiffs brought suits against employers for discrimination on the basis of sex. The court rejected the claims made by black women and concealed their experiences because the employment experience of the black women plaintiffs was not considered any different from that of white women. Additionally, the interests of black women were harmed because the claims made by them were viewed so distinct from the claims made by white women or black men that the court denied "representation of the larger class" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 138) to black women.

Crenshaw (1989) further argued that black women's experiences are much broader than the general categories that discrimination discourse provides. "Experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1243). These experiences are usually represented in the discourse of either feminism or racism. Women of color are marginalized in both types of the discourse because their intersectional identity as women of color within these discourses are shaped to respond to either one of them (Crenshaw, 1991).

Like Crenshaw (1989, 1991), Collins (2000) offers glimpses into the real-life experiences of black women. Collins (2000) discusses struggles of women of color across the globe who face oppression. Further, Collins (2000) adds the concept of the *matrix of domination*. "The matrix of dominations refers to how these intersecting oppressions are actually organized. Regardless of

the particular intersections involved, structural disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression" (p. 18). The matrix of domination presents the idea that the responses to similar oppressive experiences can be diverse. She suggests that resistance can have various forms, ranging from outright rejection of the dominant ideology to subtle shifts in consciousness.

Just as marginalization of black women is a product of intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989 & 1991), marginalization of the transgender community in India lies at the intersection of nationality and gender. Mohnaty (1991) states that Western feminist discourses stereotype the oppressions faced by women in developing nations. Additionally, Western feminism turns a blind eye on the lingering effects of colonial institutions and policies on indigenous patriarchies (Mohanty, 1991, p. 15).

The concepts of double colonization and intersectionality stem from the concept of hegemony, which was initially a term referring to the dominance of one state within a confederation but is now generally understood to mean domination by consent (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Antonio Gramsci (1971) investigated why the ruling class was successful in promoting its own interests in society. He argued that hegemony is important because the capacity to influence the thought of the colonized is by far the most sustained and potent operation of imperial power in colonized regions (Gramsci, 1973). For example, "the humanistic functions traditionally associated with the study of literature – for example the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking – can be vital in the process of socio-political control" (Vishwanathan, 1987, p. 2).

Vishwanathan (1987) states that hegemonic control was maintained after the British government took responsibility for education in India after the Charter Act of 1813. Looking for

a method of communicating the values of Western civilization to Indians while simultaneously trying to avoid offending their Hindu sensibilities, the British administration discovered the power of English literature as a vehicle for its imperial authority.

> The strategy of locating authority in these texts all but effaced the sordid history of colonialist expropriation, material exploitation, and class and race oppression behind European world dominance. The English literary text functioned as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state. This Englishman at the same time was the embodiment of universal human values. (p. 23)

As Vishwanathan (1987) further explains, the "split between the material and the discursive practices of colonialism is nowhere sharper than in the progressive refraction of the rapacious, exploitative and ruthless actor of history into the reflective subject of literature" (pp. 22–23). This refraction proved to be a mode of hegemonic control as English literature was disseminated with its attendant spiritual values, cultural assumptions, social discriminations, racial prejudices, and humanistic values more or less intact (Ashcroft et al., 1998).

The oppression of women by the colonisers and patriarchy echoes the oppression of the transgender community in India at the hands of colonisers (Hinchy, 2014). The way the British dealt with transgender colonial subjects focuses Colonial Services, which was a male institution in all its aspects with its "masculine ideology, its military organization and processes, its ritual of power and hierarchy and its strong boundaries between the sexes" (Callaway, 1987). The British took a lot of efforts to enforce masculinity and keep the hijra community isolated from mainstream settlements as they were considered an impediment for the colonisers who aimed to clean and regulate public space following the 1857 revolt, which was perceived as dangerously disordered.

Hijras were characterised as contaminating agents that infected both Indian men and colonial public space with moral and sexual "disease" associated with the "native states." British

officials argued that boundaries between bodies and between Indian- and British-ruled territories were both undermined by alleged hijra obscenity, requiring various strategies of containment to stem these flows of contagion (Hinchy, 2014, p. 287).

As some feminist scholars (e.g., Mohanty, 1984, 1991; Suleri, 1992; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins, 2000) discuss the oppression of Third World women, the transgender community has experienced similar oppression. They were dominated and inferiorized as Indians and then separately inferiorized and marginalised as the carriers of moral contamination. This marginalization of the transgender community is further solidified by the caste system of India. Although the Indian judiciary put the entire hijra community in the category of *other backward classes*, which is another term for lower classes, when they decriminalized hijras in 2014, the treatment of this community is reminiscent of the treatment of untouchables (Borooah, Diwakar, Mishra, Naik, & Sabharwal, 2014). Much like untouchables, the transgender community is ignored from the nation's politics and legislation (Khatri, 2017).

Feminism and postcolonialism have often been concerned with the ways and extent to which representations and language are crucial to identity formation and to the construction of subjectivity (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Historically, the representations of transgender people on screen have been negative. As Mocarski, Butler, Emmons, and Smallwood (2013) state, "When transgender people do become mediated, they are done so in marginalizing ways. Marginalization becomes a tactic to restabilize gender binaries" (p. 250).

Mediated marginalization can be explained why media is the predominant source, where people, whether transgender or non-transgender, gain general knowledge about transgender issues (McInroy & Craig, 2015).

Forms of contemporary media, including both legacy media (e.g., movies and television) and online media (e.g., websites and social media), increasingly contain depictions of transgender people (Burgess, 2009; Ekins & King, 2006; Ghazali & Nor, 2012; Phillips, 2006). Negative or problematic representations may sensationalize or exploit transgender people (McInroy & Craig, 2015). Using legacy media as an example, Phillips (2006) and Davis (2009) explain how transgender people have been ridiculed because of their representations as comical caricatures, criminals, or men suffering from mental disorders.

The representations of transgender people in the West echo those of their Indian counterparts. Expanding on the idea of negative representations of transgenders in Bollywood, Kalra and Bhugra (2015) provide some accounts of stereotypical hijra characters in the movies:

> The commonest type of portrayal is that wherein the hijra as an identity is used for comic relief. These performances are comically exaggerated imitations of women and their entertainment value comes from the difference between themselves acting as women and the real women they imitate. This could be seen as similar to the role and performance of drag artists in the West. The portrayal of this "other identity" has often been that of a villain of the story who can be easily identified and criticized being involved in prostitution or pimping and also in abducting children to recruit them in hijra clans. (pp. 164–166)

As discussed earlier, media representations that show the transgender people in India in a negative, marginalized light, are more frequent than positive representations. It is possible that such projections bolster the prejudice against this community even if the social situation of this community in India is slowly changing (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Khatri, 2017).

In its traditional usage, oppression means the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group. Yet, oppression creates injustice in other circumstances as well, because people can be oppressed by the society in general whose psyche has been hybridized by the ideas of the colonizers. Similarly, the way that the oppressed class interprets media texts is also guided by the ideology

of the Marxist structuralist view. In other words, the way media texts are interpreted by the marginalized community are still influenced by the elite audiences.

The faces of oppression are marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Young (2004) suggests marginalization to be the process of overall exclusion. As discussed by Hinchy (2014), Goel (2016), Kalra and Bhugra (2015), and Chakrapani et al. (2017), even though the transgender community's identity is enshrined in the Indian literary epics, the British rulers as the colonizers categorized the transgender community as a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 (Goel, 2016; Hinchy, 2014). Even though this classification has been rescinded, collective memory still renders the transgender people as untouchables and even non-human.

Marginalization expels a whole category of people from useful participation in social life, which results in deprivation (Young, 2004). The transgender community's marginalization is rooted in the centrality of the idea of masculinity imposed by the British. That is to say, the British colonized India as a "legitimate form of ownership" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 123) while embedding the ideas of the hijra community being inherently immoral and corrupt. The majority of the Indian population still believes the same. Therefore, the transgender community faces marginalization even today, which forces most of them to live in poverty. Additionally, the transgender community is also subjected to hate crimes as a result of being an ostracized community (Goel, 2016; Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Li et al., 2016).

Marginalization leads to the next type of oppression: powerlessness. Young (2004) explains powerlessness with the support of Karl Marx's idea of socialism, which suggests that some people have the power, and others don't. The powerless are dominated by the ruling class and are situated to take orders and rarely have the right to give them. This treatment has rendered

most of the transgender people with the inhibition to develop their capacities, lack of decision-making power, and exposure to disrespectful treatment because of the lowered status.

Marginalization can be further explained by cultural imperialism, which involves taking the culture of the ruling class and establishing it as a norm (Young, 2004). Bhabha (2004) explains that the groups that have the power in society control how the people in that society interpret and communicate, which is where a hybridized psyche stems from. Therefore, the beliefs of that society are broadly disseminated, expressing the values, goals, and achievements of the colonizers. India was colonized by the British for more than two centuries, during which the Indian society adopted the English language and belief systems. Sexuality is a common example of cultural imperialism (Hinchy, 2014; Reddy, 2005; Sinha, 1995). The dominant group in the society is heterosexual, and all other sexualities are deemed abnormal and inferior. Cultural and educational systems reinforce the notion that heterosexuality is normal, and those who deviate from heteronormativity are marked by stereotypes and made to feel invisible. Those stereotypes turn the minority sexual group into a mass of "others" that lack separate identities (Gupta, 2010; Sinha, 1995).

