



Gender and Social Analysis of Garbage Pail Kids

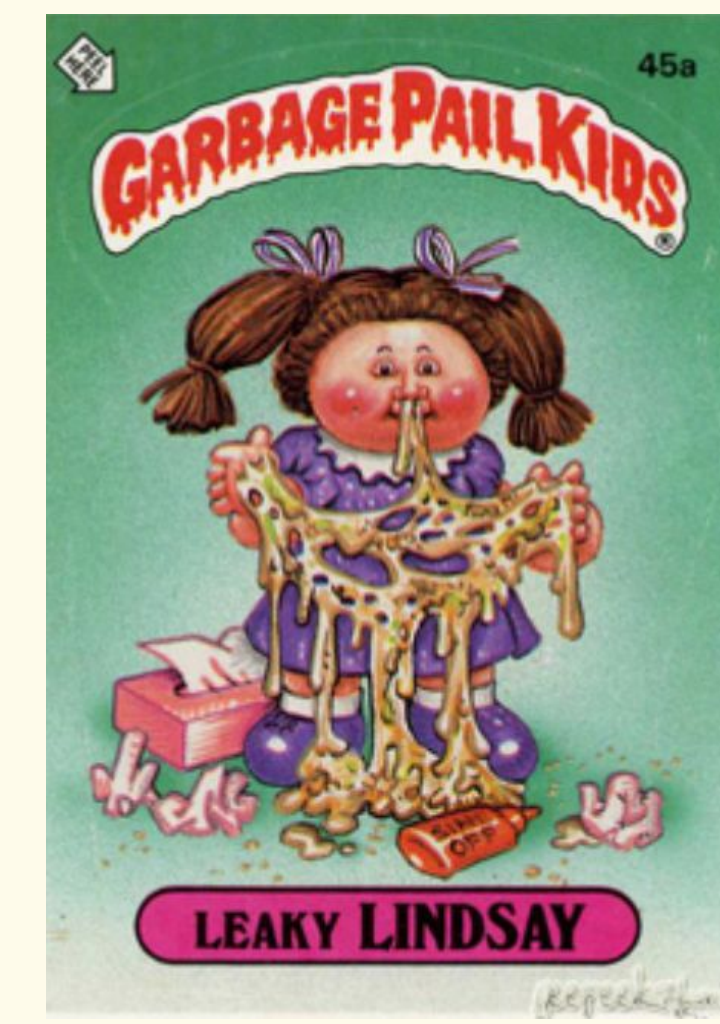
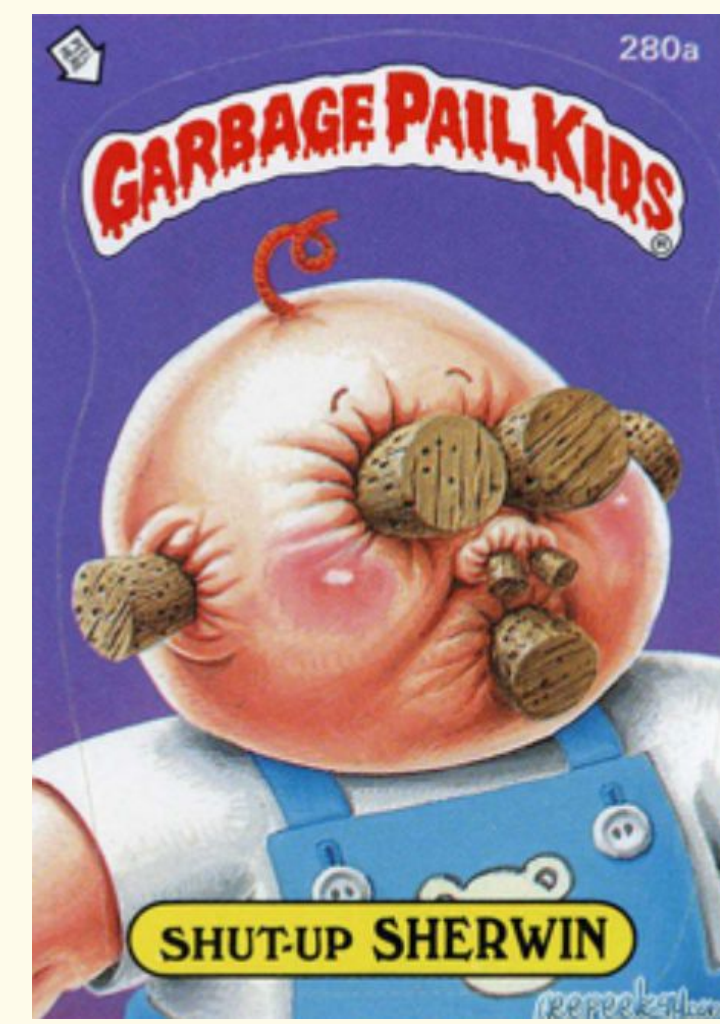
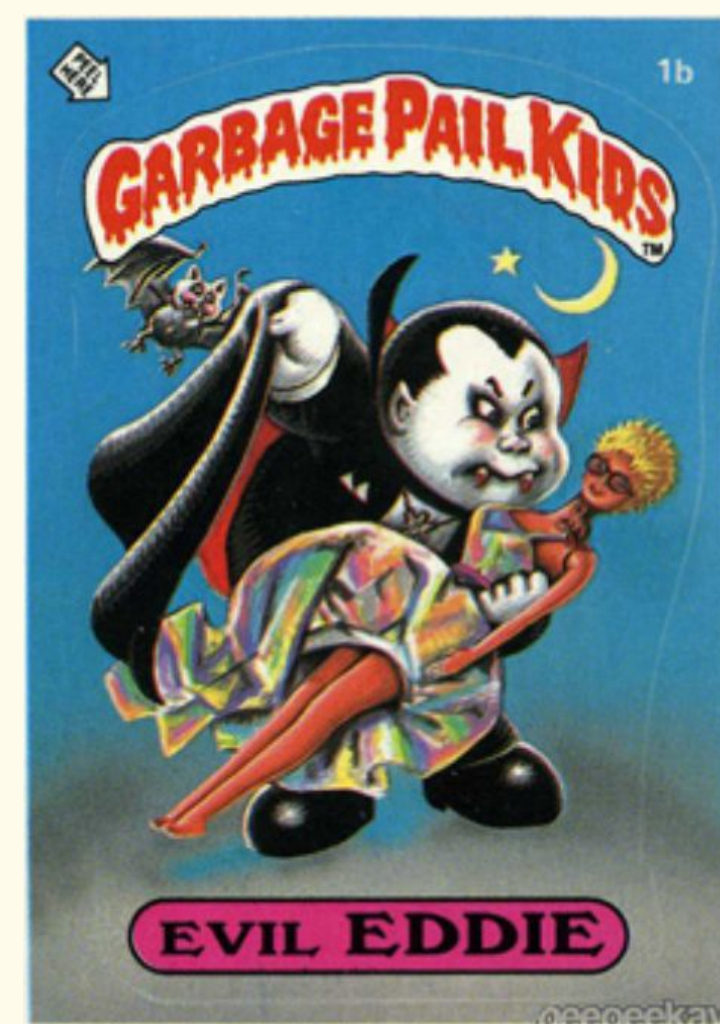
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Background

