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**The Inappropriateness of Deviant Gender Role
Portrayals in the American Cartoon
"The Simpsons (1989)"**

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Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated:

First, to myself and to my journey of growth

To those who believed in me

To my dear father for his endless love and support

To my beloved mother, the source of my life, the hand of mercy, my fountain of love and inspiration

To my lovely sisters: Nadine, Sherine, and Yasmine

To My dear friends: BELOUAFI Amal, MESSEI Hadjer, Sarah Briki, BOUGHARRA Roufaida, and BOUZOUAID Khadija.

Most importantly, I dedicate my work to those who did not believe in me

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Abstract

The present work is conducted to study the deviant gender role portrayals in the American cartoon "The Simpsons". This cartoon is airing on Fox channel since 1989 with over than 30 seasons, and exceeding 600 episodes. This reflects its popularity including even children because of its appealing slapstick comedy. Its significant engagements in the politics of sexuality and gender identity instigate to question the effects of the show's unusual gender role representations in the social and psychological development of children. The study is inspired by developmental theories in sociology and psychology. It draws on the assumption of the child's socialization process of cognitive and psychosexual development, of which the child develops his/her gender identity. The study espouses an eclectic approach, as Piaget's Cognitive Development theory attempts to demonstrate the child's social identification process to conform to the social norms including gender role. Freud's Psychoanalysis theory and his psychosexual stages account to reflect the process of internalizing gender with children. Also, queer theory is applied to examine the way these portrayals are displayed. Therefore, this study explicates the potential implications of the inappropriateness of queer gender role representations in cartoons on the child's social and psychological development. It aims to emphasize on the role of parents to protect their children from this ideological exploitation.

Keywords: children, gender role, queer, sexuality, social and psychological development, The Simpsons cartoon.

List of Acronyms

UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.
FSM:	Free Speech Movement.
SDC:	Students for Democratic Society.
VVAW:	The Vietnam Veterans Against the War Organization.
KKK:	The Ku Klux Klan
COINTELPRO:	The Counter Intelligence Program.
FBI:	Federal Bureau of Investigation.
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency.
LSD:	Lysergic Acid Diethylamide.
APA:	The American Psychological Association.
AIDs:	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus.
LGBT:	Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Trangenders.
LPGA:	Ladies Professional Golf Association.
DSM:	The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Introduction

Children start learning and developing their cognitive abilities since early age. The social dimension of sex and the dichotomy of male/female seem to be their first notice, from which they start constructing the meaning of gender role in order to behave in accordance to the dominant social norms and expectancies. This process is referred to as socialization. It operates on the internalization of maleness and femaleness traits, henceforth gender identity/role. It aims to maintain social control and conformity. Therefore, childhood is characterized by vulnerability being it an age of learning and growth, also constructing one's identity and agency. Parents, school, and society are usually perceived to be the basic socializing agents in this developmental process. However, nowadays, media seems to take a significant part due to the power of image, which makes it a remarkable influential socializing power itself; especially that children spend most of their time watching TV, and facing screens.

Homosexuality is challenging these sociocultural norms, as it attempts to install itself as a natural sexual orientation rather than a deviation, or perversion from the dominant heterosexual cultural parameter. Most importantly, it is using cartoon shows as a medium to implement its ideology in children's minds in order to consolidate social acceptability and viability. Fox channel's sitcom cartoon show *The Simpsons*, which was first aired on 1989, and still continuing until nowadays is selected as a case study. Its satirical comedy is captivating the eye, not only of adults, but also children, which explains its popularity. In this sense, the intensive ideological debate to perceive sexuality as being changeable rather than a fixed reality, is now taking place through cartoons. This reflects the influence of media, as it becomes not only a digital square for commercializing products, but also ideologies.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

It is not only of common sense that childhood is considered as a unique phase of life throughout its different stages; that requires a special, appropriate, and responsible level of treatment and awareness. This is also acknowledged by international protective laws. A healthy childhood creates a healthy, critical adult. Thus, to perceive it as a fertile soil in order to plant ideological seeds; it is a violation to its conditions, and to the established international laws. Homosexuality is targeting children through cartoons by exploiting their vulnerability, and influencing their gender perceptions. It is attempting to cultivate it as a natural sexual orientation rather than a deviation from the social norms and order. This would be reflected through an analysis to the popular cartoon "The Simpsons"; especially that the

latter is regarded to as a landmark because of its engagements in the politics of sexuality and gender identity through subverting the “commonsense” or traditional beliefs.

Therefore, the present research attempts to investigate the inappropriateness of queer portrayals to children, and explore its effects on the social and psychological development of children.

Through this study, a number of questions are to be addressed and tried to be answered:

1. What was the situation in America from which the defiant attitude towards social norms occurred?
2. What ideologies could be found in cartoons with deviant gender role?
3. Why childhood is targeted to display this deviant gender role representation?
4. How is deviant gender role portrayed in cartoon characters?
5. To what extent can the deviant representations of gender role affect children's psychological and social development?

Research Aims

This research is objectively conducted aiming to:

1. Shed light on the shift in American cinema towards an inclusive and diverse tendency in general and cartoons in particular.
3. Explore the effect of this deviant role portrayal to teenagers' development.
4. Emphasize on parental surveillance, awareness, and role to protect their children.

The Significance of the Research

The debate regarding gender and sexuality has dominated research in the recent years. The field of Sociology and its academic community has extensively explored gender as an influential social construct. Previous research has thoroughly investigated gender roles attributed to man/woman, and its role in stabilizing social conformity and order. In fact the Simpsons cartoon has been perceived as a source to teach students in college about social concepts. Most importantly, its queer representations have captivated academic attention to examine it. However, it does not seem that it had covered that much to explore its effects on children; especially that cartoons appear to be a primary learning medium to understand themselves and the world around them. They are targeted to destabilize social conformity and order through fusing defiant and unusual gender roles. This study is an attempt to investigate it.

Literature Review

In his book *Television Culture (1987)*, The American Scholar John Fiske argues that social change can occur, and that Television can play a part of it. However, he clarifies that "it is wrong to see it an originator of social change, or even to claim that it ought to be so, for social change must have its roots in material social existence; but television can be, must be, part of that change, and its effectivity will either hasten or delay it"(45). In this subject, Streitmatter (2009) argues that the American attitude towards homosexuals has evolved from fear and intolerance during the 1950s into acceptance recently, and that television has played a major role in this shift of attitudes. In his book *from 'perverts' to 'Fab Five': Media's Changing Depiction of Gay Men and Lesbians*, Streitmatter argues that "The media have not merely reflected the American's public shift to a more enlightened view of gay people, but they have been instrumental in propelling that change"(2).

Amy B. Jordan and Daniel Romer in their book *Media and the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents (2014)* examine the effect of media on the development of children and teenagers and its impacts on the experience of childhood in which they state "...the context of childhood has become centered upon screens." Today, Media, including cartoons, is perceived as a source of information by children; especially teenagers. It is a digital generation whom spend hours watching TV, and "Their bedrooms are often multimedia centers..., particularly for teens"(Preface, xii). This makes them a great target for media products as it affect their health. In this concern, Amy B. Jordan and Daniel Romer say:

"As children grow, so too does their interest in the larger world—and their opportunities for risk taking. We observe, for example, that teenagers who are exposed to alcohol advertising and portrayals of characters using alcohol in the media are more at risk for underage drinking. However, understanding the unique characteristics of youth audiences can allow producers to craft messages that resonate with their developmental ages and stages"(Preface, xiii).

Therefore, cartoon shows represent a great part in their socialization process, yet they seem to be exploited in order to subvert social norms, and perpetuate homosexual themes. In this sense, acknowledging the uniqueness of childhood requires accountability to the kind of messages and contents displayed to them. Implementing deviant conceptions and ideologies regarding gender and sexuality seeks to challenge the natural heteronormative system through cartoon shows. Furthermore to change attitudes towards homosexuals by preparing a community that normalizes, and accepts their visibility. A clear understanding to these concepts is provided in Vicky S. Helgeson's book *The Psychology of Gender (2016)*, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble (1990)*.

In his book, *The Simpsons, Satire, and American Culture* (2012), Henry discusses that *The Simpsons* has large popularity not only in the United States, but also in the rest of the world. The cartoon captivates both adults and children. Through his book, the author aims "to examine the degree to which portrayals of queer identities and lives on *The Simpsons* serve to challenge normative ideologies of gender and sexuality". Henry emphasizes that "*The Simpsons* was cultivating and regularly offering its viewers a clearly established queer sensibility"(Henry 15, 17, 117).

In fact, this cartoon is perceived as a teaching source in sociology to deconstruct heterosexual and homosexual behaviors, socialization, gender roles, and gender representations since the episode of Homer's homophobia aired in 1997; as it is stated in Gilad Padvá's article "Educating *The Simpsons*: Teaching Queer Representations in Contemporary Visual Media".

Methodology

The present work uses an eclectic method combining a set of approaches that seem relevant to the core of the study:

- Content Analysis: to examine gender role representations in the selected cartoon, and analyze how characters appear and act besides to their relationships among each other in order to depict what seems as unusual or queer gender roles.
- Queer theory: to analyze deviant gender roles since it challenged the gender role order, also to depict the conveyed messages of such representations.
- Theories in sociology and psychology: Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Freud's psychoanalysis theory in order to examine the inappropriateness of queer portrayals to children's social and psychological development, so socially and individually.

Structure of the Study

The present research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter constitutes the theoretical framework of the study. The second chapter is dedicated for the histo-cultural background of the study. Then, the third chapter is solely devoted to analyze queerness through relevant episodes of *The Simpsons* cartoon, also exploring its effect on children's social and psychological development.

The first chapter, **The 1960s Counterculture Movement in America**, provides a historical overview to the context from which America's social and cultural structures started to change. This chapter also highlights this change within American cinema in general and cartoons in particular, as an elaborative overview about *The Simpsons* cartoon is presented.

The second chapter, **The Genesis of Queer Theory**, is fundamentally devoted to discuss relevant theories. It highlights the debate over gender and sexuality where feminist theory progressed to question gender construct in its journey to deconstruct power politics between man and woman. This has served as an epistemological model for queer theory to emerge in light of their intersectionality to rethink gender and sexuality. This chapter also explains the conceptualization of internalizing gender in relation to Piaget's Cognitive Development theory, and Freud's Psychoanalysis theory.

The Third Chapter, **The effect of Queer Representations on Children's Social and Psychological Development**, analyses relevant episodes of *The Simpsons* cartoon in light of queer theory. It briefly explains the importance of children's socialization process, as it explores the effect of deviant gender portrayals in cartoons on children's social and psychological growth.

Chapter One:
The Genesis of Queer Theory

1. Chapter one: The Genesis of Queer Theory

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Feminism

1.2.1 The Three Waves of Feminism

1.2.1.1 The First Wave of Feminism

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1.3 Gender vs. Sex

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1.5 The Concept of Agency

1.6 Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

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1.7 Psychoanalysis Theory

1.7.1 ID, Ego, and Superego

1.7.2 Freud's psychosexual stages

1.8 Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to discuss the theoretical background, which espouses an eclectic approach. Therefore, a set of relevant theories would be presented. Feminist movement embodied an academic frame as feminist theory emerged to surface. It takes the charge to reveal the source behind woman's oppression and struggle, and claims for woman's rights. Through this mission, the binary of sex/gender revolutionized the discourse of feminism, especially with Butler's theory of gender performativity that re-conceptualized perceptions toward sex, gender, and sexuality. Under this actuality, another theory burst from the mold of feminism. Queer theory interrogates and defies the dominant foundation of sex, gender, and sexuality, which have become resonating concepts in the contemporary era. Apparently, it is viewed that one's agency and free will to socially appropriate or deviate is rather restricted within the infused socio-cultural norms; that are being reproduced since birth.

Therefore, a brief definition for the idea of agency would be provided. In this subject, child agency seems to represent a controversial issue in sociology. Children seem to be given this status gradually, especially at the space of sexuality, and with the rising role of TV media. In this way, it is essential to discuss children's social and psychological development. This would be reflected in Freud's Psychoanalysis theory and Piagetian theory about children's cognitive learning and development, (socialization process).

1.2 Feminism

Feminism is a western concept. This word is also lexicalized recently. It appears that the term was first coined in France in the 1880s as *feminism* before forging its path through Europe and North America in 1890s and 1910 respectively. The term originally stands for a combination between the word *femme* (woman) and the suffix *isme* which denotes "a social movement or political ideology" (Freedman 3). In this sense, it was initially coined to describe woman's epiphanic movement; that marked the realization of her marginalized rights and status compare to the other sex. Thus, it is argued that feminism burst to arouse interest about understanding woman's experience from woman's point of view. By this, preluding to a hard and long lasting debate that still casts its shadows till nowadays, as the social status of woman becomes the center of feminist writings.

At the beginning, this term received pejorative connotation and wrong minded assumptions. Feminism is perceived as an angry anti-male movement; rather than a claim for equal rights movement, which interrogates the politics of power basis between man and

woman. Hooks emphasizes that "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" that is rooted in patriarchy. She views the latter as an institutionalized system for sexism, which injects sexist thought and habit since birth (1). In this actuality, patriarchy appears to be a social mindset system provoking this hegemonic binary of man domination and woman subordination.

In the midst of this reality, feminist writers moved to release woman from the oppressions of patriarchy. A mission to claim regard to her and her needs; most importantly that disrupts man bias mindset. During this, feminism encountered a critical turning point, which stripped it off that pejorative connotation. Hence, it likely started to evolve as an academic field of study. It can be said that the Contemporary Feminist Movement in the United States exposed what Friedan describes in her book *Feminine Mystique* as "the problem that has no name". She concludes that women were psychologically tormented from the social reality, which confined their core existence solely and fundamentally to serve man's needs, housing and mothering, especially in a time they were eager for more in life and wanted career (11). As a result, women anguished an identity crisis out of their traumatic reality and domestic role. Gender role categorization between man and woman intensified the situation between the sexes. Gender broke through to spotlight the next social dimensional concern of feminism among scholars and writers.

In light of the above, the historical evolvement of feminism is divided into three major phases, or "Three Waves" as termed by scholars.

1.2.1 The Three Waves of Feminism

Historically, the epistemological discourse of feminism progressively developed through three waves where feminist theory becomes more controversial and inclusive.

1.2.1.1 First Wave of Feminism

The first wave locates itself within the second half of the nineteenth century, which embodies the establishment of "Woman's Movement" or "The Suffrage Movement". Women of that time did not try for equality between man and woman; rather sought to achieve respect for their domestic role. They concerned themselves with different issues referred to as "woman's issues" such child labor laws and abolition, which puts forth the need for their voices to be heard. Thus, they called for the right to vote, and in 1920, the American woman achieved that goal, yet after, the movement witnessed stagnancy until the 1960s (Helgeson 54).

1.2.1.2 The Second Wave of Feminism

The second wave of feminism stands as a landmark that washed over the American culture with the 1960s sexual revolution. Woman's Liberation Movement revealed the seeds of change. Plainly, contemporary woman writings focused on woman's subordination. Their movement resonated for economic and political equality between man and woman, also their difference in terms of reproduction and sexuality areas (Freedman 4, 5). It looks that these served as catalytic arenas for the feminist movement formation. In this concern, Hooks argues that women issued their bodies as personal properties. In this sense, it was their free choice to be sexual with whomever they would like, and whenever they want. Furthermore, issuing free sex confronts women to find safe ways to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Thus, they believed reproduction was woman's free right and choice as well. They viewed resolutions in contraceptive pills and in access to abortion clinics (25). This came at the heart of the sixties sexual revolution. It is argued that Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) were amongst the pioneering oeuvres, which triggered woman's consciousness. Friedan emphasizes to "take action to bring woman into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof, in truly partnership with men"(370). Thus, claiming a new life for woman.

1.2.1.3 The Third Wave of Feminism

Feminism continued forging its discourse, as it became more controversial. The third wave of feminism like its predecessors sustained its political agendas, but now rising more inclusive racially and sexually through different cultures and backgrounds. Thus, the term feminism has become open to changes in meaning, and has continued redefining itself to become a "diverse movement that emphasizes female empowerment rather than male oppression"(Freedman 6). In this sense, the third wave of feminism embodied a diverse feminist movement. It likely became a global cultural platform to eliminate all forms of discrimination against all women. In this subject, Helgeson states that the contemporary woman's recognition of gender intersectionality with race and class; rather globalized woman's movement to recognize the struggle commonality shared by women worldly, and not only concerns the white western middle class woman. Most importantly that "traditional gender roles are grounded in culture"(57). Black feminism, lesbian feminism, and the so-

called third world feminism represent examples to this diversity, especially after feminist thoughts like liberal feminism¹ and radical feminism² emerged.

Therefore, Feminism is not only an endeavor to understand the world from the lenses of woman, but more likely a socio-cultural reformation that seeks securing, empowering, and claiming respect to woman. Thus, asserting her identity against the hierarchical social system that devalued woman, and ranked man superior to her.

As mentioned above, to fully encapsulate the progressive insight of feminist theory; gender cannot be divorced from its context. This seems to come at the heart of deconstructing the politics of power between man and woman.

1.3 Gender vs. Sex

According to Freedman the gender/ sex binary has revolutionized the discourse of feminism in late twentieth century (5). It likely starts to question whether man and woman were biological or social phenomena. Thus, it goes beyond studying or comparing the similarities and differences between man and woman, into more likely exposing the source creating this social hierarchical mindset and practice.

