Portmanteau

A Publication by The Gender Studies Program
at Slippery Rock University
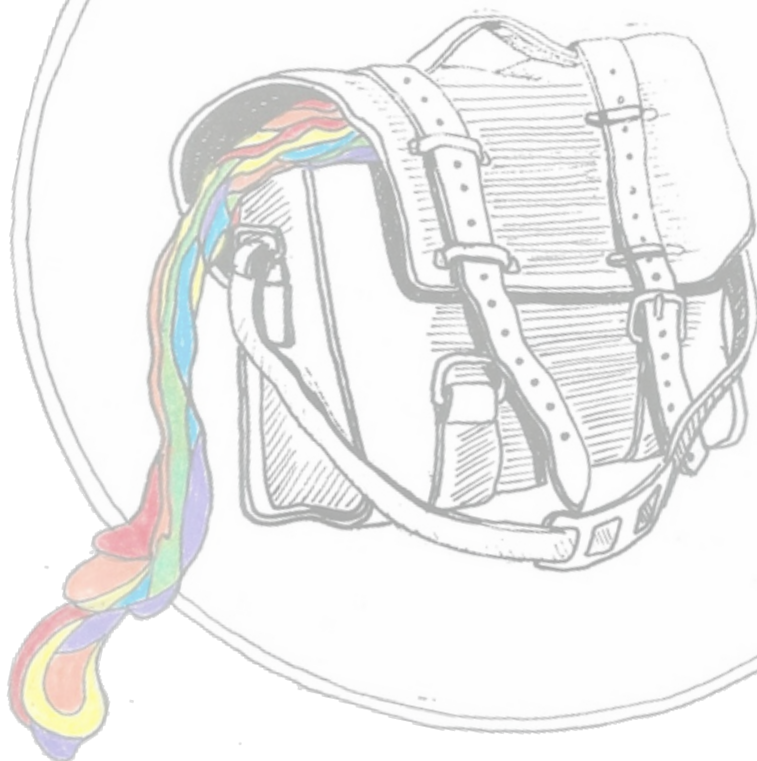
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Edited by Derek Brewer

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Foreword

"Portmanteau" means both "a large suitcase" and "a word blending the sounds and meanings of two words." The title of this journal is appropriate, both because the essays published in it work to unpack the "luggage" of cultural expectations and because they consider the intersectional meanings of those expectations within systems of privilege and disempowerment. Our bodies and psyches are cultural texts, produced, policed and contested in myriad ways which can reinforce but also resist structural biases. The essays in this volume of *Portmanteau* explore, unmoor and interrogate multiple norms: sexism, racism, ableism and ethnocentrism, among others. In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision" (1972), feminist writer Adrienne Rich writes, "Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched, we cannot know ourselves." Almost fifty years later, her point stands – and this is more the case for those who inhabit subject positions which give us access to power, whose embodiment and emmindment more closely approximate what Disability Studies scholar Rosemarie Garland Thomson calls a "normate." Authors Cassidy Leasure, Autumn Murphy, Kourtney Kotvas, and Rachel Frey remind us of this in their thoughtful and evocative essays, which engage the damages of toxic masculinity, the privileging of the phallus in a cisgender porn culture, the eugenicist negation of women of color and the pervasive power attached to whiteness in a white supremacist culture. Lauren Fedorek extends this in her essay on how anti-Muslim porn supports Islamophobic, xenophobic and misogynistic prejudice.

Yet even if, on the surface, we might approximate a cultural normate, these essays also remind us that what is visible does not necessarily tell the whole or the primary "truth" about an individual. As Emma Martin reminds us in her essay on invisible disability, what is absent can accrue as much meaning as what is present in a scopic regime. Conversely, reading the "visible" body can ignore complex realities, as Kelsey Boyle argues in her essay on the hormonal discrimination of female-identified athletes. When Olympic champion Caster Semenya loses a landmark legal case with the IAFF and is told she must reduce her naturally-occurring testosterone levels in order to complete as a woman, we need to grapple with the imbrication of visible and invisible in ways that deconstruct binary thinking. Chealyn Leitzel compels us to do this when she writes about the risks and benefits of embodying a disability, and Margaret (Maggie) Calvert re-frames our ability to do so in her essay on feminism and Buddhism, in which she writes, "it is difficult for some to accept that the categories of man and woman are intrinsically empty." Shrija Shrestha complicates the complexities of intersectional oppression in her essay about the mental health crisis of refugees. While many of us think of physical challenges facing refugees, too rarely do we contemplate the psychological support that they may require. As Shrestha puts it, "Not all refugees suffer from physical (visible) torture." In the binary taxonomic schema which structures so much of western thought, questioning binary concepts is difficult but also imperative, as these authors remind us.

Finally, in a journal focused on intersectional issues, questions of language are key. How do we "speak" privilege? How are systemic bias and oppression articulated? How do discursive choices and patterns contribute to the construction of "normates" while stigmatizing non-normative ways of being? In "Hate Speech and Censorship," Alexandra Baddour trouble the waters of First Amendment rights by asking when/if speech should be censored, under what circumstances and to what end. Such debates are rooted in structural inequities but are also necessary to move us closer to social justice and equity. In a volume whose words resonate, inspire and provocate, we invite you to read on.

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Focusing on the Phallus

Socializing Society's Obsession with Male Anatomy

Today's mainstream pornography, and perhaps the majority of pornography throughout history as well, portrays the phallus as a godly object. Women are supposedly lost without it, and they certainly cannot reach orgasm without the help of a penis in popular straight porn. This has been the mainstream narrative regarding women and sex for a very long time, but in reality, only twenty to thirty-five percent of women in the United States report experiencing orgasms from penetration alone (Tuana). So why does mainstream pornography continue to tell us that the male genitals are so important whenever it comes to sex, and how does this mindset influence our daily lives? Society and pornography arguably influence each other and perpetuate a misogynist obsession with the penis, seeping into our daily life and influencing the way we act with one another in both sexual and platonical relationships. The prevalence of and obsession with male genitalia in mainstream pornography influences culture in various ways: in terms of media, science, medicine, and language, among others.

Before the nineteenth century, scientists, who were overwhelmingly males at the time, were trying to decipher the human body. In doing so, they concluded that the anatomy of the female body was simply an inferior version of the male body. A common belief t was that a woman's genitalia was similar to a man's penis but inside out (Laqueur; Tuana). (I actually remember my peers tell me this in elementary school, and I believed them since we did not have a good sex education). According to Nancy Tuana, a feminist American philosopher, "men's bodies were believed to be the true form of human biology and the standard against which female structures-bones, brains, and genitalia alike-were to be compared" (Tuana), thus implying that women were (are) nothing more than a lesser version of man and that the female body is a biological mistake. Furthermore, a woman's body potentially does not fully exist without the penis since without man, there would be no woman. According to a one-sex model for understanding sexed distinctions, there are no other sexes, just male and those (women) whose differences mark them as "inferior" embodiments of an ideal (male) model. This view reinforced misogynistic values by stating that women are nothing without men, and that the male body was the "true form" of human anatomy (Tuana).

According to Laqueur, this one-sex model was replaced by a two-sex model between the 17th and 19th centuries, where women's and men's bodies came to be understood as incommensurately different, with women's bodies remaining the subordinate model. As part of this, the value and importance of the clitoris is radically revised. Its erasure, and the negation by extension of women's orgasms, during the aforementioned time period has had a ripple effect on today's views of female sexuality, including a continued silence about our sexuality. Not teaching young girls about their own bodies can be detrimental to a woman's sexual development. Before being sexually active with others, a girl will most likely start her sexual journey by

herself through clitoral stimulation. As she ages, though, at least in American culture, she is taught through peers, television, music, and many other forms of socialization that vaginal penetration is the ultimate sexual experience – this despite the reality, as noted previously, that the majority of women do not experience orgasm through vaginal penetration (Tuana). Therefore, one could say that American women are taught by their social constructs to be non-orgasmic. This could then potentially be harmful to a woman's psyche; sex is classified as one of the basic human needs, and having healthy sexual experiences can be therapeutic, empowering, and intimate. More generally, this reinforces a social valuation of men, the man's penis, and his sexual stimulation while denigrating women emotionally by inhibiting their ability to fully understand their own sexuality.

It is challenging to tell women to embrace their sexuality when men's their sexuality and orgasm have been reified throughout history while women are barely recognized. For example, in ancient Pompeii, brothels are perceived to have had an important role in their culture. Phallic symbols are seen in the street corners pointing in the direction to the nearest brothel (Dhwty). Also, throughout most of ancient Rome, the phallic symbol was used for good luck, and "young boys were given amulets known as bulla, which included a fascinum—a phallus amulet meant to grant protection" (Pilny). Putting these two facts together, one can assume that the arrows pointing to the brothels were penises because the men who followed them would "get lucky," a phrase that is used today in the same manner. Therefore, the penis here functioned almost identically with today's cultural reference to the penis as a sign of pleasure,luck and power.

Traditionally, the man's ejaculation has been linked to virility and a way to create life whereas a woman's orgasm was, and still can be, typically seen as sinful or simply unimportant.   Since sperm is ejaculated to create a fetus (at least in in the societally-approved and heteronormative narrative) it is not necessary for a woman to orgasm in order to procreate. For this reason, among others, the male climax is typically viewed as not only strong and virile but necessary for sex to have occurred at all. In Emily Martin's essay, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles," she discusses the adjectives used by scientists to describe the egg, which are typically associated with negative connotations. Specifically, referencing medical and biology textbooks, she cites instances where the egg is "'is `transported,' `is swept,' or even `drifts' along the fallopian tube." On the other hand, sperm are described with powerful adjectives. Martin gives a few specific examples of what she has found in scientific literature:

> …sperm are small, 'streamlined, and invariably active.' They 'deliver' their genes to the egg, 'activate the developmental program of the egg,' and have a 'velocity' that is often remarked upon. Their tails are 'strong' and efficiently powered. Together with the forces of ejaculation, they can "propel the semen into the deepest recesses of the vagina (Martin).

The connotation of the words "strong" and "propel" imply that the sperms' ability to complete these actions are good whereas the egg is "passive," implying that eggs are weak (Martin). In pornography, men are usually perceived to be the more dominant sex partner, especially if there are multiple men and only one woman. The men can be seen using their strength against the women by hitting, slapping, and pushing during sex and in the money shot, where a man ejaculates on a woman's face or chest, their semen marks the scene as being done and the woman as his. In this way, the language used in science reinforces the sexist gender roles that society claims as fact, and pornography emphasizes the same gender stereotypes. Both science and pornography are deeply rooted in misogynistic norms and values in a society dominated by heterosexual masculinity.

In today's mainstream pornography, the viewer can witness other phallocentric actions portrayed in a way that normalizes the centrality of the penis Almost always, as noted, the man will finish on a woman's chest, face, or back, emphasizing the importance of the man's climax and ending the scene. It is rare to find a clip of mainstream, heterosexual pornography that ends with a woman's orgasm because pornography directors and producers tell the men that they must orgasm. This is another way that women are taught to be non-orgasmic through pornography and its increased use as an educator. In pornography, there is a demand for evidence that the male porn actor has finished for said actor to be paid properly -- hence the term "money shot." If the women's pleasure (her actual and not fake-pornography pleasure) received the same amount of attention, it would show that the women's sexuality and pleasure are important enough to end the scene; it might send the message that women are able to be just as sexual as men.

There is clearly a focus on male pleasure and preference for men in heterosexual pornography, and one can argue that the penis could be considered more important than the actual woman, which perpetuates the suppression of female pleasure. This also can diminish the value of the women, both in porn and on a societal scale. Do straight men watch pornography for the supposedly "hot babes" or do they watch it to see the final scene of a man ejaculating within the standard narrative of the money shot onto a woman's chest? The focus on a (usually anonymously) penis in heterosexual pornography is striking. The camera will focus on it in a longing manner, emphasizing the size and shape of the penis that is penetrating the woman, creating a consumer base that believes that they need a penis like that to get this type of pleasure that the actors seem to be having. The focus in mainstream pornography is not the sex that the two or more actors are having together, but it is about the sex that the viewers could be having if they were having sex with someone if they had a penis like the male porn actor on the screen. The obsession with the penis in pornography is dominated by society's view of masculinity and the sexual norms determining how men and women should perform, creating social norms for the size, shape, and ability of the penis that men should seek to emulate.

Even more intriguing is the focus on a male penis in lesbian porn, especially on mainstream pornography sites like PornHub, Brazzers, and RedTube. It is most likely because much of lesbian pornography is made for male viewers and consequently, for men's penises. Simply click on the lesbian porn tab and look at the pictures; one scroll of the mouse and the viewer will see an array of strap-on penises, captions regarding male genitals, and threesomes with two women and one man. I am certainly not trying to dismiss the fact that many lesbians use a strap-on during sex; however, the role of the phallus is still worth analyzing. One theory, as I've mentioned, is that the "lesbian porn" tab on porn sites are actually for men who fetishize lesbians. For example, one video on RedTube had two women in a taxi, and one of the women "was missing something," and she "couldn't get off without it." Then the driver of the taxi, another woman, took a strap-on penis out of the glove box. Other discourse referring to the penis was used, too; one woman said something similar to, "this will do the trick." The emphasis on how important the penis is, even in lesbian pornography, is quite curious. It is almost as if the writers of the scripts (who are likely male) are saying, "Well, these women can't possibly be sexually complete without a penis, so we're going to have to include a strap-on, vibrator, or dildo to finish them off." It is quite demeaning to women, especially women having sex with other women, to negate their agency and ability in sex and assume that they will always be missing something if they are not having sex with men or with a prosthetic male penis.

The importance of the phallus so prominently displayed in pornography seeps into our society in many ways. Perhaps the most obvious overlap is in the medical field. As stated previously, the very language is used in science and biology can be considered phallocentric. Also, pills like Viagra have helped men for years to maintain erect penises like the ones they see in pornography. This impossible standard for men to be able to achieve rock hard erections and be able to have sex for an hour or more has pushed many men to taking drugs to perform up to what they now believe is standard. Even on pornography sites, the overlap from pornography to society is evident when ads populate the screen for drugs like Viagra and other erectile drugs. Another example of how pornography has shaped society's view on medication occurred on a news website about all things involving the United States military in an article that noted, "according to data from the Defense Health Agency, DoD actually spent $41.6 million on Viagra — and $84.24 million total on erectile dysfunction prescriptions — last year" (Kime). Unfortunately, the numbers only go up from there; according to personalliberty.com, "data collected by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) indicates that Medicare has spent more than $240 million of taxpayer money on penis pumps for elderly men over the past decade." It is fascinating that the United States spends so much money on Viagra, and drugs similar to it, but there is still no Viagra-like drug for women. Why is it that taxpayers are more comfortable spending more to fund erectile dysfunction than a Viagra for women, abortion, or even birth control? It is possible to argue that the reason the system is set up like this is because there is an unnecessary obsession with the penis, and the U.S. culture quite literally worships it.

