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Encountering Cultural Effects of Jewish Ethnicity on Negotiating Social Anxiety in Norma Rosen's *At the Center*

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Abstract

*Jewish ethnicity has a long-term connection with the historical development of many religious communities and belief systems, yet it stands as a way of life for the ethnic community. The Holocaust changed the future of the Jew influencing the formation of a different migrant identity in other parts of the world from which second-generation survivors form. The influence of literature for such a group was prominent as many writers intended to represent the actual struggles including identity crisis, trauma, and community crisis, and their effect on social change. In the scenario, the themes of social anxiety and community consciousness arise, and they reveal the present-day struggles of these people including all social platforms. Social anxiety as a theory dwells on the impact of the social boundaries of negative memories reflecting the individuals surrounded by it and the paper discusses such an impact with Norma Rosen's *At the Center* (1982) and the influence it takes on each character of it through Overestimate the level of threat in social situations, Underestimate their ability to handle social situations, Expect negative outcomes from interactions in social environments, Overestimate the consequences of these negative outcomes. At the core, the paper attempts to give a real-time solution to social phobia through cognitive behavioral therapies. The concern also enters in contemporary world with its relevance of discussion to mental health and allied fields.*

Keywords: Jewish Ethnicity, Social Anxiety, Community Conscious, American Response, Social Interactions.

Introduction

Post-war Jewish American literature evolved after the Second World War as this period witnessed the joining of Jewish-American writers involved in active American literature, especially fiction but also non-fiction. They have been involved in themes like identity, community, and social justice along with assimilation and identity with writers like Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, and Bernard Malamud exploring the Jewish cultural identity in American culture. The recurrent theme of the genre was the Holocaust and its aftermath with works like Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl" that take a deep insight into the trauma and survival of

the Jewish community. In the genre, they have also admired the theme of racism, inequality and political activism.

The paper in connection with the post-war Jewish literature from the women's point of view addresses the issue when literature of existed taking the vague reality of the Jewish survivors of then. The women writers focused more on authentic and original reactions and Norma Rosen with *At the Center* (1982) attempts to give a dynamic country at the time of collapse in culture and belief system. Although ethnic communities from various lands live in America, the Jewish community with a contradictory lifestyle engages as second-generation survivors. The characters portrayed in the novel develop a sense of alienation, identity crisis, and more negative thoughts on the impact of modern lifestyle and law as explained in the novel. The role of Jewish ethnicity is more visible when the character of Hannah manipulates the people around unknowingly and the fall of the Center marks the breakdown of an idea that tried to revolutionize women.

Methodology

The cultural encounters of any group conscious studies various methods and approaches, for which the research methodology must follow a particular pattern the paper is attempting to focus on Jewish ethnicity concerning the text that revealed a historical aspect. By using the method, the cultural effect of the Jewish community is understood in modern America. While studying the focus will be on cultural sensitivity that affects the essence of culture beholders. The method will also focus on contextual understanding and can achieve the result by focusing on an interdisciplinary approach that combines various fields like sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc.

Background to Theoretical Framework

The Jewish community emphasizes a diverse and complex history and tradition, and the community has strong intimacy with the people as it fosters family with a sense of belonging and support. They have learned silence and adaptability from the past generations because the Jewish people historically faced persecution and displacement developing a sense of adaptability in the face of adversity. The culture values education and it has also contributed high level of intellect in various fields. The cultural heritage of the community is vibrant in traditional arts, music, and more. On the other aspect, the people also hold the baggage of historical trauma that they experienced for centuries including the Holocaust. The culture has always been suppressed or demolished for various reasons including political and religious causes, in the same case they were under constant pressure to live a normal social life. There is another interesting topic that the Jewish community challenges with inter-generational conflicts. The evolution of Jewish culture is not constant it is an ongoing process with the involvement of time, influenced by historical events, cultural exchange, and social change, it allies with intersectionality with cultural identities alike nationality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status along with the individual experience and cultural practices.

