

Distinctions

Kingsborough Honors Journal



DISTINCTIONS

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Distinctions, the journal of the Honors Program at Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, welcomes submissions of scholarly work written for Kingsborough courses.

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COVER ART

The last monument was a sand box or model desert. Under the dead light of the Passaic afternoon the desert became a map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness. This monument of minor particles blazed under a bleakly glowing sun, and suggested the sullen dissolution of entire continents, the drying up of oceans—no longer were there green forests and high mountains—all that existed were millions of grains of sand, a vast deposit of bones and stones pulverized into dust. Every grain of sand was a dead metaphor that equaled timelessness, and to decipher such metaphors would take one through the false mirror of eternity.

--Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey"

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Two of the pieces in this issue, those by Jaweria Bakar and Violetta Brin, are inspired by Robert Smithson's renowned "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" (1967). They reveal writers confronting time and place and reflecting on humanity's past and future, seeing anew objects that have been crisscrossed by time. The other pieces in this issue, the contents of which seem to me especially strong, also confront time and place, perhaps less meditatively, but comparably seriously and variously personally. For instance, Lilia Teal illustrates with photographs her engaged account of particular Black women artists and Black women as subjects of art and advertising. Surayyo Khusenova traces the history of schizophrenia and its treatment while Rivka Chaimowitz argues for the sensible input of healthcare providers in the debate over gun control. In complementary articles, Sholom Gutleizer critiques diagnostic labels and their consequences while the Xi Kappa Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society outlines the politics of an addict's identity. Kourtne Ramsay and Levi Borevitz convey excitement in their discussions of language and of education. Kyle A. Reese attempts a "timeless debate" over the influences of nature and nurture, and in Jillian Bevens' lively and ambitious project, she muses on society's "construction of gender." All of the students are writing about the discoveries they've been encouraged to investigate in their challenging and rewarding class projects. I appreciate their contributions to this issue.

I give special thanks to the director of the Honors Program, Professor Homar Barcena, for rallying several of the students to submit their excellent work. I also thank Dr. Luz Martin del Campo, the coordinator of the Honors Program, for her communications with the students and administrators. As always, I am grateful to my chair, Dr. Eileen Ferretti, for granting me time to work on *Distinctions*, and to Provost Joanne Russell for funding this unique community college journal.

--Bob Blaisdell

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A Tour of the Monuments of Bensonhurst

Jaweria Bakar

Fall 2018
ENG 1200 | Freshman English I
Professor Eben Wood

On November 29, 2018, around 1:40 p.m., I left Kingsborough Community College. It was cold and foggy. On my way out of the gate, I closed my eyes and listened to the street symphony. It was the screeching of tires, blend of music, voices, and vendors. I was pleased as I was going home early. I had my phone, my bag, and Robert Smithson's essay, "A Tour of The Monuments of Passaic New Jersey." I started reading the essay carelessly.

In the essay, Smithson shared his experience of traveling from New York to Passaic. Outshone by its neighbor state, New Jersey is seen as less advanced, less metropolitan, more industrial; traveling from New York to New Jersey is like moving through time as well as space. I read about his first monument, which was a bridge between Bergen County and Passaic County. The bridge moves to make an entrance for a barge in which one part rotates to the north while the other part to the south. Due to the limited movement, it is called "Monument of Dislocated Directions." The monument is still because it does not interact with the current of the static river and therefore resembles a photograph. Smithson further wrote that the mechanical tools like cameras and our eyes could see the landscape with a false view because there is the possibility of a manufactural defect caused by negligence or some other error. The Great Pipe was his second monument. It is a pumping derrick with a long pipe attached to it and water and debris are continuously flowing inside it. Smithson compared this to human sexual activity and found the relevance between the landscape and its inhabitants. The monument reminds humans that the land is the same living thing as humans. The third monument was an artificial crater that contained a pale, limpid pool of water and from its side protruded six

large pipes. The pipes gushed the water of the pond into the river. Through his second and third monuments, Smithson was conveying the idea of industrial waste dumping systematically into the nearby rivers and creeks. Moreover, Passaic seems full of “holes” compared to New York City, which is tightly packed. The holes are the monumental vacancies that define the memory-traces of an abandoned set of futures. They will depict our failed ambition and betrayed dreams. These led him to the fifth monument, “That Monumental Parking lot divided the city into half, turning it into a mirror and a reflection” (73). This monument was not exciting but kind of reminded Smithson of infinity, which he calls the secret of the universe. If you look at the sky, it seems emotionless with the infinite numbers of stars shining with all their glory. He compares the shiny cars with the shiny stars. In the end, he conducted a thought experiment with the help of the sixth monument, The Sandbox or a Model Desert. Smithson illustrates the idea of irreversibility by describing how if black and white sand were placed in a sandbox and a child ran clockwise to mix the two colors, a gray color would be produced that could not be separated back into black and white even if the child were to run in the opposite direction. Through this metaphor, the author expresses the idea that the imperfections created throughout time can never be reversed. Although the past may have been perfection, once the imperfection is created, perfection can never again be achieved.