Garbage Pail Kids (GPK) is a series of sticker trading cards, originally released in 1985 and designed to parody the Cabbage Patch Kids dolls. Garbage Pail Kids cards feature characters that suffer from abnormalities or torturous actions and also feature names that reference their unique condition.

In order to better understand the gender and social implications of the GPK sticker trading cards, we used content analysis to analyze the visual design components and character traits of the first 16 series of Garbage Pail Kids cards.



Method

- ❖ A systematic random sample (n=220) was used so that every third card in the series was analyzed for a specific list of criteria in Qualtrics.

Card Quality Specific Criteria:

- ❖ What is the card number?
- ❖ Is the card presented vertically or horizontally?
- ❖ What is the gender of the kid featured on this card? (Female, male, undeterminable)
- ❖ What type of character is the kid featured on this card? (Human, animal, monster, physical inanimate object, other)
- ❖ Based on the visual depiction of the kid, what is its age? (Infant, toddler, child/elementary schooler, teenager, adult, elderly, not applicable)

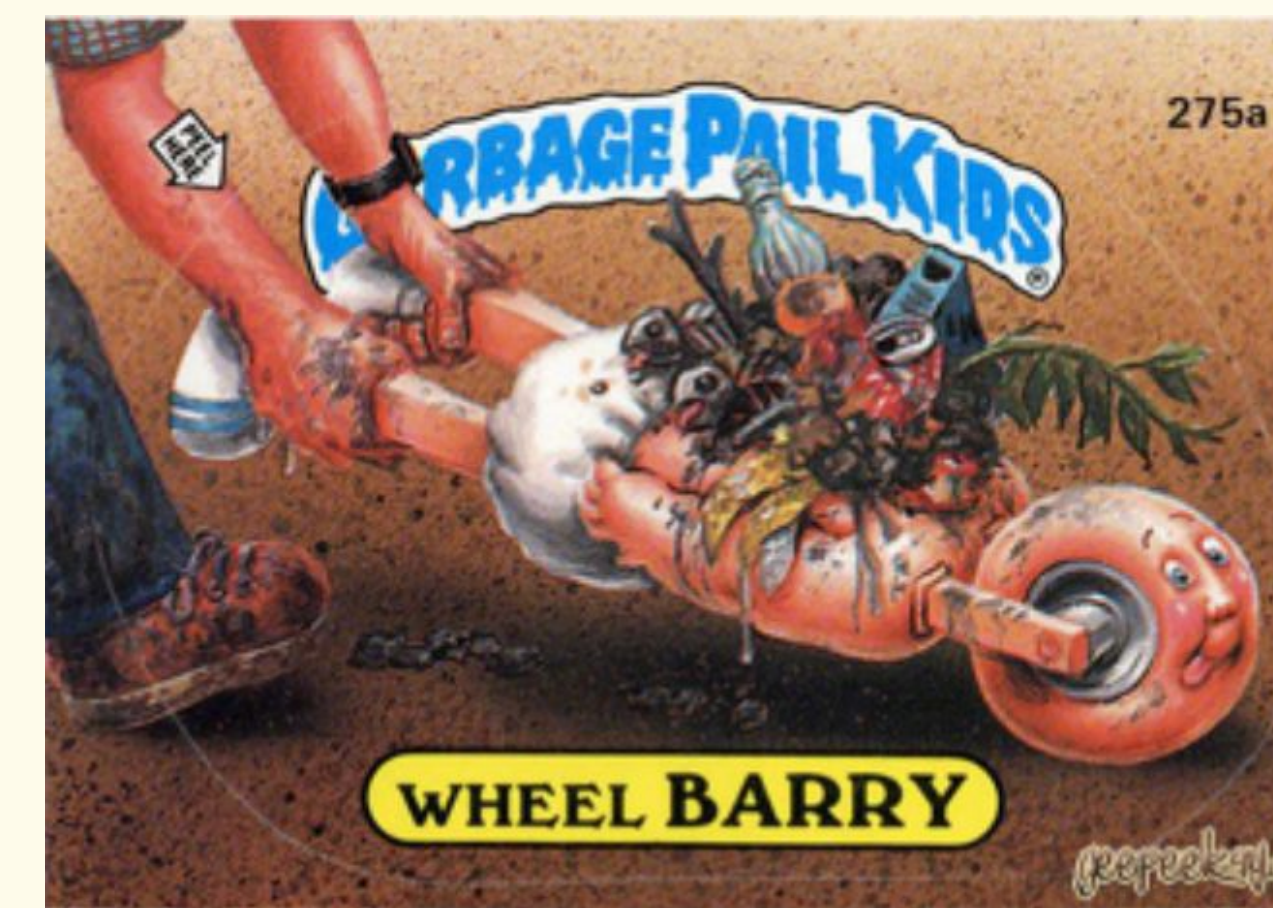
Garbage Specification Criteria:

- ❖ Which condition describes why the kid is classified as garbage? (garbage condition is happening solely because of the kid, no others involved/garbage condition is because others are doing something to the kid/garbage condition is because the kid is doing something to others on the card)
- ❖ What cultural or social element is being depicted on the card? (arts and culture/music/sports/television and movies/education/politics/healthcare/gang related violence/historical events /holidays /news /food /non-specific everyday life

Figure 1 - Garbage Coding Criteria

What is the main element that makes it "garbage"?