For so long these terms were being used interchangeably and inconsistently. However, Helgeson sharply distinguishes the two. The theorist clarifies that sex is a biological category to indicate female/male identity, which is organized by genitals, chromosomal and hormonal features. For example, the Y chromosome is a male sex given feature. In this way, it is relatively a fixed reality regulated by natural biological characteristics. Thus, "culture has no influence on one's sex". Moreover, that gender is a social category for the biological category of female/male. In this sense, gender is a social assumption or interpretation of being feminine and masculine in terms of psychology, personality, behavior, appearance, and interests that varies between cultures. For instance, she states that in United States, emotionality and dependency are psychological traits attributed to woman while competitiveness, stoicism, and leadership for man. Therefore, nurturance is expected to be a female gender feature whereas sports and work were expected to be a male gender feature. In this way, gender appears to stand as a social prescription of features and

¹ Liberal Feminism represents one of the earliest feminist forms of thought. It concerns itself with establishing equality between man and woman. "It reflects the idea that women and men are essentially the same and should have equal opportunities" (see Helgeson 135).

² Radical Feminism represents a feminist form of thought. It emerged after the 1960s (see Freedman, Preface). It focuses on woman's relationship and power politics, and "emphasizes the oppression of women by men (see Helgeson 135).

patterns for woman and man to appropriate. It is not a biological fact but a social construction; rather likely to be influenced through time by society's background, culture, religion, which makes it instable. Hence, this presupposes that there could not be one unified form of masculine and feminine conceptualization in the world (30).

Furthermore, Helgeson argues that the term gender role better outlines this social influence to sex (female and male) than gender. It captures the localization of female and male's social position proceeding from a set of social expectancies and rules for femininity and masculinity to act in accordance to. Typically, woman is perceived as being sensitive, emotional, caring while man as being strong, confident, and aggressive. In other words, it is argued that it advocates for a sort of rigid social roles for man and woman to adjust. Seemingly, these gender roles organize social relations, as they establish a kind of a social control or conformity through enforcing these gender norms and expectations in everyday life and interactions. Likely, the simplest representation of this role gendering comes to be in ascribing pink color to baby girl and blue color to baby boy, even before they are born. Thus, it is a process which starts since birth onwards, as the sex category appears to be children's first notice (27, 28, 31). Then it likely goes to encompass a structure of norms indicating acceptances, limitations and prohibitions.

In this consideration, gender becomes a controversial concern of feminism that fundamentally opposes patriarchy. It appears that this distinction in the binary of gender/ sex has been useful to feminist theory in order to explain that the differentiation between man and woman is socially produced and instable. Hence, a number of feminists instigated it as being the centric motif for the whole social structure, which delineates both social acceptability and denial for feminine and masculine roles.

Feminist theory starts to interrogate this social privilege about dominance, power categorization and attributes. In this subject, De Beauvoir declares that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman"(281). This connotes her belief that being a "woman" is not a biological destiny that one is born with; rather something made. It seems important here to look to the concept of woman as an abstract. Thus, to suggest that physical sex or biological sex (male or female body) has not to imply masculine or feminine social qualities. In other words, female body has not to exclusively display feminine trait, and masculine trait is not only interpreted for male body.

Butler developed this belief and revolutionized the discourse of feminism. She seems to shift the focus fundamentally to gender, and gives it the primacy with her Gender

Performativity Theory in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990); that explains how the construction of gender works, or how gender identity is formed with referring to its fluid nature.

1.3.1 Gender Performativity Theory

Butler proposes that gender is a performative process that is established upon a set of sustained, regular and repetitive gendered acts, which operates outside the self and affects it. In this sense, gender is not an internal feature that one is born with, but rather a feature that is performed and acquired. Hence, that one becomes. She explains that "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effect through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration"(xiv, xv). Thus, as aforementioned, gender appears to be a continuous, dynamic process that is socially constructed and reinforced. Most importantly, it "proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed "(33). Therefore, gender becomes an act that brings one into being in the milieu of masculinity or femininity.

In this way, Butler's notion of performativity in the construction of gender is likely to be centered on the idea of repetitiveness of these acts, which are continuously forming gender identity that could not exist prior to these gendered acts, but rather while are being performed. Moreover, this performativity conception puts forth or implies that gender is not fixed, but fluid, or as she describes "free-floating", so changeable since it is a social fabrication that varies amongst cultures and through time. Throughout her work, she claims that "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being", which puts forth that "gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity [...] gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts (Butler 10, 44, 179).

Therefore, gender appears as a social manifestation, which follows from physical sex differences through a range of repeated acts. Freedman comments that this operates structural discrimination through individuals' daily life practices, and then originates or constructs their attitudes, which seems to create a gender hierarchy. Thus, a sort of inequality between the sexes has come to the fore; especially that "Every culture views man and woman through what psychologist Sandra Bem calls 'the lenses of gender'" (167, 168).

It seems essential here to clarify a common misconception. Gender identity is not similar to sexual orientation, which denotes one's sexual preferences with partners of same or

different sex. In other words, indicating one's sexuality. Heterosexuality refers to sexual attraction to the other sex whereas homosexuality³ to the sexual attraction to same sex. Yet, this does not abolish the fact that sexual orientation stands as a major criterion in defining one's identity (Helgeson 37).

Butler states that "identity is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality" where individuals turn intelligible inasmuch as they confirm and suit to the expected rules and norms of "gender intelligibility"(22, 23). Although, Butler goes further with her performativity conceptualization; she tries to draw a link between gender and sexuality, also deconstructing the binary of gender/sex.

In this subject, the theorist poses the question where she elaborates the distinction between sex and gender, and suggests that "sex is as culturally constructed as gender"(Butler 10). In her work *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler emphasizes that sex is not purely biological, and that the female/ male category is also constructed. She states that "'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time" via regulatory norms and practices that governs and differentiates bodies (1). Thus, she concludes that sex is not a simple bodily descriptive condition, but seemingly a performative process, "whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieves this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms"; that assumes bodily form to sex, hence sexual differences. According to her, this serves to centralize "heterosexual imperative" as a hegemonic force (2). This puts forth that sexuality is constructed, also constitutes identity fixation and stabilization.

Furthermore, Butler argues that "sexual practice has the power to destabilize gender". Seemingly, she views that gender serves in a way as a mechanism of organizing and securing heterosexual relations and hegemony. This seems not only oppressing woman, but also homosexuals who seem afraid from the impacts of revealing their truth, hence the crisis to lose their gender identity and belonging (xi). In other words, it is argued that the construction of gender seems to achieve naturalizing heterosexuality as being the normative setting for sexuality, since it influences and organizes social relations and interactions. Thus, likely, she attempts to spark the attention that the source of oppression is grounded in heterosexual hegemony.

Apparently, this epistemological matrix have not only revolutionized feminist theory to eliminate gender and promoted change, but also served as a model or frame of reference

³ Homosexuality: Gay and Lesbian identities.

for queer theory to forge in the light of their intersectionality concerning the notions of gender and sexuality. Feminist and queer ideas seem to interconnect in their quest to explore gender and sexuality in order to rethink and recognize new directions concerning these notions, especially with their influence in defining one's identity and social relations. In this subject, Butler's works has become a pioneering reference for both Feminist theory and queer theory.

1.4 Queer Theory

Seemingly, marginalization was not projected to women only as a social class whom struggled to resist oppression. The context where feminism was established as a theory or academic discipline in order to claim for woman's rights in political, economic, and social arenas. Woman was perceived as being variant and ranked secondly and relatively to man under the categorical binary, like previously discussed. Manifestly, minorities with unusual or deviant sexual practices and gender roles, and who do not comply with the norms and rules of gender intelligibility also received marginalization and oppression. Thus, they followed an analogous path to feminism to challenge and resist the binaries and norms that relegated them, as queer theory was established to be a theoretical frame.

It appears that as an academic conceptualization and framing, "queer theory" was first coined by Teresa De Lauretis to defy the discourse of heterosexuality as being the normal and dominant parameter for sexuality. In this, opening the possibilities of other considerations, hence proceeding Butler in this. De Lauretis views that queer theory "conveys a double-emphasis—on the conceptual and speculative work involved in discourse production, and on the necessary critical work of deconstructing our own discourses and their constructed silence"(qtd. in Barnett and Johnson 581).

Butler's theory of gender performativity sparks and fortifies this perspective to destabilize and subvert identity fixation within the dominant heteronormative construction. Accordingly, if gender is a performative process that is based on a set of norms. This restrict one's agency and autonomy because one cannot decide about his/her gender, yet gender still is a part of what decides and defines identity. It, thus, determines its being. It can be argued that this highlights Butler's suggestion that the binaristic discourse of gender operates in sexual difference and on the construction of sexuality, which aims to naturalize heterosexuality as being the standard and normal. Thus, she declares that "to make gender trouble", this requires deconstructing and subverting "the constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity", especially that

" the 'unity' of gender is the effect of a regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality (42, 44). Manifestly, this actuality is foreclosing gender roles and identities.

In this sense, exposing the illusive reality of gender can bring change at the social, cultural and political spheres. Hence, if identities are constructed, they construct differently and freely, as new possibilities can exist. She concludes:

"If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old" (Butler 189).

Therefore, Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) can be perceived as an endeavor to break the shell of gender, which marginalized both woman and homosexuals. The idea of performativity and fluidity helps to understand gender in one hand, but also appears to reveal as a gap or flow, which can serve like a resistance strategy to destabilize and dismantle gender through bringing out what is outside the binaries. Seemingly, she tries to cause this trouble through proposing "a set of parodic practices based in performative theory of gender acts that disrupt the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame"(Butler xxxi). An example of what she discusses would be in the new butch and femme identities⁴, drag⁵, and lesbian and gay parenting, which are queer or deviant gender role attributes.

It is important, here, to clarify that in the notion of butch and femme lesbianism. Butch is viewed as "being a man" or taking the place of a masculine gender role, yet lesbians disagree and clarifies that butchness seeks for the access and the status granted for man, so a kind of the public privilege given to him (Butler xi). Therefore, queer theory has its roots in feminist framework.

In general, it is perceived as a "heteronormativity's antithesis, a defiantly non-normative notion of human social relations that rejects sex and gender binaries, obfuscates essentialist identities" (Barnett and Johnson 581). In this way, it aims to challenge the stream

⁴ Butch and Femme: a form of lesbianism. The lesbian part appears when a woman reveals romantic and sexual interest to another woman. Lesbians assuming feminine gender role (femme) or masculine gender role (butch) who dresses, acts, or speaks in ways that the society considers as being manish appearance and attracted to woman (see Valk).

⁵ Drag queen is a man who enjoys dressing like a woman through using makeup and woman closing style in entertainment performances (see Colin).

of thought; that institutionalizes heterosexuality as the normal and natural setting for identity, by interrogating what defines normal/abnormal, natural/unnatural or deviant. Thus, it likely takes the charge to represent those who refuse to be assimilated or locked within the cultural boundaries identifications, and reject to be limited and controlled. They seem to rise like a kind of opposite social construction to the dominant one.

In this sense, queer theory takes the shape of a socio-cultural reformation of a new resistant and defiant stream of thought; that seeks to dismantle and destabilize the regulative parameters of heteronormative hegemony. The conceptualization of queer theory is embodied in its nomenclature itself. Thus, it is also important to highlight it.

1.4.1 The Term Queer

In *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler notes that the term queer has been historically associated to shame, insult, accusation, perversion, and pathology, hence as pejorative signification. After, "The term 'queer' emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity". In this way, queer starts to counter the homophobic stigmatization of shame and taboo practiced by the heterosexual hegemony to describe those who resist and rebel against social rules (233). Thus, it can be argued that the term queer started to take the scope of a resistance; that seeks to rend this silenced social faction voiced, visible, and viable by questioning the status of authorizing and sanctioning what is normal, and what is deviant. This reflects the effort to reverse the shaming stigmatization into pride, so queer comes as a shield to redefine this marginalized faction. In this sense, it becomes an endeavor to challenge "that binarised and hierarchised sexual categorization which classifies homosexuality as a deviation from a privileged and naturalised heterosexuality" (Jagose 72).

Coming out of the closet is a resonating notion in the academic framework of queer theory; that it is important to clarify it.

1.4.2 Coming Out of the Closet

"Coming out Of the Closet" is a slang used by individuals of queer or deviant sexual preferences to celebrate, and declare their sexual preferences overtly. Sedgwick pictures the closet like a "defining structure for gay oppression", and so homosexuals. In this sense, she portrays the closet as the system which relegates homosexuals' live, and compels them to keep their sexual attraction secret and private (71).

In broader sense, the crux of feminist and queer theories seems interrogating and defying the restrictions and the foreclosing on one's agency, which constrains its ability to

decide and act freely within the cultural dominant norms. The socio-cultural structural system's realm of norms dictates approvals and rejections in terms of thoughts and behaviors; that operates to sustain gender roles and social conformity in general sense.

1.5 The Concept of Agency

In the field of sociology, the concept of agency is likely perceived as a reflection to one's critical cognitive mindset. Hence, it stands for the individual's capacity to act autonomously or independently in order to make its own free choices and express itself. In this way, "agency is the power people have to think for themselves and act in ways that shape their experiences and life trajectories". It is important here, to refer that this ability is influenced by a range of variables, such as social class, religion, gender, and ethnicity, so according to the dominant social norms and expectancies. Most importantly, that these are shaping the thought, behavior, and life experience of individuals (Cole).

However, in the sociology of childhood, agency reflects a controversial issue in terms of perceiving, locating, and interpreting child agency, especially that both agency and childhood seem to be complex subjects.

According to the United Nations on the Rights of the Child, a child is any person below the age of 18 years old. Parents and family's chief role is to provide the care and protection from any form of abuse against children. Moreover, The UNICEF emphasizes that childhood is a separate space from adulthood, which puts forth that what seems appropriate in the world of adult may not suit children. Thus, childhood needs to be centered upon a healthy and peaceful environment within family and school (Uniting Voices For Children, Childhood Defined). This presupposes that infants, teenagers, youth are all terms enveloped under the concept of child. Also, it appears to denote that childhood is a sensitive age phase that needs protection, and ought to be separated and secured from the dangers and problems of adults' world because it is an age of innocence, vulnerability, and growth. It can be said that a child is like a seed that when cultivated carefully, it fruitionizes. This is supported through child developmental theories in sociology.

1.6 Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

The concept of cognition in Piaget's theory illustrates the process of creating and arranging meaning from experiences in order to develop rationality with children. This reflects Piaget's belief that "knowledge is constructed" with children through biological maturation and environmental engagement (B. Newman and Ph. Newman 35, 37).

Piaget revealed interest to understand why children provide wrong answers to questions, which only required logical thinking and awareness. Apparently, this demonstrates his belief that children's thinking mechanism differs from the one of adults. This notion deconstructs the common postulate that perceived kids as mini-adults, who possess less competence and low modality of thought. He believes that children's intellectuality is not naturally formed, but rather constructed and developed progressively through structural active mental processes, which are based on "biological maturation and environmental experiences [and interactions]". Hence, he proposes that children's cognitive development to acquire knowledge is a dynamic explorative process; that is centered upon four consistent stages from infancy to adolescence onwards. He also, emphasizes on the sequential order of these stages, and indicates their universality and relativity to all children around the world despite the culture they are born into. Hence, it seems that the learning process is the same in conformity with any cultural parameters (McLeod, "Piaget").

1.6.1 Piaget's Four Stages of Cognitive Development

According to Piaget, children go through four stages in order to approach the level of cognitive rationality. A child starts building and organizing its knowledge in form of units or cards also known as "schemas"; that stand like an applicable ground to its future experiences, since they describe a representative model to its environment and the world. Moreover, the child develops from stage to another through an adaptation process, as he/she appropriates to its environmental model background progressively. Seemingly, these stages reflect the process's complexity of constructing thought and rationality with children (McLeod, "Piaget").

The first stage is referred to as **the sensorimotor stage** (from birth till age 2); at this level children rely on their sense organs. The second is referred to as **the preoperational stage** (from age 2 to age 7); at this level children's ability evolve. They begin thinking about things through a pattern of attributed symbols to concrete objects. Then, the third stage, known as **the concrete operational stage** (from age 7 to age 11 years); Piaget perceives it as an essential level in the process of child's cognitive development and thinking. According to him, it delineates the birth point of approaching rationality. At this level, children start working things in their mind with no need to symbolic representations. Finally, the fourth stage, **the formal operational stage** (from 11 years old onwards through adulthood); this stage outlines the continuous process of developing the ability of cognitive and logical thinking. Hence, abstract concepts began to be approached. It seems essential to clarify that

these stages do not embody a process of storing ideas, concepts, or what Piaget refers to with schemas, but a process of accommodation. The pre-existed schemas are being accommodated with new assimilated experiences. Thus, it goes beyond only storing concepts into changing and fitting them with pre-existed representations (McLeod, "Piaget").

It can be argued that sexuality is one of the conflicting concepts which children encounter, especially at the final stage of puberty because it encompasses physical and psychological changes. Thus, children's self-understanding is in its crucial time.

Another discipline focusing on child's development as a field of study would be psychology. This seems to highlight the sophisticated nature of this process.

1.7 Psychoanalysis Theory

Psychoanalysis is a theoretical framework and therapy originated by Sigmund Freud. It aims to release the psyche from repressed feelings and experiences as a method of therapeutic catharsis and healing. Thus, it studies the human mind and its role in human behaviors.