On that thought, that the time passes only in one direction, I stopped reading. While I was putting the essay back into my bag, a “Sky-Blue Pocket Mirror” grabbed my attention. The mirror is reminiscent of my mom as I bought it when I was shopping for my wedding with her. This is absurd that we associate memories of the people and the events which are important to us with the objects. Even though all things are forgotten in the end. These things are the monuments which perpetuate the memories of the past.

The Sky-Blue Mirror is a monument to me as I had it in my bag when I left my native country, Pakistan, to fly to New York on April 22, 2010. I have a vivid recollection of that night because it was a significant change in my life. I was only eighteen years old and still was pampered as a kid. Everyone came to the airport to see me off, my siblings, my dad, my mom, my maternal grandmother, and some relatives. It is a frequent picture in my mind that my mom refused to hug me. She thought if she hugged me she could never let me go because till that day I had never spent a day without her. As I was walking away, I could see the sparkle in her eyes and then tears began to roll down her cheeks.

I boarded the plane with a heavy heart. The plane landed at John F. Kennedy International Airport in NYC. My husband and in-laws were waiting for me. This transition was never smooth. I missed my mom every day, and I owe it to the technology that at least I was able to hear her voice. In the back of my mind, I always thought that one day I would go back, hug her and then lie down with my head in her lap, her hand on my forehead, with her sweet eyes full of love. The

days went by and I became a mother of a beautiful daughter. My life got busier.

On November 16, 2011, I was talking to my mom over the phone. I felt she wanted to say something, but I had to do my chores. So, I told my mom I would call her tomorrow. I still can hear her sweet voice. She said, “I wish I can keep talking to you but I realize you have to go. My sweet angel, my best friend, my rose, my moonlight, may you get whatever your heart desires in your life.” I hung up. The next day, I could not call her.

On November 18, 2011, my husband brought food on his way back from work. I wanted to ask him if he brought me a calling card to call abroad, but then I thought I should wait until he finished eating. However, he was more concerned about making me eat and then the immediate relatives started gathering at our house at 2 a.m. in the morning. They all gathered to disclose it to me that I could never call my mom again because she had moved to a place where no technology no matter how advanced it is can have access. Again, I owe it to technology that I saw her on the Skype departing from the world. She looked like a princess wrapped in a white dress with the red flowers all around her and then the connection was lost. I saw my dad cry for the second time that day. He cried for the first time when I came to New York.

Later I found out my mom was waiting for my call and she had a picture of me under her pillow the night before she died. However, I never needed her picture; whenever I look into the sky-blue mirror I see her through my eyes. She is inside me; I reflect her, and the mirror reflects me.



The Sky-Blue Mirror

I walked from Shore Boulevard straight towards Westend Avenue. After Westend Avenue towards northwest came Casspi, which went towards Neptune Avenue. On Neptune and Casspi Avenue, I saw a railroad bridge, and on top of

the bridge was an advertisement board. The board displayed a stop sign and next to the sign was the phrase that caught my attention: “We stop leg pain before it stops you.” The sign was from Sinai Diagnostic Center. It said: “Walk pain-free, NYC.” What a fantastic place to put an advertisement of course; what else we are looking for while driving carefully on a heavy traffic road? Immediately, I started imagining a pain-free New York; it would be a wonderful place to live. As a part of a society that sees everything merely as a series of images, even the real becomes unreal and is, therefore, open to re-imagination. Under the same railroad bridge on either side of the road was a metallic fence more than six feet tall. The top part of the fence had metallic wires with spikes. I was trying to decipher the purpose of the spikes when a sign grabbed my attention: “NO TRESPASSING”; on top of that sign was another sign: “No Dumping Allowed.” I was stunned upon noticing the litter behind the fence on either side of the road. I was trying to figure out what went wrong or whether the sign was at the wrong place. It should be on “The billboard” where the pain-free NYC sign was. I was completely taken aback by the creativity of human nature, because what else could be a better use of an empty lot like that than to think of it as a dumpster?



The Billboard Monument

I was thinking that the ideas of dignity and generosity are becoming increasingly rare in the frantic world when on Neptune Avenue by Ocean Parkway, I saw a vertical building. The building was under construction and covered with black net all over. On the sidewalk in front of the building, there was a big light green rusted dumpster with a partially ripped orange sign on it which said: “No Dumping, Dumpster not for public use, violators will be prosecuted.” And then I realized how silly of me! Of course violators will be prosecuted for dumping into the dumpster, but not into the empty lots and public properties. At a little distance from the dumpster, I saw a parking lot which was enclosed all around with the fence and a worn-out green cloth. It had a sign on it that said “Monthly parking available” with the number of a person to contact. I do not know why that parking lot looked like a haunted graveyard. Maybe it was because amid the hustle and bustle of the city it felt like a deserted place. The weird resemblance between them that struck my mind is in the graveyard every grave is of equal standard, though some occupy more space than others owing to their physical appearances. Everyone that resides there could be called dead. No one calls them by a title or a social tag. Likewise, the cars that are parked in a parking lot are just cars; it did not specify a parking lot for BMWs or Camrys. It was just a wonderful place, a parking lot for vehicles where space is offered on a first come, first served basis. It pursues perpetuity, which is impossible, and it is this awkward coincidence of controlled movement and motionless cars that create a deceptive illustration of the false future.



