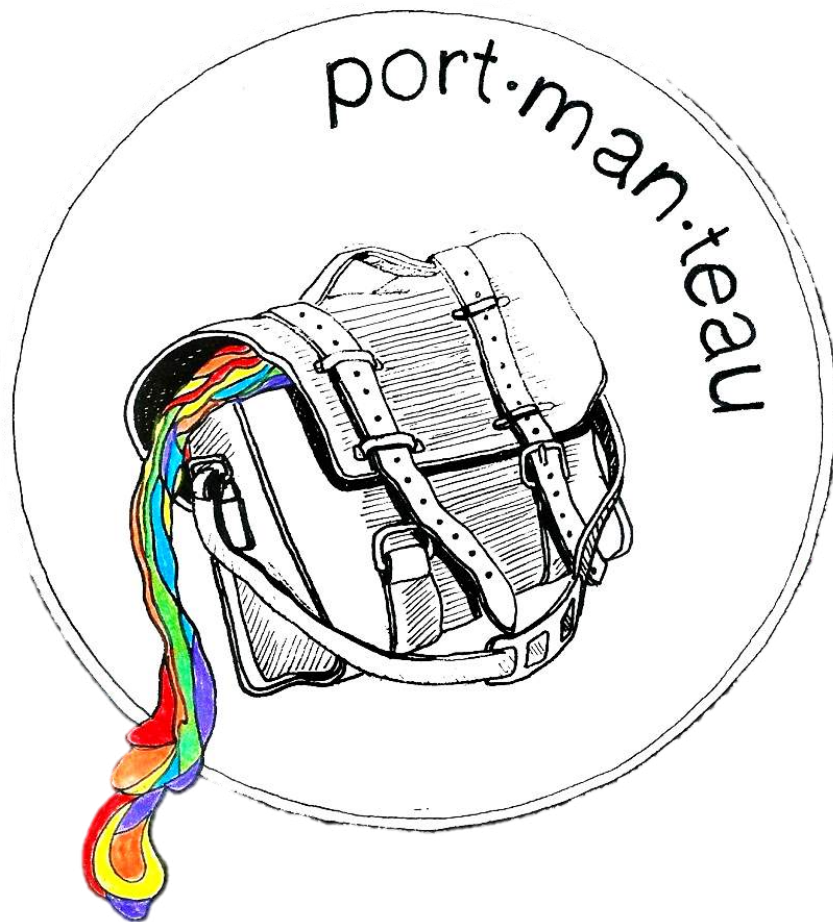# PORTMANTEAU:

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Barriers to the Ballot: The True Effects on Criminal Voter Disenfranchisement on Marginalized Communities
Tynslei M. Spence-Mitchell

Introduction

When people think of voter suppression, the image that often comes to mind is of closed polling places or changes in acceptable identification, as that is what has occurred in recent years. While important, there is a large community of people who are unable to participate in democratic elections: incarcerated and former criminals. This issue is identified as felony disenfranchisement, but felons and ex-felons are not the only populations affected. The varying disenfranchisement laws of each state affect not only current inmates, parolees, and ex-convicts; certain states also restrict or revoke the voting rights of those who have found themselves placed on probation in lieu of jail time. To remain inclusive of all people affected by these policies, this research will use the phrasing "criminal disenfranchisement" rather than "felony disenfranchisement."

While members of marginalized communities of color, specifically members of black, brown, and indigenous communities, are most affected by these policies, they are not the only community impacted by them. There are and have been various laws created that have been able to criminally marginalize other communities, affecting their ability to exercise their political rights. In addition to African American people, criminal voter disenfranchisement greatly affects the LGBT community and those accessing reproductive rights. More than a racialized criminal justice issue, the continuation of this disenfranchisement is a human rights violation

that continues to oppress already marginalized peoples.

History of Criminal Voter Disenfranchisement in America

Voter disenfranchisement is as American as apple pie, since many did not gain the right to vote upon the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Table I demonstrates how even though the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870, many American citizens were not eligible to vote until 1986, *116 years later*.

Table I

Collective Group	Year Eligible to Vote
All Citizens Regardless of Race, Creed, Color (15th Amendment)	1870
White Cisgendered Women	1920
Native Americans	1924
Chinese Americans	1943
Washington, DC residents	1961
Marginalized racial and ethnic groups	1965
People ages 18-21	1971
Absentee Voters (including foreign stationed military)	1986

With the above chart as an indicator, it can be determined that criminal voter disenfranchisement has a deeply rooted history within the various suffrage movements throughout this country's history. Upon colonization, European settlers in America enforced the English practice of "civil death," which limited many of the civil rights of a person convicted of a crime, including their right to vote (Chin, 2011). The New York Court of Appeals determined

that in a civil death, a person "is disabled to bring any action, for he is extra *legem positus*, and is accounted in law *civiliter mortuus*," and "he is disqualified from being a witness, can bring no action, nor perform any legal function; he is in short regarded as *"dead in law"* (*Avery v. Everett*, 1888) (emphasis added).

How the Fourteenth Amendment Made Voter Disenfranchisement Constitutional

It was the 14th Amendment that set the foundation for the voter disenfranchisement that has occurred in the past and the criminal voter disenfranchisement policies that are in effect today. The 14th Amendment contains the Equal Protections Clause, which reads that a state shall not create or enforce "any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (U.S. Const. amend. XIV). This amendment was also ratified in conjunction with the 15th Amendment, which states that "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (U.S. Const. amend. XV).

A common misconception regarding both the 14th and 15th Amendments is that they granted all people the right to vote. *Neither does*. The 14th Amendment makes no reference to the electoral process at all; it granted citizenship and permitted each citizen equal access to all laws and protections. The 15th Amendment states that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged based upon certain qualifications. What these amendments *did do* is allow states to decide how

to permit or withhold voting rights to their citizens.

An example of how misinterpretations of these amendments caused confusion is the 1875 decision in the *Minor v. Happersett* case. The appellant, Virginia Minor, attempted to register to vote in her home state of Missouri but was denied because she was a woman. She sued the state, claiming that although the state constitution grants male citizens the right to vote, not permitting her to register to vote violated her access to the Equal Protections Clause of the 14th Amendment (*Minor v. Happersett*, 1875). The Supreme Court confirmed that the Equal Protections Clause is not applicable, because the Constitution does not grant suffrage to anyone. This decision clarified that suffrage is a state right and permitted each state to enact policies that would eventually exclude certain populations (gender, ethnic, and racially marginalized groups) as they saw fit.

In addition to permitting states the ability to grant suffrage to their populations, § 2 of the 14th Amendment allows states to restrict the voting rights of criminals. It reads:

> *But when the right to vote at any election...is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, **except for participation in rebellion, or other crime** [emphasis added], the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.*

While granting equal protections to all people, this amendment also made criminal voter disenfranchisement constitutional, allowing each state the jurisdictional authority to decide on how such legislation is implemented. Because there is no uniform rule on what the states can and cannot do when enforcing, each state can implement and enforce any policy that they

choose to for those convicted of a crime.

Over time, certain rights rooted in "civil death" were regained via the judicial system. By suing, inmates and ex-felons were able to gain the right to marry, inherit property, and the right to sue while incarcerated. However, the right to vote has not had the same success. In 1974, three former felons from California sued the state for the right to register to vote. In *Richardson v. Ramirez*, the claimants asserted that by not allowing them to register to vote after they had served out their sentences (including probation/parole), the state of California had violated their access to the Equal Protections Clause of the 14th Amendment. The U.S. Supreme Court disagreed, claiming that the enforcement of these restrictions is constitutional according to § 2 of the same amendment. Because of how the 14th Amendment is written, any and all restrictions are legal.

Table II obtains data compiled by Jean Chung (2019) of the Sentencing Project, demonstrating current felony disenfranchisement restrictions.

Table II

No restriction:	Felons cannot vote while in prison:	Felons cannot vote while in prison **or** on parole:	Felons and ex-felons cannot vote while in prison, on parole, **or** on probation:	Felons and ex-felons cannot vote while in prison, on parole, on probation, **or** post sentence:
Maine	Colorado	California	Alaska	Alabama[1]
Vermont	District of Columbia	Connecticut	Arkansas	Arizona[2]
	Hawaii	New York	Georgia	Delaware[3]

[1] In 2017, state lawmakers expanded on the established list of "crimes of moral turpitude" that warrant voter disenfranchisement (Chung, 2019).
[2] A person with two or more felony convictions is permanently disenfranchised (Chung, 2019).
[3] Ex-felons convicted of felony murder, bribery, or sexual offenses are disenfranchised permanently.

	Illinois		Idaho	Florida[4]
	Indiana		Kansas	Iowa
	Maryland		Louisiana[5]	Kentucky[6]
	Massachusetts		Minnesota	Mississippi[7]
	Michigan		Missouri	Nebraska[8]
	Montana		New Jersey	Tennessee
	Nevada		New Mexico	Virginia
	New Hampshire		North Carolina	Wyoming[9]
	North Dakota		Oklahoma	
	Ohio		South Carolina	
	Oregon		South Dakota	
	Pennsylvania		Texas	
	Rhode Island		Washington	
	Utah		West Virginia	
			Wisconsin	

In addition to the above table, there is an unaccounted population that is denied their access to voter registration or absentee ballots due to criminal disenfranchisement, whether they are guilty of the crime or not. People who have been arrested and detained are at great risk of having their rights violated. For example, in the state of Pennsylvania, one can be registered to vote and vote via absentee ballot while being detained prior to any conviction and while

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[4] In 2018, voting rights were expanded to people with a felony conviction (as long as they completed the terms of their sentence) and those with felony murder or felony sexual offenses must wait 5 years before applying for restoration (Chung, 2019).

[5] In 2018, Louisiana legislators granted voting rights back to people on probation or parole if they are more than five years out of prison (Chung, 2019). This does not apply to those convicted of election offenses.

[6] In 2019, voting rights were restored to people with nonviolent felony convictions who had completed their sentences (Chung, 2019).

[7] The state permanently disenfranchises those with certain convictions (Chung, 2019).

[8] The state altered its indefinite disenfranchisement and now permits the right restoration to individuals two years post supervision (Chung, 2019).

[9] In 2017, Wyoming restored voting rights for first-time individuals with nonviolent felony convictions post supervisions, with other convictions requiring the state's mandatory 5-7 year waiting period before applying for rights restoration (Chung, 2019).

incarcerated for a criminal misdemeanor (PA Board of Probation & Parole, 2019). However, sociology professor Chris Uggen suggests that a practice of "practical disenfranchisement" still exists, where a sizable number of detained or incarcerated people are eligible to vote in their respective state but not given the information to do so, and may also be too afraid to ask (Barthel, 2018). The fluctuating number of people who are criminally disenfranchised makes it very difficult for concrete statistics to be collected, but there is almost certainly more affected by these policies than studies have shown.

CRIMINAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT AS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN ISSUE

Criminal disenfranchisement is often treated as an African American issue because the statistics are most visible to policymakers, especially considering the historical challenges that this group has had when voting in this country.

Post-Civil War, African American men were given the right to vote federally via the 15th Amendment, but states began to enforce poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses during the Jim Crow era to prevent African Americans from exercising their constitutional rights. In addition, African Americans faced lynching and other forms of racial violence when registering to or actually voting (Jones et al., 2017). For many states, criminal disenfranchisement became another way to curb African American voters, as many states codified these laws post-Civil War to limit the political power of both the formerly enslaved population and other members of the lower class (Chung, 2019). States even went so far as to tailor their disenfranchising laws toward crimes that African Americans were believed to be

more "susceptible" to commit, such as burglary, theft, and rape (Chung, 2019).

Per Table II, Maine and Vermont are only two states that permit their incarcerated population to vote. A primary reason these states have not created criminal disenfranchisement laws is because their populations lack heterogeneity. "It is true that almost 95 percent of people in Maine identify as white, according to the most recent census data. This makes it one of the two whitest states in the country along with Vermont" (Arnold, 2019). Once populated with a burgeoning African American community, the arrival of the Klu Klux Klan in Maine during the 1920s led to the election of officials sympathetic to their causes, forcing many African Americans to relocate for a better quality of life (Arnold, 2019). Vermont had the opposite issue. Where Maine pushed out their African American community, Vermont could not draw people there. Post-slavery and during the Great Migration, African American migrants went to the more industrial cities (i.e. Newark, Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Chicago, etc.) for jobs that Vermont did not offer (Evancie & Sananes, 2017). Because of its small African American population, the state did not possess the same fears of the African American voter as other states had. After analyzing why Maine and Vermont did not create criminally disenfranchising policies, it can be suggested that other states did so to exclude and ostracize this and other marginalized groups.

As mass incarceration and mandatory minimum sentencing for small amounts of street drugs grew in the 1970s, the African American community was (and continues to be) affected by these policies so much so that mass incarceration is often termed "the new Jim Crow," as it is

used to disqualify African American voters in the way that racial violence, poll taxes, literacy

tests, and other blockades did decades before (Alexander, 2012). With the disenfranchisement

seven times higher for African American men than other groups, 1 in 3 African American boys

not yet born are at risk of becoming disenfranchised at some point in their lives (Purtle, 2013).

Criminal Disenfranchisement as a Reproductive Rights Issue

While African American people have endured historical racialized voter

disenfranchisement, criminal disenfranchisement can affect one's access to reproductive rights,

specifically for those able to become pregnant[10]. While abortion has been legal for decades, nine

states have passed very strict laws restricting its access in recent years. The harshest restrictions

come from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio, as these

states have passed new policies known as "heartbeat bills," which ban pregnancy termination

once a heartbeat is detected.

In May 2019, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed the Living Infant Fairness and

Equality (LIFE) Act into law, which criminalized abortion. According to this law, the

termination of anything with a heartbeat is murder, punishable by the possibility of life in

prison or the death penalty (Stern, 2019). If a person were to still seek out an abortion in this

state or even miscarry, there would still be legal consequences that would affect their freedom

as well as their right to vote. Mark Joseph Stern (2019) writes:

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[10] Both this research *and* the researcher acknowledge that the dialogue surrounding abortion has historically centered on women. However, to effectively demonstrate the impact of criminal disenfranchisement against various communities. this section will utilize inclusive language to center nonbinary and trans peoples as well as women, as members of these groups have the potential to become pregnant. The word "women" and "woman" will be used only when quoting direct citations.

A woman who seeks out an illegal abortion from a health care provider would be a party to murder, subject to life in prison. And a woman who miscarries because of her own conduct—say, using drugs while pregnant—would be liable for second-degree murder punishable by 10 to 30 years' imprisonment. Prosecutors may interrogate women who miscarry to determine whether they can be held responsible; if they find evidence of culpability, they may charge, detain, and try these women for the death of their fetuses.

The federal courts in each state have blocked the enforcement of these heartbeat bills, as they are a violation of the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Legislators in support of these restrictions are not discouraged by these injunctions, as the intent is to appeal each denial indefinitely until each case reaches the Supreme Court. With the appointments of Justice Kavanaugh and Justice Coney-Barrett, these legislators believe that they would help overturn the *Roe* decision (Lai, 2019). While this area of policy is still being written, heartbeat bills and other restrictive policies would unequivocally disenfranchise those seeking to terminate a pregnancy and the medical professionals who assist them. If enforced, the heartbeat bill in Alabama (The Alabama Human Life Protection Act) will criminally prosecute anyone who performs an abortion, not the person receiving it. If convicted, medical professionals would be guilty of a felony, and per Table II, would lose their right to vote for the rest of their lives in that state.

If abortion is criminalized on the federal level, criminal disenfranchisement will affect those assisting a termination of a pregnancy, those who decide to terminate, and some of those who miscarry. While history is still being written for these reproductive rights, voter rights advocates must remain aware of the reverberating effects that these policies have.

CRIMINAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT AS AN LGBT RIGHTS ISSUE

The Alabama State Constitution reads, "no person convicted of a felony involving moral

turpitude, or who is mentally incompetent, shall be qualified to vote until restoration of civil and political rights or removal of disability" (Ala. Const. Art. VIII, § 177). In 2017, the state clarified what felonies are considered to be of moral turpitude. House Bill 282 (HB 282) includes crimes such as murder, assault, manslaughter, and sodomy (Ala. Code § 17-3-30.1). While any person can be convicted of sodomy, this crime and its subsequent penalty have unfairly targeted members of the LGBT community.

Homosexuality has been criminalized throughout American history, with many anti-homosexual and anti-sodomy laws passed early on during the colonial era (Eskridge 2009). Pre-independence, the Plymouth Colony created a list of capital offenses punishable by death which included "treason, murder, witchcraft, arson, sodomy, rape, buggery (here denoting bestiality), and adultery" (Crompton, 1976, p. 278). As each state began to create its state codes, the Plymouth Colony created the template for other states to follow regarding the death penalty and sodomy. Alternatively, Pennsylvania, as a state with Quaker and pacifist foundations, did not want to endorse the death penalty for anything but still viewed sodomy and buggery as a crime punishable by law. By 1718, the state adopted the following: "any person or persons shall commit sodomy…he or they…shall suffer as felons" (Bartee & Bartee, 1992, p. 38). Nearing the end of the eighteenth century, many states moved away from capital punishment for sodomy but enforced felony prison sentences as punishment.

In 1947, Former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover stated that the "most rapidly increasing type of crime is that perpetuated by degenerate sex offenders…depraved human beings, more

savage than beasts, are permitted to rove America almost at will" (Eskridge, 2009, p. 60).

Homosexuals were considered sexual deviants who had the intention of preying on young boys

and girls. That fear-mongering produced the Lavender Scare[11], and caused many states to revisit

and create more punitive laws for its sexually charged offenses, particularly those that were

deemed to be predisposed toward homosexuals (i.e. child molestation, loitering around a toilet,

and sodomy). Alabama and other states (Florida[12], Georgia[13], Idaho[14], Kansas[15], Kentucky[16],

Louisiana[17], Maryland[18], Massachusetts[19], Michigan[20], Minnesota[21], Mississippi[22], North

Carolina[23], Oklahoma[24], South Carolina[25], and Texas[26]) still have anti-sodomy, or more informal

sexual deviancy laws, in effect. Though they are not likely to be enforced due to the 2003 U.S.

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[11] The Lavender Scare occurred during the mid-20th century and was responsible for the mass firings and prohibition of hiring homosexual or presumed homosexual employees on the federal government level. Homosexual people were deemed to be security threats and potential communists, with this belief further purported by the news media and public officials. Similar to the Red Scare, it has contributed to many accusations (most without merit) that terrorized many.

[12] A person that commits an unnatural and lascivious act is guilty of a second-degree misdemeanor, punishable by an imprisonment of up to 60 days and a $500 fine (Fla. Stat. § 800.02).

[13] A person convicted of the offense of sodomy shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than 20 years" (GA. Code Ann. § 16-6-2, 2019).

[14] A person guilty of a crime against nature shall be imprisoned by the state for a minimum of five years (Idaho Code § 18-6605, 2019).

[15] Criminal sodomy (specific to members of the same sex) is considered a class B nonperson misdemeanor, punishable by no more than six months in jail and a maximum $1,000 fine (Kan. Stat. Ann. § § 21-5504, 2019; Kan. Stat. Ann. § § 21-6602, 2019; Kan. Stat. Ann. § § 21-6611, 2019).

[16] Fourth degree sodomy (defined as deviant same-sex intercourse is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a maximum one-year jail sentence (KRS § 510.100, 2019).

[17] Unnatural intercourse with a member of the same or opposing sex is punishable by a maximum $2,000 fine, maximum five-year imprisonment (hard labor to be determined), or both (LA Rev Stat § 14:89, 2019).

[18] A person who is convicted of sodomy is guilty of a felony and is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 10 years" (MD Code, Criminal Law, § 3-321, 2019).

[19] Unnatural and lascivious acts between persons are punishable by a fine between $100-$1,000, a maximum of five years in prison, or a maximum of 2.5 years in jail (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 272, § 35, 2019).

[20] Criminal law Statute 750.158 is titled Crime against nature or sodomy; penalty and reads: "Any person who shall commit the abominable and detestable crime against nature either with mankind or with any animal shall be guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment in the state prison no more than 15 years" (MCL § 750.158, 2019). and if the person is considered to be, or if such person was at the time of the said offense a sexually delinquent, crime is punishable by the maximum term of life in prison. Also, if any person (male or female) commits or engages in a gross and indecent act with another (male or female) is punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine (MCL § 750.338, 2019).

[21] Whoever...voluntarily engages in or submits to an act of sodomy with another may be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than one year or to payment of a fine of not more than $3,000, or both" (Minn. Stat. 609.293, 2019).

[22] Any intercourse to be considered unnatural between persons is punishable by a maximum of ten years imprisonment (Miss. Code Ann. § 97-29-59, 2019).

[23] Classified as an offense against public morality and decency, a person guilty of a crime against nature will be sentenced as a Class I felony, punishable by 3 to 12 months imprisonment (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-177, 2019; North Carolina Judicial Branch, 2013).

[24] Sodomy is punishable by a maximum of ten years imprisonment (Okla. Stat. § 21-886, 2019).

[25] Classified as buggery (the old English word for sodomy), any person found guilty of this crime shall be imprisoned for five years or pay a minimum fine of $500, or both (S.C. Code Ann. § 16-15-60, 2019).

[26] Homosexual conduct is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a maximum $500 fine. (Tex. Penal Code Ann. §§ 21.06, 2019; Tex. Penal Code Ann. §§ 12.23, 2019).

Supreme Court decision of *Lawrence v. Texas*, which determined that anti-sodomy laws unfairly target homosexual people and violate their access to the Equal Protections Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, these statutes have not been repealed. As depicted in Table III below, there are people who may currently be and have been criminally disenfranchised because they were once convicted of these crimes.

Table III

State	Would a person convicted of the above "crimes" before the *Lawrence v. Texas* decision be eligible to vote today?
Alabama	No
Florida	Yes
Georgia	Yes, post-incarceration, parole, and probation
Idaho	Yes, post-incarceration, parole, and probation
Kansas	Yes, post-incarceration, parole, and probation
Kentucky	No
Louisiana	Yes, post-incarceration; parolees eligible if released more than five years
Maryland	Yes, once released from prison (including parole)
Massachusetts	Yes, once released from prison (including parole)
Michigan	Yes, once released from prison (including parole)
Minnesota	Yes, post-incarceration, parole, and probation
Mississippi	Yes
North Carolina	Yes, post-incarceration, parole, and probation
Oklahoma	Yes, post-incarceration, parole, and probation
South Carolina	Yes, post-incarceration, parole, and probation

The *Lawrence v. Texas* decision was decided on June 26, 2003. This means that until June 25, 2003, people in the above states could be prosecuted and incarcerated for sodomy. As more

are becoming tolerant of issues that affect the LGBT community, it is terribly punitive that in

Alabama and Kentucky, those who have been convicted are unable to participate in democratic

elections due to being convicted of crimes that the judiciary has now judged discriminatory.

Because criminal disenfranchisement continues to subjugate LGBT people, the criminalization

of homosexuality in this country will continue to be permitted.

CRIMINAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT AS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

Waupun, Wisconsin is a town with three state prisons. Supported by the community,

these facilities provide stable jobs to residents and contribute to the local economy. In Waupun,

the prisoners are counted toward the town population, and as such, elected officials are able to

count them as constituents even though they are unable to vote. This is called prison

gerrymandering and is a threat to democracy in the age of mass incarceration.

According to the Census Bureau, a person's residence is where they live for most of the

year. Known as the usual-residence rule, census law permits the address of their facility to be

used as the residence of incarcerated people (Meraji, 2019). The usual-residence rule originated

in 1850, where the facility was the head of household and its inmates were counted as a prison

household (Drake, 2011). In 1900, the Census Bureau permitted inmates to be counted toward

their city of residence but reverted toward the previous policy by the next census, and that has

been in effect ever since (Drake, 2011).

By redrawing voting districts, the inmates in the Waupun Correctional Institution

contribute to 76% of alderperson Peter Kaczmarski's district (Meraji, 2019). If the prison

inmates are unable to vote for an elector, they should not be counted as residents and counted toward the district because it is a violation of the Voting Rights Act. The Act endorses the mantra "one person, one vote." When a district is not a representation of its elector and each person is unable to vote for whatever reason, the area is not a representative democracy.

Not only does prison gerrymandering negate a representative democracy, but it is reminiscent of another electoral human rights violation: the three-fifths clause. The three-fifths clause is an article in the Constitution[27] that granted the government to count each enslaved person as three-fifths of a person, which meant that plantations with large slave populations were able to hold more electoral representation. Author John C. Drake (2011) writes:

> As a result of the three-fifths compromise brokered during the Constitutional Convention, slave states...reaped the benefits in political power. In 1793, Southern states had forty-seven seats in Congress compared to fifty-eight for the North. Had the slaves not counted, then the allotment would have been thirty-three seats for the South compared to fifty-seven seats for the North (p. 252).

The similarities between prison gerrymandering and the three-fifths clause is uncanny, as the same census rules are applicable. By contributing its confined population for political consideration, it ensures that certain political interests are maintained. Like elected officials in areas like Waupun, plantation owners were able to redraw districts surrounding their property due to a population that was restricted from voting to retain political power. Some states have created policies to combat prison gerrymandering. Since the 2010 Census, Delaware, New York and Maryland are the only states that allow prisoners to be counted toward the census in those

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[27] Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution permits representation to be "determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons" (U.S. Const. art. I, § 2).

counties where they reside, not the county where they are incarcerated (Drake, 2011). Although the usage of the three-fifths clause was discontinued after slavery upon the ratification of the 14th Amendment, prison gerrymandering allows the same principles to continue under a different title and is effectively one of the legacies of slavery still in use today.

Conclusion

It was the 14th Amendment that set the course for all of the suffrage movements of the 20th century, yet its language does not guarantee people affected by criminal disenfranchisement from obtaining the right to vote. While not solely a race issue, marginalized communities have been and will continue to be most at risk of losing their voting privileges, and that risk is increased in terms of intersectional oppressions. As more people have become disillusioned with the electoral college, voting rights advocates should inform the public on how the same complaints regarding that process are applicable to the construct of prison gerrymandering and its effects on marginalized communities.

It is also important to note the future ramifications that these types of policies will have in the future. After the 2020 racial uprising protesting the murders of individuals due to police violence, the governor of Tennessee passed House Bill 8005, a policy that criminalizes any protest on public property (Mansoor, 2020). Camping on state property in any way is now a felony charge, and if convicted of a felony in that state, one loses the right to vote indefinitely. Many other states are following this trend. As millions of eligible voters each year are denied access, their exclusion will be a blemish on the democratic process.

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The Impact of Certified Nurse Assistant Training on Health Disparities in LGBTQ+ Older Adults in Long-Term Care Settings

Bailie Fleming

Introduction

Older adults bring joy and unique perspectives to this world from which we can learn. For me, this includes dear memories of my own grandmothers, Marlene Craig and the late Joanna Fleming. I learned many lessons from each of them, as we went shopping for school or grabbed dessert at a local restaurant. While I was growing up, I was surrounded by a tight-knit, loving family that I cherish. These simple experiences of shared love have had a lasting impact on my desire to be a better advocate for older adults.

This desire was confirmed while taking a course titled, "Aging and Older Persons," instructed by Dr. Adelle Williams. Part of the course requirement involved pairing a student with an older adult. This project was facilitated by a partnership between Slippery Rock University and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and was originally designed for students to meet residents in a facility. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the class adjusted to speaking with an older adult over the phone for at least twelve hours from September to November during one semester. The project aimed to create intergenerational perspectives through conversations between a student and an older adult. When communicating with the older adult with whom I was paired a few times per week, I gleaned inspiring advice from her: "Do what makes you happy now because years from now you won't be able to do it." The

experiences as part of this project, coupled with my experiences with my grandmothers, led me to my true calling in healthcare advocacy for older adults, particularly a concern for and interest in advocating for older adults facing health disparities.

Health Disparities & Older Adults

Health disparities occur when one faces a particular disadvantage based on certain social, economic, and/or environmental situations (American Association of Retired Persons, 2020). For older adults, health disparities can hinder general well-being and impact things like cognitive impairment (Brooks, 2020). Older adults may face particular health disparities based on their age.

The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2020) projects that the population of those who are 45 years or older will reach 23.5% of the total population by 2060. This population often faces discrimination, which is called ageism. Ageism exists when stereotypes or biased attitudes are applied to older adults due to their age. The *Journal of General Internal Medicine* (2019) found that one in five adults experience ageism in health care settings, which can lead to an increased risk of a new or worsening disability (Hoyt, 2019). Sugar (2015) explains that older adults are less likely to be screened, which may impact quality of life and health outcomes in the future.

Environmental factors can also impact health outcomes for older adults. The COVID-19 pandemic is a poignant example of an environmental factor that older adults are experiencing

together, yet alone. The pandemic has caused physical health risks for adults in addition to psychological burdens. This may have lasting impacts on health.

Caring for an older adult's mental and emotional needs is as important as addressing their physical needs. According to the National Institute on Aging (2020), the treatment of older adults in the health care system is not just dependent on physical symptoms, but equally on who they are as a person, who is treating them, and where care is provided. This demonstrates the importance of incorporating a person's identity into the care that they receive, especially for older adults. Older adults who identify as LGBTQ+ face particular barriers to health (National Institute on Aging, n.d.), systemic bias which has evolved through a history of discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community.

