The Significance of Socially Constructed Behaviors to Modern Identities on Em Beihold's *City of Angels*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines perspectives of modern identities in matters of socially constructed behaviors in the song of Em Beihold entitled *City of Angels.* People recently are attempting to attain a similar level of status and recognition by imitating these figures in appearances, behaviors, and lifestyles. This idea is also reflected on *City of Angels* is a song by Em Beihold released in 2020 that tells many people faking themselves by trying to imitate other people's attitude and behavior when she working in Los Angeles. Through qualitative method and explorative approach in cultural studies, this journal analyzes modern people shaping their identities by imitating other people's lifestyle and behavior. It is since people are told to always follow the trends to be more modern. In conclusion, in today's world there is no more original identity, but constructed by imitating any preferred figure or condition with a certain attitude. Modern identities never stand alone, but are supported by socially constructed behaviors.

Keywords: City of Angels, Em Beihold, Modern Identity, Socially Constructed Behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the notion of identity has grown increasingly intricate, influenced by a multitude of factors such as the social environment, cultural influences, and personal experiences. Em Beihold's song, *City of Angels*, powerfully captures the struggle of maintaining a coherent sense of self in the face of complex elements of irony (CMFRadio, 2023; Millenia et al., 2023). Through its deep lyrics, the song delves into themes of individuality, conformity, and self-discovery, all of which lie at the heart of modern identity theory. This research journal seeks to analyze *City of Angels* through the lens of contemporary identity theory, offering insight into how songs can reflect and explore essential concepts and themes related to widened modern understandings of identities.

The primary objective of this research journal is to examine how songs serve as a medium for expressing and highlighting key concepts and themes within contemporary identity theory. By closely scrutinizing the lyrics and overarching themes present in *City of Angels*, the researchers aim to deepen further comprehension of the challenges and complexities that shape modern identity (Entwistle, 2023; Sonichits, 2020). Through the following analyses, this article is shown to shed light on the intricate interplays between individualities, conformities, and self-discoveries, as well as the ways in which these elements shape and redefine various senses of self in an ever-evolving social landscape.

An integral aspect of contemporary identity theory is the recognition of the significance of the social environment in shaping individual identities. *City of Angels* provides a lens through which people can explore the role of the social environment in influencing how everyone may perceive and construct each own identity (CMFRadio, 2023; Hall, 2013). The song invites the audience to reflect on how external forces, such as societal norms and expectations, may give impact to various self-expressions and the choices people make every day (Entwistle, 2023; Giddens, 2020). By critically analyzing the lyrics, deeper understandings of the ways could be gained in which the social environment acts as a catalyst for the development and negotiation of identity.

Furthermore, *City of Angels* enables the audience to examine the tensions between individualities and conformities as a crucial theme within contemporary identity theory. The lyrics of the song prompt the audience to contemplate the struggle between asserting unique identities and conforming to societal expectations (Hall, 2013; SongTell, 2020). Through this exploration, people may gain insight into the complexities that individuals face when navigating the desire for authenticity and the pressure to fit within societal norms. By unpacking this tension, a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of identity formation in modern society may be fostered furthermore (Giddens, 2020; Oswell, 2006).

As the novelties of this research, there is no other research that has analyzed this song. Some articles based on socially constructed behavior exist but those only focus on ideas of social media, gender studies, and e-commerce matters. One previous study was done by Hamidreza Shahbaznezhad, Rebecca Dolan, and Mona Rashidirad in 2022 entitled *The Role of Social Media Content Format and Platform in User's Engagement Behavior* (Shabaznezhad, et al., 2022). The second study was written by Beniamino Cislaghi and Lori Heise in 2019 entitled *Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science* (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019). Both previous studies did not speak about any idea of socially constructed behavior in analyzing literature, especially song. There is a research gap unexplored, especially in how modernism is applied through literary research. This aspect then shapes the urgency and novelty of the research. It is needed to show how literature is a reflection of everyday life in which modernism and socially constructed behavior are always intact both in its evidence and argumentations.

Ultimately, this research journal aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding identity in contemporary societies, highlighting the importance of individualities, self-discoveries, and the social environment in shaping people's sense of self. Through an expanding analysis of *City of Angels* and its resonance with contemporary identity theory, the researchers would like to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges that individuals encounter when navigating the complexities of modern identity (SongTell, 2020; Sonichits, 2020). By illuminating these dynamics, the researchers would like to aspire more to foster greater empathy and appreciation for the diverse experiences and journeys individuals undertake to forge their unique identities.

