

WICCAN COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO MEDIA REPRESENTATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This project investigates the way that the Wiccan community feels about and deals with media representations of their religion in television shows and movies. Wicca is a nature-based religion with a belief in a dual divinity. Due to the gendered nature of Wiccan representations, I utilized feminist critical discourse analysis in order to understand the media representations and the issues around them. A variety of media representations of Wiccans were found through a qualitative content analysis of the media. The statistical analysis of data from the online survey showed that participants had negative feelings towards the representations of Wicca. If they acted against the representations being said around them or applied to them, they were most likely to correct people and educate them about the topic. The religion and gender of participants was found to affect how they felt about and dealt with media representations of Wicca.

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1.Introduction

My research explores the effect of the media representations of Wicca on the Wiccan community. Wicca is a Neopagan religion that has become more prominent in recent decades, even being reported as having been one of the fastest-growing religions in the United States at one point (Jensen & Thompson, 2008, p. 753). While many portrayals in the media show Wicca as being close to or the same as Witchcraft, Wicca is actually a nature-based religion that includes a belief in magic and dual divinity (Cunningham, 2004). There is often confusion about the differences between Wiccans and Witches, or whether if said differences exist. Wicca is primarily a religion, while Witchcraft can be more precisely defined as a form of practice.

This research focuses on how the Wiccan community deals with stereotypes about them in the media and what these stereotypes are. From my literature review in the beginning of the project I found much evidence of social blowback, social isolation, and legal issues that Wiccans have to deal with due to stereotypes and false ideas about Wicca (McClure, 2017). I used a media review of several movies, and television shows that had either Wiccan characters, examples of Wiccan practices of belief, or had systems of magic that were in some way similar to Wiccan practices and beliefs. From this I found many representations of Wiccan characters falling into categories like good, evil, weird or inhuman, and magical powers, among others. I used a selection of the results of this media review to help construct a survey to distribute to members of the Wiccan community about these representations. The representations used were:

Table 1, Representations in the survey

- Skilled with herbal medicine
- Superstitious
- Motherly and caring
- Wiccans are mostly women
- Seen as evil
- Obsessed with nature/hippie
- Practicing religion naked
- Members of cults or similar to cults
- Wicca as ancient knowledge often guarded by women
- Has magic powers
- Killing animals
- Creepy
- Crazy or deluded
- Satanists
- Owns cats
- Naïve or childish
- Nature obsessed or hippies

This survey went on to ask the participants about various representations that they had seen in media, what they thought about those representations if they had ever been pushed onto them by other people, and how they respond if they are used around them. From the answers to this survey, I was able to draw conclusions about how people felt about these kinds of representations and how they respond to them. Overall, the majority of people who took my survey had somewhat negative feelings about media representations, though opinions of specific representations mentioned in the survey varied on a case-by-case basis. In regards to feelings when media representations are said around them or applied to them, annoyance and disappointment were the most common emotions reported. The divide on whether or not participants take action on these representations being said around them was fairly even, with slightly higher levels for sometimes taking action rather than the direct yes or no. When action is taken the most common approach is informing the people spreading the representations and those around them of the truth of what Wicca and Wiccans are really like, as opposed to the

falsities in the media. My further statistical testing showed that there is a significant increase in likelihood of having media representations about Wiccans applied to them when the participants are Pagan, along with an increase in the number of different media representations that are applied to them. These results show that the media representations of Wicca and Wiccans have a real effect on members of that community. In addition to this, statistical testing showed that gender plays a role on if people believe that media representations are important to consider and research, with women being more likely to believe it is important than men, and those who did not identify as men or women being even more likely than that. My research, while not focusing on what exact effects there are, supports McClure's (2017) argument that media representations play a large role on people's opinions of Wiccans. 90.5% of my research participants stated that media plays a role on people's opinions of Wiccan with 40.5% of them indicating that it plays a very large role indeed.

Why it Matters?

It has been shown in prior studies that stereotypes in the media can have an effect on those who watch them in their attitudes and thoughts towards what is being represented, especially when those people are children (Chung, 2007, p. 99; Gorham, 1999). The representations in media can make people believe the behaviours that are being shown are what is appropriate and expected for people to do (Chung, 2007; Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017, p. 33; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Meyer & Wood, 2013; Saeed, 2007). These mistaken beliefs

can cause much turmoil for everyone involved, whether those that the beliefs are put onto or just those who believe them. For the minority groups that are affected by these stereotypes, there are issues where the general public expects them to act in specific ways (Mahtani, 2001; Seiter, 1986; Gorham, 1999). This can bias them against them either from the assumed behaviours or from their refusal to abide by what people think they should be like (Mahtani, 2001; Seiter, 1986; Gorham, 1999). For those that believe these stereotypes, not only is there the issue of how they may treat others due to mistaken ideas, but also the unnecessary fear or worry they may have about these people, when really the media representations are biased and, in many cases, may not be grounded in reality. For some, the information they gain from media may be the only knowledge they have about a minority group, which can cause a lot of misunderstandings about what it means to be a part of that group or how those people are supposed to act in the world (Chung, 2007; Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017, p. 33; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Meyer & Wood, 2013; Saeed, 2007). Many studies have researched this issue and have found that the media representations of stereotyped groups can have negative effects, such as misinformation, stereotype threat, and discrimination (Chung, 2007; Gorham, 1999; Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017, p. 33; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Meyer & Wood, 2013; Saeed, 2007; Seiter, 1986; Tyree, 2011).

Research of Wicca can help create an understanding of what it means to be Wiccan and what Wiccans are like. There are many misunderstandings about people who are Wiccan, with issues varying from people believe they are some kind of evil cultists, Satanists, or even just choosing their religion from media such as Harry Potter

or other children's media (McClure, 2017; Taira, 2010; Hjelm, 2006). The media representations that exist of Wicca are often considered inaccurate and, in some cases, can be considered harmful to those of that religion (McClure, 2017; Taira, 2010; Hjelm, 2006). By creating more academic knowledge, there is a hope that it will also reach public knowledge to make more understanding for everyone about what these representations are like and the dangers of accepting them without critical thinking. There is hope that as more knowledge about religious minorities and the effect of media representation is made, the representations that exist may come to change with public pressure, thus changing the kind of representations of minorities to be less damaging and more accepting. However, in order for this to be a possibility, public knowledge is needed. In order to create that knowledge, research must be done to objectively see what the effects of these representations are. It is due to this that I believe this research is of utmost importance.

Researcher Background

Being a Wiccan, I have first-hand knowledge of the effects that media representations of my religion have on my life and my ability to interact with people. Because of this, I decided that this was an important topic that deserved to be researched properly to understand the kind of impact these representations can have on others. I believe that my experience with Wicca made me uniquely suited to do this research as I have more comprehensive and nuanced knowledge of Wicca than an outsider to the religion and greater access to the community than someone who is not Wiccan may be

able to gain. In addition to this, I am also suited to do this research since I am a sociologist. My skillset and training from my schooling gives me the ability to step outside of my identity as a member of this religion and be able to do research about this topic. Using my analytical and theoretical skills I am able to do rigorous research and find new information, even about a topic I am very familiar with.

Along with my religious background, which aided in choosing my topic, I also have prior experience examining media for the themes within fictional works to understand the portrayal of characters and how the story's narrative treats various issues and ideas. I have countless hours of experience in analyzing media for themes, tropes, archetypes, and stereotypes that appear within it, usually then discussing them in a social context. Along with experience from outside academia, I have also taken classes focusing on the sociology of religion in my Master's education and sociology and media in my undergraduate years. Along with my studies on statistics, these all contributed to aiding me in this research. Because of all of these factors combined, I believe I was an ideal person to conduct research into this area. Any issue with bias was watched for and addressed as needed with my supervisory committee throughout the process of this research. The key factor in this was being sure to only take from the media reviewed and the texts read what was actually said and trying to remove as much of my emotional connection to and previous assumptions of the topic as possible in the analysis of it.

Thesis Overview

The first thing that needs to be established for this kind of research project is what is being researched. To this point and to help establish exactly who Wiccans are I compiled a chapter focused on explaining the religion of Wicca along with their beliefs, history, and practices. Once this is established, I move to discussing the academic context my work takes place in. The Literature Review fulfills this task and outlines the academic literature on Wicca, stereotypes in the media, and how the two areas intersect, which is the main focus for my research. Once the greater academic context is explained and the way that my research fits within it, the next task is to describe the research itself. The methods chapter served to describe the process of the research, describing the steps I took. First I detailed the steps involved in the media review and then the steps in designing the survey, along with putting it online and recruiting participants. This chapter also covered the ethics involved in the survey and also the statistical analysis techniques used in this research. Once the process of doing the research is established, the next topic to cover was the analysis of the data and describing what those results were. Using these results, I was able to construct my discussion chapter, pulling together all the information I have gained throughout the research process in order to answer my research questions and determine what my results mean in relationship to existing research. Finally, to finish the document the conclusion reviewed the important findings of the project, as well as discussing its limitations and possible avenues for future research in this field.

2. What is Wicca?

In the most general sense, Paganism can be defined as nature-based religions or beliefs. Many different branches under Paganism exist, but people may also consider themselves to simply be Pagan rather than identifying as a more specific religion under the umbrella. One of the more common varieties of Paganism, and one of the easiest to enter into without prior experience or exposure, is Wicca. Wicca is also a nature-based religion that falls within Paganism's umbrella but focuses on a dual divinity that Paganism does not (Grimassi, 2007, p. 441-445). Wiccans believe in a joint Goddess and God as their deities. However, there are variations in groups, with many also considering various region's pantheons in their understanding of deity (Grimassi, 2007, p. 185-186). The Book of Shadows can be considered similar to the Bible of this religion. However, instead of a centralized book that is common to all members, each individual or group has their own personalized Book of Shadows (Grimassi, 2007, p. 61). Each individual practitioner may decide to keep their own personal Book of Shadows with their own preferred rituals, prayers, beliefs, and practices within it, though it is also common for groups to have one for the group itself that contains all of the rituals and practices they perform together. Wicca also has several tenets that are considered key to the religion, mainly based on how to treat others in the world around you. Wiccans also observe holidays based on the Wheel of the Year, with eight evenly spaced holidays throughout the year, alongside celebrating the full moon each month (Grimassi, 2007, p. 440-441). Holiday celebrations and other religious practices can often take the form of rituals, though precisely what these refer to can differ based on the specific group that is

performing them (Grimassi, 2007, p. 348). While some chose to perform their rituals alone or in solitary practice, others do so in regular groups or at festivals with large gatherings of people (Grimassi, 2007, p. 103). Wicca has had a rich history since being brought to general awareness and has formed many different religious traditions and groupings.

Deities

Specific beliefs about deity within Wicca can vary a lot from group to group, tradition to tradition, and even from person to person. In broad strokes, Grimassi explains that almost everyone seems to agree that there is a dual divinity of the Goddess and the God, though the exact nature and role vary (2007, p. 185-186). In every case, they are explicitly linked to nature in many ways, with various elements of the natural world attributed to one or the other. The Goddess is often linked to the facet of nature that is the growing greens of the earth and the moon above. Animals, particularly young animals, are often said to also be in her domain. The God is usually attributed with power over the sun and the hunt. The more adult versions of the animal world are often said to be in his domain, and both deities share the power of the natural world. The two deities combined are said to hold dominion over all parts of the natural world.

Many people who practice Wicca utilize gods and goddesses of different pantheons in order to call on specific personifications of deity in their practices, such as calling on Aphrodite for love or Isis for help in magical workings (Cunningham, 2004, p. 9-19). In some beliefs, it is said that the various deities that humanity has seen and

made names for throughout history can be considered facets of the God and Goddess. In this belief, every deity in every pantheon can be considered as a part of one or both of the God and the Goddess, even going as far as including Christian figures such as Jesus and Mary. There is considered to be no wrong aspect of deity to focus on, and that none are considered better than the others, all just different parts of the same whole (Cunningham, 2004, p. 19). While the Greco-Roman gods are particularly common, the Celtic gods are also very prominent as far as specific pantheons within Wiccan practices (Grimassi, 2007, p.80-81). Although there is the belief that people may pray to and work with any combination of Gods, or just with the God and the Goddess, many people tend to choose a single pantheon to focus on within their own practices when they want to focus on more specific aspects of the divine (Cunningham, 2004, p. 9-19).

Beliefs and Holidays

There are several tenets and beliefs that are in common with most if not all branches of Wicca. The most central and common of Wiccan beliefs is that of the Wiccan rede (Grimassi, 2007, p. 343). This is basically a rule that many Wiccans follow that can be stated as “and as it harm none, do as thou will” (Grimassi, 2007, p. 343). This generally means that Wiccans are free to do as they wish as long as it does not harm others or themselves. There is some debate and differing views of exactly how following this rede works, especially regarding issues such as self-defence (Grimassi, 2007, p. 343). The rule of three is often presented and kept in mind along with that ideal. The rule of three is the idea that whatever one is putting out into the world, good or bad,

will be returned to them three times over (Grimassi, 2007, p. 408). Regardless of if this return is receiving blessings for the good you put into the world or having exceptional cases of bad luck for doing harm to the world, it is said to function the same. This can be considered similar to karma with the attitude of getting back what you put into the world (Grimassi, 2007, p. 240-241). This rede is applied further since many within Wicca follow the ideas of reincarnation (Cunningham, 2004, p. 73-77; Grimassi, 2007, p. 344-345). The belief is that those souls that live today will live again in the future (Cunningham, 2004, p. 73-77; Grimassi, 2007, p. 344-345). Human lives are generally considered to return in future lives as a human, with many believing that animals such as cats and dogs will also in turn return as the same kind of animals in the future (Cunningham, 2004, p. 73-77). The cycle of rebirth and the return of souls to the living world, again and again, is said to be so that people can learn the lessons their souls need to learn (Cunningham, 2004, p. 73-77; Grimassi, 2007, p. 344-345). There are also said to be periods to rest in-between with their loved ones before taking on the next part of their journey (Cunningham, 2004, p. 73-77; Grimassi, 2007, p. 344-345). There may be further rules that specific groups or practices chose to follow, but these are the main ones that are seen as common between most groups.

Within Wiccan tradition, there are two types of holy days. There are Esbats which are the full moons that take place within the year and are often common ritual days within various groups (Grimassi, 2007, p. 145; 175-177). Esbats are seen as times to engage in worship, with a particular focus on the Goddess as she is the one often connected to the moon (Grimassi, 2007, p. 145; 175-177). These days are often celebrated with a ritual of some kind, focusing on the full moon and the Goddess (Grimassi, 2007, p. 145; 175-177). Esbats can also be used as a regular gathering time

for those who chose to practice their religion with others. These are more regular days of celebration and can often be used for types of focused prayers or Witchcraft if one chooses to do so since they are seen as days with greater than usual power (Grimassi, 2007, p. 175-177). However, magical workings are not required, with many just engaging in quiet prayer or meditation within the rituals along with honouring the Goddess and usually the God as well.

In addition to the Esbats, there are also Sabbats, which are the second type of holy days recognized by Wiccans. These may be considered closer to more traditional holidays, and there are eight that take place through the course of the year (Conway 2001, p. 77-81; Grimassi, 2007, p.352-353; 440-441). Some separate them into the greater and lesser Sabbats, though the actual holidays are the same regardless of if one uses this division (Cunningham, 2004, p. 65-66). Those referred to as the lesser Sabbats take place on the four changings of the seasons, the solstices and equinoxes, while the greater Sabbats occur around the midpoint of each season (Cunningham, 2004, p. 65-71). In order these holidays are Yule, taking place at the winter solstice around December 21st each year; Imbolc or Candlemas, which takes place on February 2nd; Ostra, occurring at the spring equinox around March 21st; Beltane, which takes place on May 1st; Litha, on the summer solstice happening around June 21st each year; Lughnasadh or Lammas, which happens on August 1st; Mabon, which occurs at the fall equinox or around September 21st, and ending with Samhain, which occurs on October 31st. Each of these holidays has its own traditions and rituals that go along with it, mainly consisting of a celebration of the cycle of life, death, and rebirth in most traditions (Conway 2001, p. 77-81; Grimassi, 2007, p. 440-441). The exact definitions behind the holidays vary, but the most common definition describes the death and

rebirth of the God and the life cycle of the Goddess along with him. The God is said to be reborn at Yule, symbolizing how, from this day forward, the days grow longer. On Imbolc, the Goddess recovers from her recent pregnancy, thus showing the earth regaining strength. The holidays of Ostra, Beltane, and Litha symbolize the Goddess and God both growing in strength and being in the prime of their lives and power. Lughnasadh has the God begin to weaken as the sunlight fades. On Samhain, the God dies to reborn the following Yule, showing how the days get progressively shorter as winter approaches (Conway 2001, p. 77-81; Grimassi, 2007, p.352-353). This cycle is often called the Wheel of the Year (Grimassi, 2007, p.440-441).

Practices

There is great variation in religious practices for Wiccans. While some may choose to just quietly observe holidays and other days of importance with prayer and faith, many also engage in rituals (Grimassi, 2007, p. 348). Rituals, in this case, can be defined as a set of traditions and practices for a religious purpose (Grimassi, 2007, p. 348). Although Wicca does not have an official Church as it is commonly accepted today to mean a building or overall hierarchical structure, their beliefs and use of ritual still fall under Durkheim's definition of church and religion (Durkheim & Giddens, 1972, p. 223). For Durkheim, a religion or church can be understood as ideas and interpretations of the universe and divine that are shared by a group of people (Durkheim & Giddens, 1972, p.223). This is seen as a necessary part of religion and faith, and the rituals within Wicca can be considered to be an expression of these beliefs and ideas about the nature

of the divine. Rituals are a way of connecting deeper to one's faith and can also be a form of community building for those that practice their religion together. There are many elements within the rituals that Wiccan use to celebrate their religion. Included in rituals are the elements of casting a circle, an altar, tools, and the representations of the elements (Cunningham, 2004, p. 57-63). Casting a circle is a common part of rituals that can be best described as basically creating a sacred space within which to practice religion. This process utilizes both calling on the Goddess and the God and calling on the powers of the elements of air, fire, water, earth, and spirit. A key item in rituals themselves is the altar. It is on this surface that the purpose of the ritual in question can usually be determined. The altar usually is in the form of a table, but any flat surface can work for this purpose. It normally has some kind of representation of the Goddess and God on it, along with representations of the elements, any tools needed within the ritual, and any objects or decorations related to the ritual in question. Depending on the person's preference, the position of the altar varies, whether in the centre, East, or North of the circle or wherever works best at the time (Grimassi, 2007, p. 8).

Although tools are not absolutely necessary for rituals, many use them in some form or another. Many people begin their practices using more common household items that can work for their purposes rather than dedicated tools, though that often comes later. Deciding what counts as properly religious can vary greatly based on context, the religion in question, and the specific beliefs in the people and area in question (McGuire, 2008). It used to be common for people to use the same spaces and belongings for things that may or may not be considered religious today (McGuire, 2008). In Wicca many often wish to have dedicated or fancy items for religious purposes separate from their everyday purposes, though due to issues like money, convenience or other issues people

may continue to use household items instead. The main tools used within ritual are the wand, athame, cup or cauldron, and brooms. Censers, pentacles, and bolines are also common ritual tools. The wand is meant to be a means of directing energy and focus on a specific point. Athames are double-sided knives, often with a black handle that are not usually sharpened and can be used to ritually cut the energies in a ritual. The cup is often used to hold water to be used in the ritual, along with being useful as fire protection from the candles that are often used in ritual. The cup or cauldron can also be used to mix things for rituals and hold them during the practice. In terms of ritual practice, brooms are often made of wood with straw bristles and are used to 'clean out' the energies of an area. Censers are used to burn incense, while pentacles can be used as representations of the Goddess or the element of Earth. Bolines are another type of ritual knife, often with a white handle. These knives are used to collect herbs and plants for ritual purposes and, unlike the athame, are actually sharpened and can be used as a literal knife for anything that needs to be cut during a ritual (Cunningham, 2004, p. 27-38).