LGBTQ+ Health Disparities History

Discrimination against the LBGTQ+ community has been documented from as early as the 1600s. European colonial governments imposed   sodomy laws, which covered "a range of same-sex sexual activities" and could lead to a penalty of execution (GSAFE, n.d.). These laws have left a legacy of discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community that is still largely in place today. Homophobic and heternormative discrimination   occurs in many forms, like denying jobs and discriminatory confrontation with the police force. These struggles have inspired many protests by the LGBTQ+ community and allies to fight for what they believe in. Because of this advocacy, Wisconsin was the first state to legally require business owners, landlords, employers, and others not to discriminate or deny anyone because of their sexual orientation (Woulfe,

2017). However, bias persists.   For example, up until recently, a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy officially required members to conceal their sexual orientation (Burks, 2011). This policy was an affront to those who were unable to be who they really were to pursue a career path in the military.

Socially disadvantaged groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, have distinctive traumatic experiences that can lead to health problems (Wallace, 2018). Historically, resources to assist disadvantaged groups in talking about their experiences have been scarce. Trauma from experiences related to discrimination and prejudice has created significant emotional and physical stress for many persons who identify as LGBTQ+. By talking about mental health and trauma, experts are gaining a greater understanding of how demographics, like identifying as LGBTQ+, can impact social wellness (Noble, 2020). This also demonstrates the importance of providing resources to LGBTQ+ persons to address the negative impacts of discrimination on their health.

Health Disparities & LGBTQ+ Older Adult Persons in Long - Term Care

As demonstrated, older adults and LGBTQ+ persons face unique discriminatory barriers to health. Combined, these barriers have a compounded effect. This is especially true for older adults who identify as LGBTQ+ in the long-term care setting. Long-term care is defined as any care received over an extended amount of time. There is an increasing number of those who identify as LGBTQ+ in the older adult population, which will soon in turn lead to an increase in

those identifying as LGBTQ+ seeking long-term care. Without knowledge of challenges that this population faces, formal caregivers will not be able to provide quality care.

A significant concern related to lack of knowledge about LGBTQ+ populations is that healthcare providers will not be adequately prepared to address health disparities. For example, medical students only receive about five hours of education on LGBTQ+ concerns out of their four years of schooling (Winter, 2012). That is just five hours out of 35,040 hours spent studying medicine. Further, this training is focused on HIV/AIDS. Such a focus has a significant impact on how doctors assess and treat LGBTQ+ persons. However, medical staff need to know about common health issues, which can include sexually transmitted diseases, eating disorders, and certain types of cancers, in order to properly treat them in long term care (University of North Dakota, n.d.).

LGBTQ+ concerns in long-term care are well-documented in study after study. Services & Advocacy for GLBT elders (American Association of Retired Persons, 2021) found that 34% of LGBTQ older people and 54% of transgender and gender nonconforming people felt they had to re-closet themselves to seek elder housing. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Aruma & Hanachor, 2017) shows that there are steps to reach that self-actualization, or the maximum potential of oneself. It first starts with basic needs and elevates to needs that are emotionally deeper, including a sense of belonging. If LGBTQ+ persons are not able to reach a sense of belonging by having to re-closet themselves in settings of long-term care, they will not be able to reach their full, self-actualized nature. Training for caregivers in long-term care could help to

address this serious problem. Houghton's American Association of Persons study (2018) found that 88% of surveyed individuals said they would feel more comfortable in long-term care settings if caregivers were trained specifically on the needs of LGBTQ+ persons. This demonstrates the impact that high-quality training can have on those in the LGBTQ+ community who seek long-term care.

Adequate training for staff who provide care to LGBTQ+ persons in long-term care is an issue of justice and equity. The Fair Opportunity Rule, a federal policy which states that giving people advantages or disadvantages based on the properties that they are not responsible for is unjust (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). Homophobic bias is unfair because it is based on a person's immutable characteristic of sexuality and/or gender. Too, as noted earlier, intersectionality of other dimensions of one's identity may add to and complicate experiences of an older LGBTQ+ community to impact health outcomes.

Although health disparities exist, there is some level of protection for LGBTQ+ older adults, like the Older Americans Act, OBRA 1987, and Ombudsman. The Older Americans Act provides services for those who are "frail and at-risk for institutional placement," and includes different groups such as Native American elders and LGBT older adults (James, 2020,). The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1987 (OBRA 1987) provides certain rights to persons living in nursing homes, addressing issues like access to medical records and the right to maintain dignity and respect. In addition, OBRA established requirements for state-approved nursing aide training, which will be discussed more later in this paper. Lastly, Ombudsmen (officials

assigned to investigate complaints) are appointed to go into long-term care facilities after receiving a complaint, after which they talk to the stakeholders about how to best address the complaint. Although these safeguards are in place, they do not adequately address discriminatory practices that LGBTQ+ older adults continue to face in long-term care facilities; inadequate training of long-term care staff on the needs of LGBTQ+ older adults is considered one of the causal factors.

The Keystone of Long-Term Care Quality: Role of CNA

Healthcare professionals have a major impact on the health of older adults. Health care professionals in the realm of long-term care include interdisciplinary teams of clinicians, administrators, or formal/informal caregivers who work to provide quality care to long-term care residents. Certified Nursing Assistants, or CNAs, are the largest clinical workforce in nursing facilities and are the focus of the remaining analysis.

CNAs have a large impact when taking care of consumers within the realm of long-term care because they are direct caregivers, providing supportive services such as assistance with bathing, feeding and toileting. These caregivers are employed at skilled nursing facilities, continuing care retirement communities, assisted living, hospitals, surgical centers, home health agencies and more. There is a high concentration of CNAs in skilled nursing facilities, where CNAs make up over one third of all caregivers (Booher, 2020). Skilled nursing facilities are an important area of long-term care and a large number of older adults receive care in these facilities. A skilled nursing facility provides a resident with a room, meals, personal care,

nursing care, and medical services. It is an important service for those who need nursing care and are unable to care for themselves at home.

The CNA is a keystone of long-term care because of their direct involvement with patients and their large representation within the workforce, especially within nursing facilities. The importance of a trusting relationship between the CNA and resident is essential, especially when facing what could be a life-or-death situation. At the frontline when determining a patient's needs, CNAs are intimately aware of what the resident's behavior is normally like since they have close, daily interactions with the resident. They have an important role in bringing safety issues to the attention of other staff and leadership.

Gap Analysis: Are CNAs adequately prepared to provide care to LGBTQ+ residents?

CNA training has a significant impact on older adult residents in long-term care facilities. The amount and type of training that a CNA receives can play a large role on patient outcomes. A recent study found that requiring more training hours for CNAs reduced adverse outcomes and supported better clinical outcomes (Trinkoff & Storr, 2020). The additional training cited in this study generally consisted of continuing education. This illustrates that training can have a significant, positive impact on the residents for whom CNAs care.

While the need for a competent workforce has been established, existing perceptions of LGBTQ+ concerns have not been adequately identified. The question then arises: are CNAs adequately prepared to provide care to older LGBTQ+ residents? They provide mostly hands-on

care in nursing facilities (Singh, 2010), yet it is unclear whether they are prepared to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ residents in the nursing facilities where they work. There is a significant gap in literature regarding whether or not CNAs are trained to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ residents. Addressing this research gap is important, as recognition of need can lead to an increase in LGBTQ+ cultural competency programs for baseline knowledge and perceptions. The inquiry on CNA preparedness for LGBTQ+ population can be examined through the lenses of state mandates, CNA education, and certification requirements.

Federal regulations outline requirements for CNA certification in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 483.152. This federal regulation requires CNAs have a minimum of 75 hours of training, including 16 hours of supervised clinical training plus 12 hours of continuing education per year. These training programs include basic nursing skills, personal care skills, mental health and social service skills, caring for cognitively-impaired residents, basic restorative skills and residents rights. There is no requirement for cultural competence or competency in addressing concerns of LGBTQ+ patients. The closest requirement is that "promoting the residents' right to make personal choices to accommodate their needs" must be included in training, which is consistent with the spirit of cultural competency requirements, but does not explicitly require that training programs include any type of LGBTQ+ education (CFR) 483.152.

After completing an approved training program, CNAs must take a certification exam which includes written, oral, and skills demonstration components. These requirements are

outlined in CFR 483.154 and do not mention any requirement to examine cultural competency. Most states administer the National Nurse Aide Assessment Program (NNAAP) exam, developed by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2021). This exam encompasses five topics: activities of daily living, basic nursing, restorative skills, psychological care skills, and role of nurse aide (National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc [NCSBN], 2021). The exam does not mention topics related to cultural competency or LGBTQ+ concerns.

Overall, there is no mention of cultural competence or competency to address LGBTQ+ concerns in the federal regulations for nursing assistant certification, which means that requirements for cultural competency are left up to the state. A 2002 report from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General found that there is large variation in state requirements for nurse aide curriculum. This report found that some states have a single statewide curriculum; some states have a recommended (but not required) curriculum, and some states do not encourage the use of a core program at all. Further independent analysis finds that only Washington, D.C. has any requirement related to cultural competency: two hours of continuing education in cultural competency and training to help LGBTQ+ older adult persons.

Impact

Long-term care facilities, especially nursing facilities, are highly regulated health care settings. Thus, federal and state requirements have a significant impact on a CNA's ability to assist patient populations to achieve health outcomes and quality of life. Health outcomes are

measurements to help clinicians determine whether healthcare is effective. In long-term care, quality of life is a big part of this because it touches every part of a resident's life. Only the residents themselves can decide what is important to their own well-being and what they want from their own journey. Long term care must be consumer- or resident-driven. Care must cater to individual needs and make residents feel like they are in their own home. CNAs are at the core of a patient's ability to realize quality care and quality of life, since they provide such a major degree of direct patient care and interaction.

If CNAs were well-trained in cultural competency, especially regarding issues facing the LGBTQ+ older adult population, LGBTQ+ residents could be more comfortable and not have to fear their CNA finding out about their sexuality or gender identity. Since there is no standard requirement for this type of training for CNAs, LGBTQ+ older adults may not have this type of protection within their long-term care facility. The better prepared that CNAs are to address concerns of the LGBTQ+ community, the better they will be able to help care for older adults in their facilities.

Conclusion & Future Research

The importance of CNA education is well established and the basis of federal requirements for training and certification. No matter a resident's sexuality or gender identity, cultural competency and inclusivity should be at the center of CNA training. Improving CNA training in these areas can have a great impact on resident well-being.

With the background and experiences from my life and the education, I look forward to continuing with this advocacy in my future career. My family, specifically my grandparents, have shown me the importance of honoring the unique, individual needs of older adults in the long-term care setting. I will continue to educate myself inside and outside the classroom to find ways to advocate for LGBTQ+ older adults into my professional career. This research has opened my eyes to another level of quality that I want residents to obtain when walking through my facility doors as an administrator. By creating an inclusive culture in my facility, I will advocate for those who need it. This starts with the education and training of the staff on the needs of individuals in the long-term care setting, including the specific needs of those in the LGBTQ+ community.

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Saying the Quiet Part Out Loud:
A Brief Examination of Free Speech, Landmark Cases, and The Government's Interest in Protecting White Supremacy

Ayanna Byers

Nothing is coincidental. From the creation of the Constitution to the laws that have been passed, repealed, and then passed again, the government has said it has a governmental interest in protecting white supremacy. It just has been whispered. But the United States government's interest in upholding white supremacy is revealed through the examination of landmark cases on the subject of free speech and the context surrounding these cases.

It is often said that the pendulum of law will swing to protect governmental interest as the court's interests change. This idea of law shifting to protect governmental interest reveals what the government desires to protect. I argue here that if Critical Race Theory (CRT) is applied, then the pendulum may appear stationary, but what becomes clear is that the pendulum consistently guards white supremacy.

CRT is a lens that critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers. CRT also recognizes that race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender identity, and others. CRT recognizes that racism is not a bygone relic of the past. Instead, it acknowledges that the legacy of slavery, segregation, and the imposition of second-class citizenship on Black Americans and other people of color continue to permeate the social fabric of this nation…It exposes the ways that racism is often cloaked in terminology regarding

"mainstream," "normal," or "traditional" values or "neutral" policies, principles, or practices (George, 2021).

To take a CRT approach, context must be applied to law. Law never happens independently of what is happening in society. Furthermore, those enacting and enforcing laws are all actors of society. Therefore, their values and beliefs impact the laws. It is important to know who created the law or who had influence in the law's creation. Knowing this may not only expose patterns across many laws but highlight conscious and unconscious bias in lawmakers' work. In addition, a person's background like upbringing and values may also affect their lawmaking and decision making. Someone who grew up in poverty may have different values and priorities than someone who grew up affluent. Someone who grew up in the suburbs with a small family may navigate the world differently than someone who grew up in a large family on a farm. Their upbringing may have prevented them from interacting with people who their laws affect. This means their full extent of knowledge of a specific group of people may be from a brief interaction, something the lawmaker may have read about, or stereotypes from television.

It is important to consider if their guardians are or were involved in politics as well. Sometimes people end up in politics because their family members are involved. Rather than their top priority being concerned with serving the public, it is more like the family business. The lawmaker could be less concerned with advocacy or serving the most vulnerable, and instead be focused on maintaining stakeholder satisfaction to maintain family power.

If someone went to school, their education can inform the decisions they make as well as expose them to new people and the values of the school which may be more global or more restrictive. If someone is involved in a social organization, they may take on or share the values of that organization. Justice Black was a member of the KKK and joined to help his campaign. Although he sent a letter to formally leave because he was worried about how that would affect his election, he may have upheld values of the Klan during his 34 years on the Supreme Court (Morgan, 2018).

It is important to consider what interest someone might have in creating the law in a particular way. They may benefit directly financially or from stakeholders who want them to create a law to benefit them. Their power and position or that of their family and community may benefit from the law. It also may reinforce a value or tradition they align with. Similar to housing ordinances created to prevent Black people from living in areas with white people, the drafters explained that segregation was the way to maintain the natural order of things (Rothstein, 2018). The lawmakers used their power to maintain their value of racial segregation.

Finally, it is important to consider what the intended outcome of the law is versus the actual outcome. On its surface, it may be addressing a need of the public, but the actual outcome may have a larger effect on something other than the named goal, and the larger effect may benefit the lawmaker for any reason above. For example, laws with the intention to reduce voter fraud on the surface seem helpful, but when the actual outcome is that people of color's right to vote is restricted more than voter fraud is diminished, there is an issue. This is

especially the case when that lawmaker will benefit from restricting the votes of people of color.

All of these considerations begin to add context to laws and policies enacted and when the lens of CRT is applied show that governmental interest has been in protecting white supremacy. With a focus on landmark cases concerning free speech, it becomes apparent that the neutral policies are anything but, and instead show the legacy of racism in the United States' legal system.

Criminal Syndicalism

The first case to examine is Feiner v New York, 1951. It is important to note that this case was operating under the Criminal Syndicalism Act of 1919. This act came to be during the rise of the Soviet Union; a time when the United States began to label anyone who gathered and spoke out against the acts of the government as a Soviet communist. Criminal syndicalism made it illegal to advocate "crime, sabotage, violence, or unlawful methods of terrorism as a means of accomplishing industrial or political reform" (*Brandenburg v Ohio*, 1969). While in place, many people were targeted and investigated resulting in loss of employment or imprisonment (Fried, 1997). Although many of the convictions were found in violation of the United States Constitution, elements of fear of communism or McCarthyism remain today (*Watkins v United States*, 1957). As time progressed the way the court determined who was in violation of the law changed. The court used different tests to determine if someone was guilty of criminal syndicalism, including bad tendency, gravity of the evil, and imminent lawless action (Gibson,

2009). By the time *Feiner v New York* occurred the Clear and Present Danger Test was used. This meant that for that person or group to be found guilty of Criminal Syndicalism there had to be a high enough level of danger that was going to occur in that area as a result of the gathering.

Feiner v New York, 1951

In 1949, Irving Feiner, a student at Syracuse University made a speech encouraging Black people to fight for equal rights. There was a person in the crowd shouting in disagreement with Feiner. Officers asked Feiner to end his speech. He refused and was arrested for inciting a breach of peace. A trial court found Feiner guilty. On appeal, Feiner argued his arrest violated his right to free speech under the First Amendment. The Court found that Feiner's First Amendment rights were not violated because his arrest came when the police thought that a riot might occur (*Feiner v New York*, 1951).

The reason given was that Feiner's arrest was in "the interest of the community in maintaining peace and order on its streets"(*Feiner v New York*, 1951). However, witnesses said there was only one man "threatening to interfere" with Feiner who was not addressed by police. Police said the crowd was unruly, but witnesses said there was only a crowd because police failed to provide crowd control. It is important to consider why the police officers believed there was a clear and imminent danger when witnesses said there was no danger except the person disagreeing with Feiner. The majority of the witnesses were Black people, and the police believed the potential for the majority Black crowd to become violent was high. Research shows that due to unconscious biases and racism, Black people are often perceived as more violent, so

that could have affected the actions of the police (Eberhardt, et. al., 2004). Similarly, if the police were consciously biased, their failure to address the person shouting in opposition to Feiner's message of civil rights would align. Police said they attempted to suppress Feiner's message not based on its content but on the potential reaction of the crowd, but even Justice Black mentions in a dissent "It seems far-fetched to suggest that the "facts" show any imminent threat of riot or uncontrollable disorder" (*Feiner v New York*, 1951). If even a Justice fails to see evidence of threat, the message of equal rights for Black people may have been the reason police and the courts attempted to suppress the speech. Furthermore, if compared to other similar cases being decided on that day, Feiner's message was framed as "dangerous" while a minister street preaching anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic rhetoric was protected (*Kunz v New York*, 1951). An explanation may be found in the activities of the KKK, a monument to white supremacy (Dimick, 2006).

Brandenburg v Ohio, 1969

Eighteen years after the finding on Feiner v. New York, Clarence Brandenburg, a leader in the Ku Klux Klan, made a speech at a Klan rally that was televised and broadcasted. He was later convicted under an Ohio criminal syndicalism law. The Court's unanimous opinion held that the Ohio law violated Brandenburg's right to free speech (*Brandenburg v Ohio*, 1969).

Here are a few of the quotes taken from Brandenburg's speech:

> Personally, I believe the n***** should be returned to Africa, the Jew returned to Israel...This is what we are going to do to the n******...Send the Jews back to Israel...Freedom for the whites...N***** will have to fight for every inch he gets from now on...Give us our state rights...Let's go back to constitutional

betterment…We're not a revengent organization, but if our President, our Congress, our Supreme Court, continues to suppress the white, Caucasian race, it's possible that there might have to be some revengeance taken (Brandenburg v Ohio, 1969).

Justice Homles explained, "The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent. It is a question of proximity and degree" (*Brandenburg v Ohio*, 1969). It is important to consider why the Court does not see a high probability of threat to the state, despite a specific reference to revenge by the Klan and the Klan's history in the United States. It was in this case that the Supreme Court determined that, despite the Klan's history of violence in the United States, the proximity and degree of violence were not a concern. The court determined the threat of violence to the government was not serious enough to result in a violation, despite the Klan's call to action against Black and Jewish people during the speech, and the Klan's violent history against Black people. The court took it a step further and changed the test of clear and imminent danger explaining that there must be the probability of serious injury. Justice Brandeis explains, "The fact that speech is likely to result in some violence or in destruction of property is not enough to justify its suppression. There must be the probability of serious injury to the State" (*Brandenburg v Ohio*, 1969). During that year, the Klan was targeting Black Americans and those who were involved in the recent Civil Rights movements. Despite that, the court did not believe they posed a threat to the government. The Klan as a formalized flagship

of white supremacy upheld the values of the United States government. That is why there was no concern regarding serious injury to the state. The Klan's actions were upholding the same system in which the actions were tried and found justified. To add more context, the Director and creator of the FBI,J. Edgar Hoover, was a known opponent of the Civil Rights Movement, and during his 37 years in power worked to prevent federal prosecutions against KKK members for violence such as bombings of black churches, shootings of Civil Rights Activists, and other violent acts (Raines, 1987; Raines, 1997; Waddel, 2013). The result was the repeal of criminal syndicalism.

CONCLUSION

In Feiner v New York, a justice explained, "In my judgment, today's holding means that, as a practical matter, minority speakers can be silenced in any city. Hereafter, despite the First and Fourteenth Amendments, the policeman's club can take heavy toll of a current administration's public critics. Criticism of public officials will be too dangerous for all but the most courageous." This criticism has held throughout history and can be referenced most recently in the contrasts of protests against police brutality and those against election results.

There is a history of criminalizing people of color, and specifically in these cases Black people, as violent and threatening simply by existing, a history that often leads to the murder of Black people. The intersection of marginalized identities within race, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, and religion increases the likelihood of oppression. History has shown us that all

it takes is an idea of a Black person becoming violent to make white people fear for their lives and react with violent or deadly force while other groups of people like the KKK or the group that carried out the insurrection at the Capitol Building are often excused or protected, their actions and the threat to (white) society minimized or justified by reference to First Amendment rights . White people or groups, despite their views, rhetoric, and history are seldom seen as a threat to the United States government until after gross violence has occurred, and not always even then. The reason for this is where the governmental interest lies. Feiner called for Black people to rise against oppressive laws that arose in opposition to the Civil Rights Movement. Justice Vinson explicitly stated, "He gave the impression that he was endeavoring to arouse the Negro people against the whites, urging that they rise up in arms and fight for equal rights" (*Feiner v New York*, 1951). The court found this a legitimate concern. This is an example of governmental interest in the cessation of equal rights for Black people. Brandenburg called for Klan members to rise to put Black and Jewish people in their place, and hold the government accountable if they didn't also oppress Black and Jewish people. The court found this speech without threat. There is governmental interest in allowing Klan members to exercise their speech in this way.

When glancing at a specific topic, the Supreme Court seemingly vacillates leisurely leading the path for progressive or restrictive laws to follow. But if you apply specific lenses like CRT which examines racial discrimination, and intersectionality it is easier to see the resolute of white supremacy. In all cases, the Supreme Court must ask, is there governmental interest

in the outcome? In free speech cases, that standard is even higher, which means that if the Supreme Court is protecting or allowing it, it is of no threat, or even beneficial to the courts. By allowing this speech they are maintaining their positions of power, stakeholders, reinforcing their background, but most importantly they are allowing the ideology of white supremacy to persist. Although seldom explicitly stated, history reveals the whispers of white supremacy throughout our legal system. It just requires the application of context to hear clearly. While some people may want a declaration, a reminder that "If proof of a civil rights violation depends on an open statement by an official of an intent to discriminate the Fourteenth Amendment offers little solace to those seeking its protection" (*Dailey v Lawton*, 1970).

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Social Constructs in the Development of the Field of Geography
Jesse Gowin

For millennia, innumerable innovations have been made in regard to human life, whether it be the implementation of politics, the evolution of religion, aspects of personal identity, or progression of academic fields like mathematics and the sciences. These advancements have been met with one constant: the flexibility of the human mind. This flexibility has been impeded by white-cis-hetero norms, but transgressions against these norms exist. One field that exemplifies this notion is the field of modern-day geography, a field that delicately balances the realms of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.

Although practiced as early as the publication of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, geography was not labelled until Eratosthenes's appointment as the head of the Library at Alexandria in the 3rd century B.C.E. with his work *Geography*, which stems from the combination of the Greek words "*gē*" meaning "Earth" and "*graphia*" meaning "writing." The early 20th-century geographer Ernest Dann claims that when geography is at its pinnacle, it masters the sciences, the arts, and philosophical thought at a single moment. Dann mentions this idea of a geographic trio in his essay, "What is Geography?" published in late 1905. In it, he makes the point, "But the two subjects [geography and geology] are too closely connected to be regarded as distinct. The one is the ancient history of the other, and in places the two are indistinguishable. Geology has a distinct bearing upon scenery, and scenery is a distinct branch of our geographical study" (Dann 1905, 99). Almost 60 years later, in 1964, William Pattison published

what he called the "Four Traditions of Geography," which include the spatial tradition, the area studies tradition, the human-environment tradition, and the earth-science tradition. Pattison and Dann had a similar idea, though applied differently.

Unlike mathematics, with formulas like the Pythagorean theorem, geography consists of ever changing paradigms that allow for its continuing relatedness throughout the eons. It may appear that exploring the world can only be done until it is completed and mapped; once a region is mapped, there is little use in remapping unless differing methods or technologies are present. However, a series of paradigm shifts in the discipline of geography illustrates how geographic conceptualizations can offer new insights and approaches, enabling geography to remain meaningful in contemporary times as opposed to becoming an exhausted topic.

Since the times of the first resemblances of modern-day people in Eastern Africa, there has been a need for exploration that had only grown with the implementation of economics and politics. This application of economics and politics enabled inner desires of wealth to manifest. This led to civilizations becoming swiftly enamored with the idea of accumulating more property and thus, in theory, accruing more wealth. The desire to collect more land required not only the knowledge of aforementioned lands, but also a record of them, leading to the use of maps and exploration. As countries morphed through the ages, so too have maps and the technologies used in their creation. This came to be known as the *Age of Exploration*, the initial paradigm of geography.

Over time, this paradigm lost popularity as it served waning needs and opened the door for the next paradigm, *environmental determinism*. Also referred to as *environmentalism*, this paradigm attempted to explain what humans do by arguing that people lived as their physical environment allowed them to. Environmentalism was often used to justify acts like imperialism in the early twentieth century. However, just as with its predecessor, the sun set on the world of environmental determinism and rose on *regionalism*, a paradigm that attempted to divide the world into regions based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to economics, politics, and general location.

The notion of dividing the earth's land based on any variable factor is to categorize it based on characteristics that may be based in reality; for example, location (e.g. the region of Oceania, which contains Australia, New Zealand, Palau, and 11 other island states). An alternative is to categorize a region based on shared characteristics, within two sub-divisions; first, a shared quality like climate or landscape (e.g. a physiographic region like the Atlantic Plain in the Eastern United States), or second, a quality based on the peoples of the designated area (e.g. parts of northern Africa and parts of south western Asia being designated the "Middle East").

The latter example ("the Middle East") is based on religion but also on political alliance, economics, among other factors. The regionalism paradigm brings forth a stunning series of inquiries: who determines these regions? Why are they determined the way that they are? And

how has humanity come to accept these regions the way they are and implement them in everyday life?

As previously noted, advancements seem to originate from a white-cis-hetero-normality. This combination of adjectives is describing a routine based on opinionated stances. The three listed describe one's race, gender identity, and sexual orientation, all of which are social constructs: fabrications of the human mind reflexive of the influence that society has provided in order to categorize certain ideas, people, and objects. The need to categorize objects can be seen as soon as a human is able to communicate. Toddlers will often refer to any four-legged, furry animal as a dog, even if it is a cat or a racoon, because of this craving to compartmentalize as many qualities of life as possible. This is considered normal in human cognitive development, but it is in a commitment to these categories that socially constructed norms come to be accepted as "natural" or "obvious." Stanford University's Cecelia Ridgeway writes of these concepts in "The Social Construction of the Status Value: Gender and Other Nominal Characteristics":

> A nominal characteristic is any socially recognized attribute on which people are perceived to differ in a categorical rather than graduated or ordinal way. Religion, region of origin, ethnicity, race, and gender are all nominal characteristics in our society. They can be distinguished from graduated characteristics such as wealth or education on which people are perceived to vary in the degree to which they possess the characteristic. (Ridgeway 1991, 368).

These nominal characteristics (race, gender, sexual orientation) have created artificial hierarchies of structural privilege, a process that has influenced the field of geography.

Certainly, white, straight, cis men have made significant contributions to the field, but so have people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, people who identify as women, and non-cis people.

Race as a Mental Construct and in the Formation of Geography

The initial social construct that will be examined is the perception of race. For millennia, there has been an idea of difference that is defined by the discrepancies of the physical body of a person in relation to the hue of their skin tone, which has evolved to the point in many cultures to where the pigmentation of one's skin determined one's position in society -- whether one was destined to be incarcerated or forced into slavery, or to walk among the elites in society. This concept is clearly noted in a film produced by California Newsreel titled, *The House We Live In: Race—The Power of an Illusion.* Melvin Oliver, who currently presides as the sixth president of Pitzer College in California, is a sociologist featured in the film and explains race's role in the general public: "Race in itself means nothing. The markers of race—skin color, hair texture, the things that we identify as the racial markers—mean nothing unless they are given social meaning and unless there's public policy and private actions that act upon those kinds of characteristics. That creates race" (Oliver 2003). The film goes on to dissect the history of race in the United States through the creation and application of law and the integration, or lack thereof, of differing races in everyday society.