Violence, the last face of oppression (Young, 2004), is the most visible manifestation of what the oppressed minorities go through. Oppressed people are subjected to attacks, whether on their bodies or properties.

The types of oppression serve as a guideline, which explains the influence of the preferred meanings of media texts on the way media texts are interpreted by the transgender community within the context of their own identity. Because of this community's history with oppression first by the colonisers and now by the patriarchy, most people, including the members of transgender community, consider media to be a source of knowledge about delineation of

gender roles. The transgender community tends to accept some representations of the media as they are meant to be, and opposes some of them, making their readings negotiated.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Of the many influences on how gender is viewed, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful tools (Moore, 2016; Worth, Augoustinos, & Hastie, 2015). Woven throughout our daily lives, media insinuate their messages into our consciousness at every turn. Since a movement began toward greater equality for gender and sexual minorities, India has experienced a lot of social changes in the recent past, such as the acknowledgement of the hijra community under the third gender category and the abolishment of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Bollywood, the largest film industry in the world, is widely known for its creativity through music, dance, drama, and emotions. Bollywood is a term used for the Hindi film industry based in Mumbai, India. It has been the world's largest producer of films meant for theatrical release (Jha, 2005).

Bollywood movies usually follow a specific narrative structure, including a melodrama, heightened emotions, and the use of songs to amplify the narrative (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015). These movies usually have a happy ending where the male protagonist gets to be with the love of his life, every villain gets punished, and the male and female lead live happily ever after (Chatterjee, 2003). The more artistic side of Bollywood cinema comprises of movies that are made to create awareness about social issues rather than just make profit at the box office (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015). However, Bollywood movies are genrally hybridized by combining two or more themed categories, like romance and thriller, and made stylistically excessive (Dudrah, 2006).

Although India as a country believes in the motto of unity in diversity, beneath this layer of diversity lies a layer of social hierarchy that permeates every aspect of the Indian society (Khatri, 2017). This social hierarchy goes back 2,000 years with the culmination of its caste system (Bhaskarananda, 2002).

Even though the transgender community was an outcaste its members they held positions of dignity. It was because giving up masculinity was looked at as a sacrifice (Khatri, 2017). Despite its historical significance, the transgender community in India is still ostracized. This community has now grown over the years to represent not only those born "impotent," or as eunuchs, but also those who have deliberately castrated themselves or undergone surgery to be introduced into hijrahood (Bockrath, 2003).

Although hijras are known for performing a sacrificial ritual, India began to scorn this community as it transitioned into religious and political power, making it one of the most socially backward classes. Although India has legally recognized a third gender and mandated inclusive treatment for those identifying with such gender in all castes since 2015 (Khatri, 2017), Bollywood has not produced many transgender-themed movies in the past two to three decades, still vastly underrepresenting this community. Therefore, this research presents the following question:

RQ1. How is the transgender community represented?

Existing research on transgender community's representations in Indian entertainment media is not only less in quantity, but is also only limited to providing an explanation about the common types of representations (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Ravindar, 2018). Other research such as (Chakravorty, 2007; Goel, 2016; Hinchy, 2014; Hunt, 2011; Nanda, 1999, 2014; Patel, 2012; Reddy, 2005) provide an account of historical significance and discuss the prevalent social

condition of the hijra community, a dearth of research on transgender identity development in India exists. Therefore, this research posits the following question:

RQ2. How does the transgender community feel about the way they have been represented in entertainment media?

As discussed earlier, the hijra community in India has been a part of the Indian subcontinent for ages, holding significant roles in Hinduism (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2015; Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Bhaskaranada, 2002; Goel, 2016; Bhattacharya, 2018; Chakrapani et al., 2017; Dutta, 2012; Hiltelbeitel, 1980). It was only during the British rule when this community was criminalized in order to erase hijras as a sociocultural category and a gender identity, as masculinity was vital to the British empire (Hinchy, 2014). Their performances were considered obscene, and deviant, which earned them the label of "habitual sodomites" (p. 274).

Criminalizing the hijra community and imbibing the ideas of masculinity in the psychology of the colonized state led to discrimination faced by this community. Today, hijras live in abject poverty. Exclusionary practices against the community have been acute and made the hijra community live on the fringes of society (Goel, 2016; Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2014). Bollywood possesses far-reaching power to shape the experiences and views of the audience that consumes it. Gender roles are perpetuated by Bollywood's representations. Exploring how the transgender community assesses the content of Bollywood movies and how its members make meaning of gender identity is vital for the study. Thus, the following question inquires the stereotypical representations of the transgender community.

RQ3. How does the transgender community like to be represented?

Victimization among sexual minority is a common phenomenon because of the prevailing stereotypes (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Nanda, 1999; Ravindar, 2018). In contrast with its

Western counterpart, the Indian transgender community still lacks accurate representations in media, although the Indian society is slowly changing.

Western research suggests that a sense of self-identity through interactions with family and peers and within schools serves the purpose of feeling protected against victimization (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez 2009; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; DiFulvio, 2014). However, the transgender community in India is isolated often in ghettoized locations (Goel, 2016). Once emasculated, hijras lose all their previous relationships, including those with their biological family, and often live with their peers and usually adopt a mother-daughter relationship (Nanda, 2014; Chakrapani et al., 2017). The communities where they live are often undeveloped poor localities and they earn their income by performing at weddings and childbirth ceremonies or by engaging in prostitution.

Addressing the question about how the community enacts resilience is vital because even after being considered the third gender, this community is still not part of the mainstream society. This study tries to explore the social context of resilience. Additionally, this question seeks to understand how the members of the transgender community make sense of their social world and how they engage with the society by staying true to their identity. Therefore, the research seeks to address the following question:

RQ4. How do the members of transgender community enact resilience?

Western research also suggests that the use of social media platforms influences the transgender community's identity-making. Online activities, including snapping selfies and livestreaming, focuses on how the trans youth uses these visual and text tools to "reinforce, challenge, and/or resist identities of difference" (Wargo, 2015, p. 560).

Wargo (2015) suggests livestreaming is a highly rhetorical and literate practice. Newer literacies are emerging at a great pace, bolstering the use of digital tools (Gardner & Davis, 2013). The young generation is using hybrid literacy practices, which are multiple modes of representations, to tell their stories. Research in India has not explored this aspect of the transgender identity making yet. The following question is vital as it will add to the discourse of identity-making of the transgender community in India.

RQ5. Do social media platforms affect transgender identity?

CHAPTER 4

METHOD

This study consists of two phases: (a) semiotic analysis of Bollywood movies and; (b) reception analysis of readings by transgenders. The movies chosen for analysis were *Tamanna* (Bhatt, 1997) and *Murder 2* (Suri, 2011). The reasons for this choice were popularity among the audience and the amount of screen time dedicated to the transgender character in those movies. Each participant was individually provided streaming access to the movies. Follow-up texts were sent to ensure that the participants had watched both the movies thoroughly.

Semiotics was applied to an analysis of the two movies. The two primary traditions in semiotics are those of Saussre and Pierce. Semiotics with Saussure's science of semiology defines a sign as constituting of two elements: the signifier and the signified (Berger, 2019). Signifier is a physical form of a sign, such as sounds and images, and signified is the idea or the concept expressed by the physical form of the sign. On the other hand, Pierce (1931) rejected the dualistic ontology of Saussurean semiology and constructed triadic model comprising of relations between sign, object, and mind. He argued that the signs construct the relation between the mind and experience.

Although semiotics involves the study of different linguistic and cultural signs and the way they make meanings in a given text, Metz (1974) has made contributions to semiotics of film. Metz's (1974) work revolves around the notion that although film is not language, linguistic concepts can be applied to film. Two important aspects of semiotics that can be applied to films are syntagms and paradigms.

Syntagmatic analysis is "a chain of texts examined as a sequence of events that forms some kind of narrative" (Berger, 2019, p. 20). Barthes and Heath (1977) explain the narrative structure of syntagmatic analysis as follows:

> To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in "storeys", to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative thread on to an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to listen to) a narrative is not merely to move from one word to the next, it is also to move from one level to the next. (p. 87)

Narrative relationships tend to be sequential as well, as they do have a beginning, a middle, and an end (Barthes, & Heath, 1977). In an applied context, the syntagm of a film is an analysis of how each shot, scene, or sequence of the film's narrative flows and works together to complement the themes of the film.

On the other hand, paradigmatic analysis is concerned with how oppositions in the text generate meaning (Berger, 2019). It involves searching for a hidden pattern of oppositions that are buried in it to generate meanings. Propp (1968) sates that the paradigmatic structure

> seeks to describe the pattern (usually based upon an a priori binary principle of opposition) which allegedly underlies the folkloristic text. This pattern is not the same as the sequential structure at all. Rather, the elements are taken out of the "given" order and are regrouped in one or more analytic schema. (p. xi)

Searching for binary oppositions is based on the premise that meaning is based on establishing relationships, and meaning in language is established because of oppositions.

If syntagmatics is concerned with the positioning of the signifiers, paradigmatics is concerned with the substitution of the signifier, involving functional contrasts referring to signifiers that are absent from the text (Saussure, 1983). As suggested by Silverman and Torode (1980), signs are in paradigmatic relations when the choice of one excludes the choice of another.

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Additionally, Hodge and Tripp (1986) state that the syntagmatic structures are examined using three different variables: space, time, and continuity. The variables of space, time, and continuity can be integrated into the four concepts: synchronic/synoptic (the same place at the same time), diachronic/synoptic (the same place sequence over time), synchronic/diatopic (different places at the same time), and diachronic/diatopic (shots related by theme). Some of these two concepts are applied to the identification and examination of the structure of the scenes of the movies.