2. METHOD

Using the qualitative method as its research design, this research journal employs analysis of various concepts and written data to address the central question regarding modern identity in Em Beihold's song *City of Angels*. Through explorative approach, online and offline scripts, including books and journals, are utilized to gain insights into the correlation between the song and the construction of modern identities. The data collection includes reading the lyrics, comparing them with theories, writing down the analysis, and listing down the conclusion and references. The data analysis process involves sourcing relevant materials, deepened reading, comparing findings with other related topics, incorporating direct quotes into the paper, and compiling a comprehensive list of references. The focus of the analysis revolves around the song's lyrics, which serve as the primary source for identifying and exploring the manifestations of modern identity, with particular emphasis

on themes such as individuality, self-discovery, and the influence of the social environment. This study is limited merely on the idea of Em Beihold's song entitled *City of Angels* through ideas of modern identity and its following trends in both individual and societal contexts.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
3.1 *City of Angels* and Reflections of Modern Conditions

The song of *City of Angels* is a captivating musical creation by 22-year-old singer-songwriter Em Beihold, based in Los Angeles, California. Fusing pop, alternative, and folk influences, Beihold crafts a unique sound that sets them apart. Inspired by Regina Spektor, Beihold released *City of Angels* on August 14, 2020, with production by Nima Fakhrara (CMFRadio, 2023; Sonichits, 2020). The song's heartfelt lyrics, mesmerizing melodies, and Beihold's soulful vocals resonate deeply with listeners and capture the struggles and aspirations of living in a bustling metropolis.

The song speaks about how hard it is to stay true to oneself in a city like Los Angeles, and how misguided selfishness can develop when people try to fit in (CMFRadio, 2023; SongTell, 2020). The main character had a best friend whom she thought would never change, but now she is one of the scammers and only thinks of herself. The song encourages people to realize that life in a city like Los Angeles is much more than fame and wealth.

Certainly, here are the lyrics from *City of Angels* by Em Beihold:

[Verse 1]
It's hard havin' a heart in the city
Look at the stars, waitin' for someone
To tell you you're pretty, you're enough
So it goes, I don't know what the feeling's like
To be comfortable with a stranger in your skin
Don't know why you let them in
[Chorus 1]
We used to talk about the fakers in L.A
But now you're one of 'em and, damn, it hurts to say
I should've seen it comin' from a mile away, a mile away
You always wanted to take before you give, but what's the fun of it?
I don't know how you live with yourself in your Hollywood house in the hills
Gives me chills, city of angels
[Verse 2]
Used to say, if you ever made it, I'd be the first call
And life would stay fairly the same
Oh, our friendship wouldn't change at all
But you busted, haven't talked in a year
I mistrusted, now it's all comin' clear that you only think of yourself
May be loved but you're lonely as hell, oh
[Chorus 2]
We used to talk about the fakers in L.A
But now you're one of 'em, I guess you got your way
I bet you're tired of all the games you had to play, you had to play
You always wanted to take before you give, but what's the fun of it?
I don't know how you live with yourself in your Hollywood house in the hills
Gives me chills, city of angels

[Bridge]
That's what they call us, right?
Wish you were able
To see there's so much more to life
Than fortune and fame, validation and pain
When you always want more
There's nothing to gain
[Chorus 3]
We used to talk about the fakers in L.A
But now you're one of 'em and damn it hurts to say
Damn it hurts to say
You always wanted to take before you give, but what's the fun of it?
I don't know how you live with yourself in your Hollywood house in the hills
Gives me chills, city of angels
[Outro]
That's what they call us, right?
Wish you were able
To see there's so much more to life
City of angels
That's what they call us, right?
City of angels (GeniusMedia, 2020)

The interesting things about the song are the lyrics that reflect the challenges and changes that come with living in the city of Los Angeles (often referred to as the *City of Angels*) (GeniusMedia, 2020; SongTell, 2020). It explores themes of fame, superficiality, and the impact it can have on relationships and self-identities. People nowadays are increasingly seeking to shape their identity by imitating public figures. The songwriter expresses disappointment to a friend who has become a part of the materialistic and self-centered culture of Los Angeles (SongTell, 2020; Sonichits, 2020). The song also highlights the desire for genuine connections and the longing for a deeper meaning in life beyond the pursuit of fame and fortune. It offers deepened critique of the culture of Los Angeles and its effect on people's values and relationships.

3.2 Modern Identity and Its Impact on Self-Perception and Social Engagement

Modern identity refers to the complex and the evolving understanding of oneself in the context of contemporary society. Modern identity theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing the multiplicity of identities that individuals hold (Campbell, 2020; Simon, 2008). It encompasses an individual's self-perception, values, beliefs, and the way they navigate and interact with the world around them. The notion of modern identity has gained prominence as societies become increasingly diverse and interconnected, and traditional frameworks of identity are challenged.

Identity is not a stable essence, but a process that is always in the making. In this discussion, it is important to acknowledge that modern identity is a multifaceted concept influenced by a range of factors, including culture, social norms, personal experiences, and individual agency (Bauman, 1996; Simon, 2008). It goes beyond simple categorizations and embraces the fluidity and intersectionality of human existence. One of the fundamental aspects of modern identity is the idea of self-perception. Individuals today are encouraged to explore and define their identities based on their unique experiences and personal journeys. This includes understanding one's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and other dimensions of identity that may shape their worldview.