But what is race? Race is often thought of as a collection of genetic characteristics that determines a sort of palette of which the phenotypic characteristics of a person are determined. However, this idea has been rejected. The characteristic of skin color is derived from the
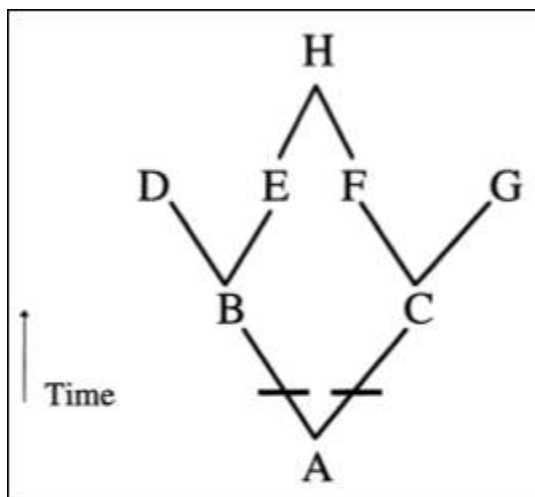
Figure

absorption of sunlight which produces melanin, a pigment that causes the browning of skin, hair and is also responsible for eye color. People closer to the equator receive an exponential amount of direct sunlight, causing people's bodies to produce melanin; as people move closer to the poles, this is reversed, and people receive less direct sunlight and in turn produce less melanin than their counterparts near the equator. *Clade* or *monophyletic* are terms used to describe a population belonging to a single ancestor - such as the human race - which originated in eastern Africa. These terms are used to help support the idea of race belonging to genetics. Robin Andreasen of the University of Chicago mentions these adjectives in her article "Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct," which gives an in-depth look into race and its being as a biological feature, a social construct, or even a mixture of the two. She provides an illustration displaying the notion of clade. (*Figure 1.*)

Race and geography have a complex relationship as illustrated in the geographic paradigm of environmental determinism, which was used as justification for acts of racism. This racism has leached into the field of geography which has, as noted, featured primarily white, straight, cis men. However, historically, the field of geography has benefited from scholars and contributors of every race. One example of a non-white person who greatly enhanced the academic field of geography is Ibn Battuta.

Born in the early fourteenth century in the city of Tangier located on the coast of modern day Morocco, Ibn Battuta followed the Islamic faith which held Five Pillars: shahada: the idea that "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God," salat: the act of prayer five times a day facing Mecca, zakat: the deed of donating a static percentage of earned income to assist members of the community in need, sawm: the abstinence of food and drink during the daytime of the ninth month in the Islamic calendar (Ramadan), and hajj: the great pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca that must be taken by Muslims whose financial and medical health permit them to do so. The final Pillar, the hajj, was the spark that ignited Battuta to explore the world. In his early 20s, Ibn Battuta left his hometown of Tangier to fulfill his religious duty of hajj. This voyage across the northern parts of the African continent allowed him to discover a plethora of knowledge regarding religion and law, in the hopes of becoming a qadi (an Islamic judge). On this initial trip, Battuta fell ill but refused to let his ailment impede his intentions, stating, "If God decrees my death, then my death shall be on the road, with my face set towards …[Mecca]." After approximately a year of travel, he reached Mecca and concluded his first of four hajjes that he would make before his death.

After the conclusion of his first hajj, Battuta was eager to explore more lands and went on a series of travels that lasted for 27 years - excluding his original pilgrimage. The University of California Berkeley mapped this three-decade long series, including legs of the journey that are disputed in regard to their happenings. (*Figure 2*.) These travels led him to the territory of Persia and the region called Iraq today within the first few years, where Ibn Battuta stumbled upon a vast land, still suffering from the long-lasting effects of their conquest by the Mongol Empire a century prior , primarily in respect to their economic and agricultural statuses. Subsequently, after returning to Mecca for a year, he left to explore the eastern coast of Africa, visiting cities like Mogadishu, Malindi, Zanzibar, and Kilwa, before turning to the north to pass through the Strait of Hormuz,

Figure 2

across the Arabian Peninsula to Mecca in a grand two-year journey.

Eventually, after a one-year passing through of the Anatolian Peninsula, Battuta came across the Khanate of the Golden Horde, making landfall in modern-day Ukraine after sailing the Black Sea, and in the last weeks of 1332, Ibn Battuta stumbled into Transoxiana, located in the present-day lands of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. During this era, the state was pushed aside in the academic world for more intriguing studies,

but Ibn Battuta's eyewitness account of Transoxiana inspired others to declare him the 'Marco Polo of the Muslim World.' While in the jurisdiction of the state, Battuta and his party met with Sultan Tarmashirin (the leader of Transoxiana) and accompanied him for a period of time just short of eight weeks. At the end of this agglomeration, the party of Battuta was gifted 700 silver *dinars* along with other items that aided in their voyages. This rendezvous with the Sultan led to Battuta's encounter with Samarqand, a city of great features built into the Wadi'l-Qassarin. As a hub of international commerce, Samarqand was often described by the contemporaries of Battuta, leaving him little need to describe the city similarly to his other entries (Gulati 1997).

Following this stop in his journey, Battuta travelled to the bottom of the Indian subcontinent and to Sri Lanka, proceeding to ride along the coast of the Bay of Bengal and around the tip of the Malay Peninsula, before arriving on the mainland of China. Here, there are disputes of where exactly the party travelled before their departure in 1346, an entire 14 years since his times in Transoxiana. After his excursion to China, Battuta was set to return to his home in Morocco. This endeavor would end up taking him across the Indian Ocean, to Hormuz, where he then proceeded to the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, where he sailed to Morocco and explored sections of northern Africa before settling down and writing the *Rihla*, his testaments of the travels of his life's journeys. The *Rihla* was filled with new information about places that would seem somewhat exotic to the then modern-day citizens of the Dar al-Islam as it perfectly enraptures the notion of travelling in pursuit of knowledge. Ibn Battuta is a

non-white geographic icon that has contributed to the world of geography with his first-hand accounts.

Gender in Society and Geography

As the 21st century continues, steadily catapulting us through time, closer to the never present future, societal norms in regard to personal identity have altered through every society, albeit, at differing paces. One aspect of personal identity that falls into this category is the concept of gender. It must be noted that gender and sex are not the same thing. Sex is defined in most societies by one's physical genitalia, most typically presented as either a pudendum or a phallus, with certain alterations that may cause someone to be classified as an intersex individual. Gender, however, is the mindset and expression that an individual feels they should assume.

Gender is viewed differently across the globe. In Western societies, until relatively recently, there were only two genders that were considered and deemed acceptable: boy and girl. In spite of the typical Western view on this topic, societies outside of the West, like Hawai'i, have third genders that break the stereotypical boy-girl binary. In Hawai'i, there are three genders present: boy, girl, and *mahu*. The mahu are persons who, born as males or females, boldly walk the line between traditional masculine and feminine roles among the populace. After the colonization of Hawai'i by Western culture, this third gender was met with backlash and dwindled away.

Today, however, gender binaries are being challenged and revised in many places in the world. It used to be thought that one was either a boy or a girl, but increasingly, people conceive of gender as part of a spectrum. Thus, one might identify as gender-nonbinary, gender-queer, transgender, gender-fluid, all gender identities and expressions that deconstruct a simplistic "boy/girl" category. If they only partly fall in line with their assigned gender then they could be demi-gender. People can also identify as agender, the concept of not aligning with a set gender.

Historically, though, gender and sex were generally aligned, and males were typically deemed superior. This superiority is clearly referenced in Queen Elizabeth I's *Speech to the Troops at Tilbury*:

> I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field (Tudor, 1588).

Queen Elizabeth I unmistakably made note of what today is called the patriarchy, making the inference that since she is of the 'inferior' sex, she needed to make others deem her worthy of her power.. The distinction of gender in language is also present, perhaps less so in English, but quite notably in languages such as Spanish and French. Referring to the French language, the installation of gender in words stems from the use of pronouns in written works starting in the Medieval ages. Prior to this gendering of words, in the Middle Ages, a period of 1,000 years spanning from 500 C.E. to 1,500 C.E., words were more often non-gendered; however, over the

course of time, words began to be associated with being either masculine or feminine. Barbara

Bullock went in search of certain facilities of how the gendered pronouns in the French language

are used and what their bases meant in a broader society, stating:

> I would like to underscore that this account of gender syncretism lends support
> from linguistics to the claims that gender in French is not arbitrary. That is, the
> phenomenon itself is arguably rooted in semantics (in the widespread notion
> that the mention of any collectivity of humans can include males) and not in
> some arbitrary, linguistic internal restructuring. I agree that the ultimate
> motivation for syncretism is linguistic- internal: it is an attempt to reduce the
> number of available grammatical forms. However, no purely structural account
> can satisfactorily answer the question of why syncretism favors the masculine in
> the plural.
>
> Much of the complexity involved in issues pertaining to grammatical gender is
> borne of the fact that gender in French sometimes does refer to the sex of the
> referent. It is not, then, a simple matter of syntactic agreement. The
> contemporary rules pertaining to gender in which le masculin l'emporte sur le
> feminin are, in part, an artifact of bon usage. But gender syncretism in the
> Middle Ages predates the linguistic codification of gender rules and
> demonstrates that in the history of French, there is a deeply rooted tendency to
> neutralize plural gender distinctions which cannot be attributed to grammarians'
> interventions (Bullock 2001, 707-8).

In other words, the masculine pronoun became the default, thus normalizing masculinity even

at the linguistic level.

As noted, the "norming" of masculinity has been prevalent in geography, where male

driven organizations like the American Association of Geography (often referred to as the AAG)

were typically founded by a predominantly male group. As time progresses, however, women are

entering the field at a higher rate, as discussed in Nicolas Ginsburger's 2017 article, *"Portrait en*

groupe de femmes-géographes. La féminisation de champ disciplinaire au milieu de XXe siècle, entre effets de
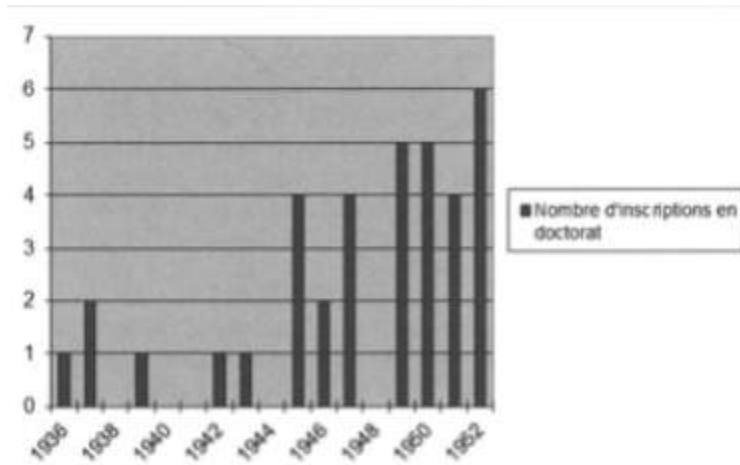
Figure 3

contexte et de structure (1938-1960)."
Ginsburger states that women are entering the field at a larger scale each year as represented by *Figure 3*- a diagram that displays the rate of female enrollment in geography doctoral programs. Ginsburger also makes note that the careers of women are growing increasingly similar to those of their male counterparts, though women still remain in the minority of these positions. This conclusion is confirmed by Linda McDowell, a published author and Senior Professorial Researcher at the School of Geography and the Environment through the University of Oxford, who writes, "feminists have been active in uncovering the gendered nature of the practice and substance of geography, in common with others working on similar social, historical and cultural questions" (1992). She asserts that feminists have had an active role in unearthing certain aspects of geography that have led to the gender attributions to the field.

However, long before the 21st century, women had an influence on the field. Isobel Gunn, born in 1781, accompanied the Hudson's Bay Company in an expedition mapping the lands of northern Canada. Gunn was a white woman, who at the time were not allowed to accompany such parties; however, non-white females were able to enlist as cooks and maintenance-like workers. In order to get around this barrier, Gunn disguised herself as a man

and went by the name John Fubbister. She maintained this role for several months until she met

with her superior and it was revealed that she was pregnant, as described in his personal log:

> [Fubbister] sent one of my people, requesting the favour to speak with me. Accordingly, I stepped down to him, and was much surprised to find [him] extended out upon the hearth uttering most dreadful lamentations. He stretched out his hand towards me and in a pitiful tone of voice begg'd my assistance, and requested I would take pity upon a poor helpless abandoned wretch, who was not of the sex I had every reason to suppose, but was an unfortunate Orkney Girl pregnent and actually in Childbirth. In saying this she opened her jacket and display'd to my view a pair of beautiful round white breasts.

This discovery rapidly barred Gunn from maintaining her position and she was immediately

sent home. This account details a woman, perfectly capable of her job, being excluded on the

basis of her genitalia, as she was only discovered after revealing her body (Rosner, 2009).

Otherwise, she performed on par alongside any other man on the expedition. Stories like this

simultaneously demonstrate and challenge a belief in male superiority.

Sexual Orientation and the Rise of Modern Geography

The final adjective in the stereotypical white-cis-hetero person describes sexual

orientation. Sexual orientation describes whom one is attracted to in a romantic and sexual

manner based on that individual's gender. The most common sexual orientation is

heterosexuality - a sexual relationship between a man and a woman which represents the

"hetero" in the white-cis-hetero categorization. Sexual orientation varies; some men may be

homosexual (attracted to other men), some women may be bisexual (attracted to two or more

genders), and some non-binary individuals may be asexual feeling (having no sexual emotions

towards anyone).

These derivatives of the typically assumed heterosexuality receive varying approvals from community to community and varying jurisdictional approval from nation to nation. Nations like Sweden, Canada and France freely support gay marriage and its legalization; however, states like Saudi Arabia, Brunei and Yemen have laws against partaking in homosexual behavior that is punishable by prison and, in some cases, death. Outside of legality, the real point of interest is the social views concerning sexual orientation. In many societies, being non-heterosexual is and has been stigmatized.

This clearly impacts LGBTQ+ communities but also those who identify as straight. During middle and high school years, male students often opt to take classes that society has deemed masculine, like the sciences (physics and chemistry), while avoiding courses with collectively considered feminine undertones (music or French), to evade the possibility that they may be considered gay. For many teenage boys, homophobia dictates their behavior based on social cues and how they present themselves (Kissau, Wierzalis, 2008).

If misogyny has largely erased the contributions of women to the field of geography, homophobia and heteronormativity have done the same with members of the LGBTQ+ community. However, when we dig deeper, we find that this is far from the truth. Alexander von Humboldt, also referred to as the Father of Modern Geography, was a gay man who never married, a detail that had been noted by acquaintances of Humboldt as well as the fact that preceding his passing, Humboldt destroyed personal documents that included letters mostly believed to be correspondence from an illicit affair that had taken place earlier in the

geographer's life. Humboldt's strides in the field removed the once Strabo dominated realm of classical geography and inserted a seed of the paradigm of environmental determinism in which people respond to their environment which somewhat dictates how the people of a distinguished area may live differently than those in an entirely separate area. Humboldt came upon these thoughts as he travelled the world studying its people and its unique landscape:

> Throughout his works Humboldt combined general principles with a myriad of specific, empirical observations. In addition he linked the external world with the internal lives of humans: "In order to depict nature in its exalted sublimity, we must not dwell exclusively on its external manifestations, but we must trace its image, reflected in the mind of man, at one time filling the dreamy land of physical myths with forms of grace and beauty, and at another developing the noble germ of artistic creation." (Bunkse, 1981, 133; Humboldt, 1845, 20)

However, the Father of Modern Geography is not the only queer geographer who has impacted the subject of geography's uprising. Sir Richard Francis Burton, born in early 1821, was a bisexual man who is renowned for his explorations of Somalia in the mid-19th century, where he became the first known white man to enter Harar, a city known in the Arabic world as the City of Saints. Burton was also the first man from the British Isles to step foot on the lands of the Islamic holy city of Mecca about a year prior to his exploration of Somalia. He kept accounts of his journeys that have become a benchmark feature in works of English texts (Sayce,1921).

Social Constructs as a Result of Geography

Straying away from the example of humans and social constructions about them, geography itself contains certain ideas that can be deemed social constructs -- constructs such

as countries, regions, and culture, because each of these are ideas that have been made by humans and morphed in some form from person to person.

Dr. Amanda Poole of the Anthropology Department of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania made a statement regarding social constructs: "Depending on your view... you can view the entire world as a sort of social construction...The notion of tribes is part of this whole genesis of people trying to prosper in the world..." (classroom lecture). Poole specializes in Africa and its stories through the ages including colonialism. Pre-colonial Africa was a continent of wealthy and powerful kingdoms and exquisite cultures until European nations occupied African soils, and at the Berlin Conference in the late 1800s, an entirely white European council divided Africa up to their liking with no influence from African leaders, and these borders are still used to this day as seen by the unnaturally straight lines that dictate states' jurisdiction. Without European intervention, it is theorized that African nations would be more plentiful and be drawn according to ethnic groups. See *Figure 4* (Felix). This model shows a more densely defined central Africa. This idea of nation's borders being different relates back to notion of nations being social constructs as borders are merely an abstract tool used to distinguish one's territory from
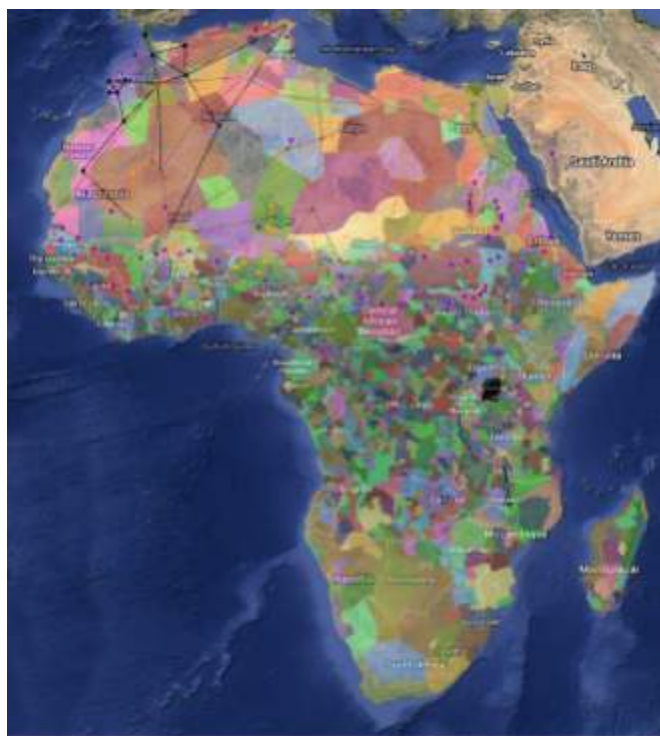

Figure 4

another's territory as noted by the authors of *Human Geography | An Essential Anthology* when they

state:

> Geographic units such as regions are sometimes distinguished from one another
> as the inventions of an observer, and at other times they are presumed to 'exist in
> nature', so to speak, rather than being purely mental constructs. Either way,
> geographical understanding is served by drawing boundaries around
> geographical areas to distinguish them in terms of either single or multiple
> criteria of difference. Terms such as 'region', 'place' and 'cultural area' are applied
> to the resulting spatial units, often irrespective of the geographical scale – local,
> within-state, continental or world-wide – at which spatial division has taken
> place (Agnew et al., 1996).

Social constructions deemed as being 'distinguished from one another as the inventions of an

observer' embodies how a region or a nation can be considered a social construct. Take for

example the Pyrenees located in western Europe; these mountains separate the Iberian

Peninsula from greater Europe. But it is when these features divide something greater than

physical lands that they become tools of social constructs. Referring back to the Pyrenees, the

mountain range not only separated the peninsula from the rest of the continent but is used to

dignify the two nations of Spain and France from one another.

It is dire that as academics, we leave the preconceived notion of the stereotypical

white-cis-hetero-man behind for the sake of geography because, not only was geography never

meant to exclude any person (but in fact embrace them as part of its study), but also because the

subject was built on the shoulders of giants - including non-white, non-male, non-hetero

giants.

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Embracing Badass Women in History: Social (Re)Constructions of Cutthroat Female Pirates

Tim Hibsman and Lydia Rose

Introduction:

Strong women have been around for centuries. However, they have not always been as popular or have obtained the notoriety of their male counterparts. Usually, this is explained as male dominance in the history books. While some astute women may have wanted to "fly-under-the-radar" or not be noticed, most history on the accomplishments of women was typically ignored or erased. In the case of pirating, we found female pirates were notorious to the point of leaving a legacy because of their success in looting, fighting, and domineering as well as the surprising fact that they were females who did not serve as servants, consorts, or slaves.

Most of the women examined in the following paragraphs have several characteristics in common. They all have strong leadership skills that were founded on their clear focus on obtaining a pecuniary advantage through attacking and robbing ships at sea. We are seeking to reconstruct notions of success for female pirates, not necessarily based on their survival (some died while still working as pirates), but on their ability to define themselves, control their identity (sometimes their gender identity), and seek their own glory.

Berg (2016) listed the top characteristics of what she calls "Unabashedly Successful women."

Table 1. Top 15 Characteristics of Unabashedly Successful Women

1. They play to their strengths.
2. They have ambition.
3. They stay positive.
4. They're organized.
5. They're constantly learning.
6. They have a strong support system.
7. They know failure and success go together.
8. They remain grateful.
9. They work hard and persistently.
10. They don't sweat the small stuff.
11. They choose their battles wisely.
12. They do what they believe in.
13. They have confidence.
14. They have a vision for the future.
15. They feel successful, but never done.
Source: Berg (2016)

As we examined this list, we are able to identify these traits in the women that lived their lives as

pirates.

Method

Using a basic online search, we sought to identify the top 10 female pirates who have a presence on the Internet, fit the definition of "successful," and meet 10 of the 15 traits identified by Berg.

Data and Data Analysis

Table #2: Female Pirates in History				
Female Pirates	Ruling Dates	Years	Nickname	Nationality
1. Ching Shih	1807-1810	3	The Widow Ching	Chinese
2. Grace O'Malley	1554-1593	39	Cropped Hair (Grainne Mhaol)	Irish
3. Christina Anna Skytt	1662-1668	6	Baroness Pirate	Swedish
4. Jacquotte Delahaye	1656-1663	7	Back from the Dead Red	French/Haitian
5. Lady Mary Elizabeth Killigrew	1567-1583	16	Lady Pirate	English
6. Teuta of Illyria	230BC-227BC	3	Pirate Queen	Illyria (Antiquity-South of Europe)
7. Anne Bonny	1718-1720	2	Anney	Irish

8. Jeanne de Clisson	1344-1357	13	The Bloody Lioness	French
9. Sayyida al Hurra	1515-1542	27	Queen of Tetouan & Noble Lady (al Hurra	Moroccan
10. Mary Reed	1718-1720	2	Mark Reed (Alias)	English

In the following section, we will highlight some of key historical records of each female pirate identified in our table.

CHING SHIH:

"The most successful pirate in history was not Blackbeard (Edward Teach) or Barbarossa, but Zheng Shi or Ching Shih of China. She acquired great wealth, ruled the South China Seas, and best of all, survived to enjoy the spoils" (Szczepanski, 2018).

In 1801, she married the notorious pirate Zheng Yi, and "When he died unexpectedly, Ching Shih took on the family business, assuming control of the Red Flag fleet. According to legend, following her husband's death, she summoned the scattering fleet captains and announced: "Under the leadership of a man you have all chosen to flee. We shall see how you prove yourselves under the hand of a woman" (Ching, 2018). She thrived, and after "just one year leading her pirate hegemony, Zheng Yi Sao had formed one of the largest navies on the planet, with some 17,000 men under her command. Extorted tributes from merchants across

the Chinese seas and from the coastal towns between Macau and Canton swelled her treasury to staggering levels, and her power was so great that she became the de facto government of the region. No longer was she merely a pirate; she was an *entire political entity" (Doran, 2012).*

Her leadership style was unlike that of her dead husband's; where he had been brusque and loud, she was "quiet and calculating" (Ching, 2018). Ching Shih was carefully calculating and developed a reputation for shrewdness and intelligence. Many vicious leaders strive to be number one. They want to be the most powerful, most profitable, most feared. Ching Shih knew that money and power was in volume. If someone else made more money on a single deal—that was fine because these were dozens of other deals going on. She is not known to be greedy on each deal. Instead she could take a lower cut than someone putting their life on the line in battle. Her method worked, and by 1801, it was estimated that she had 1,800 sailing vessels and 80,000 crew members. She understood volume and mass collecting in a large business structure in relation to the individual profits of a single provider.

Ching Shih also understood how to "cut your losses" and negotiate wisely. The Chinese and Portuguese governments could not let her rule the majority of the Chinese coastline, and after harassing her "pirate confederation," she surrendered. However, instead of just asking for amnesty, she made a deal to incorporate her shipmates into the fleet with steady jobs, her right-hand man Chang Pao became an officer, and she got to keep a large sum of money and opened up a hotel (brothel) and casino (gambling den). She retired well.

Grace O'Malley:

"Grace O'Malley was born in Ireland in around 1530, as a daughter of the wealthy nobleman and sea trader Owen O'Malley. Upon his death, she inherited his large shipping and trading business. From her earliest days, she rejected the role of the sixteenth century woman, instead embracing life on the sea with the fleet of O'Malley trading ships. The income from this business, as well as land inherited from her mother, enabled her to become rich and somewhat powerful." (Holloway, 2014)

Ireland was ruled by many chieftains, and a strong leader could bring them together for more power and wealth. Grace understood the art of negotiation and eventually commanded hundreds of men and approximately 20 ships. She started getting too powerful and was noticed by the English government and narrowly escaped a death sentence. Instead of going into hiding, in 1593 she met with Queen Elizabeth I and managed to convince the queen to free her family and restore most of her lands and influence. In her early years, she had the reputation as a rebellious, seafaring pirate. Toward the end of her 70 years, she had notable political influence, power and wealth.

Grace O'Malley understood liaisons, partnerships, and agreements. She brought together many pirates into a powerful and successful force. Negotiation is the key to these skills. She knew the goals and needs of her associates. She knew what to offer them and how to keep them happy. Later, when her life was in turmoil, she used her negotiation skills with Queen Elizabeth I.

Christina Anna Skytt:

In 1657 Sweden, Christina and her brother secretly managed a pirate ship which plundered ships in the Baltic Sea. "Christina Anna was no passive partner to her brother and spouse. She was reportedly herself present in person in 1662, when they attacked a Dutch merchant ship, murdered its crew and sunk the ship somewhere between Öland and Bornholm. This attack exposed them, because the wreck of the ship was flushed up on the beach of Öland in August of that same year" (Tysk, 2017).

Sometimes leaders need to be on the front line. Christina understood the significance of being on site with the people who were putting their lives on the line. Presence, boldness, and charisma helped to build her reputation as a leader.

Jacquotte Delahaye:

In the 1660s, Jacquotte was born from a union between a Frenchman and a Haitian woman. Rumor has it that her mother died in childbirth and her father was murdered. To take care of her disabled brother, she turned to piracy. "Her nickname comes from the most popular aspect of her story, which claims this red-haired pirate faked her own death to escape the government forces that were closing in on her in the 1660s. From there, she took up a new identity, living for several years as a man. Finally, when the heat died down she resurfaced with her catchy new moniker Back from the Dead Red." (Puchko, 2014)

Jacquotte knew the importance of reinventing yourself. If life isn't going your way, sometimes it is necessary to change course—or even change your name. She understood what it took to take care of her family. She understood what it took to survive and not be executed.

Obviously, most people don't go to the extreme of faking their own death, but many people do re-invent their image by changing their appearance, clothing, and career.

Lady Mary Elizabeth Killigrew:

Sometime in the early 1500s, Mary was born and her father was suspected of being a pirate. England was having political problems with Spain and Spain was in the process of looting and stealing gold, silver, gemstones and other treasures from the New World. As the colonial powers extracted wealth from around the world, robbing and looting from ships owned and operated by colonial powers like Spain became quite profitable. As Sharp notes, "John Killigrew and his wife, Elizabeth, led a rich and adventurous life. He was in charge of the Family business, which included not only seizing ships but also hiding and selling stolen goods and boats" (2002).

"Mary was, by all accounts, an enthusiastic supporter of her husband's less than legal activities. She re-designed Arwenak [her castle home] to better hold stolen goods, cut deals with smugglers, and occasionally sent her servants out to raid ships driven into the huge natural harbor by storm or other misfortune. It's possible that all this took place with Queen Elizabeth's approval, or at least while she turned a blind eye." (Rhodes, 2017) Mary was a very sharp and shrewd business woman. She knew how to make deals and contracts. She understood how to store, hide, and account for stolen goods. She understood the basics for warehouse management—assessing price and value, storage by product description, ease of access, and tracking.

Back then there was no database of stolen goods. Often after a very short time, few could remember what specific items were actually stolen merchandise. It was rumored that she buried some items in her garden till the situation calmed down. She understood her market and her customers. Since many locals disliked Spain, she could easily sell stolen goods to those people (at a lower price). She also understood the legal and political situation of the time. Queen Elizabeth I was not a fan of Spain, so the notion that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" applied. She eventually got caught and was pardoned by Queen Elizabeth I—which may be why she changed her name from Mary to Elizabeth.

Pirate Queen Teuta of Illyria

Teuta of Illyria was one of the first female pirates, dating back to 231 BC. When her husband died, she started her four-year reign in what is now the Western Balkans. "Queen Teuta is often considered the `Pirate Queen' of antiquity, but that may be a bit misleading. Teuta was not a pirate herself, but an avid advocate of her nation's right to piracy. In addition to piracy, Teuta's navies were quite powerful and she extended Illyria's power even more, stretching into the Ionian Sea" (Mclaughlin, 2016).