One thing that many people appreciate in Wicca is the ability for solitary practice. While many other religions rely on gathering in churches or temples of some kind to worship, Wicca allows for completely solitary practice if that is what the practitioner wishes (Cunningham, 2004, p. 48). In addition to those who practice alone, there are also plenty of people who gather in groups or covens to practice their religion together (Grimassi, 2007, p. 103). These groups can have varying numbers of people, though some consider thirteen to be a traditional number to aim for. Within each group, each member is a priest or priestess in their own right, though there is typically a High Priestess and/or High Priest who take over the running of the rituals and organizing the group (Grimassi, 2007, p. 217). The decision of practicing religion either personally or

within a group is a personal decision though both have their benefits, and some people may follow a combination of the two. Some people will practice with groups for the holidays and focus on more solitary practice for other rituals throughout the year. For these people, they may choose to also attend festivals with other people for the holidays. Festivals are simply large events held by the local groups in the area, often celebrating a Sabbat or other important event. These festivals may be closed to members of their own greater group or open to the public. Each festival varies considerably based on who is involved in organizing it and what its purpose is.

In the 1950s, Gerald Gardner first brought Wiccan to public knowledge through his books *Witchcraft Today* and *The Meaning of Witchcraft*¹ (Grimassi, 2007, p. 178-180). It was through this that Wicca, as we currently know it, was created. This religion spread, and with new people came new twists and methods of practice. Many other writers have come over time to write about Wicca and pass knowledge on to the public so that they may learn about the religion and chose to join it. Gardnerian Wicca is the type of practice that most clearly mirrors what Gardner first introduced. However, as time goes on, there have also been many other recognized traditions of Wicca one may choose to practice. Many people have decided to follow the invitation to be able to specialize the religion to their own preferences, creating their own traditions, some of which gain prominence and followers and become recognized traditions within Wicca. The many different traditions all have different names based on what it is they practice. For example, Celtic Witchcraft contains a mixture of the ideas of Gardner along with

¹ Due to the age of the texts and availability I was not able to gain direct access to Gardner's work.

Celtic and Druidic ideas (Conway, 2001, p. 17; Grimassi, 2007, p. 80-81). Ceremonial Wicca is a form of Wicca that focuses on stringent guidelines and practices, stating that certain religious activities can only occur at certain times and have an association and meaning for everything from colours to exact words (Grimassi, 2007, p. 85). This tradition places little to no value on spontaneous or intuitive work. Instead, it focuses on the highly specific rituals with every aspect planned for the best energies and meaning (Grimassi, 2007, p. 85). Dianic Wicca is a branch that is entirely women-led and focuses more solely on the worship of the Goddess over the God, though the exact practices and meanings of this can vary between groups (Conway, 2001, p. 17; Grimassi, 2007, p. 121-125). Many different traditions also focus on a specific culture's pantheon and are named according, such as Egyptian, Greek, or Roman traditions (Conway, 2001, p. 17-19). One of the more common traditions and the one I fall within is that of the Eclectic Wiccan, which is the term for someone who focuses on no particular tradition or practice, instead incorporating many different aspects within their own practice and using whatever appeals to them (Conway, 2001, p. 18-19). Many who speak or write about Wicca also use the word Witchcraft as one and the same, but that is not always strictly true.

One of the biggest misconceptions about Wicca is that it is the same thing as Witchcraft. However, Wicca and Witchcraft, though similar, are not one and the same. While Witchcraft can better be defined as a practice of doing spell work and magic, Wicca is a religion and places more emphasis on spiritual beliefs (Grimassi, 2007, p. 441-443, 452-456). While many, if not most Wiccans, are witches as well, there are still some that choose not the practice witchcraft. There are quite a few people and groups that practice Witchcraft but are not, in fact, Wiccans. Witchcraft is more of a practice, so

it can be done with a myriad of religious beliefs or completely regardless of them (Grimassi, 2007, p. 452-456). While many Wiccans are witches, this does not apply to everyone. Many within Wicca will speak about their Witchcraft in the same way, but the actual practice of Witchcraft is separate from the religious beliefs. For one who does embrace both, the best description may be that Witchcraft is a method of celebrating their religion and can be considered similar to a form of focused and ritualized prayer (Grimassi, 2007, p. 452). However, prayer can be used in Wicca without the added supplies and rituals of Witchcraft, and someone can perform Witchcraft without a religious backing to it. This difference is one that many people can struggle with and one that appears in many fields, such as the media that includes Wiccans or witches, and even in the academic literature on either Wicca or those that practice Witchcraft. There is also academic research on Wicca as well, that will be discussed further on in this thesis in the Literature Review chapter. The section on Wicca in this chapter will take on the topics academic literature tends to focus on such as who are Wiccans in a demographic sense, what their practices are from an academic viewpoint, and backlash against Wicca, especially due to media representations of the religion, which is of particular interest to this research project.

3. Literature Review and Theory

Although there has been plentiful academic research on the effects of stereotypes on marginalized or minority communities (Chung, 2007; Coyne, et al., 2014; Facciani, Warren, & Vendemia, 2015; Gorham, 1999; Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; McInroy & Craig, 2017; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; Meyer & Wood, 2013; Seiter, 1986; Silvestrini, 2020; Tyree, 2011) and academic research on Wicca (Anderson, et al., 2010; Berger, 1995; Dougherty, 2018; Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017; Hume, 1998; Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; Lee, 1995; Lewis, 2004; McClure, 2017; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995), there is very little research on the impact of stereotypes on the Wiccan community. The research on Wicca mainly takes the forms of accounting of its history, statements about who Wiccans are in a demographic sense, and examinations of what Wiccans do for religious practices. However, there are, of course, those studies that reach outside of these more standard topics, such as investigating the rates of children raised as Pagan remaining in the religion (Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017), a study connecting the cult of Unitarian Universalism to Paganism (Lee, 1995), and an article examining Wicca from an economic lens (Cameron, 2005). In addition to examining the academic research on Wicca, examining the research on representations and stereotypes in media is required. Along with many articles focusing on how these representations affect children, the research can generally be categorized based on what kinds of representations are being examined. This varies from topics such as gender, sexuality, and even race and religion. Once these two broad areas are considered, I was able to narrow it down to examining

specifically the few articles that spoke on how the media representations of Wicca can affect the community. The theoretical perspective I chose to use for this research project was feminist critical discourse analysis.

Academia on Wicca

Much of the academic literature on Wicca and Wiccans falls within three broad categories. Research on Wiccans tends to be on the history of Wicca, who Wiccans are, or on what Wiccans do in terms of religious practices, though of course, there are exceptions and those that fall outside these categories. The majority of academic writing on Wicca is from more of an outsider perspective, meaning people who are not Wiccan or Pagan themselves investigating and writing about Wicca and Wiccans. These authors are often trying to educate people about Wicca's history and practices, who tends to be Wiccan, or other aspects about Wiccans. For some works examining the history of Wicca is the main focus, while in others, it is merely a small background portion of the piece to establish what Wicca is before moving on to the actual purpose.

Many academic works cover the history of Wicca. Even if it is not the main focus of the article, there is often at least some background on the religion's history and how it came to be known today (Berger, 1995; Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017; Hume, 1998; Lewis, 2004). These authors mainly credit Gerald Gardner with the creation of modern Wicca, though it is usually acknowledged that he claims he is simply bringing an ancient religion to public view rather than creating one himself (Berger, 1995; Lewis, 2004). Some authors also examine the growth of Wicca since then, with

statements that it was considered the fastest growing religion of the early 2000s (Jensen & Thompson, 2008, p. 753). The history of Wicca also often included in texts written by Wiccans for Wiccans, though the exact content of the history varies from author to author. Although those writing books for Wiccans by Wiccans are not considered academics in the traditional sense, they may still be considered experts in their field, with unique experience within it. Several of the more prolific authors may be recognized through other works such as the *Encyclopedia of Wicca & Witchcraft* published by Llewellyn Publications (Grimassi, 2007), which is often regarded as the main publication company for all things Wiccan. In these cases, as with the academic literature, Gerald Gardner is often attributed with being the person who brought Wicca out into the wider world (Conway, 2001, Cunningham, 2004). Gerald Gardner is recorded as the first person to ever speak or write about Wicca for the public, though there is debate on if he invented the religion or brought an ancient and hidden religion into public awareness (Conway, 2001, Cunningham, 2004; Grimassi, 2007). Depending on the author, some also describe other people in the history of Wicca as noteworthy figures, such as Raymond Buckland, who can be regarded as an American version of Gerald Gardner, or Scott Cunningham, who was a major figure in terms of aiding people who are new to Wicca in learning the religion (Grimassi, 2007). The more academic literature is also likely to position the history of the religion amongst historical contexts, such as the rise of more personalized spirituality or women's freedom in religious choice (Cowan, 2005; Hunt, 1995; Warwick, 1995). Looking at who Wiccans are is a research topic that often includes at least some brief history or explanation of what Wicca is before diving into the meat of the topic.

Much of the research done on Wicca focuses on who Wiccans are. One of the main focuses for sociological research is on groups of people, so it makes sense for sociological research into Wicca to focus on who Wiccans are demographically. However, I was unable to find any official government statistical information on Wiccans within Canada or the United States. This is likely because it is not considered to be either a prominent or 'official' enough religion with eclectic practices and no recognized central hierarchy spanning regions. In many cases, the people who practice Wicca are mainly found to be younger, white, and middle class (Jorgensen & Russel, 1999, p. 330-332). While Wicca is a fast-growing religion, it is mainly seen as a younger person's religion and is found more often among the younger generation (Cameron, 2005; Cowan, 2005; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; McClure, 2017; Meintel, & Mossière, 2013), especially among those who focus on spirituality rather than strict religious values (Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russell, 1999; Neitz, 2000). Studies have shown a fair number of families with children involved with the religion, even with those who have grown up within the religion and chose to continue with it into their adulthood (Jorgensen & Russel, 1999 p.330, Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017, McClure, 2017). While the majority of members in some studies have been women, it is not overwhelmingly so, with one study finding it to be a difference of 56.8% of participants being female to 42.3% being male (Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999, p. 330; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995). It has also been shown that Pagans are more likely to have a higher level of education than the general populace while holding a broad spectrum of occupations (Jorgensen & Russel, 1999, p. 332). Research has shown that it is more likely for Pagans to live in areas with

high amounts of female political empowerment, strong religious leanings, more positive attitudes towards science, a greater focus on green culture and the environment, and with less of a focus on gun culture (Jensen & Thompson, 2008 p. 760). Along with interest in who Wiccans are, there is also a fair amount of research interest in the kinds of practices Wiccans and Pagans engage in.

As Wicca is a religion, it makes sense that the religion itself would be of interest to scholars of religion. Much of the research on this particular sub-topic is in the form of ethnography or other qualitative methods, which is a good method to get a deep understanding of the values and themes within these practices (Dougherty, 2018; Lee, 1995; McClure, 2017; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997). When researchers describe Wicca, there can often be a lot of variation in their descriptions, both from examining different groups with different viewpoints and from the difference in practice between groups (Dougherty, 2018; Hume, 1998; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997). While Neitz's descriptions of *Dragonfest* (2000) show a more relaxed and freeform nature to the religion, Hume's account (1998) is more structured and precise. While the event in *Dragonfest* has many people celebrating in a variety of ways, the way that Hume (1998) describes Wicca is more precise with exact practices described as being the constant experience (Neitz, 2000). This comes back to the nature of differences in Wiccan practices, which is not always addressed within academic literature. Just as there are many branches of Christianity, there are also many branches within Wicca, though they are often far less strict on practices and hierarchy (Conway, 2001; Cunningham, 2004; Grimassi, 2007). There are many examples of this earlier in this thesis as I described the main differences between prominent practices of Wicca such as Gardnerian, ceremonialist, Dianic, eclectic, and other popular practice styles. The type of practices

that people engage in can vary a tremendous amount from group to group and even from instance to instance (Cunningham, 2004). While someone may generally prefer more solitary and quiet ritual space and celebrations, they can also engage in larger and louder events such as festivals of various kinds with many people (Cunningham, 2004; Neitz, 2000). While some festivals may be for unrelated reasons, usually they take place in order to celebrate the religious holidays that exist within Wicca, or to honour part of the moon cycle that holds great importance in that religion (Cunningham, 2004; Neitz, 2000). Festivals like this can draw many people from a broad area but are obviously limited by who can get to them (Neitz, 2000). Even at events such as this, there are times where the activities present may not always be to everyone's taste (Dougherty, 2018, p. 122). This shows a large variation in the preferred practice of Wicca and other Pagan religions, which is accepted as a part of what makes these religions what they are (Dougherty, 2018, p. 122). One thing that many studies that examine the practices of Wicca focus on is how it is women-centred religion, where women are seen as having just as much value as men (Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995). Due to this, many consider Wicca to be a feminist religion.

In academic research, the feminist nature of Wicca is often discussed. The term feminism can be defined as a perspective that focuses on women and their strength and freedom (Hunt, 1995). Feminism in religions such as Wicca means that the religion is more equal in gender relations and the relation of gender to power as compared to other religions (Anderson, Anderson, Young, & Young, 2010, p. 266). Wicca is considered a much more woman-centred religion, with most groups holding men and women equal in status (Anderson, et al., 2010; Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen &

Russel, 1999; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995). While the God and Goddess are seen as equal in most groups, some hold the Goddess to be in higher status with the God seen as more of a partner or consort rather than an equal (Anderson, et al., 2010; Conway, 2001). Compared to larger religions such as Christianity, Wicca is much more equal in terms of status in the religion and the gender of members of the religion (Anderson, et al., 2010; Conway, 2001; Cunningham, 2004; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995). Women and men are both able to hold positions of equal status within groups of Wiccans that practice together, usually under the title of High Priestess or High Priest (Anderson, et al., 2010; Conway, 2001, Cunningham, 2004). Due to this further equality between genders, some believe that this religion is more appealing to women, especially those coming from a Christian background who wish for more power and freedom of choice within their religious practices (Anderson, et al., 2010, p. 266; Hunt, 1995). Some articles even reference and emphasize how little power women can have in other traditional religions, such as Christianity. In some of these religions, despite being a large part of the membership and doing a large amount of work for their church, they cannot hold higher status positions such as being the leaders of that church since priests in Christianity are usually men (Hunt, 1995). The equality and opportunity in Wiccan may then be an attractive alternative. Any practitioner of Wicca is considered a priest or priestess of their religion, especially due to the large number of people who prefer solitary practice (Anderson, et al., 2010; Conway, 2001, Cunningham, 2004). Even in larger groups, there is usually a High Priestess to go along with the High Priest, with having only a High Priestess more likely than the alternative, especially in Dianic groups that focus more on the Goddess than the God (Conway, 2001). Overall, most research that mentions the gender dynamics within Wicca mentions the feminist

quality of Wicca with the much greater overt power within the religion that women can have, compared to other religious groups, and the greater gender equality in the imagery of the divinity.

Along with more generalized topics, some have done much more specific and narrow research into Wicca and Wiccans. While these articles cannot be grouped into categories of broad research trends such as the others, I still believe some need to be noted and discussed to further understand what kind of research into Wicca has been done so far in academia. One particular example is Fennell and Wildman-Hanlon (2017), who studied adults who had grown up within the Pagan movement, whether just general Paganism or more specific branches like Wicca or Druidism. In this case, they found that of those they surveyed, 45% of children raised as Pagan remained as such once they had grown up, and beyond that, 25% also remained spiritually Pagan instead of specific religious practices (Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017, p. 288). They were most curious about the rates that people who were raised Pagan remain as such into adulthood, with trends such as those who were very religious as children being the most likely to remain Pagan as adults, though most still end up becoming non-religious as they age (Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017, p. 298). Another example of more unusual research involving Paganism and Wicca is Lee's article about the cult of Unitarian Universalism and its connection to Paganism (Lee, 1995). This article describes this group, Unitarian Universalism, and how they are known for assimilating the values and behaviours of many other New Religious Movements (Lee, 1995, p. 379). This group claims its purpose as being devoted to "each member's personal search for answers to life's ultimate questions" (Lee, 1995, p. 381). While they have a broad set of 'principles,' they are free to choose specific practices beyond that (Lee, 1995, p. 381).

This article focuses on the Unitarian Universalists in particular, but it does discuss how the group integrates other religious beliefs into their own practices for various group members and how Pagan and New Age practices are a part of that, using them as an example to further an understanding about how this group functions and practices (Lee, 1995). Another example of a unique analysis of Wicca is Cameron's article (2005) which examines Wicca through an economic lens. This article examines the 'doctrines' or belief system within Wicca, focusing on the ideas of deities and sin within the religion through what appears to be review of existing interviews and online sources (Cameron, 2005). While the author attempts to make an understanding of the Wiccan Rede, otherwise known as the Threefold Law, which states that what you do onto others will be returned to you threefold, the author seems to have some trouble with it (Cameron, 2005). The author compares this to sin in many cases and says that this rule "serves the important role of absolving Wicca (and similar religions) from accusations that it promotes a world of conflict by teaching people techniques to interfere with the lives of others" (Cameron, 2005, p. 88). Throughout the article, they seem to have a profound misunderstanding about how Wicca and the spellcasting element of it actually function. This is very clearly made just from their use of the term "Wiccanism," which they seem to think is what the religion is called at some points (Cameron, 2005, p. 88). In particular, the understanding of how magic is conceptualized within Wicca seems to be a great source of confusion, with Cameron writing as though people who are Wiccan are capable of instantaneous magic of great power, doing things such as mind-controlling specific people into romantic relationships and stealing money through some sort of psychic powers (Cameron, 2005, p. 95-96). Overall while looking at the economics of Wicca is an interesting idea and definitely an example of unique research

into Wicca, there are more problems with this article than there are things that can be applied to my research project. However, this article is still useful if just for the comparison to other articles such as Hume's for the difference in understandings about Wiccans' practices (1998). The most useful thing for this article is the way that it can be an excellent example for the kinds of bias towards Wicca that can exist, even in academia. Specific research into Wicca, although not fitting into the more broad trends found within the body of research in Wicca, can be very useful for the more unique information they provide to research and the overall body of knowledge.

Academic literature on Wicca, while a small category, covers a broad range of topics. For the most part, most of this research can be categorized as either being on the history of Wicca (Anderson, et al., 2010; Berger, 1995; Hume, 1998; Hunt, 1995; Lewis, 2004; Warwick, 1995), who Wiccans are (Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017; Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; McClure, 2017; Warwick, 1995), what Wiccans do (Anderson, et al., 2010; Dougherty, 2018; Lee, 1995; Hume, 1998; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997), the feminist nature of Wicca, or more narrow topics such as adults who grew up Pagan (Anderson, et al., 2010; Conway, 2001; Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995). Much of the research on Wicca that I found was actually on Pagans as a whole, rather than specifically Wicca. While Wiccans are Pagan, there are also many other branches under Paganism. However, for the research I found which inquired about which specific branch of Paganism that their participants fell under, Wicca made up the most common answer (Jorgensen & Russell, 1999). Regardless of the type of research, as a whole, the amount of research on Wicca is surprisingly small for a religion that was called the fastest growing in America at one

point (Jensen & Thompson, 2008). For my research project, this meant that I had to expand my research beyond just that of the religion I was looking at and do a deeper examination of how media representations and stereotypes are treated in academic literature as a whole.

Stereotypes in Media

A fact about the human brain is that it likes categories (Gorham, 1999). Sorting things into some kind of category is how the brain functions as quickly as it does, by linking like with like and attributing traits and responses that make sense with that type of thing (Gorham, 1999, p. 234-236). However, despite what our brains might prefer, we live in a complicated world where these categories, while convenient, may not be accurate or just (Gorham, 1999). A result of these categories is that, in many cases, the human brain tries to put people into boxes as well, often based on what we see in the world around us or in the media (Chung, 2007, p. 105; Gorham, 1999). One way to think of these ‘boxes’ is as stereotypes and representations of what these people seem to be. However, these representations and stereotypes are usually inaccurate to how the people actually are, either through misunderstanding of culture, biased representations in media, or just general ignorance (Gorham, 1999; Mahtani, 2001; Seiter, 1986). For many people, media such as television shows and movies can be the primary source of learning about people that they may not meet in their daily lives, such as minority groups (Chung, 2007; Kidd, 2015; Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017, p. 33; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Meyer & Wood,

2013; Saeed, 2007). Unfortunately, that means that the media representations of these groups may be all that some people know of them, which makes the way that these groups are treated within media of vital importance (Gorham, 1999; Mahtani, 2001; Seiter, 1986). This is explicit in Kidd's article (2015) where they state that "in large populations where individuals may never interact with members of other groups [...] the only 'interaction' they may have is with a media depiction of the co-cultural groups."