In an applied context, the use of one signifier rather than another one from the same paradigm set shapes the preferred meaning of a text. One member of a paradigm set is structurally replaceable with another. The films have various paradigmatic aspects. Those aspects are different choices of the creators, which makes the films contextually meaningful as these paradigmatic aspects are different and dependant on specific choices that reinforce the thematic discourse of the film. Since Saussure (1966) defines language as a system of signs arranged into syntagmatic and paradigmatic codes that provide a structural context within which signs make sense.

Before starting the semiotic analysis of *Tamanna* and *Murder 2,* the first objective was to get a thorough understanding of the plot, setting, and characters of each movie, which is why a synopsis of the movies was provided. Detailed notes were taken on each movies, and significant signs were identified, which helped in meaning-making of the ideas being expressed through the signs.

The grounded theory approach was used for this research as it is an inductive research methodology used in qualitative research. It allows researchers to go beyond previously established theories. Glazer and Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory as a methodology for

gathering qualitative data to develop a theory. They argued that "theory could not be divorced from the process by which it was generated" (p. 5). The grounded theory methodology is used in various disciplines, including mass communication research where it has been recognized as a way to unearth media discourses (Altheide, 1996; Dutta-Burgman, 2005; Figueroa, 2008). Grounded theory, when used to develop media theory, requires researchers to immerse themselves in the media content. Thus, it is the depth of the examination of the media content that gives the study its importance rather than the number of media texts.

The present research involves immersion into the development of reception theory through the years and the way colonization has affected transgender representations in entertainment media and the transgender community's interpretations of those representations. Along with a semiotic analysis of Bollywood movies, the study also incorporates interviews of 20 people from the transgender community. Grounded theory emphasizes the identification of patterns or consistency in use of concepts across data (Tucker-McLaughlin & Campbell, 2012).

The qualitative approach of grounded theory allows the application of conceptual meaning to the categories by connecting the elements within and between categories. When meanings were found in multiple categories, they were labeled as themes. The goal of the process was to allow themes to emerge that are not present in current literature on media representations of the transgender community in India. In brief, the process allowed for multiple interpretations of the representations to be identified and then categories based on the commonalities they shared.

In-depth interviews were undertaken in Pune and Mumbai in India. Pune and Mumbai are urban cities with a considerably higher population of transgender community. The research was restricted to these two metropolitan cities because the transgender community there was more

open to answering questions that this study sought to explore, compared to the transgender community in non-urban cities. The study involved 10 male-to-female, and 10 female-to-male transgender people who identified as binary. Six transgender men were from Pune, and four transgender men were from Mumbai. All transgender women were from Pune.

Since the transgender community in India, especially transgender women or hijra community, is a minority and a close-knit group, the recruitment of transgender women was done with the help of Golden Heart Foundation, Pune, which is a non-governmental organization working for the welfare of the community. Recruitment of transgender men was through snowball sampling, a sampling method often used for recruiting potential participants who are hard to find.

Among those interviews, 19 were conducted face-to-face and one over Zoom. Interviews took place from December 18 through 29, 2019. The participants were informed of the nature of the interview. They were also told that their participation was completely voluntary, and they could terminate the interview at any point without penalty. The interviews conducted face to face were audio-recorded, and the one conducted over Zoom was also recorded to ensure the accurate transcription of the interviews. Audio recording was done after obtaining consent form from each participant.

Face-to-face interviews were selected as the best course of data collection because of they are better for asking open ended questions and help asses vital non-verbal cues. McCracken (1998) describes interviews as "one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armoury. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument is more revealing" (p. 9). Application of this method involves building trust and rapport with the interviewees to maximize

the quality and the quantity of the data being collected. Jorgenson (1992) explains the

importance of rapport as follows:

> Rapport is a valued aspect in research setting because it is assumed to further the investigatory purposes of the research. In interviews, which constitute a basic tool of data collection in communication research, the establishment of rapport is conceived as an aid in the elicitation of candid and full disclosure of information from the research participants. (p. 148)

In order to build trust and rapport, face-to-face interviews were preferred.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

This study consists of two parts: (a) the semiotic analysis of two Bollywood transgender-themed movies, *Tamanna* (Bhatt, 1997) and *Murder 2* (Suri, 2011), and (b) an analysis of transgender audience reception of transgender representations in entertainment media. The analysis of the chosen films is vital for this study to understand the narrative structure's role in shaping audience's perception. The study also seeks to contribute to the existing research on reception studies by providing a detailed analysis of the media texts under investigation.

Semiotic Analysis

The first research question explores the structural representations of the transgender community as it influences the ability of meaning-making of the audiences watching the movies.

"Tamanna"

Synopsis

Tamanna is a mainstream Bollywood movie, which is a work of fiction inspired by a story about a hijra who picked up a mutilated newborn girl child from the streets of Mahim, Mumbai, whom he later named Tamanna.

The year is 1975, and the story is of Tikku, a hijra, who is the only child of yesteryear Bollywood actress Nazneen Begum. She has fallen upon hard times, is virtually destitute, and is dependent on Tikku, who is a hair and makeup artist of Bollywood actresses. After Nazneen passes away, Tikku is in grief. After the funeral, he witnesses a woman leaving a child in a garbage bin. Longing for company, Tikku picks up the baby girl, names her Tamanna, and decides to raise her with the help of his close friend Saleem.

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Tikku is a born hijra who does not consider himself a traditional hijra. Yet, Tikku's mannerisms such as talking loudly and expressing emotions explicitly, are typical of a hijra. Even though Saleem is a close confidante, he often ridicules Tikku for being a hijra and deems his conviction of raising a child as improbable. He constantly makes Tikku realize that to be a father to a child, he needs to understand the importance of being a man. It is implied that Tikku can't because he is a hijra.

In spite of his adverse financial condition, Tikku is seen taking care of and raising Tamanna scrupulously. Just like every parent, his aspiration for his daughter is to get educated in a good school. As the film progresses, Tikku is struggling to make money as he is getting old. His skills are no longer needed in the industry, and he is battling with poverty and is left homeless. Because of these adverse conditions, Tikku resorts to the traditional role of the hijra community of dancing at celebrations for earning money to provide a home for Tamanna, who has now grown up and wants to move back to Mahim from her boarding school to live with Tikku. Until now, Tamanna is completely unaware of Tikku's identity. One day, Tamanna finds out Tikku dressed as a typical hijra and feels disgusted by the thought of being raised by a hijra. After Salim makes Tamanna realize that the way she reacted to Tikku being hijra is unreasonable, Tikku tells Tamanna about her actual family who abandoned her because she was a girl. Tamanna visits the family and is shunned by her biological father, Ranvir Chopra, who is an upcoming politician. The conflict between Tamanna and Chopra reaches to the point where he tries to kill her. However, Tikku arrives at the scene just in time to save Tamanna engaging in a fight with Chopra. Tikku is about to kill him when the police comes to the scene and arrest Chopra. The film ends with Tamanna embracing Tikku and accepting him as her father.

Syntagmatic Structure of the Film

Almost all the syntagms of this film fall under the category of diachronic/diaoptic. They are shots related by theme. The film is chronologically presented. The movie begins with Tikku crying over his mother's death. She has just died and he is sitting right by her coffin wailing and not letting Salim Bhai and other men take the coffin for burial. He always has a very helpless expression on his face, whether he is sad or happy, and he always looks helpless, covertly explaining the plight of the transgender community in India. The next sequence of shots is diachronic/synoptic when Tikku expresses that he wants to die as he cannot live without his mother. Saleem says, "You will live even if your life will be a constant struggle," which implies that because he is transgender by birth, society that he lives in would not accept him for the way he is. It is a clear indication that people will exploit him and victimize him, but Tikku should be completely fine with the way he will be treated as he is a hijra. Further, when Tikku picks up Tamanna from a dumpster, Saleem warns him not to keep her by saying that hijras can't have children. This statement sounds as if Saleem does not consider hijras to be human beings but rather an inferior community, and Tikku should just agree that raising a child is out of his league because he is a transgender.

As the film flows, another diachronic/diaoptic scene is that of Ranvir Chopra's, Tamanna's biological father, is seen celebrating his son's birthday and asks the hijras present there that if they keep conferring fertility on his family, he will provide them with so much wealth that they would never have to beg again. Through this scene it is evident that the transgender community lives on the fringes of the mercy of the wealthy people.

As the film progresses, Tamanna grows up but still does not have any idea about Tikku's identity. When she comes back home from the boarding school and finds Tikku in a female

attire, she is shocked and appalled at the same time. She even forgets that Tikku saved her from dying in a dumpster while she is insulting him. She immediately associates Tikku with the rest of the transgender community, which is feared because of myths related to abduction associated with them (Patel, 2012). Even though Indians attribute a sacred power to them, they are often considered vulgar and are sometimes despised and harassed (Nanda, 2014). Tamanna's conflict with her biological father reaches to a point where he sends goons to kill her, but they are stopped by Tikku, who gets beaten up by them. It is easier to beat up a transgender because he is submissive and cannot take a stand for himself. He is shown as a victim of violence.