Another way phallocentrism permeates society is in the language that is used daily. In the United States, well-known sayings that rely on phallicwords or meanings are used by people of all ages. For instance, a person who is bragging about how good they are at something would be considered "cocky." Considering the idea that society thinks of penises as superior, cocky could possibly be the word of choice because to have a penis would be worth bragging about. Also, if a person is not doing what they are supposed to be doing, they are "dicking around," and while the meaning of this could be interpreted several ways, I perceive it as relying on the tired social stereotype that the penis does not always do as it is supposed to; people will say that a man is "thinking with his penis" (or thinking with his "little head") and therefore not listening to reason. Another popular saying today is "suck my dick." This is used as either the ultimate argument ender or as a joke. There is certainly a power dynamic at play in this saying; the definitive nature of it is demanding and controlling. For example, if one person insults another, the one insulting might say, "suck my dick," demanding that the insulter bows down to the other's command. When women use this saying, they are reinforcing the idea that the phallus is the ultimate weapon and succumbing to gender roles that reinforce cultural valuations of the penis as superior. When "suck my dick" is said in pornography, the woman has no other choice than to do what he says, and will eventually perform fellatio and obey the man's command. Therefore, there is a strong link with the saying "suck my dick" in pornography and a culture that reinforces the gender norms of men as aggressors and women being passive in return. Also, whena person says that they have "big balls," they are saying that they are brave. As problematic as this saying is, it is also used by both men and women. The bigger the metaphorical balls a person has, the braver they are. Therefore, the opposite, having no balls (a.k.a. a vagina), would insinuate that person could not possibly be brave at all. Overall, sayings that are not outwardly talking about the penis are still engulfed with hidden, phallic meanings that privilege the phallus and the penis as powerful.

Another way a focus on the phallus reinforces sexist gender norms is reflected in the way society references everyday objects when describing a penis. For example, a banana, drill, hot dog, meat stick, sausage, tool, or train can be used synonymously with the word "penis" in north American culture, and more often than not, people will know what the "drill" refers to. There is a long list of phallic euphemisms in the cleverly titled article "Dicktionary - Penis Euphemisms," where hundreds of words or phrases that are used to replace the word "penis" are listed in alphabetical order. Because of this overlap in words, when discussing an actual drill or actual banana, the person listening then has to decipher what their conversation is really about. For instance, when a person states, "this is a long banana," the person they are talking to will have to think twice about what the other person has just said; are they referencing a penis or an actual banana? This then causes people to think about penises far too often The relation between the homonyms is menacing and has an everlasting effect on people, compelling usto think about the phallus in myriad ways that come to be normalized. Pornography perpetuates this by using some of the words listed above to replace the word penis. For instance, a common phrase on pornography video titles

is to say that a woman gets "drilled." This is both violent and degrading, likening male genitals to tools and females to be something that need fixing. Pornography also will use some of the phallic-shaped objects and phallic euphemisms as props in videos. Therefore, if someone watched a woman practically giving a blowjob to a banana or popsicle, that image will be encrypted into said person's brain, and the next time they see a person eating a banana, they might interpret it sexually. Overall, the way American culture uses objects to reference penises creates a complex overlap in a person's mind where the phallus in inescapable.

The penis is also prominent in American culture through humor and insults about penises. Much of popular American humor is focused on the phallus. All a person would have to do is watch one episode of Family Guy to see how many jokes are centered around penises. Even the main character, Peter, has a scrotum-like chin. Our society worships these kinds of jokes, whereas vagina jokes tend to be a bit awkward. Arguably the most common types of penis jokes are the ones referring to size. Males place so much emphasis on their own and others' penis sizes like it is a competition, and as much as it is used as a joke, it can also be used as an insult. Men often attempt to belittle other men by jokes that make small size the ultimate offene. I once read the comment section of a post about women's natural bodies and the prevalence of the "camel toe." One man commented that it is a natural thing, equal to a man's penis outline being seen in pants. Then another man started arguing with him about how it is not equal and that camel toes are disgusting. After, the men started arguing in the comment section about each other's penis sizes. 5be9h wrote, "lmfao funny af… how do u know if it's small?? Have u ever seen it or took a picture with it??? Trust me u don't wish to try it *laughing emojis. *" The banter back and forth continues exactly how it started.

Pornography perpetuates this idea of inferiority based on penis size by giving roles to men with abnormally large penises or shooting from various camera angles that make it look larger than it really is. The perpetuation of this narrative leads many porn consumers (especially men) to understand this as the norm and to believe that there might be something wrong with them, their penis size, shape and power, and their ejaculate. The common tradition of bachelorette parties in American culture also reinforces the idea that the penis is godly and powerful. Traditionally, women were supposed to avoid all sexual relations prior to marriage. Then, whenit is time for her to get married, the emphasis on sex and on the penis is enormous since bstention from sex is no longer necessary. Bachelorette parties today often feature penis shaped cakes, hats, glasses, cards, foods, balloons, and other various gifts emphasizing the penis as something worth celebrating. For example, my cousin had her bachelorette party recently and her gifts included glow in the dark penis straws, a headband with two penises pointing upwards to look like ears, and penis shaped lollipops. In contrast, bachelor parties do not focus on the vagina itself but on sex as a whole. It is typically more socially acceptable for a man not to remain a virgin until he gets married; therefore the vagina would not be as much of a mystery, ensuring that it is not the main focus. Usually, the focus of the bachelor party is one last night of freedom until

they are "tied down" for life. This is especially seen in movies and television shows where men will gather together for their friend's final night of being single. Take The Hangover for an example. The plot of all of The Hangover movies is that one of the friends is getting married, so they go out to celebrate with him. Often times they talk about having sex with other women and make sure the friend is accepting of the fact that they will not be able to sleep with anyone else (Phillips). The pornography script emphasizes the penis as the point of pleasure during sex, supporting the bachelorette party idea that the penis is what all of these women have been waiting for. This is also in relation to what I wrote above about lesbian porn and how pornography is usually written for male consumption. Overall, the American culture of bachelorette parties not only reinforces but also can create the idea that women strive to finally be able to have sex, not with their love, but with the phallus.

Throughout western history, the penis has dominated our cultural imagination, and the medical and scientific erasure of female genitals has been integrated into the mainstream porn narrative and, by extension, into society's perception of female sexuality in the present. In pornography, the emphasis on the penis contributes to the emphasis on the penis outside of pornography as well. However, the inverse can also be true; the importance of the penis in the daily lives of people can contribute to the importance of the penis in pornography. This overlap can be seen in science, medicine, tradition, language, and other aspects of American culture. Overall, the misogynist history of the phallic in culture in general is likely to contribute to society's fixation with it today. This obsession is seen in and effects people's daily lives inside and outside of pornography and sex, and shapes the way that we, as a society perceive ourselves and those around us.

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Lauren Fedorek

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Policing Islam in a Pornified Culture

Introduction

Pornography is undoubtedly home for many racist beliefs, actions, attitudes, and ideas. Mainstream pornography that may be considered "normal" typically only includes white, cisgender men and women. The absence of people of color in pornography is astounding. If you were to visit a website such as "Porn Hub," people of color are categorized and viewed as fetishes. This fosters and reinforces a problematic segregation between people of color and white people.

Almost every race is racially stereotyped in pornography. A Black man in porn is glorified and fetishized for his abnormally large penis, thereby reducing him to only a part of his body. An Asian man is usually portrayed as a feminine man who is submissive. For Black women, the focus is almost always on their large buttocks and is usually enhanced with oils and close shots of her bottom. Latina women are typically fetishized for their Spanish speaking and many times are told to speak in Spanish during porn scenes.

In a Porn Studies class I took, we discussed these issues that pertain to Black men, Latina women and Asian men. However, we didn't spend a significant amount of time discussing Muslim women and their role in pornography. It is crucial to have discussions about the place held by Muslim women in porn and some of the ramifications that 9/11 has had on beliefs about Muslim women.

Muslim women undeniably hold a prevalent place in porn. In this paper, I explore the ways in which Muslim women are objectified and reduced to their bodies and hijabs in pornography. I examine some of the meanings behind specific porn videos and how they can affect the Muslim community and Muslim women specifically. I research some commonly held beliefs about Muslim women and relate them to how porn can foster and reaffirm these beliefs and ideas through mere "fantasy." I also discuss Foucault and his ideas about self-policing and discuss the threat of patriarchy among men, specifically white cisgender men. Along with this, I analyze how desire can be produced by the porn industry.

Cultural Significance of the Hijab or Veil

In Muslim porn, the indication of the Islamic faith is portrayed through the hijab or veil. This makes it crucial to understand what the veil means to women (and men) of Islamic faith. To understand Muslim porn, we must first understand the veil.

As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the hijab is "the traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women." According to BBC, the hijab is "the principle of modesty." It is important to note this contradiction in porn. A woman is not being modest while performing sexual acts on camera, yet she wears the hijab to signify her modesty.

The Quran suggests that both men and women of Islamic faith are supposed to dress and act in a modest fashion. However, in western culture, we tend to think primarily of the Muslim women as the modest individuals. Although many Muslim men are conservative in their dress and actions, Muslim women are typically held to higher standards to maintain their modesty.

In her article, Roberts writes about how Muslim women grapple with how to assimilate to American culture post 9/11, especially regarding their decision about whether or not to wear the veil.

A prevalent question about the veil is whether it represents oppression or freedom. There is no right answer to this. Lughod talks about her experience as a Muslim woman in her article "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?". She explains that many questions about Muslim women in a general sense were proposed to her. However, she cannot answer all of these questions because she is not every Muslim woman, she is just one Muslim woman. Therefore, the veil may represent something positive for some, yet negative for others.

Watching "Muslim Porn"

To begin my research, I watched some porn videos that included women in hijabs. I used Porn Hub as my source. While on Porn Hub, I clicked "categories." There were numerous categories including different races and fetishes. The top categories included Hentai, Lesbian, Anal, Cartoon, Threesome, Mature, Gay, Teen, Bondage, MILF, Big Dick, and Creampie.

While searching through the categories, there were an abundance of sex acts and categories I had never heard before. However, and to my surprise, "Muslim" was not a category. I was shocked because of the fetishizing of the hijab and women of Middle-Eastern descent. The closest category to "Muslim" was a category labeled "Arab," which featured the porn actress Mia Khalifa as the pictorial image representing the category.

The first video I selected and that was at the top of the list was a video where a woman (wearing a hijab) and a man, whose face was never shown and blurred, were eating dinner. The man, without the woman's consent, begins to play with her vagina underneath the table and begins inserting his fingers in her vagina. She appears to be completely uninterested in the sexual act and offers no indications of sexual gratification or fulfillment. This action proceeds for about five minutes.

Based on his voice and color of skin, the man in this video appears to be Middle Eastern. He directs her to stand up and he pushes all the food on the table off to the floor. He then lifts her on the table and begins playing with her vagina again. He removes all of her clothes except her hijab, which remains on during the remainder of the scene. He begins to become increasingly violent and demands that she gets on her knees and perform oral sex on him. The scene ends here.

The stereotype of Muslim women being submissive to controlling Muslim men is clearly portrayed here. The scene reaffirms the western belief that Muslim women are controlled entirely by men. Porn, like this particular scene, reaffirms these stereotypes that Muslim women are oppressed and that Muslim men are abusive and controlling.

As I continued to search under the category "Arab," almost all of the women in all scenes wore hijabs, indicating their Islamic faith. These women are placed on a pedestal as mysterious beings who are conservative and modest. When the clothes are removed, her vulnerability is exposed as she is being exposed. The hijab remains as the one piece of clothing that indicates that she is a woman who is typically conservative and would usually not perform in pornography. The viewer is constantly reminded that this is not just a regular woman but is a Muslim woman. While in real life the hijab can be used to empower these women, it is used in porn to mark them and to reduce them to something less.

The next video I watched again included a woman in a hijab. This time, the man was white. It is obvious that the woman remains in pain and discomfort throughout the video. It is very reflective of a rape occurring. At one point, she takes her hijab and covers her mouth with it. The man forcefully pushes it aside. She was trying to hide herself from him, but he would not accept it. He continuously says to her, "show me how you like it."

This video serves as a way for white men to vicariously live through the male porn actor. He imagines himself as the man in the video, someone who looks like him. Here he fantasizes about what it would be like to have relations with one of these "mysterious" women. In a similar circumstance, many white men watch interracial porn to imagine what it would be like to sexually violate a Black woman. The porn provides a safe space for the man to explore his deepest, darkest fantasies with women deemed oppressed and exotic.

After exploring the category of "Arab," I then used the search bar and typed "Muslim." One video from the website "Teen Pies" struck me the most powerfully. This video includes a young girl playing the role of a foreign exchange student with a heavy accent who is very modest in dress. The white man is allowing the woman to stay in his house if she does some chores during her stay. She repeatedly calls the man "sir" and agrees to do whatever he says.

The scene then cuts to the man in another room on a phone call and there is a loud crash in the kitchen. The young woman drops a few pans on the floor and begins apologizing frantically because, as she says, "men in her country are in charge."

This allows the white man, in not just this video but many videos, to serve the role of a "white savior." Since the white man is not as bad as the man in her home country, he is a hero who cannot do worse to her than she has already endured Therefore, she cannot be abused by the white man, but only helped and rescued. Any abuse done to her by the white man is therefore justifiable.

In this video, the man proceeds to coerce the young woman into performing oral sex on him. She tells him, "I don't know, sir. I don't want to do this, I've never done anything like this before." He replies to her that it is okay, that it is normal and to "kiss it." The white man in this video is "deflowering" a very vulnerable type of girl, a Muslim girl. Since a Muslim woman is typically modest, it is a fantasy for many white men to be able to reach an unrealistic goal to have sex with a Muslim woman.

She continues performing oral sex on the man, and then vaginal sex occurs. At the end, he ejaculates inside of her and she squeezes it out, in other words, a "cream pie." The scene ends with him asking her, "How do you feel after getting cummed in for the first time?" This is an amazing feat for the white man because he has successfully completed the unimaginable act of dominant sex with one of the most conservative women in a white, racist and colonialist imagination In this moment, he has triumphantly marked new territory for himself.

A significant number of the videos I watched, almost all of them, represented the Muslim women as "docile bodies," a term used by Michel Foucault.   The women must be "managed" and shaped into a sexually submissive being while listening to every command made by a man, especially a white man. Casting the Muslim woman as a docile body through pornography fosters beliefs of inferiority and reason to believe that the Muslim woman should be controlled. Pornography places these Muslim women at the nadir in a hierarchy of people. These views of the Muslim women by pornography do not just exist in porn. They overlap into mainstream society and the fine line between pornography and mainstream values continues to disappear. For the men who watch these videos, they are reaffirmed that Muslim women are beneath them in the hierarchy. For the Muslim women that may see one of these videos, they may succumb to their lower place on the hierarchy.

There was only one video that portrayed sex that seemed consensual and all members in the act participated. This video was called "Mia Khalifa and Step Mom Juliana Vega." Again, both women wore hijabs. The storyline was that Mia Khalifa brought home her new boyfriend and her "stepmom," Juliana Vega, made advances towards him. The two women then compete in a series of sex acts deeming who can "suck" and "fuck" better.

In this video, Mia Khalifa is dressed as young girl wearing a light pink shirt and colorful socks. Juliana Vega seems to school Mia Khalifa on how to please her boyfriend, in a way reflecting an incestual relationship between mother and daughter.

 This video was very different from the rest, as the women were much more participative in the sex and more aggressive than the man because they were in competition with each other. The main component that separates this video from the rest is that the two women eventually remove their hijabs. Since these women are being shown as sexually aggressive in a savage way that disrupts their preconceived stereotype as docile women, the hijab being removed represents complete exposure of the woman and sexual liberation. To free the woman from the tyrannical reign of Muslim men, the hijab is removed to represent that freedom. To add to the symbolism, the Muslim woman is acclimated to western culture where most women, especially American, do not wear hijabs. She is then assimilating to the white man's western culture and becoming a docile body in that way. The women in the other videos who were much less active and more violantely controlled kept their hijabs on the whole time to indicate the sexual shyness and the submissiveness "typical" of Muslim women in the colonial imagination.
conceived by many.