Modern identity is a complex interplay between individual agency, social context, and the historical legacies that shape expanding understandings of one's own self and others (Barker, 2012; Bauman, 1996). Moreover, modern identity emphasizes the importance of social engagement and the recognition of diverse perspectives. In a rapidly changing world, individuals are encouraged to engage with and respect the experiences and identities of others. This recognition of the interconnectedness of humanity can foster empathy, compassion, and a sense of collective responsibility. Identity is not determined solely by individual characteristics, but is constructed and influenced by social, cultural, and historical contexts (Barker, 2012; Simon, 2008).

However, navigating modern identity can also present challenges. The constant exposure to diverse ideas and beliefs can create a sense of uncertainty. Individuals may find themselves questioning their own identity and struggling to find a sense of belonging in a rapidly evolving social landscape (Oswell, 2006; P. Smith & Riley, 2009). In modern identity theory, we understand that identities are not inherent, but are socially constructed through language, symbols, and power dynamics. Additionally, the pressure to conform to societal expectations and norms can lead to internal conflict and feelings of inadequacy. The fear of judgment or rejection may hinder individuals from fully embracing and expressing their authentic selves (Campbell, 2020; Smarandreetha et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the digital age has introduced new dimensions to modern identity. Online platforms and social media play a significant role in shaping how individuals present themselves to the world. The curated nature of online personas can blur the line between authenticity and performance, further complicating the understanding of one's true identity (Pujimahanani et al., 2022; Yuliastuti et al., 2021). Modern identity is not confined by traditional boundaries; it is a site of constant negotiation, resistance, and transformation. Moreover, modern identity represents a complex and evolving construct that shapes how individuals perceive themselves and engage with society. It embraces diversity, encourages self-exploration, and highlights the importance of empathy and inclusivity (Barker, 2012; P. Smith & Riley, 2009). However, it also poses challenges, such as navigating conflicting societal expectations and grappling with the impact of the digital age. Understanding and embracing modern identity is an ongoing process that requires self-reflection, open-mindedness, and a willingness to adapt to the changing dynamics of various interconnected worlds.

3.3 The Correlations between Modern Identity and *City of Angels*

Modern identity theory provides a valuable framework for understanding and analyzing the themes present in Em Beihold's song, *City of Angels*. The song explores the challenges of maintaining a sense of self and authenticity in a complex and often superficial society, aligning with key concepts and ideas within modern identity theory (CMFRadio, 2023; GeniusMedia, 2020). By examining the lyrics and themes of the song through the lens of modern identity theory, deeper insights could be deeply explored into the complexities of contemporary identity formation and the influence of the social environment.

Here are the complete analyses of lyrics of *City of Angels*:

[Verse 1]
It's hard havin' a heart in the city
Look at the stars, waitin' for someone
To tell you you're pretty, you're enough
So it goes, I don't know what the feeling's like
To be comfortable with a stranger in your skin
Don't know why you let them in

In the first verse, the text describes the challenges of the city's fragile mind. It mentions looking at the stars while waiting for approval and feeling pretty or having enough suggests a desire for approval from the outside (CMFRadio, 2023; SongTell, 2020). If someone says that he/she is comfortable with strangers, it could mean that he/she feels disconnected from his/her own self and struggle to understand why anyone should influence others.

The Verse 1 above indicates that modern identity pushes people to never feel enough of their own selves. They are always pushed to consume and imitate more as those are how life is dictated by modernism. Self is always pushed to never be satisfied though what is entered is such a stranger. It has been internalized since people were born. They never really know why they should always nod to any modern structure, they only think that they have to do it (Giddens, 2020; P. Smith & Riley, 2009). Everyone in modern conditions could rarely be who he/she really is. Anyone must always search for others' recognition in order to be fully existent as individuals in matters of societal situations.

It is seen that these lyrics above touch on themes of self-identity, external validation, and the struggle to feel comfortable in one's own skin. They reflect the challenges individuals face in navigating their sense of self within the context of a city and in relation to societal expectations. The desire for validation and the difficulty in establishing a genuine and comfortable identity are central themes in Contemporary Identity Theory. The line stating "It's hard havin' a heart in the city" could be interpreted as expressing the challenges of maintaining emotional vulnerability and a sense of self in a busy and potentially impersonal urban environment (Barker, 2012; CMFRadio, 2023). In the context of Contemporary Identity Theory, this could reflect the idea that urban settings might pose difficulties in establishing and expressing one's identity due to the fast-paced nature of city life.