Freud believes that the individual's actions and decisions are largely linked and grounded in early childhood experiences and events, which influence and shape the individual's personality formation and behavioral development. His study puts emphasize on the unconscious part of the mind. He recognizes the close connection between repression and the unconscious. Thus, the discovery of the unconscious mind owes its inspiration to Freud with his theory therapy Psychoanalysis. Apparently, repression is a resonating notion at both social and individual level. Whereas social repression seems to protect and maintain social control and cultural norms, an individual's self-repression is to be believed according to Freud, like a defense mechanism, which aims to protect the psyche from anxiety and unwanted realities or feelings. Therefore, this mechanism works on resisting and preventing unconscious impulses from becoming conscious. In this, repression becomes a centerpiece that reflects one's psychological report or history (Frosh 21).

In this subject, Freud seems to emphasize Thomas Hobbes's statement; that views the natural state of human nature as being instinctively driven to the fulfillment of bodily needs such food, but mostly sexual desires, or what he calls the Eros (the life instinct). In addition to the destruction tendency such murder, hunting, aggression, and violence, which he refers to as Thanatos (the death instinct). Thus, according to him, during the course of childhood, human beings begin to be social agents through socialization where they learn to restrain these instincts in conformity with what is socially accepted as behaviors. Most importantly,

he believes in the crucial role of parental and societal intervention during these years in managing children's instinctive urges, and its impact in shaping their character and development in life (Shaffer 39).

Freud divides the human psyche to three conflicting parts: ID, Ego, and Superego.

1.7.1 ID, Ego, and Superego

The Freudian account divides the human psyche into three parts. First, **the ID** or the pleasure principle represents instincts and desires such sex and aggression, and it is developed since birth. It seeks for instant pleasure through meeting the desired demands and gratifications immediately. It seems that these desires and drives do not often receive acceptability in the external world because of its immorality, irrationality, and violent nature. According to Freud, this part of the self is located in the unconscious mental structure of the mind, which is the most significant aspect in Freud's theory. It comprises the hidden thoughts, desires, and emotions that one is not aware of, and it also occupies the largest portion of the mind compared to the conscious mental structure, which represents little of the thoughts, feelings that one expose with awareness, and it composes a small portion of the mind (McLeod, "What").

Second, **the superego** or the morality principle stands for the set of social mores and conventions; that children internalize from their parents and society. It is developed through childhood as children become socialized and identified with the followed standards (McLeod, "What").

Finally, **the ego** or the reality principle seems to operate like a mediator between the ID and the superego, as it seeks to balance between these two opposed forces. The ego checks between the unconscious desire for pleasure of the ID and the moral account of the superego, and then nominates the appropriate behavior. It plays the rational component of the human mind. In other words, it embodies the cognitive function of Piaget's theory. In this sense, it can be argued that the human mind is a sophisticated system, which is in internal conflict due to these parts' competition for incompatible demands (McLeod, "What").

Defense mechanisms illustrate the ego's mediating role. It seems that denial and repression, which was Freud's focus, exhibit children's initial and basic used defense mechanisms; that the ego uses to protect the psyche from distorted realities through blocking unwanted thoughts out of consciousness. As more forms of defense strategies occur later through developing complex cognitive abilities. Repression prohibits unacceptable thoughts and feelings while denial refuses to acknowledge them in order to avoid painful or shameful

realities (B. Newman and Ph. Newman 32). Especially that according to Freud, human beings are likely to be a machines of desires where "the state of reason [...] and conscious control over one's psychological 'self', is not a state of nature, but of culture" (Frosh 25). Thus, the human behavior is controlled by the accountment of the cultural and social standards to be appropriated to.

Moreover, Freud developed his psychosexual stages account; that highlights his assumption about the conflicting process of human development, which is perceived as a milestone in studying child development.

1.7.2 Freud's Psychosexual Stages

Freud divides the human self into three major components, which are developed gradually since birth through five psychosexual stages. These envelope his assumption; that the process of children's character or conduct development is centered upon five stages spanning from infancy to adolescence; especially, in the first six years. He emphasizes on "sexuality as a driving force" where pleasure develops from sucking to sexual intercourse through different body areas due to biological maturation, and each of these areas is reflecting its specific sexual importance (B. Newman and Ph. Newman 31).

The Oral stage, during the first year after birth, the sexual instinct is centered on the mouth from which the child derives his pleasure such sucking. Freud believes that during this stage, a child "becomes aware of the distinction between the self and the others [...] that all wishes cannot be satisfied". **The anal stage**, embodied in the second year after birth, the sexual instinct here is characterized in the anus, as children learn the appropriate toilet behavior from their parents in accordance to the cultural standard. **The phallic stage**, between the ages of three to six, pleasure is derived from stimulating genitals. Thus, this period is represented in "genital sensitivity" and awareness even though no puberty hormonal changes occur. This stage is marked by the development of the Oedipus complex⁶ in boys and Electra complex⁷ in girls. The child is conflicted by unaccepted fantasies where the infant becomes sexually attracted to the parent of opposite sex, and competes with the parent of same-sex for its affection and attention. This rival paves for the child to internalize its gender role identity, as they attribute the same characteristics of same-sex parent. **The latency stage**,

⁶ Oedipus Complex: a conflict arises from a boy's unconscious sexual desire for his mother, and hostile attitude towards his father, who views it as a rival (see McLeod, "Oedipus Complex").

⁷ Electra complex: comparable to the Oedipus Complex, it is a conflict which arises from the girl's sexual attachment for her father; as she competes her mother for his affection (see McLeod, "Oedipus Complex").

it lasts from the age of seven till puberty. Through this stage, the phallic stage's conflict is repressed, and no sexual impulses emerge. However, the ego continues developing and maturing (31).

The final stage is **the genital stage** from puberty onwards. Puberty period and hormonal changes alarms the sexual impulses to increase after the stagnancy state of the latency period. Pleasure in this stage is derived from sexual intercourse. Adolescents have to express these sexual instincts in accordance to what is socially acceptable and perceived to be healthy. The stressful nature of adolescence is related to "the sexual threat that the mature adolescent poses to the family unit. In effort to avoid this threat, adolescents may withdraw from their families or temporally devalue their parents", hence adolescence is likely to be a stormy period for the child to understand and identify itself authentically (31, 32).

Therefore, according to Freud, the psychosexual phallic stage marks the beginning of gender identification process; that is resulting from the tumultuous rival against their same-sex parent to gain the attention of the opposite sex parent. In this way, "children acquire 'masculine' or 'feminine' identities (gender roles), and a strong internalized conscience, or superego" (Shaffer 40). This paves the way for the child to acquire a heterosexual identity.

1.8 Conclusion

Feminism theory took the charge to challenge the social biased mindset toward man. It sought to change woman's oppressive reality. It was shaped through three progressive waves. In the midst of this journey, gender has become the central motif for this theoretical discourse. It appears that gender has been targeted as the source creating the social sexual hierarchies. It is not similar to sex that is the biological identity in birth certificate, but rather seems to be a social construction, which is formed at the basis of the dominant cultural norms in order to establish social conformity. In this sense, a female was expected to display femininity traits whereas masculinity was expected to be a male's gender identity.

In this subject, Butler's performativity theory revolutionized the path of this theoretical framework. She concludes that gender is not an innate characteristic that one is born with, but rather a doing process based on a range of continuously repeated acts, which defines one into feminine or masculine identities. The theorist goes further with her assumption. She views that gender operates to sustain heteronormativity. In other words, gender seeks to perpetuate heterosexuality as being the normal and dominant relational parameter in order to maintain gender conformity. According to Butler's performativity theory, since gender is a performative process, so it is instable, and is influenced through time

and space. In this sense, if gender identities are constructed, they can be constructed differently.

This conceptualization represented a reference for a new theory, which draws its inspiration from the template of feminism. Queer theory emerges to resist masculine/feminine gender binary. It urges to perceive gender rather as a spectrum of different gender identities. In this way, homosexuality ought not to be a deviant or abnormal form of sexuality, but a normal variation, which guarantees the visibility, and viability of gay and lesbian individuals. Therefore, it can be said that feminism and queer theory operate to break the restrictions on one's agency in order to claim for their rights; especially that agency seems to be shaped from the lenses of culture. According to them this creates heterosexual man biased hegemony, which oppresses both woman and individuals with deviant gender roles or identities.

Apparently, the idea of agency with children turns to be complex due to the complexity of childhood itself. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children are born with no knowledge. They come to construct it while growing up through their environmental explorative experiences. This process is referred to as the socialization process; that proceeds according to the norms of the society's dominant culture including sex, gender, and sexuality. It starts since birth towards adulthood where children come to develop their cognitive abilities progressively. Piaget divides this process into four stages: The Sensorimotor Stage, the Preoperational Stage, the Concrete Operational Stage, and the Formal Operational Stage.

Moreover, Freud's ideas about child development emphasize the relation of early child experiences and development in shaping its personality and behavior as an adult. He divides the human personality (Also referred to as the self or psyche) into three parts: the ID (the pleasure principle), the superego (the morality principle), and the ego (the reality principle). According to him, these parts are in constant conflict where the ego plays a sort of a mediator to balance between the instinct of pleasure such sex and the society' system of rules. This operates in order to protect the psyche from painful or unbearable realities which may lead one to anxiety and depression. He claims that the healthy development of these parts goes through five psychosexual stages: the oral stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage, the latency stage, and the genital stage. During the phallic stage the child develops his gender role identity out of what Freud refers to as the Oedipal and Electra complexes, which paves for the child to embrace a heterosexual identity.

Therefore, it can be said that childhood is an important age phase. It is a phase of development at different levels. The child develops socially while growing up through different experiences; that shape his/her knowledge or cognition including gender. Also, psychologically where the infant become able to control its instinctive desires rationally, and internalize gender identity. The ego seems to reflect Piaget's idea of cognitive ability. This is why childhood is perceived as the golden age because it plays an important key in shaping rational healthy adults.

Chapter Two:
The 1960s Counterculture Movement
in America

2. Chapter Two: The 1960s Counterculture Movement in America

2.1 Introduction

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2.1 Introduction

The United States' history seems to be a long and hard trajectory of debates and disputes about the idea of America and being an American. This cultural struggle is remarkably tangible in the second half of the twentieth century. In this concern, the 1960s represents a watershed period in the American history and culture. The sixties episode marks a rebellious movement to redefine America's social and cultural structures. It is known as "the counterculture movement".

Therefore, this chapter is devoted to examine the meaning of "counterculture" as concept. Then explore the sixties' youth revolutionary counterculture movement. It is essential, here, to refer to America's famous generation known as the baby boomers, and explain the gap which they evoked with past generation in terms of traditions and values.

Furthermore, the radical identity movements embodied the counterculture inspirations. It was held by many marginalized and alienated groups who sought to institutionalize their identity and be integrated in the American Dream. Thereof, this chapter will briefly address African American' Civil Rights Movement, The Anti-war Movement, and Hippies' Movement which intensified the counterculture with the youth's sexual revolution. It was followed by Woman' liberation Movement and Gay Liberation Movement to delineate the pick of the counterculture.

Lastly, an overview about the raising of queer cinema from the 1960s, and the inclusiveness and diversity tendency within the American screen. This shift would be highlighted in the American cartoon show "The Simpsons", which would be taken as a study example that reflects the impacts of the counterculture; especially that the show mirrors the American culture. Hence, an elaborative overview to this cartoon would be provided.

2.2 The term Counterculture

The 1960s stands as a remarkable episode in the American history. It embodies a range of social movements. Seemingly, these marked for a new map for the American culture. It is referred to as the counterculture movement. Therefore, it seems important to comprehend what is meant by counterculture as a concept first. However in order to encapsulate a full understanding to this term, one must be first familiar with the meaning of culture.

One common idea about culture is that system of values, beliefs, thoughts and attitudes that constitute a society. Anthropologists coin a general consensus that human

culture is a platform of human behaviors and thoughts, including values, norms, and patterns of meaning and attitudes (Kroeber and Kluchohn 3-5).

However, Yinger argues that complex modern societies such the case of the American one constitute a dominant culture and a number of various subcultures. Therefore, he emphasizes on the usefulness to draw a distinctive line between subculture and what he suggests as "contraculture". This is because, according to him, throughout the 100 sources he examined, the term subculture is used differently which blurred its meaning and concept. Yinger results that subculture is on one hand used "to point to the normative systems of groups smaller than a society, to give emphasis to the ways these groups differ in such things as language, values, religion, diet and style of life from the larger society of which they are a part". On the other hand it referred "to norms that arise specifically from a frustrating situation or from conflict between a group and the larger society". In order to resolve this confusion, Yinger introduces a new concept to separate subsocieties' normative systems from norms rising out of repressive circumstances. Thus, "Contraculture" denotes a deviant group's complete opposition or conflict with the control of the larger society's dominant culture while subcultures are more likely different in terms of ethnic, racial, social class, and other distinctive elements (Yinger 625-627,629). In this way the African-American culture, the Latino culture, Native Americans culture all are examples of subcultures in the United States. They appear more likely associated to multicultural contexts.

Apparently, there are conflicting opinions about who first coined the term Counterculture. Roberts argues that "The term counter-culture was apparently first used by Talcott Parsons in *The Social System* (1951:522), but he gave the term no clear definition". He views that Yinger's published *article Contraculture & Subculture* in 1960; rather the first hallmark to grant the term a wider academic discourse in the field of sociology (111). In fact, in his book *Countercultures*, published in 1982, J. Milton Yinger returns and contributes his observation that a counterculture is "a set of norms and values of a group that sharply contradict the dominant norms and values of the society of which that group is a part" (833). Theodore Roszak's 1969 book, *The Making of a Counter culture* is also perceived as the author who coined and popularized the term (Woo). The dramatic youth rebellion of 1960s poses itself as an illustrative case.

2.3 The 1960s Counterculture Movement

By the fall of 1960s, a radical counterculture movement emerged to American scene. It was overwhelmingly drifted out by youth who viewed the American culture repressive and

stereotypically homogeneous. Apparently, they believed that the whole American sociocultural system of beliefs was altogether wrong rather than only in need of repair. Thus, they took defiant tone and behavior against authorities that legitimized dominant norms and values, and sought for change. This youth generation is referred to as The Baby Boomers Generation.

2.3.1 The Boom Generation

The Second World War had dramatically affected people's psyche and life in general. Seemingly, after returning home at the end of the war, The American soldiers were eager to start their own families after long sixteen years of economic depression and war. It forced them to postpone marriage and having children. Also, it marked the beginning of the so-called Baby Boom. The years between 1946 and 1964 embodied the outnumbering of the demographic population in America. Birth rate was higher than ever in the American history at that time. The historian Landon Jones, in his book *Great Expectations* (1981), describes the phenomenon "the cry of the baby was heard across the land" (qtd. in Patterson 77). In fact, In *Grand Expectations* (1996), Patterson estimates that the number of babies skyrocketed to reach 76.4million by 1964. It is almost two-fifths of the nation's population of 192 million at that time. Also, he gives number of hypotheses given by historians and demographers to explain this astonishing trend. Patterson states the possibility of having a normal life after the end of the war, and hoping for prosperity and peace. Another possibility fears the communist threat and cold war (77, 78).

2.3.2 The Generation Gap

At time these boomers became youth, they revealed consciousness and readiness to indulge in a movement of defiance. Reszak describes the trend "a progressive' adolescentization' of dissenting thought and culture"(40). Because of their large demographic size, they dominated the counterculture and generated a Generation Gap. The older or parent generation witnessed the 1930s Great Depression and 1940s World War II. Likely, they experienced cruel childhood and were preoccupied by the idea of sustaining a secure life. It is believed that this explains their fundamentally economic interests to provide living for their families, and ignored the American culture mainstream in politics and social values effects; that was criticized and repudiated by the boomers. The divergent mind-thought and values between parents' generation and young generation is often referred to as the generation gap. Miller comments that gap generation issue is widely discussed within the counterculture

discourse. He describes the old generation being "moribund" where cultural change was inevitable (xix).

2.3.3 The Antiwar Movement and the African-Americans' Civil Rights Movement

Disillusionment and despair lurked beneath the sixties promises and hopes to fulfill the American dream. The decade opened with John Fitzgerald Kennedy's winning of the presidencies "Promising to 'take the first steps' to eliminate poverty and injustice in America" and "Making America Great Again" (Maga xxii, 1). However, this soon turned to political assassinations when Kennedy was shot dead in Dallas, Texas, 1963. The war on poverty started to diminish with American government prioritizing war on Vietnam which was quite expensive, also deteriorated the country's economy. Therefore, frustration and antiwar sentiment escalated, and boomers who reached campuses burst in large protests and demonstrations to call for ending poverty and war (History.com Editors).

In 1964, students at the University of California at Berkeley indulged in the FSM "to end the restrictions placed by the University of California on campus political activity" (Cohen and Zelnik 1). Then, followed by other student movements and groups across the land; it included the SDS at the University of Michigan, the VVAW organization, and the hippies counterculture (Maga 200). These protests marked the beginning of the middle-class youth movement in America from which the counterculture erupted (Larkin 73). The antiwar sentiment pivoted students' political activism at that time, especially with the role of news media in coverage. It seems that images of destruction and death of the Vietnam War intensified the American public sentiment, and believed in the immorality of the war taking place since 1950s ("The student movement"). Student Jack Weinberg warned to trust anyone over thirty during the FSM demonstrations (Duncan 145). This exemplifies the wideness of the gap between old generation and boomers.