Production of Desire

Pornography can influence our sexual desires. It can foster new fetishes and sexual interests that may be sparked by watching a new video. Many people are able to develop a new fetish by watching a new pornographic scene that sparks interest.

Numerous studies have been conducted with an objective to find a correlation between pornography and brain activity. For example, Steven Pace (2014) has examined neuroplasticity and acquiring tastes for new material. Brain maps are constantly rewired throughout the course of a life span and can be rewired through the consumption of pornography. He discusses how chemicals such as dopamine are released during the viewing of pornography. Much like drugs, the brain can become habituated to images that are no longer stimulating. The person affected may seek new material to give them that sense of euphoria once again.

Habituation is constantly occurring as we become desensitized to material that once stimulated us. The need to search for new material can foster an interest in Muslim women featuring the hijab. We are told what is sexy and what is desirable. Muslim women are people who fit that category yet remain forbidden in the mainstream western world. By exploiting this race and religion of women, desire is conceived by many.

The Threat of Patriarchy

Jennifer Johnson beautifully articulates the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism in her article To Catch a Curious Clicker (2010). In Johnson's article, she argues that patriarchy and capitalism thrive and rely on each other.
She makes the point that since women were much more dependent on men before World War II, patriarchy was much more prevalent during those times. She writes, "modern imperial capitalism has betrayed patriarchy by no longer guaranteeing the economic dependence of women" (Johnson). Therefore, many men feel micro-disempowered if their patriarchy is threatened. Because of the threat of diminished patriarchal power, many men are more vulnerable to pornography. In this way, the man may develop a dependent relationship on pornography in order to maintain his power.

Watching porn featuring Muslim women is a way for men to feel micro-empowered. Since Muslim women are deemed docile and controllable, they are an easy target for men to display their dominance vicariously through the porn they watch. They may justify their decision to watch the porn because it is not actually them who is inflicting the act on the women. The eroticism of having complete control over a foreign being such as a Muslim woman creates a fantasy for many porn watchers.

Malek Alloula also touches upon the threat of patriarchy in his piece The Colonial Harem. In his piece, Alloula discusses the eroticism of Middle Eastern women as they were photographed for post cards by French colonizers. The Middle Eastern women were then fetishized and exploited through the photographs. Alloula describes the images taken of the women as "imaginary revenge" (The Colonial Harem).

The French colonizers were imposing their dominance on the women and producing them as docile bodies. As erotic women, they were deemed as less than, and the photos served to maintain control over them and to establish and maintain patriarchy in new colonies. In this way, modern mainstream porn maintains control of Muslim women through videography rather than photography. Mostly white cisgender men are capable of making this domination more violent and demeaning through the horrendous sex acts performed in much mainstream pornography. The stakes to maintain patriarchy are higher as feminist movements continue to fight for equality for all people, therefore suggesting that the abuse will increase. The exploitation of Middle Eastern women in The Colonial Harem continues to repeat itself in way that is evolving with the new industry and technology.

Post 9/11

Islamophobia undeniably skyrocketed in mainstream media and American culture after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. According to the FBI, there was a 1,700% increase of reported hate crimes post 9/11. Ecklund and Khan (2012) found in their study that negative attitudes towards Muslims post 9/11 are particularly negative in situations such as boarding an airplane.

A reflection of the islamophobia in our country is evident in rumors fostered by the right regarding former President Barack Obama. During his election, many claimed that Obama was not a natural-born citizen of America and even had dummies modeled of him being lynched in violent ways. Hatred of Obama is often anchored to the belief that he practices the Islamic faith.

Republicans such as Joe Walsh have publicly announced their belief that Obama is Muslim through social media. Walsh writes, "I think Obama is Muslim. I think in his head and in his heart he has always been" (Hensch). As we know, the United States is a country based upon freedom of religion, yet Obama has been demonized because of the rumors about the religion he may or may not practice. If the country is really about freedom of religion, then why is Islam not included or respected?

In terms of pornography, a way to control Islamophobic fears that many white cisgender men may experience is to assert their dominance over a Muslim woman, even if it is vicariously through another man in porn. In a way, if the man faces his fear it becomes less frightening to him. To conquer a fear, you must learn how to manage it and, for some, doing it through the safety of a computer screen gives the comfort and security needed to endure Islamophobic anxieties that undermine the imagined "American superiority.".

Referring to Foucault, conquering the islamophobia may entail policing oneself from within. To be in total control and conserve one's patriarchy, self-policing and picturing oneself as existing in a panopticon can motivate a person to overcome their fear or hatred in a safe way. However, this leads me to ask whether this self-policing would help the hatred dissipate or if it would in fact ignite the hatred and reaffirm a legitimation of Islamophobia.

Conclusion

Muslim porn is a category that allows racist beliefs and stereotypes about Muslim women to remain prevalent. Through this constant reinforcement, the ideas about these women are recycled and promoted through a multibillion-dollar industry. Muslim women and other people of color remain as fetishes in the porn industry and foster the racist perspectives and "fantasies."

My experiences watching the Muslim pornography have deeply alarmed me and broadened my horizons on this issue. I can determine that Muslim porn has a distinct characteristic about it, which is, demeaning and controlling the Muslim women into docile bodies. The hijab is a fascinating statement in pornography as it serves as hypocrisy to it's true meaning, therefore, disrespecting the Islamic faith and people who are Muslim. These large industries are in control of rewriting the scripts that their stories tell and creating a respectful environment for Muslim women.

The ways in which our desire is produced is also manipulated by what the porn industry produces for the viewers. I would argue that the porn industry is a trend setter for not just the porn world, but also the mainstream world. As our desires continue to habituate, our desires change and sometimes turn into desires that are offensive, misogynistic, racist and even dangerous.

With the threat of patriarchy in the white male cisgender community comes the determination to maintain that patriarchy. With capitalism becoming more independent of patriarchy, the micro empowerment of the individual white cisgender man is crucial to his confidence in himself. He must retain control of his situations and porn is his outlet. Muslim women are the coercible people, in their perspectives, to manage. The Muslim women can make the man feel like his patriarchy is still intact.

After 9/11, the irrational fear and hatred of Muslims spread wide across the United States. As hate crimes increased, so did the stereotyping towards Muslim women. Pornography, again, can continue to reinforce the constant hatred and misrepresentation of Muslim women. One may self-police himself in order to justify the ludicrous beliefs that are imposed not only by personal conceptions, but also the media.

With constant reminders of what Muslim men and women are supposed to be, it is no surprise that the porn industry helps to contribute to these beliefs. My hopes are that with more feminist pornographers and pornographers who are women or minorities, that the porn industry will expand from its racist ways and develop into an industry that is not only fueled by capitalism. I am not sure if the first step is to start with Muslim porn particularly or if this means to completely band together as a society and rewrite the reoccurring script of the porn industry. One thing is certain, that Muslim women are deeply involved in the production of porn that is considered a fetish and that until porn is rewritten, they will continue to be perceived as docile women who cannot refuse a man's order.

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[i] Lila Abu Lughod *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?* (2002)

[ii] Michel Foucault defines "docile bodies" as bodies that "may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" in his book Discipline and Punish

[iii] Neuroplasticity: literally flexibility of the brain

[iv] Habituation is a term used by Rebecca Whisnant to describe the desensitization and acclimation to material that was once stimulating

[v] Islamophobia as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is the "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam"

Margaret Calvert

Maggie Calvert is a political science, philosophy, and gender/diversity studies major at Slippery Rock University. My hometown is Butler, Pennsylvania. I am the President of the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance and Philosophy Club, as well as the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion for the SRSGA.

Feminism & Buddhism

It is often difficult to find religions or schools of thought that support feminist ideas because of the historical masculinization of thought, religion, and philosophy. In this paper, I will argue that several ideas within the Buddhist tradition relate to feminism and help to advance certain goals of the movement. I will specifically focus on the concepts of emptiness and essence as tools for feminist philosophy. I will also argue that Buddhism inherently promotes gender equality as a necessary condition of the tradition of thought and not just as a feminist interpretation. To make a thoughtful analysis and comparison of Buddhism to the ideas of feminism, I will be using texts from Robert Wright, Rita Gross, and Stephen Batchelor.

When referring to the feminist movement and feminism in general throughout this paper, I will be focusing specifically on the gender hierarchy and gender equality. The definition of feminism is the social, political, and economic equality of all people regardless of gender identity, race, sexual orientation, or other identities. Feminism is necessarily intersectional, and the applied Buddhist concept of emptiness is helpful to all minoritized identities. However, because most of the historical contexts and examples rely on gender identity, that is the intersection I will focus on most in this paper.

The idea of emptiness from the Buddhist perspective is complex and difficult to grasp. Emptiness is not some abstract idea that is separate from reality but allows people to better understand and cope with the world around them. As Batchelor puts it, "A life centered in awareness of emptiness is simply an appropriate way of being in this changing, shocking, painful, joyous, frustrating, awesome, stubborn, and ambiguous reality." The world is empty of certain things including independent self-existence. Things do not inherently exist independently of one another, but everything exists within and because of everything else. All things exist interdependently. This means that things do not have specific essences, because without their individual parts the whole object cannot exist.

It is difficult for most people to accept the idea of emptiness and reject essentialism. The world is inherently structured by binary categories. The most prominent example of this is gender. Gender hierarchies have existed for many centuries, and it is difficult for some to accept that the categories of man and women are intrinsically empty. Most assume they need to be able to categorize other things and people in order to make sense of the world around them. Frustration emerges when people try to challenge the categories of gender. Transgender people receive backlash because it complicates the world for those who are cisgender, but if cisgender people could accept the interconnectedness of the world and reject their need for essentialism, there would be more support for gender identities that deviate from the binary categories.

Wright discusses the idea of essentialism in his chapter, "The Upside of Emptiness." He explains Paul Bloom's idea that essentialism is part of human nature and something that results from instincts. I agree with this to a certain extent, as stated previously, and I believe that humans feel the need to assign essence to certain things (including other humans) because it is the easiest way to understand themselves in relation to others. I relate these ideas to the concept of implicit bias. Implicit bias is "Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner" (Understanding Implicit Bias). Implicit biases result from beliefs about essences of whole groups of people. When someone has implicit bias about a group or class of people, they assume each member of that community holds the same kind of essence.

The assumption of essence inherently limits our experience within the world. When people associate a particular essence with certain groups of people, they miss out on interactions with those groups. Stereotypes, stigmas, and generalizations are examples of the assumption of essence within society. Different groups appropriate or have designated for them particular stigmas associated with their identities which then assigns them an essence that is not truly representative of that group. Because of these assumed essences, implicit bias occurs. People are immensely complex and should be taken for different things, not just the assumptions and essences that are assigned to them for arbitrary reasons such as the color of their skin or their gender identity.

Implicit biases are subconscious, but they can be managed through exposure. When people have positive experiences with someone from a group toward whom they have implicit biases or prejudices, they are likely to realize their assumptions or assigned essences are incorrect. They are able to realize the emptiness of the categorization that they have assigned to these people. This theory is known as the Contact Hypothesis. The Contact Hypothesis, also known as the Intergroup Contact Theory, "states that under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effect ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members" (Schiappa et al.). Often times, people will avoid the group that they are prejudiced against, prejudice which is a direct result of false generalizations that portray a group in a negative way (Schiappa et al.). What Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes identify as generalizations, I would assign the concept of essence.

If the positive representation of minoritized characters increases, it follows that public opinion about and support of the minoritized group will also increase. When people realize essence cannot be assigned to an entire community by exposing themselves to people from the community against which they hold prejudice, they are able to better experience the world because their interactions become more intersectional rather than becoming complacent and comfortable within their own experiences.

Batchelor recognizes the difficulty in separating essences from people and accepting emptiness: "To experience emptiness is to experience the shocking absence of what normally determines the sense of who you are and the kind of reality you inhabit. It may last only a moment before the habits of a lifetime reassert themselves and close in once more. But for that moment we witness ourselves and the world as open" (Batchelor). We are socialized to make distinctions and categorize one another based on perceived essences. It can be difficult to rid ourselves of those habits, but when it does happen, it is enlightening. Emptiness promotes feminist ideas because it pushes people to reject their implicit biases and promote the well-being of others who may not belong to their social group.

The rejection of essence and the adoption of emptiness allows for the advancement of minoritized identities. Emptiness has been utilized in the past for the empowerment of women specifically within the Buddhist tradition. Buddhism has argued against the idea that men are inherently superior to women because categories including gender are empty, and women therefore have the ability to achieve Nirvana and other goals of the tradition (Gross 91). Women have not been denied the opportunity to be honored and recognized as important figures within the Buddhist traditions, as is typically seen with other religions and schools of thought. Because man cannot exist without woman and vice versa, and because the categories of 'manness' and 'womanness' do not necessarily exist, there is no room for a gender hierarchy. "Furthermore, taken together, the concepts of emptiness and Buddha nature provide a very firm basis to argue that gender equality is a normative, rather than an optional position for Buddhists" (Gross et al.).

A potential objection to this argument would be the implications of the ways gender is socialized. The categories of man and woman do have meaning within the world for the most part, and most people do not understand them to be arbitrary. It would be difficult if not impossible to understand the world as interconnected because of the ways in which language is structured to creates binary categories and even with the adoption of the idea of emptiness, it may not be possible to fully escape assigning essence to certain groups of people.

I believe this objection is valid and I do think it would be impossible for everyone to see the world as interconnected and void of essence. Essentialism is a primary way that humans make sense of their perceptions. However, the argument that I would like to make is if the world and things within it could be viewed as empty, then the advancement of disenfranchised and minoritized groups would follow. The argument that everything in the world is interconnected and depends on each other provides support to the feminist agenda of creating a world in which all people can be considered equal.

Feminism can borrow ideas from the Buddhist tradition in order to improve the equality among different groups of people. Though we categorize and assign essence to units as a way of understanding, and though implicit biases can result from this assignment, it is possible to reduce implicit bias through parasocial and intersocial contact. Viewing the world as free from essence expands possibilities of experience for people whereas assigning essences limits the experience of the world.

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Embodying a Disability

My time as a Gender Diversity Studies major at Slippery Rock has allowed me to challenge my own beliefs and understanding of disabilities and disorders. A variety of classes brought new literature to my attention that I may not have previously read or even understood. This led to me wanting to seek a deeper understanding of those who choose to embody their disorders and/or disabilities, including myself. In "20 Stories of Depression and Suicide and Living Our Lives" by Michael Blackmon, many of the individuals who wrote their stories described their depression or other diagnoses as part of who they are.

In order to explore my own position on "ownership" of one's disability, it is important to define the "disability." According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a disability is any mental or psychical impairment that restricts someone from completing a "major life activity" (What is the definition of disability under the ADA?). In mental health fields, mental illnesses are typically defined by the DSM-5 for diagnosis (Stein et al.). Moving away from a legal or medical paradigm, many with disabilities or mental illnesses integrate them into a sense of personal identity as a part of themselves. While this is a very complicated issue, for the sake of my argument, I focus on physical manifestations of a disorder where the person with the diagnosis claims an embodied form, including whether or not they use or reject person-first language. My primary interest is in analyzing which can be more beneficial mentally: embodying a disorder/disability or separating one's self from it, including the choice to use person-first language as a tool in order to diminish the stigmas and stereotypes that come along with a diagnosis.

These are concepts that I have come to struggle with myself. As a former Psychology major, I have been told that the person with the diagnosis that they were given is not the diagnosis but that the diagnosis is just one facet of who they are. To gain more perspective, I interviewed a graduate from Slippery Rock University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology to gain her perspective solely from a psychological standpoint, starting with a kind of discursive perspective.