The Haunted Graveyard



The Dumpster

From Neptune Avenue, I went further west towards Cropsey Avenue. I then took a right turn on Cropsey Avenue. On the right side of the road. I entered the parking lot of a famous furniture store, Raymour and Flanigan. A metal railing separated the back side of the lot. There are a couple of benches facing the creek where one can sit and enjoy the view. Then there is another fence, probably for safety. I leaned against the fence to get a profound view of nature. I witnessed how diligently humans have added to the scenes of nature. Trash was along the edge

of the creek. When I looked down, there were some rusted metallic frames alongside the wall of the creek. The frames were stalked with all brands of empty beverage containers. No wonder this was the best place for dumping as this lowers the burden of the municipality because eventually the trash and the dirty creek water are going to end up in the ocean. The water of the creek was grayish black reflecting the blue sky like a shiny marble. I was wondering what gave this Marble Creek's water an unnatural color. Later, I found out that the eastern portion of Coney Island Creek runs along the private industrial property, and several acres are owned by Keyspan, the local electricity provider. The creek ends at Shell Road, where a storm sewer emerges from under the road. Heavy rainfall causes overflow from a local sewage treatment plant to spill into the creek because we lack a more advanced cleaning system that takes care of the storm water. Moreover, Coney Island Wastewater Treatment Plant treats all the sewage from Coney Island to Sheepshead Bay to Gravesend Bay and Bath Beach, and the treated sewage comes out of a pipe in the middle of Jamaica Bay. The creek has been mired in controversy over alleged illegal dumping, sewage contamination, and littering in and around the water. Furthermore, in a recent eight-month study, researchers at Kingsborough Community College found that levels of fecal coliform bacteria in the creek exceeded the EPA standards for swimming, shell fishing, and boating.



The Marble Creek

Right across the road is Cropsey Scrap Iron and Metal Corp., or you can call it “The Museum of Scrap History.” Many specimens were on display. Metal sheets were sorted and placed on one side; metal bars and rods on the other. Big rusted drums contained different items sorted and categorized by physical appearance; for example, nuts and screws in one drum, discs in the other, and circuit-related items in another. I saw a sign on the gate: “Choose Cropsey Scrap Iron & Metal Corporation to recycle all of your ferrous and non-ferrous scrap metal. For more than 55 years, our Brooklyn, New York, scrap metal recycler has built our foundation on a tradition of honesty and attention to customer service. This has made us the preferred choice of our local community for metal recycling services.”

A question emerged in my mind: can this puerile species take its mind off of destruction and concentrate on construction? We have gone so far in quest of technology that I do not think we can ever go back. On the way, we destroy everything that comes in our path. Even to construct we start from destruction or in other words recycling. A wise man once said, “Time is a flat circle.” The truth is time is a mystery, and we are slaves to its whims. Furthermore, with each passing year, it’s impossible to know what amazing technologies, innovations, and concepts we will have to grapple with. Just imagine the kind of phone we used only fifteen years ago; it was essentially the stone age. So, we practically live in a totally new world since smartphones came along. The technology has evolved so quickly that it has replaced many things; on the one hand, it connects us to the virtual world where we can access every corner of the world. On the other hand, it disconnects us from reality and our surroundings. Even kids rely on these technologies nowadays for entertainment. For that matter, we are both more or less experienced than the kids these days; *the paradox of age and youth is what the world calls progress*. I think due to similar reasons the ratio of playgrounds and parks are declining and the empty spaces are being used for more artistic purposes like dumping and construction.



The Museum of Scrap History

Then I went straight towards north on Cropsey Avenue and took a right

turn on Bay 49th Street. Further down the road on Bay 49th Street right before Harvey Avenue is an elementary school. I stopped at the school to pick up my kids. A fence surrounded the school yard. Parents were standing outside the fence waiting for all classes to arrive so they could pick up their kids.