The movie also consists of some scenes, which are dichronic/synoptic in nature. The first one is when Tikku sees a woman abandoning an infant by throwing her in a dumpster and then saves her life. At the same time, the camera switches to the scene of an affluent house where Chopra is seen lying to her wife about the still-born baby, when in reality, he bribes the domestic help to abandon the girl child. *Tamanna* also portrays the ways patriarchal conditioning works in India, first by deeming the transgender community as inferior that lives in abject poverty and second by showing how sons are considered priceless compared to girls in families.

Paradigmatic Structure of the Film

Different paradigmatic codes exist in *Tamanna*. These codes are specific choices, which help reinforce the thematic discourse of the movie. First, the name of the movie, *Tamanna* meaning desire, is a paradigmatic code. It signifies the yearning of the transgender community to be accepted as a sociocultural category by the Indian society, which would enable them to have the same fundamental rights as non-transgender and non-LGBTQ people have access to.

The location of the film is another paradigmatic code. The scenes of the movie are shot in poor and rich localities of the city, showcasing the abject poverty of the transgender community.

Additionally, Tikku's attire in the movie is a paradigmatic code. Even though he is a hijra by birth, he does not dress up like a woman as other hijras do in the movie. Therefore, he is mocked by the other eunuchs present in his neighbourhood because he doesn't think of himself as one of them. They say, "Don't consider us as your own, but when you die, we will be the only ones present at your funeral," implying that eunuchs are outcastes and even if Tikku doesn't believe so, he will remain an outcast as he is a transgender by birth. Lastly, the selection of background sounds and the sad songs also constitutes another paradigmatic aspect of the film. The sad songs of the film render Tikku as helpless and extremely naïve, which has always been the case with the hijra community.

"Murder 2"

Synopsis

Arjun is an ex-police officer, who is hired by a pimp as an investigator for an unofficial assignment. Several sex workers have gone missing under mysterious circumstances, and Arjun has to trace their whereabouts. During his investigation, he finds out that all the sex workers who have gone missing are called from one phone number. Arjun asks the pimp to send a sex worker to the address linked to the phone number as a bait. The pimp decides to send Reshma, a college new comer in the business, who has gotten into prostitution to feed her family, though she keeps this a secret from them. Reshma is sent to the house of Dheeraj Pandey, who is actually a serial killer responsible for torturing and killing the missing prostitutes. He decides to do the same to Reshma and throws her in a dark well, with the intention of torturing her until she dies.

Arjun finds out that Pandey is the murderer and informs the police. While Pandey is held in jail, the police commissioner calls a psychiatrist to extract confession from Pandey. He confesses that he kills women because he thinks they take advantage of men. Pandey also reveals

that he castrated himself and became a eunuch to get rid of his sexual addiction with the help of a transgender woman who is also a famous politician, Nirmala Pandit. Pandey is eventually bailed out of prison under Pandit's influence. Meanwhile, Reshma escapes from the well and tries to find her way out through the forest.

Later Arjun meets Pandey's family, who reveals that Pandey used to beat his wife. Arjun next meets a dancer, Sonia, who had also been tortured by Pandey but managed to escape. Arjun then meets a sculptor who makes idols of deities and used to work with Pandey. The sculptor tells him that Pandey used to make idols of devils instead of deities and killed the factory owner who tried to stop him. Later, Arjun is informed that Pandey is free and the police is trying to track him down as quickly as they can. Pandit and Pandey enter the same temple where Reshma is hiding. The priest reveals that Reshma is hiding in the temple. Pandit and the priest, unaware of Pandey's nature, are killed by him. Pandey finds the terrified Reshma and kills her brutally. Arjun reaches the temple right before Pandey escapes, and breaks down after finding Reshma dead, feeling guilty and responsible for her death.

Next, Pandey targets Arjun's love interest and calls her on the pretext of a photoshoot and tries to torture her. Arjun saves her, engaging Pandey in a fight as police officers show up. They request Arjun not to kill Pandey. Pandey then plays the tape he recorded when he was torturing Reshma. Hearing Reshma's pleading cries, Arjun, tormented by her death, furiously kills Pandey, bringing an end to his reign of terror.

Syntagmatic Structure of the Film

The syntagmatic structure of the film will be discussed using the synchroni/synoptic (the same place at the same time) structure and diachronic/synoptic (same place over time) structure.

The opening of the film is shot at a red-light area where a lot of transgender women can be seen being offered money hinting at sex work as the major occupation of the transgender community in India. The next scene begins with a song where a man dressed up as a woman is being seduced by a sex worker. It is not given away upfront that it is a man who is dressing up as a woman. The whole song creates a sense of mystery around the character in a woman's clothing. The first scene only reveals his hands, which are pretty muscular and strong like that of a man. At the beginning of this song, the viewers might think that it is more about passion play as the sex worker is seen handcuffed to the chair while being seducing. However, as it progresses, the sex worker is seen with bruises on her arms while still seducing the man dressed as a woman. As the song is nearing its end, the crossdresser is shown brutally killing the sex worker, revealing that he is a sadistic psychopathic killer, who enjoys every bit of torturing his victims before killing them. A shot from the same song also reveals an audio recorder, which records the blood-curdling screams of the sex worker being attacked by the crossdresser.

As the film progresses, the next scene shows Arjun finding the mobile phone of the sex worker who was the last one to go missing. At the same time, the crossdresser is seen dragging a dead body wrapped in a plastic bag and throwing into a dried well, which is filled with other decaying corpses. While Arjun devises a plan of finding out what is happening to the missing sex workers, the immediate next shot is that of a man lounging on the couch and listening to the painful screams of women from an audio recorder.

As Arjun furthers his investigation, he finds out the mobile number of the person who is the suspect. The true identity of this person is still not revealed so far. At the same time, Reshma, who is the scapegoat in this investigation, is seen entering the house of the suspected murderer. While Arjun is on the way to find the address of the suspect, Reshma finds bloodstains spewed

on the walls of one of the rooms of this man's house. That is when the identity of Dheeraj Pandey as a serial killer is revealed. Even though it is known in the first half itself that Pandey is the killer and Arjun hands him over to the cops, he has no remorse on his face while confessing his crime to the police. In fact, he looks quite contented with what he has done to the missing sex workers. Pandey also confesses that he castrated himself and now seeks revenge on women for his self-induced impotency perpetuating the belief that gender deviant people are also psychopathic killers.

As the film progresses, another synchronic/synoptic structure is when Pandit visits the jail to bail Pandey out, she literally blackmails the police commissioner saying that if Pandey is not bailed out her curse will ruin the commissioner's life. After being threatened by Pandit, the police commissioner looks really helpless because of two reasons. First, Pandit is a very well-connected politician who can leave the commissioner jobless with one phone call, and second, the transgender community, as well as the public, have internalized the belief that transgenders have the power to confer fertility (Nanda, 1999, 2014; Reddy, 2005). Their blessing and curses do affect the individuals they are vested in.

Some of the synchronic/synoptic structures are when Pandey is in the police's custody, Nirmala Pandit, the famous eunuch politician gives a call to Pandey who is still in the lock up and asks him how is he being treated in *sasural*. Sasural is the parents' in-laws house. In India, when women get married, they traditionally move in with the in-laws along with their spouses. Additionally, a lot of domestic violence cases were reported in the past and still continue to be reported even today. These cases are about injuries inflicted on women by their in-laws mostly in demand of dowry. The term sasural is used by Pandit assuming that the police is torturing Pandey for information. Police brutality against the transgender community is common (Goel,

2016). But in the movie, Pandey escapes because he is well connected with a eunuch politician like Pandit. The police is not being brutal with Pandey, even after confessing his real identity and he murdered the sex workers in front of the psychologist and the police. This scene signifies that he is mentally unstable, he has absolutely no fear of consequences.

After escaping the prison, Pandey finds Reshma and flees from the scene after killing her brutally. Once Pandey gets back to his house, he targets Arjun's love interest and calls her to his place on the pretext of a photoshoot as she is a professional model. Arjun reaches Pandey's house right when Pandey is torturing Arjun's love interest. Pandey and Arjun engage in a fight, which ultimately results in Pandey's death.

Paradigmatic Structure of the Movie

The movie has some paradigmatic codes as well. The name of the movie, *Murder 2*, reveals half the plot of the movie. It is evident that the movie is a murder mystery. The entire setup of the first song in the movie, which is supposedly the residence of the crossdresser, is extremely dark and dingy and has accents of red suggesting diabolic activities. Almost the entire movie is set in dark color palette and has a lot of sadistic music playing in the background, especially at scenes shot in the antagonist's house. The house that he is living in is a large secluded property, and broken pieces of sculptures are seen lying around all over the place, which tells the viewers that he is a sculptor and hints that he literally butchers his victims, before putting their corpses in a plastic bag and dumping them in the well. He uses an Indian handheld musical instrument with cymbals and sharp edges to kill the victims which is later revealed in the film that the transgender community uses that same instrument while singing and dancing when emasculating a hijra. Surprisingly, Pandey does not have feminine expressions at all, so nobody knows for sure if he is a eunuch until he says so himself.

Reception Analysis

The second part of the study is an analysis of the interviews conducted with 20 people from the transgender community in India. Participants discussed their experience with depictions of transgender people in media, mainly Bollywood, within the context of their own identities and experiences. To safeguard the identity of the research subjects, the 10 transgender men have been assigned the abbreviation TM, and the 10 transgender women have been assigned the abbreviation TW. Appendix A and B provide lists of questions and research subjects respectively. The second research question that this study sought to answer was about how the transgender community feels about the community's representations in entertainment media. Some negative themes emerged.