Q: As a psychology major, are you taught to use person-first language?
A: Yes, when talking to clients and when talking about clients with other colleagues. In discussion in classes, we were also encouraged to try our best to use it.

Q: Do you think using person-first language would be beneficial for the client?
A: I think that it would be because it doesn't sound degrading when you use person-first language. Saying it any other way implies a lot of negative connotations.

Q: What do you think about using "disabled person" over "person with a disability"?
A: The word "disability" seems negative altogether and shouldn't be used, in my opinion, because people automatically associate negative aspects with that individual. I like "person with a disability" better.

Q: So, if you believe that it is a negative word, what comes to mind when you think of someone with a disability?

A: : I automatically think, "oh, they can't do things that other people can," which isn't true at all, but it's my first reaction and I think that would go for other people as well. The first reaction is often negative because we have a tendency to assimilate that into schemas that we learn at a very young age. Even if the disability is something that's small, I think that the word "disability" is negative because it takes away characteristics of a person without knowing that individual on a personal level.

Q: Do you think that if a disabled person identifies so closely with their disability or being disabled that they can take on those negative stigmas? Do you think that it can be empowering?

A: It could definitely be empowering when people say that they can't do something because of their disability and they overcome those stereotypes and stigmas. Even athletes who have paralysis win gold metals and overcome all of the people who said that they wouldn't be able to achieve something like that. I think that if they have a good support system and are in a supportive environment in general with resources and skills, then they are more likely to overcome a lot of stigma, even if it's internalized. If they don't have that type of support or environment of care, they could be consumed by the negative aspects and that would take a huge toll on their mental health.

This interview brings a lot of thoughts into perspective. The interviewee had no previous knowledge of Gender Studies or Disability Studies and was speaking solely from a psychological perspective. But her replies show how much stigma is placed on people who have any type of disability. Even as someone who is taught to separate person from mental diagnosis, she has trouble separating the person from disability as someone who lives in an ableist culture. When she speaks of schemas, she is referring to a cognitive process tied to how we store information. According to Ghosh and Gilboa, a schema is a mechanism that allows humans to file (or encode) and retrieve information (Ghosh and Gilboa). I have heard it compared in Psychology classes to a filing cabinet. When we are children and first see a dog, our brain makes a file for a dog. Then when we encounter other four-legged animals that are not dogs, we accommodate and make a new file. The interviewee suggests, based on this concept of schemas, that when we become aware of humans as small children, they are more than likely abled bodied, so that is the "file" we make for a "normal" person. This means when we see someone, for example, with a mobility disability, they do not fit into the schema we have for "normal people." While we could simply have schemas that we categorize as "different" without value attached, in an ableist society, we typically think of them as "non-normal" or "less than," however.

While this point of view has made sense to me since being taught the concept starting with my first year of college, I had not thoroughly considered another side to this debate. In one essay we read in a class on Disability Studies, author Rachel Reed

states that she does not identify as "someone with Autism" but as "an Autistic person." Her argument is that identifying as "an Autistic person" implies that she cannot and will not separate herself from her disability because it is so much a part of who she is and her everyday life, that being separate from it would not be an option nor would she want to be separate from her disability. In contrast, the phrase "someone with a disability" literally separates the person from the disability and thereby reinforces ableist biases by suggesting that a disability is so bad that we need to separate it from the person. I thought that this was a profound choice for not only her, but everyone who would choose to "claim" disability despite (or because of) the stigma attached to it by other people. According to a study done by Cuttler and Ryckman, when not using person-first language the noun (or diagnosis) has a negative connotation that suggests that the stigmas that come with the disorder are also associated with the person who has the disorder (Cuttler and Ryckman). A year ago, I would have assumed that without using person-first language, someone with a mental illness or disability would end up feeling attacked or lesser than because they are not being looked at as a whole human being. Many people that suffer from mental illness express that, while it was difficult to overcome at times, their disorder had empowered them and ultimately crafted them into the stronger person that they are now. They do not separate themselves from their diagnosis because it played a vital role in"becoming themselves."

While I was fascinated with the radical implications of rejecting person-first language and "claiming" one's disability in positive and anti-ablest ways, I struggle between choosing a side in this debate for multiple reasons. On the one hand, I do believe that it is important for someone with a mental illness to know that they are not only a diagnosis and not only the negatively stigmatized ideas that come with being diagnosed, and person-first language can help achieve this. On the other hand, I can see that it is beneficial for some people to embrace a disorder and/or disability rather than separating themselves from it. According to Patrick Corrigan, person-first language can often be mistaken for pity as well as implying that the person with the diagnosis is nothing more than a victim of their mental illness or disability, so that, ironically, using person-first language could place the person with the disability in the victim position. He also states that it is a common and almost automatic reaction for people to feel pity for those who are sick or appear to be sick. Since disabled individuals are often thought to be less than "normal" because of their disability, they will unfortunately be met with pity more often than not in a society that sees disability as "less than." If this is the case, person-first language can amplify ableist bias.

Given this, I can see that possibly embodying a disorder or disability can allow someone to have power over it and determine how much significance it can have over their own identity. Jillian Weise, a disabled author and performing artist, describes her disability as a part of her identity and not a separate object with which she is in a relationship. Weise frames her choice as a political and ideological one that is necessary to fight against ableism.

However, the argument for using person-first language rather than embodying a mental illness becomes clearer for me when I substitute an eating disorder rather than just saying a disability. While embodying a disability, whether it be visible or invisible, can come with more benefits, I would like to argue that embodying a disorder may have opposite if not harmful effects based on my own experience with a disorder.

When I was a freshman in high school, I was diagnosed with Anorexia Binge/Purge type. In some ways, I believe that if I looked at this disorder as "who I was" or "part of myself," it would have been harmful. In other words, if I chose to embody this disorder it could have been even more detrimental to my health because I would have, in a sense, become the physical representation of this diagnosis. However, even eight years later, I would still not say that my eating disorder was/is part of who I am. I spent years separating myself from my body; my body was not part of me, my "self." If I embodied my disorder, that implied that my "self" was as ailing as my body was. I, as an individual, was not anorexic, but my body was. My body was the physical representation of this illness, but since I had separated self and body, I was not anorexic; I was a person with anorexia. If anorexia was part of who I was as a human being, that meant that I had immense control while restricting my eating but very little control while binging, which stereotyped me as erratic. My eating disorder also taught me to be secretive and to lie not only to other people, but also to myself. These are not traits that I would never wish to embody. Arguably, when I first developed this disorder, I very much wanted to embody the diagnosis. I say this because at first, I did not look at the diagnosis as something to be "treated" or "fixed". If I was anorexic, that meant that I was (at least in other people's eyes) skinny. So, if being anorexic meant being skinny, then that's what I would embody. Looking back, this may be because I was under the impression that it was "fashionable" and normative, even ideal, to have an eating disorder or that I would eventually be prettier and skinnier if I was anorexic. I also embodied the slang terms; words like ana, thinspo, ed-nos, plan a (another "name" for anorexia), stgw (short-term goal weight), and school diet can all be learned and embedded into someone's life style via the help of pro-anorexia websites. "Pro-anorexia" websites are popular and easy to access, and they worked to "normalize" my disorder, even to frame it as a good thing. Too many people are not aware that "pro-ana" websites even exist, let alone are accessible. When I was younger and seeking out these websites, there were fewer restrictions placed on what could be posted on the internet. They were even, at most times, disguised as websites that claimed to have "dieting tips." This also became one of the "secrets" I kept from family and friends. Though they are harder to find now, when I was younger it was as easy as typing it into a search engine, and doing so invited me into a community of others who celebrated and embraced being anorexic.

Embodying the disorder in the early stages of my diagnosis arguably enabled me, maybe encouraged me, to continue it. But when I compare it to other diagnoses that come with similar stigmas, I find it hard in hindsight to understand why one might prefer to embody their disorder or disability rather than keeping it separate from themselves, even if it has shaped them into becoming a stronger person. In my case, identifying with anorexia ultimately was damaging.

One can argue that embodying anorexia is my best choice since I will never get rid of it or recover wholly from it – the idea that I am always "recovering" from anorexia. Although having a mobility disability is not that similar to eating disorders, the same concept of never being able to "get rid of it" can also apply. The definition of recovery is "A return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength" ("Recovery" 2018). In an earlier draft of this paper, I stated that I was "in recovery," and while this is a popular term for people who have overcome a disorder (i.e. recovering alcoholic or recovering drug addict), the word and definition of "recovery" in a general sense is problematic in itself. It creates a narrative in people with disorders that equates "recovery" with health or being able-bodied. Thus, for a disabled person, a recovery paradigm can reinforce a cultural narrative that they need to get rid of their disability and "get better" in order to be in recovery. My own position is that someone with a disorder that has permanently affected their strength, health, or mind can never be considered to be fully "recovered."

In my own case, I have had a nutritionist for multiple years and attended therapy as needed. I took all of the proper and healthy steps that are supposed to be taken. However, I contend that most people diagnosed with eating disorders would concur that specific triggers exist that will affect them throughout their lives. This reflects back to the "mind" not being able to "return to normal." These thought processes – triggers I have to engage, impulses I have to negotiate, a history which is always part of my "now" -- have become my normal. Now, I have coping skills to handle those triggers, but the concept of "recovery" suggests an all-or-nothing which oversimplifies my situation. Some side-effects from the anorexia still impact my life almost daily. My teeth are very sensitive from purging, my stomach is sensitive to an array of foods or medications, and my joints can get incredibly sore. Those are symptoms that I will carry throughout my life. But I believe – have decided – that the symptoms are part of who I am and how I live my life and that the diagnosis of anorexia is not.

Some disabled people might argue that I can't compare anorexia with a "real" disability because eating disorders are a "choice" while having a disability or being born with a disability is not. Though I reject the claim that having an eating disorder is a choice, it is a common misconception made by those who do not fully understand the diagnosis. This can also apply to many other mental health illnesses and addictions. With eating disorders, there are certain risk factors that make some people more prone than others to develop them. For example, females who are in the age range of 15-19 are more prone than other females to develop anorexia nervosa

(Smink et al.). If having an eating disorder or partaking in disordered eating was a choice, there would likely be no correlation between gender, age, and susceptibility. Quite clearly, having an eating disorder is no walk in the park. The health risks, the mental (as well as physical and emotional) strain are not things that someone would willingly choose. Even if someone was not aware of the risks when they "chose" to have an eating disorder, once these risks become evident, it's hard to imagine that someone would "choose" to continue having an eating disorder. But I do think that I have had some agency in deciding how to understand and experience my anorexia.

Although I would never think of myself and my disorder as one, I would say that it has played a vital role in the person I have become. And with saying that, I believe that might be why people tend to associate with and embody their disorders. Maybe it is not the disorder themselves, but perhaps what it has taught you or turned you into that is worth embodying. The disorder itself may not be worth embodying, but the person someone becomes because of living with a disability may be. As I've said, I would not look at my disorder as part of who I am, but I am stronger because of it. I learned to become angry with my disorder. Because I was once so close with it, it became embedded in my everyday life and to counteract that, the only other option I could see was to reject the identification I once embraced. It was such a part of who I was that for me, the only other choice was to be completely separate from it. I can say that now I have a healthier relationship with my diagnosis, but even so, being labeled "an anorexic" comes with more negativity than being labeled "someone with anorexia." Even though I am comfortable talking about it and disclosing it to anyone who may ask, I still find myself hesitant to bring it up in classes or bring it up at all unless someone asks about it first. This may be because of themisconception I discuss above that having eating disorders are considered by some to be a choice; it also reflects my point that we tend to internalize the stigmas associated with disorders and disabilities. Even though I am very much aware that having an eating disorder was far beyond something that I would ever "choose" to have or partake in, I still internalize that common stereotype. The possibility of being reduced to disorder causes this hesitation because, as human beings, we have a strong tendency to automatically stereotype people, including ourselves in a process of internalization. This stereotyping and labeling is going to happen even when someone embodies their mental illness or disability, and while I admire those who actively resist this stereotyping by claiming their disability or diagnosis, it's not a choice I want to make.

Maybe the solution to this tension is that of a happy medium: not to fully embody a diagnosis or disability, not to make it all that you are as a person, but also not to completely disassociate yourself with it. Another solution could be to simply let the person who has the disorder or disability choose how they would like to identify. For example, even though most disabilities come with stigma and stereotypes that can be internalized, having an in-group in which there are people with that same diagnosis fosters disability pride and acts as a sort of barrier, at times, to those stigmas (Bogart et al.). The happy medium, possibly the healthiest and most beneficial, might be to acknowledge the diagnosis or disability that you have, know that it has made an

impact on your life and maybe the person you are, but also to have some parts of your identity that are not fully associated with it at all times.

I was a person who was once diagnosed with Anorexia Binge/Purge type, but I was also once someone who did not have this disorder. Even now, without the diagnosis, I am still a whole person without embodying it.

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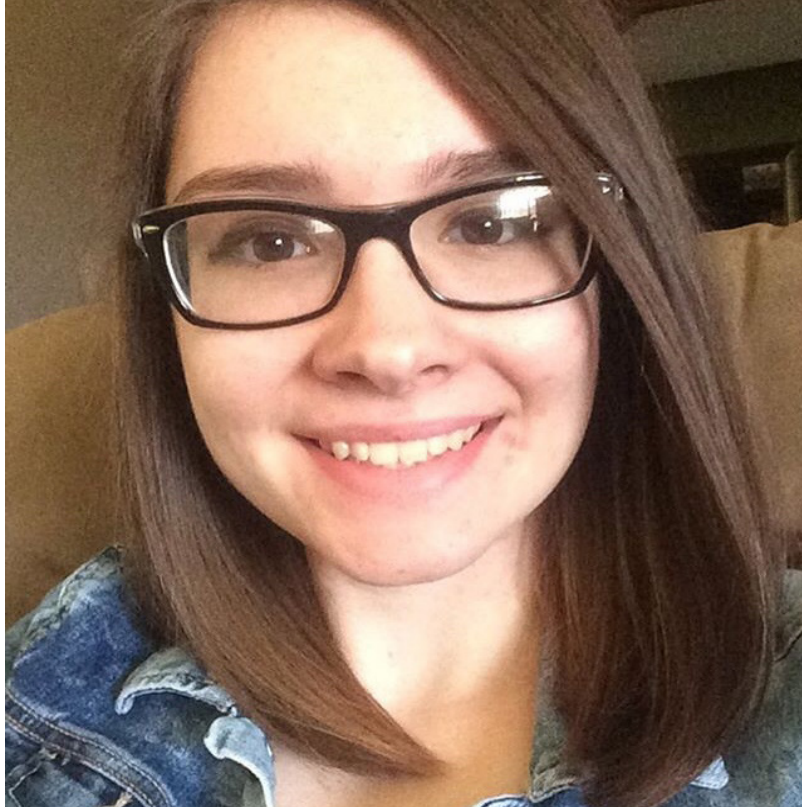
Autumn Murphy

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Need for a New Narrative

Disney & Toxic Masculinity

When talking about representation in Disney's characters, people often focus on the female characters and audience. There are many issues present for the female audience, but there might be just as many for the boys, and they could have a lasting effect on boys, just as they do for girls.