Furthermore the lines stating "Look at the stars, waitin' for someone to tell you you're pretty, you're enough" touch on the desire for validation and affirmation from others. Seeking external validation is common in the context of contemporary identity, as individuals often look to others to define their self-worth. The desire to be told that "you're pretty" and "enough" might indicate a reliance on external opinions to shape one's self-image (P. Smith & Riley, 2009; Sonichits, 2020). The part stating "So it goes, I don't know what the feeling's like to be comfortable with a stranger in your skin" suggests a lack of self-acceptance or self-comfort. It indicates such disconnection from one's own identity and body. In terms of Contemporary Identity Theory, this could reflect the struggle to feel at ease with one's self and to fully embrace one's identity, possibly due to societal pressures or personal insecurities (Barker, 2012; Bauman, 1996). Moreover, the line stating "Don't know why you let them in" could allude to the influence of external opinions and judgments on one's self-perception. It might suggest a pattern of allowing the opinions and expectations of others to affect one's self-image, even when it is not in alignment with one's true identity. This relates to the concept of identity negotiation and the impact of social interactions on how individuals view themselves.

[Chorus 1]
We used to talk about the fakers in L.A
But now you're one of 'em and, damn, it hurts to say
I should've seen it comin' from a mile away, a mile away
You always wanted to take before you give, but what's the fun of it?
I don't know how you live with yourself in your Hollywood house in the hills
Gives me chills, city of angels

The chorus reflects her shift in perspective as the singer speaks to a person who has changed and become one of Los Angeles' "counterfeiters". There is a sense of disappointment, a realization that

someone whom the singer knows has succumbed to the shallowness of those around her and her selfishness (SongTell, 2020; Sonichits, 2020). The phrase "take before you give" implies a selfish nature and calls into question the meaning and satisfaction of such behavior. It is also related to the term "the rabbit now turns into the jackal" as the one that is victim has turned into the perpetrator itself.

These lyrics convey themes of disappointment, shifting identities, and a clash between genuine connection and superficiality. The lyrics reflect the complexities of identity negotiation, external influences on self-perception, and the tensions that can arise when individuals adopt behaviors that conflict with their previously held values or beliefs, which are concepts discussed in Contemporary Identity Theory (Dunlop, 2022; SongTell, 2020). The line stating "We used to talk about the fakers in L.A" suggests a shift in perspective and behavior. The use of the term "fakers" could refer to people who pretend to be something they are not in the context of Los Angeles (L.A.), which is often associated with the entertainment industry and a certain level of image-consciousness. The mention of "fakers" implies a previous understanding or critique of this behavior (Bialystok, 2014; SongTell, 2020). The line reflecting a sense of disappointment or betrayal is "But now you're one of 'em and, damn, it hurts to say". The person being addressed was once critical of the "fakers" but has now adopted similar behaviors, leading to a sense of hurt and disillusionment. This could tie into the concept of identity inconsistent or identity discrepancy within the context of Contemporary Identity Theory.

Moreover, "I should've seen it comin' from a mile away, a mile away" is the line indicating that the change in behavior was predictable, suggesting that there were signs or indications that the person's identity might shift in this direction. It could also reflect a sense of regret for not recognizing those signs earlier (CMFRadio, 2023; GeniusMedia, 2020). The line stating "You always wanted to take before you give, but what's the fun of it?" implies a self-centered or opportunistic attitude where the person prioritizes taking rather than giving. This behavior might be seen as conflicting with the values of genuine relationships and connections. In terms of Contemporary Identity Theory, this could reflect a self-identity that prioritizes personal gain or image enhancement over authentic connections. The lines reflecting on the contrast between the person's lifestyle and the speaker's perspective can be seen in "I don't know how you live with yourself in your Hollywood house in the hills Gives me chills, city of angels" (GeniusMedia, 2020; Sonichits, 2020). The mention of the "Hollywood house in the hills" and the phrase "city of angels" alludes to Los Angeles' glamor and fame. The speaker's discomfort or "chills" might arise from the person's alignment with the perceived superficiality of this lifestyle.

[Verse 2]
Used to say, if you ever made it, I'd be the first call
And life would stay fairly the same
Oh, our friendship wouldn't change at all
But you busted, haven't talked in a year
I mistrusted, now it's all comin' clear that you only think of yourself
May be loved but you're lonely as hell, oh

The second verse deals with broken friendships. The singer expresses her surprise at the resulting separation and mistrust, highlighting her friend's perception of self-centeredness (SongTell, 2020; Sonichits, 2020). This lyric conveys the idea that friends only think of their own needs and may be loved by others but end up feeling lonely. This is also a matter of modern condition that tends to change longingness into loneliness. People may be longing for any good aspect in the future, but once

he/she could not attain it, the condition changes into being lonely (Bauman, 1996; Oswell, 2006). Some people may say that mistrust is caused by other people's deeds, but some people also admit that they are the ones that change into the ones that they had previously really hated.