California Governor Ronald Reagan confronted these protests with armed police force while promising to "clean up the mess at Berkeley"; that is the place where students held their political activism in large (Lawrence and Cummins 33). The New Left is a title that was broadly given to these social activists' political movement. It was led by the SDS, and defined students' radicalism in 1960s (Isserman and Kazin 168,170). It is essential here to mention another movement taking place through the sixties, and importantly inspiring students' demonstrations.

The Civil Rights Movement represents a defining element for the sixties when Jim Crow laws of racial segregation were a main scene in the American culture. In 1960s, four black students entered whites- only luncheonette in Greensboro, North Carolina, and refused to leave before served. They started a movement to encounter racial segregation in restaurants, transportation and public places. Furthermore, they attempted to accentuate the cruelty and brutality of Jim Crow Laws (History.Com Editors). Apparently, black people got fed up by racism and discrimination norms. Moreover, in the March on Washington, DC, Martin Luther King's famous speech "I Have a Dream" resonated for equality and justice. He screamed "go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation" (Bjornlund 8-10).

Civil Rights Act and Voting Act were passed in 1964, 1965 respectively, yet the battle rather continued to resist all lasting forms of segregation through courts, and media. Bjornlund argues that "The African Americans knew that even a minor act of defiance could come at great cost" (28). King advocated for boycotts and civil disobedience rather violence. Thus, its assassination in 1968 evoked an outrage against brutality and the KKK violence toward black people. The situation intensified as black community sought with greater determination to assert their identity. Also the COINTELPRO which set gathered FBI, CIA, and military intelligence forces to rip radical movement and eliminate their leaders such like Luther King, and Malcolm X. Black Power broke through, and its leader Stockely Carmichael, who was a student at Howard University- called for more "aggressive approach" based on unity and pride in the black race. "No man can give anybody his freedom", "A man is born free", he said. Another promising revolutionary movement was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense extending the battle to include economic objectives and protecting African Americans from police brutality (Monteith 39, 64-66, 151). Therefore, on one hand, the sixties Civil Right Movement highlighted African Americans' successes in catching the nation's eye to racism, inequities and black freedom, and boosted students' radical rebellion against establishment on the other hand.

It is argued that the counterculture broke out with a tone of defiance to end poverty and war, and to rend America great again. African Americans defied the racial segregation mindset and system, and claimed asserting their identities with full rights. However, the crux of the counterculture movement as a movement of social deviance toward the traditional cultural realm of norms and mores; rather appears visible and relative with the legacy of hippies' movement and sexual revolution.

2.3.4 Hippies Movement

As the antiwar movement grew more radical, the youth counterculture grew sharper; and the New Left grew more influential. It extended from 11 campuses in 1962 to more than 300 by early 1969 (A. Miller, "Mapping"). It included a group of baby boomers known as Flower Children or Hippies. However, Timothy Miller argues that the New Left and Hippiedom or hippies' lifestyle have different approaches. The New Left was "an overtly political opposition to the dominant culture" while hippiedom was "the world of dropouts and cultural dissenters". He goes further and declares that hippies sympathize with the New Left, yet they believe its involvement was far from a counterculture movement; since hippies show no interest to politics (xx). In this sense, hippies embodied a tone of deviance.

In fact, the term hippie or hippy is related to the 1960s counterculture movement which rejected the American realm of mores and conventions. However, it is traced back to the 1950s "Beats" or "Beatniks". According to The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica "The Beat Movement, also called Beat generation, is an American social and literary movement originating in the 1950s and centered in the bohemian artist communities of San Francisco's North Beach, Los Angeles' Venice West, and New York City's Greenwich Village". Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac were prominent beat writers whom applied the term "hit" in their works. Moreover, inspired the 1960s new bohemian generation who later became known as "hippies". Likely to be, the term "Beat" has a musical connotation as "hip" that is thought to be adopted from the fifties Jazz music. Thus, beatniks seem to be the precursors of hippies, and Larkin views that "Hippies were the precursors to what later come to be known in the English-speaking West as 'the counterculture' "(73).

Hippies seem unconventional at both their dress style and lifestyle as well. Men grow long hair and beards. Women wear floral, long loose dresses and skirts, and they both wear sandals. Their fashion appears colorful and handmade. Also, they live collectively and alienated from what they view a corrupted, materialistic society. More importantly, they have taken their dissent voices against authority and the parents' conservative minded values to a sharper divergent level. This delineates the point from which the counterculture began to streak ahead. Roszak refers to the young generation's rebellion as "Counter Culture" where hippies boldly detonated their disaffiliation and opposition (42). In the sixties youth rebellion, they experimented with drugs such marijuana and LSD, sex, and music as mediums to liberate and discover themselves.

According to T. Miller, hippies claimed that drugs or dope helped them in understanding the evils of the American culture. He gives one of potentialities resulted from theoreticians' debate that dope is used because it was a good medium for body and soul. Furthermore, he explains that "...The hippy creed was 'if it feels good, then do it so long as it doesn't hurt anyone else' (5, 10). Thereof, it represents a tendency to advocate for individual liberties. Accordingly, while drugs serve as a vehicle for mental delectation, sex seems to be a vehicle for physical delectation. In this way, human beings are free with their bodies and sex represents a wonderful experience, which one chose either to try it or not with whatever sex he feels so, and without any abuse or repression. It was a sexual revolution (25). Hippies engaged in sexual activities such group sex, public sex, nudity, masturbation and homosexuality. Seemingly, these tabooed behaviors strengthened the breadth of the gap between old generation's traditional values and youngsters' anomalies.

In 1967, this hippie phenomenon took the Human Be-In Rally on 14 January in San Francisco's Golden Park Gate as a departure. There, hippies celebrated their creed and lifestyle. It was a response to the beat writers' require for gathering chief among Allen Ginsberg, who appears to be a sort of godfather for hippiedom, also Professor Timothy Leary. The latters performed speeches in front of fifteen thousand people, and LSD drug was distributed to crowds (Duncan 159, 160). This seems to be a prelude to that year summer's hippie invasion known as "Summer of Love" located in San Francisco's district of Haight-Ashbury. Duncan approximates one hundred thousand hippies taking place there (161). They burst their withdrawal or "Dropping Out" from the American culture which they viewed rotten. Manifestly, "Turn on, Tune in, Drop out" phrase was popularized and acclaimed to the extent it had become a sort of spiritual anthem for their counterculture. It is derived from Leary's 1966 published book entitled with same slogan. T. Miller comments his view "to drop out, to quit Establishment society and drop into the new age" (93).

Moreover, Rock Music is seemingly perceived to be a sort of an ethos to their beliefs. It was not only a new revolutionary musical genre, but rather a cultural communicative language that influenced hippies "to expose the shame of Western culture and to change the life orientation, political and otherwise, of its listeners" (T. Miller 42, 45). In this respect, Rock lyrics could sound like a scream to the approaching collapse of dominant culture. Thus, a sort of a festival of indulging freely in tabooed sex and dope manifestations that embodied the summer of love event. It is argued that Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix were among prominent rock figures at that time.

Monteith argues that 1967 was "The year of the hippie", yet things got out of control and security broke down at the peaceful summer of love to mark the "Death of the hippie" on same year, October 6. "Pseudo hippies", as she describes, took advantage of the event to sell drugs where serious addiction problems appeared (174, 175). Also, other issues such the outnumbering of homeless people and crimes where the free love claim was used as a justification for rape ("What Was The Summer Of Love?").

T. Miller concludes that the hippie culture was a culture of love and peace, but also a culture of defiance, conflict, and confrontation. A reason to which he believes the counterculture was not another raising subculture in the scene but rather a "Disloyal Opposition" to the dominant culture (87).

Therefore, hippies' revolutionary movement held its funeral by the end of 1967. However, its dream of utopian America seemed to continue. Through the sixties, the hippies' legacy provoked other minorities whom felt alienated and oppressed by the cultural mainstream in United States. Therefrom, woman and gay movement erupted to declare the heyday of the counterculture.

2.3.5 Women Liberation Movement

The 1960s cultural liberation continued to forge its path with different othered groups within the American social stream. In this concern, woman marked a profound impact on the sixties. Seemingly, after the World War II ended, women found themselves; more than ever, confined with a certain role to fulfill. They were compelled to comply to the attribution of being housewives and mothers. So, women's lives did not exceed door step at that time. They were socially expected mainly to clean, bear, nurse, also pleasing man's sexual needs and desires. This explains the baby booming emerged in the postwar context.

It is said that Betty Friedan's book *Feminine Mystique* (1977) stands as a pioneering work in this subject. Friedan argues that the ratio of women attendance in higher education dropped from 47 percent in 1920 to 35 percent in 1958. She returns this to the fact that most girls at that time were encouraged to marry at young age while still studying in high school (12). It seems that girls are taught or socialized since early age upon the idea that the quality of being a woman lays in praising and mastering the role of wifehood and motherhood; rather than pursuing education and careers. In this sense, man is portrayed as a desperate need in woman's life.

Furthermore, she elaborates that magazines were pivotal agents in injecting this pattern, especially that its audiences are; usually and mainly, teenage girls. The author

examines those women's magazines; specifically, *The Fourth*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *had died*. After scrutinizing their pages and contents, she claims that they tend to adjust woman to the "housewife-mother" domestic role all the time. Not even once championing woman who had an occupation, or focused on a passion beyond man and home. She provides examples to some headlines such: "Femininity Begins at Home", "Have Babies While You're Young", "How to Snare a Male", "Careers at Home", "How to Hold On to a Happy Marriage", "Cooking to Me is Poetry", "The Business of Running Home". Therefore, the American woman was given a limited identity dependent and existed upon man where she was alienated from being a thoughtful, minded being (Friedan 30, 38).

After fifteen years of enduring, it appears that women suffered psychological implications such depression, unhappiness under which an identity crisis lurked beneath. Thus, the 1960s marked the burst of dissatisfaction sentiment accompanied with the raise of women's consciousness. It looks that the epistemological core of women's movement was to emancipate her from the oppression of the social patriarchal system. Also reformulate the relational pattern between man and woman. Thus, the sixties is said characterize the battle of sexes. Friedan describes it "a battle of social reform"(90). A journey asserting woman's identity as an independent being equal not subordinate or secondary to man, and following the lead of other groups' identity movements.

Other promising factors encouraging women's movement is the emergence of the contraceptive pill. The latter granted women more sexual freedom and protection from unplanned or unwanted pregnancies (Patterson 234). Also, it can be argued that the publication of several oeuvres such as: Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and Kate Miller's *Sexual Politics* (1969) have played an important role in raising woman's consciousness against the secondary role dictated to her by society, which rather linked her core existence to serve man. Friedan summarizes this as burying women alive (Patterson 325).

This sense of deprivation and dissatisfaction towards social control and role conformity was also shared by other group whom had been living in shadows since long times.

2.3.6 Gay Liberation Movement

It is also referred to as Gay Rights Movement or Homosexual Rights Movement. Apparently, the sixties' liberation tone inspired gay and lesbian's sexual revolution. Living secretly and in hidden because of the social denial and exclusion tormented them for so long.

Thus, they determined to form and assert their identity through defending their way of life; especially that the sixties' escalations sparked within themselves hope in more tolerate world. Escoffier describes the sixties as a cathartic period for this group (9). The sixties seem to stand like a departure landmark that marks the deviance toward sexual mores, and claim for civil rights for this social category.

Moreover, Hartman argues that the Stonewall Riot which took place in late hours of June 27, 1969 represented a turning point in their history. Police illegally raided the Stonewall Inn which is a gay club in Greenwich Village, New York City. This act provoked gay to explode their rage. In this way, it was no longer a revolution to love freely as bohemian called for, but a revolution to claim identity and civil rights. The gay liberation movement activists sought for social visibility and viability. A mission initially requires detaching gay and lesbian from the stigma; that diagnosed their state as mental disorder by The American Psychological Association. It received response later in 1973 where the APA removed it from the list of diseases (31, 32).

In this concern, it seems that at time homosexuals were diagnosed as mentally ill, a correspondence for therapy and cure took place. This intensified the situation; especially, that even after the APA repealed homosexual orientation as being mental disorder, yet some clinicians continued their sexual conversion therapy to cure homosexuals in ways, which reached using even the electroshock therapy (Shidlo et al 1). The social mainstream perceived intimacy and eroticism likely as natural expectations for man and woman's amatory relationship; rather ones of same-sex which was unacceptable. Therefore, it is argued that the sixties liberation tone reached its peak with gay liberation movement, as things seemed to start changing in America.

The impacts of the sexual revolution and the hippies' legacy continued forging, and sexual freedom seemed receiving a sense of toleration gradually until the AIDS epidemic⁸ crisis happened. It is defined as a serious sexually transmitted disease. The HIV virus epidemic increased public fear towards sexual liberty, which became a nightmare with its devastating incidence. This "seemed to put the brakes on the sexual revolution"(T. Miller 113).

This epidemic crisis that broke through the United States from 1970s to 1980s, and it increased homophobic attitudes in the public sphere; especially after the infection rate was recorded; mostly, among homosexual men and injection drug users. The public panic toward

⁸ AIDS /HIV: is a sexually transmitted disease through vaginal fluids, semen. It can be also transmitted through blood transferring, and breast milk (see "Emergence of the AIDS Crisis (Article)").

homosexuals reached the extent of labeling it the "gay disease" or the "gay plague", which reflects the public homophobia, with estimated death incidence reaching 20,000 by 1988. In this sense, it is argued that the AIDS epidemic curbed the sexual revolution and its quest for civil rights to some extent. Yet, gay rights activists continued their journey facing discrimination through spreading awareness, and providing safe sex education. The United States' effort to control this fatal disease began to be achieved with the mid-1990s (Emergence Of The AIDS Crisis).

Therefore, resisting the discrimination tendency against gay and lesbian persons because of their sexual orientation continued. Homosexual Civil Rights Movement advocated for equal rights and human rights in all life areas: socially, politically, and legally. Questing to end all forms of discrimination and prejudice against them.

In this subject, homosexual activity or sexual activity between individuals of same-sex was legalized in 2003. It is essential here to refer that before, homosexuality legalization varied between states. Sodomy laws were banned by some states since 1960s, yet still kept operating in other ones. However, in 2003 the United States' Supreme Court appealed this law for all states. In this sense, no sodomy or homosexual activity can be accused as a crime (LGBT Rights In United States).

In the military arena, homosexuals could engage in military service provided they do not reveal their sexuality. This settlement was placed by President Bill Clinton in 1993 with what is known as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. This continued until 2011 when the Supreme Court announced the annulment of this law. Hence, gay and lesbian people were allowed to serve openly in the military without hiding their sexuality (LGBT Rights In United States).

Furthermore, Homosexual Rights Movement achieved its core goal and celebration by 2015, when the United States ruled for legalizing and recognizing Same-Sex Marriage Law in all states. The Supreme Court announced this federal law, and gay and lesbian couples could receive official marriage licenses. Before, in 2013, same-sex marriage has been left to state jurisdiction to decide for, so it varied among states. Adding to this, homoparental families and same-sex individuals' ability to legally adopt a child began to actually materialize with almost states around the nation legalizing Same-Sex Adoption Law; especially after the barriers put on to allow adaption only for married couple or single ones only. Also, some states leaving it ambiguous. Seemingly, this reflects the complications surrounding this law (LGBT Rights In United States).

However, Same-Sex Discrimination Laws and protections such in job and housing still challenge persons of same-sex, as they continue to vary by state jurisdiction. No federal law seemed being proposed in this concern, hence prohibition and protection against discrimination is likely lacked in some states. Also, Conversion Therapy Laws varied by states. Some states banned them like Washington and California; some states did not like West Virginia and Missouri; and other states seemed ambiguous toward them like Arizona, Colorado (LGBT Rights In United States). Thereof, it can be argued that the federal nature of the United States' governmental system put challenge in some areas to achieve full equality, and eliminate discrimination, as homosexuality remains a controversial issue.

This social and cultural structural changing was mirrored on television screens, as the influence of the 1960s era transmitted to American film and cinematic industry.

2.3.7 Queer Cinema

Since the 1960s, Sexuality has been a resonating subject. After being defined in one exclusive form, now it comes to be represented multiply. In other words sexuality started to embrace both heterosexuality and homosexuality; especially after establishing and acknowledging queer theory as an academic platform. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) are perceived as the foundational texts for queer theory; that "disrupted traditional feminist theory, subverted 'commonsense' beliefs about gender, sex, and sexuality (as well as binaristic thinking about these categories) (Henry 110).

Queer Cinema was born as an attempt to portray this diversity and expansion in defining human sexuality. In contemporary American culture, films and shows industry is perceived as being one of the mediums from which people grasp and learn meanings of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. Cinematic industry is becoming popular and influential, especially with the fact that sex and sexuality are still receiving a kind of reticence and reluctance to discuss them openly. Therefore, it seems shaping people's thinking and understanding about themselves and about the world around them. In this way, "films are cultural artifacts that are intricately connected to our understanding of (among other things) gender, sexuality, history, and identity". Thus, it is argued that movies and shows are becoming pivotal aspects in the life of the contemporary world. In other words, it is becoming a powerful socializing force (Benshoff and Griffin 2).