She used piracy as a means of fighting back against her domineering neighbors. Usually, war translates into high costs, both in financial terms and in terms of lives lost. Teuta preferred a profitable war and encouraged plundering ships from the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea, terrorizing the trade routes of Italy and Greece. Teuta understood how to turn a negative into a positive. She understood how to maximize the benefits when she was in charge. She gained

great wealth and power, but with this, she also gained a great number of enemies. Even when the situation became bad, she still kept her people intact. Eventually, Rome took away her seafaring power and forced the people whom she represented to pay annual tribute.

ANNE BONNY:

Anne Bonny was born in 1698. Her respectable father disowned her after she married a small-time pirate named James Bonny. Their marriage did not last long and ended in divorce. "In August 1720 Anne Bonny abandoned her husband and assisted Rackham in commandeering the sloop *William* from Nassau Harbour on New Providence. Rackham's decision to have Bonny accompany him was highly unusual, as women were considered bad luck aboard ship. He may have been swayed by her fierce disposition: apocryphal stories claimed that she had, in her youth, beaten an attempted rapist so badly that he was hospitalized" (Pallardy, 2010).

Anne Bonny was known for her dangerous temper. Sometimes her passion and drive was mistaken for anger. It may have appeared that Anne was obsessed, but this type of passionate drive is what motivates some people to strive to reach higher levels. Anne Bonny hated to lose. She hated cowardice and weakness. Therefore, it was also suspected that she would give herself an advantage during battle by implementing a few tactics. It was rumored that she had a style of brass knuckles sewn into her gloves. One punch from her could do more damage than several punches from a man. She was also known for wearing loose clothing that would give her an advantage during frantic and physical battle. To avoid hand-to-hand combat with physically

dominant males, she might have used multiple pistols in battle. Anne utilized technology to help create an advantage.

Jeanne de Clisson:

Jeanne de Clisson was living as a wife and mother of five children until her husband was beheaded for treason. She liquidated her assets and "used her funds to buy and outfit three warships. As a clear statement of intent she painted the ships black and dyed their sails red. Then they set off into the English Channel, the 43-year old Jeanne on deck, to play pirate against any merchant vessel they saw flying a French flag. They gained a reputation for savagery, leaving few survivors (though always enough to tell the tale). The nobility who fell into their hands suffered the most, and some stories had it that despite the money to be made ransoming the nobles, Jeanne herself personally beheaded them with an axe before dumping them overboard. It was this reputation that gained her the title of *La Lionne Sanglante* – `the Bloody Lioness'" (Conliffe, 2016).

With her crew, she had a reputation for respect, fairness, and courage. But with her opponents, she had a reputation for shrewdness, brutality, and savagery. She was not the type of woman you wanted to cross. Challenging her could have severe consequences. When she confronted her enemies, it was better to just give her what she wanted than face the wrath of her retaliation. Fear and intimidation can be a strong force in achieving success.

Sayyida al Hurra:

Sayyida Al Hurra ruled from 1515 to 1542, controlling the western Mediterranean Sea. Her inspiration to take to piracy probably came from a desire for revenge on the Spanish and Portuguese governments. Ferdinand and Isabella were in power when her family was removed from Spain and moved to Tetouan, Morocco. Piracy provided a quick form of income, but she understood that more money could be made by ransoming the captives. "Most information on Sayyida al Hurra comes from Spanish and Portuguese records. They were in close contact with her, negotiating the return of prisoners and playing a key role in the 'diplomatic game'" (Engel, 2011).

She ruled as governor for almost 30 years and was not disputed as the leader of the pirates in the western Mediterranean Sea. She commanded power, influence, and respect. Instead of hiding or giving the appearance of cowering, she stood firm and met with ambassadors from Spain. Her enemies were more powerful than she was, but they didn't want to spend the money or lose lives to fight her. She knew this and used it in her negotiations. Understanding strengths, weaknesses and opportunities were extremely beneficial to her long leadership career. She understood her opponents so well that they never defeated her in her reign. Eventually her own son-in-law overthrew her. Look out! Money and power can corrupt even family members.

Mary Reed

Mary Reed was raised as a boy by her mother to scam the wealthy grandmother of her older half-brother who had died. She continued to live as a man until she met and married a man. She lived as a woman until her husband's death and then went back to working as a man. She worked as a soldier and sailor. She joined the crew of Anne Bonny and John Rackman (a.k.a. Calico Jack) when the ship she was working on was commandeered by pirates. Upon befriending Anne, Mary revealed that she was a woman. The friendship between Anne and Mary seems to have been one in which they were able to become empowered as women fighting together until their capture. Mary was well known to have been a great fighter and swordswoman that could best out the men on her ship. Her time as a pirate was short lived, but has a strong presence on the web because of her ties with Anne.

CONCLUSION:

To be accepted in a male dominated society, it was not enough to be competent. In fact, being just as good as the men was not acceptable. Being part of the status quo was not acceptable. Female pirates had to have superior attributes that would benefit others, especially their crew or crewmates. Many of these women made themselves indispensable to the "organization." Without them, there would be a definite and clear downward spiral in operations. The attitude or common belief that "I'm glad they're on my side" seems to be part of the reason their histories are reproduced and reconstructed. Today, the notion of badass women pirates is a construction that makes them accepted, admired, and protected.

According to *Forbes Magazine* (YEC 2017), the eight traits that female leaders should possess include the following: 1) strength; 2) perseverance; 3) the ability to create women-empowered workplaces; 4) adaptability; 5) knowing how to ignore bad advice; 6) grit; 7) knowing how to ask; and 8) tenacity. Nearly all of these traits were prominent in the historical research of the top 10 female pirates included in this study. It is those traits that led us to embrace them as badass women in history.

For many of these women, their brutal activities of robbing and looting ships at sea eventually caught up with them. But that does not negate the fact that strong personal characteristics helped in the success of these women. They all understood power, wealth, liaisons, and leadership. When the workers (pirates) are making money and meeting basic needs in life, there is no reason to mutiny. The longer the success continues, the greater the possibility of support and admiration. Political, business and religious connections can be extremely helpful. In today's society, we call it networking. Many of the women knew how to take advantage of their personal connections and their network using those social ties along with their negotiation skills during their reign in power. While the golden age of piracy is situated within the colonial practice of extracting wealth from the less powerful, the gender politics of these women's successes is nonetheless notable. Somewhere in that horrific history, we can still pay tribute to some "badass women."

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The Erasure of Truth: Confronting Racism Through History Curriculum
Abigail Thomas

Education is foundational to American society, holding the power to mold young minds and therefore alter the future of the country. For an institution to hold this much weight, one may assume it is treated with high regard and much respect; however, more often than not, the education system lacks funding, resources, and the appropriate curriculum. In the status quo, we see how a lack of education about racism in America is detrimental to society and harmful to non-white persons, costing people their lives. Change is necessary, and it can occur beginning with one of the most fundamental aspects of society: education. I will discuss several approaches schools can take to alter their curriculum to center our history of racism and bigotry, while incorporating personal experience of how high schools fail to provide students with adequate knowledge of racial injustice.

The American education system typically fails to adequately teach students the vast history of segregation and racism in America, instead creating a success story of the ability to overcome. This omission perpetuates white supremacist values; America's racist history should not be a mere chapter in a textbook. I grew up in a rural town in Pennsylvania, a majority of the students at my high school were white, and many were conservative. My younger brother is now a sophomore at the same high school, studying the exact same material I did. As I reflect on the curriculum being taught, with the knowledge I now have, I see very troubling patterns. The themes that organize his history textbook, *The Americans*, prove that absence has as much

meaning as presence, how valuable language is when discussing issues of oppression and diversity, and represent an epistemology of ignorance. The textbook covers history from 1492 to 2004, yet it conveniently leaves out vital pieces of the nation's history. As I reflect on my own education, I am troubled by how little I truly learned of America's racist practices. Even more bothersome, I was never taught I was benefitting from my whiteness nor that this privilege means others were at a great disadvantage because of it. In such a racially divided country, during such a polarized time in society where half of America is standing up with racial minorities in a fight for equality and the other half is storming the capital with confederate flags, the education of racial diversity should be at the forefront of conversation. To provide a foundation for this discussion, I will use the textbook mentioned earlier. There are three issues which must be addressed in this regard: the section titles, the short passages where the textbook discusses issues of injustice, and a lack of coverage on these matters.

The language used in the section titles throughout the textbook downplay the significance of racism, segregation, slavery, and oppression toward nonwhite persons in history. The textbook begins with two chapters titled *Three Worlds Meet* and *The American Colonies Emerge*. The former includes subsections titled *Peopling the Americas*, *North American Societies around 1492*, *West African Societies around 1492*, *European Societies around 1492*, and *Transatlantic Encounters*. The latter uses subsections titled *Spain's Empire in the Americas*, *An English Settlement in Jamestown*, *Puritan New England, and Settlement of the Middle Colonies*. Although only four pages of information, the subsection regarding North American societies solely discusses the culture of

Indigenous people; however, the authors still neglected to adequately title the subsection with respect to Indigenous persons. There was no subsection titled *The Genocide of Natives*. This is a prime example of how history is whitewashed, focusing on the building of the nation as an excuse to downplay and disregard the damage done to the native tribes already living here. In addition, simply because there is discussion of Native Americans in the textbook does not mean the book adequately explains this part of history; language is so vital that there is an immediate devaluation of this information due to the authors' failure to prioritize and dedicate a specific section and section title to Native history, beyond the simplified discussion of their culture and "the impact" of colonization. Unfortunately, this is only one of the several examples throughout this textbook.

African American history was also not given adequate and deserving attention in *The Americans*. Titles used, like *The Divisive Politics of Slavery* and *Taking on Segregation*, act similarly to the example of erasure of Native American history. These titles likely develop several assumptions in the minds of young students: there is a certain aspect about slavery making it worth fighting for, and segregation was condemned and has ended. The authors again fail to dedicate any sections where white Americans are labeled as the oppressors, or where the focus is shifted from segregation and slavery to white supremacy and white nationalist movements. It is intriguing that something as simple as titles throughout a history textbook can provide a fascinating insight into how language can erase or minimize structural racism in a school curriculum. This presents a parallel to the status quo where powerful figures, average citizens,

and government institutions carefully use specific rhetoric in discussions about race to avoid

the use of precise and explicit words like racism, racist, and white supremacy that often trigger

backlash. It is vital to teach children at a young age the meaning and history of these words to

encourage open and honest dialect about what they mean on an individual and institutional

level.

The language the authors used paints an image of a nation where success, free will, and

growth are accessible to all rather than provide a realistic perspective of American history that

proves to be atrocious, disturbing, and racist. Unfortunately, this is not the only issue with the

American history curriculum. Throughout *The Americans*, topics of race are given little attention;

the section titled *Slavery and Abolition* ranges from page 248 to 254, *Slavery and Succession* from

page 324 to 332, *Segregation and Discrimination* from page 492 to 498, and *Taking on Segregation*

from page 906 to 916. Sporadic blurbs about racial injustice are not an acceptable way to teach

American history, especially when we consider that America has been built on the back of racial

divides, oppression, and the exploitation of people of color to benefit white, landowning, men.

Racism and bigotry intertwine to create a fundamental aspect of society, acting as the basis for

institutions, positions in society, and even the nation's founding documents. Why is this history

then ignored throughout curriculums across the country? The answer is quite simple: generally,

America as a nation is not willing to admit this, and many leaders of the country fail to take

adequate action against it.

Action is being taken in the status quo as citizens stand up and fight for racial equality; however, for substantial and lasting change this history must be taught in schools. Curriculum can be altered in several ways, as long as history is being taught with respect to the nonwhite persons and histories so often ignored in textbooks, providing a platform where their stories can be heard and learned from. An example of a feasible and acceptable curriculum would include a three-part framework. It is important to note that this curriculum would be focused on racist practices and oppression throughout history, and thus the topic would no longer be a mere afterthought of history textbooks. In addition, the language used in this curriculum will be chosen deliberately as a means of demonstrating the harsh reality of the subject. The three components of the curriculum would be *Structural Racism Established by America's Elites*, *Government Invasion on the Health and Personal Autonomy of Nonwhite Persons*, and *White Supremacy and White Privilege in America*.

These three elements will encompass the negative aspects of history; however, this curriculum will only be successful if instructors are spending adequate time on the material, textbooks contribute more than ten pages on the subjects, and supplemental materials are used. *Structural Racism Established by America's Elites* will likely be the most in-depth component of the curriculum. The goal is to demonstrate to students the systematic ways in which the powerful and elite in America have been able to institutionalize racism. Subtopics of this section would include a transparent study of Native American genocide, slavery and segregation, Jim Crow, red lining, white flight, mass incarceration, and police brutality, for instance, with a focus on

how political institutions are responsible for racial oppression and injustice. *Government Invasion on the Health and Personal Autonomy of Nonwhite Persons* will be focused on teaching the overstep of the government throughout history, in regard to autonomy, liberty, and privacy of nonwhite persons. Subtopics will consist of forced sterilization, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, and pharmaceutical outsourcing of drug trials to developing countries. Finally, *White Supremacy and White Privilege in America* will include an examination of white nationalist movements throughout history, racist rhetoric, the lack of denouncement toward and accountability to white nationalist activities, and a reflection of white privilege in America. This curriculum plan is certainly not all inclusive to the many directions historical studies on race can take; however, it is a significant start and will provide a necessary foundation to students by providing knowledge and insight into the history too often ignored.

It is likely there will be much opposition to this shift in historical studies. People may claim students are too young to learn about such horrific or gruesome topics or argue that textbooks do mention these issues, so there is no reason to change the entire curriculum. Responses to such resistance must point out that if students are too young to learn about these topics, then they must be too young to learn about the Holocaust; yet the Holocaustsis consistently incorporated into history curriculums. Even more interestingly, *The Americans* dedicates an entire section to the Holocausts, but fails to mention forced sterilization of people of color and people with disabilities in the U.S. and how this acted as a model for Nazi Germany. In addition, responses would require an explanation of how race is currently discussed in

contrast with the true racial history of America. In the status quo, most students are learning a fraction of this history and it is often depicted as something the nation has overcome, downplaying its true racist history and the continued realities of systemic and structural racism.

It is vital we acknowledge racist practices as a nation and accept our history, improving policy and legislation to help compensate for it. Education is one of the most integral aspects of society, and to allow the education system to continue enforcing this epistemology of ignorance is to suggest the country is not willing to acknowledge its history and is therefore not willing to amend the problems it created. The absence of racist practices in American history curriculum speaks loudly to who we are as a nation, as we blindly accept the skewed narrative that these stories are not worth telling and are somehow insignificant to our history. Education has the tremendous power to shape young minds of the future; however, to achieve a future without civil unrest, racial injustice, racism, oppression, and bigotry, it requires we teach students the dense history surrounding these issues.

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A Pandemic of Porn Viewing: An Overview of Pornography and its Effects

Joshua A. Cendrowski

Pornography has grown increasingly prevalent and widespread in the lives of people worldwide. In the United States, the number of both men and women who have seen porn at least once across all age ranges has been consistently rising (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016). Due to this wide-reaching audience, it is not surprising that people's everyday lives are being affected by it. These effects can be seen in various ways, ranging from porn addiction, to how we engage in sex, to how we engage in daily interactions with one another.

However, even prior to the relatively recent explosion of accessible and affordable pornography, there is evidence of various forms of pornography in nearly all cultures throughout human history. Some of the oldest forms of pornography currently known include cave drawings, sculptures, and detailed pottery. The mass-production of porn only began once it became possible to quickly print dozens upon dozens of images, drawings, or photographs through halftone printing (Wiess, 2020). Since then, the marketing and selling of porn has continued to change with each new market, growing exponentially throughout each decade. Pornographic photos became available to consumers by the 1860s, once cameras became commercially available. Through the 1920s to the early 1970s, pornographic film was available to the public through private viewings, strip clubs, magazines, and peep shows. However, viewership at this time was low due to the expense, rarity, and stigma surrounding pornography. In the 1950s especially, an emphasis on family and family values was heavily

enforced, discouraging young men from pursuing a single, bachelor lifestyle. Despite this, there was still a portion of men choosing the bachelor lifestyle. To appeal to these single men at this time, Hugh Hefner created *Playboy Magazine* in 1953, which was immediately met with a large following that lasted for decades. While not explicitly pornographic in nature by today's standards, the magazine set the stage in the 1950s for a more outward expression of men's sexuality (Condon, 2021). In the late 1970s and 80s, pornography was beginning to become more mainstreamed and increasingly hardcore. Some of the first strip clubs were created in the 1960s and, by 1974, the magazine *Hustler* was deliberately created as a more explicit version of Hefner's art-inspired *Playboy*. This marked a stepping stone for increasingly raunchier content for a growing audience of porn viewers. Not only were films becoming more widespread, but they could then be packaged and shipped to one's home for private viewing (Wiess, 2020). Likely due to these shifts, approximately forty-five percent of men in the 1970s reported using pornography. And this statistic jumped to about sixty percent by 1999 (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016).

With each new advance in pictures, film, and video, new forms of porn typically follow (Wiess, 2020). The same was especially true of online pornography. Soon after personal home computers became widespread, the Internet became flooded with pay-per-view sites offering various types of pornography for anonymous viewing. By 2004, pornography sites switched to gaining revenue based off advertisements rather than subscriptions (Wiess, 2020), creating the foundation for free-to-watch porn sites as we know them today. And these sites began seeing

viewers almost instantaneously. *Pornhub,* one of the most popular porn sites today, reached one million daily visits within just seven months of launching (Cox, 2017). Due to this extremely large market, many other sites were formed as websites hosting either specific types of videos for niche genres of porn, as pirating sites, or as copies of Pornhub.

In response to these increases in porn viewing, various theories about the uptick in and acceptance of porn consumption have been considered. While many believe porn's level of popularity today is due to the newer generations' rising levels of promiscuity, premarital sex, sexual activity, or acceptance of pornography, these are simply not true. Multiple studies have found promiscuity, premarital sex, and sexual activity have remained consistent throughout generations (Finer, 2007; Ueda, Mercer, Ghaznavi, & Herbenick, 2020). In fact, within an eighteen-year gap, there has been a substantial increase in men aged eighteen to twenty-four who report having year-long periods in which they do not engage in any sexual activity (Ueda, Mercer, Ghaznavi, & Herbenick, 2020). And lastly, a 2016 survey reported a small increase in the number of young people that believe porn should be restricted or illegal compared to the same survey in 1974 (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016). If there has been a decrease in sexual activity in men and acceptance of pornography, why have viewing rates gone up then?

Much of the success modern pornography has had in ensnaring such a large audience can be attributed to a model introduced by Al Cooper in 1998 referred to as the Triple A Engine: these Triple A's refer to availability, anonymity, and affordability (Johnson, 2010). Beforehand, pornography was much more expensive, embarrassing to access in public, and could only be

found in places that were hard to find or access. With many of the obstacles pornography faced in the past now gone thanks to the Internet, anyone with a device and Internet connection can access pornography in just a few seconds. This wide availability has made free-to-watch porn almost ubiquitous with the Internet. About twelve percent of all websites on the Internet are dedicated to pornography (Recovery Village, 2020). With this widespread reach, the consumption of porn seems almost inescapable to many modern Americans.

The Triple A Engine model considers the accessibility of diverse avenues for viewers to begin watching pornography, and many of these avenues encourage viewers to both start watching and keep watching. Because first-time viewers are younger and younger, it is easier for pornography companies to reach wider and wider audiences. Reports have shown the number of men that have seen porn at least once before age eighteen has grown to 93 percent, and the number of young men that consume porn has grown up to between 60 to 70 percent (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016; Recovery Village, 2020). According to the American Psychological Association (2017), the average age boys are exposed to porn is about thirteen years old, with some of the youngest being only five years old. And there are many ways children are exposed to porn early in life. Because of the accessibility of porn, the majority of young viewers are exposed to it accidentally or through word of mouth. And this younger audience is not only more accustomed to and accepting of pornography, but also much more likely to get an addiction to it, creating viewers who are groomed into long-time viewership. However, this is a topic that will be further discussed later in the text.

Another reason young people begin watching porn is because they are curious about sex. In the United States, there are incredible deficits within sex education. As far as education in the classroom goes, sex education is rarely mandated and has a high potential to be lacking in depth or even medically inaccurate. Fewer than half of high schools and a fifth of middle schools teach the necessary content recommended by the CDC. Only 23 states mandate sex ed and only 13 require that education to be medically accurate (Orenstein, 2016). The sex education people do learn, however, is often through abstinence-only programs. Abstinence-only programs teach sex education by using fear tactics on high schoolers. This often includes classes that discuss the dangers of having sex, which include risk of pregnancy and information on STIs, heavily promoting an abstinent lifestyle. The goal of programs like this is to scare people out of engaging in sex. This approach, however, has been shown to be extremely unreliable; numerous of studies and evidence report that it does not offer adequate education about sex for high schoolers (Perrin & DeJoy, 2003; Stanger-Hall & Hall, 2011; Wiley, 2002). Because of the prevalence of these programs across the U.S., a deficit of sex education exists, thus making pornography the leading form of sex education for many students. This is concerning for one extremely important reason: the vast majority of porn neither depicts accurate forms of sex nor safe depictions of sex. Because porn is specifically created as a product, it is not surprising to see actors rarely use contraceptives such as condoms, films largely not depicting accurate healthy conversations about consent, nor a display of actors with average body types. Therefore, many children and adolescents learn from one of the worst teachers imaginable.

Other reasons for men in particular to stick with porn may be due to a lack of intimacy or stability in finding a partner. In the 1950s, when the idea of the bachelor was much less accepted, dating had much clearer implications compared to today. If a man were to ask a woman on a date, and she accepts, they were a couple. Additionally, couples would often date with the idea of marriage in mind. Soon after dating, they would choose to marry within about a year of dating. The average age men would typically marry was around 23 years of age, and 20 for women (Gross, 2013). A majority of women also did not have many employment opportunities and would often be expected to become housewives[28]. They were dependent on their husbands and were expected to do what their husbands wanted from them, including engaging in sex whenever their husbands wanted (Johnson, 2010). Therefore, men did not necessarily need to consume porn to achieve sexual gratification. Today, the idea of dating is much more skewed and much more cumbersome for the average person. For one, both the desire and need to date or marry is not as present as it has been in the past (Bonos & Guskin, 2019). Both men and women wait longer to get into committed relationships; the average age men marry for the first time has reached an all-time high of 29 years old, with women marrying at an average of 27 years old (Nisen, 2013). While everyone was expected to be married to someone at some point in their lives in the 1950s, it has even become more socially acceptable to not date or marry at all today. The rules associated with dating are not as clear as they once were. Today, a primarily online dating scene caters to a wide variety of relationships: hookups,

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[28] This statement is mostly true for white Americans in the 1950s. However, this statement is not representative of African Americans or women of other races.

friends-with-benefits, short-term dating, long-term dating, polyamory, etc. This wide variation has bred uncertainty in individuals regarding what they expect in their relationships. Regardless, men and women now have a wide array of romantic and sexual partners to choose from in dating sites; they are free to search for the exact relationship they are looking for. While many would believe this would make finding a partner easier, it has shown to have the opposite effect. A 2007 study from Northwestern University found that, after being given a wide variety of potential partners to choose from, individuals would quickly and overwhelmingly reject any partners that were interested in them, but instead choose partners that were not interested in them. All of this considered, it is easy to see where many would feel frustrated.

Within this culture that limits the areas in which men can show intimacy, porn has now become a go-to coping strategy for men in order to quickly achieve intimacy and combat levels of loneliness, depression, or anxiety. We know that men have been shown to have worse responses to stress compared to women and are much less likely to have social support (McKenzie, Collings, Jenkin, & River, 2018). So, men are already vulnerable to using porn as a negative coping skill (Ward, 2020). Additionally, men are almost guaranteed to know pornography is available and how to obtain it. As established before, great masses of men are exposed to porn, some at extremely young ages (APA, 2013). Despite the decrease in acceptance of porn (Price et al., 2016), there has been a profound acceptance and normalization of pornography (Weinberg, Williams, Kleiner, & Irizarry, 2010). Thus, almost all men know pornography is a cheap, non-judgmental option for them. Once men become frustrated if they

cannot obtain someone to confide in, grow with, and be intimate with, one of the first places

they turn to as a replacement is pornography. And this is only exacerbated during stressful,

isolating incidents: for example, during the lockdown after the breakout of COVID-19,

pornography sites unsurprisingly found an exponential increase in daily visits (Zattoni et al.,

2020).

Considering the long-term use men typically experience throughout their lifetime, there

are often side effects of pornography seen within increasingly large populations. One of the

most common of these effects include porn addiction. Unlike substance-based addictions, as

with alcohol or nicotine, porn addiction is categorized as a process or behavior addiction. Other

addictions like this include Gambling Addiction and Internet Gaming Addiction. Porn

addiction, however, does not have any specific diagnosis criteria according to the Diagnostic

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), and is only considered a form of Compulsive

Sexual Behavior Disorder. Despite a lack of recognition by the APA, pornography has proven to

be an extremely powerful and addictive substance (Casarella, 2020). Research has noted that

pornography does, in fact, follow much of the same processes as other addictive substances. A

2014 study (Voon et al.) showed pornography activated the same level of activity in areas of the

brain as addictive substances like cocaine. Because a large portion of porn viewers start off as

children, the effects of addiction may increase the risk of long-term addiction. According to a

series of studies by Yale University observing the way in which substance abuse affected

children, addiction was found to occur much more rapidly and cause more permanent changes

to the brain while it is still undergoing vital steps of development. For many, porn addiction is experienced as an overwhelming feeling of not being able to stop watching porn. This feeling can lead to distress, especially when one's major attempts to stop continuously fail. Additionally, porn addicts typically begin watching porn that is more mainstream but gradually move to watching more intense and extreme versions of porn, leading to long amounts of time spent looking for videos that will stimulate them or paying an egregious amount of money for more specialized content. Porn addiction has also shown to have the potential to devastate one's personal life. If someone becomes over reliant on pornography, they may begin to watch it while at work or in public spaces. Overwatching of pornography may also lead to lower sex drive, decreased satisfaction in romantic relationships, and even erectile dysfunction. Treatment options available for porn addiction often follow much the same treatment options for Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder, which include therapy and medication (*Medical News Today*, 2020).

It is important to note that, while most viewership, marketing, and research of porn has been consistently directed toward men throughout history, a large portion of women also consume in pornography. And this is not only due to the recent explosion of online pornography. Between 1973 and 2012, the percentage of women from the ages of 18 to 26 who have viewed at least one pornographic video has gradually gone up from 28 to 35 percent (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016). With the recent widespread consumption of pornography, other current sources have reported the number of women consistently watching porn has

jumped to between 60 and 73 percent (Brande, 2020; Fight The New Drug, 2021). With that, women share many of the same experiences that men do when watching pornography. Like men, women often begin watching pornography during adolescence. Women also share many of the same reasons for starting to watch porn, such as interest in learning about sex and as a coping skill (Brande, 2020). With that in mind, women also share many of the side effects of excessive porn consumption. Women who watch porn are just as susceptible to porn addiction as men are, and women with porn addictions also have reported lower self-esteem, body dysmorphia, and reduced intimacy with romantic partners (Brande, 2020).

With all this in mind, it can be confidently said that pornography deeply effects a majority of people, at least in the United States, on an individual level. However, because pornography has become widespread enough to where almost all people have experienced it, the effects on our culture must also be considered. Firstly, it is not surprising that in a porn culture, the way in which people engage in sex has changed to imitate it. An extreme example of this can be traced back to a pornographic video that opened in theaters back in 1972 titled *Deepthroat*, starring a new porn actress named Linda Lovelace. During this time, hardcore porn had just begun to hit the market, and this was one of the first hardcore films to come out. This film in particular featured a woman character who had a clitoris in the back of her throat, and her character achieved orgasm when she performed deep oral sex on a male actor. The film was the first to introduce the act of "deep throating," an extreme form of oral sex that effectively choked the one performing it. However, the film became extremely popular and went on to influence

various other films, almost single handedly creating one of the largest staples in porn (Klutinoty, 2021). Now, it has become so mainstreamed that it is an expectation heterosexual men have for women as a normal behavior in sex. Other, more tame versions of this exist as well. One 2020 paper from the University of Arizona found that young heterosexual couples that both watched porn and also participated in hook-up culture were significantly more likely to follow the same social script as in pornography (Dajches & Terán, 2020). While the idea of hooking up and hook-up culture is not a new concept (Finer, 2007), pornography has been shown to dictate the script in which men and women engage in heterosexual relationships in our culture. Perceptions in porn have bled into how individuals perceive normal, daily interactions. For example, a 2018 study found men more likely to believe women would engage in porn-like sex in normal interactions, such as calling a taxi or going to work, if they had seen a porn video depicting sexual behavior in those settings (Miller, McBain, & Raggatt, 2018).