Whenever it is raining the school has an inside pick-up where parents pick up their kids from the auditorium. An ice cream truck can be seen standing outside where kids usually buy ice cream after school. After taking my kids I made a right on Harvey. Right across the road on the left side are a bakery and a laundromat. We went to the bakery to buy pizza. It is the same bakery where I ordered my daughter's first birthday cake. The crossing guard was helping the kids cross the road. We took a right turn to Bay 50th Street. On Bay 50th there was a playground right next to the school. The playground had a slide for kids and when my daughter was younger, I used to take her there. But now the school building has been under construction for a very long time. The playground has been sealed ever since. Now and then my kids ask me why they sealed their playground. I try to explain but I think their little minds cannot decipher our worldly affairs. About half a block from the school is our house. It is hard to find parking on our street because scaffoldings occupy half of the street's parking. When we reached home, the kids started running towards "The Door." The space around us can be defined as a whole. Inside and outside are two parts and the opening between them is a connection. The connection between fear and love is uncertainty. The connection between birth and death is life. The door is the connection between our home and the outside world. A home is a place where you can be yourself without worrying about being judged. It is a feeling that you have wherever you are surrounded by your loved ones.



The Door

If we look at the relationship of human beings with their environment we can conclude that human activity has metamorphosed a third and a half percent of planetary land area. The world is growing at a speed hard to match, and the increasing need for space is turning out to be a matter of concern. There is a desperate need of land for agricultural, industrial and most importantly urban needs to develop cities and contain a growing population. Cities are getting packed. Due to the excessive constructions of buildings, green trees and grassy lands are disappearing. If the trend continues, you will see the following types of advertisements displayed on the billboards in the future if there is any. Do you ever feel like spending holidays on Mars? Or how about spending the spring break on the Moon? Let us breathe in the natural space environment for a week! No doubt, our weedy species is best at invading other places. For a moment, assume that after totally altering the environment of our native planet, we are successful in invading other planets by creating an unnaturally natural environment. Let us pause for a moment and think deeply: Will we be able to call those planets natural? Our planet was not the land one had to build up. This was already here for us; all we had to do was clear the trees and burn the fuels. After providing us with all the comfort and luxuries, does this land deserve to be treated like that? Will we ever be able to put a halt on our destructive nature and restore our natural environment? If not, then there are, however, ghosts or memories that still remain in the dead cities, or more precisely in a dead planet.

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Bringing the Gun Control Debate to Healthcare

Rivka Chaimowitz

Fall 2018
NUR 2100 | Nursing the Ill Adult
Professor Joan Zaloom

As a nursing student, my main interest is in the healthcare field. I love helping people, I love learning about different diseases and their cures, but most of all I have always been interested in preventive care. Preventive yearly screenings help catch chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension while they are in the early stages and easiest to treat. According to the Centers for Disease Control, “Chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, are responsible for 7 of every 10 deaths among Americans each year and account for 75% of the nation’s health spending. These chronic diseases can be largely preventable through close partnership with your healthcare team, or can be detected through appropriate screenings, when treatment works best” (Gateway to Health Communications and Social Marketing Practice).

While yearly screenings are helpful in preventing and treating common chronic diseases, there is a whole other realm of nursing care which is trauma and emergency nursing. I have always been interested in trauma and emergency care because of the fast-paced environment and lifesaving opportunities. While doing my emergency department rotation, I saw a gunshot victim being brought in in critical condition. I had the chance to watch as doctors, nurses, and all kinds of medical personnel tried to save the patient’s life but ultimately failed. This made me think. The patient was a very young man and was completely healthy, yet he died at a young age from an injury that could have been prevented.

As healthcare workers, we may not think that the gun control discourse going on in our country right now is important to us. We are not politicians or political commentators and may think we have very little to do with it. However, stepping into the emergency department and witnessing what I saw gave me a new perspective. The issue really does affect every healthcare worker and especially those in the front lines working as paramedics or emergency department/trauma center staff. As published in an article on the New York State Nurses Association website, Jill Furillo, R.N., who works in the emergency room, said, “Nurses know

that gun violence is more than fodder for partisan debate and political stump speeches; it's an epidemic that threatens the health and well-being of our patients and their families" (Furillo 2). I share her sentiments fully.

Therefore, my objective in writing this paper is twofold. I will attempt to persuade healthcare workers to understand the conversation going on regarding gun control and gun laws in this country. Secondly, I would like to show how important it is for us to have a say in the topic and use our collective voices to hopefully bring about positive changes.

Since my first goal is to help people understand the conversation, I had to understand the conversation myself. While reading up on this topic, I was shocked by how many details and opinions are being voiced. Originally, I believed this was a black and white issue, i.e., banning versus permitting all weapons. However, I noticed how each perspective has numerous facets and arguments concerning the extension and interpretation of the second amendment. I quickly realized that this would be more complicated than I had thought and began my research to discover, through reading as many perspectives as possible, the American viewpoints and conversations surrounding the second amendment and its effect on our current gun laws.

I started by reading "Get a Knife, Get a Dog, but Get Rid of Guns" by Molly Ivins, found in *The Norton Reader*. I thoroughly enjoyed reading her essay because it was written in an interesting as well as informative manner. It engaged me as a reader and was a good start to my research.