The 1960s highlights the transition in the American cinema towards queer people, as sex and sexuality were tabooed contexts. Before this period homosexuals were marginalized

and rarely represented in movies because their sexuality was perceived as a kind of "sex perversion". Film industry exclusively characterized heterosexuality as the standard and proper sexuality by reinforcing dominant values and norms. However, after the sixties escalations, the new queer cinema or queer films burst to surface in 1990s. These films broke through as an alternative after the regulation and censorship that their representation received in cinematic industry. They are including and representing queer characters, or written, directed, produces, and performed by queer persons. In this way, "these films helped change the cultural understanding of sexuality in general, contributing in direct ways to the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s, when for a brief period sexuality was celebrated as a revolutionary force" (Benshoff and Griffin 10, 108).

In this subject, Henry argues that "the 1990s was also a period of backlash and resistance to queerness", from which the debate over gender, sex, and sexuality intensified, and gay and lesbian life frequented increasingly. The author views that queer media studies was established as part "to challenge the negative representations of queer experience in mainstream media [...] which has until quite recently been defined as straight, white, and middle class". Especially that the mainstream media represents an important arena in defining and enforcing the American heteronormative culture, which is increasingly confronted with raising fragments defending difference and diversity (110).

Therefore, cinema screen has become an influential didactic instrument, which mirrors social and cultural streams and changes. It is a powerful socializing medium especially in the contemporary era. Most importantly, it proves to become more inclusive and diverse. These seem reflecting that screens have become squares for these ideological disputes. Henry discusses that:

"mainstream media such as film, television, and advertising work largely to reproduce the dominant norms, values, and practices of contemporary American society. Of course, mass media can also work in distinctly oppositional ways, questioning, contesting, and even rejecting dominant discourses "(4).

It seems that the debate towards sexuality and queer representations extended, and started to take place within popular cartoons. In this subject, Fox Channel's popular cartoon show *The Simpsons* would be an example to illustrate this phenomenon. Henry discusses that *The Simpsons* cartoon "filled a void in the media landscape in the early 1990s, offering greater visibility for queerness and helping to make it more acceptable within the mainstream of American culture" (121).

2.4 An Overview about "The Simpsons Cartoon"

The Simpsons is a sitcom⁹ cartoon TV show created by Matt Groening, and is airing in Fox Network since December 17, 1989, with an opening episode entitled "Simpsons Roasting in an Open Fire". On January 14, 1990, it was officially released as a TV series. Today this cartoon show is reaching 31 seasons, with over than 600 episodes. Since its first broadcast by Fox Television until nowadays, this show continues captivating the eye of millions of viewers both in United States and the world, also ranking amongst the top shows in Fox. This reflects its popularity among audiences. Although its controversies put it in front of fierce criticism, it still stands as an "unprecedented milestone in the history of animation and situation comedy"(Henry 1).

The Simpsons Family mirrors a traditional American working class family, portrayed in Homer (the father), Marge (the wife), Bart (the son), Lisa (the eldest daughter), and Maggie (the youngest daughter) and their dog pet. They live in the suburban fictional town Springfield. Henry argues that this show represents an icon when it comes to American culture. It goes beyond just mirroring it; rather to more likely intervening in the issues and debates surrounding the American culture, in regular way through satire. Therefore, *The Simpsons* "satirically engages with important social, political, and cultural issues related to race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and religion[...] *The Simpsons* participates in some of the more ideologically loaded debates taking place in American culture"(4). Most importantly, this cartoon show "established itself as a biting satire on American culture [...] to lambaste, among other things, ' traditional' family values" that perceived the gay and lesbian life as inappropriate to these values, and to the traditional nuclear structure of family (111).

In fact, *The Simpsons'* appropriations in portraying the nuclear construct of a typical traditional American family where the father is the superior to the other members of the family. It puts forth the ground to critique satirically the traditional values embodied in the nuclear family, especially with technological advancement and changing in the contemporary era. In this sense, the show espouses a satiric tone on the idealized images of family mold in order to critic, and to destabilize the traditional values of heterosexual compulsory, male superiority and dominance, along to female passivity and submission. Thus, the show goes further, and works to uncover and critique the practices and ideologies toward minorities

⁹ Sitcom: Situation Comedy is a television comedy series that involves a continuing cast of characters in a succession of episodes (see Merriam-Webster).

within a predominant heterosexual culture, which is based on their sex, gender, and sexuality. By this putting forth a critique to counter the cultural exclusion against them characterized in sexism, homophobia, and racism. The satiric tone of the show "prompts us to ask questions as well about the visibility of subversive or oppositional content on American network television"; especially that satire comedy operates questioning the mind, and provoking the thought. Thus, it instigates a mindset challenge towards the dominant cultural discourse, and puts it under accountability. In this way, satire functions to rethink the notions of good/evil; normal/deviant in ways which perpetuate or subvert social order and moral base (Henry 5-8).

As previously discussed, gay and lesbian individuals lacked visibility within TV screens. This started to change with queer cinema and queerness taking academic frame and inquiry, and challenging the binaristic common sense toward sex, gender, sexuality. Thus, queer identity started intervening in stream media and screens to achieve visibility and viability. *The Simpsons* took charge in this queer stream issue. The show designs itself to develop a sense of sensibility toward queer identity where satire serves to achieve this "queer sensibility" among viewers in order to rethink the oppression and exclusion against sexual minorities in America, and cultivating the idea of fluidity with gender and sexuality. In fact this queer sensibility is characterized since the beginning of its broadcast, and is developed through the show gradually (Henry 111, 117).

The show's engagement in the issue of gay and lesbian people, or in other words its purpose to establish queer acceptability developed gradually from covert or allusive representations to overt engagements in the politics of sexuality, gender norms, and queer culture. In 1997, the cartoon engaged overtly in the politics of sexuality for first time with the episode entitled "Homer's Phobia" (season 8, no 15). In 2005, the show boldly dedicated an episode for the issue of same-sex marriage which the United States legalized it in 2015. The episode is entitled "There's Something about Marrying" (season 16, no10). This episode highlights Butler's critique on gender and sexuality binarism which questions, and disrupts the heterosexual hegemony. Also, through its characters where Patty Bouvier portrays female gay life, and Waylon Smithers portrays male gay life.

This cartoon's tendency to intervene and critique in the American culture's issues puts forth the assumption that this show goes further making a popular culture in America. Its comedy stands upon satire towards political, social, and cultural issues in America, and also on slapstick humor¹⁰, which makes it appealing to both children and adults alike. This makes

¹⁰ Slapstick humor is a comedy based on clownish humorous actions (see Collins English Dictionary).

the cartoon show popular among different age stages, also critical. Simone Knox describes it as "Double Codedness", which reflects the nature of the show as a comedy of wit that is an intelligent form of humor, so it is not just an entertainment comic cartoon (Henry 15; Knox 73).

In the subject of the purpose of this cartoon, in an Interview with Mother Jones Magazine, in 1999, Matt Groening the creator of the show states that he grew up watching TV, as he says:

"For me, it's not enough to be aware that most television is bad and stupid and pernicious. I think "what we can do about it?"[...] What I want to do is point out the way TV is unconsciously structured to keep us all distracted. With The Simpsons[...]What I'm trying to do— in the guise of light entertainment, if that's possible—is nudge people, jostle them a little, wake them up to some of the ways in which we're being manipulated and exploited. And in my amusing little way I try to hit on some of the unspoken rules of our culture. "The Simpsons", message over and over again is that your moral authorities don't always have your best interests in mind. Teachers, principals, clergymen, and politicians— for The Simpsons they are all goofballs, and I think that's a great message for kids" (March/April, 1999, p 36).

2.5 Conclusion

In 1960s, the American Culture witnessed a watershed point, which put the struggle to redefine it. The sixties era embodies a crucial episode in the American history and culture known as The Counterculture. It is defined as a deviant group's complete opposition to the dominant culture with its norms and values.

The counterculture in America epitomizes an attempt to reorient the traditional American culture toward a utopian America more open to new people, ideas, and norms. This radical movement owes its inspiration from a range of social movement led by the alienated groups within the American cultural mainstream. They held a quest for change, integration, identity and civil rights assertion. Also, eliminating all forms of discrimination and prejudice against them, at the basis of race, sex, gender, and sexuality. The sexual revolution of the youth rebellion in 1960s represents the hallmark of this iconic era, especially that before, sex and sexuality were censored if not forbidden contexts to intervene in.

The 1960s era embodies the Americans' hope in a prosperous America, especially after the disillusionment of the World War II. However this hope was soon crushed with different reality. The American government failed to end poverty and injustice because it gave the primacy for the War on Vietnam, which worsened the country's economic situation.

This tiring reality opened for the counterculture escalations. The boomers indulged in an Anti-War movement to end poverty and war, and viewed the need for change in the American culture and values. The 1960s youths are referred to as the boomers. This term describes the new generation born after the World War II where birth rate grew exponentially. Unlike their parents' generation, the boomers lambasted America's social and cultural structures and values. Therefrom, a gap between the two generations occurred because of this radical opposition to the white heterosexual cultural mainstream. African Americans' Civil Rights Movement burst to claim for black's civil rights and identity, and confront racism and racial segregation.

However, the crux of the sixties counterculture is designed in hippies, woman and gay liberation movements that sought to break the barriers surrounding sex, gender, and sexuality. It is referred to as the sixties sexual revolution. Hippies quested for peace and free love. They experimented with drugs and sex to release the mind and the body from the repressions rooted in the values of the American traditional culture. Nudity, public sex, group sex, homosexuality are all activities exposed by the hippies. Woman and Gay liberation Movements erupted to continue the legacy of hippies' movement and end the oppression practiced against them by the man biased heterosexual dominant culture. The notions of gender, sex, and sexuality were debated increasingly. Queer identity broke through seeking for assertion, visibility, and viability within a heterosexual dominant discourse.

In this subject, queer cinema emerged to politicize gay and lesbian's civil rights movement. Moreover, television and cinema industry have become squares for the battle. Therefore, sexuality turned to be one of the subjects surrounding the contemporary American culture.

This stream is also reverberating in cartoon shows. *The Simpsons'* regular satiric interventions concerning this issue portray the attempt to redefine the American culture, also to destabilize the social order, and recreate the realm of mores. *The Simpsons* is a sitcom cartoon show which is airing since 1989 till nowadays. Since the starts of this cartoon, satire serves to establish queer sensibility among its viewers, whom are from different age levels even children. The show's satiric tone aims to provoke the mind to question, to re-consider, and to put under accountability the traditional norms of the dominant culture; that is excluding sexual minorities and oppressing them. Thereof, this show operates to support queer politics. It is viewed as a cultural phenomenon. This cartoon operates to influence the American popular culture with its complex satirical treatments to issues related to gender, sex, and sexuality in the American dominant culture.

Therefore, this show would be taken as a case study to explore the effects of its messages to the viewers and how would children interpret them. Especially that it proves to be popular for adults and children alike, inside and outside America.

Chapter Three:
The effect of Queer Representations
on Children's Social and
Psychological Development

3. Chapter Three: The effect of Queer Representations on Children's Social and Psychological Development

3.1 Introduction

3.2 *The Simpsons* Analysis

3.3 The Importance of the Socialization Process

3.4 The effect of Queer Portrayals on Children's Social and Psychological Development

3.5 Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a content analysis for *The Simpsons* cartoon is provided where relevant episodes, from the show's first releasing until nowadays, are examined and interpreted using queer theory. This chapter also discusses the importance of the developmental socialization process for children to construct their knowledge and gender roles. It is presented in relation to Piaget's cognitive development theory and Freud's psychoanalysis theory. This is in order to conclude the effects of the deviant gender roles, or queer representations in children's cartoon on their social development, hence socially, and on their psychological development, thus the individual level.

3.2 *The Simpsons* Analysis

Queerness or deviant gender roles characterize a prominent feature in *The Simpsons* cartoon. It is developed in the series gradually through its engagements in the politics of sexuality and gender norms. Drawing inspiration from Judith Butler's ideas presented on *Gender Trouble* (1990), the show attempts troubling gender and sexuality since early seasons in order to establish what Henry refers to as queer sensibility (Henry 114). Butler questions a number of binary oppositions such: masculinity/ femininity; hetero/homo, and seeks to undermine it with her gender performativity theory (1990).

First, with the episode entitled *Simpson and Delilah* (season 2, episode 2) aired on October 1990. The episode starts with Homer watching TV along with his family, also Patty and Selma (Marge's Twin sisters who dislike their brother in law Homer). They are watching a quiz TV show when a hair product advertisement appears, and captivates the bold Homer's attention immediately. He rushes to visit the center selling this "Breakthrough miracle product" to regrow hair, but its expensive price makes him burst into tears at the seller. "Forget you pal, thanks for nothing", Homer tells him. However, the paradox comes when Homer recounts the story to his friends at work. In an angry and rough tone voice, he screams I told the seller, "Forget you pal, thanks for nothing, and I storm right out" before his work colleague replies as he laugh proudly, " Hahah, that's telling them". This highlights the idea of gender role categorization. Men are socially expected to be strong and emotionless, which explains Homer' different story about what happened with the seller. Homer did not tell his friends that he cried. He rather said he felt angry and screamed at the seller to keep his product because it is expensive. Tearing and emotionality are socially perceived as femininity traits related to woman and not man, who usually display masculine behavioral traits, chief among strength, sobriety, and emotionlessness.

The episode continues as Homer later manages to buy the product. His hair grows long again, and happiness overwhelms him. Later, he is promoted in his job, and he hires a secretary, a man named Karl. The latter helps him to dress like a successful man, and improves his self-confidence. Homer is selected to deliver an important speech to the bosses, but he is still reluctant and lacks confidence in himself. He says, "I'm a big fool", but Karl replies to him, "Oh, no you're not". Homer asks him, "How do you know?" After, Karl surprises him with a kiss in the lips, and tells him, "Because my mother taught me never to kiss a fool", "Now go get them tiger", and gives him an affectionate pat in his behind as Homer is leaving. Although there are no explicit statements of queerness, or Karl's sexuality through these representations, yet participating in an affectionate kiss implements for gay culture allusions. Affectionate intimacy normally characterizes the relationship between man and woman, not man and man.

The show continues its engagement in the debate concerning queer politics and gender role categorizations. In the episode entitled *Lisa the Beauty Queen* (season 4, episode 4) aired on October 1992. Lisa competes in a local children's beauty contest (Little Miss of Springfield). Her brother Bart gives her instructions and advices on how to win. Lisa finds difficulties to walk with heels, and decides to quit. However, Bart mockingly says, "There's nothing to it", "Give me those heels", and he starts doing the walk of victory, as he seems mastering the runway walking techniques. Lisa interrupts, and asks him, "Do you really think I can win?" Then with a move with his hip confidently replies, "Hey, I'm starting to think I can win!" Again the show with this representation seeks to cultivate the idea of gender fluidity and challenging the rigid gender roles dictated by the dominant heterosexual culture. Heels are related to female dressing, also walking with hips moving side to side, is usually a feminine trait, and it is not socially accepted for a man to dress, walk, or behave in such way.

More overtly, in the episode entitled *In the Front* (season 4, episode 19) aired on April 1993. The show keeps emphasizing on the issue of sexuality and gender. Now with grandpa Abe (Homer's father) who falls asleep and dreams himself being "The queen of the west". The dream bubble shows him dressing in a red female garment where two cowboys gunfight for his love. He intervenes to stop them by declaring, "Boys, stop. You can both marry me" then the cowboys celebrate cheerfully, and fire their guns in the air before this image with a heart-shape faints to black. This keeps revealing the show's tendency to confront the cultural gender norms; that adjust man to appear and behave according to the role which is socially expected from him. In this stressing on Butler's idea that gender identity is not a fixed, but fluid. It is a performed process of repeated acts that operates to

naturalize a person into acquiring an identity, which is pre assumed by the norms of the dominant heterosexual culture. Thereof, grandpa's cross dressing or drag and imagining himself as a queen torned between the love of two men; rather than a king, who two woman wants his affection. It subverts gender binary and the invariability of sexuality to emancipate gender from the cultural lenses. Also re-considers for other variations for sexuality to promote queer culture.

In the episode entitled *Homer vs. Patty and Selma* (season 6, episode 17) aired on February 1995. The show proceeds further in challenging the binary rigid gender roles. After all other gym classes' lists at school are full; especially, popular sports such soccer and basketball. Bart comes late and the only class left was ballet. This makes him angry as he says, "Ballet! Dancing is for girls". He participates in this class as which he comforts himself saying, "Okay, steady Bart, taking ballet doesn't make you any less of a man". He enters the class where its participants are all girls, who start laughing at him. Bart tells his female coach, "I'm only taking this stupid class because they made me", "I think ballet is for sissies" before she laughs and replies to him angrily, "Ballet is for the strong, the fearless, the determents, but for the sissies never". As the class starts, he is wearing a pink suit, and angrily complains, "I don't wear tights". The coach replies to him, "But your heroes wear tights, Batman for example". Then, the music is played and Bart naturally starts dancing and impresses his class. After, in a happy tone, he says "I'm doing ballet, and I love it". Bart takes part at the school recital and impresses his school friends with his ballet performance. Even the bullies Jimbo and Nelson, who highly display masculine identity, are impressed by Bart's dancing, as Jimbo emotionally states, "He is graceful, yet masculine, so it's okay for me to watch this".