These lyrics above convey themes of changing friendships, unmet expectations, and the impact of personal identity shifts on relationships. The song reflects the idea that as individuals' identities evolve or change, it can affect their relationships and lead to feelings of betrayal or loneliness (Luerssen et al., 2017; Schrage et al., 2020). This aligns with the concepts of identity inconsistency and relationship dynamics discussed in Contemporary Identity Theory. The line "Used to say, if you ever made it, I'd be the first call" reflects a previous understanding or agreement between the speaker and the subject of the song. It suggests an expectation of loyalty and communication, where the speaker anticipated being an important part of the other person's life once they achieved success.

In addition, the lyrics "And life would stay fairly the same Oh, our friendship wouldn't change at all" indicate a belief that their friendship would remain constant, even in the face of external changes or successes. It underscores the idea that true friendship should be resilient to life's fluctuations, which is a common expectation in personal identity within the context of close relationships (Floyd et al., 2008; Graves, 2021). "But you busted, haven't talked in a year" is the part revealing that the expectation has not been met, and the friendship has deteriorated. The word "busted" implies a breach of trust or a failure to uphold the previously agreed-upon values of the friendship. The absence of communication for a year suggests a significant disruption in the relationship. The lyrics expressing a sense of betrayal and realization that the other person has become self-centered can be seen in "I mistrusted, now it's all comin' clear that you only think of yourself". It can also be seen as a shift in the person's identity from being a loyal and dependable friend to someone who prioritizes their own interests.

The concept of identity inconsistency, where one's actions and behaviors conflict with their established identity, is such proofing evidence here. "May be loved but you're lonely as hell, oh": This line suggests that despite the outward appearance of success or being loved by others, the person is experiencing loneliness and isolation (CMFRadio, 2023; Sorokowska et al., 2023). This could be related to a loss of genuine connections and authentic relationships, emphasizing the importance of maintaining meaningful relationships in the context of personal identity.

[Chorus 2]
We used to talk about the fakers in L.A
But now you're one of 'em, I guess you got your way
I bet you're tired of all the games you had to play, you had to play
You always wanted to take before you give, but what's the fun of it?
I don't know how you live with yourself in your Hollywood house in the hills
Gives me chills, city of angels

This refrain is repeated, emphasizing the singer's continued disappointment with her friend's change. A statement that he is tired of playing games suggests that the friend may be tired of the appearance he has to maintain. Beyond materialistic pursuits, the song desires to understand that there is more to life than wealth, fame, and recognition is expressed. The interesting point of this chorus is that Beihold shows that her friend is actually tired of imitating any wealth and fame, but it seems that she has any other choice. This is indeed a matter of modern identity and people should look into wider conceptions (Barker, 2012; P. Smith & Riley, 2009). The lyrics also implicitly emphasizes that there are various options that must be explored beyond any surrendering deed toward modern situations.

These lyrics explore themes of authenticity, conformity, materialism, and the influence of external factors on identity. They showcase how contemporary identity theory can be applied to understand the interplay between an individual's self-concept and the larger cultural context, especially in a city known for its image-focused culture (Barker, 2012; Bauman, 1996). The lyrics start by referencing the concept of authenticity and the perception of "fakers" in Los Angeles. The shift from talking about "fakers" to becoming one of them reflects how identity and perception can change over time. The transition from criticizing to embodying a perceived identity can be indicative of evolving self-concepts and social influences.

The phrase "I guess you got your way" implies that the individual has adopted the behaviors or qualities they once criticized. This might suggest a pressure to conform to societal norms or to fit in with a particular group. This aligns with contemporary identity theory's exploration of how individuals adapt and sometimes modify their identities in response to their environment. The mention of a "Hollywood house in the hills" and the image of wealth and luxury reflects materialism and the idea that external possessions can influence how one defines themselves (CMFRadio, 2023; GeniusMedia, 2020). The line "Gives me chills" could signify discomfort or unease in the face of such materialistic values. The phrase "city of angels" could be seen as a broader commentary on the environment of Los Angeles, a city often associated with dreams and aspirations.

However, the idea above juxtaposed with the earlier reference to "fakers," indicating a tension between the city's idealized image and the reality of its complexities. This highlights how societal influences can impact an individual's identity. Moreover, the lyrics suggest that the individual might be aware of the contradictions between their actions and values (P. Smith & Riley, 2009; Sonichits, 2020). This self-awareness touches on the ongoing process of self-reflection and understanding, which is a key aspect of contemporary identity theory.