- Body fluids/content not related to illness (spit, earwax, boogers, blood, urine, baby goo, sap)
- Body fluids related to illness (vomit, snot)
- Illness (broken bones, specific reference to disease)
- General dirt or dirtiness (stains but not smells, surrounded by trash)
- Odor (farts, body odor, foul food)
- Twisted/body contortion (body is being contorted perhaps painfully, possibly just acrobatically)
- Shape-shifting/transforming (changing from one thing to another---not likely)
- Mild violence (poking, prodding, pushing)
- Mid-level violence (punching, slapping, hitting with a stick, biting)
- High violence (shooting, burning, torture, stabbing)
- Other (specify) _____



Results

Figure 2 - Kid type and Garbage Condition

KidType		GarbageCondition		
		By kid to kid	By others to kid	By kid to others
Human	Observed	118	31	12
	Expected	113.43	35.13	12.441
	% within row	73.3%	19.3%	7.5%
	% within column	76.1%	64.6%	70.6%
Animal	Observed	11	2	1
	Expected	9.86	3.05	1.082
	% within row	78.6%	14.3%	7.1%
	% within column	7.1%	4.2%	5.9%
Monster	Observed	8	0	2
	Expected	7.05	2.18	0.773
	% within row	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%
	% within column	5.2%	0.0%	11.8%
Physical, Inanimate Object	Observed	18	15	2
	Expected	24.66	7.64	2.705
	% within row	51.4%	42.9%	5.7%
	% within column	11.6%	31.3%	11.8%
Total	Observed	155	48	17
	Expected	155.00	48.00	17.000
	% within row	70.5%	21.8%	7.7%
	% within column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