Soccer and basketball are perceived as appropriate sports for man because the latter maintains masculine identity; that is related to strength and aggression. Ballet dancing on the other hand is perceived as a sport, which is more appropriate to woman. It is a classical dance that demands grace and precision in bodily performance. Every girl imagines herself as what Bart's ballet trainer tells her class "a queen or a fairytale". Sissy is a pejorative term especially in the United States that describes a boy or a man with effeminate attributes. A boy is expected to maintain a traditional masculine identity. Thereof, feminine boys, who engage in activities which are typically perceived for girls such ballet in this case, are to be socially seen as weak, fragile, coward person, and even gay because it is incompatible with the expected gender role. In this subject, Weinrich discusses that a sissy boy or feminine boy is "a boy whose gender nonconformity (dressing in female clothing, desire to be a girl, friendships with girls, feminine role-playing or gesturing, and lack of interest in

athletics)...these boys grow up to identify themselves as homosexuals when asked about their sexual orientation"(322). This episode illustrates the show's trend to rethink gender just like Bart and the bully Jimbo did with ballet. This aims to continue cultivating the idea of gender fluidity among viewers. Most importantly, preludes to cultivate social acceptability for queer ideology and culture.

In light of the mentioned above, Henry comments, "It is thus no surprise that a queer sensibility is a large part of The Simpsons. Indeed, it has been there from the start. As the series developed, so too did this sensibility" though its frequent references to gay themes such as freely participating in hug, kiss, and drag. It "is particularly true among the Simpson family males (Abe, Homer, and Bart)"(117).

Homer's Phobia (season 8, episode 15) aired on February 1997. This episode epitomizes this cartoon's first overt attempt to politically engage in the politics of sexuality. In this episode the show finally confronts the stereotypical intimidating image surrounding gay identity by having the Simpson family befriends a gay man named John, the owner of Cockamamie's which is an antique and collectibles shop at the Springfield Mall. Homer doubts that anyone would spend his money on such "Junk", but in hope of turning some money, he invites John to his house, as he says, "Our place is full with valuable worthless crap". John is impressed by the Simpsons' house and its old items. He and Homer spend time talking and laughing, and even dancing as they quickly become friends. Homer thinks that John is a great man and wants to invite him again with his wife. Despite the clear signals, Homer is oblivious to the fact that John is gay as he seems personable, friendly, festive, and charming man. However, Marge reveals him this fact as she says, "John is a homosexual", and with this information Homer screams loudly as his homophobia comes to the fore. Homer is fearful that people will know that he befriended a gay man, supposedly because it socially stigmatizes him. Thus, he refuses to go with John and the family on a tour in John's car. However, John does not react negatively to Homer's fear nor apologizes for being gay, and keeps indifferent. He simply tells Homer, "You don't even know what you're afraid of". Seemingly, Homer expects that gay people are identifiable, which explains his response telling Marge, "You know me Marge. I like my beer cold, my TV loud, and my homosexual flaming [distinguishable]". In brief, Homer is upset at thinking for a gay man as being straight, and the fact that gay people do not conform to his stereotypical preconceptions about gays.

As Homer's phobia sharpens, he starts to worry that John may have a negative influence on his son Bart. He is even convinced with this when he sees Bart begin to behave

like John, so like a gay person. It starts with Bart wearing a Hawaiian shirt as Homer asks him where did he get it, and Bart answers him innocently "Just come out of the closet", which is a slang used by homosexuals to celebrate their sexual preferences overtly. Then, it continues with Bart choosing a pink rather than a chocolate brown cupcake, because pink is perceived to be a girly color. The final straw for Homer is when he sees Bart wearing a 1950-style womanly wig and dancing. At this moment, Homer decides to face John and tells him to stay away from his family. John asks him what he has got against gays, and Homer replies, "It's not usual"; that "it is embarrassing America". When Homer cannot find a word as he to describe "them"(i.e. homosexuals), John suggests "queer". The term queer used to be associated with shame, perversion, and stigmatization against gay people before taking the shape of a resistance, and connoting for pride in gay culture. It is explained in Homer's response to John as he says, "I resent you people using this word. That's our word for making fun of you. We need it", and proposes to take back both his son and the word.

Homer starts his process to make Bart a man by heterosexualizing him through engaging his son in traditional masculine activities. He puts him for few hours in front of a billboard, which portrays women models wearing bikini and promoting for Laramie cigarettes. However, when Homer returns and asks Bart how he feels, Bart simply replies, "I dunno, kinda feel like having a cigarette". This scene aims to depict the superficiality of thinking in gayness; more specifically in sexuality, as a learned behavior which can be converted or manipulated through an advertising exposure by comparing it to other behaviors like smoking in this case. In short, it operates to emphasize that being gay or straight is not a learned behavior or a matter of choice but an innate quality (Henry 124). In this way, it aims to understand homosexuality as a natural variant rather than a deviant behavior from the norms of the reproductive heterosexuality. Therefore, conversion therapies which aim to change or correct one's sexuality are barren in light of this satirical representation.

After Homer's first strategy fails, he takes Bart to a still mill to see "real American men" hard at work with their strong physical shape. However, men in the still are not as Homer expected. When Roscoe the owner of the still mill asks his workers to welcome Bart and Homer, they all reply gently, "Hello!" and softly wave their hands. They are wearing pink shirts and shorts, and behave in an effeminate way. Then the still mill transforms into a big discotheque with laser lights and glitter ball once Roscoe tells Homer, "We work hard and we play hard" and everyone starts dancing. At this moment of oddness Homer screams, "The whole world is gone gay!" Homer is even concerned and determined to conform Bart toward traditional masculine identity. Thus, he resorts to take Bart in a hunting trip, as he

believes that killing a deer will make Bart "More of a man", especially that hunting features the masculine traits of aggression and strength, which Homer wants to reinforce in Bart. Marge mocks of this idea, as she confronts her husband about the fact; that he never went to hunt or killed a deer, yet he is a heterosexual. This again depicts the show's attempt to destabilize gender.

Homer takes the trip with Bart, Moe, and Barney, but the trip does not go well as planned to. The only deer found is reindeer, and they get attacked by the angry herd. At that point, John intervenes to rescue, and scares the reindeer away with a remote-controlled robot. Moe and Barney mourn "We've been saved by a sissy". However, now that Homer confronts his homophobia, he defends John. He calls John "fruit" and then, realizing the term might also be offensive, a "queer". "Queer", he says. "That's what you like to be called, right, queer?" "Well, that or John", John humorously replies. By the end of the episode Homer has come to see John as a fellow friend rather than gay.

Therefore, this episode represents the show's coming out of the closet, with its explicit attempt to rethink about gay identity and the preconceived stereotypes against gays. When Marge goes with John and the kids in a trip, Homer is terrified, He asks Marge if John acted in gay ways with them, but she angrily replies to his narrow-mindedness, "No he is a really witty, obeying person". At the end of the episode, he comes to the rescue when Moe and Barney cowardly hide, but John who is being called a sissy saves him. Hence, with this ironical paradox homer's gay panic turns into acceptance and friendship.

The Simpsons cartoon continues its journey towards gay themes in order to enhance the visibility and the acceptability of queer identity. In the episode entitled *Three Gays of the Condo* (Season 14, episode 17) and aired on April 2003. Homer and Marge are facing marital problems. While Homer is looking for a missing puzzle piece, he comes across an old angry note Marge wrote when Homer was drunk, and ruined her night. Homer is depressed, and wonders why Marge chose to stay with him if she feels that he is not good enough for her and her dreams. He finds another note which explains that she was pregnant with Bart. Thus, he realizes that Marge was originally going to leave him as he got drunk, but she found out about her pregnancy before she could do so. This reflects woman's situation before inventing the contraceptive pill; that saved them from unwanted pregnancies and destinies. Marge is a traditional housewife who is occupied by housing, mothering and cooking unlike her twin sisters who are successfully working at the Springfield Department of Motor Vehicles. She is a characterization for the reality which feminism bursts to counter because of the gender

norms; that foreclosed woman into this secondary, inferior, dependent social occupation to man.

Homer moves out of his house, and finds a newspaper announcement for a cheap three bedrooms condo in the hip part of Springfield. It is located in a completely gay men neighborhood. He is a roommate of two openly gay men (Grady and Julio). What is interesting about this episode is the absence of Homer's panic, which he previously experienced in his relationship with John in *Homer's Phobia*. He does not seem frustrated from the idea of living with gay men, and sharing them their lifestyle; that includes as the episodes portrays: legs waxing, shopping the trendiest cloths, drinking excessively. Also, dancing topless at the local gay club (There were gay couples, lesbian couples, and butch lesbians). He is even walking completely naked in front of his gay roommates in the condo. Although this seems to be stereotypically portrayed, yet Homer's comfort implies for a space for openness and acceptability tendency, as he does not expose violent reactions.

When Grady reveals interest in Homer and kisses him in the lips, Homer is surprised, but keeps calm lying in the bed, as he says "Wow, I never realized you felt about me that way. We should really take some time to talk and..." then Homer flees out of the window. Homer did not react with anger or violence about the kiss unlike his attitude with John in *Homer's Phobia* episode, six years ago. He seems to accept the kiss. Homer also received a kiss from Karl a decade ago with the episode of *Simpson and Delilah*. However, Homer seems nonchalant about Karl's kiss, as he was not aware of his gayness nor the show revealed it openly. Thus, Homer's nonchalantly changing attitude to acceptability towards the kiss. Also, his humoredly fleeing out of the window once his comfort was soured by Grady's kiss. These portray the show's attempt to establish both visibility and acceptance of queerness in the American culture "in ways that conform to the existing stereotypes" wherever serves and supports their quest (Henry 128).

There's Something about Marrying (season 16, episode 10) aired on February 2005 portrays another overt and bold attempt for the show's political engagement in the politics of sexuality. It discusses the issue of same-sex marriage which was legalized ten years later in 2015 in the United States of America under Obama's presidency. Also, it depicts the official coming out of Patty Bouvier (Marge's twin sister) as a lesbian. This episode exclusively begins with a black screen with this disclaimer: "This episode contains discussion of same-sex marriage. Parental direction is advised. "This warning highlights the controversy over the issue of homosexuality, as it continues challenging the American norms and social stability. Most importantly, such warning indicates the inappropriateness of such representations with

children, who have not yet come to construct their knowledge towards abstract concepts such as gender and sexuality, which embodies pillars for one's identity.

After this disclaimer, the episode starts with Bart and Milhouse's pranks on Howell Huser, who is a professional reporter travelling all over the United States rating towns for tourism. Consequently, the torment he receives at the hand of Bart and his friend, breaks his 47-year long smiling streak, and portrays Springfield as an unfriendly town, with the worst rate ever been giving for a town in the show. As a result to this, Springfield witnesses an economic collapse after tourism business declines within a month. Thus, Mayor Quimby urges his town for solutions to revitalize tourism, and Lisa suggests legalizing same-sex marriage, as she justifies, "We can attract a growing segment of the marriage market and strike a blow for civil rights." No one object as everyone seems concerned only with the first part of Lisa's statement to provide incomes where Mayor Quimby declares, "Then it's settled. We'll legalize gay money—I mean gay marriage." Soon, a great number of gay and lesbian couples come to Springfield. However, Lovejoy, the reverend of the first church of Springfield holds the view that marriage is a divine covenant between a man and a woman, and not same-sex couples, as he says, "While I have no opinion for or against your sinful lifestyles, I cannot marry two people of the same-sex any more than I can put a hamburger on a hot dog bun." Marge confronts Lovejoy and challenges his religious view. She says, "As long as two people love each other. I don't think God cares whether they have the same hoo-hoo or ha-ha." Her idea of free love resonates with the civil rights liberating tone, which burst with the 1960s youth sexual revolution to liberate love far from the traditional norms of compulsory heterosexuality and gender binary; that came to fore with Woman and Gay liberation movements to assert for civil rights.

When Homer discovers that ministers get paid, he quickly register himself online as an Episcopal minister, and starts to perform gay wedding ceremonies in his garage where he settles a chapel. It satirically portrays the banality of one's ability to be a minister, and performs weddings via internet certificate even someone like Homer. Shortly, Homer starts his business and marries gay couples like Julio and Thad, after that Julio breaks up with Grady. Later, Patty comes to the Simpson's house and tells Marge she is getting married. Marge initially assumes that it is to a man before Patty eventually comes out of the closet and announces her, "I'm gay". In fact, in the episode entitled *Treehouse of Horror III* (season 4, episode 5) aired on October 1992. Patty after seeing Homer naked declares, "There goes the last lingering thread of my heterosexuality", which can be interpreted as an implicit allusion to Patty's secret sexuality.

There's Something about Marrying takes us back to *Homer's Phobia* episode. Marge's tween sister Patty announces; that she is getting married to a woman. Marge is surprised and reluctant. This angers Patty because Marge declared her support to gay marriage act, but she is not that supportive to her sister's union with Veronica. On the wedding day, Marge surprisingly discovers that Veronica is, in fact, a man who is disguised to be a woman. This was after her foot caught Veronica in the bathroom preparing for the event while shaving her face in the toilet, and singing Aerosmith's rock song "Dude Looks like a Lady". Therefore, at the ceremony, at the altar when Homer asks if anyone objects the marriage, Marge exposes Veronica's secret. The latter confesses to being a man and explains that she pretended being a woman to enter the LPGA tour, long before he met Patty. When Patty asks him about his lying, he tells her, "Because you fell in love with me as woman, and I didn't want to lose you." The disguised man continues as he falls in one knee, "Now, I'm asking you not as Veronica, but as the man I'm—Leslie Robin Swisher—Patty will you marry the real me?" After a brief pause, Patty shakes her head and replies, "Hell no! I like girls," and the attendees cheer and applause. Patty thanks Marge for accepting her, as Patty gets the chance to freely choose and affirm her sexuality at the end. In the episode entitled *Livin' La Pura Vida* (season 31, episode 17) aired on November 2019, Patty is dating a female character named Evelyn as the show again affirms on her lesbian identity.

The American traditional culture opposes gay marriage, and operates to sustain gender conformity, so heterosexuality through the norms of femininity and masculinity where each adjust to its gender role accordingly. The inspiration of this episode is celebrated in 2015 where same-sex marriage was legalized in all over the United States of America.

In analyzing queer identity on the Simpsons show, Patty Bouvier refers to the life of a gay female; however, another important character is also to be referred to; that is Waylon Smithers who reflects gay male life. The coming out process of Waylon, throughout the course of the show, has been deliberated slowly but surely. Before the show's overt political engagement in the issue of sexuality and queerness, as focused on the episodes of *Homer's Phobia* (1997) and *There's Something about Marrying* (2005). The show was initially overt in its script and representations; that paved the way for Smithers's homosexuality (Henry 111, 119, 121).

The assistant Smithers has an affectionate interest to his male boss Mr. Burns, who seems oblivious to this fact. In the episode entitled *Brush with Greatness* (season 2, episode 18) aired on April 1991. Marge registers in an art class to revive her passion for painting after Lisa encourages her. She wins first prize in a local competition, and Mr. Burns contracts her

to paint his portrait. Again Smithers's affection for his boss is implied. At the Simpsons house, Marge accidentally enters the bathroom and finds Mr. Burns naked while Waylon offers him a towel. Marge apologizes and leaves. Smithers asks, "Would you feel more comfortable if I left too, Sir?" and Ms. Burns replies, "Of course not, Smithers. You're...you're like a doctor." Whereas Mr. Burns's reply affirms his heterosexuality, yet this unusual closeness between the two is fueling Smithers's devotion towards his boss, especially with his role of caring after Mr. Burns's, which indicates for Smithers gayness.

Dog of Death (season 3, episode 19) aired on March 1992 is more explicitly reflecting Smithers's secret sexuality. The Simpson's family dog Santa's Little Helper is ill and needs a surgery; the reason to which Homer turns to Mr. Burns for a loan to cover the cost. As Mr. Burns cannot understand this attachment to a dog, he asks Smithers, "Why would anyone spend good money on a dog?" "People like dogs," Smithers replies. "Nonsense," says Mr. Burns. "Dogs are idiots. Think about it Smithers. If I came into your house and started sniffing at your couch and slobbering all over your face, what would you do?" At this moment Smithers seems trying to savor the image, "Mmmmm... if you did it, Sir?" With this scene the show takes an overt and audacious step establishing for Smithers's sexual orientation.

First direct representation for Smithers's eroticism towards his boss is depicted in the Seventeenth episode of season 4. In *Marge Gets a Job*, aired on November 1992, Marge gets a job at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant where Homer works. Mr. Burns develops a crush on her. He orders offering her a raise and an office near to his, and Smithers is now alienated with Mr. Burns's feeling for Marge. When Mr. Burns asks Smithers, "You know that dream where they fly in through the window?" A short appearance of Smithers's own dream occurs; and Mr. Burns is the one, who flies in the window, as Smithers's homosexuality is acknowledged to the viewers.

Moving beyond allusions to gay culture, the fifth season (1993-1994) delineates the show's forthright acknowledgment of gay identity, and paving for the coming out of Smithers. In *Rosebud* (season5, episode 4) aired on October 1993. Smithers is sad that he did not receive his Birthday wish to have Mr. Burns jumping out of an oversize birthday cake, wearing nothing but a sash, and singing to him "Happy Birthday" a la Marilyn Monroe. Again with the episode *Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy* (season 5, episode 14) aired on February 1994. Smithers is writing an article, and when he opens his computer, an image of Mr. Burns appears in the screen, and says "Hello, Smithers. You're quite good at turning me on." Then, *Secrets of a successful Marriage*, the 22nd and final episode of this season, aired on May

1994. Homer goes to an adult education center where decides to take part of teaching a class of his own on marriage. The class is about sharing personal marital secrets, as Homer reveals his own secrets with Marge. In this class, Smithers reveals, "I was married once. But I just couldn't keep it together." Then a flashback scene appears showing Smithers having an argument with his wife over Mr. Burns. This representation portrays Smithers's suppressed homosexuality and erotic desire for Mr. Burns; that he did not feel with his wife, so indicates him being a gay man.