When the media representations of minority groups are skewed, biased, harmful, or even just plain wrong, it can affect the community that is being represented. One example of the issues with poor representations of groups in media is the phenomenon of stereotype threat (Martin, 2008; Tyree, 2011). Stereotype threat can be defined as "the fear that one will confirm an existing stereotype of a group with which one identifies" (Martin, 2008, p. 340). This can cause people a lot of distress and anxiety, forcing them to constantly be aware of their behaviour to avoid replicating these representations. Along with this reaction against stereotypes, there is also stereotyped identification, which means that "cognitively and emotionally identifying with fictional minority characters can increase acceptance of minorities, while reinforcing stereotypes about how they look, act, and talk" (McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017, p. 1197). This effect is a double-edged sword that, while it increases awareness and acceptance, often comes with issues in beliefs about how people should or will act without actual knowledge of the people. These representations are, of course, dynamic and can change over time as the attitudes towards groups of people and what is acceptable to show about them change. Theories like critical media literacy can help in recognizing this and can help to create better or more realistic media representations (Kelly & Currie, 2021, p. 678-679). The effect that misinformation or negative representations in media can have on people is even stronger

in children and is a reason why the content of children's media needs to be carefully considered (Chung, 2007, p. 99). Beyond what is shown to children, there are a myriad of negative representations in media that can be considered problematic, covering issues such as race, gender, sexuality, and religious stereotypes. However, if properly taught and utilized, the concept of media literacy can be very helpful when it comes to dealing with the kind of representations that appear in media. The lack of media literacy and knowledge that what is shown on a screen not always being accurate is a large part of the issue regarding the kinds of representations that appear in children's television shows and movies.

There are plenty of studies that focus solely on how the representation in children's media affects those children (Chung, 2007; Coyne, Linder, Rasmussen, Nelson, & Collier, 2014; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011). Whether the representations in question are issues of gender, race, or sexuality, the fact remains that examining how they affect children and their developing minds is of vital importance (Chung, 2007, p. 99; Coyne, et al., 2014). This is even more true to looking at the effects, or rather a lack of effect, that mediation can have on children internalizing messages about gender and other representations from media (Coyne, et al., 2014). Parental mediation can be defined as "direct tuition from parents where they can verbally express their feelings regarding the behavior of media characters", which can theoretically help children with issues in representation but in reality, is shown to have little effect (Coyne, et al., 2014, p. 418). For children, it has been shown that active mediation, people such as their parents talking to them about the messages within their television shows and movies and explaining what is right or wrong about those messages, has minimal effect on children (Coyne, et al., 2014, p. 427). Restrictive mediation, limiting how much of these

television shows and movies the children see, has been shown to have a much more significant effect on children (Coyne, et al., 2014, p. 427). The way that kids take in these messages is so very important, mainly because this is when their minds are still developing and creating an understanding of the world around them (Chung, 2007; Coyne, et al., 2014; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011). If the understanding they form during this time is biased, racist, sexist, or otherwise ignorant, it can be a very difficult process trying to break free from those methods of thinking (Chung, 2007; Coyne, et al., 2014; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011). This is why it is so important for the messages that kids receive through their media consumption to be more carefully considered because the ideas they take in and form at this age can stick with them for their entire lives.

Many of the articles that examine the way the stereotypes appear in media or how media representations can play a role in people's lives focus on examples of gender stereotypes (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Coyne, et al., 2014; Downing, 2018; Grace & Mueller, 2019; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011; Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir, & Lund, 2017; Rabe-Hemp, 2011). Many of these show that women are often shown within stereotypical roles, underrepresented, and diminished in their role compared to their male counterparts (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Coyne, et al., 2014; Downing, 2018; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2011; Tyree, 2011). The female characters on these shows are often placed into roles as caretakers or as nagging wives, with little actual personality outside of these two-dimensional representations (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Downing, 2018; Rabe-Hemp, 2011). This also applies to the kinds of representations male characters have (Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir, & Lund, 2017). While there is usually more variation in the personalities of male characters, there are still definite signs of trying to uphold ideas of appropriate behaviour within them, with some

programs having stricter rules on what characters can do based on their gender (Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir, & Lund, 2017). While female characters are forced to always have perfect makeup and be otherwise beautiful unless an explicit part of the story or stereotype their character falls into, men may be shown as being very muscular and quiet (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Coyne, et al., 2014; Downing, 2018; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2011). Some male characters are forced to uphold some ideal of manliness, as in Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir, and Lund's article (2017) on the Icelandic show *Trapped* (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Coyne, et al., 2014; Downing, 2018; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2011). Problems with stereotyped characters occur in either gender and can often be compounded by other factors in their identity, such as race or sexuality (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Downing, 2018; Facciani, Warren, & Vendemia, 2015; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011; Mahtani, 2001; Tyree, 2011). These characters are shown to be more caricatures rather than representing people with actual personalities and depth to them, even when appearing on so-called 'reality television,' where the edits and direction by the staff distort things and show something that can be far from reality (Downing, 2018; Rabe-Hemp, 2011; Tyree, 2011).

Along with examples of stereotypes of gender often discussed within academic research on stereotypes, many also discuss the representation of the LGBTQIA+ community (Chung, 2007; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Meyer & Wood, 2013). In these cases, it can be more complicated than that of issues with gendered representations. This is because, in some cases, these representations can be all the knowledge that people may have of people of these sexualities (McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017, p. 1197; McInroy & Craig, 2017, p. 33). This can apply both to those who identify as heterosexual and have never seen those who openly identify differently

in real life and young people who are members of the queer community who are finally seeing what they feel identifies with their own feelings for the first or only time in their lives (McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017, p. 1197; McInroy & Craig, 2017, p. 33). In these cases, the representations are not just something that needs to be examined just for the false ideas they may give others about what the people in the community in question are like or should behave like. However, it also affects those within the community who are still learning about what it means to be queer. While the increase in the diversity of representation can, in some cases, be considered better than the alternative of no representation as was more the custom in past years, some may argue that in this case, less is better when those representations are harmful (McInroy & Craig, 2017). For some people who think they may identify with some of the queer identities that are presented, they may be scared away by the often negative and polarizing kinds of representations that exist for characters that use that label (McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017). This more internal issue combined with the standard issues for representations and stereotypes in media makes a complicated situation that requires a lot of consideration and is rightfully the subject of many studies (Chung, 2007; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Meyer & Wood, 2013).

The issues of stereotypes in media about race and religion are similar to other areas of this research in many ways. As with all of the others, there is a skew in people believing these representations are how people really act, but the representations for race and religion-based stereotypes are often even worse in their consequences when compared to other types of stereotypes (Erba, Chen, & Kang; Facciani, Warren, & Vendemia, 2015; Johnson, Olivo, Gibson, Reed, & Ashburn-Nardo, 2009; Martin, 2008; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Saeed, 2007; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015;

Silvestrini, 2020; Tyree, 2011). While the world is becoming ever more accepting of those of different cultures, the fact remains that the representations in media are not keeping up and continue to show an extremely biased and one-sided view of people who are considered to be minorities (Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Meyer & Wood, 2013). This can especially be an issue with those who see these representations of themselves in the media and then either believe that is how they should act due to it being what they think people are expecting (Chung, 2007; Coyne, et al., 2014; Facciani, Warren, & Vendemia, 2015; Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; Silvestrini, 2020; Tyree, 2011). Even if they do not believe this, they may have great anxiety about avoiding acting in ways similar to what they have seen in media to help prove those ideas and misconceptions wrong (Martin, 2008; Tyree, 2011). In cases such as race and religion, there can often be issues with white Christian families not really knowing much about people who are in minority groups outside of the media they watch (Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Saeed, 2007; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015; Tyree, 2011; Gorham, 1999). This can lead to extremely biased ideas about what these people are like, with many cases including thinking people who are black, Arabic, or who practice Islam are in some way dangerous, just because it is what they have seen on a screen (Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Saeed, 2007; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Many programs people can watch, such as television shows, movies, or even the news, often make a practice of ‘othering’ people who are from minorities in some way, often in regards to their ethnicity or religion (Erba, Chen, & Kang; Facciani, Warren, & Vendemia, 2015; Martin, 2008; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Saeed, 2007; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015; Tyree, 2011). This kind

of separation can often create fear of these people, creating gaps and divides between people through an “us versus them” mentality.

An important vein of research into stereotypes and media research is that of media literacy. While the specific stereotypes that are being examined in articles that discuss media literacy vary a great deal, they all have an understanding that media literacy can be of great help in mediating the effects of stereotypes on the people who consume these forms of media (Chung, 2007; Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Media literacy is a form of education and knowledge about how media such as television shows and movies can often show biased or skewed representation of the world around people and can often work as a form of critical thinking about the kinds of things that people see within media (Chung, 2007; Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). While exact techniques vary, for the most part, “media literacy education has largely been conducted toward the shared goal of critiquing narrow media practices and representations, acknowledging and envisioning broader and more balanced practices and representations, and working toward a more just range of portrayals” (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015, p. 172-173). Understanding what kind of stereotypes are being shown in the media one is watching can be helpful when trying to use the skill of media literacy, which is part of the reason I believe that investigating the representations and stereotypes about Wiccan characters is so important. There are examples of studies that examine the teaching of media literacy, such as Kelly and Currie’s (2021) article that focuses on a high school teacher teaching their students about critical media literacy in regards to a pop music video. This example is further evidence that media literacy is important for all of the kinds of media and entertainment mediums that people take part

in, though I focused on those of television shows and movies within my research. The idea of media literacy is so important since it allows for the reduction of the negative repercussions of the representations in media shown to people daily (Chung, 2007; Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Since it is unlikely that the representations and stereotypes in media will have much shift without substantial pushback, increasing education in media literacy and awareness of what the stereotypes in media can be like and how they can be harmful is of great priority in order to help keep people from being biased against others due to their effects.

Wicca and Stereotypes

Although academic literature that directly addresses the connection between stereotypes and the religion of Wicca is rare, some works within the literature do address the stigma that Wiccans face directly. One example of this is McClure's article (2017) that gives many examples of backlash parents have experienced due to being Wiccan, with some of them overtly blaming it on media and misconceptions because of it. In many cases, these Wiccan parents are looked down upon and treated unfairly just due to their religion. This goes as far as neighbours constantly calling the police on them for imagined reasons due to their religion, to even having a judge insist on them attending a Christian church in order to retain custody of their children (McClure, 2017, p. 348). Less intense examples include having to hide their religion in their workplace over fears of being forced out due to their religion (McClure, 2017, p. 348). In many cases, false beliefs about Wicca can have a large effect on Wiccans. This is not the only example,

with Pino's article on deviance and criminology mentioning that one of the students was certain that Wiccans are child killers due to what they had seen on a screen (2003, p. 188-189). This goes along with how McClure's article stated that people in their communities believed that Wiccans were raising children to be "sex orgy freaks" (2017, p. 345). In so many ways, the attitudes presented in media present ideas of what Wicca is that may or may not be grounded in actual reality, often leading to stereotypes and bias (McClure, 2017). Along with the more personal issues such as these, this kind of bias can also play out in larger frames, such as government decisions.

In addition to social issues, there are also legal issues where the representation of Wicca in media plays a role. An example of this issue is the debate in Finland in 2001 about adding Wicca as a recognized religion (Taira, 2010; Hjelm, 2006). Although the debate was eventually settled on the idea that no, Wicca would not be classified as an official religion by the government of Finland, there was a lot of debate and blowback against that decision (Taira, 2010; Hjelm, 2006). Much of the debate was based on the belief that the government may have been biased against Wicca due to beliefs that it is connected to media like Harry Potter or new religious movements like Satanism instead of being a legitimate religion in its own right (Hjelm, 2006). Hjelm's article described how many people saw Wicca as either being a part of a fad, such as Harry Potter, or being a form of Satanism (Hjelm, 2006). Some believe it was due to this perception that the application for the government of Finland to consider Wicca as an official religion was denied (Taira, 2010; Hjelm, 2006). To clarify, this did not actually stop people who wished to from practicing Wicca; it just meant that Wicca was not recognized as a religion under the government of Finland (Taira, 2010; Hjelm, 2006). Due to reasons like those mentioned above, I decided investigating the effect that the media

representations and stereotypes of Wicca that people have to deal with was worth the effort.

Theory

The theory that was the most useful to me through this project was feminist critical discourse analysis (Cook & Natalier, 2016; Fenton, 1995; Graham, 2011; Hvas & Gannik, 2008; Jenkins & Johnson, 2017; Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Lafrance & Britta, 2019; Marling, 2010; Natalie & Tyler, 2018; Rizwan, 2001; Spigel, 2004; Watkins & Emerson, 2000). This theory combines the ideas behind both feminist theory and the Foucauldian theory of critical discourse analysis. While the feminist theory is an important avenue for consideration and one that allows for more specification on what is being done, the main structure for this theory comes from Foucault's ideas of critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is a theory that can easily have various lenses applied to it when examining material. In this case, I used a feminist lens to help with the gendered nature of the representations I examined. Critical discourse analysis, designed by Michel Foucault, is focused on examining the messages that are available in the world and how the understandings of these messages affect the people who are living with them and consuming them (Bazzul, 2014; Graham, 2011; Hook, 2001; Steinert, 1983; Willig, 2013). Within this theory, discourses are defined as messages and themes that are repeatedly shown through communication in its various forms, which in modern times can take the form of television shows, movies, books, social media, and various other methods (Bazzul, 2014; Graham, 2011; Hook,

2001; Steinert, 1983; Willig, 2013). In many cases, the discourses are being presented by a person or group that has or supports power in some way, whether literal power through that of governments or metaphorical power of ideologies like the patriarchy or classism (Bazzul, 2014; Graham, 2011; Hook, 2001; Steinert, 1983; Willig, 2013). In comparison to the time that Foucault lived in, messages and discourses have gotten even more prevalent due to such things as the creation of social media and the utter explosion of mass media allowing for a constant stream of information to people at all times, often whether they want it or not (Cook & Natalier, 2016; Fenton, 1995; Graham, 2011; Hvas & Gannik, 2008; Jenkins & Johnson, 2017; Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Lafrance & Britta, 2019; Marling, 2010; Natalie & Tyler, 2018; Rizwan, 2001; Spigel, 2004; Watkins & Emerson, 2000). While I used discourse analysis mainly as a theory in my own research, some others also use it as a content analysis method. In order to use this method, the researcher must carefully examine a source in order to comprehend the discourses that exist within it and place them within the world at large (Bazzul, 2014; Cook & Natalier, 2016; Fenton, 1995; Graham, 2011; Hvas & Gannik, 2008; Jenkins & Johnson, 2017; Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Lafrance & Britta, 2019; Marling, 2010; Natalie & Tyler, 2018; Rizwan, 2001; Spigel, 2004; Watkins & Emerson, 2000; Willig, 2013). The main discourses I was looking for in my research were those around moral attitudes, such as characters being seen as good or bad, towards Wiccan religious practices and experiences. I decided the discourses around the morality of Wicca and Wiccan characters would be a good one to examine due to my previous knowledge of the media, including how the characters often had a morality ascribed to them more based on their 'magic' than on their actual actions. This was also in addition to the trend in media for those who practice religions besides Christianity often being

demonized, seen as weird, or being seen as the villains of the media. However, I also left myself open to seeing any other prominent discourses that appeared within my research data. In addition to the more overt discourses around their actual religious practices, I also focused on how the other, non-Wiccan characters treated the characters who were seen as being Wiccan or magical in some other way of the media. Although critical discourse analysis can be used as a method as well, it is still primarily considered to be a theoretical perspective and is often also used as a theory in studies where it is considered a method of content analysis (Bazzul, 2014; Cook & Natalier, 2016; Fenton, 1995; Graham, 2011; Hvas & Gannik, 2008; Jenkins & Johnson, 2017; Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Lafrance & Britta, 2019; Marling, 2010; Natalie & Tyler, 2018; Rizwan, 2001; Spigel, 2004; Watkins & Emerson, 2000; Willig, 2013). This theory is extremely flexible. It can have various lenses applied to it to help consider the discourses from various perspectives, such as a Marxist lens for discourses related to class or a feminist lens for gendered discourses.

Feminist theories often focus on the power imbalances within gender relations, with a particular focus on that of the patriarchy (Shapiro, 1992). For most feminist theories, the focus lies on issues like inequality in the world based on gender differences, like women being considered less than men in terms of abilities or capability (Gough, 1998; Hesford & Diedrich, 2014; Shapiro, 1992; Watkins & Emerson, 2000, p. 153). When a researcher is concerned with the role that these kinds of gender imbalances can have on their research, they may choose to use a feminist lens for said research, as I have done with this project (Gough, 1998; Hesford & Diedrich, 2014; Shapiro, 1992; Watkins & Emerson, 2000). Most, if not all, structures in society can be considered to have the role of gender play a part in their operations (Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012;

Watkins & Emerson, 2000). This is true whether in regards to informal structures like the family and the gender roles that appear within families, the assumed roles that occur with interactions with strangers, or more formal ones like government where the gender of people literally has an effect in different laws and who is considered appropriate for certain tasks (Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Watkins & Emerson, 2000). Many studies have found that femininity is a large factor in determining the difference in treatment of people within the social structuring of gender, and this has been found both when the people in question are women and when they are simply seen as more feminine than the circumstances, and social pressures wish to allow (Cook & Natalier, 2016; Fenton, 1995; Gough, 1998; Hvas & Gannik, 2008; Jenkins & Johnson, 2017; Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Lafrance & Britta, 2019; Marling, 2010; Natalie & Tyler, 2018; Rizwan, 2001; Spigel, 2004; Watkins & Emerson, 2000). When examining discourses, whether in media or the wider world, feminism can be a very beneficial lens as it lets the research focus on how the nature of the discourses can be gendered and allows for an examination of how and why the gendered nature can play a role in the discourses themselves (Cook & Natalier, 2016; Fenton, 1995; Gough, 1998; Hvas & Gannik, 2008; Jenkins & Johnson, 2017; Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Lafrance & Britta, 2019; Marling, 2010; Natalie & Tyler, 2018; Rizwan, 2001; Spigel, 2004; Watkins & Emerson, 2000).

Feminist critical discourse analysis combines the theory of critical discourse analysis with a feminist lens. This lens and focus allows for a deeper examination of how gender roles and ideas that people have about gender specifically play a role in the nature of the discourses that exist in the world at large, in social media, and in my specific case, those that appear in media (Cook & Natalier, 2016; Fenton, 1995; Graham,

2011; Hvas & Gannik, 2008; Jenkins & Johnson, 2017; Kaufer, Parry-Giles, & Klebanov, 2012; Lafrance & Britta, 2019; Marling, 2010; Natalie & Tyler, 2018; Rizwan, 2001; Spigel, 2004; Watkins & Emerson, 2000). This theory is of great use in any case where it is believed that gender roles may in some way affect the construction or understanding of the discourses a researcher wants to examine. This is the reason I chose to use it within my own research. Since my research focuses on how the Wiccan community deals with the representations of them in media such as television shows and movies and what these representations are, it is obvious that discourse analysis works well with this research. In most cases, representations of Wiccan or similar characters tend to be of women. This, along with the common belief that Wicca is mainly a religion for women, makes it clear that a feminist lens for any theory examining this situation is a wise idea. Along with the more gendered focused discourses that appeared within my research, discourses outside the direct feminist lens were also sought after, such as Wicca or religion, in general, being seen as foolish, irrational, irrelevant, or a matter for only private spaces and not to talk about openly. While not the main focus of these discourses due to the gendered nature of religion, there is a gendered element to these representations as well. Although all religion can be considered gendered in some way since almost all aspects of our lives can fall under the domain of gender in one way or another, I consider these to be less overtly gendered than what I initially looked for in my research (Avishai, 2016). They are still very important to consider, especially due to the religious aspect of my research and the discourses that I found within the media I examined. This theoretical stance was used not only for examining what discourses I found within the course of my media review but also with my survey to examine how people responded to and dealt with the discourses they see in the world around them.