At its worst, this cultural imitation of pornography has shown to increase levels of aggression in men toward their relationships with women and even a more accepting view of abuse toward women. The vast majority of porn includes some form of physical violence and portrays men as the more powerful and controlling partner in sex. When watching dehumanizing displays of submission over an extended period of time, those interactions begin to seem normal. Thus, many couples today are at risk of having deformed, one-sided power dynamics (Fight The New Drug, 2017). Even women addicted to porn have shown them to be

more accepting of this dynamic, often viewing themselves as weaker, less intelligent, and submissive (Brande, 2020).

Despite being a subject most people avoid, the overwhelming impact of pornography on both ourselves and our culture as a whole is damaging. While the mainstreaming of pornography does have some slight benefits, such as the more outward and accepting expression of sexuality for people, the negatives are much more significant. It is also important to note, this does not take into effect the potential impacts of newer developments in pornography, including virtual reality and hyper realistic sex dolls. Additionally, developing trends within pornography may create new problems, such as the emergence of deepfakes/revenge porn and more personalized/intimate interactions with porn viewers through sites such as OnlyFans. While the Internet has and may continue to potentially help educate more people regarding safe sex and normalized acts of intimacy and love, the overall effects have effectively immersed our culture into one modeled after pornography.

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Red-Pilling the Red Pill Theory: A Transgender Perspective

Em Mirra

Among the far reaches of the Internet lurks *The Red Pill*, a Reddit community that shares a hatred for women (Reddit, "The Red Pill"). "Red Pillers" operate on the general belief that women have it better than men by virtue of being female (Love). They find solidarity amongst one another, retreating to the Internet to air out toxic opinions on women, minorities, and relationships, namely dating and sex (Reddit, "Ask The Red Pill"). Both the forum's name and ideology originates from an iconic scene in the 1999 movie *The Matrix*, in which one character named Morpheus offers the protagonist, Neo, a choice: "You take the blue pill – the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill – you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes" (The Matrix). According to Red Pillers, the rabbit hole Morpheus describes is a "reality" where female oppression is a myth and men are the victims in a progressive society. The act of "swallowing the red pill" represents becoming "enlightened" to the ways in which social justice issues attempt to socially disenfranchise people, particularly white males. The theory exists at the core of the Manosphere, a vast network of websites frequented by men's rights activists, pick up artists, and self-identified "incels"—young men who proclaim involuntary celibacy from their poor success with dating women yet who often blame women for refusing to have sex with them. Occupants of the Manosphere promote toxic masculine roles and applaud dominance and machismo while expressing often deep contempt for women and minority communities. The

greatest irony, however, is that two transgender women filmmakers invented the very idea of red and blue pills in a movie that for years has been widely interpreted as an allegory for the transgender experience (VanDerWerff). Countless transgender writers—Marcy Cook, Laura Dale, Jennifer Harrison, Leigh Monson, and Emily Todd VanDerWerff—have written articles from a transgender perspective supporting this theory[29]. Despite receiving skepticism and pushback from cisgender naysayers, these speculations found validation in August 2020 when the Wachowski sisters confirmed that *The Matrix* was written as a metaphor for transgender identity (White). This verification may come too little too late, however. With two decades of silence and a translation of an authentic transgender experience into a universal storyline, the Wachowskis' have unintentionally enabled Manosphere occupants to spend years co-opting their work. Yet, by understanding *The Matrix*'s transgender allegory, where the red pill represents waking up to the harmful effects of the gender binary and gender roles themselves, it is startlingly easy to debunk *The Red Pill* community and its purported beliefs.

While many categorize *The Matrix* as a science-fiction film, its hidden transgender themes reflect a more nuanced storyline often missed by cisgender viewers. On its surface, the film depicts a dystopian future in which humanity is unknowingly trapped inside a simulated reality known as the Matrix. Created by thought-capable sentient machines to enslave humans, the Matrix distracts humanity from the truth—with their minds plugged into the virtual world, machines are free to harvest their actual bodies as energy sources in the "real" world.

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[29] Specific articles by the mentioned transgender writers can be referenced in the Works Cited.

Essentially, the Matrix symbolizes both meanings of a system: physically, as a massive computer simulation composed of binary code, and theoretically, as systemic oppression of human thought and autonomy. In the transgender allegory, the system of oppression specifically represents the social construct of the gender binary in a cis-normative society. Under this metaphor, the machines and their agents represent the establishment in both its physical and psychological forms. They constrain people in their roles as energy sources, paralleling how society encourages transgender people to remain as their assigned gender at birth. While Neo is not a transgender person in the literal sense, his story of escaping the system and working to dismantle it reflects the transgender experiences of transitioning and learning how to safely navigate the world.

From the very beginning of the film, Neo experiences feelings of discomfort with the world around him and appears to be seeking answers as to why. Throughout the day he plays the part of Thomas Anderson, a computer programmer at a top software company. However, by night he works as a computer hacker searching for answers under the alias Neo, a name he chooses for himself. It's important to note that Neo's preference for using this alias over his legal name "Thomas Anderson" is similar to how some transgender people reject their given birth names and instead choose a new name that better reflects their gender identity. Yet this step in the transgender journey is often met with pushback—and not just among friends or family members. Without legally altering their name through government documentation, a transgender person is still required to use their birth name in institutional settings. Without a

legal name change, a transgender person can expect to be deadnamed—the instance of being mistakenly referred to by their rejected birth name—numerous times by workers within institutions such as banks, schools, or hospitals. *The Matrix* represents this experience in the way Neo is referred to throughout the movie. While his close friends always use the alias name, "Neo," civil authority figures such as his boss and the agents are seen consistently addressing him as "Mr. Anderson." *The Matrix*'s usage of these two names not only serves as an allusion to transgender deadnaming, but also underscores the concept of living two lives, a theme prevalent throughout many transgender narratives.

In the interrogation room scene, Agent Smith highlights Neo's double life by stating,

> It seems you've been living two lives. In one life, you're Thomas A. Anderson, program writer for a respectable software company, you have a social security number, you pay your taxes, and you help your landlady carry out her garbage. The other life is lived in computers, where you go by the hacker alias Neo and are guilty of virtually every computer crime we have a law for. One of these lives has a future, and one of them does not" (The Matrix).

Agent Smith's comment expresses how many transgender people feel as if they are forced to choose between two genders or "two lives." By living as their gender assigned at birth, transgender individuals risk experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation from a lack of personal fulfillment (Schreiber). However, living as openly transgender can be just as perilous, with many individuals facing social rejection amongst family and friends, loss of employment, and the threat of violence and death from hate crimes (Pilkington). Ed Pilkington's article "'I am Alena': Life as a Trans Woman Where Survival

Means Living as Christopher," illustrates this predicament that transgender people face. He describes the story of Alena, a transgender woman from the deep south in Georgia. Forced to live as "Christopher" so she can stay in her mother's home and not face violence from her bible-belt community, Alena has to choose between her personal safety and fighting crushing depression from living a lie. The agents in *The Matrix* threaten Neo with an identical choice: cease hacking for answers and live quietly as Thomas Anderson or risk physical harm at the hands of the agents. This is the first of many life-or-death decisions that Neo must make in the film, choices similar to those that many transgender people also have to make on their journeys of self-discovery.

A great portion of *The Matrix*'s plot focuses on Neo's struggle to become "The One," a concept akin to the transgender experience of transitioning. Described in the movie as the person prophesied to destroy the machines and free humankind, being "The One" also symbolizes Neo's ability to unlock his greatest power by living as his truest self. His journey to becoming "The One" parallels similar steps taken throughout the transition process such as being made aware of transgender identities, potential body alterations through hormones and surgery, learning to navigate the world safely, the difficulties in fully accepting one's identity, and ultimately finding personal empowerment through living life authentically. As the movie's story unfolds, these steps are presented chronologically throughout the film, beginning with his awareness of the Matrix itself through intervention on the part of the character, Morpheus.

After Neo decides to take Morpheus' mysterious red pill, he essentially becomes "unplugged" from the Matrix and wakes up to the "real world." After being collected from a pod used to harvest him as an energy source, he is taken aboard Morpheus' ship, the *Nebuchadnezzar*. In the following collection of scenes, the crew rebuilds Neo's weakened body in what can be seen as a direct allusion to how many transgender people make changes to themselves from taking hormones or undergoing surgery. As Neo regains his strength, Morpheus explains to him the history of how the Matrix came into existence and the rules it is built upon and offers him advice on how to navigate the dangerous agents who hunt for unplugged humans. These lessons are reminiscent of how transgender individuals just beginning their transition often seek advice from more experienced members of the transgender community to explain concepts like the gender binary, medical transition, and how to manage discrimination.

Additionally, in a world that often scorns and dismisses transgender identities, many individuals struggle with self-acceptance and rely on the community to receive validation. Neo also doubts his identity throughout most of the movie, depending on Morpheus' unyielding belief that he is "The One" to help Neo even consider the idea. Only after undertaking a great risk to rescue Morpheus—an endeavor the *Nebuchadnezzar* crew considers a suicide mission—does Neo finally find his true strength through self-acceptance as "The One." Similarly, when transgender people achieve self-actualization, they often feel themselves grow more powerful from their elevated confidence in their identity. In Sabrina Rubin Erdely's article, "The Transgender Crucible," she recounts how a young transgender woman named CeCe finds the

strength to stand up to her street harassers. Despite potential risks to her personal safety, Cece's newfound security in her identity enables her to lecture hecklers on why it is inappropriate to call her slurs like "tranny" (Erdely). Just as Cece risks violence to pursue who she is, once Neo believes he is "The One," he no longer fears the dangers of the Matrix and goes on to successfully rescue the kidnapped Morpheus from his torture and captivity under the evil Agent Smith. Interestingly, before the rescue occurs, Agent Smith confesses to Morpheus about how confining his duties in the Matrix are.

The confession scene adds an additional layer to the transgender allegory because it explores how oppressors sometimes feel oppressed by the system they strive to protect and uphold. In Marilyn Frye's essay, "Oppression," she discusses how oppressors sometimes feel they are being oppressed themselves. According to Frye, for oppressors to maintain status in their privileged group, they must follow certain rules as dictated and policed by other members of the same social position (Frye). For example, she explains how socially imperative it is for a man to not cry in front of another man, or else he risks gender-policing and others questioning his manhood (Frye). A similar scenario arises when Agent Smith takes off the headset that plugs him into the Matrix, essentially disconnecting him from the other agents before vulnerably disclosing to Morpheus, "I hate this place, this zoo, this prison, this reality, whatever you want to call it. I can't stand it any longer. I must get out of here. I must get free" (*The Matrix*). Following Agent Smith's confession, his fellow agents enter the room. They immediately become suspicious of his behavior, in a manner paralleling the gender-policing behaviors that occur

among men in Frye's example. Agent Smith's discontent with the Matrix represents how privileged groups still experience the harmful effects alongside the benefits they receive from the system. This phenomena is something the Red Pillers encounter themselves, yet remain blind to. If anything, Red Pillers have more in common with Agent Smith than Neo, as both hold membership in a dominant social group, condescend and oppress minority peoples, and recognize the existence of factors that threaten their agency to do so. However, while Agent Smith correctly pinpoints how the unplugged humans trying to dismantle the Matrix threaten his power, Red Pillers completely miss the mark on their perceived danger.

Placing value in the incorrect theory that feminism and progressive ideals subjugate men results in Red Pillers partaking in a delusional belief with societal consequences. From the Red Pillers' point of view, their fabricated victim status absolves them from acknowledging their privilege and warrants their abuse towards women and minorities. While it should not be overlooked that some Red Pillers may struggle economically or withstand other hardships leading to feelings of victimization, they nevertheless still hold some societal privileges from being white, straight, and cisgender men. Combined with the fragility of the male ego and society's tendency to write stories for men and by men, it is unsurprising that the Red Pillars view *The Matrix* as a parable about their struggles. After all, with an inclusive storyline chronicling the path to personal empowerment, *The Matrix* is susceptible to numerous interpretations wholly dependent upon each individual viewer's background.

While no one apart from the Wachowskis themselves can explain why it took them decades to confirm the transgender allegory, certain circumstances in the Wachowski's lives can provide some insight into their decision. It should not be discounted that at the time of *The Matrix*'s release in 1999, Lana and Lilly Wachowski were still in the closet and would not publicly announce their identities until 2012 and 2016 respectively (Gardner). Perhaps neither of the sisters intended to earnestly write a transgender storyline. Instead, maybe they wanted to express hidden emotions surrounding their gender identities and these feelings manifested into the elements formulating the transgender allegory. Since the sisters themselves acknowledge how their work draws from their lives, a more considerable factor influencing *The Matrix*'s writing may be Hollywood's negative view of transgender people, especially in 1999.

During the late nineties in America, mindsets surrounding the transgender population were significantly less accepting—if not outright hostile—and very likely impacted the Wachowski's decision-making. Between a misinformed society as their audience and the fact that the Wachowskis were just starting out in Hollywood, making an overtly transgender film might have killed their burgeoning careers and lead to speculation of their *own* identities in the process. Additionally, with a universal storyline *The Matrix* would be more likely to experience greater critical and financial success. Considering these pressures, perhaps the Wachowskis' figured the best they could do was write a plot and characters that a diverse audience could relate to, while subtly coding transgender themes into the background. However, this decision forced the Wachowskis to relinquish control over how the audience would interpret their film,

setting the stage for *The Matrix* to become one of the most revered cultural touchstones amidst the Manosphere.

Unfortunately, what Red Pillers continue to misunderstand is how the Wachowski's identities and later filmography discredits their habit of claiming the film as representative of their experiences. First, the idea of two trans women sitting down to write underlying warnings on the "dangers" of equal rights for women and minorities is absolutely ludicrous. Furthermore, the Wachowski's 2015 television series *Sense8* outwardly features a transgender woman protagonist (Berlatsky). Thanks to contemporary acceptance of transgender people and their established Hollywood reputations, the Wachowskis were able to boldly addresses issues of identity and gender throughout the television series (Berlatsky). *Sense8* suggests the Wachowski's desire to include such themes existed all along, adding further credence to the transgender allegory in *The Matrix*.

Even if we forget the transgender allegory for a moment and assume that *The Matrix* is nothing more than a badass, science-fiction movie, this alone should be enough to expose how illogical and out of touch Red Pillers are. Their complete view of reality and its inhabitants are based upon a *fictional* movie.

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Artist Statement

Em mirra

As both a graphic designer and transgender individual, I am interested in how visual design can be utilized to educate about transgender experiences. I enjoy using branding, photocollaged imagery, color, and humor to invite viewers to engage with the issues my work discusses. One   particular issue I sought a creative solution to was how infrequently transgender individuals' personal pronouns are used correctly.

We use personal pronouns every day, as they are essential in how we validate gender and communicate with the people around us. Despite increasing trans visibility in the media, academic institutions have yet to normalize the use of personal pronouns in their everyday communications and experiences for transgender individuals. These communications include forms, email signatures, and classroom dialogue and information-sharing, among others.

Whilst taking a senior seminar advertising class at Kutztown University, I designed *The Royal Pronounsments*, a faux 360-advertising campaign. This campaign would be hosted through GLAAD   Media Institute and take place on community college and university campuses, targeting students, professors, and administrators. *The Royal Pronounsments* aims to generate awareness, offer possible solutions for normalizing personal pronouns across campuses, and create space for transgender and   gender-nonconforming individuals in the academic community.

Inspired by the drag queens and kings of the trans community, *The Royal Pronounsments*

identity system presents visual royalty of a contemporary nature to highlight the campaign theme. Cultural context lies at the heart of visual decision-making: color was selected with the goal of representing royalty across a cultural spectrum, while imagery of transgender celebrities was photocollaged with historical royal garments sourced from paintings, photographs, and tapestries. Special attention was given to matching each celebrity with monarchs from their cultural background. The campaign's campy, tongue-in-cheek copywriting unifies a variety of media through its various calls to action for incorporating the use of personal pronouns throughout campuses.

The Royal Pronounsments

#TheRoyalPronounsments

pronouncement (n.) – a formal or authoritative announcement or declaration

pronounsment (n.) – to declare one's pronouns, especially in public utterance

Now hearken unto me,
let us pronounce our

pronouns

dilligently!

This has been a
Royal Pronounsment
from Elliot Fletcher

To help me start a conversation about personal pronouns,
scan the code or visit glaad.org/theroyalpronounsments

glaad

The Royal Pronounsments

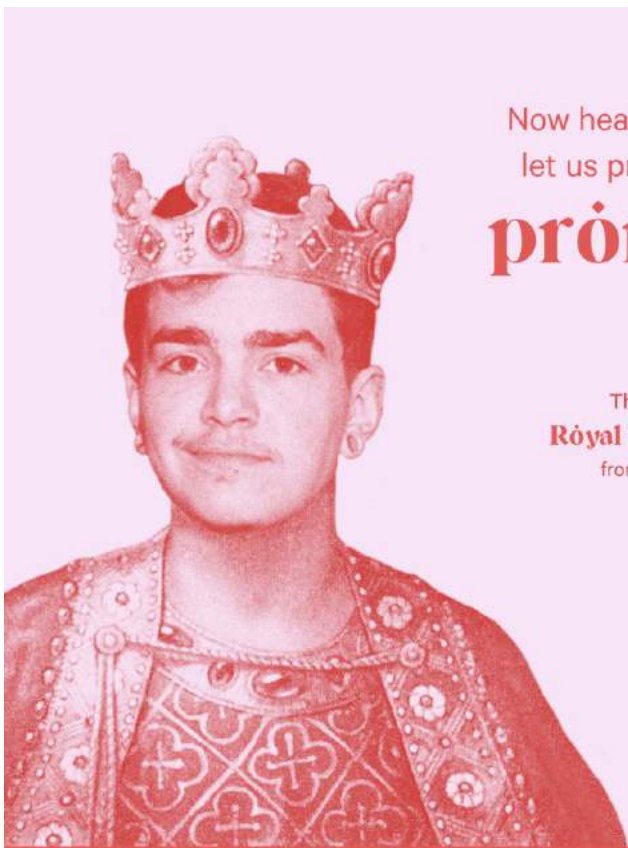Hear ye, hear ye! Are you

they, she or he?

This has been a
Royal Pronounsment
from Jonathan Van Ness

To help me start a conversation about personal pronouns,
scan the code or visit glaad.org/theroyalpronounsments
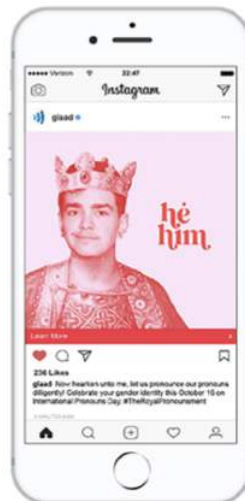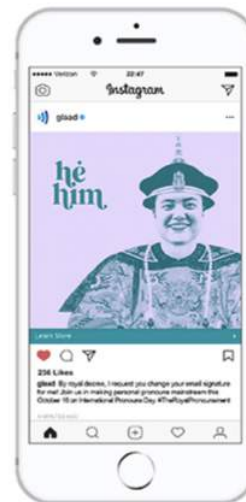
glaad

The Royal Pronounsments

Applying Ecofeminism: Nature's Role in Women's Freedom
Mikenna Beattie

Throughout American society and its literature, women tend to be seen as property. They are treated as less than human and have no real freedom. The men in their lives control them. The amount of freedom they have connects to the environment they are in. In a more structured environment, like the setting of "The Yellow Wallpaper," the woman's every move is controlled by her husband; she cannot even leave the room without his permission. In *The Awakening*, the woman starts in an environment being controlled by her husband but by the end is in her own landscape that is controlled only by her; however, in the end, she is ultimately under the control of the man. In an open and free environment, like the rural landscape in "A White Heron," the young girl has the freedom to make her own choices and break free from the restraints of men. These three works were chosen based on the female character's heavy involvement with the setting in these stories. Each story shows a different space and each has a different impact on the female character and her freedom. As these works show, the more controlled a female character is by a space the more controlled she is by a man. By examining these stories through an ecofeminist lens, it is easy to see that women are free when in a natural environment. In a controlled, man-made environment, the female character is under the control of a man. However, when the female character finds herself in nature, she is free to make her own choices and be herself. The significance of this article rests in its findings: when in nature, women are

free from the oppression of their male-counterpart. While it is well known that men control

women, I would also argue that the setting plays a significant role in women's freedom as well.

Ecofeminist, or ecological feminism, theory "was first proposed in 1974 by the French

feminist Francoise d'Eaudbonne in *Feminism or Destruction (Le Feminismeou la mort)*" (Ling 104).

Ecofeminism can be defined as a type of feminism that examines the links between women and

nature. For centuries, humankind has identified nature as a female body. Nature is the Mother

of everything; without nature we would not be able to live. Nature makes the food we eat and the

air we breathe. One reason women are considered close to nature is the reproductive abilities

women hold; both are beings that create life (Dailey 11). Also, both nature and women have been

oppressed by the patriarchy.

Neither woman nor Nature can escape the hands of man. Man has oppressed nature by

killing her animals and cutting down her trees. Man has taken away these children and replaced

them with cold, looming skyscrapers and deadly vapors. Since the industrial revolution, man

has killed and oppressed Mother Nature. The same can be said of women. Man has been seen as

the superior gender since the beginning. He is in control of her life and her body. "The [male]

consumption of women's bodies reinforces their role as second class citizens…Young women are

told to protect themselves, while young men are applauded for their sexual conquests" (Dailey

12). These ideas can be seen in literature, specifically in the stories mentioned earlier.

It is a well-known concept that men view women as objects. This is most likely due to the

male gaze in literature, and entertainment in general. The term male gaze was first coined by

the feminist film critic Laura Mulvey in the early 1970s (Dailey 12). Male gaze refers to the idea

that all art, and therefore literature, is created from a male point of view. This means that all art,

films, and literature are made with the males' view in mind. In other words, all entertainment is

made for a male perspective. "Often in Ecofeminist [literature], the male gaze is present, and is

representative of the general overbearing presence of patriarchal culture. Nature tends to serve

as an escape from this presence, or this gaze" (Dailey 12). When a woman finds herself in nature,

she is able to break free of the chains of man (her husband) and, finally, be free.

In "The Yellow Wallpaper," the woman has a negative transformation due to the space

that she is in as well as the control John, her husband and physician, has on her. When she first

arrives at the "colonial mansion, a hereditary estate," where she will be staying for the summer,

the woman describes it as a "haunted house" (Gilman 1735). The woman even goes on to say that

it reminds her of "English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates

that lock, and lots of separate little
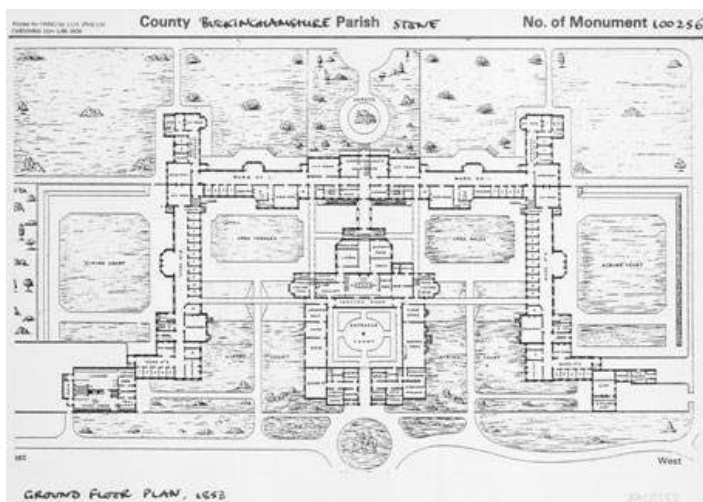
houses for the gardeners and people"

(1735). The woman says that there are

"bordered paths . . . lined with long

grape covered arbors with seats under

them" (1735). Rather than a mansion,

this illustrates more of what an insane

asylum may have looked like at this time. In figure 1, there is a picture of St. John's Hospital in

1853; it is exactly what comes to mind when the woman describes the landscape of the house she is staying in (Ground Floor Plan, St. John's Hospital, Bucks."). The controlled paths and hedges represent John's control on the woman throughout the story. The woman also says that John tells her "she shall neglect her proper self-control; so [she] take[s] pains to control [her]self--before him, at least, and that makes [her] very tired" (1736). As much as the woman would like to control herself and what she does with her days, she cannot. John is always right there to tell her what she is supposed to do. John then goes even farther to control her by locking her in a room "at the top of the house" (1736).

The rest of the story takes place in this room. The woman says that the room is big and "was a nursery first, and then a playroom and gymnasium, I should judge for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls" (1736). If this truly is a house, then perhaps the woman is right about what she sees. However, if she is actually being locked away in an insane asylum, then the things she is seeing are barred windows so that *she* does not harm herself; the "rings and things in the walls" would be places to tie restraints in case she has intentions of harming herself or others (1736). The woman also comments on the color and design on the walls in which she is imprisoned, saying, "I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling, flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin. . . . The color is repellent, almost revolting: a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight" (1736). She goes on to say, "This paper looks to me as if it *knew* what a vicious influence it had!" (1736). The woman is slowly starting to go crazy from looking at the same hideous walls

on a daily basis. In spite of this, she cannot leave the room because John thinks she is not well

enough.

Before the woman enters the grounds, she is a physically healthy person who is staying

there because of "hysterical tendencies" (1735). This is a disease that men claim women have so

that they can more easily control them. According to Abigail Callahan, physicians at this time

believed "that women were sick merely because they had ovaries," which "allowed different or

unique treatments according to a person's sex" (10). This permits John to control his wife as he

sees fit. By the end of the story, the woman loses complete control of herself and goes mad

because of the room, or landscape, that her husband has confined her to. Sandra M. Gilbert and

Susan Gusban explain, "The cure, of course, is worse than the disease, for the sick woman's

mental condition deteriorates rapidly" (262). The woman says at the end of the story, "I don't

want to go outside. I won't. . . . For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is

green instead of yellow" (1743). In the beginning, the woman wishes that she could be outside

rather than in the yellow room. By the end of the story, she is defeated and mentally broken by

her husband: she now wants to be in the yellow room rather than the green outdoors, showing

that her husband has succeeded in controlling her.

In this story, the narrator is in a man-made environment at all times. She never finds

herself in nature or even fresh air. She is completely under the control of her husband. Also, as

proven by the quote above, the woman is no longer interested in going outside at all. She wants

to stay inside, under her husband's control that has ultimately driven her mad, rather than

going outside where "everything is green instead of yellow" (1743). The woman stays in her man-made space and rejects nature; she chooses to remain repressed by her husband.

The theme of control through space and man is also found in *The Awakening*. Throughout this story, Enda, the main character, fights to find herself and break free of the societal norms for women at the time in 1899. She transforms throughout the story, from interactions with other characters as well as throughout the multiple landscapes she inhabits. Even though Edna has a better chance of having a positive transformation through her space, she does not quite make it.

As a young child, Edna lived in "old Kentucky blue-grass country" with her controlling father and two sisters (Chopin 1651). She then moves to Louisiana with her husband Leonce. This is a very different experience that she must adapt to because of the difference in culture. Kentucky is a very innocent place; the people there do not talk about sex or even show much outward emotion. Contrastingly, the culture is the exact opposite in Louisiana . According to Nancy Walker, "Chopin has not placed her heroine in a rigidly moralistic environment. Relatively unaffected by the puritanical environment. Relatively unaffected by the puritanical mores of much of American society, the Creoles among whom Edna finds herself are openly sensual" (67). For example, Madame Ratignolle, one of the women Edan comes to know, openly shares a "story of one of her accouchements, withholding no detail" (1654). In addition to this, Edan is also shocked by the women's "entire absence of prudery" (1654), as well as the fact that "the Creole husband is never jealous, with him the gangrene passion has been dwarfed by

disuse" (1655). This shows that Creole men are passionless; they simply court women for sex and from habit. Moving from Kentucky to Louisiana, Edna begins the journey of finding herself; she can begin her awakening.

Not only does the setting help Edna's transformation along, but so do the other characters in the story. After Edna comes back from the beach at the Grand Isle, Leonce exclaims, "You are burnt beyond recognition,'. . .looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which ha[s] suffered some damage" (1649). Leonce Pontellier, treats his wife as a valuable possession that he can control as he pleases. Later in the story, Edna decides to move out of her husband's house and into the pigeon house in spite of the fact that her husband denies her permission to do so. She takes it upon herself to decide her own fate and move out on her own. She gets the inspiration from Madame Ratignolle; she sees her beautiful house and is inspired to paint and sell pictures to support herself when she moves out. Leonce's oppression pushes Edna to break free, and Madame Ratignolle gives her an idea on how to do it. It is in the pigeon house that Edna starts to free herself from Leonce. The pigeon house is a sort of middle ground. She is away from her controlling husband; however, she still does not have complete control over herself.

While living near the Gulf, Edna learns to swim. The sea is a landscape that helps her to escape her reality. Sandra Gilbert believes the sea is so important in the story because it offers a type of "baptisimal embrace"; through it "she is mystically and mythically revitalized, renewed, reborn" (360). The narrator explains that for Edna "the voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The

touch of the sea is sensuous, en-folding the body in its soft, cold embrace" (1657). This is where Edna is truly transformed. Her first independent swim makes the idea of rebirth prominent (Gibert 360). It is in nature that Edna truly owns herself and is free. In that first swim, Edna feels "as if some power of significance importance ha[s] been given to her," has inspired her "to swim far out, where no woman had swum before" (Chopin 1668). The freedom that the sea offers gives Edna the courage to do something about her life. Through the freedom of the natural space, Edna becomes the only person controlling her being. She learns to be free while swimming. So, she does the only thing she can truly do to ensure her freedom: she swam out into the sea and let it envelop her and free her. In nature, and now death, Edna is free of her husband.