Transphobic and Problematic Representations

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that transphobia, that is, negative reactions or opinions of transgender people, was an issue in media with a specific emphasis on transphobic representation in entertainment media.

> I did not like the character of Dheeraj Pandey in *Murder 2*. That man is mentally unstable. Transgenders are not mentally unstable people. (TM 1, 28 years, Pune)

> I didn't like *Murder 2*… People in the media don't even think before coming up with such representations. They neither have the knowledge about the community nor do they try to educate themselves about us. They just show horrific stuff because that's what sells. But we know the reality and we are not like that. (TW 4, 27 years, Pune)

> I remember a colleague asking me if I hate women too, after watching *Murder 2*. I was like, when have you ever seen me misbehave with women? Even though biologically I am a male, I am a woman at heart, so how can I hate women? It's pathetic the way our community is represented in that movie. (TW 3, 36 years, Pune)

> I don't consider Dheeraj Pandey a hijra just because he is castrated. Hijras are women born in the male body. [However,] In this movie, and another regional movie, they have shown hijras as psychos who have castrated themselves for one reason or another and then take revenge on people for the self-inflicted injury… I don't know what is all that about, but that's not us. (TW 10, 25 years, Pune)

Tamanna (Bhatt, 1997), as opposed to *Murder 2* (Suri, 2011), tried to showcase the

transgender community in a positive manner. Yet, the character Tikku did not strike the right

chord with a couple of research participants:

> I didn't like this character. In my opinion, Tikku should have been the kind of character who would do something for the hijra who beg for a living. Even though he is a born hijra he is a makeup artisit and a hair dresser, right? He tries to stay far away from his own community because they earn a living by begging and dancing at weddings and childbirth… he knows that he is a hijra, he knows the community's condition, yet he doesn't want to be called as one of them… but then when he stops getting work in the film industry, he has to resort to the traditional job of hijras, that is begging. So I didn't like that attitude. (TM 9, 25 years, Mumbai)

> I did not like Tamanna because I feel bad when I look at Tikku. I think that he is there just for the TRPs. The creators say that it is about the life of a hijra who adopted an abandoned baby girl, but the movie seems like it's more about Tamanna and less about Tikku. (TW4, 27 years, Pune)

Because many people within the transgender community do not receive an education and

are subjected to social discrimination (Goel & Nayar, 2012), their professional engagements are

based on the business of blessings or *badhai*, a common income-generating avenue for the hijras.

These responses show a keen hunt for a role model in the movies, an inspiring character that

stands up against all odds. They wish to see the kind of character that does not perpetuate

stereotypes.

Patel (2012) and Goel (2016) suggest that a myth revolving around the sociocultural

identity of the transgender community is that they indulge in kidnapping and castrating male

children for increasing the membership of their community and transphobic representations

reflect the same myth.

> Because of such terrible representations people are afraid of us, people also think that we have feelings of a man, but we have become this way as somebody tricked us into becoming a hijra. It is not true… but that's the reason why women are more afraid of us. They think that we are men in the guise of women. So they don't even talk to us. (TW 5, 27 years, Pune)

Transphobic and problematic representations also lead people from the transgender community to look down upon themselves. Participants discussed how they feel about their own identity within the context of how they are treated.

> The way people talk about me behind my back, I feel ashamed of who I am. I can't live with my parents because the community where they live and [I] grew up at, know me as a male. So I always have to go at night if I want to meet my mother. I don't want my parents to face the embarrassment. (TW 4, 27 years, Pune).

> Movies like *Murder 2* haven't had a very good impact on me… people want us to feel ashamed of ourselves. They don't consider us normal. (TW 5, 27 years, Pune)

Objects of Ridicule

Many research participants felt that the hijra indentity is used for comic relief. As suggested by Kalra & Bhugra (2015), Bollywood movies have short comedy situations in a number of films that often do not fit into the storyline. These films construct the hijra identity through abjection, ridicule, and erasure. They are caricatured, living a life of poverty and appearing in the scene to beg or dance at some occasion, setting the scene for the audience to laugh.

> Sometimes I feel filmmakers use this community just to add some humorous element to their creation… People in bigger cities are more understanding, but those in rural areas learn from TV and films. Because there's hardly any interaction between the transgender community and the heterosexual people in remote areas of the country, TV and movies are probably their only source of learning about us. And when we are treated as a joke in Bollywood and television, naturally the audience also thinks that it is okay to do so. (TM 9, 25 years, Mumbai)

> Most of the transgender characters in comic roles in Bollywood movies are just men dressed as women… they don't understand our struggle hence they don't mind performing those incessant, ridiculous jokes. But such jokes do affect us and it's important that people understand that. (TW 2, 31 years, Pune)

> Even if a man is seen acting in a feminine manner, he is always looked at from the comic perspective. I don't think that is right. The same goes for transgender community as well. Just because we don't fit into the dominant gender binary doesn't mean you have to laugh at us. (TM 4, 24 years, Pune)

Transgender men were also perceived as being less visible than transgender women.

While many felt representation of transgender women in films was transphobic and problematic,

they felt that transgender men were nearly invisible in entertainment media.

> Entertainment media has not played any role in my identity development. They were not at all useful. Hijras and transwomen at least have some representation. But I don't think that the filmmakers even know that we exist. (TM 2, 44 years, Pune)

> I don't remember watching anybody like me in entertainment media while growing up. There weren't any transmen in the movies or even in television… We still don't have representations. There is just one movie I think… I don't even remember the name, but it had a very short role of a transman… I mean the scene with transman was so short that even I don't remember it, so how will the rest of the audience remember us… I am pretty sure a lot of people don't know that transmen even exist. (TM 1, 28 years, Pune)

> When transgender women or hijras are depicted in the media they're portrayed as psychotic murderers or they are in the film for a very short time… I mean, I am not very happy with the way transgender women are represented. But transgender men aren't depicted at all in the media. (TM 10, 29 years, Pune)

Although the transgender representation available within entertainment media remains

limited and stereotypical, some participants also discussed the positive influence entertainment

media has had in their lives.

> Media's role in my identity development wasn't exactly bad, I would say, but it wasn't the best as well. There was a TV show that dealt with real issues and one of the episodes was about the transgender community. The show's host had invited a transgender woman to share her experience of going through the transition, which was helpful for me. (TM 4, 24 years, Pune)

> I haven't seen transmen in the entertainment media, but I do remember movies having lesbian and gay characters… they used to make people feel so uncomfortable… some accepted and it some people didn't… they said this is not Indian tradition, so I think one good thing that has happened because of media is that audience's at least got to know that the LGBTQ community actually exists. It also helped me understand better who I am. (TM 6, 32 years, Mumbai)

> One of the local language movies that recently came out was very good. It is about our struggle as a transgender child… so that movie was really helpful in making my parents

understand what I have been going through my entire life. They watched it and then they could understand my struggle. (TW 8, 30 years, Pune).

The hijra community in India has been a sociocultural part of the country but has been criminalized and subjected to ridicule and stigma (Agoramoorthy & Hus, 2015; Bhaskarananda, 2002; Bhattacharya, 2018; Chakrapani et al., 2017; Dutta, 2012; Hiltelbeitel, 1980; Kalra & Bhugra, 2015). The effort of erasing the transgender identity has also been reflected through entertainment media where the transgender community's representations are already scant. Additionally, whatever representations do exist, do the job of perpetuating gender roles (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015). Hence, the third research question explores how the community likes to be represented in Bollywood.

Inspirational Character

Since the transgender community has faced oppression by the society for many years, the participants showcased a keen interest in having transgender characters in the entertainment media that would spark inspiration within the community to speak for themselves.

> In my opinion, Tikku should have been the kind of character who could take stand for his own community… He was a makeup artist and a hair dresser in the film industry, which means he had conviction to make a living without begging… he should have been the kind of character that would motivate others from his community to stand up for themselves. (TM 9, 25 years, Mumbai)

> This film came out in the year 1997 and back then we did not have the privilege of adopting a child… They could have shown Tikku to be someone who fights for the community's rights to adopt a child… maybe such storyline would have made our lives a little better, who knows. (TW 4, 27 years, Pune)

Authentic and Fair Representation

Since media is a source of knowledge for most people on transgender communities, it influences people's attitudes and impact the experiences of transgender people (Heinz, 2012; Shelley, 2008). The majority of participants discussed that they would like entertainment media

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to showcase their real struggle with their identity, which would slowly lead society toward

accepting them.

> Our struggle starts from the day we realize we are different. Parents don't accept us for who we are, and the society doesn't accept us because we don't fit into the gender binary. I had to leave home at a very young age. I was able to complete my education despite great difficulty, but there are still a lot more hijras who couldn't even complete their education, so they had to start begging on streets… I think if media represents our struggle instead of showing us as bad people, people will know what our lives are like and maybe try to understand what we have to go through. (TW 1, 18 years, Pune)

> If I was a film director, my first film would be about a girl's struggle for transitioning into a man. She has to deal with her own identity issues… accepting the way we are is not easy, and on top of that society still thinks that it is a mental disorder. I would like entertainment media to tell people that this is normal. I am normal. (TM 8, 21 years, Mumbai)

> Out of all the Bollywood movies that I have seen, they all have the same thing going on… a girl and a guy fall in love, there are romantic scenes, then they get married they have a family and all that. Why don't they showcase transgender people in a small sweet family set up? You know what, even we wish to get married with our partners, we wish to have a family just like any other regular family. So if such representations are available in the mainstream media then it might change society's idea about us. (TM 3, 29 years, Pune)

With the onset of British rule in India, hijras were deemed as habitual sodomites and

gender deviants. They were deemed as obscene by the colonial officials and hence were

criminalised (Hinchy, 2014). Participants discuss that since patriarchy has always had an upper

hand in the Indian culture, it is not just hijras that are represented in an unfair manner, but other

gender groups as well.