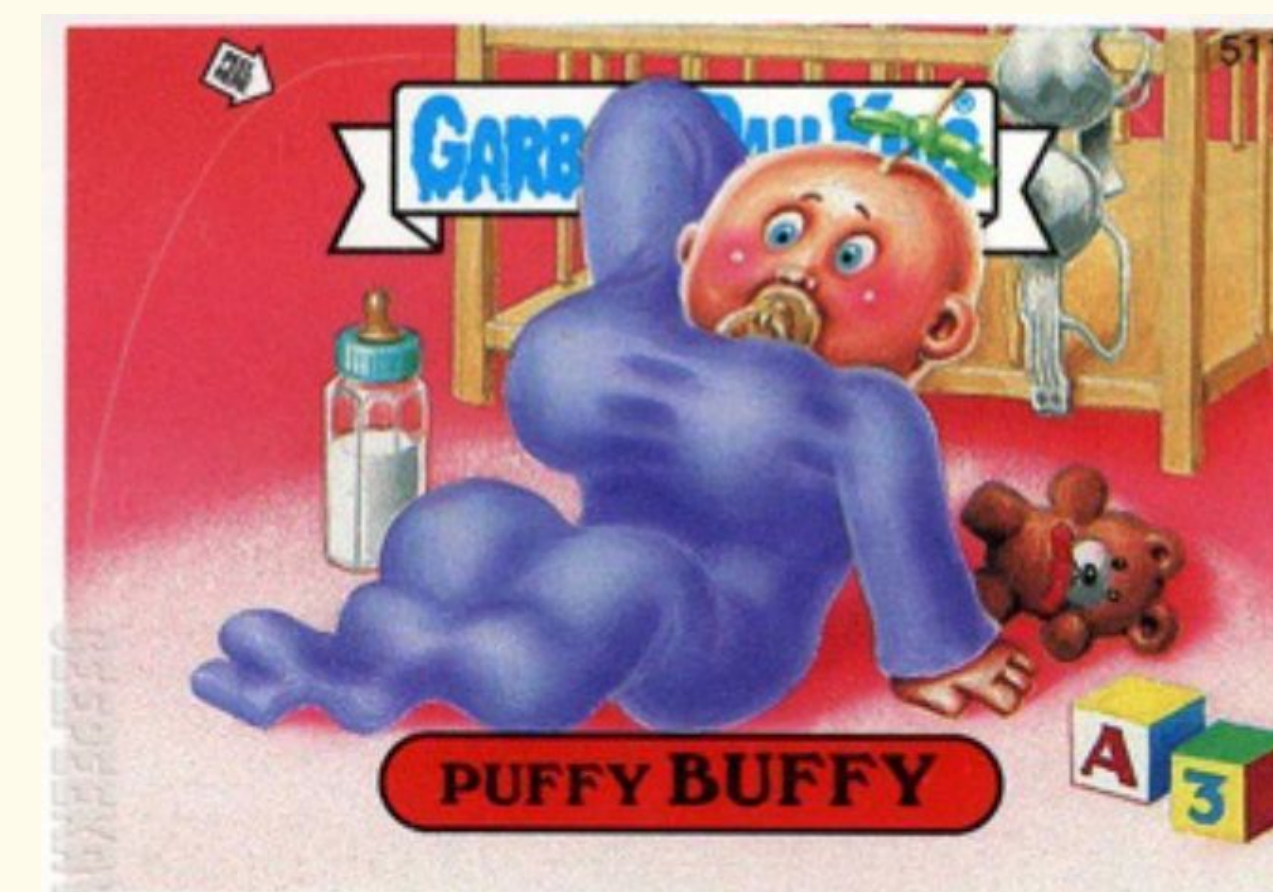


Figure 3 - Gender and Age

Age		Gender			Total
		Female	Male	Undeterminable	
Infant	Observed	15	11	0	26
	Expected	8.75	17.0	0.238	26.0
	% within row	57.7%	42.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	20.3%	7.6%	0.0%	11.8%
Toddler	Observed	3	13	0	16
	Expected	5.38	10.5	0.145	16.0
	% within row	18.8%	81.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	4.1%	9.0%	0.0%	7.3%
Child/Elementary School	Observed	28	29	0	57
	Expected	19.17	37.3	0.518	57.0
	% within row	49.1%	50.9%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	37.8%	20.1%	0.0%	29.9%
Teenager	Observed	5	13	1	19
	Expected	6.39	12.4	0.173	19.0
	% within row	26.3%	68.4%	5.3%	100.0%
	% within column	6.8%	9.0%	50.0%	8.6%
Adult	Observed	10	57	0	67
	Expected	22.54	43.9	0.609	67.0
	% within row	14.9%	85.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	13.5%	39.6%	0.0%	30.5%
Not applicable (For inanimate objects, etc)	Observed	13	21	1	35
	Expected	11.77	22.9	0.318	35.0
	% within row	37.1%	60.0%	2.9%	100.0%
	% within column	17.6%	14.6%	50.0%	15.9%
Total	Observed	74	144	2	220
	Expected	74.00	144.0	2.000	220.0
	% within row	33.6%	65.5%	0.9%	100.0%
	% within column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 4 - Gender and Orientation

Orientation		Gender			Total
		Female	Male	Undeterminable	
Vertical	Observed	58	128	1	187
	Expected	62.9	122.4	1.700	187.0
	% within row	11.1	21.6	0.300	33.0
Horizontal	Observed	16	16	1	33
	Expected	11.1	21.6	0.300	33.0
	% within row	74	144	2	220
Total	Observed	74	144	2	220
	Expected	74.0	144.0	2.000	220.0
	% within row	74.0	144.0	2.000	220.0

Discussion

Kid Type and Garbage Condition:

Garbage Pail Kids are more often shown as victims of violence and not perpetrators.

Does this play into a potential bullying narrative?

- ❖ Overwhelmingly we see the garbage condition happening solely to the kid because of the kid, meaning that the kid is presented in grossness in isolation.
- ❖ More often than not, in the case that there is more than one kid on a card, someone is doing something TO the kid vs. the kid doing something to others.