The Theory of Social Anxiety

Social anxiety is studied from an individual point of view as well as based on community standards as well, one such energy is studied in the cognitive theory of social anxiety elevates that, it is related to overthinking of negative aspects that occur with social interactions to an individual which later affect the community, situations he is in and understands it at the positive aspect of the same situations. This may vary according to the individual emotional ability and intellectuality, and it occurs as an outcome of social interactions which are likely to turn into negative reactions. One such negative impact of the situation is that the individuals' actions and thoughts may be overjudged and underestimate their ability to handle the social interactions. Treatment for such cases is very popular one such method is b targeting the patterns of what they think and encouraging such individuals to be more active in their social life.

In detail of the theoretical application of social anxiety includes with the individual thoughts and belief system and by targeting the patterns of thoughts the problem can be resolved to an extent and by compromising the thoughts if such avoiding social interactions one can come out of the situations. The individuals in this scenario are expected with certain expectations and belief systems. According to the cognitive approach, individuals with social anxiety can undergo different stages with four setups as it goes like,

- Overestimate the level of threat in social situations. (For example, “This person is going to be judging me.”)
- Underestimate their ability to handle social situations. (For example, “I’m going to say something stupid.”)
- Expect negative outcomes from interactions in social environments. (For example, “He is going to think I’m stupid.”)
- Overestimate the consequences of these negative outcomes. (For example, “He’s probably going to tell everyone at the office how stupid I am, and then I’ll probably be fired.”). Because of these beliefs and expectations, social interactions are often avoided. The focus of attention during social interactions When individuals with social anxiety is in social interactions, they tend to focus more on how they are being perceived by other people (for example, “My handshake was too weak. She’s going to think I have no confidence....”), rather than on the interaction itself.

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Focusing on one individual performance in a social situation is very distractive and maintaining a positive attraction can help someone in need also, at the same time the individual can think in an alternative way individuals with social anxiety tend to think only in the negative aspect of how they interact with others, because people of such always focus on past interactions as something more worse than they exists. The pattern can lead to social interactions or negative interactions.

The medical treatment for such a cause is by doing the cognitive behavioural treatment for social anxiety, as this helps the individual to evaluate and modify the negative beliefs and expectations about social interactions. Avoiding social interaction in society can increase social anxiety.

Analysis

The merge of two cultures in the formation of another new culture, social anxiety in each character connects to the confusion of humankind as a community and this phobia leading to a health phobia the novel also discloses the change in the narrative health anxiety, the root causes of dr to build the Bianky Center is b considering the relevance of an abortion Center and its market which is a product of health anxiety occurs. This is revealed through characters like Mimi, who had undergone an unsafe abortion and flooded blood to death. The traumatic impact it has left on the senior doctor Edgar who is also Mimi’s brother and her death changed the whole purpose of Edgar’s life.

Anxiety forms at different levels, social anxiety social phobia Health anxiety, and Performative anxiety. The identified problem is that the people of second-generation survivors experience a lot of self-quest like the characters Hannah, Doctors, and young female doctors although they were not part of the event, only Hannah is Jew, as the category of the genre explains the American reaction to the change The change occurs in the medical field, corporate world, and the character of Hannah predict the fall of the hospital with the moral insights gained from cultural knowledge – as one culture with varied facets. The role of religious culture as we see it more as a living system rather than a belief system in such a way Hannah and the diary signifies the cultural falling

Thus, all characters relate to the theme of social anxiety that occurs due to cultural change in America, but Hannah had a strong sense of affixation to her religion even after facing a lot of identity struggles never fails and it stands out as a character beholding her culture. The problem occurs to every character at some point, and it can be relatable to social phobia.

Conclusion

The paper evidences the symptoms of cultural changes in the charters of the novel *At the Centre* (1982) with the cultural effects affected by Jewish ethnicity in the modern American world that have been witnessed through the theoretical framework of social anxiety and affection. The link of every event that happens in the Center interlinks with one Jewish character called Hannah and it is her conviction that the Center will fall apart, which negotiates social anxiety in every other individual in the novel.

Works Cited

1. Rosen, Norma. *At the Center*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982.
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