> Bollywood is not very good at representing even gays and lesbians in a fair manner. The male lead is still the hero and the rest of the characters seem secondary. You have already seen the misleading representations hijras have. Only in *Tamanna* what they were trying to show was really good, but otherwise it's just humor. If a movie is about a transgender character, then that representation should reflect the community's reality, that's how people will know more about us. (TM 2, 44 years, Pune)

> Because India is a country dominated by men, I think even Bollywood is still stuck there… I mean, it is still hero-related. Even if the movie is a biopic of a female athlete, there will be a man in her life because of whom she has achieved success, and it sells

because I think the majority of the Indian society wants to see that. So, if the movie is about the life of a female athlete, then the focus should be on her… and that also goes for the representations of other gender groups. (TM 9, 25 years, Mumbai)

Sufficient Inclusion of the Transgender Community in Media

Participants also discussed the lack of inclusion of real people from the transgender community. Their concern is about transgender talent not getting promoted, and that whatever representations that they do receive are often tokenistic.

> Instead of having men crossdress and perform our roles, why don't they cast us to portray transgender characters? The problem of media is that they want to use the transgender community for entertainment but doesn't want to acknowledge us by giving us the platform. For example, in the film *Tamanna*, they could have cast a transgender person as Tikku instead of having male actor do that role. But we don't have the power to influence people in the media because we have been oppressed by the society. (TW 2, 31 years, Pune).

> If you need a transgender character in a film, audition them and see which one is the best, and then cast them in the films. Or even if they want to cast cisgender actors as transgender characters, they should be encouraged to spend time with the community to observe us closely. That's how they will understand our lives in a better way to portray us on the screen. (TW 6, 46 years, Pune)

Lack of Representations in News Media

After striking down Section 377 in 2018 and providing recognition to the hijra community in 2014, India passed the long debated Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) bill as an act in December 2019. This act guarantees to safeguard the rights of transgender persons and promotes their welfare (Bill no. 169 of 2019). However, the research participants state that it is regressive and that the media only focused on the discussion and passing of the bill as an act.

> They have not thought about us while making this bill. I am a female biologically, and all these surgeries are very expensive. So if I want my identity to be that of a male on my documents, I will have to show the proof of my gender reassignment surgeries to the district magistrate… It is going to take time to reflect my gender as a man on my ID proofs. (TM 10, 29 years, Pune)

I don't trust news media. They are there to keep the government in check, right…. because of this new transgender bill hijras cannot beg, which is their only sources of income. Even if they go and ask for a job, we are not going to get any jobs because society already bears so many prejudices against us. What are we even supposed to do? And news media only covers what's happening, I don't think they're doing their jobs very well. (TW 6, 42 years, Pune)

This transgender bill is divide and conquer… exactly what the British did. Self-identification is my right. What that Bill says is that if a transgender person gets raped, the accused will face up to two years of imprisonment, but if the same thing happens with a cisgender woman, the accused will be sentenced from 7 years to lifetime imprisonment. So this is discrimination and news media doesn't cover this. (TW 7, 35 years, Pune)

Victimization among sexual minority is a common phenomenon because of the prevailing stereotypes (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Nanda, 1999; Ravindar, 2018). The stereotypes stem from the lack of accurate representations of the transgender community in media, although the Indian society is slowly changing. The fourth research question speculated the transgender community's resilience that reflects through the negotiated readings of the media texts

Being Aware of Adultism Experiences

The vast majority of participants described adultism as an overarching issue through which participants experienced transprejudice. Adultism is a system where adults hold privilege and power in youths' lives (Bettencourt, 2018). Adultism was woven through participants' coming out stories and their social interactions which are influenced by entertainment media's representations that perpetuates gender roles.

They described that they were aware of the messages that they were receiving for being different. Hitting a child in South Asia is a common practice for disciplining the child. Some of the most common experiences were physical abuse, especially in cases of transgender women.

I remember performing a dance like a girl on one of my favourite songs in front of my relatives. I had also put some of my mom's makeup on my face, but my relatives started laughing at me, and it was not in a good way. That day my father beat me up so much because he was furious with my girly behavior. He kept trying to make me a boy

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somehow, but he never understood that I was always a girl at heart. (TW 7, 35 years, Pune)

I was raised in a rural area. I was an adopted child. When my adoptive mother and father would get tired of explaining me that I am a boy and that I shouldn't behave like a girl, they would hit me. You see this mark on the bridge of my nose? That's from when my mother hit me with a broom in a fit of rage. (TW 8, 27 years, Pune)

I have experienced physical abuse at home and even in school and college. Senior students in college would hit me by throwing footwear at me, or push me in whenever they would see me walk in the hallway…. I have also experienced sexual abuse at school, and all this just because I was feminine. (TW 3, 36 years, Pune)

Some research participants discussed that even though they did not experience physical abuse at an early age, coming out to their families was a difficult task as being gender-variant is still stigmatised.

When I told my father that I would like to take him for counselling while transitioning, he refused. He doesn't understand that it is something very normal. Not very common, but very normal… he said that whatever "disease" you have, I want to know about it from you and not from anybody else. (TM 1, 28 years, Pune)

My mother insisted on getting me married thinking that once I get busy with a married life, I would stop behaving like a guy. She thought marrying would magically "change my mind"… They still think it's all in our head. (TM 6, 32 years, Mumbai)

When I would dance on Bollywood songs with *ghunghroos* (musical anklet) in my feet, my mother thought that I have lost my mind. She and the rest of the neighbours thought that I need to see a psychiatrist. (TW 6, 42 years, Pune)

I had no problem with acceptance at home, thankfully, but school was not a very happy place for me. My classmates and friends had accepted me the way I am, but teachers would often gossip. One male professor in particular would call me names. I would often argue with him about it …. That's the only thing I don't miss about school. (TM 8, 21 years, Mumbai)

Seeking Support at Workplace

Some participants mentioned that coming out to their employers in their workplace was easier than coming out to parents at home. They discussed that coming out to someone who does not belong to the family was beneficial as it gave them the feeling of belongingness.

I had a lot of struggle with acceptance at home, but my employer was a big support when I started the hormone therapy. It took me time to get adjusted to the effects of T-shots, but my employer really understood what I was going through and supported me through all of it. He still is one of the biggest supports I have received. (TM 3, 29 years, Pune)

When I came out to my parents, they asked me to leave the house. It was a struggle as I was not stable financially… When I had to get my surgery done, the bank had not sanctioned my loan even one day before my surgery… My employer helped me with money for the surgery, and he also gave me a paid leave for the rest of the month so that I can focus on my recovery. (TM 6, 32 years, Mumbai)

There are a lot of companies these days supporting LGBTQ community. The company that I work with has the colors of rainbow in support of this community. So acceptance is on the rise in multi-national corporations I would say. (TM 9, 25 years, Mumbai)

Finding One's Place in the Transgender Community

Since most of the participants did not receive support from their families at an early age, they discussed getting out of their homes and seeking support in the community. The degree of their interaction with the members of the transgender community influenced their resilience.

I was only 13 when I left home. My father would often beat me and I was tired of it. I moved to the big city from a very small village, that's where I met my guru…. Running away from home, takes a serious toll on education, because there's no acceptance at home and even at schools… My education had been completed only till 8th grade when I left home. (TW 1, 18 years, Pune)

When I ran away from home, and became a part of this community through a friend, I finally felt at home. I felt that they could understand me. They were supportive to me like a family is usually supportive. (TW 5, 27 years, Pune)

It's like we don't have the option of going anywhere else [other than the community]. Family doesn't accept us. Neighbourhood doesn't accept us. But I have accepted myself the way I am. That is very important. If you don't respect yourself, then nobody will accept you… My parents have eventually accepted me, and that's because of my attitude. (TW 2, 31 years, Pune)

Self-Advocacy through Social and Creative Work

Some (six) participants expressed that advocating transgender rights and working toward the welfare for their own community or others have influenced the way transgender people are

perceived in the society.

> When my relatives asked me to get out of their house, I had to struggle with finding a home. People have a lot of stigma against us so renting an apartment is not easy… I somehow started a dog kennel, whatever I earned through that was used as the investment money for the boutique that I started…. My uncle had political connections and they motivated me to participate in the district-level elections. It is a great opportunity for me to work for the welfare of my community. (TW 8, 30 years, Pune)

Another participant discusses her experience in school as a transgender youth, which

motivated her to take up social work for educating underprivileged women and children.

> After I ran away from home and quit college because of the harassment, I joined the community, and there was an NGO working for the welfare of our community. The lady over there was so nice to me. She really motivated me to complete my education…. I also worked for the welfare of women working red light areas. Now I work for the welfare for the children in an orphanage…. I have faced sexual abuse, so I teach them the difference between good touch and bad touch because I don't want them to go through what I experienced because of my ignorance. (TW 3, 36 years, Pune)

A participant shares her experience working with the transgender community in Pune's

red-light area. She also narrates the story of the time when she was denied entry into a shopping

mall in Pune that led her to become a social activist advocating transgender rights.