Doing research requires an understanding of the academic context behind it. In this research project this context relays mainly on the existing literature about Wicca and about representations of groups in the media. For academic literature on Wicca the research mainly falls in three categories of the history of Wicca, who Wiccans are, and what the religious practices of Wiccans are. However, there are other works outside of these. Most of these works come from the perspective of an outsider trying to educate people about some aspects of Wicca or Wiccans. After examining the topic of Wicca in academic research is finished, the topic of representations and stereotypes in media is examined. Literature on stereotypes in the media can have a great amount of variation based on what population they are looking at the representations of. There are many studies that examine the effects that media representations can specifically have on children. Along with this, there is summary of some of the more common categories of representations based on gender, sexuality, race, and religion. While there is little on the topic of media representations of Wicca specifically there are some research articles that do mention the relationship between the media representations and the affect on people's lives. Once the academic context of the actual research project is established the chapter can move on to discussing the theory behind this project. In order to understand the media representations about Wiccans in this study and how they may play a role in their lives a theoretical perspective of feminist critical discourse analysis was used. This is a theory that focuses on the gendered understanding of messages that appear in the media and in people's lives. Once the theory and academic context is established the next step of the research project is to describe the methods of the actual research.

4. Methods

For my research, I wanted to investigate how the Wiccan community feels about, deals with, and responds to the representations of them in the media. In order to carry out this research, I used a mixed methodology, making use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the qualitative method, I used a media review to examine television shows and movies with Wiccan or similar characters. For the quantitative method, I used a digital survey to get information from the Wiccan community about what kinds of representations they had seen and how they felt about them and how they respond to such representations in their daily lives. In order to find participants for this survey, I engaged in a digital snowball sampling method, meaning that I spread information about the survey online and asked participants to share it within their own groups.

Research Question

This research project has a rather complicated central question which is:

- How does the Wiccan community feel about, deal with, and respond to media representations of their religion?

Due to the complicated nature of this question and the many parts involved within it, I have broken it into three sub-questions to aid in the ability to investigate this topic. The first of these three questions is:

- How are Wiccans represented in the media?

In the pursuit of answering this question I conducted a media analysis. I watched several movies and television shows with characters that either stated they were Wiccan or seemed to be implicitly Wiccan, even without saying the term. Through my previous knowledge, consulting others, and research I was able to create my list of media. In order to broaden the view I had of this media, I also expanded it from this more narrow definition to a broader view of characters, including many other shows with magic users in various forms. However, I tried to stick to those at least somewhat similar to Wicca that treated the magic as a belief system or used rituals and such in their magic use. The second and third questions that were developed from the original question are:

- How do Wiccans feel about these representations?
- How do Wiccans respond to and otherwise deal with the representations in the media?

These questions were examined through an online survey. This survey was distributed through various social media groups meant for Wiccans and other Pagans and was also shared by participants and people who wanted to help with the research. The second question was answered directly through asking for the participants feelings about specific representations I found through the media survey and about the representations in general. The third question was answered directly through asking how the participants respond to the stereotypes being used around them or on them. Though less direct, questions about how much of this kind of media people chose to watch and how often the stereotypes have been applied to them also helped to inform the answer to this question.

Mixed methods methodology

The research project included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. When compared to either method being used on its own, mixed methodology allows for a broader scope of the topic to be examined, thus increasing understanding since it can allow for different angles. (Ahlmarm, Algren, Holmberg, Norredam, Nielsen, Blom, Bo, & Juel, 2015; Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007; McKim, 2017; Schoonenboom, & Johnson. 2017; Stolz, 2017). A mixed methods study allows for more robust knowledge to be created and known through this interaction of the two different kinds of methods (McKim, 2017, p. 203). With different forms of methodology there are different views or aspects of of the topic and project that can be examined, allowing for a broader or more complete picture of the topic than any method alone. This technique of doing research has been used in many different research fields and has only increased in prevalence and prominence since the 1960s (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007, p. 267). This research project consisted of two main parts, the first being qualitative. In order to better understand the way that movies and television shows that feature Wiccan characters treat said characters, I conducted a media review. I used qualitative content analysis for my media review. This was so that I could acquire detailed and nuanced information to help construct my survey guide for the second half of the project. The information from the media review helped me to construct a list of representations in the media for me to ask about within the survey, along with providing context to the survey answers about how people deal with these representations. The second half of the project was a digital survey. While there were some open-ended questions that were examined

qualitatively, the survey was primarily a quantitative method. The majority of questions were closed and were examined through bivariate analysis methods such as correlations and crosstabulations.

Mixed methods research can be considered helpful to the researcher and the research itself, as it helps to provide experience in multiple kinds of research. Doing research in this way allows for researchers who are learning or training in research techniques to utilize multiple techniques within one project and gain a greater breadth of experience. It also is helpful to anyone who may read the research or findings. It can often be considered better for understanding since it allows for those who prefer qualitative or quantitative research to find something they have more experience with (McKim, 2017, p. 211). This helps to understand the finished results when they are brought together since they will still have an aspect of it they recognize and relate to. While, as with any other kind of research, there are limitations, such as sample size, redundancy, bias, time requirements, and the integration of data; this is still the best option for the methodology that was used for this project, since it allowed me to examine the issue from several angles and get a broader view of the topic (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007, p. 268-269). How the issues involved with sampling were handled is addressed further on in this thesis. However, the issue of redundancy is irrelevant since each part of my project focuses on largely different areas (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007, p. 268). These two parts are the media shown to have characters similar enough to Wicca to be considered and people who identify as Wiccan for the two areas being investigated (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007, p. 268). The time requirements were a risk with this research, but the goal of being efficient as possible with the research was met with little issue. Multiple integration points were

used in my research and analysis to address how the integration of data would work for this project, which helped create a better understanding of the research questions as a whole (Schoonenboom, & Johnson 2017, p. 115-117). The first of the integration points took place at the construction of the survey guide, when the qualitative media review data was examined to create a questionnaire that allowed for the most thorough and complete examination of the impact of media representations of Wiccans on Wiccans. The second point of integration came about during the analysis process after the survey was completed. Thus, this was “an analytical point of integration,” which means that both sets of data are analyzed together in order to have a conclusion drawn from the sum of their parts, as opposed to having completely different conclusions that are simply presented at the same time (Schoonenboom, & Johnson. 2017, p. 115).

Media Review and Content Analysis

The first part of my project was conducting a media review of several movies and television shows that had Wiccan characters. I choose to use movies and television shows rather than other types of fiction such as books as they have a more condensed form that allows for quicker consumption and review, along with making it more likely that people may have seen the representation in them. Wicca is a nature based pagan religion and the people who practice it are referred to as Wiccans, though there can be great variation in the actual practices of different Wiccans. In order to find pieces of media to be examined in this, I first began with my existing knowledge of shows with Wiccan characters and did further research from there. This research took the form of

asking others I knew, both within and outside the Wiccan community, about what shows and movies they knew of that had characters who were or appeared to be Wiccan. I also conducted several web searches through different methods, such as directly through Google or through more narrow catalogues like New Brunswick Public Library or Netflix, with varying search terms in order to find more sources. Although, in the beginning, I had wanted to use mainly shows that were more clearly Wiccan in nature, had overtly Wiccan characters, and the way that the magic systems were treated, I quickly realized that this was not possible. I realized that if I were to hold too tightly to these restrictions, I would not be able to find enough sources. With this in mind, I expanded my search parameters and started including other shows that included magic or 'witch' characters that were not as obviously Wiccan as well. I made sure not to include every show with magic, as I thought several ended up too far away from the character type and idea I was looking for. Those shows or movies where characters used magic to fulfill their every whim with no effort were among those excluded most easily. Also excluded were shows and movies that focused on a magic school system as they focused more on the idea of teaching people magic just as we in the real world are taught science or mathematics. This type of show went against the idea of Wicca being a personal choice, which is a fundamental part of the religion with ideals such as the freedom to choose and seek your own path are highly valued. In addition, using this kind of show would make it difficult to show the contrast between characters that are seen as Wiccans or otherwise magical and those that are not. In most of these shows, most, if not all, characters are magic users or fit within the category of 'witch.' This would make it implausible to be able to isolate the tropes and themes around the specific characters in terms of their relation to this magic, thus making these shows impractical for my

research. Instead, I focused on the shows where the characters in question treated these elements as being a part of their belief systems, even if they didn't use the word Wicca for them. For example, in the show *The Good Witch* even though they did not use the word Wicca in the episodes I watched, the characters seemed to have a nature-based faith that was similar enough for me. Part of this decision process involved keeping the difference between Wicca and witchcraft in mind, thus those pieces of media that did seem to have elements of witchcraft but did not treat it as a faith or religion were not included. Although including the depictions that were closer to witchcraft would have allowed for more and different media examples in my review, I chose to focus more on the religion of Wicca instead of expanding to include the practice of witchcraft. In order to help with any possible issues with bias in understanding of what should count as Wiccan within the media I relied more on definitions of Wicca from the literature descriptions of it, rather than relying on my personal experience. I also made sure to consult with my supervisor Dr. Holtmann in this to help determine the criteria for inclusion in the media review.

The shows I reviewed for my media review consist of the *Bones* episode "The Witch in the Wardrobe", episode two and three of the *Witcher*, episode one, two and three of *Midnight Texas*, episode one and two of *Luna Nera*, episode one and two of *Cursed*, episode one and two of *Merlin*, episode one and two of *The Good Witch*, episode one and two of *Charmed*, and the movies *Scooby Doo and the Witch's Ghost*, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *The Last Witch Hunter*, *All Hallow's Eve*, *The Witch*, and *The Blair Witch Project*. Each example was closely watched multiple times while taking notes on anything that seemed similar to Wicca and how the characters who were similar enough to be Wiccans were treated by both the

narrative itself and the other characters. Though there were a few examples that were unique to their own source, many of the types of representations I found were similar to each other, and after a while, I noticed I was mainly finding the same results. It was this repetition that let me know I had done enough in terms of examining media sources. While the media I examined spanned several genres and decades in terms of when they were created, there were still things similar in most cases regarding what representations and stereotypes of Wiccan characters they had. The majority of stereotypes or representations I found can be fit within three categories, positive representations, negative representations, and representations of being strange or inhuman. While there were also other stereotypes and representations that did not fit within these three categories, they do cover the majority of the representations I found within the media I examined. Further discussion of these categories and themes will be provided in the results section of this thesis. Overall, the media review successfully completed its main purpose, aiding in the construction of a survey to find out how the Wiccan community feels about and responds to these stereotypes.

Digital Survey

The digital survey was the main method for collecting data from members of the Wiccan community for this research project (see Appendix 2). While the media review was very beneficial in establishing a baseline of information about the media representations of Wicca and Wiccan characters, it is the survey that is the main focus of this project. From this survey I wanted to acquire information such as how people within

the Wiccan community feel about and respond to the media representations that they see of their religion. A survey was chosen as the primary quantitative method as it was the best option in order to reach a large number of participants very quickly. It also allowed for gathering a large amount of broad data with relative ease. Digital forms of survey can be of particular use when surveying individuals from large geographic areas for relatively little cost when compared to other methods of gaining data (Evans & Mathur, 2005; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Since my research project was mainly on the Wiccan community, which is very spread out and may be considered as one that is difficult to get into contact with, this was the ideal method for me to use since travel times, phone costs, or in-person meetings would not be a concern (van Selm & Jankowski, 2006, p.437). The survey was intended to be an international one and was open to people from any country in the world with internet access. However, it was limited by only being available in English, which may have contributed to most of the participants being from North America. This difference was also added to since the majority of the websites, and social media pages I was able to get access to were based in either Canada or the United States. The digital aspect of this survey was particularly advantageous since the research took place during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic that greatly limited the ability to have in-person contact with people and even limitations on handling the same objects as other people without proper sanitation and quarantine procedures. While surveys and digital methods, in general, have weaknesses, such as issues with clarity of instructions or privacy concerns, the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages for my research project, especially when compared to other possible options that would be far less suitable for this research (Evans, & Mathur, 2005, p. 196-202, 209-211).

The broad idea of surveys is many people answering a series of questions about something, but there are many different types of surveys with great variation between them (Evans, & Mathur, 2005, p. 202-207). My survey had a mix of open-ended and closed questions. However, the vast majority of them were closed, with only a few that would be classified as entirely open-ended. In contrast, others had a list of possibilities to select and an option of choosing “other” and the participants supplying their own answers. The survey itself was delivered by digital means through the website known as Survey Monkey. The format of the survey is one of the biggest differences between kinds of surveys, though no matter what method is used, there is always a great variety of delivery methods. Open-ended questions allow for more qualitative analysis due to their ability to let people fill in their own answers to questions. Closed questions are the more typical kind for surveys, particularly within quantitative research, in that participants are asked to pick an answer between given options. Closed questions are the kind that allows for statistical analysis, which is why they were what I preferred for this project. These types of questions offer limited insight into people but allow for many people to answer the same questions, thus allowing for a lot of data to be collected and analyzed efficiently. Methods of survey distribution can be a main source of differences between research projects (Evans, & Mathur, 2005, p. 202-207). Although distribution methods could be considered more an issue of sampling, all of these differences create variability in the information collected just by research design.

In general terms, surveys can be distributed through written, audio, or digital means. Digital surveys, the kind used in this project, are administered through technology in some form. Emails and websites are the most common means for the distribution for digital surveys. Digital surveys have very particular strengths as

compared to other methods of doing survey research which made them ideal for my research project. These types of surveys can be noted as one of the best methods in order to contact groups that are considered difficult to get into contact with (van Selm & Jankowski, 2006, p.437). Many Wiccans have been persecuted for their religion in some way or another (Hjelm, 2006; McClure, 2017; Taira, 2010). Because of this, I realized some among their community might be uncomfortable with in-person research or any type of research that would have the risk of identifying them. I decided an anonymous digital survey was the best method to overcome this. Due to the global reach that digital surveys have, along with their speed in ability to answer and convenience for the participants, gaining a larger sample is said to be easier with this method (De Bruijne & Wijnant, 2013; Evans & Mathur, 2005; Saunders, 2012; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). From my perspective, the low cost, flexibility, ease of data entry, and possibly quicker methods of analysis are all benefits from digital surveys that helped immensely in my research (Evans, & Mathur, 2005, p. 196-201). As with any method, however, there are weaknesses to digital surveys. Implementation issues, clarity of instructions, skewed samples, and privacy/security issues are all things that must be addressed in order to do research with digital surveys, which will be addressed further in the limitations section of this thesis (Evans & Mathur, 2005, p. 201-202).

The survey (found in Appendix 2) began with demographic questions to gather information about where the participants are from, age, gender identity, ethnicity, and religion to provide categories to be used in analysis to examine trends in the data. The vast majority of the survey questions focused on what kinds of representations the participants had seen in the media about Wiccan or other similar characters, how they felt about said representations, and if they had ever been applied to them. Besides those

questions about specific media representations, there were also more general ones about how they think media representations may play a role in people's opinions of Wicca and Wiccans and how they respond to and deal with these kinds of stereotypes in their own lives. In addition, I also made sure to ask participants how important they thought the examination of these stereotypes and representations were, along with how much of an impact they think they have in the world. The end of the survey contained open-ended questions inviting participants to state if they wanted to add anything to be considered in my research or suggestions for topics I did not cover. Prior to the actual release of the survey and beginning of sampling procedures I reached out to several colleagues, contacts and my supervisor in order to have them test, or pilot, the study to search for any issues in the questions or functioning I may have not noticed. At both the beginning and end of the survey, I included information inviting anyone who had any questions to contact me through either my own email or through the Facebook page for the project. As well as contacting me directly, I also made sure to include contact details for my research supervisor Dr. Holtmann and Chair of the Research Ethics Board at University of New Brunswick, Dr. David Coleman in case anyone had questions they did not want to ask me directly. I also included the REB ethics number of 2021-003, in order to help anyone asking the Chair of the Ethics Board about my project. Providing contacts for them to ask questions to rather than including some kind of immediate messaging system within the survey helped with confidentiality as it made sure that any questions anyone wanted to ask were not linked with their survey responses. The full survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2.

Sampling

For the survey portion of this project, I used a method of sampling often called either snowball or respondent-driven sampling (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012, p. 60-61; Goodman, 2011; Handcock, & Gile, 2011). What this means is that while I made initial contact with participants through a variety of sources, the main method of distributing my survey was meant to be the participants sharing the link for the digital survey to others in their own social networks (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012; Bhutta, 2012; Goodman, 2011; Handcock, & Gile, 2011). For the actual process of the recruitment, I began by creating a Facebook page² for my research as I decided that would be easier to share than just the direct link through the survey hosting website of SurveyMonkey. From here, I shared the page through my own personal Facebook account and reached out to moderators and owners of several Facebook groups that I am a part of for permission to share my survey. In addition to Facebook, I also reached out to potential participants through other social media websites such as several Discord servers I am in, Reddit, and Tumblr. Unfortunately, most of the Facebook groups or pages I reached out to either denied my request or never answered through the course of the research. However, I was cleared to post within every Discord server and Reddit thread connected to Wicca that I was able to find. At the end of each survey, I had included a request that participants share the survey with anyone they know who may be interested in completing it. I am certain that at least some of my participants did indeed share my survey as hoped since four separate people reached out to me for permission to share my survey through forms

² <https://www.facebook.com/WiccanCommunityResponsestoMediaRepresentation>

of social media that I had not used for recruiting participants. In addition, I could see that people were also sharing the actual post about the survey that I had made through both Facebook and Tumblr's systems. As well as through these sampling methods via social media, my survey was also posted to the weekly events email for the University of New Brunswick and the Twitter accounts for the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Canadian Society for Studies in Religion. I had also reached out to several podcasts towards the end of my recruitment, but beyond one of them saying they would 'take a look' at my survey, I never got any response back from them before I closed my survey. I closed my survey when I did because I needed to make sure I would have enough time to be able to analyze the results. The survey was open from February 4th until May 16th of 2021.

Since both the recruitment and the actual method of collecting the data are digital, they have much in common in terms of the benefits and drawbacks. In both cases, the broad reach for the digital methods is a definite benefit, allowing for an international sample of participants since it is not restricted by location (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012, p. 62; Bhutta, 2012, p. 58-59). In addition to the variety of areas that the participants can come from when using a digital method, it also allows for those who tend to be in more isolated social groups to be contacted easier than with other methods (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012, p. 62-65; Goodman, 2011). This is especially true when the areas of interest for the research are those that are more difficult to reach or to know from an outside perspective (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012, p. 62-65; Goodman, 2011). This applies to Wiccans, especially because they are very spread out with relatively small numbers of people in various regions. Due to the lack of bureaucratic organization in charge of the religion, like structured churches and institutional hierarchies, it can be

even more challenging to contact Wiccans about research like this as compared to other religions since the researchers cannot contact the official organizations and use that as a method to gain participants. People knowing that they can respond very quickly, without much effort on their part is also a benefit of these kinds of methods, especially when both are digital methods since it is far easier to follow a link rather than looking up an email address or web link, phoning a number, or coming to some kind of gathering or meeting (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012, p. 62; Bhutta, 2012, p. 58-59). The low cost to the researcher is a definite plus as well, with the only costs for collecting my research being that of a subscription to the site I used to host the survey, SurveyMonkey (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012, p. 62; Bhutta, 2012, p. 58-59). However, I was able to use the account for the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research since my supervisor had access, so this research had no monetary cost to me. There are, of course, disadvantages to this kind of sampling for research. These mainly fall into issues with how representative and generalizable the data can be, along with concerns about bias in the data or recruitment since some of the participants will inevitably know each other (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012, p. 62-63). The disadvantages and how I addressed them through the course of this research are addressed later on in the limitations section of this thesis.