Ivins' stance was prohibitionist, meaning she supported the banning of guns. Ivins raised several ideas supporting her viewpoint. For one, she made a comparison between guns and cars saying that because cars can be dangerous and kill many people per year, our government strictly regulates who can drive or purchase one as well as requires licensing. Therefore, there is no reason for guns, being as deadly as they are, to be freely accessible to private citizens. It is only logical to, at the bare minimum, strictly limit the sale of guns to "presumably sane and sober adults" (Ivins 385).

She continues by debunking the argument for needing a gun in modern day America. When the framers drafted the second amendment, America was a largely rural, hunting-based society and guns were needed for day-to-day living. Outlawing guns back then would have meant taking away people's livelihood and food sources. Times have changed and we now live in a more urban society. Guns now are being used for leisure, such as at a shooting range and for recreational hunting. They are more and more often falling into the wrong hands and being used for unlawful activity. I sincerely believe that if the writers of the Constitution would have foreseen the use and abuse of guns in today's times, they would have included more parameters and limitations to the second amendment.

Reading the above, I became curious as to what was being said against the banning of guns because Ivins was very persuasive. I read "Gun Control Versus

Gun Prohibition,” an article by Don B. Kates, Jr., who has edited several publications that discuss gun control. Kates strongly believes that a gun ban would not work or help, so our lawmakers should focus on how to keep the country safe without one. He brings up a study in which three years of research showed no evidence that homicide occurs simply because there is a gun lying around. Furthermore, he refutes a prohibitionist argument that most homicides among family and acquaintances are committed in a “momentary fit of rage” (Kates 4) by regular citizens who just so happen to keep a loaded gun in their home for protection. He claims this is simply untrue and that research has shown that the clear majority of homicide offenders are not regular citizens. Most of them are “highly atypical pathologically disturbed, often drug-or alcohol-dependent aberrants with long histories of prior violence” (Kates 4). If these hardened criminals want a gun, there is no reason to believe that they would think twice about breaking any laws regarding the use or sale of weapons.

The next article I read is “Our Second Amendment” by Charles L. Blek, Jr. His main idea is that the second amendment is fully compatible with reasonable gun laws. Many gun advocates use the second amendment to defend the status quo pertaining to this issue. They claim that gun control laws are contradictory to the second amendment. However, Blek believes the second amendment is being misinterpreted by them. He uses our freedom of speech as an example. Even with its broadest interpretation we all agree on certain limitations, like not yelling “Fire!” in a crowded theater. Are we supposed to believe the second amendment gives all citizens an unconditional right to bear arms without limitations?

In reference to a school shooting that used a high capacity magazine and killed four students and injured twenty in a crowded cafeteria, Blek states: “Simple math tells us if, at the very least, we had laws limiting the capacity of magazines to ten rounds or less that it would have been physically impossible for more than twenty people to have been injured or killed during his rampage” (Blek 17). It seems clear to me that considering the above, government regulations must be put in place to prevent the kind of reckless damage unlimited access to high capacity weapons can do.

As I have seen by my research, this issue is extremely complex and fraught with emotion on both ends of the spectrum. On the one hand, everybody wants to feel like their family is safe and protected because we do live in a dangerous world. Our personal responsibility towards our family and loved ones drives us to seek any means to ensure their well-being. This would include protection from the elements, financial responsibility and even possibly purchasing a weapon if deemed necessary. The feeling of stability and security that owning a weapon gives is undeniable, as there is nothing better than peace of mind.

On the other hand, there is no denying that guns are dangerous. People feel that there is no price too high for safety, even if that means the ultimate level of personal security is forfeited. Not having guns readily accessible means a definite

drop in gun-related deaths per year, and those wanting guns banned or at least regulated feel that is a worthwhile trade-off.

For my part, I see the pros and cons of both positions. A perfect middle ground in my opinion would be reached by limiting assault and semi-automatic weapons to the military or law enforcement. Any other individual who wishes to purchase a handgun would need to be screened and undergo some sort of certification or licensing to ensure they will behave in a responsible manner when handling it. This would preserve the second amendment as well as keep guns only in the hands of those proven responsible enough to use them.

Now that I had figured out where I stood on the topic it was time for me to do some research with my original goal in mind, which was to bring this debate to the world of medicine. I began by reading an open letter that was written to the National Rifle Association and signed by over 41,000 emergency medical professionals as of January 2019. They wrote this letter in response to the NRA, which had published a statement saying, “Someone should tell self-important anti-gun doctors to stay in their lane” and not get involved in the nation’s gun debate. In the emergency medical professionals’ emotional letter, there is a list of graphically worded reasons arguing why anti-gun laws are an issue for medical professionals. For example, “We do our best to repair the damage from bullets on pulverized organs and splintered bones” (This Is Our Lane). Some may think this vivid language is not necessary, but I disagree. I believe people should be aware of the ugly consequences that guns can cause.