Lastly, in "A White Heron" the main character is unlike the former two. Rather than living in a confined, negative landscape, she lives in a positive, natural one that allows her to break free from the bonds of her male counterpart. Sylvia is originally from a "crowded manufacturing town" where she had "tried to grow for eight years," but "she had never been alive at all before she came to live at the farm" (Jewett 1641). While in the man-made space, Sylvia could not develop and prosper. The open, free space she moves to allows her to grow as a person, as well as a woman.

Throughout the short story Sarah Orne Jewett uses the hunting of a white heron as a conceit for the young man trying to take Sylvia's virginity. At the beginning of the story, Sylvia meets the young hunter while walking in the woods. She encounters him first by hearing his

whistle. "Suddenly this little woods-girl is horror-stricken to hear a clear whistle not very far away. Not a bird's-whistle, which would have a sort of friendliness, but a boy's whistle, determined and somewhat aggressive" (1641). Sylvia associates the natural whistle of a bird with comfort and friendliness. However, when Sylvia realizes the whistle comes from a man she is terrified and immediately associates the male's whistle with anger and fear. When they finally happen upon each other on the path, the hunter asks Sylvia for help.

The young man enlists her help to find the rare white heron because he does not know the land well. According to Robert Brault, "Jewett created a populated landscape, with women who clearly have expert knowledge about their habitats while the men are generally clueless" (209). The young man needs Sylvia's knowledge of the land to succeed in his quest. Rather than Sylvia being powerless and under the control of the male, the roles are reversed. Sylvia holds the knowledge of her natural space while the young man is clueless to the workings of Mother Nature and tries to enlist Sylvia to help him capture the bird, also known as her virginity. Fortunately, while living in the free, open wilderness Sylvia is transformed from a meek little girl who is "alarmed" by the young man into a young woman who decides to take herself into womanhood (1642). When Sylvia enters the woods by herself, Jewett uses the words "tingling," "eager," "mount," and "daring step" to reveal that Sylvia is going through a maturing process (1644). Sylvia does not need a man to tell her when her awakening should be; she has the freedom to decide this for herself. Overall, the landscape influences Sylvia to make her own free and natural choices. Sylvia learns, through the freedom of the natural space she now lives in,

that nothing and no one can control her. Sylvia's outcome is more positive than the woman from "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Edna because from a young age Sylvia is connected to nature.

The setting plays a big role in the outcome of stories; it can even influence the characters within the stories. The more freedom the landscape allows the characters, the more freedom the female characters tend to experience from their male counterparts. In structured, man-made spaces the women's husbands tend to be overbearing and controlling; whereas, in relaxed, natural environments, the female characters have more freedom to control their own lives and make decisions for themselves. Spaces have the power to negatively or positively transform characters through the intimate relationships they have with them.

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.Intergenerational Transmission of Racial Trauma Through Acts of Discrimination

Danae M. Johnson

Evaluating the research evidence concerning the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the role it continues to play in current generations is of importance to raise awareness and provide a thorough understanding of the lasting impact of racism. The aim of this paper is to discuss the transmission of trauma in relation to racial discrimination among African Americans by discussing the additional challenges that are faced throughout a lifetime of experiencing discrimination, particularly the consequences of discrimination on African American youth, impacting their physical and mental well-being along with their achievement and engagement in an academic setting (Schmitt et. al., 2014). African Americans are faced with the cumulative ongoing and traumatic experiences of racial discrimination that influence their physical and mental health, leading to numerous variations of negative outcomes (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). Relating to several types of trauma, race-based trauma can be racial, generational, historical, collective, or parental trauma that have built and maintained foundations for various types of racial discrimination (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019; Carteret al., 2018; Doucet & Rovers, 2010). Among African Americans, these forms of trauma vary in outcomes in terms of gender. In particular, African American women that face multiple forms of discrimination that not only

include the characteristic of their race but their gender as well that overlap in intersectional

contexts (Crenshaw, 1989).

Introducing Definitions

To fully comprehend the transmission of trauma through generations, in relation to the

influence of slavery and racial discrimination, clear definitions must be given. Racial

discrimination refers to the unfair treatment of individuals due to their actual or assumed race.

Racial discriminatory acts by individuals of a dominant racial group have a negative impact on

individuals of nondominant racial groups. African Americans experience racial discrimination

beginning early in life and continuing throughout their lives, which impact their health and

well-being (Hope et al., 2015).

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood, the time between 18 and 29 years of age, is a developmental time of

life that begins with the experience of exploring one's identity, and African Americans are faced

with the additional experience of institutional and interpersonal racial discrimination during

this stage of their lives (Hope et al., 2015). Institutional racial discrimination refers to the unfair

distribution of beneficial resources and power in society, an imbalance of power and resources

that exclude people of color, leads to residential segregation, and sustains aggressive policing

while providing power and resources for those who are white to get ahead in society (Hope et

al., 2015). In contrast, interpersonal racial discrimination is associated with individual beliefs or

behaviors that stem from conscious and unconscious personal prejudice, including racial

hassles and microaggressions (Hope et al., 2015). For instance, forms of conscious prejudice can

be as subtle as excluding an individual based on a preconceived opinion or as extreme as

physical or verbal harassment, whereas a form of unconscious prejudice can include forming

stereotypes about a certain group without realizing or noticing it (Nosek et al., 2002). These

forms of racial discrimination have consequences and impact the physiological, psychological,

and sociopolitical well-being for African American emerging adults. However, children and

adolescent African Americans face discriminatory mistreatment tied to race as well (Benner et

al., 2018).

Schmitt et al. (2014) investigated the association of discrimination and psychological

well-being by completing a double meta-analysis that included 382 studies, in which 77% of the

participants were African Americans in adulthood, and who reported experiences of

institutional and interpersonal discrimination as influencing their mental health. In this first

meta-analysis, the researchers measured the correlation between discrimination and

psychological well-being that included depression, anxiety, and psychological distress (Schmitt

et. al., 2014). The researchers reported a negative correlation between the moderating factors of

experiences of discrimination and wellbeing, suggesting that higher incidences of

discrimination have a negative association with psychological well-being (Schmitt et al., 2014).

In addition, they found systematic differences among participant characteristics; individuals of

low socioeconomic status who experience discrimination were more likely to have a negative

impact on their well-being than among individuals of higher socioeconomic status. For instance, discrimination can harm psychological well-being by depriving individuals of quality health care, while undermining the learning process, and threatening the need for inclusion and acceptance (Schmitt et al., 2014). There was also a difference based on age, where results showed that experiences of discrimination or racism impacted psychological distress more for children than for adults (Schmitt et al., 2014), suggesting that as children develop, they need to be made aware of resources and strategies to effectively cope with discrimination and intense degrees of distress (Schmitt et al., 2014).

Youth and Discrimination

By the age of 10, children have developed an awareness of cultural stereotypes and prejudice, along with the ability to recognize both overt and covert discrimination (Benner et al., 2018). This ability creates an early understanding of racial awareness by witnessing the negative effects of racism. Children acknowledge the implications of race on their everyday lives, such as being followed in stores, being perceived as dangerous, and being called racial slurs (Osborne et al., 2020). Benner et al. (2018) presented a connection between racial discrimination and poorer youth adjustment in relation to socioemotional distress, academic success, and risky health behaviors. Discrimination and prejudice influence the development of African American youth by increasing the likelihood of developing depression and internalizing other symptoms, such as depressive and anxiety disorders along with complaints of physical symptoms and possible teenage suicide (Benner et al., 2018). In addition, discrimination and

prejudice negatively impact academic achievement and engagement while increasing risky behaviors, such as substance use and deviant peer associations among African American youth (Benner et al., 2018). Experiences of discrimination and prejudice in adolescence are remembered and carried throughout life, putting African American youth at risk during this sensitive period of their life that consequently impacts them in the future.

Viewing racial discrimination vicariously through caregivers or members of the community impacts African American youth development as well (Osborne et al., 2020). Along with vicariously witnessing experiences of racism, by the time African Americans have reached early adulthood, they have their own list of race-based experiences. In response to these systematic and interpersonal threats, caregivers attempt to combine traditions and legacies, along with economic and political histories to adapt to current circumstantial demands (Osborne et al., 2020). This form of acculturation involves preparing their children for the experiences they went through, knowing that their children will ultimately have similar experiences as well. In doing this, children form their expectations of racial discrimination that explain injustices perpetrated against African Americans (Osborne et al., 2020). Such protective factors potentially have a negative influence on children because it forces them to incorporate the values and beliefs of the dominant culture in terms of how they behave and how they view their own racial identity. By doing this, it results in low-self-esteem and symptoms of depression. These negative influences can therefore amplify the effect of racism exposure on children's socioemotional development (Osborne et al., 2020). This results in symptoms of

internalized emotions, including feelings of sadness, loneliness, fear, and viewing oneself as unwanted or unloved. Internalized behavior causes one to withdraw from social settings (Osborne et al., 2020). The more African American caregivers reported experiencing higher levels of racism, their messages on how to deal with discrimination were correlated with higher rates of anxiety and sadness among their children (Osborne et al., 2020).

Society also impacts the way African American children internalize racism. In the Clark Doll study, the development of racial identity was evaluated through choice of doll to study the influence of racism on ego development and self-awareness (Clark & Clark, 1950). African American children were presented with four dolls that were identical in every way except skin and hair color. Children were instructed to respond to requests that revealed their doll preferences, indicated their knowledge of racial difference, and showed their self-identification (Clark & Clark, 1950). These results show that the majority of the children preferred the white doll and rejected the brown doll by explaining that it was "ugly" or because it "got black on him" (Clark & Clark, 1950). Some children could not make self-identifications with the dolls presented, some ran out of the room crying, while others blamed themselves for the reason they identified with the brown doll (Clark & Clark, 1950). This shows that the way society views African Americans can be internalized and presented in children as young as three years old, influencing the way they view themselves, their knowledge of the difference that one's race makes and the choices or preferences they make in their daily lives such as deciding which toy they want (Clark & Clark, 1950).

Mental and Physical Health Disparities

The influence of racial discrimination and the biological toll it takes on African American individuals contribute to underlying health disparities and early deterioration in physical health (Hope et al., 2015). This refers to the cumulative ongoing and traumatic experiences of racial discrimination that are associated with negative health outcomes. Some of these negative outcomes include increased blood pressure, heart rate, risk for cardiovascular diseases, cellular aging, and dysregulation of their bodies' response to stress, leaving African Americans more susceptible to disease and infections that result in death (Hope et al., 2015). The increase of the physiological reaction of fight or flight to racial discriminatory events that are not only momentary but lingering long after the event has life-threatening physical consequences and negatively impacts mental health. Racial discrimination is also associated with an increased risk for attempting suicide, suicidal ideation, and demonstration of defensive violent acts (self and other directed) (Hope et al., 2015).

Cumulative exposure to racial discrimination is linked to depression symptoms, which are commonly associated with suicide and suicidal ideation (Nadal et al., 2014). O'Keefe et al. (2015) focused on the experiences of traumatic experiences of racial discrimination and how it undermines and diminishes an individual's sense of belonginess and leaves them vulnerable to suicide. A sample of African American emerging adults were asked to report the frequency and emotional impact of experiencing racial discrimination such as microaggressions, the occurrence of depression symptoms in the past week, and their experience of suicidal ideation

experienced within two weeks (O'Keefe et al., 2015). The frequency of racial discriminatory experiences positively correlated to thoughts of suicide or suicidal ideation through increased depressive symptoms. Discriminatory experiences that include racial microaggressions such as assumptions of lower intelligence in school or observing an absence of African Americans from one's environment convey messages of being less welcomed or valued (O'Keefe et al., 2015). Being the victim of racial discrimination during vital times of development not only affects an individual in the moment but is internalized into depressive symptoms, which can subsequently lead to increased thoughts of suicide.

Race-Based Traumatic Stress

Race-based experiences are the building blocks for racial trauma or race-based stress and refers to the experiences of danger related to real or perceived racial discrimination (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). Race-based traumatic stress (RBTS) occurs when an individual experiences racial discrimination directed toward them from another person or following a racial encounter (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). RBTS symptoms are like the symptoms found in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance headaches and heart palpitations (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). However, the severity of their symptoms is dismissed for not fitting the requirements for a DSM-5 diagnosis (Carter et al., 2018). RBTS is determined after a person reports negative or emotionally painful encounters, viewed as sudden and uncontrollable, on scales that measure stress reactions to racial discrimination (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). Even though they share similar symptoms, RBTS stress differs from

PTSD because it involves ongoing experiences due to exposure and reexposure to race-based stress (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). RBTS is distinctive from PTSD because it not only focuses on the effects of a traumatic event after the event has taken place but also how that event impacts ongoing experiences of RBTS.On the other hand, PTSD focuses solely on the aftereffects of a single or limited traumatic event (Carter et al., 2018). It is possible for African Americans to experience RBTS and PTSD at the same time or separately. The influence of RBTS not only affects an individual after the event but also how they deal with the ongoing events that continue to occur in the present and in the future, whereas the influence of PTSD can lead to a fixation on a specific traumatic event (Carter et al., 2018).

To assess the emotional and psychological stress reactions to encounters with racism and racial discrimination, the Race-Based Traumatic Stress Symptom Scale (RBTSSS) was developed (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). It is a 52-item measure that consists of seven scales (depression, anger, physical reactions, avoidance, intrusion, arousal and low-self-esteem) and begins with an open-ended question where individuals are asked to describe three of their most memorable experiences of racism in their lives (Carter et al., 2013). It was developed to assist mental health professionals with discussing racial issues with clients and incorporate race in clinical formulations and treatment regarding stressful institutional and cultural encounters with racism and racial discrimination (Carter et al., 2013).

An experience potentially leading to race-based stress and trauma include the everyday engagements and interactions that African Americans are expected to learn to live with. When

faced with experiences of racial discrimination, individuals deem them as stressful and traumatic occurrences, that trigger traumatic reactions. Some of these reactions include depression, anger, recurring thoughts of the experience, and mentally distancing oneself from the traumatic experience (Carter et al., 2020). As noted, unlike PTSD, RBTS is a mental injury that results from living within a racist system or reoccurring experiences of racial events (Carter et al., 2020). This might include avoiding racial disclosure, which refers to discrimination that is manifested through communication, including conversations about discrimination or topics such as racism or slavery. The avoidance of such conversations contributes to the reproduction of racism and stems from an attempt to minimize eliciting White people's racial discomfort or participating in innocuous practices like stepping aside on the sidewalk for a White person to pass (Liu et al., 2019). This suggests that African Americans learn acculturation through racism, microaggressions, and racial trauma about their position and how they are expected to accommodate White people's needs, status, and emotions (Liu et al., 2019). Acculturation refers to the adoption of the dominant culture and is a form of racial trauma from being forced to live within White supremacist spaces and culture from the day they are born (Liu et al., 2019). Acculturation has a lasting impact on African Americans because it transforms overt racism into aversive racism or "color blindness," allowing White people to avoid awareness of race and racism or to avoid being labeled as racist (Liu et al., 2019).

The transformation of overt racism into aversive racism has played a dominant role in internalized racism. This is referring to the identification of White stereotypes about

unchanging racial characteristics and may be related to diminishing one's racial or cultural identity, which can become traumatizing (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). This includes the limitation of dreams or goals made by African Americans due to the limited and stereotyped ways African Americans are portrayed in society. If an individual does not see accurate and positive representations, internalized racism can influence a person to believe there is no place for them (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). Internalizing emotions tied to experiences of racial discrimination is among the coping strategies commonly used as a response to trauma, which is positively associated with dissociative symptomology (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). African Americans cope with experiences of racial discrimination using strategies of avoidance, keeping it to themselves or accepting it as a way of life, potentially leading to higher rates of stress and harmful adaptions similar to symptoms of dissociation (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). The loss of control over mental processes that lead to a change in conscious awareness and self-attribution are found in individuals that experience trauma (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). Specifically, the experience of ongoing trauma tied to race can result in a range of changes, from momentary gaps from reality to losing control over one's environment that challenges their sense of safety and security (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). The more racial discrimination African Americans face, the more likely they are to form coping strategies leading to an increase in dissociative symptoms that follow them throughout life and build with each racially traumatic experience they encounter (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016).

Types of Trauma

Along with a lasting influence on mental health, racial trauma has a collective impact because its effects extend beyond the individual to affect families and communities, something known as historical trauma, which is the psychological wounds of traumatic experiences in history that accumulate over time, transferring from generation to the next (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). Survivors of historical trauma have psychological effects that have secondary consequences on future generations. Trauma can be defined as "the influences of overwhelming and extraordinary experiences that leaves individuals in a state of helplessness, undermining their perception of personal efficacy, their ability to psychologically integrate the challenges of life in meaningful ways, and their relational capacity" (Doucet & Rovers, 2010, p. 94). Traumatic experiences can upset common views about life along with shattering one's view of the world around them by creating a sense of alarm, fear, and lingering dread well beyond the actual experience of the traumatic event (Doucet & Rovers, 2010).

Generational Trauma

Generational trauma is a secondary form of trauma that results from the transfer of traumatic experiences from parents to their children; it is also referred to as intergenerational, transgenerational, or secondary trauma (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). Generational trauma can result from a variety of disturbing incidents or experiences that may be derived from such tragic events as colonization, genocide, dislocation, slavery, atrocities of war, domestic violence, and psychological manifestations of Holocaust experiences in the lives of survivor offspring (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). Research that examined generational trauma has identified four different

styles of how survivors of trauma adapt: those who were numb; victims; fighters; and those who made it (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). Those who identified as victims or as being numbed by their experiences appeared to be fearful and emotionally withdrawn, whereas those who identified as fighters tended to be obstinate (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). Individuals who identified as being someone that 'made it' were survivors who were able to separate themselves from the trauma of their past and advance socioeconomically (Doucet & Rovers, 2010).

The existence of generational trauma has been supported through empirical research of war-related trauma and the observation of Holocaust offspring (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). These studies suggest children whose parents have experienced extreme trauma, such as the Holocaust, were less able to externalize aggression. Studies suggest that parents' communicate their traumatic past, either through disclosing their experience or through exclusive silence about their experience as a primary reason for trauma being transmitted to offspring (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). Research suggests that the most beneficial option is to discuss the traumatic event that is appropriate to a child's or youth's level of understanding, using language that they understand, and reassuring them that the event is over (Isobel et al., 2019).

Trauma Transmission

Trauma transmission is the process by which parental trauma may be passed on to the next generation (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). There are four psychological pathways of trauma transmission, including the vicarious identification of children with their parents' suffering at similar stages of chronological development, the intuitive responsibility assumed by children to

compensate in various ways for their parents' suffering, the particular patterns of parenting demonstrated by survivors toward their offspring, and the styles of communication between parents and their children concerning traumatic experiences the parents had endured (Doucet & Rovers, 2010, p. 96).

The first two pathways mentioned are identified as being a direct mode of the transmission of trauma, whether unconsciously or through familial communication;the latter two have been identified as an indirect mode of transmission of trauma that may be transmitted through parenting styles or patterns of family interaction (Daud, Skoglund, & Rydelius, 2005).

To establish a better comprehension of the transmission of trauma, an understanding of the relationship shared between parent and child that contribute to life outcomes must be evaluated. Beginning with the theory of attachment introduced by John Bowlby (1969), this theory states that children are born ready to form attachments with others that will potentially help them survive. Bowlby's theory of attachment suggests that disruptions in attachment can result from unexpected separations from figures of attachment, creating a sense of anxiety and personal loss. Consequently, a lack of resolution of parents' traumatic experiences can prevent them from sharing in a consistent manner their traumatic experiences, leading to confusion and disorganization in the process of bonding between parent and child (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). Children of survivors are likely required to carry the unresolved emotional burdens of their parents, leading to their parentification, the process of role reversal whereby a child is obliged to act as parent to their own parent or sibling (Doucet & Rovers, 2010). In sum, forming

passive coping strategies for experiences of trauma can interfere with a parent's ability to respond to their child (Iyengar et al., 2014).

A history of trauma interferes with mothers' expectations and perception of her child, along with the ability to sympathetically respond, resulting in a compromised development of attachment in her child when the mother keeps in her traumatic experiences or accepts them as being her way of life (Iyengar et al., 2014).

Children who have attachment figures or parents who fail to comfort or protect them may develop similar self-protective strategies; thereby repeating a cycle of passive coping strategies. This is noted when children experience difficulty forming emotional connections with others or become aggressive or unpredictable due to the lack of consistent love and affection (Iyengar et al., 2014). This has also been seen with mothers who have psychiatric diagnosis associated with recurring periods of mental illness, which poses a risk for the social emotional development of their children, thus increasing the risk for the development of an insecure attachment with their children (Ozcan et al., 2016). The deteriorating relationship between mother and child due to neglect in phases of maternal mental illness is associated with the relationship between trauma and attachment style. This association suggests that trauma in an early relationship like the one shared with child and parent can initiate a developmental effect that results in insecure attachments (Ozcan et al., 2016). When evaluating mothers with psychiatric disorders, their children scored higher in childhood trauma than compared to

children whose mothers did not have psychiatric disorders, and they were found to have more insecure attachment styles and more likely to have been abused (Ozcan et al., 2016).

This suggests that when a mother experiences forms of trauma, such as racial discrimination, it can influence her relationship or how she attaches with her child, which can result in that child growing up with an inability to attach to others or repeating the cycle. Growing up with the inability to attach to others can result in feelings of sadness or loneliness, possibly leading to symptoms of depression (Iyengar et al., 2014). Transferring patterns of insecure attachment across generations can be interrupted by developing active coping strategies of talking to others and exploring the discourse associated with the event. The development of such coping strategies can result in the reconstruction of the attachment shared between parent and child, thus, disrupting the intergenerational cycle (Iyengar et al., 2014).

However, for African Americans, it's often difficult to overcome the transfer of trauma from parents. In addition to the traumatic experiences passed down to them, such as acts of discrimination, childre are faced with their own traumatic experiences tied to their race. Transfers of such trauma are not only passed from parent to child but can come from historically racist sources or personal trauma passed down through families and communities (Osborne et al., 2020). The chattel enslavement of Africans in the U.S. and other countries continues to be a source of traumatic stress for African American communities, forming a collective trauma among them that has been transmitted through generations (Osborne et al., 2020). The historical influence of enslavement, legal segregation, and disenfranchisement

present lasting significance for African Americans across their lives, each aspect adding to the

collective trauma that therefore plays a role in child development outcomes. Thus, the passing of

trauma can be rooted from the family unit itself and also perpetrated by a racist society,

specifically for African Americans and other minority groups that experience discrimination or

oppression. A collective trauma where individuals who never experienced the initial traumatic

experience can still present signs and symptoms of that trauma (Osborne et al., 2020). .

For instance, the victimization of racial discrimination can present itself institutionally

and interpersonally, influencing the sociopolitical lives of African Americans and impacting the

comprehension of political, social, and economic systems that maintain and exaggerate

oppression and injustice to minority groups (Hope et al., 2015). Sociopolitical discrimination is

the process of understanding how political, social, and economic systems work to continue and

strengthen forms of oppression and injustice to disadvantaged groups of people (Hope et al.,

2015). Forceful action is needed to correct systematic inequalities by understanding the roles of

oppression and the creation of privilege that sustains social and individual dysfunction (Hope et

al., 2015). For example, in regard to voting, African Americans have been discouraged to vote

since enslaved Americans were granted citizenship in 1868, which did not translate to the ability

to vote (History.com, 2009). The fifteenth amendment of 1870 allowed male citizens to vote

regardless of race, but states found ways to prevent African Americans from voting by using

tactics such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and the "grandfather clause." This specific clause stated

that a person could only vote if their grandfather had voted. All of these tactics were used to

intimidate African Americans, keep them away from the polls, and create an impossibility for most African American males to vote (History.com, 2009). It was not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, by prohibiting literacy tests and other methods such as intimidation and providing incorrect information to voters (History.com, 2009), that African Americans gained broad access to vote. But African Americans still face barriers to voting power, from gerrymandering to states' creation of new voter ID laws to inaccessible polling place locations and limited hours (History.com, 2009). However, in many instances, such experiences have lasting or influential consequences for African Americans that are gendered, impacting men and women in unique and different ways.

Gender-Based Differences

African American women who face racial discrimination and race-based experiences deem them as traumatic, associating them with specific emotions that impact aspects of their life including pregnancy and motherhood (Powers et. al, 2020). They often experience emotions such as sadness, which can be associated with emotional dysregulation, a risk factor commonly seen with early trauma exposure that research suggests can be associated with maternal trauma experiences (Powers et. al, 2020). Traumatic experiences such as childhood trauma, physical trauma, or experiences that are perceived as life threatening and caused a reaction of horror, fear, or extreme helplessness can influence the way that pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting are experienced (Muzik et al., 2009). Having a history of trauma impacts trust in others and themselves as parents. Mothers who have untreated traumatic symptoms have a higher risk of

medical complications during pregnancy, higher rates of Caesarean section, and excessive fetal growth. Excessive fetal growth is due to high glucose levels in individuals with traumatic shock that can result in macrosomia, which describes a newborn who is larger than average (weighing more than eight pounds) (Muzik et al., 2009). Along with being faced with racial discrimination, African American women also experience discrimination associated with being a woman, and they must become aware of the influence of their traumatic experiences and how those experiences impact not only themselves as parents but also their children.

Intersectionality

Individuals are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of discrimination and oppression based on characteristics that include their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers (Harnois & Ifatunji, 2011). This concept is described as intersectionality, a concept developed by Kimberle Crenshaw to explain the oppression of African American women (Crenshaw, 1989) as both women in a sexist society and African Americans in a racist society.   In evaluating the multidimensionality of African American women's experiences that include both racism and sexism, Crenshaw developed the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) by evaluating legal cases that dealt with the issues of both racial discrimination and sex discrimination: *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors, Moore v Hughes Helicopter, Inc., and Payne v. Travenol.* In each of these cases, Crenshaw argued that the courts appeared to forget that African American women are both black and female, and thus are subject to discrimination based on their race, gender, and often a mixture of both, what

Crenshaw called intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). In essence, African American women experience specific forms of discrimination that African American men or white women may not.

Many of the experiences that African American women face stem from traditional limitations of race and gender discrimination that have lasting influences on their lives in ways that cannot be captured by looking at race or gender in insolation (Crenshaw, 1991). Researchers who have studied oppression within an intersectional framework suggest some forms of discrimination affect men more than women, and some affect women more than men (Harnois & Ifatunji, 2011). For instance, African American men and women face racial and ethnic stereotypes that depend on their gender. African American men must contend with stereotypes such as the lower-class, hyper-sexual 'thug' and the de-sexualized upper-middle-class 'black friend,' while African American women face stereotypes of being single mothers and 'welfare queens' (Harnois & Ifatunji, 2011). Although there are a variety of experiences that African American men and women face, such as racial discrimination, racial identity, stereotypes concerning intelligence, and racial profiling, there is a possibility of gendered racial differences.

The aspect of a 'double jeopardy' that African American women face in a society marked by both racism and sexism stems from eighteenth and nineteenth century America (Harnois & Ifatunji, 2011) where African American women were viewed differently than white women in often profound ways. For instance, there were different valuations of the meaning of birth, where the birth of a white child was viewed as building American society in contrast to the birth

of an African American child, who was viewed more as individual units of labor or additions to the workforce (Harnois & Ifatunji, 2011). Although the discrimination and views of African American women date back to centuries past, it is evident that similar views continue to exist in society today and have been transferred through generations.

Views of society contribute to numerous outcomes that African American women face, including the experiences of perinatal health disparities that are associated with levels of stress tied to the exposure to racism and sexism (Garfield, & Watson-Singleton, 2020). Perinatal stress or stress experienced during pregnancy and postpartum can negatively change maternal endocrine, immune, and nervous systems, impacting the ability to carry a child to term and increasing the likelihood of premature births resulting in infants with low birth weights (Garfield, & Watson-Singleton, 2020). For African American women experiencing a lifetime of stressors as well as stress during pregnancy, the intersectionality of their experiences has both a systematic and individualistic impact on their perinatal health (Garfield, & Watson-Singleton, 2020). In addition, African American women also face stereotypes as 'welfare queen' who use pregnancy and motherhood as an excuse to exploit public assistance resources, which not only contributes to the existing stressors within everyday life but also oppressive stressors that follow them through pregnancy and motherhood (Garfield, & Watson-Singleton, 2020).