Ethics

The most important part of ethics in social science is ensuring that no harm comes to the participants of the research. This is true regardless of whether the harm

takes the form of psychological, economic, physical, social, safety, legal, or equality and justice issues (Denscombe, 2012, p. 128; Oliver, 2010). While rather straightforward in most cases, each of these is important to consider when conducting ethical research and have their own ways to deal with them to prevent harm. In addition to the harm of participants, legal issues such as who owns the data and keeping said data confidential are also of concern, along with topics such as the legality involved with scientific inquiry and voluntary consent (Denscombe, 2012, p. 130-131). As I am the one who collected the data, I also have the right to use it, such as publishing it or the results I find from analyzing it (Denscombe, 2012, p. 130). For ethical considerations, data security is an aspect that is both a legal and moral issue (Denscombe, 2012, p. 131). The data security for this project was assured in that all data for the project required passwords to access, whether through Survey Monkey where the survey was collected or through the devices that the data was stored on when being analyzed and within password-protected folders. In addition, it was never stored on any form of cloud service. This is an important topic to consider as many participants would not want to be identified from the research, nor did they give permission to be identified in the research. The aim of not allowing for any identifiable information to be found was aided by the website used to collect survey responses. Survey Monkey allowed for anonymous responses, keeping me from being able to identify participants. It allows people to answer the survey without requiring an account or entering an email address or anything similar that could identify people, along with not tracking things like IP addresses or the like. Consent for participating in the project was achieved through participants confirming they had read and agreed with participating in the project before continuing with the survey (see information from the survey in Appendix 4).

The risks to the participants were very minor for this study. The only risk there was at all for ethics in terms of harm to the participants was having to be careful when I was constructing my survey to ensure that none of the questions caused any emotional distress to the participants. While the topic of media stereotypes' effect on people's lives might have been an upsetting one, I believe I accomplished this goal of asking about this topic with minimal harm as nothing I asked was too fraught, focusing solely on the representation of media and how the participants have seen it and think about it. For the affect on their own lives I limited questions to solely if they had been applied to them and who by rather than expanding on what kind of affect the representations may have had on their lives. Other topics that were considered for the survey, but they were decided to be too difficult to ask about in this context. One example of this were questions of if they had ever done some of the actions mentioned in the survey, the lighter examples of which would be practicing herbal medicine or owning cats. Another example is asking if people had ever considered the representations to be true to who they are, with the lighter example being having a motherly or caring personality or being nature obsessed. However, in both of these cases I decided that asking such things would be far too hurtful to participants and should not be included in this survey. The privacy of the participants was also something I believe I succeeded in protecting through my survey, making it almost impossible to connect anyone's responses with their identities. The only possible avenue for connecting results to a person's identity is if someone emailed me or asked on the Facebook page with a question or comment that indicated something specific they had said in their survey answers. Even in this case, I only had access to whatever means they used to contact me and the assumption they had done the survey in addition to whatever they included in their message. This had been a very rare

occurrence within the course of the research, and in all cases, there was not enough information for it to be possible to connect the person who contacted me with their results. Due to this, not even I am able to link the results of any individual on my survey with their actual identity.

Statistical Analysis

The survey included both closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions are those with a set number of pre-generated responses that participants must choose between while open-ended questions allow the respondents to write in any responses they wish. I utilized thematic analysis to examine the open-ended questions since they were relatively narrow in scope and content. For the closed questions, statistical analysis was used. This statistical analysis consisted mainly of analyzing descriptive statistics, performing chi-square tests, logistic regressions, and a factor analysis with OLS regression. Before analyzing the results of the survey, the results had to be recoded and redefined. The first thing I did was ensure that the values for answers to the questions were coded in a reasonable way. This meant when coding questions with a scale, the numbers increased as the value of the responses did. An example of this is, recoding the answers to how often the participants see certain representations in media to make sure that the higher numbers meant seeing these more often. Along with this, I recoded the variables to ensure that for yes/no questions, the no's made for meaningful zeroes rather than having separate numbers themselves, which allowed for easier statistical analysis. After this, I recoded variables to create combinations for easier understanding and analysis. The first one of the combinations was adding the various categories of people

who had applied each trope to the participants. These questions took the form of listing a trope and asking who had applied it to them, with categories such as friends, family, coworkers, strangers, others, and none of the above. Due to the website's format, these were all listed as separate variables in the original survey. I combined them to make a variable for each trope that measured how many categories of people had the representation applied to them by adding the variables for friends, family, coworkers, strangers, and others. I examined all of the descriptive statistics for these variables before deciding to go further with statistical analysis and looking at the relationships between variables.

After examining the descriptive statistics, I decided to recode variables for the representations for easier statistical analysis. Recalling the categories established through the media review, I split the tropes asked within the survey into the categories of good, bad, weird/inhuman, and other. The term weird in this case was defined as being different from the average human character of the media and referred to things such as having magic powers, being superstitious, or being considered creepy. From here, I created combinations of all of the questions asked about specific tropes for each type. Using this, I began looking for relationships between variables using chi-square analysis, and crosstabs. To further test associations between variables, I prepared a series of logistic regression models. I recoded the variables I wanted to investigate into binaries. This included predictor variables such as age, gender, and religion, along with outcome variables such as those from questions focused on specific representations asked about in the survey, and more general questions like the role they believe representation plays in their daily lives. I recoded the outcome variables I wanted to examine into binaries and examined them compared to my demographic variables of age, gender, and religion.

The logistic regression models were created to assess the impact of each of the predictors of age, gender and religion on the most relevant outcome variables. The relevance of the variables was determined by examining those that were shown to have a significant relationship to the predictors and then considering them in relationship to my research questions. There were 49 variables associated with the representations survey respondents had seen within the media which led me to conduct a reliability test and factor analysis. I created an interval level variable using the factor analysis which I called 'tropes' since it included a lot of information about media representations and the impact of them on the respondents. Tropes was the outcome variable for an OLS regression to examine how the predictor variables of age, gender and religion each impacted the research participants experiences of seeing media representations of Wicca and dealing with them personally.

The methods are decided in part by what the research question for the project is. In my case, I have a research question of "How does the Wiccan community feel about, deal with, and respond to media representations of their religion?" I split this question into the two issues of what are the media representations of Wiccans and then how does the Wiccan community feel about and respond to these representations? In order to answer the different parts of this question, I used a mixed methodology for my project, allowing for the different parts of the methods to handle the different parts of the question. The question of what representations there are was best handled by a qualitative media review, examining movies and television shows in order to see what representations of Wiccan and Wiccan characters were within them. For the other part of the question, I collected information from the Wiccan community using, a survey. I used an online survey that also lent itself well to using an online sampling method. In this

case, I used digital snowball sampling, asking participants to share the link to the survey among their own social groups. The ethics review of this project was relatively straightforward since this research only had minimal risks of harm. The confidentiality of the participants was ensured through using an anonymous website for the collection of data. Once data has been collected, the next step is to analyze the results in detail and see what they can tell us about the researched topic. These results were analyzed through basic thematic analysis for the qualitative results and statistical analysis of the quantitative results.

5. Results

This research project had two different but related data collection phases. The first was a media review examining various movies and television shows that contained examples of Wicca, Wiccans, or had similar characters or belief systems without actually using the term. The content analysis of media led to a list of representations about these characters and beliefs that I was able to concentrate and narrow down for use in the second part of the project, the digital survey. The survey was conducted over the website Survey Monkey and spread to participants through social media websites such as Facebook and Tumblr. The survey focused on asking participants about their views about representations of Wicca in media. It was mainly aimed at Wiccans as the preferred group to answer, though I also received responses from many people who were not Wiccan. The main form of analysis from the survey was statistical, though a few open-ended questions were examined qualitatively. The quantitative statistical analyses varied from descriptive statistics to bivariate measures such as chi-square, and linear regression to factor analysis and OLS regression. The media review allowed for the survey to come to fruition and the possibility of statistical analyses.

Media Review

The first part of my research was conducting a qualitative media review of television shows and movies with Wiccan characters. While I originally wanted to stick to characters that were obviously Wiccan, even if they never used the term Wiccan, I had to expand my parameters to include other character types that just had aspects similar to the religion of Wicca in order to gather enough data. For this aim, I examined

the movies *Scooby Doo and the Witch's Ghost*, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *The Last Witch Hunter*, *All Hallow's Eve*, *The Witch*, and *The Blair Witch Project*. This was in addition to *The Witcher's* episodes "Four Marks" and "Betrayal Moon"; *Midnight Texas'* "Pilot", "Bad Moon Rising", and "Lemuel, Unchained"; *Luna Nera's* "Omen" and "The Book"; *Cursed's* "Nimue" and "Cursed"; *Merlin's* "The Mark of Nimueh" and "The Sins of the Father"; *The Good Witch's* "Starting Over...Again" and "Apologies and Remembrances"; and *Charmed's* "Something Wicca This Way Comes" and "I've Got You Under My Skin." I found there were several categories that most of the representations fell into. These tropes or representations often fell within the characters being presented as good, evil, or plain inhuman. There were other representations outside of these categories as well. Most of the remainder were either personality traits that do not fit within the binary of good or evil or representations of how their powers work. From the myriad of representations I initially found, I removed some of the rarer examples and combined others to get a shortened list of tropes to ask participants about in my survey.

Table 2, List of representations from media review-Good

- | Good | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbal medicine, • Healing people, • Midwife, • People are people, • Jars with herbs, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeopathic medicine, • Protectors of innocent, • Good follow Wiccan rede, • Wants to be good • Herbal medicine, |

Table 3, List of representations from media review-Evil

	Evil
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evil/Devil worship,• Animal sacrifices,• Hate non-witches,• Acting against the Christian god,• Humans hate those who are not human-even if they appear to be,• Hatred of order and humanity,• Killing humans,• Tempting kids with candy,• Stealing babies,• Goats being representative of Satan,• Does evil,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worshiping Satan,• Evil animals,• Sexual predator,• Dressing provocatively,• Causes rot in crops and disease in animals,• Signing name in a devil's book,• Nudity,• Killers,• Warlock,• Bad witches kill good witches,

Table 4, List of representations from media review-Weird

	Weird
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More wealth than people who don't have magic,• Burned by iron,• Green skin and pointy hats,• Even if good still not human,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Piles of rocks as a burial ground or markers,• Floating/flying,• Twig poppets,

Table 5, List of representations from media review-Personality Traits

- | Personality Traits | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Naive and childish, | • New Age, |
| • Delusional, | • Vague, |
| • Crazy, | • Distrustful of modern medicine, |
| • Hippy, | • Unnerving/creepy, |
| • Nature obsessed, | • Knowledge about many topics, |
| • Catty, | • Carefree, |
| • Power obsessed, | • Rebellious, |
| • Arrogant, | • Stick in the mud, |
| • Hunger for power, | • Traditional, |
| • Vain, | • Vengeful, |
| • Cat person, | • Fearless, |
| • Alcoholic, | • Fearful, |
| • Runaway, | • Sweet, |
| • Egotistical, | • Superstitious |
| • Think they know everything, | • Motherly |
| • Caring | |

Table 6, List of representations from media review-Powers

- | | Powers |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| • Ancient knowledge guarded by women, | • Magic creates a disturbance that can be followed and sensed, |
| • Born with magic, | • Necromancy, |
| • Difficult to control your magic, | • Glowing eyes, |
| • Love as magic, | • Psychic, |
| • Magic has a price/consequence, | • Altars, |
| • Blood magic, | • Rituals, |
| • Magic for girls only, | • Protection magic, |
| • Hair linked to magic, | • Uses 'spirit boards'/Ouija boards, |
| • Animal communication, | • Poppets, |
| • Rituals, | • Chants, |
| • Nature based magic, | • Telekinesis, |
| • Can learn or may be born with it, | • Seeing the future, |
| • Powerful and dangerous, | • Stopping time, |
| • Supernatural, | • Magic from the elements |
| • Magic has a cost, | • Sucking away people's life force |

Table 7, List of representations from media review-Other

- | Other | |
|---|--|
| • Feared by men, | • Druids, |
| • Magic seen as not real even by the characters that have it, | • Magic not being real- just superstition, |
| • Cultists, | • Witches |
| • Blamed for ills of the world, | • Living in secret |
| • Wiccans, | • Scared of hunters |
| • Lesbians, | • Burned in Salem, |
| • Old religion, | • Pentacle, |
| • Fae, | • Crows, |
| • Astrology, | • Cursed animals, |
| • Inhuman, | • Lucky 13, |
| • Just another religion, | • Owning a new age store, |
| • Born a witch | • Sisterhood, |
| • Wiccan symbols on characters as a sign they are Wiccan without actually saying the term | |

The first of the representation categories I want to discuss is that of more positive representations. One of the main reoccurring themes with the Wiccan characters seen as good is that they are skilled with herbal medicine and healing. They use these skills to help people. Examples of this include Cassie Nightingale in the show *The Good Witch*, who often supplies members of the town with herbal medicine to help with any issues they are having, and Fiji of *Midnight Texas*, who, while capable of using more direct magic than an actual Wiccan, also has a variety of herbal medicines that she uses when needed. In line with this, there are examples of these characters also being midwives, though in this case, it is more likely to be set in an earlier time period rather than a modern one. In *Luna Nera*, the characters are midwives taking care of a lord's wife and

are known as midwives and healers of their community. In general terms, in many of the programs where these characters are seen in a positive light, it is as healers and protectors of some kind. If these characters are shown as good in a world with a greater magic universe, then the 'good' magic users are often seen as protectors of the innocent or of those without magic from those that would harm them. One of the key aspects of stories in which these magical characters are given more positive representations is a theme of people being people regardless of their powers or abilities. This means that regardless of any powers or abilities they have, or even if they are human or are not, they are still people with intrinsic value that are worthy of respect, dignity, and kindness. However, in many cases of the more magically based shows, while there are characters with magic on the side of 'good' and given positive representations, there are also those who use magic for 'evil' and have more negative representations. This is in addition to negative representations even for generally 'good' characters being prevalent in these shows.

There are many examples of movies and television shows where tropes and representations applied to characters that may be considered Wiccan or similar that are very negative in nature. These can cover everything from being very vain and arrogant to murdering children. The main ones included and those that need attention are characters with magic being evil and murderers. In many cases, when these characters are seen as evil, it is in opposition to other magical characters who are seen as the heroes or good guys of the program. Of course, there are exceptions to this, mainly within the horror genre from the media reviewed in this research. Even when good magical characters oppose the evil ones, they are often aided by non-magical characters. Along

with these stereotypes, there are also those about characters who are seen as a witch or Wiccan just being Satanists and worshipping the Christian Devil, who is seen as the ultimate figure of evil within that religion. An unfortunately common representation in media, even in programs without magical characters as villains or evil, is that of witches or Wiccan engaging in ‘animal sacrifice’ or just killing animals. Though rarer in the media I reviewed, there were also themes of temptation or predatory behaviour in magical characters, including things like luring children with candy, stealing babies, and being a sexual predator. Although there are some programs in which the only Wiccan or otherwise magical characters are on the side of good or the heroes, even in those, stereotypes about them being evil or immoral often appear. This is in addition to those shows in which these characters appear on both sides of the moral divide. These kinds of representations are even more prevalent within shows with magical villains, to say nothing of how much of the narrative they fill in programs with no magical characters on the ‘good’ side.

Whether the characters are seen as good or evil within their work, they are often seen as not being human. Although there are tales in which the witches or other magical characters are also human, they are often seen as having an inherent quality that makes them different from the average human, such as magic in their blood. In contrast, in many other cases, they are not shown to be human at all. Whether explicit or not in the media I reviewed, it was often clear that the characters were not the same as the non-magical characters. This is the case, whether due to the power they could wield, often referred to as being in their blood or passed through their family, or in more explicit ways. Whether the obvious classic examples like having green skin and glowing eyes or

something more subtle such as having magical powers that normal humans could not dream of, there are many examples of these characters being shown as not human. In some media, these characters are burned by iron like the ancient legends of the Fae, have glowing eyes, or are capable of flight. In movies such as *The Last Witch Hunter*, the witches are stated to look like humans but can be very different, although a human can be born of two witches in this universe. This show is one of many examples where it is stated that humans are afraid of what they do not understand, especially regarding people with the kind of powers that these characters often have. In some of the more extreme cases with negative portrayals of these characters, whether by the narrative itself or from other characters, it is said that ‘witches’ are the source of all ills in the world with their inhuman abilities coming from an ancient and evil practice. Another example is in “*The Witch*,” where a character begins as a normal human but later becomes a witch. This shows how even if a person begins as a human, once they take on these powers, they are no longer human because all who have these kinds of magic are seen as being against the world’s natural order. Whether the characters are treated as being good or evil, in many of the programs I reviewed for this project, they are seen as inhuman regardless of morality.

Along with the representations that fit within these three categories, of course, there were other ones. Most of the other tropes that can be attributed to magical characters in the media samples I reviewed can be attributed to character traits outside the dichotomy of good and evil or how their powers work. For the latter, the main reoccurring themes are that the knowledge of witchcraft is an ancient knowledge guarded through the ages by women, the prevalence of rituals in their practices, and that

the practices of magic are intrinsically connected to nature. The personality traits of tropes for magical characters are more varied, possibly being completely contrary in different media. While in some sources, these characters are presented as naive and childish, in others, they are shown to be motherly and caring. In the same vein, some show them carefree while others show them as arrogant, egotistical, vain, and power-obsessed. One particular show, *'The Good Witch,'* shows that a character connected to Wiccan themes is highly knowledgeable, to the point of being called unnerving or creepy but distrustful of modern medicine. In the case of the term creepy, this was considered to include things such as being seen as unnerving or slightly disturbing, appearing in media typically from having unusual knowledge. At times, these characters are shown to be obsessed with nature and to favour cats as pets for common traits with a less contradictory nature. While the clear majority of tropes within the shows and movies I reviewed for this project fit within the ideas of being 'good,' 'evil,' or just 'inhuman,' there are, of course, other tropes in common between them beyond these categories.

From the varied list of tropes analyzed in the media review, they were pared down considerably for the construction of my survey. Once I had first established a list of all of the tropes, I selected the most prevalent ones or those that were most relevant to my survey. I specifically chose the ones that were more harshly applied, or those often mentioned in my literature review. I also removed any that would not be likely to be applied to people in real life, such as the most specific magical powers or characteristics such as having green skin or not being human. I combined any that seemed similar

enough to help reduce the list of stereotypes. Once this list was established, I constructed the survey, with questions for the 18 representations.

Digital Survey

A digital survey served to collect data from participants on how Wiccans feel about, deal with, and respond to representations of them in the media. Eighty-one people total took my survey, though 48 of them left at least one answer blank, whether that be from missing a question or choosing to stop the survey early. Many of those who seemed to stop early left at some point through the questions about individual tropes. For these individuals I counted the answers they had already given but discarded them from consideration for the questions where they did not answer. First, I examined the answers from the survey in the form of descriptive statistics. From there, I completed a more detailed bivariate analysis, conducting chi-square tests of association with variables of interest and each of the demographic variables of age, religion, and gender. Based on significant associations, I ran a series of logistic regression models with dichotomous outcomes of whether participants had had the representations in media applied to them, how often these representations had been applied with a set cut off point, if they thought that media representations affected people's opinions of Wicca, and if they thought that consideration of media representations is important. Because the results of the models did not provide meaningful information about the impacts of age, religion and gender on the respondents' experiences of media representations of Wicca, I conducted a factor analysis. Factor analysis is a process of statistical analysis where many different but

related variables are all taken in consideration of their relationships to each other so that an underlying construct that is linked to them is made apparent (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012). This statistical process helps create a single variable that combines all of the separate measures, aiming to be able to quantify and examine the underlying attribute or construct that cannot normally be tested for directly (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012). This outcome variable can then be used in further statistical analysis, such as with as an OLS regression model. Also included in the survey data were answers to open-ended questions about one specific trope from the media and feedback from participants about the experience of completing the survey.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 8, Demographics

Variables	Count	Percentage
<i>Gender Identity</i>		
Female	46	56.8
Male	13	16
Nonbinary	12	14.8
Trans Woman	2	2.5
Trans Man	3	3.7
Other	5	6.2
Total	81	100
<i>Age</i>		
19-30	50	61.7
31-40	11	13.6
41-50	9	11.
51-60	7	8.6
61-70	4	4.9
Total	81	100
<i>Religion</i>		
Wicca	24	29.6
Pagan	8	9.9
Druid	4	1.2
Shamanism	1	4.9

Agnostic	19	16
Atheist	6	7.4
Christian	12	14.8
Jewish	1	1.2
Other	12	14.8
Total	81	100
<i>Region</i>		
North America	74	91.4
South America	1	1.2
Europe	2	2.5
Asia	1	1.2
Australia	2	2.5
Missing	1	1.2
Total	81	100
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Caucasian	72	88.9
Asian	2	2.5
Hispanic/Latinx	2	2.5
Black	1	1.2
Other	3	3.7
Missing	1	1.2
Total	81	100

In terms of demographics, the participants in my survey had a few things in common. As shown in Table 1, almost 89% of the people who took my survey were white. In addition to this, 91% of the participants lived in North America. While these were the more intense majorities the categories of gender and age also had clear majorities with 57% of the participants identifying as women. The ages of the respondents show a similar trend, with the clear majority between the ages of 19 to 30 holding close to 62% of the participants and decreasing numbers of respondents as the age ranges increase. The religion of those who took my survey was much more varied, with Wiccan being the most common religion (29.6%) but not what most respondents answered. Agnostics (16%), Christians (14.8%), and those who identified as a different

religion (14.8%) also made up a fair proportion of the respondents, with any two of those categories being equal to or greater than that of Wiccans.