Another very real and powerful point in the letter is, “We train civilians to carry and use tourniquets to #StopTheBleed, something that should be necessary on battlefields but not in American grade school classrooms” (This Is Our Lane). I understand this is referring to the rise of school and other mass shootings going on in our country. Medical professionals are the ones working to educate the public on life saving measures like how to stop bleeding that can save lives and reduce casualties in these gun related events. #StopTheBleed is a campaign that was launched in 2015 by the White House. Its purpose is to train, equip, and empower lay-people to help in emergency bleeding situations in which they are the real first responders. A person who is bleeding can die from blood-loss within five minutes, so rapidly stopping the bleeding is critical to the victim’s survival.

As someone who is working towards becoming a nurse and who witnessed a patient die from a gun injury, I really felt like I could relate to that letter. I believe it is fully in “our lane” to speak about this topic and hopefully bring about changes. The number of signatures on the letter showed me that this is a sentiment shared by many other medical professionals. Hopefully this conversation continues and more people in healthcare begin to get involved in the discussion.

In a related article, Tina Reed writes about doctors treating the gun violence epidemic as a health crisis, and therefore Reed believes it needs to be treated as such: “The symptoms include catastrophic soft tissue injuries, hemorrhaging,

fractures, lifelong disability and death caused by high-velocity entry of those bullets,' said Stephen Hargarten, M.D., director of the Comprehensive Injury Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin" (Reed 2). Hargarten is one of a few healthcare providers who are trying to mobilize the healthcare industry to treat gun violence as they would any other new disease. He feels that the only way to address this is through education, just as people needed to be educated in the past about the dangers of tobacco. Proper education combined with reasonable gun laws can be the ultimate solution to this problem.

Next, I read a very interesting article written by Sallie Jimenez following the notorious Parkland school shooting incident. She wrote how the American Nurses Association "called on policymakers to ban assault weapons and enact other effective gun control reforms to protect the public" (Jimenez 4). The emergency departments and trauma centers are struggling with extremely complicated and dangerous injuries resulting from the use of deadly military grade weapons. This was encouraging to read because it, too, showed me that more and more people in healthcare are involving themselves in this important discussion.

Conversely, I read a very interesting article written by Marcia Frellick and published by Medscape. They did a poll in December 2017 after the Las Vegas mass shooting which left 58 people dead. "Of 462 total respondents, 72% of physicians and 71% of nurses/advanced practice nurses said gun violence is a public health threat" (Frellick 3). However, the most compelling part for me was that shockingly, only 57% of physicians and 51% of nurses felt that they have a responsibility to discuss gun safety. This shows a great discrepancy between believing in something and making a change. It is this exact phenomenon that I am hoping to see corrected one day. It shows how although there are many who do, many medical professionals do not necessarily see this as an issue they should be getting involved in.

After doing extensive research on the great debate surrounding gun control, and then reading about how various healthcare providers are responding to the discourse, I realize that although there are some individuals who realize change is needed, it is not nearly enough. We need to all band together and use our shared voice as a group to try making a change. I really do believe that if enough medical personnel recognize this as a problem that involves them, we will be able to help get some sensible gun laws passed that will save a lot of lives.

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Education's Influence on Religiosity

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SOC 3100 | Introduction to Sociology

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Education has a very big impact on our life, and it can change the way we think about many fundamental things. One of the things education was believed to impact, specifically with Christians, was our religiosity, meaning how adherent someone is to their faith. Many people have theorized that with the rise of education the world will become more and more secular, and much research has been done that backed up this claim. As opposed to those that thought education had a negative effect on religiosity, some other researchers found that education had either no effect or a positive effect on religiosity. Looking through some of the existing literature, we can see that both views are somewhat true; in general, education does have a negative effect on religiosity, because of its connections to rationality, science, and peer pressure, but some specific sects and denominations of Christians have a positive correlation with education, because of factors like high network closure, and the sects' attitude towards education. Also, different definitions of religiosity correlate differently with education; depending on which definition we are speaking about, education might have a positive, non, or negative effect on religiosity.

When measuring religiosity, there are many different aspects to look at. Religiosity means adherence to one's faith, but there are many ways adherence can be defined and measured. In the first part of this essay I consider religiosity in all its different forms, so anything at all that shows adherence to a faith, or lack of thereof, can measure religiosity. For example, things like prayer, belief in God, belief in the Bible, attendance to congregational meetings, acceptance of other faiths, etc. can all measure religiosity. This is because the first part of the research focuses on the distinction in types of religious denominations, taking into account many different ways of showing belief, and not focusing on exactly what they are. The last part of the research, though, does differentiate between different aspects in religiosity, as I shall elaborate on later.

In general, education has a negative effect on religion. This is backed up

by data from a number of different studies and research: The Princeton Center for the Study of Religion in a paper entitled "Religion in America" found that college students were less likely than those not in college to answer yes on a number of different questions measuring religiosity. For example, if they wish their faith was stronger, if they are living a very "Christian life," or if they seek God's will through prayer (Albrecht, 1984). Data analyzed from the Youth Parent Socialization Panel study found that education has a negative effect on things like believing in the Bible (Sherkat, 1998). Data analyzed from the 1988 and 1993 General Social Surveys found that every year of education decreased the risk of believing in a personal God, and increased the risk of not believing in any God (Johnson, 1997). Many more data on this exists, across a multitude of different research papers.