African American women are likely to present traumatic stress symptoms in response to racial discrimination (Moody, & Lewis, 2019). The more gendered racial discrimination experienced, the greater the traumatic stress symptoms presented among African American

women (Moody, & Lewis, 2019). African American women who reported experiences of gendered racial discrimination also showed greater internalized gendered racial oppression, indicating how damaging internalized racism can be on mental health (Moody, & Lewis, 2019). In internalizing negative views about their race or gender, African American women are more likely to experience anxiety and other forms of psychological distress (Moody, & Lewis, 2019). Gendered racial discrimination is a challenge that African American women experience subtly on an everyday basis; they have reported being treated as stereotypical 'angry black women' or 'Jezebels' to be silenced and marginalized in workplaces, schools, and other professional settings, along with having assumptions made about the way they speak, their hair, skin tone, their bodies and facial features (Moody, & Lewis, 2019). By internalizing continued experienced challenges mentioned, African American women are likely to experience negative mental health outcomes as well as downplay or accept these forms of discrimination unless they find an active way to cope with these experiences to talk about them, critique them and avoid internalization (Moody, & Lewis, 2019).

Coping Strategies

Racialized trauma in response to racial discrimination can come from a direct experience of racism or vicariously (Carter et al., 2020). For instance, viewing videos of other people facing racism, such as brutal police killings of African Americans, can cause traumatic stress reactions to those who view them. Along with aspects of vicarious traumatic stressors, African Americans most commonly face direct traumatic stressors that involve living in a society

of institutional racism or being the victim of individual racist attacks (Carter et al., 2020). African Americans tend to internalize the negative emotions related to racialized traumatic experiences, presented in their rates of depression, suggesting that depression is a common reaction to such experiences regardless of whether a stress reaction is triggered (Carter et al., 2020).

The internalization of negative emotions can lead to the use of coping strategies that men and women can experience and practice differently. Women were more likely to use active coping strategies that include talking to others and trying to do something in response to racial discrimination than men (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). Although there is no difference in frequency of racial discrimination, there is significant difference in the type of discriminatory experiences that influence why women take active coping pathways and men are more passive in their coping strategies (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). For example, men have a greater likelihood of experiencing racially motivated assaults than women, such as racial profiling, and they are more likely to be the victims of police brutality (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). This leads to acceptance of such experiences as the way the world works or allowing these experiences to take place without resistance out of fear of eliciting more violence (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). In contrast, women are more likely to face experiences of race and gender-based discrimination such as tokenization, involving the offering of opportunities strictly as a gesture of presenting equality with the workplace (Dickens et al., 2019). African American women often cope with tokenized experiences by consciously or unconscious code shifting, changing their language or

cultural behaviors in certain situations such as with co-workers and presenting their true selves to friends and family (Dickens et al., 2019). African American women's experiences of tokenism and racialized gendered socialization motivating them to engage in identity shifting presents a possible association to why women are more likely to actively cope with these experiences by being aware of the stressors of such experiences and attempt to reduce the negative outcomes by seeking support (Dickens et al., 2019; Polanco-Roman et al., 2016).

Actively coping with experiences of race and gender-based discrimination for African American women is also associated with the unique coping process specific to African Americans, including reliance on family and community, cooperation, achievement, belief in hard work and the belief in religion that includes prayer (Thomas et al., 2008). Using these various coping strategies for racism such as overachieving, praying, or relying on social support stem from a lack of or restricted coping options available that leave African Americans in search of alternate ways to manage racism (Thomas et al., 2008). When it comes to discrimination associated with gender, African American women are more likely to remain silent and accept the discrimination as a norm than white women (Thomas et al., 2008). African American women are also more likely to avoid the problem of discrimination and less likely to seek social support which plays a negative role on their self-esteem and life satisfaction (Thomas et al., 2008). African American women who did report attempting to cope with racism and sexism relied on both internal and external sources (Thomas et al., 2008). Sources of internal coping involved spirituality, reporting the benefit it was for their ancestors (Thomas et al., 2008). External

sources included social support that led to strategies of decreasing the influence of racism and

sexism by altering their speech and contact with others, avoiding negative situations and being

assertive (Thomas et al., 2008). This particular study found that experiences of gendered racism

were related to ineffective coping strategies associated with an increase in psychological distress

(Thomas et al., 2008).

Looking Toward the Future

Moving forward, it is vital to understand the lasting impact of racial discrimination that

African Americans continually experience resulting in consequences that follow them

throughout the course of their life (Hope et al., 2015). An understanding of the mental and

physical disparities associated with forms of discrimination can help bring awareness and

active change to effectively help African Americans (Hope et al., 2015). Beginning in childhood,

racial discrimination alters the formation of positive development, increasing the importance

of African American parents and caregivers to transfer racial socialization messages that

promote the importance of understanding race, coping strategies, realities of racial oppression,

along with racial pride (Hope et al., 2015). By understanding discrimination and ways to

recognize the consequential outcomes that follow, it can lead to not just individual but collective

resistance to reduce the frequency and severity of the negative outcomes of discrimination

(Schmitt et. al., 2014). Helping to form active coping strategies among both African American

men and women more effectively promotes wellbeing in the individual and effects social change

by participating in collective action to increase feelings of empowerment (Schmitt et. al., 2014).

We need to build and resource culturally competent customized care for trauma survivors and their offspring to help African Americans effectively persevere (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019; Doucet & Rovers, 2010). In addition, an understanding of the differences between African American men and women in relation to discrimination experiences and the difference between their lasting outcomes is vital to acknowledging the importance of intersecting identities and the ongoing fight for overall equality (Harnois & Ifatunji, 2011). The intersection of racial and gender discrimination and the complex role it has on the experiences of African American women is a topic in need of investigation, to understand the unique experience they face in a society that values neither of their identities and fails to validate and acknowledge the various ways to cope with the pain associated with surviving as an African American Woman (Moody, & Lewis, 2019; Thomas et al., 2008).

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CONTACT IMPROVISATION DURING THE #MeToo ERA: FOSTERING A SAFER AND MORE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR PRACTITIONERS

Kari Hoglund

In the words of Steve Paxton, founder of Contact Improvisation, "If you're dancing physics, you're dancing Contact [Improvisation]. If you're dancing chemistry, you're doing something else" (Steve Paxton 1987). Commonly referred to as CI, Contact Improvisation is a physical and intimate dance form founded by Steve Paxton in 1972 focusing on the physical principles of touch, momentum, balance, shared weight, and most importantly, a shared point of contact between two or more movers using skin to skin proprioception as a means of communication. The result is often a duet dance in which two bodies improvise rolling, falling, spiraling, "flying" and locomotion through space while remaining connected through touch.

CI can occur in a class setting to refine technical skills or in a "jam" setting which refers to an organized, collective improvisation session in an open space dedicated to experimentation and play. Different from a class, a CI jam typically has minimal supervision with looser etiquette, including freedom to enter and exit the space, dance with whomever wherever, or to sit back and watch the corporeal landscape when chosen. However, in a physical and intimate dance form like Contact Improvisation, the moment that line between physics and chemistry is crossed is when the artistry can be replaced by harassment. Although physical touch is essential to humanity, where do we draw that line in experimental work like CI that pushes those boundaries? How can practitioners clearly distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors to novice improvisers that will help guide CI into a future filled with comfort and safety? Evidently, the beginners are not always the perpetrators who are in need of clarification

as the patriarchy relevant in today's society can directly reflect in most CI settings, leaving gaps in the regular attendance once occupied by marginalized women.

The CI community has been dealing with issues revolving around the hyper-sexualization of this dance form for decades now, but it wasn't until the #MeToo movement, a notable social media movement birthed in late 2017, that victims began to openly share their stories, find courage to "out" predators, and take greater action to revolutionize standards when practicing and teaching the extreme physicality and intimacy of CI. Within recent years, facilitators, teachers, scholars, and CI enthusiasts have taken serious measures to inform newcomers of what is deemed appropriate in a CI jam, class, and workshop setting, thus restructuring and enhancing the future of CI.

One crucial component of CI is physical contact, hence the name: Contact Improvisation, and physical contact is innate to human connection. Most human beings thrive on touch as it causes the release of oxytocin and an increase in dopamine and serotonin levels, all natural chemicals that help induce optimism, stress relief, and an overall "feel good" sensation. Those whose lives are absent of touch can suffer major consequences such as stress, depression, and inability to connect with others (Keltner). In fact, infants who are raised with inadequate physical contact commonly experience "impaired growth and cognitive development, as well as an elevated incidence of serious infections and attachment disorders" (Ardiel and Rankin). When movers engage in CI, a sensation, "...occurs due to a combination of

the level of touch and exercise-exertion involved in the practice" (Rea), the same way it would in a gesture as simple as a pat on the back to the full body experience of a hug.

The ability to touch and therefore react to sensations is imperative to CI allowing a heightened form of spatial awareness to develop over time. In *Chute*, an early demonstration video featuring and narrated by Steve Paxton, Paxton describes the sensibility of the skin in three dimensional space. As he narrates, the film depicts a female dancer launching her body towards the torso of a male dancer who then, using her momentum, spins both bodies around in space. As he completes one revolution, the female's body is dropped just inches from the floor to be swiftly caught by the male as they both gracefully roll to the floor, limbs flailing. As this performance takes place, Paxton describes the skin as a sensor in a spherical space:

> The sphere is an accumulated image gathered from several senses, vision being one as if quickly looking in all directions gives me an image of what it might be like to have a visual surface all over my body instead of skin. But skin is the best source for the image because it works in all directions at once. If we could turn the skin off we would appreciate it much more, but the skin works most of the time as an automatic pilot. The conscious mind is alerted if unusual stimulation appears on the surface of the body but I don't notice the touch of my clothes or my weight in a chair most of the time (Chute).

This type of dance involving a jolting movement such as dropping to the floor or hurtling through the air is extremely common in CI but cannot be safely executed without a keen sense of awareness of the surrounding space; the male was able to catch the female before she hit the ground due to his heightened sensitivity to his spatial surroundings.

In CI dances like the one previously described, many practitioners have followed what is referred to as the First Rule or Only Rule of CI. This "rule" states that when dancing CI, one must take care of themselves first. By adhering to the First Rule, both dancers in *Chute* knew their limits, what stunts they could do, or how comfortable they were with contact all while staying aware that each variable is constantly changing. The female dancer was not completely relying on her partner to catch her and was prepared to fall at any moment. Through a corporeal language, the dancers were able to communicate their needs and comfort level, assuming there was clear consent given prior from both individuals; examples of nonverbal consensual cues include melting the body into a partner or using momentum to assist in a lift versus stiffening and pulling away or making the body heavy to avoid contact or an unwanted lift (Keogh).

Superficially, the first rule seems completely logical. By taking care of oneself first, one is able to let go of unreasonable concerns that may hinder a partnered dance as well as allow for freedom to explore limits and navigate risks. However, in most cases prior to the #MeToo movement, the first rule has been used on its own. Without elaboration and a space for clarification, the first rule puts the responsibility on potential victim-survivors to police others' behaviors toward them. Instead, prioritizing communal safety and comfort while considering personal wellbeing as secondary would aid the prevention of unwanted behavior.

The winter/spring 2019 edition of dance journal, *Contact Quarterly*, includes Michele Beaulieux's thought provoking essay, *How the First Rule Brought #MeToo to Contact Improvisation*, inspired by a disruption that took place at the West Coast Contact Improvisation Jam (wcciJAM)

in 2018: "Twelve people sat in the middle of the dance floor at the Saturday evening jam and told

their stories of harassment, assault, marginalization, and invisibility in CI" (Beaulieux 46). This

group was made up of both men and women who evoked discussion about the diminishing

number of predominantly female attendees at jams through the use of informational signs and

even a megaphone. Beaulieux describes this absence of females thus:, "The concept of negative

space—the space around and between the subjects of a picture [that] can help us look at who is

not in the CI community," (46). Due to non consensual touch by males who are gifted with power

and privilege from society, many female participants have withdrawn from the CI community,

leaving detrimental holes in the community's population.

The first rule in union with the power structure prevalent in today's patriarchal society

has allowed predatorial men to take advantage of what should be considered a safe haven for

curious artists. In *How the First Rule Brought #MeToo to Contact Improvisation*, Beaulieux

acknowledges the varying degrees of privilege that individuals have: "While we all have

privileges, some of us have more privileges and, thus, more power than others. We do not come

to CI on equal footing. The privileged are more likely to violate, and men bring their societal

privilege into CI spaces" (47). This is where that line between physics and chemistry becomes

blurry and sexual harassment and assault can occur.

The first rule encourages the invitation of privilege and power because it stresses the

responsibility of the dancer to say "no" rather than the responsibility to not overstep boundaries

in the first place. When a female participant feels violated by a dominating partner, the onus

tends to fall on the victim-survivor whether she reports the incident or not. If she does report the incident to a supervisor, she will most likely be the one asked to leave the setting until the perpetrator is approached and the situation is handled (Beaulieux 49).

Another common response to an incident report is victim blaming where the victim-survivors will be blamed for their passivity at the time the incident occurred. Not only does this invalidate a victim-survivor's experience but it also doesn't account for the time it takes to process these traumatic experiences. It is possible for a participant to leave a dance feeling content until, in later reflection, they realize something happened that caused discomfort. The fight-flight-freeze response is commonly used when referencing reaction to fear, but it doesn't stop there. Another response to fear common among women is fawning. A fawning response is one that attempts to keep peace and avoid conflict even if it means abandoning personal preferences, thoughts, and needs. Beaulieux says, "Asserting boundaries in a forthright manner is not fun and may be particularly difficult for women who have been socialized to please, who have reason to fear male anger, and whose voices and trust have been repeatedly disrespected... Telling dancers to take care of themselves in a high-touch environment is like telling women not to go out at night" (48-49). As a result of the prevalence of victim blaming, victim-survivors are less likely to report an incident and more likely to completely remove themselves from the CI community, a decision which ironically supports the existing patriarchal power structure.

To avoid the unwanted experiences associated with the first rule, CI practitioners have created various guidelines to clarify appropriate behaviors in CI jam settings. CI practitioner and activist, Kathleen Rea, attempted to create a set of guidelines as specific as possible that left little room for misinterpretation. Her guidelines included details such as, "Do not intentionally caress another dancer on their breasts or genitals," and, "Non-consensual pass-by pokes, kisses, tickles, caresses, massages or pats while dancing or passing by someone in the studio or hallway will not be tolerated" (Rea). Rea sarcastically simplifies what she intended to relay through her guidelines when she writes,

> I just want to dance with a group of people on Wednesday nights in Toronto for an hour and a half and have it clearly understood that my vagina is not to [be] grabbed or caressed. And please as well don't touch me elsewhere unless it is consensual. So, don't come up from behind me when I can't see who you are and tickle the small of my back or give me a massage. I want to dance with a group of people that generally understand these agreements (Rea).

When she published these guidelines, Rea received unexpected backlash from primarily men within the gender balanced community. Complaints about her guidelines included that they were taking away people's rights, not trusting the form of contact improvisation, insulting the attendees, drawing more attention to these unwanted behaviors and causing them to happen more often, letting feminist rhetoric taint the contact improvisation world, and taking the fun out of the dance (Rea). Understandably, Rea felt threatened by the aggressive tones underlying many of the complaints and unfortunately was continually provoked by male dancers in her community following this bold action.

While the ideology of the first rule has been used in CI since its adolescence, the term had not been coined until recent years. The #MeToo movement now shines a light on the rule's flaws when standing alone, and has motivated CI participants like Kathleen Rea to modify guidelines of the standard CI jam, class, or workshop that accommodates for what the rule leaves out. A skill in fending off sexual encounters should not be a prerequisite for practicing in CI. CI welcomes all bodies of every level and skill. Instead of creating an atmosphere influenced by a singular rule that asks people to defend their own boundaries, the comfort and safety of participants would be elevated by adding to the first rule by prioritizing the care of the community as a whole versus its individuals.

CI practitioners like Chisa Hidaka and her colleagues in the NYC contact improvisation community are a prime example of advocates who have successfully instigated refinement in their CI community. After a concerning incident was brought to attention by a long term community member, the formation of a women's group had been requested to gain support. The victim-survivor had experienced victim blaming and "felt that she had been interrogated and accused as if she might have given mixed signals or that what she was reporting wasn't entirely true" (Hidaka). Upon request, the newly formed women's group created a new set of guidelines for the local jams. After several community editorial meetings, a formal document labeled *Welcome Document* was created as a way to inform newcomers of appropriate jam behaviors.

At the top of the *Welcome Document* underneath a welcome statement is an underlined sentence directing newcomers to meet the facilitator. In an interview with Chisa Hidaka, she

explained, "We wanted to create a document that helps people talk and ask questions. If a newcomer did nothing else but read the first line and meet the facilitator, we thought this would be the minimum that the document had to accomplish." Below the introduction sentence is a quote defining CI by Steve Paxton, followed by a statement: "Rehearsals, extended teaching, or sexual exploration are inappropriate in this space." Next there is a numbered list answering the question, "How is Contact Improvisation practiced in this jam?" The answers to the following are 1) We listen to and respect our partners. 2) We take care of ourselves. 3) We support a *focused* jam environment. Hidaka adds,

> Listen is the first principle. Taking care of ourselves is second. Some of the reasons for this were the same as what is written in [How the First Rule Brought #MeToo to Contact Improvisation]. Beyond that, though, we also felt that CI is above all a practice of listening, and that the best way to prevent problems is for people to listen to each other. The back of the double sided sheet lists various learning and practice skills, appropriate clothing, grooming and hygiene, references, and a concluding statement inviting comments and suggestions to improve the living document.

Although this document might just be two pages long, it has the potential to prevent intolerable behaviors by simply specifying what was originally the five worded rule of "take care of yourself first." CI facilitators and teachers all over have adopted methods similar to creating the *Welcome Document* to adapt to the progressive reformation taking place in our society. In an interview with Texas Christian University (TCU) dance faculty member and veteran CI/improvisation teacher, Dr. Nina Martin, Dr. Martin describes her flexible style of teaching to accommodate for students who have experienced any form of sexual harassment or trauma and

are easily triggered in a physical setting like CI. Nationally, sexual assault on college campuses is a serious epidemic. Between 20-25% of college women are victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault (*Office of Sexual Assault Prevention & Response*). According to Dr. Martin, since the #MeToo movement, students have become more aware of the severity of the issue. When handling triggered students, she allows them to modify class how they please and direct their own learning.

Along with teaching at TCU, Martin also organizes the annual Texas Dance Improvisation Festival. To begin a jam or workshop, she first reviews the festival's reporting system by identifying jam organizers in colored shirts who are responsible for incident reports. Before dancing, Martin makes sure to address what is considered inappropriate behavior in the setting as well as staying open to answering any and all questions. Martin's opening ritual is fairly standard among various CI communities. In a community jam held at Oberlin College in 2018, approximately 1,200 miles from TCU, similar practices occurred before and during the jam. Guidelines were posted welcoming guests as they entered sporadically throughout the day, student facilitators responsible for incident reports wore white tape Xs on their shirts, and a discussion about consent in CI took place. Whether these pre-jam practices were influenced by the #MeToo movement or have been continually included in certain standard jam layouts for years, creating space for these important conversations is key to eliminating confusion and establishing safe boundaries. Other CI teachers such as Anya Cloud believe that the #MeToo movement "is facilitating some space for more transparent questioning/discourse of patriarchy,

white supremacy, and heteronormativity that can be quite pervasive in the CI community"
(Cloud).

The #MeToo movement has stirred up stimulating and controversial topics of discussion
that have been crucial for the gradual reformation of nonconsensual and inappropriate behavior
within the CI community. It has given women strength, pride, courage, and power over the past
three-and-a-half years to take back the physicality in CI while leaving behind the chemistry or
sexuality. As a straight, white, cisgender 22 year old female dance student, I can fortunately say
I have little experience with boundary issues in a CI setting as I rarely branch out of academia;
however, I was quite naive before my inquiry into the hyper-sexualization of CI and the consent
culture of its community. Lacking this knowledge would have put me more at risk of sexual
harassment in a field I plan to devote my life to, like the many other marginalized women who
have permanently removed themselves from the CI community. As an avid CI practitioner and
novice facilitator, I am capable of sharing these stories and documents I have collected and am
excited to take part in the advocacy of consent within a CI setting and beyond.

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Karin Hoglund is a recent graduate of SRU with a BFA degree in dance. She is an avid improviser and thinker who strives to promote accessibility, inclusivity, and approachability in her artwork. Her research on consent culture began in the spring of 2019 as a simple research project for a class and has evolved into a passion and pursuit that she continues to integrate into her daily life.

Using Mentoring and Critical Communication Pedagogy: Approaches in Mentoring Students with Physical Disabilities in the College Classroom.

Anthony Esposito and Ronald Raymond

One of the most significant challenges for educators mentoring students at American universities is listening to and hearing individuals' voices from special populations, among them students with physical disabilities. Ahmet and Trebing (2018) state, "Historically speaking, students from special populations were mostly referred to as 'at-risk students' because they were seen as having deficits or risk factors which needed to be remedied" (p. 2). One such population misrepresented is the population of students with physical disabilities. It is vitally important that college professors acknowledge their students with disabilities and their life experiences, which differ from their non-disabled peers. According to Grue (2011), "There is little doubt that disability, taken as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, exhibits many of the features that are displayed by many of the canonical topics of discourse research, such as racism and gender" (p. 534). Discussion and empathetic reflection enable professors to serve as mentors who value the contributions of students with disabilities. As communication professors, we try to establish a bond with our students with disabilities, which allows us to help guide them inside and outside the confines of the university or college classroom.

To reach the goal of mentoring students with disabilities, we must incorporate critical communication pedagogy (CCP) into the courses we teach and the interactions we have. Critical communication pedagogy is described as a means of exploring what people know, what powers contribute to this understanding, and how this knowledge is organized within the context of

schooling (Fassett & Warren, 2007; Kahl, 2011; Rudick & Golsan, 2014). The task of understanding all kinds of diverse student stories, and the specific populations they may belong to, must be a central theme in our courses. Yep (2007) emphasized this approach to critical pedagogy when he said we must create a classroom that "is characterized by pedagogical interactions based on the belief that every voice (or perspective) deserves a hearing" (p. 95).

This essay focuses on how educators can address diversity and invite students with disabilities to articulate their voices while teaching classes predominantly composed of non-disabled students through faculty mentoring. The structure for mentoring students with physical disabilities could also benefit from mentoring other marginalized groups, such as those affected by race, class, gender, or sexual orientation. Buell (2004) expounds on the significance of a mentor by saying, "Mentor, consequently, became the inspiration for the term mentoring, which is defined for this study as the process of one person supporting, teaching, leading, and serving as a model for another person" (p. 56). We will be focusing on the following points for this essay. First, the definition of a marginalized population will be studied, especially looking at the culture of students with disabilities. Second, we will discuss the importance of mentorship with marginalized populations. Third, as professors, we will consider assignments and interpersonal encounters that invite students with disabilities to express and be heard by the majority who may be unaware of the issues faced daily by members of this community. These goals can be achieved by incorporating critical communication pedagogy into both mentoring and teaching practices. According to Fassett and Warren (2007), "Critical

communication pedagogy takes as a central principle a commitment to questioning taken-for-granted, sedimented ways of thinking" (p. 100). Mainly, this type of paradigm-shifting behavior benefits college professors desiring to understand the population of students with disabilities clearly.

Marginalized Populations and Students with Physical Disabilities

The term marginalized populations can be seen as a discursive term that includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and students with disabilities. Atay and Trebing (2018) define it "as an umbrella term for any student who tends to be unrepresented on college campuses and has a very specific set of unique needs" (p. 3). This definition certainly highlights students with physical disabilities. About fifty-four million Americans, or 19% of the United States, experience either a physical or mental disability. 3.3 million Americans use wheelchairs (World Health Organization, 2018). This is an important demographic that must be highlighted in our pedagogical approaches within our respective college classrooms. For example, in Pennsylvania, Edinboro University, where the authors teach, has supported students with disabilities for over 40 years. The Office of Students with Disabilities supplies many services such as note-taking, transportation, and home health care to students with both mental and physical disabilities. Edinboro University was ranked #46 out of 50 colleges or universities that excel in teaching students with disabilities (www.edinboro.edu). Therefore, being professors at Edinboro University for decades, we have experienced teaching students with physical disabilities, especially in wheelchairs, in our respective courses.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1988 defined special populations within six categories in the United States. These included individuals with economic disadvantages, limited English proficiency, disabilities, and single parent or displaced homemakers (U.S. Congress, 1998). Therefore, a clear rationale is present to include students with physical disabilities. The Americans with Disability Act, established in 1990, aimed to provide equal rights and access to people with disabilities. Braithwaite & Labreque (1994) say, "First ADA says that access for persons with disabilities is no longer an act of benevolence; access is a right" (P. 2). These equal rights still seem to be an issue within our society, especially in the portrayal and stereotypes of people with physical disabilities. There seem to be high levels of uncertainty between both groups when they are involved in necessary interpersonal communication. This is undoubtedly important in our courses. Specifically, Brathwaite and Labreque (1994) state, "Yet both existing research and our interactions with able-bodied and disabled persons suggest that the process of interacting with persons who are disabled is very troublesome for many able-bodied individuals" (3). This apprehension between both demographics creates an opportunity for professors to bridge the gap with interactions and exercises between the groups, which will enable both groups to negate some of the cognitive dissonance that so often accompanies exchanges.

Often, the unique population of wheelchair or physically disabled students feels out of place in the traditional college classroom. According to Blockmans (2015), "Often people with impairments are viewed as helpless, unproductive, passive, burdensome, hypersensitive,

childlike, that is, clashing with the socio-cultural ideas of independence, beauty, and marketability which are highly valued in Western society" (160). These negative stereotypes create a stigma that students with physical disabilities are different from able-bodied students. By highlighting both mentorship and Critical Communication Pedagogy, we attempt to create a dialogue within our classes about disability that destigmatizes it.

The discipline of communication has been negligent in studying students with physical disabilities within the college classroom. Searching *Communication Abstracts*, we found 170 articles, either dealing with physical or mental disabilities. However, when pursuing this research, the studies on teaching students with physical disabilities, especially those in wheelchairs, seem to be scant in a discipline that purports to understand and study students from marginalized populations. The existing research within the communication discipline fails to meet the pedagogical needs of professors and students with physical disabilities within the academy. This is a trend that needs to be rectified. This exigence needs to be addressed within our research highlighting disability studies within our field. Our objective in this essay is to highlight how both CCP and mentorship, if appropriately implemented into our classes, can assist in the creation of a space and a classroom culture where physically disabled students' voices are heard and respected in predominantly able-bodied classrooms.

Mentoring Through Effective Interpersonal Communication

Braithwaite (1991) is one of the few scholars who deal mainly with the communication patterns of students who use wheelchairs. I was only able to find eight studies that highlighted

physical disabilities. According to Buell (2004), "Despite the abundance of research on mentoring, the distinctively communicative nature of the mentoring process has received limited attention from scholars" (59). We hope to provide others a template which may negate some of the cognitive dissonances between professors, students using wheelchairs, and non-disabled students, highlighting the relationship of mentorship and the connection to students with physical disabilities.

We teach such classes as Public Speaking, Argumentation and Debate, Interpersonal Communication, Human Communication and Modern Society, and Intercultural Communication. In some of these classes, physical mobility and movement might enhance student presentations. However, some of our students in wheelchairs might have difficulty working with their hands in a hands-on class or moving their heads or hands in a public speaking course, thus providing us an opportunity to mentor them in a way that might differ from able-bodied students. However, though mentoring marginalized students can contribute in significant ways to their success, some universities still believe mentoring is not as important as research or teaching. Mentoring exists in a space between the formal instruction that we do in the classroom and advising; thus, it is often unrecognized or not formally counted in the road toward tenure, promotion, or retention of full or part-time faculty (Calaffel 2007).

Most students expect their instructor to demonstrate a degree of personal warmth and approach (Witt & Schrodt, 2006)., but students who are wheelchair users can be impacted by a lack of empathy and understanding in the classroom. The importance of being a mentor to a

student from a unique community is the focus on understanding parts of the cultural landscape of the student from this population. Caleffel (2007) says, "Thus from a critical perspective, a deeper and more nuanced understanding of mentoring must include not only a focus on professional development, but also the potential for it to be guided by social justice" (2). Social justice, especially understanding some of the obstacles facing wheelchair users at universities, must be a central theme in the mentoring relationship between professors and students. We hope to give our students a voice both in and outside of the classroom. This should be a goal of mentorship between professors and students from differing backgrounds. Mentorship should enable students from marginalized populations to express their views and have their perspectives valued and respected. This could include, as it relates to students in wheelchairs, the chance to present their voices in class through readings, movies, or Ted Talks that address the experiences, joys, challenges and culture of wheelchair use. Meeting with students with disabilities outside of class enables us to discuss how their disability impacts their day-to-day experience. Additionally, talking with them about research within the communication discipline allows both the instructor and student to connect based on the academic literature highlighting this discursive cultural community.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of a mentorship relationship. Farmer (2015) provides a clear rationale for communication and mentorship by saying, "Communication is a crucial element of mentoring, and effective communication is considered a hallmark of effective mentor relationships. As such, the mentoring literature is replete with empathic statements

about the singular importance of communication in mentoring, which is first and foremost an interpersonal relationship" (138).

This is a central and needed skill with professors that mentor students with physical disabilities. One example might be to sometimes kneel, so we are on the level with our students, enabling eye contact and facial expression to provide a fuller mode of interpersonal communication hopefully. Some of our students may have limited nonverbal movements, including, but not limited to, hand gestures, head movement, and extended facial features. Therefore, we might change how we communicate with our students. Overall, Edinboro University is user-friendly to wheelchair students, including ramps, transportation, and health care services to this unique community, but as professors, we can extend these accommodations using CCP.