Table 9, Seeking out Wiccan media

Do they seek out Wiccan media? *		
Variables	Number	Percentage
No	36	48.6
Sometimes	20	27
Yes	18	24.3
Total	74	100

*total for tables 2-23 refers to how many respondents answered the question

Table 2 shows that about 49 percent of respondents do not seek out media with Wiccan characters in it, 27 percent stating that they sometimes do seek out this kind of media and 24.3 percent confirming that they do seek out media with Wiccan characters.

Table 10, Wiccan without using the word

How often have they seen a character that seems to be Wiccan, but the word is not used?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Never	7	9.5
Rarely	20	27
Sometimes	20	27
Often	20	27
Constantly	7	9.5
Total	74	100

Table 3 shows that there is a three-way tie for possible answers on how often participants had seen characters that seem to Wiccan but do not use the actual word for the religion with the answers of rarely, sometimes, and often all being tied at 27 percent.

Table 11, Number of stereotypes

How many different stereotypes about Wiccan characters have they seen?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
0-5	14	34.1
6-10	11	26.8
11-15	8	19.5
16-20	3	7.3
21-25	2	4.9
26-30	1	2.4
31-35, 36-40	0	0
41+	2	4.9
Total	41	100

When inquiring about how many representations of Wiccans people have seen,

Table 4 shows that the most common answer is between 0 and 5 representations,

covering 34.1 percent of the participants with 6-10 categories following close behind at 26.8 percent.

Table 12, Seen representations

Have they seen ____ representation?	Total Count	Yes%	Maybe%	No%
Skilled with herbal medicine	52	78.8	3.8	17.3
Obsessed with nature/hippie	52	48.4	3.7	17.3
Motherly and caring	51	64.7	9.8	25.5
Wiccans are mostly women	52	88.5	3.8	7.7
Seen as evil	53	73.6	9.4	17
Satanists	53	75.5	9.4	15.1
Killing animals	46	54.3	4.3	41.3
Members of cults or similar to cults	49	69.4	8.2	22.4
Creepy	50	78	8	14
Crazy or deluded	52	71.2	11.5	17.3
Superstitious	53	75.5	11.3	13.2
Owens cats	54	88.9	3.7	7.4
Practicing religion naked	55	61.8	10.9	27.3
Naïve or childish	56	35.7	8.9	55.4
Has magic powers	51	86.3	3.9	9.8
Wicca as ancient knowledge often guarded by women	49	81.6	4.1	14.3
Talks to animals	51	70.6	3.9	25.5

Table 5 highlights which of the 18 individual tropes respondents had seen when viewing media. The most frequently seen representation in media was that of Wiccans or Wicca adjacent characters owning cats, with about 89 percent of the participants stating that they had seen this representation. The next most common trope was close to that, with 88.5 percent of the population confirming that they had seen representations of Wiccan being mostly women within media. The third most common representation was shown to be the representation of those associated with Wicca having magic powers of some sort, with 86.3 percent of those who answered the survey confirming that.

Table 13, How often representations are seen

How often have they seen ___ representation?	Total Count	Not Applicable*	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Skilled with herbal medicine	52	3.8	7.7	7.3	38.5	32.7
Obsessed with nature/hippie	51	2	11.8	13.7	47.1	25.5
Motherly and caring	51	5.9	15.7	21.6	43.1	13.7
Wiccans are mostly women	52	3.8	3.8	9.6	26.9	55.8
Seen as evil	53	3.8	11.3	13.2	37.7	34
Satanists	53	5.7	9.4	17	37.7	30.2
Killing animals	45	20	20	22.2	22.2	15.6
Members of cults or similar to cults	48	8.3	10.4	20.8	33.3	27.1
Creepy	50	4	10	16	40	30
Crazy or deluded	51	9.8	3.9	23.5	39.2	23.5
Superstitious	52	9.6	5.8	11.5	48.1	25
Owens cats	54	1.9	5.6	7.4	35.2	50
Practicing religion naked	53	7.5	11.3	39.6	24.5	17
Naïve or childish	54	25.9	27.8	18.5	20.4	7.4
Has magic powers	51	2	9.8	3.9	27.5	56.9
Wicca as ancient knowledge often guarded by women	48	8.3	6.3	4.2	43.8	37.5
Talks to animals	48	8.2	16.3	12.2	49	14.3

* The answer columns are reported in percentages

Table 6 indicates that the top three answers for the media representations that participants most often see of Wiccans are having magic powers, being women, and owning cats. These three options had percentages of 56.9, 55.8, and 50 percent reported by the participants, respectively.

Table 14, Representation opinions

Opinions of the representations						
Variables	Total Count	Very negative*	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Herbal medicine	51	2	3.9	19.6	37.3	37.3
Nature obsessed	51	5.9	5.9	51	31.4	5.9
Motherly and caring	51	2.0	3.9	25.5	49	19.6
Wiccans are women	52	9.6	26.9	42.3	21.2	0
Evil	52	30.8	42.3	25	0	1.9
Satanist	53	34	45.3	13.2	3.8	3.8
Killing animals	45	46.7	33.3	15.6	2.2	2.2
Cults	48	16.7	50	33.3	0	0
Creepy	50	14	54	28	2	2
Crazy or delusional	51	37.3	37.3	17.6	3.9	3.9
Superstitious	52	3.8	7.7	76.9	9.6	1.9
Cat owning	54	3.7	1.9	55.6	24.1	14.8
Practicing naked	54	3.7	16.7	59.3	14.8	5.6
Naïve and childish	53	17	32.1	45.3	3.8	1.9
Magic powers	51	2	19.6	47.1	31.4	0
Ancient knowledge	48	2.1	12.5	35.4	37.5	12.5
Talk to animals	50	4	8	50	32	6

* The answer columns are reported in percentages

Of the respondents' opinions of these representations, as shown in Table 7, being skilled with herbal medicine, having a motherly and caring personality, and having magical powers were the three most positive, with 74.6, 68.6, and 50 percent of the participants listing them as positive, respectively. On the opposite side, as also shown in Table 7, killing animals, being Satanists, and being crazy had the more negative opinions, with 80, 79.3, and 74.6 percent of the participants, respectively.

Table 15, Application of representations

Has the representation been applied to them	Total	% Yes	% Maybe	% No
Skilled with herbal medicine	52	28.8	3.8	67.3
Nature obsessed/hippie	52	46.2	5.8	48.1
Motherly and caring	51	17.6	11.8	70.6
Wiccans all being women	51	54.9	5.9	39.2
Evil	53	41.5	5.7	52.8
Satanists	53	47.2	9.4	43.4
Kill animals	46	21.7	4.3	73.9
Being in a cult or like one	48	29.2	6.3	64.6
Creepy	50	32	12	56
Crazy or delusional	52	38.5	3.8	57.7
Superstitious	53	35.8	9.4	54.7
Owning cats	54	38.9	5.6	55.6
Practicing religion naked	55	23.6	1.8	74.5
Naïve and childish	53	18.9	3.8	77.4
Magic powers	51	27.5	11.8	60.8
Ancient knowledge often guarded by women	48	16.7	10.4	72.9
Communicating with animals	51	13.7	15.7	70.6

According to Table 8, the most common stereotypes applied to participants were Wiccans being women (55%), Satanists (47%), and being obsessed with nature (46%)

Table 16, Categories applied representations

How many categories of the following have applied _ to the participants?*		Categories: Friends, family, co-workers, strangers, other					
Variables	Total Count	None **	1 of them	2 of them	3 of them	4 of them	5 of them
Skilled with Herbal medicine	46	56.5	19.6	6.5	4.3	10.9	2.2
Nature obsessed or Hippies	50	46	16	12	14	12	0
Motherly and caring	47	72.3	17	2.1	4.2	4.2	0
All Wiccans being women	50	40	32	14	10	4	0
Evil	52	48.1	23.1	13.5	11.5	3.8	0
Satanists	48	43.8	25	20.8	4.2	10.4	2.1
Killing animals	44	72.7	13.6	6.8	0	6.8	0
Being in a cult or like a cult	47	66	12.8	2.1	4.2	12.8	2.1
Creepy	48	54.2	16.7	12.5	2.1	12.5	2.1
Crazy or delusional	50	54	16	10	8	10	2
Superstitious	51	52.9	17.6	7.8	11.8	9.8	0
Owning cats	51	54.9	13.7	7.8	13.7	7.8	2
Practicing their religion naked	51	68.6	17.6	5.9	0	5.9	2
Naïve and childish	51	76.5	9.8	7.8	2	3.9	0
Magic powers	48	62.5	12.5	4.2	14.6	6.2	0
Ancient knowledge often protected by women	44	75	9.1	11.4	2.3	2.3	0
Communicate with animals***	47	70.2	19.1	4.2	4.2	2.1	0
Other representation not listed	38	57.9	18.4	7.9	5.3	7.9	2.6

* Columns are percentages.

** For none on this table they indicated none of the above to the categories, not necessarily absence of other scores.

***For this category there were some who answered both none and the other categories.

Table 9 shows which people in the participants' lives had applied Wiccan tropes to them, according to the categories of friends, family, co-workers, strangers, or others.

For each trope, I added these categories together, assigning each participant the number of categories applied for each representation, ranging from 0 to 5. For all five categories of people, no representation had more than a single person report that as occurring. However, 12.8 percent of people had the representation of cult applied to them by 4 of the categories of people. 14.6 percent of participants indicated having the stereotype of having magic powers applied to them by 3 of the different categories of people in their lives. Wiccans being Satanists has the highest number of answers for those who have had two of the categories apply it, with a percentage of 20.8. In the section for only one category applying the representation, Wiccans all being women comes out in the lead with 32 percent.

There is a media representation of those who were born as Wiccans, or within communities that are treated similarly to Wiccans, as the ones that can be considered good, while those that learn about it later in life are portrayed as evil. This is a disturbingly common representation within the media and can appear within some social media circles as well. Since this representation is much more complex than the rest of those within this survey, I used two open-ended questions to gain information about it. I used thematic analysis to examine the answers to these questions. There were 40 responses to the first question. However, three were discarded for either being unintelligible or simply having the participant state that they did not have an opinion on the matter. There were also 40 responses to the second question. However, in this case, nine of them were discarded for being unintelligible or simply stating a lack of opinion or knowledge of this representation.

Of the respondents who had seen the difference between being born a witch and learning to become a witch as a media representation there was some disagreement on if someone being born as a witch or Wiccan is possible. There was agreement among those that addressed that learning about Witchcraft or Wicca was a pivotal part of being a witch or Wiccan. Many had stated that they greatly disliked the representation in media, with one participant stating that “I think the idea of being ‘born a witch’ is frustrating and annoying and isn’t reflected in the actual modern witchcraft movement, let alone the subsets that are Wiccan.” This was a common theme, with a participant calling this media representation a form of “unnecessary gatekeeping” while another commented that “Media never does the research it needs and just always uses the stereotypical tropes.” There was an additional response that should be mentioned, even though it did not focus on the topic intended by the question. This participant simply stated that “Wiccans are not real.” This response shows that I reached a broad view of participants for my research.

For the second of the two open-ended questions, the one more focused on the moral difference between being born as a witch or learning to become one, there were various responses. For the most part, the general tone is that either the participants are not familiar with this representation or think that it is terrible in one way or another. Several wrote about how they believe that this is harmful to the Wiccan community for spreading these kinds of ideas and representations. One participant even went as far as to state that these representations “teach people that study or hard work is bad.” Another stated that they “think it’s absolute foolishness, and potentially dangerous to the spiritual community as a whole,” with the media and books only telling a biased and partial story.

Along with these responses, others simply wrote that the representations were bad or inaccurate. Still, others expressed that they did not think there was an issue with these representations as they are only fiction or do not apply to them.

Table 17, Effect of representations on opinions

How much of a role do representations play on people's opinions of Wicca?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
No role	1	2.4
Unsure	3	7.1
Small role	4	9.5
Medium role	5	11.9
Large role	12	28.6
Very large role	17	40.5
Total	42	100

Table 10 provides information on how much a role my participants think that media representations play on people's opinions of Wicca. For most, a very large role was the most common answer, at 40.5 percent of the respondents. Following this answer were a large role and a medium role at 28.6 and 11.9 percent of the participants, respectively. Over 70% of the participants think that media representations play a large or very large role in people's opinions of Wicca.

Table 18, Importance of stereotype consideration

Is consideration of stereotypes important?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Yes	29	72.5
Maybe	5	12.5
No	6	15
Total	40	100

The clear majority of participants agree that considering stereotypes is important, with 72.5 percent indicating that on the survey. This is shown in Table 11.

Table 19, Role of stereotypes on daily life

Do the stereotypes play a role in their daily lives?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	20
Maybe	10	25
No	22	55
Total	40	100

However, as Table 12 shows, 55 percent of participants said that the stereotypes discussed within the survey did not play a role in their daily lives. Twenty-five percent of the participants indicated that the representations might play a role in their lives, while 20 percent are confident, they do play a role.

Table 20, Effect of stereotypes on daily lives

How much do the stereotypes affect their daily lives?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Very much	0	0
A fair amount	4	10
Somewhat	9	22.5
Very little	14	35
Not at all	13	32.5
Total	40	100

Table 13 shows that 35 percent of the participants indicate that the stereotypes affect their daily lives very little, and an additional 32.5 percent say they do not affect their lives at all. The third most common answer was that the representations have somewhat of an effect on their daily lives, making up 22.5 percent of the participants.

Table 21, Feelings when stereotypes are applied to or said around participants

How do they feel when stereotypes are applied or said around them?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Angry	10	12.3
Amused	13	16
Annoyed	23	28.4
Sad	5	6.2
Disappointed	20	24.7
Upset	5	6.2
Fearful	3	3.7
Disgusted	7	8.2
Confused	10	12.3
Shocked	4	4.9
Happy	2	2.5
Other	3	3.7

*Percentage of those who gave that answer, the answers were not mutually exclusive

Table 14 displays the information about the participants' feelings towards the representations of Wicca in media. The most common feeling was that participants are annoyed at these portrayals, with 28.4 percent of participants indicating that. Following this commonality is disappointment at the representations making up 24.7 percent of the participants. There is a rather large gap in the following most common answer, dropping to 16 percent of participants responding that these representations in the media amuse them. Responses of being angry or confused make up the next two places at a tie, with 12.3 percent of the respondents each, with all other answers containing less than 10 percent of the participants..

Table 22, General opinion of Wiccan stereotypes

General opinion on the stereotypes		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Very negative	1	2.4
Negative	6	14.3
Somewhat negative	16	38.1
Neutral	8	19
Somewhat Positive	8	19
Positive	3	7.1
Very positive	0	0
Total	42	100

When asked about their general opinion of the representation in media, the strongest answer is that the participants had a somewhat negative opinion, as shown in Table 15, holding about 38 percent of the people who answered. After this, and with a large gap, neutral and somewhat positive were tied for the second most popular answers, each having 19 percent of the participants.

Table 23, Taking action against stereotypes

Do they take action when the stereotypes are applied to them?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	21.6
Sometimes	11	29.7
No	8	21.6
Not applicable	7	18.9
Other	3	8.1
Total	37	100

When asked if they take actions against the use of the representations or stereotypes discussed, the most common answer that participants gave was that they sometimes take action, accounting for 29.7 percent. After this, the next most common

was the answers of yes, they do take action and no, they do not take actions, which were tied at 21.6 percent each, as shown in Table 16.

Table 24, Reactions to stereotypes

How do they react when the stereotypes are applied to them or said around them?		
Variables	Number	Percentage
Informing of truth	26	32.1
Ignoring what was said	14	17.3
Aggression	2	2.5
Expressing sadness	1	1.2
Expressing disgust	4	4.9
Laughing along	6	7.4
Mocking the person who said it	6	7.4
Other	5	6.2

*Percentage of those who gave that answer, the answers were not mutually exclusive

Information about the kinds of action against the stereotypes that may be used against or around them taken are displayed in Table 17. The most common action was informing whoever was saying it of the truth, making up 32.1 percent of those who answered the question. Following this answer was that of ignoring what was said by those mentioning these stereotypes at 17.3 percent of the participants. After these two most popular answers, the remainder all had less than 10 percent of those who answered indicate that response.

Bivariate Analysis

After analyzing the descriptive statistical results, I recoded the demographic variables that I thought would make the best independent variables for bivariate analysis,

focusing on differences in religion, gender, and age. I created binary variables in order to understand and discuss the results more easily. For the variable of religion, I created a binary by recoding it into a new variable where a participant identifying as any religion under the Pagan umbrella as 1 and any outside of this as 0. Similarly for age, I recoded those of the ages 19-30, the young category that had the bulk of participants, as 1 with all others as 0. Recoding gender was a bit more complicated. I recoded this variable into a new one coding those who had identified as man as 0, those that identified as women as 1 and all other gender identities as 2. Originally, I attempted chi-square analysis with as many dependent variables as possible, using all that I had recoded into binaries and several that had few possible categories as well. While I found quite a few statistically significant chi square associations with the independent variables, I focused in on those that were most relevant to my research questions.

Table 25, Chi-Square tests

Relationship	Pearson Chi-Square	df	p
Media representation applied and Religion	8.514	1	0.004
Level of representation application and Religion	13.224	1	0.000
Effect on opinions of Wicca and Religion	5.352	1	0.021
Importance of studying media representations and Gender	12.732	2	0.002

The first of these dependent variables was a binary variable that measured whether or not the participants had had any of the representations applied to them. For a test of the association between this variable and religion a chi-square value of 8.514 resulted and was significant at the alpha level of $p \leq 0.05$, having a p-value of 0.004.

This is the alpha level I used in the remainder of the statistical analysis for this project. The second dependent variable tested was one that focused on the amount that people had dealt with having these representations applied to them in their lives. It was a measure of how many categories of people in their lives (friends, family, co-workers, strangers, other) had applied a media representation to them. The original parts of this variable can be seen in Table 9 but for the statistical analysis I combined the results of these variables into a single measure of how many categories had applied any of the representations to them. From this variable I created a binary of a high and low amount of media representation applications that the participants had dealt with. The cut off for this was decided to be that any who had 18 or higher representations applied to them from the various categories was assigned to the high category, coded as 1, while those below 18 were assigned to the low category, which was coded as 0. This dependent variable had a significant relationship with the predictor variable of religion, and the chi-square value was 13.22. This result had a p-value of <0.001 . The third dependent variable tested was created based on information about the role that media representations play on people's opinions of Wicca. This was created through recoding the information from Table 10. I recoded no role or unsure as 0 with the other answers of various magnitudes of effect as 1 to create a binary. It also had a significant relationship with religion. This relationship has a chi-square value of 5.352, and $p=0.021$. The final of these four dependent variables was whether or not people thought that the consideration of media representations was important. In this case it was recoded into a binary where those that answered no, consideration of stereotypes is not important were recoded as 0 while all others who answered were recoded as 1. This

variable had a significant association with gender. The relationship between these two had a chi-square value of 12.732 and a p-value of 0.002.