In *Homer's Phobia* (1997), it is implied that Smithers is in a romantic affair with John the owner of the Cockamamie's shop. When John takes the family in a trip, they are having food in a restaurant. Smithers approaches to John's table and whispers to him, "So this is your sick mother!" and the embarrassed John tells him not now for this. It seems the two were supposed to meet for a date before John changes his plans.

Three Gays of the Condo (2003), this episode clearly depicts Smithers's homosexuality. He is shown living in the gays' neighborhood where rainbow flags are everywhere, even Smithers is wearing a short with rainbow colors on sides. It symbolizes for queer culture. However Smithers fearfully denies living there when Homer asks him so. He even flees away when gays in the bus asks him, "Is that the Mr. Burns you're always talking about?" This representation emphasizes on Smithers's gayness that comes clear to the viewer, even that Smithers has not yet revealed it to his society.

Flaming Moe (season 22, episode 11) aired on January 2011, is another audacious episode of the cartoon; that explicitly deals with the issue of homosexuality. It depicts another attempt to familiarize queer visibility and activism like with *There's Something about Marrying* episode. In this episode the gay Waylon Smithers's secret homosexuality no longer seems to be secret, but for his boss. The latter is demoralized after discovering that Mr. Burns cut him of his will. Although Smithers is his "Campiest of aides-de-camp", as Mr. Burns clarifies. However he did not earn his respect as a self-made man. Thus, he is not seen as an equal to him, Mr. Burns states. The sad Smithers is wondering the streets, as he comes across a gay bar called The League of Extra-Horny Gentlemen. "Here's a place I can feel wanted", he says. However, he is not allowed to enter because he lacks the super aesthetic favored features at that bar such bulging muscles. Thus, he ends up in Moe's bar where he gets an idea to earn Mr. Burns's respect by starting a business. He thinks about opening "A men's bar for the average-looking fellow". Henceforth, he suggests to Moe to transform the bar into "A place for guys like me," that welcomes men "With few extra pounds or little less hair." Moe was first hesitant about "Hanging out with swish-kabobs," but soon agreed by his desire for

making money. It works and the bar is crowded and doing well with different queer characters including homosexuals, cross-dressers...etc.

Smithers angers when realizing that men at the bar think Moe is gay as well. The latter is not aware of this fact until Marge reveals it to him. Although Moe decides to clarify this misunderstanding and "Clear the air," the profits his bar is successfully making prevents him doing so. One of Moe's clients, Grizzly Shaun, a big beard man develops a crush on Moe and asks him out on a date. Moe avoids him with an excuse, yet flirts with him, and keeps pretending to be gay. The problem for Smithers intensifies when Patty and three men enters the bar complaining; that they are banned from walking in the Springfield Founder's Parade because they are homosexuals. One of the three says that change will only happen if one of "them" (homosexuals) is on the town council, and Shaun quickly nominates Moe, referring to him by "The heart of this town's gay community." Moe agrees after that another asks him, "Will you become Springfield's first openly-gay city councilman?" This exasperates Smithers, who asks Moe to speak in private. He faces him for his dishonesty: "You can't be this people's leader if you're lying to them about who you are," he tells him. "You're not gay!" However, Moe rejects Smithers, and returns to his bar announcing "Your queen is back!"

Springfield's queer people gather at the City Hall; they are a diversity of backgrounds and races. Moe, who keeps pretending to be gay, is announcing his speech when Smithers expose him before the crowd, "You're not one of them." After that Moe initially denies this claim, Smithers challenges him to a kiss. Moe reluctantly tries, but he cannot do it, and admits, "I ain't gay." Then the crowd leaves in disappointment. Likely, Moe thought it is harmless to pretend being a homosexual, as he is not aware of this faction's historical and political quest to assert their rights, which is explained in the crowds' disappointment and Smithers's anger of Moe's fake sexuality, especially that it represents an important pillar in one's identity. The episode surprisingly ends with Moe holding Smithers, bending him down, and kissing him in the lips, after he shrugs saying, "As long as I got nothing to lose..." Afterwards, Moe says, "not bad, Like Frisbee golf, I'm glad I tried it once." Then he leaves, and a large Smile draws on Smithers's face, as he stands by himself.

This episode reflects what Lenny describes it, "A sense of acceptance in the air," after that he arrives to Moe's remodeled bar along with Homer and Carl, as they realize the difference in the place. Likely, the stigmatization attitude against gay people, like in *Homer's Phobia* (1990), changed through the episodic course of the show to reach more acceptability, as being gay or pretending to be one like Moe, no longer seems carrying this social disgrace. The 1960s sexual revolution instigated for a cultural shift in the United States of America to

achieve social open-mindedness for new identities such as queer identity. The show, with its gradual engagement in queer politics, is familiar with this fact, and wisely cultivates queer ideology compatibly with the social sphere. For example, the 1990s embodied an intensive homophobic public attitude against homosexuals because of the AIDS epidemic crisis. Presumably, Moe's remodeled open bar reflects the aspiration of the new open American culture.

Therefore, *The Simpsons* cartoon engages in the debate of sexuality and queer identity, as it operates to install queer sensibility "through its abundant allusions to gay life and sexual orientation its constant toying with the fluid nature of sexuality, its incorporation of regular gay characters (especially Waylon Smithers), and most recently, its engagement with the highly politicized issue of same-sex marriage (Henry 17). In this sense, it enacts for sexuality and gender identity being changeable, and not fixed.

3.3 The Importance of the Socialization Process

It is a developmental process from which an individual evolves from a biological being to a social being; by which he/she learns to become a member of his/her family and society from early childhood along to his/her national group's cultural framework of norms and values. This operates to regulate the relationships between the individual and the society members. In other words, it stabilizes a social order, and preserves the society's culture and social heritage. The reason which "childhood is to be understood as social construct" (Jenks 7). This elaborates that childhood is constructed and defined through the society's lenses and cultural background. Thus, it is not a natural or isolated phenomenon, but rather is grounded in social and cultural beliefs and norms including: gender role and sexuality. In other words, the society decides the status of childhood and adulthood. Although, this seems to reflect that there could not be one unified definition for childhood amongst different societies and cultures, yet it does not reject the fact that childhood is an age of growth and learning.

Childhood is a journey to adulthood where children learn and construct their knowledge; henceforth develop their agency gradually in order to explore their self-identity and the world. They are described as being born like blank slates with no knowledgebase. The reason is agreed being an age phase that needs to be perceived and treated with prudence. Through socialization, children adjust to the parameters of their culture, and appropriate its norms then form their gender identity. This process seems operating to sustain and affirm the reproduction of the dominant social norms and expectancies of thoughts and behaviors among individuals.

The socialization process starts since birth and progresses with age through learning until the individual reaches the stage of rational thinking, and develops his/her own agency. Henceforth, childhood represents a golden age, as it is characterized by this developmental process for the child (physically, mentally, socially, and psychologically). According to Piaget, children are born without knowledge or skills. In this sense, they have no understanding about themselves, or about the world around them. Thus, they start acquiring these through socialization because they do not attribute them at birth, but rather are learned progressively through time while they are growing up. In this way, they come to develop their cognitive abilities, foresight, judgment, hence their agency. His study of child's mental development with his theory of cognitive development, attempts to demonstrate how the child constructs knowledge and conception about the world while growing into becoming an individual with critical thinking. Piaget believes that children's logical thinking and intelligence is an adaptation relational process between the biological organism and environment; that is based on "constructing mentally structures which can be applied to those of the environment"(3, 4).

Parents, school, and society are perceived to be the basic socializing structures for the child to acquire knowledge, in this limiting and shaping child's agency. In fact, family is the first nucleus structure and social institution in which the child lives and constructs knowledge about own self and the world around. It is through the parents' eyes that a child builds perception and understanding in terms of concepts, values, and habits. Thus, parents' role is like a sort of a filter; that operates to protect their children from inappropriate experiences, which may affect their children's social and psychological development.

Most importantly, it is throughout the socialization process that children develop their gender roles according to their assigned sex, as they are socially taught to comply in conformity with the cultural norms, values, and beliefs since birth. Girls are expected to display femininity traits whereas masculinity traits for boys. Therefore, as childhood is an intense phase of learning and constructing knowledge about everything from concrete objects (car) to abstract concepts such gender roles and sexuality. In the theory of Cognitive Development, "Gender schemas are cognitive schemas that are used to organize information on the basis of gender categories". Children conceptualize elaborative gender schemas as they internalize their gender identity and understanding of gender roles (Stockard 219).

Socialization is perceived like an educative and instructive process, in which Freud states that childhood experiences influence the child's personality and behavior as an adult. It "influences boys' and girls' ideas about themselves, their gender, and sexuality" (Stockard

222). In this sense, what the child learns in his/her early years is characterized by stability and continuity. This refutes the preconceived perceptions which absurdly views that the child forgets most of childhood memories and experiences, and underestimate its importance.

On the process of socializing gender, the inception of the developmental theory of gender returns to Freud's ideas. The latter emphasizes that children develop their gender roles throughout their parent's conscious and unconscious socializing messages, also their joint activities (Ehrensaft 242, 243). Children's toys like dolls for girls and soccer ball for boys, pink and blue colors, are all examples for the process of socializing gender roles to enhance traits of femininity in girls such emotionality and caring, also masculinity traits in boys such aggression and strength. In fact, the context of childhood or the "culture of childhood" is "highly gendered", not only with its norms and conventions, but also materials such toys. It characterizes more rigid distinctions in the roles assigned to males and females; that it sanctions violating it (Stockard 220, 221). This emphasizes on childhood being it a social construction.

According to Freud's psychosexual account, the Oedipal and Electra complexes marked by children's fantasies to monopolize the attention and the fondness of the opposite sex parent; it operates in the development of their heterosexual identities after resolving these conflicts while approaching adulthood. In this sense, Freud as well accentuates the central role of parents (father and mother) in the child's development of gender identity (Stockard 223). Therefore, when the developmental course of this process takes another direction, "parents would usually to be blame for the child's anomalies" as children may display gender identity that does not correspond to their biological sex, hence the cultural standard, or even may not unfold heterosexual identities (Ehrensaft 244). It is known as gender nonconformity. This highlights the complexity of the process of the gender development, as the child's understandings of gender is subject to change until he/she develops a fixed conceptualization that will not change (Stockard 218). Therefore, it is an adaptable process where their thoughts and behaviors are characterized by change and flexibility before reaching intelligibility and constancy.

In this way, a child's mind is the suitable soil to implement an ideology, as they are still developing and learning. Thus, they are more flexible to accept homosexuality as a natural variation, and gender as a free spectrum through influencing their understandings, henceforth their sexual agency in itself.

Therefore, Piaget's cognitive development theory highlights the process of the child's knowledge construction, and developing rational thinking and agency in light of the

sociocultural norms and values, chief among gender roles. Hence, the social conformity process, which identifies the child with his society. The Freudian account elaborates to the process of gender socialization itself. Freud emphasizes on the unconscious part of the mind where hidden sexual desire represents a driven force demanding fulfillment, especially with biological maturation. Sexuality is still treated as a taboo, which makes it one of the major controversial areas. Sexual agency stands as sensitive criteria in the child's conflicting development within the socio-cultural platform of norms and expectancies of gender and sexuality. It is mostly defined as one's control over its own body and sexuality (Cense 248). Thus, it stands for one's full freedom to take decisions about its body and sexual orientation. Parental role is important, as when it is absent or little, the child tends to act freely to learn from other agents within his/her environment, taking them as a role-model to adopt and imitate, including even characters in cartoons and movies.

This perception is even tangible in the cartoon itself. In *Homer's Phobia* episode, there is a scene when Homer is arguing with Marge about his fears of Bart's imitation to the gay John, as he blames her, "Do you have to be so effeminate around the boy!" before his wife replies, "Homer, I don't think there's a problem with Bart, but if there is, it is probably because you are not spending any time with him." This representation reflects the importance of the time that the father shares with his child in terms of character development, as parents are perceived like the appropriate role-models to their children, so the child does not need to find a substitute filling this gap. Also in *Lisa's Substitute Teacher* (season 2, episode 19) aired on April, 1991. Lisa develops a crush on her substitute teacher Mr. Bergstrom and his learning methods, as she views him like a positive role-model rather than her father whom she sees as an embarrassment because of his ignorance. When Mr. Bergstrom notices the void in the father and daughter's relationship, he takes Homer aside and urges him to take part in Lisa's life, and to be more of a positive role-model to her. Thus, when her teacher Miss Hoover returns and it is time for Mr. Bergstrom to leave, Lisa is devastated to lose him, but eventually learns to take her father like a role-model. Again, this emphasizes on the importance of the close relationship between parents and their children.

In this subject, with the development of TV media, "the context of childhood has become centered upon screens". For today children, screens become the primary source of information and knowledge for knowing themselves and the world; especially, teenagers through watching movies, series, and TV shows. It is the digital generation whom spend hours watching TV, and "Their bedrooms are multimedia centers [...] particularly for teens", (Jordan and Romer, preface, xii). As nowadays, almost every house has a TV, and most

teenagers have their own tablet, iPad and smartphone devices connected to internet. This makes them a great consumers and targets for media contents which affects their development. Children seem turning to these instruments in order to grasp meanings of gender and sexuality. Thus, to forge their agency in these areas, especially that children nowadays seem wanting to assume themselves within their society and life in general. Hence, to be more active and participative in reflecting their own self-interest, so likely to be freely capable of expressing themselves even before developing complete cognitive abilities.

The Simpsons is one of the popular cartoons not only in the United States of America, but in the whole world. Its satirical and slapstick comedy is appealing to children, and especially teenagers, which gained it a large mass base not only with adults, but also younger generations. However, the show's deviant gender roles, or queer representations, and its engagement in the politics of sexuality. It is aiming to destabilize the social order and the cultural norms in order to promote for the visibility and viability of homosexuality as a natural variation, and not a deviation or perversion from the heteronormative sexuality. This puts the question about the effect of such inappropriate portrayals in both social and psychological development of children and teenagers, especially at the level of gender and sexuality.

3.4 The Effect of Queer Representations on Children' Social and Psychological Development

Children seem to be principal targets for the raising queer social construction, where the 1960s counterculture represents a turning point in America's histo-cultural trajectory. Moreover, the inclusiveness of media and the technological development in general seems promoting for cultivating queer ideology through every screen in the world due to globalization. Hence, the effect of these mentally implemented deviant themes is of cross borders, and touches all children in the world because heterosexuality is the natural and dominant cultural parameter.

The traditional family mold consists of a male father and a female mother, and not homosexual parents of same-sex. This permits the child to appropriate the assigned gender role through an identification process with same-sex parent, especially with the phallic stage to monopolize the affection of the opposite sex parent. A child raised by parents of same-sex (Parent 1 and Parent 2), this would affect his/ her gender developmental course at the social level since this familial entity is socially abnormal and unaccepted. Also at the psychological level, this would be traumatizing, especially with adolescence as it is a struggling period for

teenagers to assume themselves socially and individually. Hence, the feeling of social rejection and the confusion distorting the child's understanding of own self and the world will result in psychological disorders. This influences one's character and behavior as an adult, and affects its lifetime course.

Perceiving children as targets is not a coincidence, but a thoughtful attempt. As aforementioned, children are born with no knowledgebase, neither about themselves, nor about the world. They learn and grow progressively through socialization where they develop their identity. The reason to which childhood is perceived as an age of vulnerability; that ought to be separated and protected from the dangerous conflicts of adult's world. It is because they do not attribute the rational level of cognition at birth, so they still cannot freely decide for themselves, or behave by themselves. It is the parents' role to hold this responsibility in order to protect their children since they have not yet come to develop their agency. They are in a process of adaptation with their environment where their thoughts and behaviors are characterized by change and flexibility. For example, legally, children do not have the agency to acquire properties such a house, a car, a bank account, or even sign official documents or contracts until reaching the legal age being an adult.

Gender nonconformity puts the child in front of a social intolerance, even bullying, as "many of gender nonconforming boys start to be called sissy boys"(Weinrich 322). Like the case with Bart, because they are not identified with their society's set of cultural norms and gender binary system. Thus, they are not socially accepted and called sissies. It is a painful experience for the child to go through, and it will affect his/her character and behavior as an adult. As a result, the child will be psychologically tormented of depression and anxiety, even social denial, hence a serious identity crisis, which the ego operates to protect the psyche from, through repressing the socially unaccepted thoughts and behaviors.

In fact, child psychiatry used to perceive gender as an illness that needs to be fixed or converted according to the appropriate cultural norms, especially with children. However, it changed its assumption later, and aimed at providing suitable methods in dealing with children of this case. Thus, they introduced the new gender affirmative model that perceives gender as a health trait. Their model seeks to help gender-nonconforming children to explore themselves and affirm their gender identity whatever it is. This is because remaining with gender confusion is a problem. This means they are anguishing an identity crisis. Therefore, they try to prepare them to face the social world that does not tolerate their gender deviation. In this, defying and urging the world "to be more gender inclusive" thus, including other possible identities (Ehrensaft 241, 242). In 2013, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of

Mental Disorders (DSM) appealed it as a mental disorder, unless the person struggled to label a gender where it becomes a concern that needs to be treated. This was following the de-pathologizing of homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973, and repealing it as a natural alteration.