As for an explanation why education has a negative effect on religion, there are a couple of hypotheses given:

The first one is that much of religion is based on faith rather than understanding. Education on the other hand trains students to use rationality as opposed to faith. This can cause students to question religion that was previously accepted on faith. As Caplovitz and Sherrow (1977: 95) state: "intellectuals are committed to empirical based truth and are suspicious of non-empirical 'truths' that form the basis of religion." This conflict between religion and reason is what brought about the period of Enlightenment, when empirical evidence started to replace revelation and tradition (Wilson, 1978). Religious beliefs and actions were not seen as rational, and, therefore, their very existence needed an explanation (Campbell, 1971). This is also similar to how Weber ([1922]1993) saw the increase of rational thought in the world as a driving force behind secularization (Schwadel, 2011). And to what Wilson wrote, "today, religious perception shares an uneasy and shrinking frontier with rational percepts" (Schwadel, 2011).

Another one of the reasons is because of science. The correlation between science and apostasy is a common theme with many sociologists. Wilson wrote that the rise of science made the world an object to study, and, therefore, "The scientific world view is largely incompatible with a belief that there are supernatural powers" (Wilson, 1978). Therefore, college, where many of the students are introduced to new scientific ideas, which might contradict or cast doubts on their religious beliefs, has a negative impact on religion (Albrecht 1984). College students are also exposed to a diverse set of cultures which might make them question their beliefs. This exposure to science and cultural diversity continues throughout the life course of many people who have a college degree, increasing the likelihood of apostatizing. (Johnson 1997; Sherkat 1998).

Another reason for education's negative influence on religiosity is, that college is a time when the influence of family on students usually declines, and the influence of the student's peers rises. Family influence has been observed to greatly sustain one's religious identity, while peer influence is associated with new ideas, thoughts, and behaviors. Therefore, when a student goes to college he or she

is more likely to find new ideas and become less religious. This reason explains the fact that the negative impact of education on religion is a lot less for students who go to a Catholic college. This is because the peer influence in a Catholic college is a lot more likely to uphold religion than in a secular college (Caplovitz and Sherrow, 1977).

The problem with the cited research is that, although in general education has a negative correlation with religion, when we differentiate between different types of religions, we find that some religions actually have a positive correlation with education. McFarland, analyzing data from the General Social Survey of 1972-2006 and 1983-2006, found that for Evangelical Protestants, Black Protestants, and Catholics religiosity has a positive correlation with education, although their beliefs might change some. For regular Protestants and nonaffiliated though the correlation was negative (2011). Albrecht, conducting a survey to random Mormons, found that Mormons had a very high positive correlation between education and religiosity (1984). This finding was later reaffirmed by Merrill by analyzing two cross-sectional random surveys: the 1996 Utah Health Status Survey, and the 2000 Utah Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (2003).

The reason these religious traditions are not negatively impacted by education differ. For Evangelical Protestants, Black Protestants, and Catholics, it's because they have high network closure. Network closure is how connected the individual is in a group, which generally leads to trust and dependency.

Evangelical Protestants appear to have high network closure for many reasons. Historically they were always very secluded, distancing themselves from other cultures. Evangelicals tend to interact only with other Evangelicals, they tend to live secluded together, they don't like secular engagement (Iannaccone, 1994), and they devote a lot of their time to volunteer work, for the function of their churches. All of these things show a very high network closure.

Black Protestants also have a very high network closure. From the times of slavery their church has always been a primary institution for Black Americans (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). Because of all the issues Black Americans had to fight against, strong connections developed between members of the church (Roof and McKinney, 1987). They are also separated from other Protestants because their traditions are very different, they tend to view the Bible based on their own experiences, leading to different songs, behaviors, and values than other Protestants. For these reasons, Black Protestants have a high network closure. Catholics also have a high network closure, although it's a lot less than some of the other traditions. They are a lot less likely to convert to another religion (Sherkat and Wilson, 1995), they keep a higher level of religious attendance, and are more likely to consider themselves "strong" members of the church (Roof and McKinney, 1987).

There are two reasons that high network closure traditions are positively affected by education: the first one is, that being very into one religion stops them

from being exposed to other ones. Because they are all the time busy with their religion and its responsibilities, they don't have the time or the will to explore other ideas and cultures. And even if they did want to, they won't because of social rewards and sanctions; "In religious communities with strong network closure, diverse beliefs and practices are discouraged if not prohibited" (Iannaccone, 1988). In other words, a religion that pulls you into its network will at the same time shelter you from the outside. The second reason is that network closure religions can "save" them from outside influences. This reason suggests that in a high network closure religion, even if you are exposed to new ideas and beliefs, the network will help you get over it by reconfirming your current beliefs again and again. Being surrounded by people who believe in the same thing as you means that if you start to differ in your belief, they will pull you back with formal and informal sanctions. Because of these two reasons education does not have a negative effect on high closure networks.