Logistic Regression

Logistic regression is a further method of statistical analysis. I used two of the variables from the bivariate analysis to test the individual impacts of the predictor variables in logistic regression models. Both of the outcome variables were modelled controlling for individual impacts of the predictor variables of age, gender, and religion.

Table 26, Logistic Regression models

Models	Nagelkerke R²	Log odds ratio	SE	p
#1 Level of representation application	0.285			
Constant		-3.563	0.982	0.000
Age		-0.278	0.634	0.661
Gender		0.833	0.524	0.112
Religion		2.498*	0.728	0.000
#2 Importance of studying media representations	0.293			
Constant		0.357	1.002	0.708
Age		0.506	0.955	0.596
Gender		2.465*	0.911	0.007
Religion		0.203	0.951	0.831

*Significant for an alpha level of 0.05

For the first logistic regression model on the level of application of the media representations, only religion was significant. This predictor had a B-value of 2.498 with a significance of $p < 0.001$. This means that if the participant is Pagan, thus having a value of 1 for the religion variable, this leads to an increase in the odds of having a high

number of applications of the media representations applied to them by a factor of 2.498 while holding the other variables constant. For the R-value for the model, including religion, gender, and age, was a Nagelkerke R^2 of 0.285.

The second outcome variable I chose to model was whether participants thought it was important to consider representations in the media. This dependent variable was shown to have a significant relationship with gender. The odds ratio of 2.465 indicates how much the odds of considering the importance of media representations increases based on gender. This means that the odds of considering the study of representations important increases by a factor of 2.465 when holding the other two variables constant. The model Nagelkerke R^2 value was 0.293.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression

The results of the two logistic regression models showed the significant impacts of the predictors of gender, and religion on the respondents' experiences with media representation of Wicca. I decided to conduct factor analysis in order to create an interval level outcome variable and perform an OLS regression in order to get further information about the breadth of data I had received about the representations in the media about Wicca and Wiccans. Due to the relationship between in the respondents' knowledge about media representations of Wicca and application of the various representations to them by others, I decided to use the variables with information on having seen, how often having seen, and has been applied for each of the representations to create an interval level variable through factor analysis. The outcome variable from

this factor analysis was created using 49 separate variables and was named ‘tropes.’ The measure of reliability for this variable, by Cronbach’s Alpha, was 0.949. This means that by taking into account all of these variables I have created a very reliable measure, meaning there is an about 95% chance that these variables are all affected by the same underlying construct.

Between the first three components, as shown in Appendix 5, 49.06 percent of the variance in the outcome “tropes” was explained. For the first component, the variables that had the highest loads were having seen representations of Wiccans having magical powers, owning cats, or being skilled with herbal medicine in media, respectively. The second component brought the variables of how often participants see a representation of Wiccan or similar characters being superstitious, if they have seen the representation of Wiccans being superstitious, and how often they have seen representations of Wiccans or similar characters being obsessed with nature into focus. The third component has the highest loadings for the variables about having representation applied to the participants. Specifically, the representations of being skilled with herbal medicine, having a motherly or caring personality, and being obsessed with nature had the highest load for this component. While the focus on the variables of having seen certain representations or how often they had been seen for the first two components does not really relate to the earlier work I had done with statistical analysis beyond the descriptive statistics, the third component’s focus on application of representations does. For the connections to the descriptive statistics, the variable of having seen representations of Wiccans being women or having magic were also among

the highest for their own category. Overall, the ‘trope’ outcome variable resembles a normal, bell-curve in distribution with a negative skew. The mean is 0, with a standard deviation of 1.00 and a range of 4.8, with the highest value being 1.04 and the lowest at -3.76.

Table 27, OLS regression model

Model	R²	Unstandardized B	SE	t	p
Tropes	0.208				
Constant		-0.867	0.360	-2.410	0.021
Age		0.030	0.030	0.100	0.921
Gender		0.580*	0.227	2.560	0.015
Religion		0.463	0.297	1.557	0.128

*Significant for an alpha level of 0.05

The tropes variable was the dependent variable for an OLS multivariate regression model with the independent variables of gender, religion, and age. The results show that an older male respondent who is not pagan (constant) has a score of -0.867 on the tropes scale. Gender was the only significant independent variable. This means that being an older female or queer non-pagan increases the likelihood of seeing a media representation of Wicca and having it applied to oneself by 0.463 with a resulting value of -0.404 on the “tropes” scale. Thus, gender has a small impact. With all three predictors in the model, there was an R² value of 0.208. This means that with knowing the values for the predictor variables of provides for a 20.8 percent chance of being able to predict the value for tropes. In other words, the combination of the three variables explains 20.8 percent of the variance in the outcome variable of tropes.

Survey Experiences

At the end of my survey, I asked three final questions to all of the participants. I asked them what their experience taking the survey was, if they had any comments they wanted to add, and if there were any questions, they thought I should have included. These questions had fewer responses than the others in the survey, whether due to people who decided that they had no feedback to give or those who did not finish the survey. Thirty-one people answered when asked what their experience was doing the survey, 22 on if they had any additional comments, and only 18 participants added anything to the question of questions they thought I should ask. However, it was the case for all three questions that not all of the answers were of substance. For all three, some simply said they had nothing to say, and in some cases, they did not have responses that I could understand.

Several participants commented on the quality of the questions in the survey. Some thought that focusing my study only on Wiccans instead of Pagans, in general, was too narrow a field or that some of the questions did not apply to them since they were not Wiccan. Several expressed approval of the survey and its goals, with one participant mentioning that it was “refreshing to know someone is genuinely interested in the opinion of a minority spiritual group.” Others pointed out the limitations of the survey, complaining of it being too long or having too many different representations with repetitive questions. There was division in the opinions on the clarity of questions, with some participants stating that they were easy to understand while others said they were confusing. Some participants also simply gave sweet sentiments wishing me well or stating that they thought my research was useful. Still others spoke on possible further

research in this field, such as focusing on the change in what kind of representations are shown over time, such as comparing the original Sabrina the Teenage Witch show with the more recent Netflix remake. A few participants also mentioned that they had had trouble remembering where they had seen the representations before or that they had read of more rather than watching them in movies or television shows. People also included questions that would have been useful within this research in their answers as well. Further clarification on the differences between Wicca and witchcraft was requested in the demographics section, along with a recommendation about more open-ended questions to allow participants to fully explain their views instead of the closed questions I favoured. Another recommended question that I wish I had included was one participant suggesting that “It might have been interesting to ask people how ‘out and open’ they are about their Wiccan practices.” This refers to the idea that I could have asked how outspoken participants are about their religious beliefs regarding Wicca, which may have made for interesting analysis compared with differences, especially in rates of stereotypes being applied or how they react to being used around them.

The point of a research project is to find the answers to the questions that begin it. The media review allowed for the answering of my first research question of what media representations of Wicca and Wiccan characters there are. Through this media review I was able to create a list of representations of Wicca and Wiccan characters. These representations fell into categories such as good, evil, weird, powers, personality traits, and other. From the descriptive statistics I was able to answer the other research questions of this project. These showed how the people who took my survey feel about stereotypes and how they react to and deal with them in their everyday lives. The

participants' feelings towards representation were mostly negative while informing people of the truth was the most common action taken against the representations being applied to them or said around them. While the bivariate analysis, logistic regression, factor analysis, and OLS regression did not serve to answer my questions they did still provide valuable additional information. The logistic regressions helped to show that the religion of the participant impacted how often representation from the media were applied to them. The gender of the participant had role on whether the participant thought that the consideration of media representations was important. The factor analysis and OLS regression helped to illustrate how related the various variables associated with the media representations were and how the gender of the participant impacted their knowledge of the media representations of Wicca and the application of the representations to them by others.

6. Discussion

For my research, the questions I investigated were ‘How are Wiccans represented in the media?’ ‘How do Wiccans feel about these representations?’ and ‘How do Wiccans respond to and otherwise deal with the representations in the media?’ These three questions came from the core question of ‘How does the Wiccan community feel about, deal with, and respond to media representations of their religion?’ but was broken into three separate questions to aid in answering it. Wicca is a nature based religion with a focus on a dual divinity that fits under the broader Pagan umbrella (Grimassi, 2007). While there has been previous research into the religion of Wicca much of it was focused on areas other than that of media representations. The history of Wicca (Anderson, et al., 2010; Berger, 1995; Hume, 1998; Hunt, 1995; Lewis, 2004; Warwick, 1995), who Wiccans are (Fennell & Wildman-Hanlon, 2017; Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; McClure, 2017; Warwick, 1995), what Wiccans do in their religious practices (Anderson, et al., 2010; Dougherty, 2018; Lee, 1995; Hume, 1998; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997), and the feminist nature of Wicca (Anderson, et al., 2010; Conway, 2001; Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995) were the most common areas. In order to answer my questions about media representations, I conducted a media review of movies and television shows that had characters or themes relating to Wicca and a digital survey primarily aimed at members of the Wiccan and Pagan communities. My media review found that there were many possible representations of Wiccan characters that reappear in media. These representations can be categorized such as good, bad, weird/inhuman, magical powers,

and others. I narrowed the original list of media representations to those I considered more relevant or prevalent and used them to help create my digital survey to tackle the other questions in this research project.

Within the survey I was able to get a sample of 82 participants. Since this was a convenience sample through the digital snowball technique it is not generalizable and is not considered to be representative of the Wiccan population. The main part of my sample was young (61.7 % between the ages of 19-30), Caucasian (88.9%), and from North America (91.4%), thus showing even more that this was not representative of the general population or of Wiccans. For the second question of the three that make up this research project, I examined how my participants felt about the representations of Wicca in media through several methods. The most straightforward of which was simply asking them about their opinion of representations in general. The largest part of the sample indicated that their overall view of the representations was somewhat negative, (38.1%) which makes sense as often there can be a negative effect when having stereotypes from media applied to people regardless of the nature of the particular stereotype (Chung, 2007; Gorham, 1999; Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; Seiter, 1986; Tyree, 2011). Research has shown that even separate from how other people respond to stereotypes of groups, even inside themselves there are negative effects from the stress of trying to avoid being considered that way, or from trying to live up to expectations from these representations (Chung, 2007; Coyne, et al., 2014; Facciani, Warren, & Vendemia, 2015; Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; Silvestrini, 2020; Tyree, 2011). This is especially true in the case of representations about Wicca since there are more negative representations than positive ones from the results of my media

review. In the media review itself while there are only 10 representations that I categorized as being examples of ‘good’ there are 21 that were categorized as ‘evil.’ This is fairly similar to representations of other groups within the media, with many showing a biased and inaccurate view of minorities (Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Meyer & Wood, 2013). I also asked about the participant’s feelings about having the representations said around them. In response to this question, the participants were mainly annoyed (28.4%) and disappointed (24.7%). These feelings make sense since most of the representations in media that may be applied to them or said around them are likely to be wildly inaccurate and troubling to deal with (Chung, 2007; Gorham, 1999; Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; Seiter, 1986; Tyree, 2011). Finally, I also asked about opinions of the specific representations I found within my media review, with 18 possible media representations mentioned. While the opinions of each varied, the ones that had the most positive feelings towards them were being skilled with herbal medicine (74.6%) and having a motherly or caring personality (68.6%) while killing animals (80%), being Satanists (79.3%), or being crazy (74.6%) had the most negative feelings attached to them. While being caring or having skills with herbal medicine may be considered good things, those with more negative opinions can be terrible for people to deal with in their own lives. Examples of this are shown in the academic literature, such as in McClure’s (2017) research where due to the kinds of stereotypes that people believed in about Pagans, they ran the risk of losing their children, since people believed things such as that they were Satanists or killing animals.

For the final question of this research project, I determined how members of the Wiccan community dealt with these representations in their daily lives. For specific representations that have been applied to them, the most commonly applied was Wiccans mainly being women (54.9%), which was the most prevalent within my media review. Throughout the media review, I found less than ten male characters coded as similar to Wiccans. The most common response to the representations being applied to the research participants was that sometimes they take action when this occurs (29.7%). The most common reaction that people have to the representations from media being applied to them or said around them was informing the people about the truth of the religion (32.1%), followed by ignoring what was said completely (17.3). In today's world, many people who are Wiccan are self-taught in the religion (Cunningham, 2004). They find books or other resources and learn about it themselves, likely correcting previous religious assumptions based on media stereotypes (Cunningham, 2004). Because of this, it makes sense that the primary response to incorrect information like this would be to correct it. With these findings, I was able to answer my original research question of 'How does the Wiccan community feel about, deal with, and respond to media representations of their religion?' The findings showed that while people had varying responses for having specific media representations of Wiccans applied to them, they only sometimes took action in response to the representations being used around them or being applied to them, which may have something to do with possibly volatile circumstances they may be faced with at the time, depending on what kinds of reactions may come from acting against the stereotypes. These kinds of consequences for acting against or speaking up about these kinds of stereotypes can vary

from more serious ones to being treated as inferior or as though the person had picked their religion from children's literature or are a Satanist (Taira, 2010; Hjelm, 2006). In addition, I also determined that the most common response when people took action was to help educate the people who applied these representations or said them around them.

Statistical testing showed significant relationships between the religion and gender of the survey respondent and several key factors associated with media representations of Wiccans. Logistic regression showed that when controlling for age and gender, Pagan research participants had a higher chance of many people applying the media representations of Wiccans to them than if they were not Pagan. It makes sense that those who are Pagan would have representations about Wicca and Wiccans from the media applied to them more often, with many of the representations used in this survey being able to be applied Pagans in general as well as Wiccans (Grimassi, 2007). Since Wicca is a religion that falls under the Pagan umbrella there are many things that are similar between it and the other religions that are considered Pagan (Grimassi, 2007). This accounts for the similar experiences for participants when they are Pagans and not just specifically Wiccans, despite the media review being focused mainly on the representations of Wiccans rather than the more general category of Pagans. Logistic and OLS regression models both showed significant impacts of the participant's gender on their opinions and experiences of media representations of Wiccans. Women were more likely than men to indicate that the consideration of a media representation was important and people whose gender identity fit under the queer umbrella were more likely to indicate this than women. Since gender is something that is highly stereotyped within media, with particular roles given to different genders with those that identify as

men being more likely to be presented in a better light than women this is not overly surprising (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Coyne, et al., 2014; Downing, 2018; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2011; Tyree, 2011). In addition to this, those with gender identities under the queer umbrella are often treated even worse in media representations, fitting with the general treatment of LGBTQIA+ people within media (Chung, 2007; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Meyer & Wood, 2013).

Participants with more marginalized gender identities (women and those who were classified as queer within the research as they did not identify as male or female) were more likely to have engagement and interaction with media representations about Wicca and Wiccan characters. This could be as simple as demographics about who is watching these kinds of shows and movies, or in the case of the results of the OLS regression model focused more on application of representations due to the fact that these representations of herbal medicine, being motherly, and nature obsessed may be considered gendered. The stereotype of Wiccan characters being motherly and caring also fits within media representation about women in general, (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Downing, 2018; Rabe-Hemp, 2011). This may also have a connection to the fact that Wicca is considered by many to be a feminist religion (Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008; Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995). Wicca is a religion that supports equality between the sexes, with men and women having equal power within religious spheres and the God and Goddess usually seen as being equal, and when not it is the Goddess who is the higher power (Anderson, et al., 2010; Conway, 2001; Hunt, 1995; Jensen & Thompson, 2008;

Jorgensen & Russel, 1999; Neitz, 2000; Scarboro & Luck, 1997; Warwick, 1995). This focus on women's power may have a connection to why those who identify as female or those who did not identify as either male or female are more likely to engage with the representations of this religion. People who normally have their gender identity treated as lesser in other religions may seek out information or media about a religion that focuses more on equality between all genders and less on masculine power.

Wicca is a religion that treats gender and sexuality differently than many traditional religions. While other religions often place men above women and ignore or degrade those of gender identities besides just cisgender men and women, Wicca instead accepts people of any and all gender identities, placing them all as equal to one another (Cunningham, 2004). While the deities are typically referred to as a Goddess and a God, there is also encouragement for recognizing other pantheons of various cultures (Cunningham, 2004; Grimassi, 2007). Many of these other pantheons do have gender-fluid gods and those that would be considered to have a queer gender identity by the classifications of this research project (Grimassi, 2007). Along with the acceptance of many gender identities, Wicca emphasizes the equality of power in genders within their practice, with women being seen as just as powerful and suitable to be religious leaders as men (Cunningham, 2004; Grimassi, 2007). Within some groups, there is a gender divide in these kinds of roles, though splitting from the traditional religions it is one where women are given priority and focus, and this tradition is often seen as a reaction against more patriarchal religions (Cunningham, 2004; Grimassi, 2007). These splits from traditional religion may have some kind of role in why there is a gender difference in how much interaction with media representations the participants had. Along with the

differences in the treatment of gender, there is also a lot of difference in the treatment of the religion itself and its structure that makes it different from other religions (Cunningham, 2004; Grimassi, 2007). This difference may appeal even more to those who are often pushed down by other religions. While most other religions have an overall hierarchical structure and organization that is central to their practice and to which each branch answers to, this is different for Wicca since there is no organizational structure or hierarchy beyond that which people chose for their own groups (Cunningham, 2004; Grimassi, 2007). Certain official structures or traditions may have these kinds of hierarchy, but individuals do not need to follow those if they do not wish to and can customize their religion as they chose on their own or within their own groups. This difference may make the religion of Wicca an attractive alternative to more official structured religions for those who have been discriminated against by those religions or suffered under them.

The two elements of statistical testing that showed a significant relation to gender are that of the previously discussed relations with and interactions with the representations in media and the if participants find the study of media representations important. For both of these variables, it was shown that women have higher values than men, and queer gender identities have higher rates than both women and men. This means that not only are women or those with queer gender identities more likely to consider it important to research the representation in media, but they also show higher rates of interaction with media representation of Wicca. Since both of these variables have a significant relation to religion and have an in-depth relationship to media representations themselves, it may be possible that as people engage with and have had

to deal with media representations they are more likely to think this an important area to study. However, in-depth testing of this idea of the connection between the two is beyond the scope of this project.

The media representations about the religion of Wicca are a varied bag between the various sources I was able to find. While there were representations of these characters that were both positive and negative, the positive representations were in the minority. For the television shows and movies that had clear morality splits in terms of good and evil, there was almost always a character that had magic and may have been seen as being similar to Wiccans on the side of evil, with *Midnight Texas* the only exception in the episodes I watched, though later seasons also had a villain of this type. In most of these shows, there were also characters using magic on the side of good as well, showing such characters on both sides of the moral divide in many cases. Previous research has shown that people being presented in media in an untrue or inaccurate way can be very damaging (Gorham, 1999; Mahtani, 2001; Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019; Meyer & Wood, 2013; Saeed, 2007; Seiter, 1986). In cases of people trying to avoid being painted with the same brush that is used in the media depictions of characters that they identify with is called stereotype threat (Martin, 2008). Many people try to avoid being considered the same as these kinds of representations as they are often damaging and hurtful. Even for the less ‘damaging’ stereotypes such as representations like Wiccan people being caring people can still cause issues with stereotype identification (Martin, 2008; Tyree, 2011). This is an issue that while mentally and emotionally identifying with the representations of a character allows more acceptance for that minority in

theory, it can also lead to issues about assumptions of what people of that minority group should look, dress, or act like, which can cause issues when real people inevitably do not live up to or follow that idealized image (Martin, 2008; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017, p. 1197). Media representation can play a large role in people's lives, whether they are the topic of the representations in question or just consuming and viewing them. The best way to combat issues from untrue or inaccurate representations in media is through education, both by media literacy helping people with separating what is shown in media from what people are really like and through actually educating about specific representations and the diverse ways in which people engage with Wiccan beliefs and practices (Chung, 2007; Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). This strategy also lines up with my participants' responses of their most common action against representations in media being said about or around them is to educate and inform people about Wicca.

