Mother Nature squeezes the life out of the brush, both high and low, around me and I march out of line and out of step. The year is 2005, I'm a junior in high school and I'm wearing designer clothes, but I feel like the cheapest human being in my high school. If you ask just about anyone, the general consensus is that I'm a flashy, loud-mouthed "fag" that dresses too well to be considered straight and the rumors shock the faces of my macro-level relationships as they hear about the rumor that can ruin a high school kid's school life. Only a handful are even slightly cognizant to the fact that I'm chronically depressed and deep in my craw the leaves fall from the trees like grains of sand slipping through a tiny plastic tube; the end feels near. Their tiny brains don't fire any type of neuron telling their thick heads that I've had bouts of psychosis, nor do they know I'm candidly quiet when I don't put on a school day façade for my peers. No, I'm marked as the kid who is more than likely gay, and moreover that I don't have any clique to defend my tarred-and-feathered reputation. There is no proving them wrong. There will be no mercy. Although I've never at any point in my life been a woman, I do have experience being marked.

One would have a quite difficult time saying that no one at all is marked, just ask me. Deborah Tannen, in her piece "Marked Women," opts for a notion that's easier to defend when she says that only women are marked, and that men have a choice whether they want to be noticed. This is where some of the minor cracks in Tannen's argument allows the opposite viewpoint to make some sort of stand, since she blindly negates all men as being able to be marked. She boldly states: "men aren't marked like women are", yet Tannen is not taking a very scholarly approach to the topic, because she leaves out tons of examples when men are perceived as being marked. Tannen only focuses on a small range of varying aspects that affect women, yet she leaves out a ton of times when men are marked. This can be something very specific like material possessions (cars to jewelry, athletic ability to hair style) and the male examples are not necessarily more or less of a hardship, but to ignore and dismiss the gender as having "virtually no marking" is faulted. In a variety of sources including "Marked Women" by Deborah Tannen, The Beauty Myth by Naomi Wolf and in the movie Thelma and Louise, we see plenty of valid assertions over the marking of women; yet, if we delve deeper into the movie Thelma and Louise, and look at other real-life examples, one will find overwhelming evidence that both men and women are marked. It is false to assess either or neither gender as being free of marking, for both are very much marked.

Deborah Tannen, author of "Marked Women", writes a very catchy and empowering bit of work in her essay and in it the reader finds many truths. Tannen uses a personal meeting she had with a few men and a few women and virtu-
ally builds an entire argument off of the situation in which she proclaims that women are definitely marked and that men have the choice of not being marked. She further goes on to examine the cornucopia of choices that a women is almost burdened with as she wakes up in the morning and must decide how she wants the world to view her. She imprudently suggests that men have the choice to go unnoticed if they so desire; the men in her meeting all had hair and attire one would have a hard time distinguishing between. She breaks down every bit of fabric and makeup on the women’s skin and paints a much more individualistic and personal experience in doing so. In the end, the reader feels that he or she has a much better feel for how the women are and a virtual feeling of unknowing for the men.

The movie Thelma and Louise could also be used as a supplemental work to build Tannen’s argument, albeit the film also mildly proves the opposing viewpoint as well. Obviously, the first element Tannen would use is that these women are very literally marked in the sense that Louise has killed a man who was about to rape Thelma and now they both are on the run for fear of being caught; they’re marked because they’re fugitives. Yet, a homicide is not exclusive to either gender; a pair of men could have easily killed a random individual and have been on the run like these women are. This is the cornerstone of the women’s marking and when it proves a flaw in Tannen’s one sided argument, we will see it start to unravel. Louise, specifically, is marked because she drives a soft blue 1966 Ford Thunderbird convertible, a car that obviously sticks out. However, Thelma’s misogynistic husband, Daryl, drives an equally marked vehicle with his scarlet Corvette. Thelma’s marking in particular is perpetuated when she robs a convenience store – using JD’s monologue – to recoup money that JD stole from the women. Again, her marking is equivocal at best, and the point that men can be equally marked is punctuated by JD, her foil/mentor who is marked by the law as well. Furthermore, Tannen, surely, would make mention of the movie’s main coincidence, a rowdy and randy truck driver who has an uncanny ability to make obscene sexually explicit gestures at Thelma and Louise as he hauls along in his manly 18 wheeler. However, is he acting anymore out of sexual desire than Thelma does when she allows JD into her hotel room, strips naked, allows her wedding ring to be removed and has sex with the young and toned JD? Absolutely not, the point is proven over and over again, that while Tannen is right in her own sphere of truth with her meeting anecdote, there are a thousand more stories that can be made to prove the point that men and women are not necessarily equally, but very closely marked.