> Two years back I visited a mall with a friend. The security wouldn't let me enter the mall because a few other hijras had created a scene there a couple of weeks ago… they were just not letting me in, they said that it's the mall's policy to not allow entry to transgenders. I asked them to show me the policy papers, but the security personnel refused to produce it. I argued with them for over an hour. The people coming and going through the doors supported me, especially the young people…. I know this happens because people in the community are not educated but being able to go wherever they want to go, is a very basic right. Such behavior is not just transphobic but classist as well. (TW 7, 35 years, Pune)

This incident led her to speak up about transgender rights in the parliament on behalf of

the entire community after the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) passed in the first

week of December 2019.

A couple of participants discussed that dancing is a way of self-advocacy for them. Both

of them are professional dancers, and they find dancing liberating as it gives them the

opportunity to embrace their femininity.

> I was always brilliant at dance, but nobody wanted to teach me because, well, I was a boy, and a boy dancing like a girl is frowned upon. But I learnt dancing by myself…. I started performing in shows and now a lot of people know me. The best part about dancing is people know me because of my work and not because I am hijra. (TW 6, 42 years, Pune)

> Dancing at shows was like a good respite from begging…. I also started participating in beauty pageants for the transgender community. My skills at dancing gave me an edge there. I have won several pageants. I love this lifestyle now as I get to dress up and showcase my talent. I don't have to depend on begging and prostitution. (TW 8, 30 years, Pune)

Western research by Wargo (2015) and Gardner & Davis (2013) states that the use of digital tools influences transgender community's identity development. Research in India has not explored this aspect of the transgender identity-making yet. Therefore, to add to the discourse of identity development of transgender community in India, RQ 5 asks if social media platforms affect transgender identity.

Use of Social Media to Affirm One's Identity

Nine out of 10 transmen described a significant use of social media when they were in the process of transitioning. They said groups on platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp, helped them connect or serve as models of inspiration to people having the same gender identity.

> When my parents were against my gender reassignment surgery, I created a Facebook ID and put my new name on it. I started reaching out to other transmen. Through Facebook I could get in touch with transgender groups outside of India who gave me information about surgeries. That motivated me to look for transgender-friendly doctors and other information related to transition. (TM 3, 29 years, Pune)

> I have just started going to community events, I was not very active before…. I do have friends outside of the community, but I got in touch with my transgender friends through Instagram. They obviously understand my struggle better. My heterosexual friends tend to behave sympathetic sometimes. I don't like that. Also, I had recently published my story on Humans of Bombay's official Instagram page. So since then a lot of people have reached out to me for help regarding transition. (TM 9, 25 years, Mumbai)

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I am a part of a group on WhatsApp, which is specifically for transmen. If anybody wants any kind of help regarding the gender reassignment surgery, I and other transmen, like myself, try to help them with anything that they need. We provide them with information about doctors and counsellors. We also try our best to provide monetary help to those whose families don't support them… helping and getting help has become very easy because of internet. Everything is easily accessible now. (TM 7, 29 years, Mumbai)

Only three out of 20 participants discussed following models of inspiration on social media and reported receiving responses from them at times when they needed support as a transgender youth.

When I was only starting my transition, the wall paper on my phone was of Aaryan Pasha. He has been my ultimate inspiration from Day 1. I would like to be just like him one day. (TM 6, 32 years, Mumbai)

Although social media platforms are considered a great tool for gender identity affirmations, two participants described the transphobia and harassment that they have to face on social media platforms.

My Facebook ID has my current gender identity (male). But I am not very active there. The thing with social media is everybody uses it. Even those who are not educated have smartphones with social media applications in them. For example, my relatives living in the rural areas, they know I am a girl, but by looking at my gender identity online, they will try to post or send me content that is transphobic in nature. This has happened before, so I usually keep my account deactivated. (TM 1, 28 years, Pune)

I have an account on Facebook but I rarely login to it. Whatever Facebook friends I have are all from my community. I don't like adding anyone else, because they either post transphobic or explicit content on my timeline. They sometimes also send me obscene messages. So I try to stay away from social media. (TW 10, 25 years, Pune)

Self-Advocacy through Social Media

Wargo (2015) states that lifestreaming is a highly rhetorical practice adopted by a large number of youth to tell their stories. One participant describes her use of social media platforms to reach out to people about the way she was treated at a shopping mall in Pune.

After how I was treated at the mall by the security over there, I felt very humiliated. But I am not the kind of woman who would sit in one corner and cry. I narrated my experience in video and uploaded it on social media. In a week it had gotten viral. So many people

had joined me outside that mall in protest. With the help of my lawyer and the commissioner, that mall was sealed for four days, and they apologized to me publicly. (TW 7, 35 years, Pune)

Harrison (2004) notes that

The social dimension of "everyday" photography… ensures that the meaning of the images are in some measure available to everyone, drawing on shared values and systems of thought as well as aesthetic criteria. Personal image making draws on the wider public narrative. (p. 28)

Hence the lifestreams supported by artistic practices are now techno-literacy of the everyday.

Making lifestreams and selfies is a personal act as well as it "reveals ontological choices that confirm values, social relationships, and identities" (Harrison, 2004, p. 34). Another participant describes her use of the social media platform TikTok for self-expressions.

Other than dancing, I also love acting. I have a lot of videos on TikTok and a lot of fan following as well. I think it is a very good platform because it easily conveys my femininity. I love using the filters for clicking selfies, too. (TW 6, 42 years, Pune)

All the participants had smartphone access. Across participants, the use of social media helped them see transgender-positive perspectives, which empower them to feel good about their identities and give them the strategies for addressing transprejudice behavior. However, some of them also discussed that social media is just another platform where they experience transphobia.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSIONS

Summary

This study has adopted reception theory (Ang, 1982; Cavalcante, 2017; Hall, 1973; Hartley, 2002; Hay, Grossberg, & Wartella, 1992; Heath, 1990; Joyrich, 1996; Morrison, 2010; Nightingale, 2011; Procter, 2004; Radway, 1991), focusing on how audience interacts with media texts and the way contextual factors influence spectators understanding of the media content. Because of the country's history with British imperialism,effects of double colonization (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998; Mohanty, 1988, 1991; Oyewumi, 1997; Suleri, 1992) and intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Urdang, 1979) have been incorporated into the study.

This study found out that the media representations of the transgender community have been influential to their identity. Media representations of transgender people have significant implications for identity development (Ringo, 2002; Shelley, 2008). Previous research by Gazhali and Nor (2012) has found that the media assists transgender youth in rehearsing and negotiating their transgender identities. It also determined that these representations have a direct impact on transgender lives as the perceptions and behavior of people they encounter are influenced by the media (Heinz, 2012; Shelley, 2008). Responses from participants in this study were generally consistent with regards to the way the transgender community is represented in the entertainment media.

Western research suggests that the entertainment media mainly uses transgender characters as villains (McInroy & Craig, 2015; Shelley, 2008; Davis, 2009). Participants indicated that the use of transgender characters for humor was rampant. The participants also

stated that the media presents far less authentic representations of the transgender community, resulting in limited and stereotypical portrayals. The participants also indicated that other than comical representations, transphobic representations are also common in the entertainment media, which bolsters transphobia in society. Transphobia also leads to transprejudice. Because of such representations, the transgender community either becomes an easy target for harassment or is rendered as a group of criminals who are mentally unstable and indulge in the kidnapping and murdering people.

Participants felt that transgender men had absolutely no exposure in entertainment media. They stated that transgender women were more visible but also highly stereotyped. These findings are consistent with the previous research on the representations of transgender people in the mainstream media (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; McInroy & Craig, 2015b; Burgess, 2009; Ghazali & Nor, 2012; Heinz, 2012). Transgender men are not just absent from the media landscape but their identities also have no exposure in the field of research in India.

Transgender community, especially the hijras, have been victims of prejudice and intolerance, often living on the fringes of society in poverty (Goel, 2016; Nanda, 2014; Reddy, 2005; Kalra & Bhugra, 2015; Taparia, 2011; Hinchy, 2014). Perceptions of participants regarding how they would like to be represented revealed that they would like their struggle to be represented in the entertainment media as it would help the audiences to understand the kind of lives most of them lead. Additionally, they would also like to see more people from the transgender community performing the roles of transgender characters, which would bring the talent from the community ahead. Casting people from the transgender community for movies and television would also bridge the gap in knowledge about the community in general. Additionally, with providing recognition to the community under the third gender category in

2014, striking down Section 377, which decriminalized same-sex relationships in 2018, and passing the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in 2019, the participants described that the news media didn't give enough attention to the views of the transgender community before the bill was passed as an act. Their responses critiqued the objective nature of news media.

Since the transgender community in India is often stigmatized, how they bounce back from challenging experiences is an area of research that needs further attention. From the responses, various themes of coping mechanisms emerged that help the transgender community enact resilience. Most of the participants have experienced adultism in the form of physical abuse for not conforming to the gender identity assigned to them at birth. Transgender women, in particular, have faced physical abuse in their homes, which arises from the fact that patriarchy still has an upper hand in Indian society. A person who is biologically male and exhibits gender-variant behavior is automatically considered inferior to men as well as women, hence the third gender (Diehl et al., 2005; Woltmann, 2019). Experiencing adultism eventually led to joining the transgender community at an early age, especially in the case of transgender women. Although not all transgender men experienced physical abuse while growing up transgender, they did experience transprejudice in the way they were treated when they exhibited masculine behaviors. For four out of 10 transgender men found moral as well as monetary support by coming out to their employers. They described that confiding their identity to the employers was a lot easier because multinational corporations promote diversity and inclusion, and therefore, many employers had no problem embracing policies, initiatives, and tools designed to increase levels of diversity among employees. Advocating transgender rights through social work, such as

promoting the welfare of their own community, has influenced the way transgender people are perceived in society, which is an important aspect of the transgender community's resilience.