So, what are these stereotypes? Disney heroes tend to be white, tall, rich, muscular, and clean cut with light to dark brown hair. They are the ones who usually save the day and the damsel in distress. When I think of males in Disney movies, there are two that really come to mind. One is Gaston from Beauty and the Beast and the other is Shang from Mulan. Gaston is considered the villain and Shang the love interest. Despite being different characters from different movies, they both represent the same thing: the "ideal" man. There are even songs about how men should be. In Beauty and the Beast, LeFou sings about how every man in the tavern would want to be like Gaston. His reasoning is that Gaston is big, a good shooter, a good fighter, and even good at spitting. LeFou sings it in front of a group of men who are smaller, poorer and older than Gaston. I suggest that on a subconscious level, this teaches children that real men should be young, strong and rich. If they are anything else, they should aspire to be a man like Gaston.

One might argue that Disney is making fun of this ideal since Gaston is the villain, which might be true except for the fact that the Beast shares similar qualities, and years later Disney will release another film including another another song praising the same characteristics in the good guy. The Beast is presented as being big, angry, and an equally good fighter who is just as rude to Belle as Gaston. Therefore, even if Disney is attempting to mock hypermasculine traits in the song about Gaston, they simultaneously praise it in the same movie.

While the story differs, Mulan also features a song about masculinity. Though Mulan defies the usual Disney logic in terms of a princess narrative Shang embodies the stereotypes of men in society. Mulan even has a song titled "I'll Make a Man out of You." Without even listening, we understand that the song will be defining what it means to be a man. The first line is, "Did they send me daughters when I asked for men?" which implies that if children are unable to do the physical work required for the army, they must be girls, thus making them inferior and less desirable. This is harmful because it sets standards: that women are weak and that men have no option but to be strong. The song continues to describe men using metaphors of different natural disasters that cause immense amounts of damage, like a typhoon and fire. This implies that men must be ready to destroy and protect, even if they do not want to. There is no other culturally sanctioned choice but to be so strong that there is no hope for anything in the way, which can ruin possible communication skills. Shang also says they must be as "mysterious as the dark side of the moon," but by being mysterious, men do not show their emotions, which means they are bottling them

up and not learning how to properly express them. Bottling emotion like that can be dangerous mentally and physically to oneself and others.

One troubling point is that Mulan was released seven years after Beauty and the Beast. Somewhere between this gap Disney decided that the hyper-masculinity portrayed by Gaston was no longer laughable but should be encouraged through the male love interest in their new movie. So, while they made an important step for little girls by showing girls can be the heroes of the story, they took a large step back for boys.

This damaging image of men and masculinity persists in other Disney movies as well.   One example is Hercules, which reinforces the message of the first two films I have discussed that anything other than tall and buff is laughable and dangerous. Hercules starts the movie as a scrawny teen who is very clumsy; mocked for this, he has to go through a training montage, not unlike that of Mulan. By the end of the montage, he is buff and not as comical. So what is the moral here? Be tall and buff or become the comedic relief. While Mulan has secondary characters who are fat, short and scrawny and who are supposed to be funny in comparison to Shang, Hercules' physical change shows male audiences that his original state is inferior to the "real" man who has learned that particular expressions of masculinity bring rewards. Essentially, according to Disney, boys can reach the level of socially acceptable masculinity if they put in the work for it. However, if boys are not trying to improve their masculinity, the mockery they earn is justifiable.

Disney also has a habit of showing its fathers as incompetent. This happens both in live action and animation. Too often, the father is depicted as a bumbling fool who is incapable of handling his kids, who are often over the age of ten. This indicates that the fathers in Disney do not carry the same parental load as the mothers do. Most recently, viewers have seen this in the movie Incredibles 2. Mr. Incredible is left alone with the kids after his wife goes out and fights crime. Though at first flush it seems like this breaks gender roles, with Mrs. Incredible going out and working, Disney continues to enforce the idea that men do not do the caregiving in a family. He is a mess, unable to do anything and clearly overwhelmed even though two of his kids are old enough to do most of their care for themselves. This is a narrative repeated in almost every Disney film and series.   There is a least one episode of the dad trying to care for the family himself. For example, the pilot for Goodluck Charlie shows a dad of four trying to tackle his wife's first day back at work after their newest baby. The problem is he is a father of four, three of whom are in middle school or older, and the mother is an established nurse. Therefore, this concept should not be new to him, yet the entire episode is a disaster.

While the list of toxic masculine traits presented in Disney are many, there is one last trope that needs to be discussed. The concept of the "dumb and underachieving brother." This trope seems to be more prevalent in live action shows, which are typically what is airing on Disney Channel. This trope can be seen in Goodluck Charlie, Wizards of Waverly Place, and Hannah Montana, among others All

of these shows imply that the sisters are brighter and most likely to succeed. For example, in Hannah Montana, Miley is the sister who excels at everything and is even a famous popstar. But on the other side of the coin, there is Jackson. Jackson seems to fail at everything, and his failures are the fodder of humor. At face value, this seems like just a cheap laugh. But when we really look into it, there is more at play. Young boys watching Disney will learn that their sisters will most likely be the ones who excel at school and that boys are stupid, providing an implicit message that boys aren't "good" at school and thus perhaps should not try as hard. This mindset can be devastating to boys and perpetuates a double standard that values boys and men more on bulk and muscle than on brains and intellectual aspirations. What does this all mean? It means Disney severely limits the idea of what it means to be a man. Through Disney, men are told to be so strong they can destroy anything in their path, to shield their emotions, and to risk almost anything rather than be caught acting like a "girl." They are boxed into one ideal look and learn that anything which deviates from this is supposed to be funny. All of this can be very harmful to boys. In reality, there are men who are not athletic and do not want to fight. They should not be made to think that is the only way, and in a sexist world, sadly, telling them they are feminine for it can hurt their self-esteem by making them feel inadequate. It also shames those who are either not represented or are represented as the comic relief. There are few men of color, few men with a "less desirable" who do not risk being the butt of humor, and there are no same sex relationships.

The idea that men are not caregivers can be extra harmful because it is likely many of the boys watching this will grow up thinking it is not their job to help share the childcare load with their spouse. But if they do, odds are they will be mocked as if they are not equally as capable of care as their female counterpart. Disney poses an equally damaging representation of men as it does women. Too often, representations of masculinity are overlooked in discussions of equal and proper representation. It is important to realize that creating such a small box for what is expected of anyone can be dangerous to their mental and emotional development. Without diversity in media, limited representations make it more likely that they will grow up knowing one "correct" form – and correlating that form with rewards from romantic. It is important for Disney to think about this as theirs are often some of the first movies to which children are exposed. Disney branches cross platforms and reach a wide audience, and while they have an ability to challenge gender stereotypes, they are largely failing to do so.

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White Privilige
A Guide for White People

In the current political climate, the idea of "white privilege" has become a topic of interest, especially as groups like "Black Lives Matter" and white supremacist groups have gained publicity. There has been a lot of debate as to whether or not "white privilege" actually exists or if it's a narrative of victimization created by minorities in order to gain "special treatment." However, if you look at who's in charge in this country versus the targets of racism, systemic oppression, and hate speech, it's fairly evident that some form of white privilege still exists in America today.

If you are a person who has white privilege of any form, addressing it can be difficult for many reasons, the main one being that acknowledgment of privilege, especially privilege that you feel as though you have not actively taken advantage of, feels wrong. Acknowledgement of white privilege for people who have never been exposed to this could feel like a lie, especially if that specific individual has been disadvantaged in other areas of life (socioeconomically, educationally, or in terms of body size, for instance. When being educated about white privilege, it's easy for white individuals to claim that they have taken no part in this system of privilege because they have worked for everything in their life. The accusation of systemic privilege may feel like a personal insult and attack against their character if this acknowledgement of white privilege is framed incorrectly.

 The term "white privilege" has the power to polarize audiences. The term "privilege" can create defensiveness.   However, there is a large misconception that needs to be addressed; "white privilege" does not mean that you are privileged because you are white. It means that your life hasn't been made more difficult because of the color of your skin. Although the phrase "white privilige" does not perfectly capture this, likely because of warping in the media, the phrase has caused myriad problems in the discourse surrounding it. In situations such as these, it's important to educate about white privilege accurately and to break down the idea that having white privilege discredits the work or individual struggle someone has gone through. To say that white privilege does not exist because white people still struggle shows a distinct lack of understanding of the greater issues of structural racial bias and other intersectional issues that the country may be facing.

The first, and possibly most important, step in coming to terms with white privilege is to recognize it. As Peggy McIntosh states, "Describing white privilege makes one newly accountable" (McIntosh). Once you have knowledge of how you have been advantaged in this society solely based on the color of your skin, there is no going back. Even if you feel you have not actively participated in white privilege, after you have gained knowledge of this system, it is undeniable that you have benefited from this system. Having simply benefited from this system is not in and of itself the only issue. Having knowledge of this system of white privilege but refusing to acknowledge how it may have affected your life while continuing to participate in

this society is the problem. Realizing that we can participate in conversations about white privilege while being white and acknowledging that you have benefited from these systems is the only way to begin to come to terms with it. It's also the only way to realize that having benefited from a prejudiced system that has been in place since the beginning of this country does not make you a bad person or make your accomplishments any less real or admirable. What makes you admirable if you are a white person is realizing how this system may have overly advantaged you and disadvantaged others.

The second step in beginning to combat white privilege is to acknowledge that these kinds of conversations are uncomfortable and complicated but are necessary to have. In her article, "When Feminism is White Supremacy in Heels," Rachel Elizabeth Cargle focuses mainly on how white women who claim to be feminists perpetuate a system of white supremacy by policing black women specifically. In one section, she writes, "[white women] start to explain why race is hard for them to talk about, what they think would be a better solution to the topic at hand, and perhaps that women of color can do to make it more palatable." Here's the problem with that: this topic isn't supposed to be "palatable." Very little in this world that needs to be fix has been easy to talk about. But change won't happen if these conversations don't occur. Understanding that these conversations are difficult to have, especially when they feel like a personal attack, but having them anyway shows a true concern for and acknowledgment of the real problems at hand. Surrendering your ego and realizing that white privilege has affected you but realizing that your past privilege does not affect how you will use your privilege in the future is key.

After having recognize how white privilege has affected your life if you are white you can begin to look for ways it continues to impact your life as well as the lives around you. You can begin by taking into account some of the daily effects of white privilege, such as the ones McIntosh has identified: "I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented," "I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race," and "I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race." Training yourself to realize how white privilege touches your life even in the most minute ways is integral to realizing how deeply rooted this system is. This also comes in recognizing what racial biases you might have and actively combating them. Understanding your own racial biases (both overt and implicit) and understanding where they come from (socialization, personal experience) can not only help you understand the challenges that marginalized people face but should also reveal the societal expectations and biases already in place.

The best way to use your white privilege if you are white is to help others. Take Kamira Trent for example. In a viral video that surfaced, Trent (a white woman) was seen defending two Hispanic women from another white woman who was harassing

them for speaking Spanish to each other. Trent used her privilege as a white woman to speak up against another white woman, probably recognizing that she could do so without fear for her own personal safety, considering how unlikely it would be for Dwire (the harasser) to become physical with her. She also could have felt certain that the store employees would behave civilly, so she was in little danger. She also probably took into consideration that, if Dwire would listen to anyone, it would probably be another white woman. She is a fantastic example of how people are using their privilege to fight injustice for other people in everyday situations.

While it is a difficult subject to tackle, the only way to address systems of racially based advantage is to continue to have these conversations. Recognizing your structural places of privilege and learning to surrender your ego in order to benefit those who are   systematically disadvantaged is a necessary first step in beginning to solve these issues. We must foster a refusal to diminish the struggles marginalized and oppressed groups have faced and to have uncomfortable conversations where the solutions and answers may not be clear to combat structural inequalities and privilegeLearning to recognize how white privilege affects all of us and equipping ourselves with knowledge of how to use privilege to other's advantage will help spread awareness and activism. This is how we learn and grow. This is how we fight systemic oppression. This is how we change the world. This is how to use our privilege if we have it and to fight for those who do not.

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Hate Speech & Censorship

Politics in the United States are highly polarized, especially since the beginning of the presidential campaigns for the 2016 presidential election. People have taken to the internet with their opinions, starting and inflaming arguments on social media sites. With those arguments have come slurs and antagonizing comments. Add to that the rise of white supremacist groups and people on all sides 'doxxing' each other, the internet can seem like a toxic and dangerous place
.

A catch-all term for these slurs and antagonizing comments is 'hate speech.' Many people think speech like this should be restricted while others say restricting such speech would be a violation of the First Amendment. There is a lot to unpack in this debate. What does the First Amendment say and does it protect hate speech? What does 'freedom of speech' mean? What constitutes 'hate speech'? Can such speech be restricted? Should it be restricted?

The First Amendment, in its entirety, reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or protecting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances" ("The 1st Amendment"). That is a lot to squeeze into just one amendment. It guarantees several rights in very broad strokes. Concerning speech, it simply says that the United States government cannot impose on citizens' freedom of speech. An important detail to note here is that the First Amendment protects citizens from the government. It does not protect citizens from each other or from corporate entities. While this is certainly an important fact on its own, it becomes even more relevant when discussing if and how hate speech should be censored. After all, according to the broad wording of the First Amendment, there is no reason hate speech should not be protected.

Freedom of speech, or free speech, simply means that you are legally allowed to say things, whether through spoken word, physical text, or digital text. Freedom of speech is generally understood to be what is called a 'negative right.' This means that "it is exercisable only against the state and acts as a shield against interference" (Stone). Put more simply, the government cannot limit its citizens' speech. Smith points out a common misunderstanding, noting that "people often mistake freedom for license – for the prerogative to do as one pleases, subject to no boundaries whatsoever" (Smith). This is an incorrect understanding because there are many scenarios where speech is understood to be limited through rules or social norms.

'Hate speech' is considered free speech. Leets categorizes hate speech under the broader category of 'harmful speech,' which she references Leets and Giles defining as "utterances that are intended to cause damage, and/or irrespective of intent, that their receivers perceive to result in damage" (Leets). Leets then explains that, within the legal community, 'hate speech' is understood to mean "speech that denigrates persons on the basis of their race or ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, physical condition,

disability, sexual orientation, and so forth" (Leets). What "and so forth" means is not defined by Leets, but many people argue that rude comments made about a person's political leanings can be categorized as hate speech, and a few people consider anything said against themselves to be hate speech. For this paper, 'hate speech' will be used as it is defined in legal contexts as described above.

Leets also points out that people often do not understand the harm that can come from being a target of hate speech. "Most would agree that hate speech is ugly and regrettable, but not all understand how it is injurious, yet alone traumatic" (Leets). Leets says that being a target of hate speech "strips people of their dignity," "can elicit anxiety and distress," and that, while reactions are not always traumatic, the victims' response over time follows a pattern similar to trauma response (Leets). Words, both verbal and written, can have a notable negative impact on people's lives.
The answer to whether or not hate speech, or any other speech for that matter, can be restricted is an easy "yes." There are legal ways to restrict speech. The key is in how speech is restricted - or rather, by whom. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media sites can restrict speech. The government, however, cannot. For the most part, it is just that simple.

The reason that social media sites, and most other companies, are legally allowed to restrict speech is that when you sign up for an account or download an app, you are asked to read and agree to a contract, though most people do not really read it. That contract is usually called something along the lines of "Terms of Use," "Terms of Service," "Terms and Conditions," or "User Agreement." They are long legal documents about what you can and cannot do with the site or app, and what steps will be taken if you do something you are not supposed to, among other things. For example, Twitter's Terms of Service simply says that if you use Twitter, you should be prepared to see "offensive, harmful, inaccurate or otherwise inappropriate" content ("Twitter Terms of Service"). You are responsible for your own content and your own experience. In May 2018, Twitter made changes to its Terms of Service, but those changes mostly pertain to data collection.

