

Introduction

This is preliminary research into the idea that women are associated more with nature within society. The medium of television and movies were chosen to try to view this association because they are typically dramatic versions of the culture they come from. Media forms like television and movies often also have an influence on the culture that they are received into.

Background

Ecofeminists espouse an ideology that explicitly links women/femininity and nature, either through a biological or social construction. While this is an interesting idea that is mostly new in the fact that it includes the connection may be socially constructed, this is not remotely a new concept in its totality. The idea that femininity is linked somehow to nature is in our culture, in old and new media, and studying this and applying theory like ecofeminist theory to this is extremely important because of the different cultural implications of this association. As previously stated, ecofeminists espouse a "close connection between women and nature based on a shared history of oppression by patriarchal institutions and dominant Western culture" (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari 2016:34-35). This shows that even if there was a biological association between women and nature, it is also steeped in the cultural history of the subjugation of femininity and nature both. While this could be interesting to examine in the real world, it is not as neat to examine as it would be using media, especially since media mirrors reality. A large-scale study of different forms of media should be done to examine this fully, as well as the development of metrics to measure femininity and associations to nature. A study should include different genres of media that fit into different categories, and ideally should include as many different genres of media as possible. Doing this sort of study would allow for a greater range of reality-mirroring media to be examined for this same sort of thing, and would allow a greater pool of data to ultimately be examined with an ecofeminist lens.

Methods

Our hypothesis is that media that passes the Bechdel test has a lower likelihood of associating women and nature.

Before research was gathered, the primary researchers created a questionnaire based upon what they wanted to see studied by data gatherers in the media that was being examined. For examples of this, look at the below picture. The researchers also employed the use of the Bechdel test in order to gauge if the media employs the perspectives of women within.

Research was gathered by researchers and other persons following a specific set of instructions that outlined each question. An example of the questionnaire can be seen below.

Figure 1:

Image of Part of the Questionnaire

	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	O1a: Is nature more than a backdrop (ie. it poses a challenge, offers a solution, is agent of change)?	O1b: Does nature/environment change?	O1c: Is nature a motivation?	O2a: Is nature/environment complex (i.e. not just good/bad)?	O2b: Is nature used? Is this use sustainable, unsustainable, or undetermined?	O2c: Is nature a refuge (place of protection or healing)? Or is nature the cause of danger (place of fear or harm)?
2	1	-1	1	-1	0	-1

Results

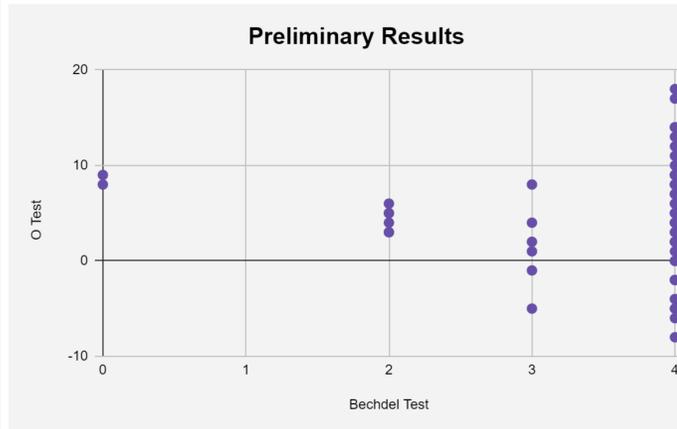


Figure 2:

Preliminary Results

The results show that there is seemingly no correlation to passing the Bechdel test and scoring high on the O Environmental test. The two pieces of media studied that did not pass the Bechdel test scored high on the O test, and those that fully passed the Bechdel test were not necessarily environmentally friendly.

However, more research needs to be done into this project, particularly with media that either does not pass the Bechdel test or scores between a one and a two on it.

Media Count	Type of Media		Grand Total
Bechdel Result	1	2	
0	1	1	2
2	4	2	6
3	5	1	6
4	31	17	48
Grand Total	41	21	62

Media Count	Type of Media		Grand Total
O Score	1	2	
-8	1	1	2
-6	1	1	2
-5	2	1	3
-4	2	2	4
-2	4	4	8
-1	1	1	2
0	2	1	3
1	1	1	2
2	3	1	4
3	4	4	8
4	5	1	6
5	2	3	5
6	2	1	3
7	2	1	3
8	5	1	6
9	5	5	10
10	1	1	2
11	1	1	2
12	1	1	2
13	1	1	2
14	2	1	3
17	1	1	2
18	1	1	2
Grand Total	41	21	62

With 1 coding for films and 2 coding for television, these are the results of each test. The O test is out of 18.

Conclusions

Preliminary testing suggests that there may not be a correlation between passing the Bechdel test and being environmentally aware/relation of women to the environment.

There are limitations to this study, first and foremost being the time that was able to be dedicated only being one semester. More time will be needed to gather further data on the topic in order to fully state if there is a relation between media that is better to women and more ecofriendly. The data still needs to be examined by researchers more in depth, by reviewing the media firsthand and cleaning the gathered data. Also, media that fails the Bechdel test needs to be examined to see how it fits into the research, as most media studied passes the Bechdel test. Another test may need to be looked into in order to study this, as the Bechdel test is good for getting preliminary data like this, but something more robust could be better for future data collection.

The eventual goal is to expand the project, not only in how much data is gathered, but into looking at other forms of media to see if this test can be applied, specifically video games and books, but potentially attempting to test any type of fictional media.

Bibliography or Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the EcoFem Lab and Dr. O'Leary for allowing us the opportunity to do this research, and we would like to thank the Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective (ANT 4302) class for helping us to collect data.

1. Rocheleau, Dianne, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari. 2016. "Gender and Environment: A Feminist Political Ecology Perspective." In *The Environment in Anthropology (Second Edition): A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living*, edited by Nora Haenn, Richard R. Wilk and Allison Harnish. 2nd ed., 34-40. New York: NYU Press.