[Bridge]
That's what they call us, right?
Wish you were able
To see there's so much more to life
Than fortune and fame, validation and pain
When you always want more
There's nothing to gain

The bridge reflects the superficiality of the city and the allure of wealth and prestige. The lyrics suggest that unfinished desire would only lead to feelings of emptiness and rejection to any fulfillment. The more people respond to any dictation from modern condition, the more they can not leave from the trapped situations. Beihold in this Bridge section emphasizes her wish for her friend and other people to think outside any demanding structure (CMFRadio, 2023; Sonichits, 2020). People should not always follow any trendsetter since doing so will only create more pain for themselves. It is true that people require more recognition to be known by others, but it should not be the ultimate desire. It should always be followed with rational common sense in which such fame should be beneficial, not detrimental to any person (Bauman, 1996; Djanarko & Pasopati, 2019).

The lyrics above touch on the idea of societal labels and categorizations. People often use labels to define themselves and others, which can shape their identities. The lyrics might suggest that the speaker is aware of how society tends to label and define individuals. The lyrics also reflect the concept of authentic self-perception. The speaker wishes that the audience could recognize that life holds more value than material possessions in matters of fortune and fame (CMFRadio, 2023; Sonichits, 2020). This speaks to the idea that true self-worth comes from within, rather than external

validation. The lines "When you always want more, there's nothing to gain" touch on materialism and its impact on identity.

In a culture driven by consumerism and the pursuit of material gain, individuals may lose sight of what truly matters in life (Bauman, 1996; Yuliastuti & Pasopati, 2021). This can lead to a shallow sense of self and a constant craving for more, which can hinder personal growth. The mention of "validation and pain" highlights the role of validation in shaping one's identity. Seeking validation from others can lead to a fragile sense of self, as it relies on external opinions. The lyrics suggest that true fulfillment comes from recognizing one's intrinsic value rather than seeking validation from others.

Furthermore, the lyrics indirectly address the societal pressures and expectations that shape identity. The emphasis on "fortune and fame" and the desire for "more" could allude to societal norms that promote material success. The speaker challenges these norms, suggesting that there is a deeper, more meaningful aspect to life (Barker, 2012; Sonichits, 2020). The lyrics can be seen as a critique of consumer culture, where the pursuit of material possessions and external recognition often leaves individuals feeling unsatisfied. This critique aligns with contemporary identity theory's focus on the impact of culture on how people define themselves. In summary, the given lyrics reflect themes of authentic self-perception, the influence of materialism on identity, the role of validation, the impact of societal expectations, and a critique of consumer culture (Bakti et al., 2020; Bauman, 1996). These themes align with contemporary identity theory's exploration of how individuals construct and navigate their identities in the context of a complex and rapidly changing world.

[Chorus 3]
We used to talk about the fakers in L.A
But now you're one of 'em and damn it hurts to say
Damn it hurts to say
You always wanted to take before you give, but what's the fun of it?
I don't know how you live with yourself in your Hollywood house in the hills
Gives me chills, city of angels

The chorus repeats once more, emphasizing the singer's continued disappointment and distress as her friends change. The lyrics, especially questioning her friend's way of life in her Hollywood home in the hills, gave the singer goosebumps. It suggests that her friend is uneasy about her pursuit of superficial success. By saying that it "damn hurts to say", Beihold would like to emphasize frustration faced by her in the sense of her friend. The friend should always know that fame and wealth is nothing but illusion (Djanarko & Pasopati, 2019; Wijaya et al., 2023). It will only give more pain at the end though she gets much money by following trends in Los Angeles.

The chorus above reflects themes of identity change, authenticity, and the impact of the environment on one's sense of self. The shift from reviewing inauthentic behavior to adopting it highlights the complexities of identity negotiation (Hanson, 2021; Norris, 2018). The lyrics also emphasize the idea that one's environment and relationships can shape how they define themselves, which is a key consideration in Contemporary Identity Theory. The lyrics touch upon the concept of authenticity and how people perceive each other. The line "fakers in L.A" implies that there is a perception of inauthenticity or superficiality in Los Angeles.

However, this perception changes when someone who was previously critical of "fakers" becomes one of them. This reflects how perceptions of authenticity can be complex and fluid. The lyrics suggest that the subject of the song has transitioned from being an outsider or critic of the "fakers" to becoming one of them. This transition can impact their self-identity and how they are perceived

by others (GeniusMedia, 2020; Law et al., 2021). It highlights the way social identity can shape an individual's self-concept. The line "You always wanted to take before you give" suggests a self-centered approach to life. This can tie into how one's identity is constructed through their values and actions.

The contrast between taking and giving can impact how the individual sees themselves and how others perceive them. The reference to a "Hollywood house in the hills" highlights materialistic pursuits and the culture of image-focused living. This connects with the notion of identity being influenced by external factors, such as wealth and possessions. The speaker's reaction of getting "chills" suggests a negative emotional response to this lifestyle, possibly implying that such values are not aligned with their own (Aulia et al., 2022; Barrera & Ponce, 2020). The term "city of angels" is juxtaposed against the perceived fakeness discussed earlier. This contrast could reflect the tension between the idealized image of Los Angeles as a city of dreams and the reality of its flaws. It speaks to how societal norms and expectations influence how individuals construct their identity (Lewis & Moital, 2016; Pasopati et al., 2022). In summary, these lyrics touch on themes of authenticity, changing perceptions, materialism, and the tension between self-identity and societal identity. They illustrate how contemporary identity theory can be applied to analyze the ways in which individuals navigate their sense of self within a larger cultural context, especially in a city known for its complex image and identity dynamics.