This illustrates the seriousness of the situation, as influencing a child's gender identity, and placing him/ her between two opposite social forces. The social control is emphasizing on its realm of norms and beliefs concerning gender and sexuality in childhood culture, and a queer construction is cultivating for destabilizing social order and rethinking the traditional perceptions towards gender and sexuality. This is a violation of childhood under the laws of protecting children, which are ratified by international organizations such UNICEF.

In this concern, an American husband and wife shared a video to draw parents' attention to the dangers of screen technology nowadays. Through this, urging them to protect their children from what it is naively thought to be a safe instrument. While their seven year old daughter is playing a game with her mother's tablet, she is receiving inappropriate advertisements. As the child is surprised of what she saw, she immediately tells her mother. The reason pushed her frightened parents to share their story, and convey their message to all parents. The child is receiving a one minute and half video advertisements, which cannot be skipped. They are significantly displaying homosexual relationships (two men kissing secretly from their wives). They also advertise lying, adultery, and deception in marriage, and normalizing it. It is not a marketing targeting to urge children buying products such toys, food. These advertised messages is targeting children to install specific ideas in their minds from early age, as a child's mind is a fertile soil to plant and grow ideologies such queerness because of its mental flexibility and lack of intelligible schemas. Promoting for homosexuality and distorting the marital base paves to cultivate the idea of normalizing homosexuality as a natural variation, and reconsidering other familial molds in order to consolidate the visibility, acceptability, and viability of the anti-dominant queer culture. The parent's suspicions are even confirmed when these advertisements change their patterns in form of pictures able to be skipped, and with different contents (agriculture and education) when they are the ones playing this game. This proves the targeting aim of this game application, since it is able to identify their daughter through the camera and her voice, which is urging to take the necessary measures to protect the context of childhood ("Do You", 00:00:00-00:07:09).

As with the case of this couple, game applications represented a way of approaching this aim, but it also can be implemented through video games, social media, or TV shows like the studied case with *The Simpsons* cartoon. Influencing a child's sexual agency and gender role schemas in order to forge ideological agendas is a significant violation to childhood, especially when they do not come yet constructing their knowledge and full understanding in these arenas. Children are vulnerable beings whom should not be perceived or treated like mini-adults by forging their sexual agency while they are not yet cognitively matured. Therefore, parental surveillance and awareness is crucial. Parental responsibility is not confined on providing their children a safe roof, clothing, and food. It is beyond materialistic requirements, as parents' chief role is to protect their kids psychologically and socially through providing them a peaceful and normal environment where they do not need to visit a psychologist while growing up.

3.5 Conclusion

In light of the technological advance and the inclusiveness of TV media landscape, children are spending most of their time exploring themselves and the world through different screens from TV to tablets, and smartphones, all connected to the internet, especially that nowadays everything is available in this network, even TV shows, and cartoons. It is the age of globalization. Therefore, the context from which childhood is developing and constructing perceptions seems changing. Parents naively assume that this new context is safe for their children; presumably, thinking it is both entertaining and educative in terms of mastering using technology. However, it is a reality that screens are instruments to convey messages.

Childhood is exploited in the ideological debate of sexuality and gender roles. Queer representation, in TV cartoons delivered to children, is influencing their gender identity and sexual orientation through normalizing what is socially perceived as deviant and abnormal. Queer culture is challenging the dominant heteronormative culture in order to cement its existence and acceptability through targeting childhood. The latter is characterized by vulnerability, as children have no previous knowledge about the concepts of this debate. In other words, since childhood is a social construction which operates in preserving the stability of the social order, and the continuity of the dominant cultural norms. In this sense, influencing children's perceptions through installing and normalizing queer themes; it will construct individuals accepting homosexuality as a natural sexual orientation, and not a perversion. The context of childhood is torn between two opposing dominant and anti-dominant culture which would affect children socially and psychologically.

Throughout the analysis of *The Simpsons*, the cartoon progressively engages in the debate of sexuality and gender. From allusions to queer themes into directly engaging in the politics of sexuality, the show cultivates for the visibility and acceptability of queer culture. It satirically critiques queer exclusiveness in the mainstream of American culture, and draws inspiration from Butler's performativity theory (1999) which concludes that gender is fluid, and not a rigid binary.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The United States' historical trajectory is characterized by hard debates and intensive disputes to define America culturally and socially. In this subject, the 1960s era represents a turning point in United States' history and culture, which highlights this struggle. It is known as "The Counterculture Movement". It is defined as a deviant group's complete opposition to the traditional dominant culture with its conventional system of norms and values, which was viewed as corrupted, hence in need for change.

The 1960s youth sexual revolution bursts to free love, and break the barriers surrounding sex, gender, and sexuality. It is designed in hippies, woman, and gay liberation movements; that represent the heyday of the counterculture movement to redefine America's social and cultural structures. Hippies experimented with drug, public sex, group sex, nudity, and homosexuality to free themselves from what they describe the evil of the traditional American culture.

After the end of the World War II, women found themselves compelled to the role of housing and mothering. They were mainly expected to clean, nurse, and serve men's sexual needs and desires; rather pursuing education and careers. Women suffered an identity crisis from this social reality. Thus, the 1960s marked the dissatisfaction sentiment and women's consciousness to achieve social reformation. Women's liberation movement quest to emancipate woman from the oppression of the patriarchal man biased social system. Most importantly, asserting woman's identity as an independent being equal, not dependent or secondary to man. The publication of several oeuvres such as: Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and Kate Miller's *Sexual Politics* (1969) have played an important role in raising woman's consciousness

The second wave of feminism emerged. It called for economic and political equality between man and women. Also, emphasized on women's right in free sex and reproduction. The third wave of feminism followed the ideological agenda of its precursors. It globalized women's movement, and concerned itself with female empowerment, and claiming high regard to woman. In this actuality, gender broke through to be the new social dimension for feminism in deconstructing the politics of power between man and woman.

The notions of sex and gender were used interchangeably, which is inaccurate. Sex refers to the biological category of male/ female. Gender refers to social category of man/woman. Therefore, sex is a natural fixed reality whereas gender is the social interpretation to this biological category according to the traditional cultural conventions and

norms, which vary among cultures. Thus, gender is a social construction, and it is changeable. Females are expected to display feminine gender identity, and males are expected to exhibit masculine gender identity. Gender identity/ role captivate the localization of female and male individuals to their social position through the process of socialization which starts since birth. This aims to organize social relations, and maintain social order and conformity.

Feminist theory interrogates the social construction of gender as being the source of social oppression against woman. The idea of gender fluidity was instigated with De Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949). Judith Butler developed this belief with her Gender Performativity Theory, in her Book *Gender Trouble* (1990). She proposes that gender is not an innate quality that one is born with, but a performative process based on a set of regular, sustained, repetitive gendered acts which affects the self, and brings it into being, in terms of socially reinforced feminine and masculine gender identities.

Most importantly, Butler concludes that gender identity naturalization stabilizes the conceptualizations of sex, gender, and sexuality; that serve to centralize heterosexuality as hegemony. In this sense, Butler's performativity theory attempts troubling gender by emphasizing on its fluid nature. This opens for other gender identity possibilities, also other forms for sexuality. In this way, it subverts the binary system of gender and man biased compulsory heteronormativity. This epistemological matrix of feminism served as a model for queer theory to forge. Butler's *Gender Trouble* stands as a pioneering reference for both Feminism and queer theory. It is important here to clarify that gender identity is not similar to sexuality. The latter denotes for one's sexual orientation.

The 1960s liberation and civil rights movement inspired gay and lesbian individuals' sexual revolution toward the dominant sexual mores and gender roles. For long, this sexual minority lived in secret because of the social denial and exclusion. This era marked their coming out of the closet in order to assert their identity, visibility, and acceptability within the American mainstream. Homosexuality used to be diagnosed as pathology by the APA. However it appealed it from the list of mental disorders in 1973 with the increasing role of gay activism.

The term queer historically connoted for stigmatization, shame, insult, perversion, deviance, and pathology before taking the scope of a resistance, as it becomes a connotation for pride and identity. Queer theory emerged to resist and destabilize the foreclosing binaries and the conventional conceptualization of sexuality, which perceived homosexuality as a deviant, pervert sexual orientation; rather that a natural variation form of sexuality.

Therefore, resisting identity fixation rooted in heteronormative system. In broader sense, Feminism and queer theory defy and interrogate the restrictions on one's free agency, in particular sexual agency within the cultural dominant norms.

This research reflects this ideological debate over gender and sexuality; especially that it is taking children cartoons as squares or battlefield. Fox channel's popular cartoon show *The Simpsons*, which is airing since 1989 until nowadays with over than 600 episodes. It is a sitcom cartoon whose comedy stands upon satire; that operates to question the mind, and provoke the thought. It is known as the comedy of wit, which is an intelligent humor and not just designed for entertainment. Most importantly, *The Simpsons'* slapstick humor is also appealing to children, especially teenagers. Thus, it is famous among both adult and young viewers.

Since its earliest seasons, this cartoon operates to cultivate queer acceptability among its viewers through its regular engagements in the politics of sexuality and gender identity. This show is putting the American traditional culture under accountability for oppressing and excluding sexual minorities through addressing related issues. The issue of homophobia is addressed in the episodes entitled *Homer' Phobia* (1997). Moreover, the episode *There's Something about Marrying* (2005) represents a landmark in the show's history. It openly addresses the issue of legalizing same-sex marriage, which was implemented ten years later in 2015 through all American states under Obama' Presidency.

This research examines relevant episodes demonstrating the show's queer or deviant gender role portrayals. This was characterized with drag or cross-dressing like the case with Bart in the episodes: *Lisa the Beauty Queen* (1992), *Homer vs. Patty and Selma* (1995), and *Homer's Phobia* (1997), and grandpa Abe in the episode entitled *In the Front* (1993), also freely participating in kisses and hugs like with Homer and Karl in the episode of *Simpson and Delilah* (1990) then Grady in the episode of *Three Gays of the Condo* (2003), in addition to Moe's kiss with Smithers in the episode of *Flaming Moe* (2011). These portrayals imply for gay culture themes. It seeks to destabilize the traditional gender role categorizations, as it seeks to emphasize on Butler's notion of gender fluidity.

The cartoon displays homosexual characters; that the study examines chief among John (ex-boyfriend Smithers), Roscoe and workers at the steel, Julio (ex-boyfriend of Grady), Thad (married to Grady), and gays in the bus. Most importantly, the show's lesbian character Patty Bouvier (Marg's tween sister) who announced her homosexuality in the episode *There's Something about Marrying* (2005). Now she is dating her lover Evelyn. Waylon Smithers's, the show's male gay character's coming out of the closet was portrayed progressively from

allusions to direct acknowledgement of his homosexuality and devotion for his boss Mr. Burns. First direct representation for his homosexuality was in the episode of *Marge Gets a Job* (1992), and then it continues with the episodic course such: *Rosebud* (1993), *Lisa vs. Mlibou Stacy* (1994), *Secrets of a Successful Marriage* (1994), *Three Gays of the Condo* (2003), and *Flaming Moe* (2011) which focuses on the experience of Smithers.

Therefore, this cartoon reveals tendency to rethink and normalize homosexuality like a natural form of sexuality; rather than a deviance or perversion from the dominant heteronormative system, as it critiques the traditional norms of American culture and offers more visibility to homosexuality through its characterizations.

The idea of agency reflects the restrictions and the foreclosing on individuals to freely decide for themselves, as it is shaped by the norms of the traditional culture, including sexual and gender mores. Feminism and queer theory sought to resist this. Agency is developed since birth while developing knowledge and intelligibility about one's self and the world around, including sex, gender role, and sexuality; especially that these are the pillars of one's identity. Therefore, one's agency is defined and limited by the conventional sociocultural system of traditions.

Agency within the culture of childhood is characterized by complexity because it is an ongoing phase of growth and development, and of constructing meanings and understandings towards everything from materialistic elements to abstracts; especially that children are born with no knowledgebase. The reason children do not hold the agency to decide or behave by themselves, but under parental surveillance, and until they reach biological and cognitive maturation, so becoming adults. In this subject, sexual agency is a sensitive arena. It stands for one's free will to decide about own sexual orientation. In fact children's conceptualizations or schemas such gender role alter and change until the child increasingly elaborate more intelligible schemas for it, then what he learns is fixed. This is gender identity fixation. However, before this point, it is an adaptable process where their thoughts and behaviors are characterized by change and flexibility. This explains ideological targeting for childhood in cartoons like *The Simpsons*. It is because children's are flexible to learn and accept homosexuality as a normal rather than a deviant sexual orientation, which destabilizes their gender role categorizations schemas, also social conformity and order.

Piaget and Freud's developmental theories emphasize on the central role of parent on their child's development process of knowledge schemas and understandings. It is through the eyes of parents that the child develops his cognitive abilities. Most importantly, develop his gender role and superego maturation to balance between his sexual desires and the morality

standards of the society. This is embodied in the process of socialization, as adjusting children to conform according to the conventional sociocultural norms proposes that childhood is a social construction itself, which aims at stabilizing social order, and norms. Hence, maintaining social conformity and heteronormative identity fixation that regulate social relations. The child constructs a heterosexual identity through its identification process with same-sex parent while competing the opposite sex-parent for his/her attention and affection after resolving the Oedipus and Electra Complex demonstrated in Freud's psychosexual stages theory. This would affect the developmental course for adopted kids with same-sex parents, as homosexual parenting is abnormal and irrelevant.

Gender nonconformity in child psychiatry and sociology highlights the efforts to help children with gender confusion and anomalies in order to prepare them to face the social denial and intolerance, as they are not identified with the cultural standards. Children with gender nonconformity display gender identity that does not correspond to their biological sex, hence the cultural standard, or even may not unfold heterosexual identities. This is socially not accepted behavior; it is deviant from the dictated gender and sexual mores. Therefore, they are called sissies or feminine boys as sort of shaming and stigmatization, which will cause them psychological disorders such depression, anxiety, identity crisis. Therefore, this study highlights the ideological exploitation of childhood to achieve social acceptability through children's mental flexibility and lack of gender intelligibility. In this sense, this study sheds light on the role of parental awareness and surveillance toward their children.

Parents must not naively assume that messages displayed in children contents whether cartoons, games, movies are appropriate to their age, and it is advantageous, as *The Simpsons* cartoon also, the American parent in the video prove that the context of childhood is under queer ideological targeting to fuse its rhetoric. This proves to affect children's social and psychological development, as children nowadays are torn between two radically opposite forces influencing most sensitive element of an individual, his/her identity itself. Such effect is of cross borders because childhood in all cultures is a phase of growth, and because of globalization such contents are displayed worldly.

It is also important to refer that this ideological targeting is adopted by those assuming pedophilia as a natural sexual orientation just like homosexuality, which needs to be legalized as well. It seeks normalizing molestation against children under the notions of free love, love is love, and love has no age, which initially burst with the 1960s sexual revolution. Therefore, the conditions of childhood are significantly violated, which needs to be investigated and examined thoroughly through different digital contents.

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ملخص

يعمل هذا البحث العلمي على دراسة و تحليل المشاهد و التمثيلات الشاذة في البرنامج الكرتوني " عائلة سمبسون " الذي يتم بثه على قناة فوكس منذ عام 1989 متجاوزا بذلك اكثر من 30 موسم مع اكثر من 600 حلقة. وهذا يعكس شعبيته لتجذب حتى الاطفال و ذلك يعود الى نزعة الكوميديا التهريجية للبرنامج. تعرض تدخلات الكرتون و مشاركاته المتصاعدة في سياسي العلاقات الجنسانية و الجندرية على تاثيراتها المحتملة على التطور الاجتماعي و النفسي للطفل، خاصة ان هاته الدراسة مستوحاة من النظريات التنموية للطفل في علم الاجتماع و علم النفس، و التي تشدد على اهمية عملية التنشئة الاجتماعية للطفل في تطوره المعرفي، النفسي و الجنسي، و التي من خلالها يطور دوره الجندري و بذلك يستوعب هويته الجندرية و منه ميوله الجنسي وفقا للاعراف و القوانين الاجتماعية المنصوصة. لهذا تتبنى الدراسة منهجا انتقانيا حيث تظهر نظرية التطور المعرفي لبياجيه تطور عملية التوافق الاجتماعي للطفل مع محيطه اين يكتسب معرفيته حول نفسه و حول محيطه و يطورها تدريجيا بما في ذلك معرفيته حول دوره الجندري . و تعكس نظرية التحليل النفسي لفرويد عملية تطوير و استيعاب الدور الجندري لدى الطفل على نحو ادق. و منه تهدف هاته الدراسة الى استكشاف و توضيح الآثار المحتملة للتمثيلات و الشاذة المعروضة في الرسوم المتحركة على التطور الاجتماعي و النفسي للطفل نظرا لعدم تناسبها و انحرافها عن الاعراف و القوانين المتبعة اجتماعيا، و من خلال ذلك تلقي الضوء على دور الوالدين في حماية أطفالهم بتوعيتهم ضد الاستغلال الأيديولوجي للمثلية الذي اتخذ من برامج الاطفال ساحة لغرس و تعزيز وجوده.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأطفال، العلاقات الجندرية، العلاقات الجنسانية، النمو الاجتماعي و النفسي، كارتون عائلة سمبسون.