On the other hand, Facebook's Terms of Service asks users to help keep Facebook safe by not posting anything intimidating, harassing, threatening, or anything that may be hate speech, though it does not define hate speech. It goes on to add that you cannot use Facebook for "anything unlawful, misleading, malicious, or discriminatory" ("Terms of Service"). Facebook also says, "We can remove any content or information you post on Facebook if we believe that it violates this Statement or our policies" ("Terms of Service"). Facebook updated their Terms of Service in May 2018 in response to the Cambridge Analytica issue and resulting pushback from users. In the update, Facebook takes a stand against "misuse" and "harmful conduct," saying it is using technology to look out for such content and vowing to take "appropriate action," whether that means blocking content, banning users, or even contacting law enforcement ("Terms of Service"). What counts as "harmful content" remains vague and undefined, allowing Facebook to arbitrarily decide when and if to enforce this.

Instagram falls in the middle, saying that you cannot "bully, abuse, harass, or threaten" others, and declaring that each user is responsible for the content they produce ("Instagram Help Center"). As for what might happen if you go against these guidelines, Instagram simply says that they might do something about it, but that they do not have to, saying "We may, but have no obligation to, remove, edit, block, and/or monitor Content or accounts containing Content that we determine in our sole discretion violates these Terms of Use" ("Instagram Help Center"). There are two big problems with these Terms of Use. The first is that what is considered "harmful" content is only vaguely defined. The legal definition of hate speech is a good place to start. Adding something about physical threats wouldn't be amiss either. Internet threats are worth mentioning, and are an important and related issue, but doing any justice on the topic would require a paper of its own. The second is that screening for such content effectively is difficult, though Artificial Intelligence is making it easier. It would be incredibly difficult for a team of people to scan all the content posted on a social media site. Artificial Intelligence, or AI, could scan through content much faster and flag any content that may go against the Terms of Use then send flagged content to be evaluated by people who make the final decision about what action to take, if any.

The issue then would be programming the AI. What should it flag? Giving it a list of slurs would be a good place to start, but what about threats? What about cyberbullying? What about when people put spaces or symbols in slurs to try to trick the sensors? What about discriminatory comments that get creative and avoid using slurs altogether? What about the way language changes and groups reclaim slurs? No AI is ever going to be perfect, but with constant upkeep and regular human supervision, it can be a big step in the right direction. That being said, it should absolutely be humans, not AI, who make the final call on what action needs to be taken. There are AI that are mastering natural language, such as IBM's Watson, but they take a long time to train and are not as well equipped as humans to handle language nuances and evolving internet grammar rules.

There has been talk of national laws restricting hate speech, too. People against such laws say they would infringe on the First Amendment right to free speech and worry that they might open the door for the kind of censorship laws that could mean the end of free speech. People supporting such laws point out that the First Amendment was written well over one hundred years ago – society has changed, and now the internet allows us to communicate in ways people could not have imagined when the Amendment was written. Many find themselves somewhere between these two extremes. Neither side is incorrect, and it is likely to be a long time before any laws restricting hate speech can be seriously considered.

Even before we get to that point though, it is important to start thinking about how such a law might work. A law restricting free speech would likely face problems similar to those faced by social media sites' attempts to screen content. That is, how will hate speech be defined and how can such a law be enforced? The legal definition near the start of this paper is still a good starting point.

It covers various groups that are discriminated against. It does not give a list of slurs to be restricted, allowing the law to remain flexible even as language evolves, which is important.

The question of enforcement is much more difficult. The spoken word is hard to censor. Unless it was recorded, it is difficult to prove anything was said. Censoring printed speech can run dangerously close to infringing on the freedom of the press as well as freedom of speech. Then there is the matter of who is responsible for the hate speech in printed forms – the writer, the editor, the publisher, or someone else entirely? Decisions will have to be made about whether hate speech is allowed to be used in educational texts or historical fiction.

Censoring the internet is going to be extremely difficult too. In most places in the United States, the internet is provided by a company, not the local government. Either those companies, or individual websites, will have to oversee censoring. But what can, or should, be done about hate speech hosted by servers in other countries? What about people in other countries that post hate speech on social media sites hosted in the United States? Lines will need to be drawn on how the law applies on the internet, and that will likely impact how long it takes for a law to be decided on. Alternately, the law could be made without much thought of how it will apply on the internet, and the United States court systems will have to figure it out as they go. If the United States government does pass a law allowing censorship of hate speech, there is the potential for the government "to overstep their powers, selectively enforce laws, or otherwise misuse power in a way that undermines or frustrates any legitimate role for hate speech laws" (Stone). The First Amendment specifically mentions freedom of speech and freedom of the press so that the government cannot overstep their power and censor citizens. The government who puts a law allowing censorship on the books may not overstep the boundaries of the law, but there is no guarantee that governments in the future will do the same. Is disapproval and condemnation enough? Or should steps be taken to restrict hate speech?

There is no easy solution to the debate between restricting hate speech and saving free speech. Restricting hate speech could save a lot of people from harassment and self-hatred, but there are too many issues that will need to be worked out before such a law is useful or even enforceable. It also needs to be considered that restricting a person's hateful speech is not going to change their hateful attitudes or behaviors. But does that mean people should have to deal with hate speech aimed at them? A thoughtful debate of the issue goes around in circles. Smith says, "we should defend the racist's freedom to speak, for instance, on my view, but we should also condemn vehemently and articulately the depravity of his message" (Smith). Smith echoes a sentiment most often attributed to Evelyn Beatrice Hall - "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" (Smith).

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Sexism, Women Athletes, & Testosterone Testing

Throughout the history of professional sports, especially in levels as prestigious as the Olympics, there have been countless instances where athletes' integrity has been called into question due to cheating allegations. One reason that athletes have been scrutinized in particular is due to the elevated appearance of natural hormones in their bodies. This has caused governing bodies like the International Association for Athletics Federations (IAAF) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to question whether or not these athletes possess an unfair advantage during competition. Although females in the realm of professional sports have traditionally been faced with judgment and criticism, recently, higher than normal levels of testosterone in female athletes have been the center of controversy, consequently sparking a debate about gender discrimination in modern sports.

It is logical that organizations like the IAAF or IOC must ensure fairness in competitions, especially due to the ease by which professional athletes can cheat. For example, many athletes today are charged with doping, which is a term for enhancing performance via banned substances like steroids or stimulants (What is Doping?). As a monitoring tool, athletes are often subjected to extensive testing to ensure they are not cheating, especially when accusations arise. These allegations are taken very seriously by these organizations and typically launch full investigations of these athletes. Although evidence suggests that agents such as anabolic-androgenic steroids, which are commonly abused by athletes, enhance athletic performance through increasing lean mass and muscle strength, a controversy still exists over the ability or lack thereof of endogenous, or naturally-occurring bodily hormones to boost performance (Huang and Basaria). This topic is especially critical for female athletes with increased testosterone levels. Hyperandrogenism, which is marked by an abnormally high level of testosterone, is a marker of many medical conditions and often linked to disorders of sexual development (DSD) (Huang and Basaria). DSDs have created a mountain of controversy in the world of professional sports, placing numerous female athletes under tremendous scrutiny from both the public eye and the governing bodies of their competitions. However, thus far, evidence fails to positively confirm or deny whether or not hyperandrogenism provides a definite advantage to female athletes. Nevertheless, it is important to note that male athletes do not face these same policies. That being said, existing rules severely penalize and restrict female athletes naturally affected by hyperandrogenism and/or similar conditions.

In 2009, Caster Semenya, a South African track and field athlete and Olympic champion encountered considerable scrutiny in the face of this controversial issue. Semenya's impressive success in her Olympic races, paired with her hyperandrogenism and masculine build, have caused the IAAF to call her into question as a female athlete, thus perpetuating a legal battle over the regulations that undermine her athletic eligibility. According to an article from the New York

Times that explores this issue, "Most women, including elite female athletes, have natural testosterone levels of .12 to 1.79 nanomoles per liter… while the normal male range after puberty is much higher, at 7.7 to 29.4 nanomoles per liter" (Longman). Semenya's endogenous testosterone levels were substantially higher than what is considered normal, consequently sparking a debate and launching a corresponding investigation through the IAAF. Semenya was outraged by these allegations, which claimed that her natural-occurring hormones gave her an unfair advantage and ultimately jeopardized her reputation as a two-time Olympic champion.

The IAAF has several policies in place in order to verify the gender of competitors. In Semenya's case, invasive tactics such as evaluations from gynecologists and endocrinologists, among others, were used to confirm that she is, in fact, a female. Extensive testing also established that an intersex condition is the cause of her hyperandrogenism (Buzuvis). The IAAF has detailed protocols in place in order to police circumstances like Semenya's. Their guidelines restrict female athletes with testosterone levels of 5 mmol/L or above or with DSD from competing (IAAF introduces new eligibility regulations for female classification). The implications of this are that athletes like Semenya are forced to choose from few undesirable options in order to continue to compete in the sport they love. The rules clearly state that female athletes with testosterone levels meeting the aforementioned criteria can "change the distance at which [they] race to beyond one mile; compete against men; enter competitions for so-called intersex athletes, if any are offered; or give up [their] eligibility to perform in the most prestigious competitions like the Olympics" (Longman). These regulations are not only unjust and excessive, but they also threaten the livelihood of Semenya and other female athletes. Semenya has courageously fought these punitive rules with accusations against that the IAAF fosters gender discrimination, commits overall injustice, and tampers with her natural bodily functions with no viable health issue. Unfortunately, Semenya's efforts to fight for the rights of athletes with DSDs have been unsuccessful (Buzuvis).[1]

In order to evade the discrimination linked to the current policies, the institutions should approach these controversial situations differently and search for more just and equitable solutions. First, female athletes should be permitted to compete during any pending investigation regarding their testosterone levels because there is no reason to penalize them without committing any wrongdoings. Those in charge should also acknowledge that the science behind their regulations is fuzzy at best. Every individual responds to and utilizes testosterone differently, therefore not necessarily warranting any advantage to those with elevated hormone levels. There is no solid support to prove that increased testosterone consistently shows enhanced performance in any or every athlete. Additionally, by rejecting and/or revising their protocols, the IAAF could declare their stance as anti-gender discrimination in athletics. This will help to promote equality between male and female athletes, as well as encourage body positivity and respect for the female athlete population, rather than allowing the public to openly scrutinize them for their masculine characteristics

[1]

In May 2019, Semenya lost her challenge to the IAFF, which concluded, in part, that that all DSD athletes, who are usually born with internal testes, will have to reduce their testosterone to below five nmol/L for at least six months if they want to compete internationally all distances from 400m to a mile. As of this writing, Semenya has said that she plans to challenge this decision.

(Jordan-Young and Karkazis).

Public scrutiny and suspicion of female athletes for masculinity have unfortunately played a sizable role in athletics for years, and Caster Semenya's case is no exception. In fact, women have fought a long, arduous battle to advance to their current position, whereas their male counterparts have been relatively untouched by the issues that burden females in the realm of athletics. Even Semenya argues that "the offensive practice of intrusive surveillance and judging of women's bodies… has historically haunted women's sports" (Longman). This discrimination against women in athletics predates even the ancient Olympic games, where women were barred from attending and participating due to their distracting nature and lack of strength to compete (Buzuvis). Flash forward to the 1930s, when the IAAF and IOC went so far as to visually inspect athletes to confirm their sex and prevent "male imposters" from competing in female competitions. Then, physician confirmation, chromosomal testing, and buccal smear testing were all implemented to disqualify men attempting to compete in women's sports and women with DSDs. Although the severity of this test battery has slowed, the new outlandish policies directly affect women with DSDs and hyperandrogenism (Huang and Basaria). Although women with these conditions are continually placed under a microscope, alternatively, men with elevated levels of endogenous testosterone see no penalties when it comes to participating in competitions. Women athletes have earned considerable rights and respect through years of trials and tribulations, but unfortunately, females are still oppressed by the pervasiveness of gender discrimination, which plagues the institution of professional sports.

As a student-athlete at the university level, I believe that I harbor a unique perspective on this controversial topic. On one hand, I understand what it is like to feel cheated by an opponent and how this is a severe injustice to both competitors and the entity of competition itself. Therefore, I firmly believe that cheating should be monitored diligently to ensure clean, fair competition. Given that most athletes are extremely competitive, we desire a competition void of any dishonesty or unfair advantages, so that we can prove that we won on our own volition: through strict athleticism and a strong work ethic. The IAAF utilizes similar logic to defend their position, stating that their guidelines are "leveling the playing field to ensure fair and meaningful competition in the sport of athletics where success is determined by talent, dedication and hard work rather than other contributing factors" (IAAF introduces new eligibility regulations for female classification). They also explicitly state their intention not to discriminate against the gender or gender identity of any athlete, but rather their aim to provide fairness and equality to athletics.

Although I agree that explicit rules are integral to any sport, I disagree with the irrationality and inequity of the IAAF's guidelines. For one, I believe it is unjust to prevent an athlete from using their natural abilities to perform in competitions. Undoubtedly, some athletes possess more natural talent or athleticism than others. This is what makes them successful athletes and essentially allows them to compete at a level that others simply cannot. However, athleticism is complex and

not quantifiable as it is a delicate combination of environmental influences, sheer motivation, and genetic markers. By that token, it has been reasoned that "if you want to be an Olympic champion, then you better pick your parents very carefully… genes for growth, muscle function, and cardiopulmonary function… clearly affect athletic performance and permit exceptional function" (Jordan-Young and Karkazis). Arguably, having high endogenous testosterone is, in a sense, no different than being naturally tall or muscular. It seems petty to fault athletes with favorable genetics and/ or hormones, which are entirely out of their control, especially when other athletes are abusing their privilege to compete by knowingly exploiting outside resources to cheat.

Unfortunately, there is an extensive history of scrutiny of women in sports, which stems from gender discrimination. It is clear that the current controversy is yet another instance of the overarching inequality and lack of rights that women have faced for centuries. Sports governing institutions not only complicate this, but they also continue to add to this issue. The manner in which the IAAF and IOC go about regulating testosterone levels in female athletes is invasive, discriminatory, and unreasonable. As a female athlete, I strongly reject and discourage the regulations implemented by these institutions and strive for change that permits equality between male and female athletes. Until it is proven undoubtedly that elevated endogenous testosterone levels consistently provide an advantage for each and every female athlete, it is nonsensical to bar women in sports from their livelihood and require them to make momentous, forced decisions about their athletic careers that could have serious long-term implications.

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The Refugee Crisis

Addressing Mental Health Challenges

The Refugee Crisis: Addressing Mental Health Challenges

      A universal feeling that human beings chase after is peace. Thus, an important question today is, "How hard is it to maintain peace?" Ongoing war and political instability can create difficulties in maintaining peace. The Oxford English Dictionary defines peace as "freedom or a period of freedom from public disturbance or war." In other words, it is a quiet and calm state of mind, and harmony amongst people. Different regions face hardships in regulating life because of issues such as hunger, war, violence, and terrorism. For instance, conflict in a number of Middle Eastern countries has led to disharmony among people and their political representatives. This has caused a refugee crisis to erupt, leading millions of people to flee looking for less violence and some stability. This is important to note, given that the number of displaced people has reached historically high numbers.

      There is often a misconception between the differences between immigrants and refugees, but according to the UNHCR, there is a clear difference. Immigrants are people who choose to move to another country to take up permanent residence to improve their lives in ways such as a better job, education or for family purposes, whereas refugees are a group of people that leave their home country to escape war, fear or nation-wide conflict, a definition that can cause trauma by changing how refugees perceive themselves and the world.