[Outro]
That's what they call us, right?
Wish you were able
To see there's so much more to life
City of angels
That's what they call us, right?
City of angels

The Outro reinforces the idea of being called the *City of Angels* and expresses her wish for people to realize that there is more to her life than superficial pursuits. The repetition of this phrase symbolizes a longing to understand and perceive life more deeply than the exterior of the city. This section also implicitly states that angels in this point are not about good celestial beings nor any better creature on earth. They are just beautiful girls that tend to find more wealth and fame in order to find more recognition from other people (Aulia et al., 2022; Campbell, 2020). They are dictated to do so as if they have any other choice in the modern era.

The Outro reflects themes of assigned labels and the desire to break free from limited perspectives on identity. The repetition of phrases and the reference to a specific location of City of Angels, indicating the influence of external factors on how individuals perceive themselves (CMFRadio, 2023; Sorokowska et al., 2023). The lyrics suggest a yearning for a more holistic and authentic self-concept, which aligns with the ideas of self-identity and self-discovery discussed in Contemporary Identity Theory. These lines could hint at the complexity of identity. The notion that "there's so much more to life" suggests that the city's identity is multi-dimensional and cannot be fully understood or defined solely by external labels. This aligns with contemporary identity theory, which emphasizes the multifaceted nature of identities.

The lyrics could also touch on the idea that outsiders (those who are not part of the city) might have a limited understanding of its true essence. This relates to how external perceptions often shape the identity of a place or community, but there is often more to a place than meets the eye (Bialystok, 2014; Yuliastuti & Pasopati, 2022). The repetition of "City of angels" reinforces the notion of collective

identity. This phrase might serve as a label for the city, but it can also suggest a shared sense of belonging among the people who live there. The identity of the city is something that the inhabitants might relate to and take pride in it.

In addition, the lyrics could address the idea of social identity, where individuals identify themselves based on the group they belong to—in this case, the city. The label City of Angels" becomes a part of how the people in the city see themselves and are seen by others. The repetition of the phrase "That's what they call us, right?" indicates that the identity of the city is constructed by external perceptions or possibly media representations (CMFRadio, 2023; GeniusMedia, 2020). This reflects how identities can be influenced by external factors and how people might respond to or internalize those perceptions. In summary, these lyrics appear to engage with themes of collective identity, the complexity of identities, the tension between external perception and internal reality, and the role of labels in shaping identity. Contemporary identity theory helps people understand how identities are constructed, negotiated, and expressed within the context of broader societal and cultural influences (Barker, 2012; Bauman, 1996).

Overall, Em Beihold's *City of Angels* explores disillusionment, shallowness, and a yearning for true connection in a city known for its charm and artificiality. The song reflects the challenges of maintaining credibility and integrity in the face of social pressure. The lyrics do criticize the egocentrism and materialistic aspirations that can arise in such an environment (Aulia et al., 2022; Sonichits, 2020). Through its introspective lyrics, the song raises questions about the nature of identity, the value of true relationships, and the pursuit of a more meaningful existence beyond the shackles of mere success.

3.4 Self-Reflection and Self-Exploration in *City of Angels*

One of the central themes in modern identity theory is the tension between individuality and conformity. *City of Angels* reflects this tension as it delves into the struggle of remaining true to oneself in a city known for its emphasis on external validation and superficiality (CMFRadio, 2023; GeniusMedia, 2020). The lyrics highlight the pressure to conform to societal expectations and the challenges of maintaining authenticity in the face of these pressures, echoing the dilemmas individuals face in navigating their identities in modern society. The concept of self-discovery is another key aspect of modern identity theory that resonates with the song. *City of Angels* captures the journey of self-exploration and the search for a genuine sense of self amidst the allure of fame, fortune, and external validation (SongTell, 2020; Talbot, 2019). The lyrics imply the importance of introspection and finding one's own path rather than succumbing to the expectations imposed by the social environment, aligning with the notion of self-discovery as a crucial element in shaping modern identity.

Em Beihold's song *City of Angels* has several references to contemporary identity theory and the subject matter of study. First, the song reflects an important aspect of modern identity theory in the tension between individuality and conformity. The lyrics convey a sense of disappointment and disillusionment with the friend-turned-Los Angeles "counterfeiter" (CMFRadio, 2023). This suggests a conflict between the friend's desire to live up to society's expectations and the singer's yearning for authenticity and genuine connection. This highlights the challenges individuals face to remain true to themselves under social pressure. Second, the song explores another central theme of modern identity theory, which is the concept of self-discovery (Giddens, 2020; Talbot, 2019). The lyrics involve a journey of self-exploration, a search for a true sense of self beyond external assessments and material aspirations. The protagonist questions the meaning and satisfaction she derives from her selfish actions, emphasizing the importance of finding meaning and fulfillment in life beyond her fame and fortune.