Gender and Age:

Female GPK are depicted as children more often than male GPK

- ❖ Only half of the GPK sticker cards feature a female kid, however 68.91% of the female cards depict the kid as a child vs. as an adult.
- ❖ GPK creators may have implicitly visioned Adult males as lawyers, doctors, other business professionals etc. while they view women as childish/young.
- ❖ GPK creators may view women through an infantilizing lens reflective of the general culture of the time.

Gender and Orientation:

Female GPK are presented horizontally the same amount of time as male GPK despite there being 2 male cards for every female card

- ❖ Horizontal orientation is related to a passive stance, which could be a reflection of the vulnerable/passive state GPK creators view females.
- ❖ Vertical cards show kids in assertive stances, so GPK creators could have explicitly or implicitly decided to display females in a non-assertive stance more often than males.

Conclusion

- The results provide an interesting reflection on 1980s culture in relation to gender roles. The cards may potentially be playing into the infantilization of women by perpetrating a narrative that women need to be protected/cared for by men.
- Bullying, which was a common feature of pop culture in the 80s, could have impacted child toy products, potentially affecting the public's view on violence.
- As the data is further analyzed, we hope to uncover more statistically significant relationships between the GPK conditions we coded for. We measured for race in our study, however we are not looking at the implications of race in GPK stickers at this time.

References

[1] The jamovi project (2022). jamovi. (Version 2.3) [Computer Software]. Retrieved from <https://www.jamovi.org>. [2] R Core Team (2021). R: A Language and environment for statistical computing. (Version 4.1) [Computer software]. Retrieved from <https://cran.r-project.org>. (R packages retrieved from MRAN snapshot 2022-01-01).