We must make our offices user-friendly when students visit for guidance, ensuring their wheelchairs fit in the office and that we provide practical interpersonal communication skills, both verbally and nonverbally, during these communication interactions. Often, students with physical disabilities see themselves being compared to abled-bodied students from within myriad negative media portrayals. As noted by Burns (2016), "Another issue has to do with the fact that traditionally disability has been framed by the media in ways that promote negative stereotypes" (p. 221). As mentors, we must be aware of both these prejudices and stereotypes, so we are open and not dogmatic to students with disabilities in our courses. In these instances,

mentorship means, as it pertains to the classroom, integrating readings, movies, and/or class discussions that destigmatize ableist perspectives and decenters majority assumptions.

A successful mentoring relationship between professor and student will require a large amount of trust, vulnerability, empathy, and critical thought and analysis. We rely on Buell (2004) when he says, "The Nurturing Model represents a mentoring cycle in which a mentor fulfills some of the functions of a parent figure, creating a safe, open environment in which the mentee can both learn and try things for him or herself" (65). This definition is undoubtedly part of the template to connect mentors and disabled students in our academic teaching, writing, and advising. Certainly, mentoring is essential to all college students, but it is even more critical for students who face structural bias in their day-to-day lives.

CRITICAL COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY AND MENTORSHIP IN THE CLASSROOM

Mentoring as a form of critical communication pedagogy allows professors to use tools that connect the voices of marginalized students with other students in our courses — in this instance, using CCP to unite their voices. According to Esposito and Raymond (2018), "The philosophy of critical pedagogy was established by Freire (1970), whose seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, launched the beginning stages of the term and addressed its political and racial relationships to teaching discursive student populations" (134). In sum, Freire (1970) felt the teaching paradigm was inept at the time because of the traditional model as a "banking concept of education" (72).

Students must feel that our pedagogical approaches resonate with them, especially if they come from the frame of reference of a marginalized population. Specifically, CCP, as a teaching tool, allows us to highlight the voices of wheelchair users by employing the voices of unique communities through class readings, discussions, and speeches. Warren (2009) emphasizes the importance of CCP when he writes, "As such, critical communication pedagogy is hopeful in part because it builds on the long-standing tradition of making education a site where one learns not only content, but ways of being critically reflexive citizens of the world" (5).   Since most of our students are able-bodied, our job is to bring in academic articles, nonfiction books, or movies, where the focus is on what some describe as a "wheelchair culture." In certain of these instances, our goal as both a mentor and professor is to explore both the differences and similarities between disabled and non-disabled students. In sum, the main emphasis of our courses is to incorporate and value different modes of communication practices.

Students who have access to and take for granted structural privilege (especially ableist privilege) often minimize, ignore or disparage the voices of marginalized students. For this reason, a main emphasis of our courses is to create dialogue around students' lived experiences as an opportunity to diminish biases and preconceptions and to normalize the experiences of disabled students.   Our vision is to construct our classes as a community which respects and values all experiences, including verbal and nonverbal interactions. Kressen-Griep and Witt (2015) expound on the importance of both communication and mentoring when they state, "Though it usually occurs in organizational contexts and satisfies certain psychological needs,

mentoring ultimately is an interpersonal accomplishment whose success relies on participants' communication abilities" (2).

In past classes, we have found that integrating both books and movies that address the experiences of people with physical disabilities impact courses dealing with culture and differences, especially courses such as Interpersonal and Intercultural communication. Ott and Burghchardt (2013) provide an obvious rationale for employing book and movies by stating, "The development of critical consciousness depends on creating and promoting opportunities for students to see themselves as active social agents, engage and interpret texts in relation to their lived experiences, and struggle meaningfully to connect and understand texts within larger social contexts" (16).

One issue we have had to address directly is the discomfort experienced by some students who identify as nondisabled. How can this problem be rectified? Should it fall upon either demographic? Though it is unfair to place the responsibility for addressing bias on marginalized and oppressed groups, as Braithwaite and Labreque (1994) note, "Persons with disability themselves report that they recognize that it will most often fall to them to do something to relieve uncomfortable situations" (5). This seems like an important area requiring immediate rectification, meaning the interaction should be reciprocal between disabled and non-disabled participants.

Critical Communication Pedagogy and Film

Zembylas and Boler (2002) state, "A pedagogy of discomfort…offers direction for emancipatory education through its recognition that effective analysis of ideology requires not only rational inquiry and dialogue but also excavation of the emotional investments that underlie any ideological commitment such as patriotism. A pedagogy of discomfort invites students to engage the ambiguous ethical and moral differences" (2). This quote resonates with what we are attempting to enact in our classes, primarily through selected texts. We believe in achieving both critical thinking and understanding between students, which will give able-bodied students a deeper understanding of how ableism is created, maintained and potentially challenged. It invites not only disabled students a forum to share their experiences and perspectives but an opportunity for students who identify as nondisabled to recognize their access to structural privileges. One way to do that, as noted, is through the materials we teach, which might also include films that study society from a disability frame of reference, such as *Bleed for This* (2016), *Stronger* (2017), *The Theory of Everything* (2014), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Forrest Gump* (1994), and *Murderball* (2004).

The biggest obstacle we have faced is abled-bodied students' perceptions of students in wheelchairs. Darke (2003) shows this continued negative portrayal of disability when he says, "The representation of disability in the media in the last ten years is pretty much the same as it has always been: clichéd, stereotyped and archetypical" (100). How can we show that the voices and experiences of students who use wheelchairs are much more rich, nuanced and diverse than those typically shown in media representations? As we have discussed, integrating

readings, film, and video which includes those rich, nuanced and diverse experiences is critical. This can include examination and destigmatization of lived realities for some wheelchair users (i.e. challenges they may face, such as dressing and feeding themselves, self-care aids, transportation, and note-taking) as well as the experience of acquired disability. Analyzing these distinctions breaks down a monolithic view of "disability" and creates space for difference among wheelchair users, an essential step in negating ableism.

One particular film that seems to resonate with students is *Murderball*, a documentary film about paraplegic athletes who compete in Olympic Wheelchair basketball. Since Edinboro University has a wheelchair basketball team on campus, the film seems to resonate with all class demographics, especially our students with physical disabilities. Areas addressed in the film include how different athletes function in their wheelchairs, stereotypes they navigate, the question of congenital as opposed to acquired paraplegia, and their sex lives. This movie highlights the normalness of this culture, mainly through a focus on interpersonal relationships. Bringing out the lived voices of people in wheelchairs becomes a vital teaching tool for this film, important because as Reynolds (2017) notes, "a vast range of medical thinking and communication about disability is based not on its lived experience, but on misguided aversion to or fear of it" (150). The narratives in *Murderball* address more than just pain, suffering, or misfortune. This movie shows the lived experiences of people in wheelchairs who live happy and productive lives.

Griffin (2012) writes, "An ethic of care rooted in critical love supports humanization, dialogue, and strong emotions such as fear, frustration, and anger. This type of love recognizes the pride and pain of humanness at the intersection of complex identities" (216). This is the approach we hope to emulate by using film as a pedagogical tool to teach our students. Employing *Murderball* as a form of both mentorship and CCP enables us to have honest discussions regarding stereotypes of the wheelchair community and provides opportunities for physically disabled students to share various aspects of their discursive culture in class discussions to highlight the pluralistic voices too often silenced in classes where the focus is on an able-bodied population. In *Murderball*, there are many instances in which the individuals tell sad stories about being paralyzed after being able-bodied for most of their lives. The movie doesn't gloss over the sufferings as the members of this team discuss losing their independence. This is a critical perspective, which allows the class to observe the pains and difficult adjustments some of their classmates may have experienced when they became paralyzed due to accidents. In this instance, the movie would escalate the perceptions and stereotypes of pain. Reynolds (2017) explains this point by stating, "Wherever operative, the ableist conflation flattens communication about disability to communication about pain, suffering, hardship, disadvantage, morbidity, and mortality" (152). This is certainly evident in the movie as these young men attempt to grasp a life that they did not want. But the film resists a primary focus on pain and it avoids a kind of "super-crip" narrative by retaining a focus on the men's lives as complex, full and often joyous.

Our role as both mentors and professors is to include the voices of all of our students. According to Griffin (2012), "I like the image of growing into (and even exceeding) mentoring because it implies a constantly changing process. It implies, or requires, openness-to process, to people, to putting your body on the line not for another but with another" (46). This changing process may make us and the students uncomfortable in certain instances. Still, as discussed, sometimes a "discomfort pedagogy" is necessary to effect change.

Real-life and sometimes humorous experiences are also discussed in the documentary. In one clip, an individual discusses how people come to him in a parking lot by his car and ask if he needs assistance. He replies,"Why would I need help? Can't you see I drove myself to the store?" These types of exchanges challenge ableist assumptions about need and independence. There is also a humorous scene in the movie where members of the team are gathered in a bar drinking and having fun. One team membe, who has a beautiful woman sitting on his lap while in his wheelchair, looks into the camera and says, "Women pity me, so I have sex all of the time." Though this scene may reinforce a pity narrative which informs ableism, many students laugh at this interaction. After the movie is completed, we discuss the film at length, and in many instances, students who use wheelchairs use the film to talk about themselves as active individuals who have overcome the odds of being in college and living away from home. In other words, they frame their stories not in terms of pity or pain but in terms of power and resilience. Dorrow (2013) observes that "Persons with disabilities share a common bond of

experiences and resilience" (33), and this concept becomes an essential point for discussion and insight during class discussions.

We believe in what critical pedagogical thinker bell hooks (2001) says: "The choice to love is a choice to connect -- to find ourselves in the other" (93). This connection can be accomplished through caring mentorship in and outside the classroom. This type of mentoring approach is or should be a part of all of our university courses seeking to embrace diverse voices, especially those that are marginalized. Warren (2009) shows the importance of this when he says: "Regardless of the context of action, what counts is how one engages—the effort to see the self and other as complex beings, each striving for meaning and purpose, and to engage them with a kind of care that embraces the ethics of a critically compassionate communication pedagogy"(215).

Following mentoring practices, Kalbfleish (2002) says, "Mentoring enactment theory believes the mentor 'has achieved personal or professional success and is willing and able to share covert and overt practices that have assisted him or her in becoming successful'" (63). It is our goal to be well-read in the literature we are discussing in class to model a mentoring template that attempts to bridge gaps in terms of cultural differences within our courses, including our Public Speaking courses. When teaching this course, it is common for students to stop during office hours for assistance with their upcoming speeches. One speech we would like to highlight is an address called the Speech of Introduction, where students introduce themselves to the audience and which might include information about their majors, hometowns, hobbies,

unique talents, or future aspirations. These are often very enlightening because students will share both serious and non-serious instances of their life experiences. Most students feel a sense of speech anxiety before this speech because it is the first speech. Therefore, many will come during my office hours for assistance. Sometimes, students using wheelchairs feel a sense of cognitive dissonance before their speeches. This stems from some of them having difficulty moving their heads or hands, reading from their papers, or giving eye contact to the audience. There are certainly more hindrances, but these are examples of some of the difficulties they face before giving their presentations. I adhere to the approach of mentoring by Hoa et. al. (2012), who make a commitment to build "an academic community that is culturally inclusive" (32). Some students feel apprehensive about discussing their disability in the speech situation. Our job as both mentors and professors is to help them share their narratives *if they choose to*. After each speech is completed, we give the audience 3-5 minutes to ask questions. Over the years, we have heard some interesting questions posed to wheelchair users by nondisabled students. One issue that comes up fairly often is this: Do you think any student who is not in a wheelchair can truly understand people's difficulties in wheelchairs? This type of question allows students from all backgrounds to respond based on their personal experiences interacting with students with physical disabilities. Other questions posed include the topics of perceptions and stereotypes, lifestyle, transportation, health care, and happiness. Many students have mentioned they enjoyed this class interaction because it enabled them to ask questions of students from different backgrounds in a thoughtful and respectful environment. As a professor, I need to

ponder if my pedagogies support my mentoring goals, effectively empowering students who use

wheelchairs rather than making them feel tokenized or like outsiders in their classroom

experiences. I do not want to adhere to the negative approach constructed by Grue (2011), which

says, "Disability was explained, relatively strictly, as a form of economic and political oppression

enacted on people whose bodies did not conform to the needs of industrial capitalism" (538). I

hope to negate these stereotypes within my courses by establishing a mentorship model that

welcomes students' voices from diverse backgrounds. These voices need to be seen as usual and

not unusual to members of our classes.

Speech of Introduction

The introductory speech as an exercise has yielded some exciting narratives from wheelchair

users. One student in one of our classes two years ago said that students in wheelchairs are

negatively stereotyped as unintelligent, depressed, unstable, and childlike, to name just a few.

This student (a wheelchair user) and other students with disabilities responded by saying they

did not own these stereotypes. Most considered themselves to be healthy, physically and

mentally, and very intellectual in their academic endeavors. Iezonni (2016) shows the

significance of discussing uncomfortable topics by saying, "Disability when visible can be like an

elephant in the living room in a predominately able-bodied culture" (160). Though this

unfortunately remains the case in an ableist culture, mentoring can occur for all of our students,

meaning we are attempting to create an inclusive culture in our classes. In these instances,

abled-bodied students can appreciate and understand the cultural views or experiences of their

disabled peers. As part of a pedagogy of discomfort, "If professors resist augmenting what they know or are unwilling to move outside of their comfort zone, they also limit the borders of knowledge to which their students are exposed" (Borisoff and Chesboro, 138).

Our job as both mentors and professors is to establish an ideology of diverse and respectful inclusion in all of our courses. Parks (2011) expounds on the importance of mentorship by saying, "Good mentors play a vital role in stewarding the promise of a worthy future. As emerging adults are beginning to think critically about self and world, mentors provide crucial forms of recognition, support, and challenge" (165).   Can it be a risky proposition to have students talk about such complex issues when they risk causing discomfort? Absolutely. And using CCP and thoughtful and inclusive mentoring allows us to open discussions on topics that should be central in all of our communication courses, especially since our university has numerous students with physical disabilities.

Concluding Remarks

In our mentoring approaches, we work to connect individually with our students with disabilities and to destigmatize their lived experiences by challenging ableist stereotypes but in curricular and pedagogical terms. It is essential in all of our mentorship opportunities, which can be both individual and in the classroom, to show the significance of and include voices of marginalized populations. Specifically, this study highlights the views of students who use wheelchairs and their diverse experiences as a particular population in the United States. The pedagogical approach of combining both CCP and mentoring allows us to hear voices frequently

muted in our classrooms. Implementing a loving mentoring strategy, which is essential to students' success from marginalized populations, enhances the relationships between professors, able-bodied, and physically disabled students. It can make wheelchair users more comfortable and possibly make able-bodied students uncomfortable. As both professors and mentors, our goal is to make disabled students feel comfortable sharing their narratives and increase empathetic understanding among some of our abled-bodied students. They have never experienced these challenges in their lives. Lau, Gilliland, and Anderson (2012) stressed the importance of such an approach:

> Not only do individuals simultaneously belong to multiple communities in terms of their personal identities and their targeted community of practice, but they are also, as with the students, in this case, bringing the concerns of their personal community backgrounds and identities inside academia just by being there and insisting on having a voice in what is being talked and studied. (997)

Our goal is to show that mentorship entails more than individual meetings with members of this culture outside of the classroom's confines. Yes, this is important, but so is listening and creating opportunities to integrate experiences of people with disabilities through a lens of love and empathy.

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The Islamic Veil: A Deconstruction of the Western Discourse
Ahlam Abulaila

The view that the liberty of women in Muslim societies is made almost impossible by religious oppression originates in the West; it is the survival of the Orientalist view of Islam. Orientalism posits Islam and Muslims as an essential "Other" which has stagnated in backwardness and shown itself unable to progress with "modern" notions of liberty, equality, and democracy. Because of these attitudes, many Muslims, veiled women particularly, have been the target of Islamophobic stereotypes. The Western gaze assumes that Muslim women are often deemed, by their religion, to be second class citizens, and therefore frequently endure systematic abuse. The Western eye tends to focus on the practice of veiling as the most significant abuse against Muslim women, perhaps because, as Leila Ahmed in *Women and Gender in Islam* states, it is "the most visible marker" of Islamic identity (152) and of the social separation of the sexes. Ahmed asserts further that "the peculiar practices of Islam with respect to women had always formed part of the Western narrative of the quintessential otherness and inferiority of Islam" (149). Many western feminists have adopted the same attitude: the custom of veiling is considered highly "oppressive" and therefore a proof of the inferiority of Islam, which is then used to undermine Muslim religion and society. Consequently, Muslim women in the west occupy the "center stage" of the ideological, gendered construction of Islamophobic discourse (Hammer 110).   Within the context of Orientalism and postcolonial feminism, I will examine

how some Muslim women writers challenge and others embrace the Orientalist Western reduction of the veiled Muslim woman as an object of oppression. The veil, for the purpose of my argument, entails both the historical concept of veiling as a segregating tradition of women within the walls of a harem and the actual veiling of the female body with different kinds of Islamic dress.

Significantly, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism is useful to establish the relation between the "West" and the "East." Orientalism, according to Said, is fixed to the European psyche and the need to control the Other. This "nature" of the European is found throughout the historical periods to suggest that it is not a historical or cultural phenomenon but an epistemological one. Said uses the term "orientalism" to mean a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (2). He also defines an orientalist to be anyone who "teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects" (2). In *Orientalism*, Said describes the relation between the Orient and the Occident as a relationship of "power" and "domination" (5). Said also accuses Orientalist scholars of producing a false image of the Orient and Orientals who are represented as passive non-participants. Orientalists have created, shaped, and framed the characteristics of the Orient and presented it to the Western reader, who accepts Orientalist codification as truth.

Embracing the Eurocentric gaze, Mary Shelley reflects in her novel *Frankenstein* (1831) how early feminist Orientalism plays a large part in how Muslim men and women are portrayed. Shelley divides the world into West and East, a trope that has been used to illustrate "Western" superiority and "Eastern" inferiority. Her portrayal of the Muslim-Christian character Safie is the main example of Orientalist discourse in *Frankenstein*. Her mother, a Christian, represents the Western values of freedom, civilization and independence; Shelley contends, "The young girl spoke in high and enthusiastic terms of her mother, who, born in freedom, spurned the bondage to which she was now reduced. She instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Muhammad" (146). On the other hand, the Muslim "side" of Safie (her father is Muslim) is strongly condemned as it equates with submission, ignorance and veiling: "This lady died, but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia and being immured within the walls of a harem, allowed only to occupy herself with infantile amusements, ill-suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue" (147). Apparently, Shelley nurtures the same Orientalist discourse by focusing on the veil, harem, and the treatment of the female body as a sign of oppression both by Islam and by Muslim men. In "Three Women's Texts," Spivak examines the ambivalent western, liberal thinking of Mary Shelley: "In depicting Safie, Shelley uses some commonplaces of eighteenth-century liberalism that are shared by many today: Safie's Muslim father was a victim of (bad) Christian religious prejudice and yet was

himself a wily and ungrateful man not as morally refined as her (good) Christian mother" (257).

For Spivak, Christianity is both attacked and praised in the liberal language of Shelley; however,

the civilized part of Christianity is utilized to attack the backward Muslim men to assert

western superiority.

As a Western feminist, Shelley sustains a view of cultural superiority towards the Orient,

and the oppression of Muslim women continues to be understood as determined by religion.

Islam is regarded as the cause and effect of this oppression. Muslim women are considered

bound by a cruel code of restriction, inaccessible, imprisoned within harems and hidden from

men. Shelley's perspective further advocates that women's lives in the secular societies of the

west are less oppressive; therefore, her Orientalist discourse has to include the call to liberate

Muslim women from Islam. Accordingly, Shelley's solution of redeeming Safie from the

oppression of Islam is that "The prospect of marrying a Christian and remaining in a country

where women were allowed to take a rank in society was enchanting to her" (Shelley 147). Thus,

Said's basic critique of the west and his notion of "Orientalism" are now an essential component

of Shelley's discussion of the relationship between the Islamic world and the Western world. At

the center of Shelley's Orientalist critique, one finds the recognition that the colonizers depict

the colonized as inferior, in need of progress which could only be offered by their colonial rulers.

In *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon points out that in Algeria, French soldiers made it a point

to unveil Algerian women in public in an attempt to free them, but more realistically it is a

gesture of ownership and power over the nation and its practices (42). The Algerian woman's veil

is not only a mechanism of resistance against the occupier who is bent on unveiling Algeria but also a strong attachment to the religious Algerian society: "this veil, one of the elements of the traditional Algerian garb, was to become the bone of contention in a grandiose battle" (Fanon 36). In this battle, the colonizer has an alleged, benevolent mission to defend the Algerian woman who is pictured as "humiliated" and transformed by the Algerian man into a "dehumanized object." The Algerian man is described by the colonizer as totally "medieval and barbaric." Thus, the occupier has his target fixed: "We want to make the Algerian ashamed of the fate that he metes out to women" (Fanon 38). To save the Algerian women from the "barbaric" Algerian man means to unveil them. In this context, the Algerian women are doubly silenced both domestically and by the colonizing powers; the structure of colonization is undoubtedly established on the grounds of patriarchy and colonization.

Replicating the Western stereotypes, Nawal El Saadawi, the Muslim Egyptian feminist, in *Woman at Point Zero*, reiterates Western feminist ideologies, equating colonization with liberation of her female characters. El Saadawi believes, as many Western feminists do, including Mary Shelley, that Islam has degraded the social status of women. In doing so, she enforces a stereotyped, Westernized image of Muslim woman as an oppressed, objectified, silent victim of her religion and the violence of patriarchal Muslim societies. This image of the Orient represented by El Saadawi is derived from the vocabulary of the colonizer.

The institution of family plays a very important part in Muslim society as there is a balance establishing the roles and relationships that exist between men and women. In

contradiction to this, El Saadawi starts *Woman at Point Zero* with an extremely severe depiction of the patriarchal family of the heroine, Firdaus. She embodies the violent manner in which women are bartered and dominated as forms of property. Firdaus begins to narrate her childhood memories with a description of her father, who she characterizes as "poor," financially double-dealing, knowing "how to sell a buffalo, poisoned by his enemy, before it died," skilled in the "exchange of his virgin daughter for a dowry" and good at beating his wife (12). To further distort the picture of Muslim men, El Saadawi offers a huge space to present sick, oppressive male behaviors: the misogynist attitude of Firdaus's father, the sexual assault of her uncle, the constant beating of her husband and the sexual exploitation of the pimp whom Firdaus kills at the end of the novel. Thus, El Saadawi portrays the Muslim/Arab society according to the agenda and expectations of the Western reader by nurturing the Orientalist ideas about the Orient as backward, aggressive, male-dominated, and misogynist.

To further increase the dilemma of the Muslim Arab woman, Firdaus's story is told from the vantage of a prison cell. The prison functions for El Saadawi and consequently for her readers as a metaphor for the predicament of all Arab women, much akin to the text's use of "unveiling" to signify Firdaus's revelations at the end of the novel. Like the prison metaphor, El Saadawi's "Author's Preface" exemplifies the type of gesture that emphasizes a Western audience's preconceived image about the Arab world. In her introductory statements, El Saadawi gratifies the Western appetite for images of the Arab barbarism. She describes the horror of the prison in which Firdaus is incarcerated as a world of "sudden gloom" and "overall

harshness" in which she finds "women, lurking behind the bars like animals, their white or

brown fingers twisted around the bark metal" (ii). Paradoxically, it is only when Firdaus is most

fully debased that she perceives herself to be in possession of freedom: "I have triumphed over

both life and death because I no longer desire to live, nor do I any longer fear to die. I want

nothing. I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. Therefore I am free" (101). El Saadawi's discourse of

freedom serves primarily to indicate further subjugation, rather than as a meaningful vehicle

for Firdaus's empowerment. Only as a prostitute and a murderer does Firdaus attain a sense of

freedom and pride.

Thus, El Saadawi achieves the status of what Spivak in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*

describes as "Native Informant" (ix) since her texts are often referenced in U.S. academia,

especially in the syllabi of postcolonial studies and women's studies that too regularly seek an

"authentic" representation of Arab/Muslim women's subjugation. El Saadawi gives western

readers what they want to hear by continuing the Orientalist Westernized notion of reducing

the veiled Muslim woman as an object of oppression. By demanding emancipation for the veiled

women, she herself sees Islam as a tool of subjugation, eliminating the voices of women who are

veiled. By telling the Muslim women what they must do, El Saadawi silences them and, in

effect, makes them invisible.

Conversely, as an unveiled feminist Arab, Lama Abu Odeh, in "Post-colonial Feminism

and the Veil," offers an inspiring feminist perspective on the veiled women that is built on

inclusion and embracing rather than on exclusion and singularity. Abu Odeh validates her

postcolonial feminist fortification by asserting that "For the feminist, such multiplicity of veiled

sexuality could be very exciting and promising of rich interaction and dialogue ... Instead of

dismissing them as the enemy, the threat, the falsely conscious, she could see them as the

varied, divided, seemingly united, female community trying to survive in an environment that

is hostile to them as much as it is to her" (35). Similarly, Mohja Kahf in *The Girl in the Tangerine*

Scarf, Mohja Kahf highlights the diversity of Arab/Muslim American women and challenges

traditionally monolithic western assumptions. In *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf,* Khadra's

deliberate choice to veil herself destabilizes stereotypical Eurocentric discourse on Muslim,

veiled women as victims who need to be rescued. However, Khadra's life journey with the veil is

not a consistent one; it is a process of veiling, unveiling and re-veiling that indicates the various

changes that occur for one woman at different stages in her life. Khadra reflects: "How veiling

and unveiling are part of the same process, the same cycle, how both are necessary; how both

light and dark are connected moments in the development of the soul" (309). Khadra's pride in

wearing a hijab springs from her belief that this choice is a source of comfort to her: "The

sensation of being hijabed was a thrill. Khadra had acquired vestments of a higher order. Hijab

was a crown on her head" (113). Out of a deep conviction and without any outside pressure,

Khadra decides to wear the veil as "it was something her body felt at home in. She knew this

now from letting her body speak to her, from the inside out-rather than having it handed to her

as a given" (374). Thus, Khadra's constant change of perspective on veiling reflects her power,

autonomy, and freedom of choice which are basic features that contradict the Western image of a misogynist and aggressive Muslim society.

In spite of the possibility for alternative readings of Islam regarding the respect of women, negative religiously determined stereotypes dominate the western description of gender. For the west, Islam (and almost Islam alone) causes and allows injustices toward the female gender. Ahmed defends Islam by stating that "The colonial account of Islamic oppression of women was based on misrepresentations and political implications and was incorrect" (166). Thus, Kahf's Islamic feminist counternarrative deconstructs the western prejudiced assumptions about Islam. Khadra's education and religious devotion give her the power to challenge her husband's traditional image of "wife." This image does not meet Khadra's expectation as she argues with him about the authenticity of women's rights in Islam that is different from the traditional patriarchal supposition, supporting her debate with verses from Qur'an; she argues, "But it wasn't God's rulings. It was just his own sensibilities, the way he'd been raised in Kuwait. So why was he bringing God into it?" (229). Certainly, Khadra's arguments with her husband about her legal rights as a Muslim wife using the Quran as her only provocation proves the emancipating power of Islam and undermines the manipulative patriarchy that projects Islam as anti-feminist in the Western mind.

Contrary to the image of Muslim women within harems, the exiled Palestinian-American Suheir Hammad, in *Born Palestinian Born Black*, provides a defiant collection of poems that do not apologize for being political and a critical woman of the exile.

Being a Palestinian, Muslim, Arab and Black woman in America is an unbearable burden for Hammad. It represents a multiplicity of erasures. Her life is always at odds where the personal and the political dimensions intersect. Considering the dynamics of power relations, Hammad's skin color is celebrated as a challenging power against an exploiting white male gaze in "Exotic." In this poem, she not only reflects an Orient-Occident relationship, but she also announces her liberation from both subjugating powers: "Don't wanna be your exotic/ Some delicate fragile colorful bird/ imprisoned caged/ in a land foreign to the stretch of her wings" (64). Hammad abhors the history behind labels. To avoid the discriminatory, racial effect of labeling, Hammad stresses "the essence of being Spirit" (13), which is something eternal that no label can touch. She recognizes her difference but does not feel it hinders her freedom and ability to move and change.

Thus, the issue of veiling, as a marker of the Muslim women's identity, is a complex one. There are many reasons why Muslim women wear the veil; however, Western feminists still too regularly continue to reduce the veil to a symbol of Muslim women's oppression. For example, whether Muslim women activists today espouse the ideology of veiling or not, they have been active in advocating the improvement of women's socio-economic position: they are not passive. But the work of these Muslim women activists tends to go unnoticed by scholars and feminist activists in the West. This is partly because many Western feminists continue to depict Islamic societies as a single community, adhering to a single ideology. In reality, the Muslim concept of the Islamic community does not correspond to a single concrete reality. Nonetheless, the

Orientalizing narratives about Muslim women continue to condemn Islam as being the primary

cause of women's oppression.

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