Western research suggests that social media platforms and digital tools are effective ways for transgender youth for telling their stories (Wargo, 2015). Resilience can often be enacted through social media platforms, as well as it is a great source to reach out to audiences. In this study, as opposed to entertainment media, social media offered a more realistic form of representation. Some participants stated that transphobia was more explicit online, but as a result of the anonymous nature of online communication, participants stated that online media is more beneficial. Transgender men described the high quality of resources and information as social media provides them the opportunity to develop peer groups, track each other's transitions, and share information. In this study, several transgender participants were able to develop personal support communities, which provided relevant resources and encouraged a sense of connectedness. Awareness about the benefits of social media platforms was not predominant among transgender women. However, only one out of 20 participants demonstrated the knowledge about the effects of double colonization on the transgender community.

<center>Limitations</center>

There are several limitations to this study. First, the selection of two movies for the analysis was based on the amount of screen time given to transgender characters and the popularity of both the movies among the audiences. As Kalra and Bhugra (2015) state the various kinds of representations of hijras in Bollywood movies, this study is limited to only negative and positive representations in *Tamanna* (Bhatt, 1997) and *Murder 2* (2011) respectively. Second, the participants for this study were recruited from Pune and Mumbai. Research suggests that the culture shapes subtle aspects of the thinking of an individual

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(Takahiko & Nisbett, 2001). Since the participants were recruited from the neighboring, metro

cities from the states of Maharashtra, this study lacks cultural diversity in responses. Third, the

age of recruited participants varied from 18 years to 44 years. The large age gap means that the

participants' belonged to different generations and had different set experiences and beliefs.

Implications

Unlike the Western conceptualization of dichotomous gender identity, Indian culture and

law recognize a third gender. The most visible manifestation of the third gender resided in its

hijra community, a group of male assigned people who adopt feminine gender expression and

live together in communities that are defined by kinship and religious practices (Dutta, 2012;

Goel, 2016). In contrast to the prevalent gender binary system, South East Asia has "deeply

entrenched and broadly institutionalized traditions of pluralism with respect to gender and

sexuality" (Peletz, 2006, p. 311).

Hinduism is one of the most ancient and diverse of the world's religions (Bhaskarananda,

1998, Nanda, 2014, 1999; Hiltelbeitel, 1980). The Hindu universe is highly accustomed to the

flexibility of divine beings and other creatures that often change their appearance (Bhattacharya,

2018). History suggests that castration was an act of divinity that encouraged men to enter

hijrahood and become legitimate and recognized members of the community who were viewed

to have committed the ultimate sacrifice (Hossain, 2012). The previous studies try to state that

transgenders were not considered as outcasts.

A shift in the perception of the transgenders began with the rise of the British Empire

(Jami, 2005). Hijras are those people who are males by birth but undergo an initiation rite called

nirvaan, which involves castration. *Nirvaan* is vital to be a part of the hijra community (Nanda,

2014; Reddy, 2005; Hinchy, 2014). They wear feminine clothing and have the socio-cultural role

of performers during childbirths and at weddings, but "to the British in nineteenth-century India, hijras were habitual sodomites and gender deviants. Their performances were an obscenity, according to colonial officials, while their public presence was a normal outrage" (Hinchy, 2014, p. 274).

Hijras have been known for challenging the gender binary for ages (Elischberger, Glazier, Hill, & Verduzco-Baker, 2017; Hinchy, 2014) and describe themselves as neither man nor woman (Chakravorty, 2007; Kavi, 2007; Nanda, 1999). Even then, the colonial officials referred to hijras as men (Hinchy, 2014). Hinchy (2014) argues that colonial officials used masculine pronouns for the hijra community, which was a linguistic strategy to erase the hijra community as a distinct gender identity.

Hall's (1973) reception theory posited three types of readings, which were dominant, negotiated, and oppositional in nature. The audience reception of the transgender community produced negotiated readings of the two Bollywood movies chosen for this study. Although this community has been a historically significant sociocultural identity in India, other than just one participant, all of them were unaware of the effects of British colonization on the transgender identity itself. The way the transgender community was criminalized can be explained through hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), a theory that studies the effects of the mixture upon identity and culture. By constant iteration of representations of hijras as obscene and a threat to the colonial rule, the colonizers gave rise to colonial anxiety about the threat that hijras posed to Indian boys. The hijra panic was further fuelled by the paper bureaucracy of colonial governance that circulated anxious interpretations of hijras (Hinchy, 2019). The colonial mentality has eventually led to internalized transphobia, and the lack of understanding of the effects of double colonization on their own interpretations of the representations in Indian entertainment media.

Suggestions for Future Research

As suggested in the limitations, this research is only limited to negative and positive representations of the transgender community. Further research can explore the influence of comical representations of the transgender community on their own identity. The effects of comical representations can be studied using the humor disparagement theory. Zillman and Cantor (1996) argue that people find disparaging humor amusing as it allows the expression of aggressive and hostile feelings in a socially acceptable manner. They allow disparaging jokes more when they have negative attitudes toward the victimized party. Future research can investigate why people enjoy disparaging humor targeted toward the transgender community or its effects on the community as it would be a new take on the transgender identity development in India.

Conclusion

The personal narratives in this study offer a starting point for future studies. The findings of this study address a gap in the literature with transgender identity development through representations in entertainment media. The study also critiques the Western colonial discourse's role in fueling the internalization of transphobia not just among audiences but also the transgender community itself. Although the country is slowly changing its norms to foster inclusion, acceptance of this community into the mainstream is still a far cry. It is important that the society be more sensitized toward gender issues, and creating more awareness through entertainment media is vital in this process as entertainment media, or Bollywood, is undeniably a deeply ingrained part of the Indian culture.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Sr.No.	Interview Questions
1.	Please tell me a little bit about yourself. Where did you grow up? What were you like when you were a child? Family, friends, neighbourhood, school, etc.? How old are you now? Are you currently in a relationship?
2.	How and when did you begin to realize that you are transgender? • What memorable experiences do you recall while growing up transgender? Can you share a few examples with me? • Why do you think people behaved the way they did toward you?
3.	Would you please tell me about your coming out story? Whom did you talk to for the first time? Were they supportive of you? • Why do you think people behaved the way they did toward you?
4.	How do you describe the community of friends and acquaintances who share the same gender identity as you?
5.	What roles do you think media has played in shaping your identity? • Are news media, entertainment media, and social media the same in their depictions of the transgender community? How do you describe them? If not, how are they different? • Can you tell me specific media portrayals or images that you remember are particularly influential to your identity while you were growing up?
The interview progresses to more specific questions about the media in relation to subjects' personal identity.	
6.	What were your favourite Bollywood movies while growing up?
7.	What do you think about the movie *Murder 2*? • How do you describe the character Dheeraj Pandey? • How do you describe the plot of the film? • What do you like or dislike about this character the most? Why?
8.	What do you think about the movie *Tamanna*? • How do you describe the main character Tikku? • How do you describe the plot of the film? • What do you like or dislike about this character the most? Why?
9.	How do you describe Indian media in general in terms of their representations of various groups? • How do you think Bollywood portrays women and men? • How do you think Bollywood portrays gays and lesbians? • How do you think Bollywood portrays transgender people?
10.	How do you think those representations affect Indians' views of transgender people? • Do you have a few examples you can share with me about how media have been affecting non-transgender Indians' views of transgender people?
11.	How prevalent do you think media representations of transgender people are? • How have media representations of transgender people changed over time since you were a child? • How do you think media representations of transgender people will change over time in terms of quantity and quality?
12.	How do you describe the state of the transgender community in India?
13.	Do you use social media platforms? What platforms do you use often?
14.	Do you think social media is an important tool for gender identity expression?

Sr.No.	Interview Questions
	• How do you use social media for gender identity expression?
15.	What impact do you think these representations have had on your identity development?
16.	Do you have anything else you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX B

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Sr. No.	pseudonyms	Gender identity	Age	Gender Classification	Location
1.	TW 1	Transgender woman	18	Binary	Pune
2.	TW 2	Transgender woman	31	Binary	Pune
3.	TW 3	Transgender woman	36	Binary	Pune
4.	TW 4	Transgender woman	27	Binary	Pune
5.	TW 5	Transgender woman	27	Binary	Pune
6.	TW 6	Transgender woman	42	Binary	Pune
7.	TW 7	Transgender woman	35	Binary	Pune
8.	TW 8	Transgender woman	30	Binary	Pune
9.	TW 9	Transgender woman	30	Binary	Pune
10.	TW 10	Transgender woman	25	Binary	Pune
11.	TM 1	Transgender man	28	Binary	Pune
12.	TM 2	Transgender man	44	Binary	Pune
13.	TM 3	Transgender man	29	Binary	Pune
14.	TM 4	Transgender man	24	Binary	Pune
15.	TM 5	Transgender man	37	Binary	Pune
16.	TM 6	Transgender man	32	Binary	Mumbai
17.	TM 7	Transgender man	29	Binary	Mumbai
18.	TM 8	Transgender man	21	Binary	Mumbai
19.	TM 9	Transgender man	25	Binary	Mumbai
20.	TM 10	Transgender man	29	Binary	Pune

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