Moreover, the influence of the social environment on identity formation is evident throughout the song. *City of Angels* portrays the city of Los Angeles as a symbol of a superficial, materialistic culture in which individuals are driven by outward evaluations and appearances (GeniusMedia, 2020). This is consistent with the modern identity theory understanding that the social environment plays an important role in shaping an individual's identity. The lyrics convey the challenges of dealing with urban expectations and the impact of such environments on developing and maintaining one's true self. *City of Angels* provides clues to contemporary identity theories by examining themes such as individuality, conformity, self-discovery, and the influence of the social environment (Sarmi et al., 2023; SongTell, 2020). The song reflects the complexities and difficulties individuals face in establishing and maintaining their identity in today's society.

Besides, one subtopic that emerges from the data above is the importance of understanding oneself in the context of modern identity. The lyrics of *City of Angels* by Em Beihold and the concepts discussed in the analysis shed light on the significance of self-reflection and self-exploration in navigating the complexities of contemporary identity. The song emphasizes the challenges of staying true to oneself in a city like Los Angeles, where external validation and conformity often overshadow individual authenticity (Rowlands, 2020; SongTell, 2020). This theme resonates with the idea that understanding oneself is crucial for developing a strong and resilient sense of identity in the face of societal pressures.

Self-understanding is a fundamental aspect of modern identity theory. It involves introspection, self-reflection, and the exploration of one's values, beliefs, and personal experiences. By examining and questioning their own thoughts, emotions, and motivations, individuals can gain insight into their authentic selves and form a solid foundation for identity development (Giddens, 2020; Rowlands, 2020). *City of Angels* also highlights the importance of self-discovery and the journey of self-reflection in finding one's true identity beyond societal expectations. The protagonist in the song grapples with the misguided pursuit of fame and material success, ultimately realizing the emptiness and superficiality of such pursuits. This realization aligns with the idea that self-understanding involves uncovering one's genuine desires, passions, and values, rather than conforming to external pressures or superficial aspirations.

The analysis of Em Beihold's song *City of Angels* and the exploration of modern identity theory provide valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary identity formation and the significance of understanding oneself in navigating modern society. The song captures the struggle of maintaining authenticity in a city known for its superficiality and external validation, aligning with key themes and concepts within modern identity theory. Understanding oneself is a fundamental aspect of modern identity. It involves self-reflection, self-acceptance, and the exploration of personal values, beliefs, and experiences (Berman, 2020; Sonichits, 2020). Through this process, individuals can develop a strong and resilient sense of self that aligns with their authentic nature, enabling them to withstand societal pressures and cultivate a meaningful and fulfilling life.

The concept of understanding oneself is intertwined with self-acceptance and self-compassion. Through self-reflection and exploration, individuals can develop a greater sense of self-awareness and acceptance of their strengths, weaknesses, and unique qualities (Berman, 2020; Sarmi et al., 2023). This self-acceptance serves as a foundation for building a positive and authentic identity that aligns with one's true nature. In the context of modern identity, understanding oneself is not a static or final destination but an ongoing process. It requires a willingness to engage in introspection, to question societal norms and expectations, and to navigate the complexities of personal growth and self-discovery (Sarmi et al., 2023; M. F. Smith et al., 2023). By understanding oneself, individuals can cultivate a sense of authenticity, resilience, and fulfillment in their pursuit of a meaningful and fulfilling life. In addition, the correlation between *City of Angels* and modern identity theory

emphasizes the tension between individuality and conformity, the significance of self-reflection and self-acceptance, and the influence of the social environment on identity formation (Annasai et al., 2023; SongTell, 2020). It underscores the complexities individuals face in establishing and maintaining their identity in a rapidly evolving social landscape.

4. CONCLUSION

Understanding oneself is an ongoing and dynamic process that requires self-reflection, self-acceptance, and a willingness to explore and embrace one's authentic identity. By navigating the complexities of modern society and actively engaging in self-discovery, individuals can cultivate a sense of authenticity, resilience, and fulfillment. Em Beihold's *City of Angels* serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of understanding oneself in the pursuit of a genuine and meaningful life. *City of Angels* highlights the challenges of conforming to societal expectations and the importance of self-discovery in navigating contemporary identity. The lyrics encourage listeners to question the pursuit of fame, wealth, and external validation, urging them to recognize that life in a city like Los Angeles encompasses much more than superficial aspirations. The song serves as a reminder that understanding oneself goes beyond conforming to societal norms and involves exploring one's true desires, passions, and values.

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