Comic Strip Analysis - Peanuts

"Peanuts" by Charles Schulz is a children's comic strip that depicts some gender stereotypes that not only apply to children but also society as a whole. In this comic strip, the female child, Sally Brown, explains that she has been pushed by a boy and persistently demands that her brother, Charlie Brown, exacts revenge. However, Charlie is reluctant to yield to Sally's demands. Through his use of artistic and humor techniques, Schulz comments on the gender stereotype of the damsel in distress and her male counterpart as well as the stereotype of women being emotional rather than rational.

Since this is a children's comic, the details are very simple and there are very few people and objects. The only two people in each frame are Charlie and Sally Brown. In the frames, Sally argues that Charlie must "slug" the boy who pushed her down while Charlie disagrees with Sally's approach to the problem. The only objects shown in the strip are a sofa and a windowpane in some frames through which the siblings view the offender. Both objects suggest that the two are safe in the confines of their home from the offender and that they are both afraid of going outside and confronting the boy.

The main debatable issue that Schulz comments on is the perception of the role of a woman as the damsel in distress and the role of a man as the valiant, protective one. These roles are stereotypes of men and women that are ever-present in countless forms of literature.
and media. They consist of the woman being helpless and unable to defend herself while the courageous man saves her from the source of her problems. In this comic strip, Schulz depicts Sally as the damsel in distress as she believes that she cannot resolve her conflict with the boy by herself and needs Charlie, the male, to confront the boy for her. Sally expects Charlie to be valiant and to conform to his gender stereotype but instead Charlie deviates from his stereotype by being afraid of the "husky" boy and suggesting that they reach a compromise.

The second issue is the gender stereotype of women being overly emotional rather than rational. This is depicted in the comic, as Sally wants the boy to be avenged violently as she repeatedly demands that Charlie "slug" the boy. It is clear that she is filled with rage. In contrast, Charlie is rational and attempts to resolve the problem by finding out "what his purpose was in pushing [Sally]." He recognizes that there are two sides to the problem, not just Sally Brown's. Charlie also realizes that the conflict will not be resolved for them is they choose to fight as the other boy is "husky." Despite Charlie's logic, Sally, being emotionally charged, persistently demands that Charlie hit the boy.

Schulz's artistic style is iconic as he makes use of exaggerated features and symbols. The exaggerated features consist of the characters' facial expressions. In the last frame, Sally Brown is depicted as hopeless and frustrated as her mouth is open so widely that it covers most of her face. Also, the words in her speech bubble, "my brother is a coward," are bolded and enlarged. In contrast, Charlie Brown's anxiety and reluctance are portrayed by a simple wavy mouth. Sally's exaggerated frustration represents her overly emotional state and thus reflects upon the stereotype of emotional females. Additionally, Schulz uses the characters' styles of dress to comment on gender stereotypes. Sally Brown is wearing a blue dress, a matching bow on her head, and has long blonde hair. These characteristics reinforce the stereotype of a damsel in distress as they portray Sally as being extremely feminine and attentive to her appearance.

The humor technique used in the comic is irony. It is ironic that Sally Brown exclaims that her "brother is a coward" when she is the one running to Charlie demanding that he resolves her problems for her. Sally could have easily resolved the conflict by herself by talking to the boy and reaching a compromise as Charlie suggested. Through the use of this irony, Schulz suggests that the gender stereotypes of the damsel in distress and her valiant male counterpart are illogical. Also, the comic strip exhibits juxtaposition, as Charlie seems to be the voice of reason compared to the emotional and irrational Sally beside him.
Through these artistic and humor techniques, Schulz suggests that when we conform to gender stereotypes we make ourselves seem foolish and irrational. However, the gender stereotype of the damsel in distress runs rampant in our society, whether it is on television or in novels or in advertisements. By ridiculing these gender stereotypes, Schulz calls for society to deviate from the stereotypes because not all men are valiant and protective and not all women are weak and in need of rescuing just as Charlie Brown is not brave and protective of his sister.

Work Cited