To use a hypothetical example to prove the point, ponder the marking of a young black man. Although he may be male, he, just like any other man, has the desire to appear presentable. Yet, society – the same society that has marked women for male desires – has marked this young minority as being susceptible to crime, drugs, and other non-scholarly quests. What is to be thought of when a conservative couple views this young man, dressed in sagging jeans, a doo-rag, large t-shirt as he sings the lyrics to his favorite rap song? The same, short logical jump in thought is applied to a woman who wears a sexually suggestive outfit. Tannen is highly mistaken if she thinks that men are not concerned with physical appearance, and her lack of such a rudimentary concept proves her apparent lack of knowledge and research on male marking. Although maybe more women care about how they look, than men, it is naive to say that no men care about it. The point does need to be made though, that at the time of Tannen’s publishing of the article, society has seen the gender line thin out and men and women are becoming increasingly alike. Men commonly have their ears pierced, follow the latest fashion trends and subject themselves to the question, ‘what will she think when she sees me wearing this?’ The point is neither gender should be marked, but it’s the game we play as humans in complex culture. My story obviously is a great indicator to being marked and to anyone who thinks you cannot be marked based on rumor, common belief or any other faulty logic obviously had a pretty easy high school career. Just
like JD and Daryl are marked negatively, so are Thelma and Louise. Although the movie’s fictitious, it holds elements of truth. Tannen should open her eyes and beliefs and include men in the unfortunate social catastrophe of marking.

So the leaves still drop every autumn and fortunately I have escaped with some of my psyche in tact. I might as well have had a scarlet letter on my chest ‘G’ to symbolize my apparent ‘gayness’. I have been marked and as a male, I take offence to Tannen’s assertion that men aren’t nearly as marked. Her assertions of feminine beauty leading women to being marked are true, yet she needs to realize that marking is a dark panorama, not just a sexist sphere. For every woman accused of being a ‘whore’ or a ‘slut’ there is a man accused of being ‘gay’ or a ‘criminal’. The two are not mutually exclusive and we have seen this through a variety of examples. So, who cares? Anyone who feels a helpless cackle when they hear such a rash statement cares, surely. We as people cannot change marking over night, but we should tone down the marking and stereotypes before this society, with dual genders, becomes irreparably divided.

Theorist Ahead of Her Time

Betty Neuman was born in 1924 and attended the then Peoples Hospital School of Nursing in Akron, Ohio, where she received her RN diploma in 1947. After finishing school, Ms. Neuman relocated to California, where she continually added to her experience and education. She held positions of increasing responsibility, starting at hospitals as staff and eventually heading a nurse. Outside of the hospital arena she was a school nurse and an industrial nurse. Eventually, she became an instructor in medical surgery, critical care, and communicable diseases. In 1957, she graduated from the University of California with a double major in psychology and public health (Heyman, Wolfe, 2000). She continued on to receive her master’s degree in mental and public health consultation in 1966, and a doctorate in clinical psychology in 1985. At the age of seventy-four, Betty Neuman was granted an honorary doctorate from Grand Valley State University, in Allendale, Michigan (Heyman, Wolfe, 2000).

Abstract

Grand theorist, Betty Neuman, Ph.D., RN, was one of the first to advocate preventative healthcare for individuals, families, and communities. Her holistic approach encompassed the person as an entire system, with layers of defense against stressors that would ultimately lead to disease, if proper coping mechanisms were not in place to offset the disturbance. Her interventions are centered on preventative measures. Dr. Neuman is still advancing her theory through several venues, including publishing articles and hosting symposiums through her Neuman Systems Model Trustees Group, Inc.

History

The Neuman Systems Model was developed by Betty Neuman, Ph.D., RN, in 1970, in response to her students at the University of California. They wanted a common framework of nursing to apply to specific nursing problems. Neuman was ahead of her time in developing a model that was based on the concepts of stress and reaction to stress (Potter, Perry, 2005). She unified several theories into the Neuman Systems Model: the Systems Theory, Selye Stress Theory, and Gestalt Theory. The Systems Theory, as defined by Lars Skyttner, “is a set of interacting units or elements that form an integrated whole intended to perform some function” (Skyttner, 1986). Hans Selye labeled stress as a syndrome; in 1936, he saw it as a universal explanation for human behavior in industrial society. Based on Selye, physiologists today use stress as a study.