      After World War II, the United Nations was established, and one of their missions was to set up universal laws to define the status and rights of refugees. More than 66 million people have been forcefully displaced worldwide, and 50% of them

are children. This has profoundly impacted their health both physically and mentally. In grade 5, I learned the definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity (WHO). I often ask myself how many people in this world fall under the category of healthy people based on this definition. The answer is not all of them, especially refugees who have gone through a traumatic situation while fleeing from one country to another. They face the scarcity and inequitable distribution of relief, even when the access is available. In addition to living through painful situations in their country of origin, some face detention or violence in the destination country. Since they go through a very long journey for their resettlement process in the new country, they can experience trauma during and after their journey to new country. These situations often cause risk for refugees to suffer from a variety of mental health illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, panic attack, adjustment disorder and somatization.

As noted, the journey from their country of origin to a new nation can itself be traumatic. Migration is classified into three components with specific risk and exposure: premigration, migration and post migration. Pre-migration is a stage close to death because of war, which leads to an emotional trauma and mental health illness. Migration is a long and rigorous process. People often encounter violence, poor living situations, and separation from their family. Post-migration is the final and the most complicated stage. By the time they "resettle" in a new country, they have already lost their home, loved ones, and especially their self-esteem. They go through a difficult phase of adapting to new cultural practices such as languages, racism, difficulty in obtaining education, employment and housing, which typically causes depression and anxiety. A long period spent waiting to get accepted by people from the destination country can add new levels of stress that only a refugee can experience. This often leads to a lack of optimism about the future.

Life After Trauma

Asylum

Asylum is the legal protection granted by a nation to foreign nationals, and an asylum seeker is a person who flees their home country to a foreign country and applies for asylum. Asylum can be granted to people who are unable or unwilling to go back because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social groups or political opinion. People who are legally defined as refugees based on the United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 protocols are eligible to apply for asylum. The USA became part of the Convention and adopted the protocols in 1968.

Though it may seem that the journey is the most difficult part, the asylum process itself is often long and tedious, with a lot of paper work and the stress of waiting with uncertainty about asylum status. Researcher have shown that refugees seeking asylum display higher levels of mental health conditions than other immigrant populations. There have been many cases prior to being forced to flee; refugees have experienced imprisonment, torture, loss of property, malnutrition, physical assault, extreme fear, rape and loss of livelihood. These mental health conditions, exacerbated by war and fear, have their impact on the asylum process in the destination country. Most of the time, refugees experience difficulties in remembering devastating events and provide a fragmented story. As a result, this uneven story telling might slow down the asylum process. The study conducted by Dutch psychiatrist Laban CJ, Gernaat HB, Komproe IH, Schreuders BA and, DeJong JT, found that the mental health condition of refugees gets worse as the length of the asylum process increases (Laban et al.). Therefore, it is important to have asylum officers who are aware of the prevalence of mental health illness among these groups and are trained to work with them. The other co-factors that add deleterious effects on their mental health are language barrier, social disconnection, financial burden, loneliness, uncertainty about future and fear of deportation

Language and Social Disconnection

Language is not just a medium of communication, but it is also an emotion; it is a root of individual identity. Roughly 6,500 languages are spoken in the world today. One of the major problems that refugees face on their arrival to a new country is language. Some organizations like HIAS Refugee and Immigrant Services, CWS, and IRC provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for newly arriving refugees. Along with the language barrier, they face social disconnection because of difference in culture and traditions. This linguistic hardship and the problem of loneliness and isolation in a new country remind me of my journey as an international student in the USA, as it was very hard in the beginning. Even though language was not a barrier in my case, I struggled to gain a sense of belonging. I remember calling my parents at midnight and asking them if I could come back home. I was emotionally shaken because of the distance from my family and I felt socially disconnected from everyone. But I, at least, was here by choice. Most refugees have less agency, and their

experience of trauma as they have to embrace a completely new society as their home becomes more difficult. So many refugees get disconnected from their family members in the process of fleeing and some may never get a chance to see their families again. This can be devastating for any human being who forever leaves their home country without having an emotional and social support from their family members.
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Living Standard

It is hard to start over in a completely new and unfamiliar place. A person who was a citizen in their origin country in now addressed as a "refugee" in another. A person who was a doctor, engineer or teacher had to leave their occupation behind and restart their life by possibly working low paying jobs such as a dish washer, cleaner or butcher. Social status plays a pivotal role in defining an individual's living standard. Access to health care, education, nutritious food, and residential area depends on the kind of job people hold in the society. It takes a long time for refugees to adapt to society and settle with their new lifestyle, and this process is made more challenging by often limited access to resources and prestige in their destination country.

Torture Victim Relief Act

One condition for asylum, as I have noted, depends on home nation conditions and allows asylum as an option to those "who are unable or unwilling to go back because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social groups or political opinion." However, proving that these conditions exist and that a person's fears are well founded can be difficult, even in the case of torture. The definition of torture varies across countries, even as most of them have ratified the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman Degrading Treatment or punishment, commonly known as UNCAT. The CAT defines torture as:

> Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions. (Garcia)

Even though the United States is a party to CAT, the specific legal statutes and regulations that define torture under US law are different than those articulated in and by CAT. The Torture Act of the U.S. Law defines torture as an act committed by a person acting under the color of law, an appearance of legal power to all that may operate in Violation of Law, specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering upon another person within his/her custody or physical control

(section 2340(1) of title 18, United States code). The Torture Victims Relief Act of 1998 helps a person who has gone through series of torture in foreign countries and who is entering the United States to access rehabilitation services,Including medical treatment as well as social and legal services for victims of torture. Each fiscal year, the Office of Refugee Resettlement administers approximately $10.5 million in grant funding as part of the Survivors of Torture (SOT) Program under the Torture Victim Relief Act. According to the research conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, 44% of asylum seekers and refugees now living in the United States are torture survivors. Not all refugees get a chance to enroll in rehabilitation service for the required treatment. To provide rehabilitative services to refugees, torture treatment centers make eligibility determinations on two levels:part of the Survivors of Torture (SOT) Program under the Torture Victim Relief Act. According to the research conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, 44% of asylum seekers and refugees now living in the United States are torture survivors (Kelly). Not all refugees get a chance to enroll in rehabilitation service for the required treatment. To provide rehabilitative services to refugees, torture treatment centers make eligibility determinations on two levels:

i)   assessing eligibility on symptoms and clinical needs.
ii)   A legal determination regarding whether an act was (a) sufficiently severe, (b) inflicted under the color of law, (c) motivated by the perpetrator's specific intent to cause the severe pain or suffering, and (d) committed under the offender's custody or physical control.

People go through several forms of torture and sometimes we cannot put them into words. It is unfair and unjust to several refugees who has not got any form of rehabilitation service just because their torture does not fall under the definition of torture cited above. Not all crimes are the consequence of a specific intent to cause mental health illness, but some crimes like assault and rape can be performed with general intent, which can still harm victims emotionally and mentally. Most of the female refugees across the world are highly vulnerable to all forms of sexual assaults and exploitation, including rape. It can happen either in a refugee camp within the country of origin or seeking protection elsewhere which can cause serious threat to women's mental health. Similarly, refugees also get harassed without any physical confinement to a particular space, for example, a situation where refugee is being harassed by stalking, judging their lifestyle or blocking their walking way. These actions can hamper their confidence level and cause fear and anxiety. So many refugees are still in need of help to recover. So instead of applying a narrow definition of torture, our law should come up with broad criteria and give a powerful sense of belonging to all refugees.

A New Definition of Torture

There are thousands of refugees in need of psychological support. They need more time and help to overcome all the difficulties they face in their adopted country, not just with logistics, but also, psychological and emotional relief. It is important that the Torture Victims Relief Act be considered within a broader definition of torture, a definition that is not so rigid or restrictive in terms of intent to cause harm and suffering. Not all refugees suffer from physical (visible) torture; the impact of most forms of torture is often invisible but deeply damaging. The Torture Victims Relief Act should be revised to include a treatment program for those who do not meet the criteria of physical torture victims, and also include mental health assistance with an intent to provide relief to those who have suffered mental trauma. In addition, training clinicians to work with culturally diverse patients, providing professional interpreters in all sectors working with refugees as well as establishing different organizations to constantly monitor the living standard of refugees can help them overcome some of their difficulties, especially emotional ones. Along with providing ESL classes to refugees, jobs training, and counseling, asylum evaluation can help them develop confidence with a determination to succeed in their life. I believe it is our moral and human duty to help refugees get access to all the resources that can help them transition into their new life.

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Structural Racism
Sterilization of Black Women

Coerced sterilization tends to get left out of America's history, although one does not have to go back too far in time to find cases of it. Sterilization was used as a means of controlling "undesirable" populations, those being immigrants, people of color, poor people, unmarried mothers, people with disabilities, and those with mental illnesses. While sterilization was aimed at reducing all of these ostracized minorities, Black women were a prime target. Throughout history, women of color have existed at the intersection of many marginalized identities: being Black, female, and, most of the time, poor.

Federally-funded sterilization programs and policies took place in over 30 states throughout the 20th century. While sterilization is a medical procedure, the process of becoming sterilized was often done without the knowledge or consent of the victim. If a woman was being put through another procedure, they might often also be sterilized while being treated for the original procedure. The message that is indirectly sent to someone who is sterilized is that your possible offspring are not wanted and that society does not want to deal with it. The nonconsensual sterilization of Black women over the course of over four decades was the consequence of a racist and eugenicist ideology in the United States.

Documented cases of sterilization of Black women can be found dating back to the 1930s. By January 1935, estimates are that over twenty thousand people had been sterilized, and those who were most affected black women (Sterilization, 1936). The Great Depression resulted in Roosevelt's New Deal, which was put in place to aid American citizens through the Depression. Welfare was one program put into place, though Black people were stopped from fully accessing it, and those who got to use it often faced backlash from white society. In California, ta case that was brought to a grand jury focused on women living in Contra Costa County, who were urged to undergo sterilization operations by the welfare department. The Welfare office reported that the only crimes "committed" by these women were unemployment and poverty, but they were nonetheless sterilized by the welfare director's order (Sterilization, 1935). The Welfare department justified the decision by claiming that the women were promiscuous and having large numbers of children. California was not the only stated During this time to sterilize women under orders and policies, either. Sterilization in North Carolina started in the 30s and this state alone sterilized over 7,600 individuals between the 1930 and 1970s (Unfair Sterilization). Documentation of these cases has only been recorded since the 30s, so a large number of cases are undocumented, leaving lots of victim's stories untold.

Many states in the U.S. had established policies that gave them the right to sterilize unwilling and unwitting people. These sterilization policies listed the "insane," the "feeble-minded," the "diseased," and the "promiscuous" as targets,

based on the grounds that they were "incapable of regulating their own reproductive abilities, justifying government-forced sterilizations." The Senator of Mississippi in 1964 was implementing a program of genocide against the "negroes of the state" (Genocide in Mississippi, 1930). To the state, genocide was defined as killing members of a group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, physical destruction of a group, preventing births within the group, or transferring children from the group to another. It was clear that the bill being passed specifically targeted Black people in an attempt to reduce the number of African Americans in Mississippi. The bill focused on illegitimate children being born and made it a felony to be a parent of one. After the birth of an illegitimate child, the state mandated that the mother go to Planned Parenthood to discuss birth control options. The bill used Planned Parenthood clinics to go after black women, despite rhetoric that sterilization was to be strictly voluntary. In fact, the state pressured Planned Parenthood to heavily enforce sterilization (Genocide in Mississippi). During the 1960s, 60% of black women living in Sunflower County, Mississippi were sterilized without their permission, and a majority of them were under the age of 20 (Nti-Asare). This bill proves how the government used sterilization as a form of genocide to get rid of the black population and erase their existence.

Besides Mississippi, North Carolina was no stranger to the cruel and punishing coercion of black women. The North Carolina Eugenics Board (NCEB) oversaw the practice of sterilization of inmates, medical patients, and the mentally ill, although the board often stepped outside of their jurisdiction and coerced people to unwillingly consent to being sterilized. Howver, the policies did more harm than good, especially to women of color. Many black women, like Nial Ruth Cox, were pressured into sterilization. Cox was sterilized as a child in North Carolina on the "terms" that she was "mentally retarded," despite the fact she was not disabled but was just a black girl from a poor family. At the time of the procedure, Cox was living with her mother. Cox had just given birth to a 10-week-old girl and was on welfare (Carmon). A social worker threatened to take away the family's welfare unless Cox's mother consented to the sterilization of her daughter. This is how the state obtained consent for the procedure. Cox and her mother were lied to by the state, and they were under the impression that the sterilization was temporary, but years later her gynecologist told her that she could never bear children again. North Carolina, along with a number of other states, especially in the south, put these policies in place to perform a kind of eugenics. Many stories of victims have surfaced about the terrible situations they were forced into by the government of North Carolina.

Another horror story of sterilization is that of Elaine Riddick, one of the brave souls who continues to speak out about the harassment she went through my the NCEB. At the age of 14, Reddick was raped by a 20-year-old, which resulted in an unplanned pregnancy. Social workers threatened to take away Reddick's grandmother's welfare. Afraid of not being able to live without the help of welfare, her grandmother gave consent to have Reddick sterilized (Curb Sterilization). As she was in labor, Reddick was put under and also sterilized. She woke up, unaware of what

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had happened, with bandages on her stomach and her one and only baby. Reddick herself was never informed that the sterilization was going to be conducted; all she thought was that she was giving birth. After being raped at the age of 14, giving birth, and being sterilized without being informed, Reddick was traumatized, and she was not the only black girl that this happened to.

In most cases of unwilling sterilization, the affected women go on with their lives feeling as if they are less than. One arguable exception to this occurs with the case of two young sisters, Mary and Minnie Relf, both of whom were both mentally disabled and sterilized involuntarily by the local hospital. L later, parents went on to sue (Stokes). The Relf family was living on welfare, as they were very poor, and both Mr. and Mrs. Relf were illiterate. To obtain "consent" from the girl's parents, the nurses gave Mrs. Relf papers to sign, knowing that she was illiterate and could neither read nor understand them. As they were talking to her, they were discussing methods of birth control, which placed Mrs. Relf under the impression that her daughters would be receiving birth control shots as they had in the past. After the procedure, the girl's dad tried to visit them, and the nurses told him he was not allowed as visiting hours were over. The next day, the girls were released from the hospital. Once home, their mother noticed scar tissue was starting to form on the girls' bodies. The parents asked their social workers to find out what actually happened to their daughters, leading to the revelation of the sterilizations. The girl's parents were livid once they found this out, and immediately filed a law suit with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Montgomery, Alabama (Stokes).

Mr. and Mrs. Relf knew that with their status and background, they would need extra help to get the justice deserved for their daughters. They obtained help from attorneys at the Montgomery Southern Poverty Law Center. The Relf family asked for $1 million in damages, a reversal of the operation, and a stop to any other operations like this nationwide. This turned into Relf v. Weinberger, the lawsuit that ultimately overturned the use of federal dollars for involuntary sterilization. Throughout the lawsuit, the number of sterilizations that had happened and were continuing to happen was continuing to surface, and the final number (almost certainly underestimated, due to the difficulties in collecting accurate data) was that approximately 150,000 people were sterilized annually under federally-funded programs (Stokes). The judge ruled that this practice should not threaten women on welfare and that their benefits should be protected if they refuse to comply with sterilization. Another outcome was that doctors were compelled to obtain informed consent, taking the requisite steps to make sure that the patients and their family were well aware of what they were consenting to. One of the attorneys for the Relf's said, "I have never heard of a sterilization case before, I had no idea of anything like this going on. I don't think anyone knew this was going on" (Stokes. This further proves just how pervasive racism was and how little valued women of color were.