Media literacy is very important for anyone who wants to have the ability to think critically about what kinds of messages they are receiving in the media and what they mean (Chung, 2007; Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). This can be a form of critical thinking and helps people to keep in mind the skewed way that media can present information (Chung, 2007; Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Media literacy can be considered a form of education as it helps to educate people on what things in their media really mean (Chung, 2007; Erba, Chen, & Kang; Johnson, et al., 2009; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). In general terms, the Wiccan community has been found to have higher levels of education when compared to the population at

large (Jorgensen & Russel, 1999, p. 332). In addition to this, many in the Wiccan community are self-taught in terms of their religious knowledge, learning about Wicca and choosing the religion through their own research rather than learning from their parents or through some kind of organization (Cunningham, 2004). For this reason, it makes sense that from their own experience educating themselves about Wicca would lead to them following the idea of educating others about the religion. This education and focus on more accurately informing people shows a desire to push the path forward and continue to advance.

7. Conclusion

Wicca is a nature based Pagan religion focused on a dual divinity of the Goddess and the God. This religion follows the idea of the Wheel of the Year and celebrates eight holidays through the course of the year along with celebrating the full moon with rituals. Wiccans celebrate their religions through performing rituals, with varying levels of ceremony and formality depending on the specific group doing the ritual. While there is a fair body of literature on both the Wiccan community and on the topic of media representations, the combination of the two is far smaller. I did not find another research project like the one I have completed that asks the Wiccan community about their thoughts on the media representations of their religion. In this, I am glad to fill a gap within the academic context and help create new knowledge.

Media representations can affect the communities that they are about, especially if they are inaccurate or biased in any way. From my research I found a variety of representations about Wicca and Wiccans in the media, with categories such as good, bad, weird, magical powers, personality traits, and others. My descriptive statistics determined that people had mainly negative feelings about the media representations of Wicca and Wiccans. Participants were most likely to respond to the stereotypes being said around them by informing people about the religion and those who practice it. People being Pagan was seen to increase the odds of them indicating that many people in their lives had applied the various representation in the survey to them. Differences in gender also helped to predict whether or not people thought it was important to research and consider the representations in media. Women were more likely to indicate it was important than men, and those who identified as something different from men or

women were more likely to state it was important than men. In addition to this, women and LGBTQ2SI+ people were found to have had more intense interactions with the Wicca representations in the media. In the future, I plan to publish parts of this research to share these results to help add to the academic context on this subject and, hopefully, help to further research on this topic. Research on how the media representations of the Wiccan community affect the actual people is vitally important, just as it is for any other group of people. Knowledge of the pain these representations cause may hopefully help create change and help remove the harm that these representations can cause.

Limitations

Every research project has limitations on what it can do. Issues like what kind of data can be gathered and what it is good for are common within academia, and this project is no exception. Since my research project was two distinct parts, there are also different limitations to each. For the media review, the limitations mainly came from the limits of what movies and television shows I could gain access to examine within my available resources. This is because I was mainly limited to either what I had access to myself through my own resources or what was available for public access. Since I did not have any funding for this project, I restricted myself only to sources I could gather through catalogues like the public library or YouTube. In addition to these outside references, I also used the movies and television shows I could access through physical DVDs I own, those I can borrow from friends or family, and my personal Netflix

account. Due to this, my media review would not be considered truly representative since there were limits to what could be included in my sample. There was also an issue with knowledge of the media sources to try and find since there may have been even more possible movies or television shows that were not considered due to not knowing that they may apply to my study. I attempted to overcome this by discussing it with various contacts of different ages and interests as far as media type or genre. In addition, I also added television shows with only one episode featuring Wiccans or similar characters rather than restricting to those that were primarily focused on those characters for consideration. There were also gaps in my media review due to programs I knew of and wanted to add to this part of my study; however, I could not find legal access to them within the constraints placed upon my sample. However, despite these limitations, I believe that my efforts to find samples from as different times as possible and consideration of different genres came into effect. I was able to create a broad list of representations in media for consideration within my study. I am even more confident in this since I asked my participants about media representations that were not listed in the survey, and all of the answers fell within the greater list of representations I had made. While this sample did allow for a good look at the breadth of the representations and treatment of Wicca and Wiccan characters within the media I was able to access, it was somewhat lacking in depth of examination as for the series I only watched a few episodes rather than the entirety of the shows. This meant that instead of being able to see how the treatment of the characters changed over time I only examined a short snapshot of their treatment.

Many of the limitations in the survey come mainly from the sampling technique. The sampling method I used was a form of digital snowball sampling, which may have led to issues with group bias in my sample and how representative it is (Baltar & Brunet, 2012, p. 61-62). Group bias means that there is a chance that the results of my survey may have been skewed due to participants knowing each other beforehand or being from the same social group, or only a small number of them (Bhutta, 2012, p. 77). This was handled mainly by reaching out to and making several points of contact for distributing my survey. By increasing the number of starting points for my snowball sampling method, this issue should have been dealt with, though skew in how representative my data is due to the participants being from the same groups may still have had some small effect.

While the sampling method was of the greatest concern for limitations when designing my research project, there are also other possible issues with doing a digital survey, such as implementation. Implementation has to do with the operation and function of the survey itself (De Bruijne & Wijnant, 2013). Choosing a reliable website like Survey Monkey went a fair way to addressing these issues. An additional issue within implementation that cannot be as easily addressed is the issue of possibly unclear instructions. This is especially true for an online survey as it is difficult to ask clarifying questions (Evans, & Mathur, 2005, p.202). However, this issue was managed by being rigorous in creating the survey while working with my supervisory committee and running a pilot study before opening the survey for the public. Each of these led to small tweaks to help make the survey easier to understand for participants and help to reduce possible confusion over things like wording or terms within the questions.

Future Research

There are many possible avenues for future research on this complicated topic of Wiccans and the representations in media. While this survey did find some interesting and important results, it is barely a scratch on the surface of this vital topic. There is a lot more research on the types of stereotypes about Wiccans that exist in media and what effect these stereotypes and representations have on the Wiccan community. One thing mentioned earlier in this thesis was a possible research topic mentioned by one of my participants. Something that may be interesting to consider is examining how the types of representations of Wicca and Witchcraft have changed over time, especially if these changes are compared to and contrasted with the changes in public perception about Wiccans and Witchcraft. While this would be a more comparison-based study, comparing the past to the present, there is also plenty of research focused more on the current times. The most obvious of all is simply studying the exact topic I have chosen but expanding it beyond the scope I was able to achieve with a Master's level research project. Expanding the reach of a survey on this issue of the representations of Wicca would provide new data and a broader idea of what the Wiccan community thinks about this topic with a larger sample. In addition to another survey, doing interviews about this topic would also provide valuable data, gathering more in-depth information about how this topic affects Wiccans in their lives, which would be invaluable for emphasizing the importance of this issue. Countless research projects could be created on this topic,

depending on what a specific researcher may want to focus on. Representation in media will always be an important topic worthy of consideration for as long as representations exist. While the Wiccan community is a relatively small population compared to those normally tackled by other research on the effect of media representations on those represented, they are still a subculture and community that deserves to have a greater light shed on their issues and treatment by society.

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Appendix 1- Ethics Approval

Alicia Caissie

Department of Sociology

University of New Brunswick Fredericton

Dear Ms. Caissie,

As Chair of the Research Ethics Board (REB), I have reviewed your ethics application for the project entitled "Wiccan Community Responses to Media Representation" which has been assigned the file number REB #2021-003. On the basis of the review, I consider your project to be eligible for delegated review, since any risk to participants that might exist appears not to exceed the "minimal risk" outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd edition (TCPS2). I am also pleased to inform you that, in my opinion, your project is in compliance with TCPS2 and the University Policy on Research Involving Humans (UPRIH). Accordingly, please consider this E-mail to represent official notification of REB approval of your project for a period of three years from the date of this E-mail.

NOTE 1: In the Facebook invitation and consent message in Appendices 1 and 2 of your Application, would you please insert the assigned REB Project number into your phrase "This project has been reviewed by the UNB Research Ethics Board and is on file as REB 2021-003." Also, please change the name of the REB contact person from "Dr.

Dan Coleman” to “Dr. David Coleman”. Then, would you please email to me (cc to <ethics@unb.ca>) a copy of each of those modified messages for our records? There is no need to send a revised version of the whole application.

NOTE 2: This approval is conditional on interviews, meetings and related activities being conducted ONLY either online or over the phone, depending on with whatever the interview participant is most comfortable. In the future, if you find that you must make any changes to your protocol, those changes must be considered and approved by the REB before they are implemented. To initiate changes, please submit the REB Case Modification Request form, available online through the Research Ethics page of the Office of the VP (Research). If you do wish to proceed with in-person interviews at a later date, you can request the Vice President (Research) <vpr@unb.ca> to grant permission to allow human participant research to proceed. For permission to be granted several criteria will need to be met. First, a rationale for why face-to-face contact is required and what the implications are if the research is not permitted to proceed. Second, a detailed operational plan (OP) that complies with public health advice (e.g., New Brunswick Public Health <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19/recovery.html>) will need to be developed and approved by the Vice President Research and EHS. Third, after the OP is approved, approval for the research to proceed must be obtained from the REB and the REB will provide researchers with a special “informed consent form” to be signed by each participant prior to commencing the research. The Vice President Research will provide final approval for the research to begin.

Please note that, in the future, if you find that you must make any changes to your protocol, those changes must be considered and approved by the REB before they are implemented. Please submit the REB Case Modification Request form, available online through the Research Ethics page of the Office of the VP (Research).

Annual Reports for this project are due on the 15th of January each year, provided that this date is at least six months after the date of project approval. Final reports are due 90 days after project completion. Form templates for both of these reports can be found on our website at <https://www.unb.ca/research/vp/ethics.html>.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research project.

— David

Appendix 2- Survey Questions

- Demographic
 - Gender, age range, religion, country/continent where they live, maybe income?
 - What matches most closely with your gender identity? Male, Female, Trans Man, Trans Woman, Nonbinary, Intersex, Other: _____
 - What age are you? 19-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81+
 - What is your religion? Wicca, Shamanism, Druidism, Agnostic, Atheist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Other: _____
 - What region do you live in? North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, Other: _____
 - What ethnicity do you most closely identify with? Caucasian, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, First Nation, Arabic, Other: _____
- What representations they know of
 - How many times you seen a character where they seem to be Wiccan but don't use the word Wicca in reference to themselves? Constantly, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
 - Do you seek out media that has Wiccan characters? -yes no sometimes
- Questions about individual tropes

- For the following questions please consider any characters that are explicitly or implicitly Wiccan, Pagan, or otherwise related to new age religions.
- Use of Herbal Medicine and Healing
 - Have you seen Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who are shown as being skilled with herbal medicine and healing? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are skilled in herbal medicine and healing? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans being skilled with herbal medicine and healing, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Nature Obsessed Hippies
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who are obsessed with nature or are hippies? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are seen as being hippies or obsessed with nature? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans being hippies or nature obsessed, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe

- Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
 - Motherly and Caring
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who is seen as having a motherly or caring personality? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are motherly and caring? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans all being motherly and caring people, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
 - All women
 - Have you seen a TV show, series, or movie in which every character who is seen as Wiccan or witches are women? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this in shows with Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
 - What is your opinion about shows where all the Wiccan characters are women? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Has anyone expressed to you this idea of all Wiccan being women? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
 - Evil and Dangerous

- Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who was shown to be evil and dangerous? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
- What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are shown to be evil and dangerous? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
- Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans being evil and dangerous, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Satanists
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who was called a witch or Wiccan but shown to act like or also be called a Satanist? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are shown to be or called Satanists? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans really being Satanists, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Killing Animals

- Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who kill animals? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
- What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are shown killing animals? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
- Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans killing animals, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, and/or Stranger?
- Cultists
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who either was called a cultist or shown as being in a cult? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Not Applicable
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are cultists? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccan groups being cults, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Unnerving and Creepy

- Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who was seen as being unnerving and creepy? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Not Applicable
- What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are unnerving and creepy? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
- Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans being unnerving and creepy, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Deluded or Crazy
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who are seen as deluded or crazy? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Not Applicable
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are shown to be deluded or crazy? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans deluded or crazy, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Superstitious

- Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who was shown to be superstitious? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Not Applicable
- What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who are superstitious? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
- Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans being superstitious, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Cat-Person
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who owns cats? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Not Applicable
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who own cats? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans having cats, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Nudity
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who practices their religion naked? Yes, No

- How often have you seen this representation of Wiccan characters? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Not Applicable
 - What is your opinion about the representation of Wiccan characters who practice their religion naked? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans practicing their religion naked, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Naïve and Childish
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who acts naive and childish? Yes, No
 - How often have you seen the representation of a Wiccan who is naïve and childish? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Not Applicable
 - What do you think of the representation of Wiccan characters who are naïve and childish? Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Negative, Very negative
 - Have you had this stereotype, of Wiccans being naïve and childish, applied to you? Yes, No, Maybe
 - Has this been done by: Friend, Family, Co-worker, Stranger
- Magic Powers
 - Have you seen a Wiccan character in a TV show, series or movie who had magic powers? Yes, No

- How many different stereotypes about Wiccan characters have you seen?
0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41+
- The way that they are affected by the representations in real life/what stereotypes from media have they had to deal with
 - Have you any had stereotypes about Wicca from the media that were not mentioned applied to you? -yes, no, maybe
 - Has this been done by friends, family, co-workers, Stranger -
answer all that apply question
 - What stereotypes were they? Open ended question.
- The way they take action to deal with and respond to the effects of the media representations
 - How do you feel when the stereotypes are applied to you or said around you? Choose all that apply: Annoyed, angry, amused, sad, disappointed, upset, fear, disgust, confusion, shock, happy, other ____
 - Do you take action against the stereotypes being applied to you? Yes, no, don't know, not applicable
 - How do you react when the stereotypes are applies to you or said around you? Informing of the truth, ignoring what was said, aggression, expressing sadness, expressing disgust, laughing along, mocking the person saying them, other ____

- If they think examining these representations are important
 - Do you think these representations play a role in your daily life? -yes, no, maybe
 - How much do you think these representations affect your daily life? - Very much, a fair amount, somewhat, very little, not at all.
 - Do you think that considering these representations is important? -yes no maybe

What was your experience of taking this survey?

Do you have any comments you want to add?

Are there any other questions that you think I should have asked in this survey?

Appendix 3- Facebook Information

About: “Wiccan Community Responses to Media Representation” is a project focusing on understanding how the media representations of Wiccan can affect members of the Wiccan community.

About: Hello! Thank you for considering this survey and helping me in my study. My name is Alicia Caissie, and I am currently working on a Master’s of Sociology. This study will examine how the Wiccan community deals with portrayals of themselves and their religion in media such as television shows and movies. I am doing this study to shed light on how media representations of minority groups can affect people in those communities. All I need from you to help is to answer this survey if you are willing!

The survey should only take about 10-20 minutes to finish, and you can come back to finish it at any time! The results cannot be linked to any identifying information on you such as your email address or your Facebook account. While no identifying personal information will be collected, the raw data will only be seen by me and my supervisory committee for this research.

Feel free to message this page if you have any questions! Or, if you don’t want to use Facebook for that, you can email me at acaissi1@unb.ca. You can also contact my research supervisor, Cathy Holtmann at cathy.holtmann@unb.ca. This project has been reviewed by the UNB Research Ethics Board and is on file as REB 2021-003. If you have concerns you can contact Dr. David Coleman, Chair of the UNB REB at ethics@unb.ca or call (506) 453-5189.

Here is the link to the survey! Thank you for your help!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F3GJVPN>

Appendix 4- Introduction and Ending of the Survey

On the opening page

Hello! Thank you for considering this survey and helping me in my study. My name is Alicia Caissie, and I am currently working on a Master's of Sociology. This study will examine how the Wiccan community deals with portrayals of themselves and their religion in media such as television shows and movies. I am doing this study to shed light on how media representations of minority groups can affect those communities. All I need from you to help is to answer this survey! The survey should only take about 10-20 minutes to finish and if you need to step away you can come back to finish it or edit your answers at any time until the research ends! While I would appreciate answers to every question, it is not required to move on in the survey if you are uncomfortable with a question. The results cannot be linked to any identifying information on you like email address or your Facebook account. While no identifying personal information will be collected, the raw data will only be seen by me and my supervisory committee for this research.

If you have any questions, feel free to message me through the research project's Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/WiccanCommunityResponsestoMediaRepresentation>. You can also follow the page to stay updated on the research progress! If you have questions but don't want to use Facebook, you can email me at acaissie1@unb.ca or reach my research supervisor, Dr. Holtmann, at cathy.holtmann@unb.ca. This project has been reviewed by the UNB Research Ethics Board and is on file as REB 2021-003. If you

have concerns you can contact Dr. David Coleman, Chair of the UNB REB at ethics@unb.ca or call (506) 453-5189.

By clicking on the button to proceed, you confirm that you consent to participate in the research and are at least 19 years of age.

On the closing page

Thank you for your participation! Your response will help me investigate how the Wiccan community feels about, deals with, and responds to representations of themselves and their religion in media such as TV shows and movies.

If you would like updates on the research progress or ask any questions about my research, you can contact me through the research Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WiccanCommunityResponsestoMediaRepresentation>. If you would like to contact me without using Facebook, you can email me at acaissi1@unb.ca. You can also reach my research supervisor by cathy.holtmann@unb.ca. This project has been reviewed by the UNB Research Ethics Board and is on file as REB 2021-003. If you have concerns you can Dr. David Coleman, Chair of the UNB REB at ethics@unb.ca or call (506) 453-5189.

Thank you again for helping with this research!

Appendix 5- Rotated Component Matrix for Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix ^a			
	Component		
	1	2	3
recoded have seen herbal medicine	.772	.117	.161
recoded seen nature obsessed	.205	.723	.101
recoded seen motherly	.202	-.015	.116
recoded seen women	.098	-.006	-.003
recoded seen evil	.527	.321	.130
recoded seen Satanist	.630	.188	.295
recoded seen killing animals	.227	.171	.068
recoded seen cult	.573	.188	.122
recoded seen creepy	.198	.456	.121
recoded seen crazy	.235	.515	.347
recoded seen superstitious	.113	.811	.005
recoded seen has cats	.850	.081	.067
recoded seen skyclad	.449	.251	.248
recoded seen naive	.117	.196	.613
recoded seen has magic	.872	.164	.014
recoded seen ancient knowledge	.410	.242	.055
recoded seen talk to animals	.434	.514	.238
recoded how often herbal rep	.767	.060	.166
recoded often nature obsessed rep	.070	.743	.176
recoded often motherly rep	.199	.152	-.097
recoded often Wiccans women rep	.064	-.017	.092
recoded often evil rep	.517	.335	.030
recoded often Satanist rep	.410	.120	.002
recoded often kill animals rep	.114	.124	-.035
recoded often cultist rep	.415	.297	.089
recoded often superstitious rep	.160	.837	-.039
recoded often has cats rep	.607	.157	.121
recoded often skyclad rep	.314	.344	.062
recoded often naive rep	.111	.168	.163
recoded often magic powers rep	.736	.132	-.132
recoded often ancient knowledge rep	.291	.156	-.051
recoded often communicate with animals rep	.342	.567	.314
herbal medicine applied to you	.101	.095	.802

recoded nature obsessed rep applied to you	.217	.115	.641
motherly personality applied to you	.074	-.013	.760
wiccans are women applied to you	.293	-.061	.103
are evil applied to you	.157	.130	.343
are Satanists applied to you	.249	.098	.287
kill animals applied to you	-.001	.097	.187
member of a cult applied to you	.074	.121	.303
being creepy applied to you	.100	.304	.224
crazy or delusional applied to you	.081	.273	.163
being superstitious applied to you	-.073	.097	.286
own cats applied to you	.136	.156	.414
rep of practicing religion naked applied to you	.006	.089	.362
naive and childish applied to you	-.023	-.024	.202
having magic powers applied to you	.086	.101	.228
ancient knowledge often guarded by women applied to you	.127	.233	.570
communicating with animals applied to you	-.185	-.057	.437

Curriculum Vitae

Candidate's full name: Alicia Caissie

Universities attended (with dates and degrees obtained): St. Thomas University,

Bachelor of Arts, 2019

Publications: N/A

Conference Presentations: St. Thomas Research and Ideas Fair, 2018