The involuntary sterilizations that took place in the U.S. constitute a bleak spot in our country's history. History can be haunting and evil, but those moments are important. Learning about the outrages of our past can teach us what to do in the future, how to be better. Racism is still pervasive, and the targeting of black people as "less than" and "diseased" that needed to be "cured" by eugenics was, and still is, disgusting, so it is up to us as a society to learn from this unjust ugliness and create light. It is our job as an informed society to acknowledge the past to act now in the present and reshape the future. The women who never had the chance to tell their story must not be forgotten. Society tried to diminish the presence of African Americans and erase them through sterilization. Though the stories told and the lawsuits filed spoke for thousands of women across America who were experiencing this oppression, too many voices were not heard. We must take time to learn about the horrors of the past so they are not repeated.

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Emma Martin

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My Physical Invisible Disability

When I was in 5th grade, my mom took me to a doctor because I had been complaining of foot pain after dance class. We were told that I had extremely flat feet and short Achilles tendons, which was causing my feet to invert inward, creating the pain. The doctor recommended low impact sports, such as swimming, as well as physical therapy, but assured my mother that my diagnosis probably wouldn't have a great effect on me until late in my life, most likely when I was to reach old age.

He couldn't have been more wrong.

Flash-forward ten years, and I am now a sophomore in college. I followed the doctor's orders, wasa competitive swimmer throughout high school, and also had intermittent physical therapy. I had pretty much forgotten about having flat feet because it had no effect in my life. But this all changed when I turned twenty. I started to have severe pain in my feet, to the point where I couldn't walk to classes and had trouble putting weight on my feet for the first hour or so that I was awake.

I went to see an orthopedic doctor with my mom, where I had many X-rays. This first appointment revealed that I had numerous tiny stress fractures running throughout both of my feet, presumably causing a lot of the pain I was in. But the doctor suspected that it was more than just the fractures causing the pain, so we set up an appointment with a different doctor who specialized in podiatry, and I was sent on my way with a boot to be worn on each foot for two months.

At the time, my knowledge of disability was quite basic. I had taken high incidence and low incidence disability courses, and I interacted with disabled people regularly by spending time with my aunt, who has cerebral palsy, and by working with clients as a music therapy student. I readily categorized disability as autism, Down's syndrome, and cerebral palsy, to name a few, but I had never dived into the realm of what makes someone disabled, and I had certainly never thought of myself as having a disability. At this point in my life, I did not "feel" disabled, similar to how people in the Deaf culture, who identify as a members of a distinct community not because they 'hate' disability, or view disabled people as 'less worthy', but because they do not 'feel' disabled" (Deal).

When I visited the podiatrist, he was quick to diagnose me with tendonitis. He wanted to bypass orthotics altogether and go straight into leg braces. The braces were made of plaster, colored tan to blend in with my skin tone, and laced up the front. I could only wear them with three pairs of shoes, all of which had to be bought a size and half larger than my foot size.

I despised these braces. I had never felt more exposed, more vulnerable, more in pain, than when I was wearing them. I covered them up at all costs and rarely showed my legs in public anymore. But the worst part was that they didn't help anything. The braces pressed in on my swollen tendons and made my skin itchy from where I would sweat and the plaster would stick to my skin. I constantly needed to take sitting breaks during classes and was consistently ten minutes late to classes, even though I was practically jogging to get to them.

But if it hadn't have been for these braces, I wouldn't have discovered something about myself: I am disabled. The devices that were supposed to help me disabled me. The classes where I was supposed to learn about disability disabled me. My professors who told me I wasn't allowed to sit during class disabled me. I finally allowed myself to become disabled, and in that, found ways to help myself. This is where my experience differs from people of the Deaf community- I do feel disabled by the world around me.

I registered with the office for students with disabilities, which gave me the following accommodations: the ability to sit during class, the ability to leave class for short periods of time, the ability to stand during class, the ability to miss class for doctor appointments, and the ability to make up any assignments I might miss due to a medical appointment. I ditched the braces, and the doctor, for a new podiatrist who actually listened to me and found options that worked for me. Additionally, I also acquired a new disability: arthritis, found by an MRI my new doctor had prescribed.

I cried when I got the phone call from the nurse telling me I had arthritis. I cried because old people had arthritis, not twenty-year-olds. I cried because I knew it would only get worse from here. And I cried because finally, finally, I had a definitive answer.

I have flat feet, short Achilles tendons, tendonitis, and arthritis. I am disabled. According to an article by Verbrugge and Juarez, "arthritis-disabled people are older and more likely female than other-disabled people, they have substantially more health and disability problems, their work participation is lower, and they are more likely to self-identify as disabled", making me a paradox for being diagnosed with arthritis at a young age. According to the same study, the mean age for a person with arthritis is 66.7 years old, and the prevalence of adults 18-24 being diagnosed with arthritis is only 0.1% (Verbrugge and Juarez). This data may be discouraging for a twenty-year-old diagnosed with arthritis; however, the article also states that 72.7% of people with arthritis are female, and that "arthritis-disabled people have more chronic conditions than other-disabled people," possibly explaining why I have the co-morbid condition of tendonitis. Something else I find interesting is that only 43.1% of people with arthritis identify as having a disability, perhaps because arthritis is usually thought of in relation with old age (Verbrugge and Juarez). I feel that my youth may contribute to the impact of my disability because it is another anomaly added to my experience.

As noted, the stereotypical image of someone with disabling arthritis an old person, maybe in a wheelchair, possibly in a nursing home, and the data largely supports this alignment of age and arthritis. Almost no one envisions a blonde, blue-eyed twenty–year-old college student. Possibly because of this, arthritis is not thought of as a disability; it's thought of as a side effect of aging and possibly another reason why a little less than half of the people with arthritis identify as being disabled. This thought process makes my disability even harder to grasp or understand. In an article by Bruni, he writes about an older woman, who has lost much of her mobility due to old age, "maybe they see in her their worst fears about their own futures" (2). The combination of my youth and arthritis may exacerbate people's fears, further causing them to shy away from me and build defenses in response to my arthritis-disability.

I was just beginning my junior year when I first heard of invisible disability.

The Psychology club was holding a weeklong event to bring awareness to invisible disability, or depression and anxiety, as was depicted by the posters. It was also around this time that I enrolled in an Intro to Gender Studies course. In this class, we briefly discussed the difference in society's reactions to visible versus invisible disability, something which I had started to see in the mental health awareness rise but hadn't fully explored yet.

It's worth mentioning that up to this point I hadn't had the best reactions from people when I told them I had a disability. My parents thought I was being dramatic, most of my professors thought I was lying, and my friends brushed it off or, in one case, laughed and said, "You shouldn't say that when there are people out there with actual disabilities." Having these reactions to my "coming out" as disabled made me feel as if I had made the wrong choice; my experience of identifying as disabled was diminished by other people's opinions. These reactions also lowered my self-esteem, as a newly disabled woman. According to Nosek et. al., "On average [women with disabilities] reported lower self-esteem than women without disabilities" (Nosek et. al.). The reactions I was experiencing are not uncommon for disabled people, and clearly our society is perpetuating a hierarchy by imposing low self-esteem onto disabled people while reinforcing a visible/invisible binary that makes invisible or less visible disabilities the subordinate term.

In an article by Grue et. al., they discuss the hierarchy of disability from an able-bodied perspective: "We find that there is prestige hierarchy of chronic diseases and disabilities in the disability field. In this hierarchy, somatic conditions that are strongly associated with medical treatment were placed higher than either conditions that are characterized by permanence, or conditions are associated [that] with psychosomatic etiologies" (Grue et. al.). What this article is telling us is that people prefer disabilities that they can readily understand; they can point to an answer or cause, and that makes them feel better about the disability. And if I'm being honest, my disability is one that, according to the research, is slightly "preferred." According to the same article, arthritis was ranked 16 out of 38 in "prestige" (Grue et. al.).

Furthermore, in an article by Deal, in examining research conducted by Tringo (1970), he concurred that "ulcer, arthritis, and asthma ranked as most accepted" (898), and that conclusion still stands 30 years later (Thomas).

I find these research conclusions both comforting and concerning at the same time. On one hand, it is nice to know that my disability is "preferred." I find comfort in knowing that future employers and friends/family will most likely not view my disability in a negative sense. This opens up many doors for me and fortifies a positive future. On the other hand, however, is my disability "preferred" because you can't see it? Or is it because it has a definitive medical definition, or cause? People want to feel secure in their thinking, and "our prejudices often exist to make us feel better" (Snyder-Grant).

I have learned that people with mental disabilities are stigmatized because people can't see their disability. I have also learned that mental disabilities are invisible disabilities. It wasn't until Intro to Gender Studies, when we briefly discussed different reactions to disability, that I had this realization: "This is it. This is why people are so confused when I tell them I have a disability."

I am an anomaly. I don't fit the mold.
I have an invisible physical disability.

This realization is something that I have really struggled with. With which group do I identify? Do I identify with people who have mental disabilities, usually classified as "invisible" that I can relate to on a stigmatized basis, or people with physical disabilities, usually classified as "visible", that I relate to on a diagnostic/prognostic basis? And what if I choose a group to identify with based on a hierarchy I have unconsciously created in my mind? Snyder-Grant discusses her own prejudice by saying "even those of us with disability compare ourselves to one another. 'At least I'm able to walk' can give me a false sense of superiority" (Snyder-Grant). I feared I would choose the wrong side of the dichotomy and be rejected by fellow disabled people. But should I even have to choose a group to identify with at all -- can I not just identify as disabled?

My experiences with disability contradict what society expects. Society loves a clean, black and white answer. It rejects grey areas. It creates dichotomies as if they can really impose order on a chaotic world. Annie Delainey, a Youtuber, has many similar experiences to myself. She also feels unsure of whether her disability is visible or invisible, or both, stating, "I am this weird in-between point of visible and invisible disability" (theannieelainey). I frequently fall victim to this dichotomy. I wonder where I belong in the dichotomy of disability, instead of looking at disability as a spectrum. "People don't know the amount of diversity that is within the disabled community" (theannieelainey), and I think that "forgetting" that diversity helps to create two dichotomies – ablebodied/nondisabled and visible/invisible – that are thrust upon people with disabilities.

I think it is possible to experience your disability as both visible and invisible. Hilde Zitzelsberger interviewed fourteen women about their experiences of embodiment with physical disabilities. A common theme arose out of the interviews, which "indicated that lived dimensions of in/visibility were not separate or sequential but occurred simultaneously throughout their lives" (Zitzelsberger). This is something I can personally relate to. Depending on the day, the severity of my pain, the latest diagnosis, my disability can be either "visible" or "invisible". My disability is "invisible," but there have been times when I have worn boots, or braces, which have then made by disability visible. The separation seems superficial; if I'm experiencing both, why not just refer to it as my disability?

The problem with a dichotomy of disability, physical or mental, visible or invisible, is that it leaves out many people. It rejects people who don't fit the mold, who experience both invisible and visible disability. Why are we not talking about this more? Why in a class I recently took focused on Disability Studies am I not reading more about people to whom I can relate? There have only been a few articles I have related to, having been about Black and disabled women, who feel that feminism rejects them both because of their race and their disability. I relate to these women because I feel rejected too, but not by feminism. I feel rejected by Disability Studies. I feel that, on some level, and maybe unconsciously, the field rejects people who don't fit the visible/invisible, physical/mental dichotomy. "We, as disabled people, may need to acknowledge our own prejudices before we can truly demand a wholly inclusive society" (Deal).

This dichotomy, or segregation of disability, forced upon us in an ableist culture creates unwelcomed tension between people with disabilities, a community that should ideally be unified in a common desire to break down stereotypes and prejudices. Snyder-Grant writes about being scared of people thinking she may have muscular dystrophy instead of multiple sclerosis, stating that "MS is more romantic than muscular dystrophy" (Snyder-Grant). But, as Deal states, "if we accept there is nothing inherently 'wrong' in being a disabled person, then being viewed as one sub-group or another, based on impairment, should not, in theory, cause anxiety or insult" (Deal). Maybe looking at disability more as a spectrum can assist with decreasing the tension between people with diverse kinds of disabilities.

In order to truly understand people with disabilities, to truly dive into cultural perceptions of disability, we need to do away with this dichotomy of disability that has been thrust upon us. We cannot accommodate, nor fully include, until we first reject these dichotomies. As Deal states, "such action is likely to further isolate those perceived as less accepted by society, creating a further level of social oppression, but this time from within one's own community" (Deal). We need to study, simply, people with disabilities, and not then separate them into limited taxonomic rubrics which serve to to contain them. Only when we break down the visible/invisible, physical/mental categories can we truly begin to study disability, and how it affects people. Disabled people may be wary of this idea of viewing disability as a spectrum;

they may worry that this will diminish their personal experience of disability. But I believe that looking at disability as a spectrum does not ignore the sub-groups of disability or the people who relate because of their similar disability experiences. Deal voices a couple of other important questions that relate to my topic and should be given more consideration: "do disabled people regard themselves as part of an in-group of disabled people, an in-group of those with the same impairment, or as part of an out-group (i.e. not associated with disability)?" (Deal). Or, could it even be a combination of all three? The fundamental purpose of Disability Studies is to learn about disability as a social construct, to examine how society makes someone disabled, how it produces disability.

If Disability Studies scholars integrate societal construct of disability in their examinations -- visible/invisible, physical/mental -- then they fail to reach their purpose from the outset. For example, if a Disability Studies scholar decides to write a piece about "invisible disability" and how it is viewed by the majority of society, but the piece only focuses on mental disabilities, such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder, then the scholar has used the societal construct of "invisible/mental disability" in order to attempt to break down another societal construct. This piece would, therefore, become less valid because it fails to address all invisible disabilities and reinforces an unnecessary and damaging binary in doing so, using one absolutist societal construct in an attempt to break down another.

Everyone's experience of disability is different, but I reject the idea that these experiences categorize us. Disability Studies has done a good job of analyzing the hierarchies of disability that society creates. But in continuing to use a disability dichotomy, Disability Studies as a field too often reinforces a hierarchy- that of easily classified disability versus people who don't fit the ready-made mold. All data points to a hierarchy of disability within the disabled community, of people with physical disabilities, or easily explained disabilities, being preferred over people with mental disabilities, or disabilities that cannot be easily explained. I am not saying that the project of breaking down the hierarchy of mental versus physical disability is not a valid one, especially in the disabled community. But I am saying that in challenging that hierarchy, we are forgetting about a whole group of people who are then no longer a part of the conversation.

In regard to whether there should be sub-groups in the disability community, I believe further research is required as to whether or not society creates these sub-groups in order to more easily understand and manage disability. I am just one person, and I do not pretend to be an expert in Disability Studies, nor do I claim that my experience speaks for anyone other than me. However, these strike me as pressing and important issues. Deal states that we should "[expand] our knowledge with respect to the degree to which we, disabled people, see ourselves as homogenous in-group, as a set of separate impairment group or, possibly, as not holding a disabled identity at all" (Deal). I agree.

We must begin to consider how our current ways of conceiving of disability does not account for all who are disabled., I cannot be molded into a category of disability. And because of this, my experience of disability is too often forgotten about, discarded, treated as if it is neither real nor valid. Until Disability Studies rejects a disability dichotomy, it will continue to follow a social construct that categorizes people in unnecessarily limited, which goes against the fundamental purpose of the field and undermines our efforts to dismantle ableism generally.

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