The reason education has a positive impact on these religions is because people with a high education level are more likely to have high status in these religions. Because these religions put a high priority in connecting with one another, and worshipping God within the group, it's very important for them to have good leaders. They need leaders who can explain their beliefs well, who can guide the community in the meaning of the text, and who can apply the belief to their daily lives. Educated people are more likely to be able to do all these things, and therefore are more likely to be leaders in high network closure religions, causing a positive correlation between these religions and education.

The Mormons also have a very high network closure. They are very likely to attend church meetings, to pay full tithe, to live a "Christian life" and have family discussions about religion. They are also very likely to vote like they are told by the heads of church (as long as the heads are in agreement) (Campbell and Monson, 2003). But the reason that Mormon religiosity has a positive correlation with education is based on more than just that. Mormons are different from other religions in that they place a very high emphasis on education. This emphasis on education comes straight from their scripture, where it says one should "study, learn, and become acquainted with good books and with languages, tongues, and people" (Doctrine and Covenants 90:15). And it can be seen many times: in the 1950s-'60s, many Mormon churches were turned into schools. In 1912 they funded a released-time program, and Utah has the highest percent of people over 25 with high school diplomas. So, because the church is so into education, someone with a good education is likely to feel even more connected to the church than if they were without, causing an increase of religiosity with education (Merrill, 2003).

Another problem with the research showing a negative correlation between education and religiosity is that the research does not differentiate between different types of religiosity. As mentioned earlier, religiosity can mean a vast number of different things, and while some of them are negatively affected by education, some

of them are actually positively affected. The reason education lowers religiosity, as already explained, is because education emphasizes rationality, teaches science, and exposes students to diverse beliefs and cultures. Those things only contradict certain types of religious beliefs, but any practices not contradicted by education are not negatively affected by it, and might even increase because of it.

Beliefs that go against education are things like believing that only your God is true, believing that in order to be “good” you must follow the teachings of whatever religion, or stopping atheists from making public speeches. These go against education, which introduces diversity and the understanding of many different viewpoints. Things like believing in a specific God versus a higher power, or that the Bible is literally the word of God, are contradicted by education. Education teaches rationality and scientific “truths” and things like biblical literalism doesn’t make sense according to those things (Schwadel, 2011). Magic type practices, or dealings with spirits etc. are negatively affected by education for another reason: magic practices are usually related to syncretism, while education makes people more conscious of religious history. Therefore educated people are more likely to follow a more pure version of their religion, and are less likely to practice magic (Tamney, 1980).

Other religious ideals and practices don’t contradict education at all. Things like believing in a higher power, believing in an afterlife, praying, and Bible reading, are all things education does not contradict. Science and rationality do not defiantly go against a higher power, science has no way to prove there is no afterlife, and it has no reason to go against praying and Bible reading (as long as it’s not taken literally). Being exposed to many cultures doesn’t either have any reason to negatively affect these things. Indeed, these traditions are not negatively correlated with education (Petersen, 1994; Schwadel, 2011).

Although praying doesn’t contradict education, it can still be negatively affected by it. In general there are two types of prayers: the first is a prayer for material needs. With these prayers people who feel that they are in physical need can find comfort in the thought that God will help them. The second is a prayer for spirituality. This prayer is meant so that people can stay in good standing with their god, this is the type of prayer where people might confess their sins or try to connect to their god, all so that when they die, they might go to heaven. Because people with more education tend to be richer, and are less in need of physical help, people with more education will be less likely to pray for physical needs. Praying for spiritual needs on the other hand is not effected at all by education because there is no real contradiction between praying and education.

There was one practice though that was found by many researchers to have the highest positive correlation with education: attendance in a house of prayer. The reason for this is because it is not essentially a religious act, rather a social one. High education is associated with a high social life, like volunteering, or civic engagement; therefore, educated people are more likely to participate in

congregate events, purely as a social event (Albrechet, 1984).

One major limitation to this research is that this paper to this point has focused almost only on Christian denominations. There is some research that points to different trends in other religions. For example, Islam might be positively correlated with education. Nonaffiliated might have a negative correlation with education. But overall there just wasn't enough research done for me to justify making those statements. The same lack of research applied to Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and, therefore, I didn't mention them, but they should be studied more to see if they support this research's arguments.

There are numerous other factors that have as much, or even more, of an effect on religiosity. There is what type of college the student goes to, with there being a big difference if the student attends a Christian college or not. There is the community size, the person's gender and place of origins, role model, etc. This paper does not address these other factors because education was shown to still be a big factor independent of all these other ones; future research should try analyzing the ways different factors interconnect in their effect on a person's religiosity.

Although in this paper I have presented education as the independent and religiosity as the dependent variable, there is the possibility that the opposite is actually true. It should be taken into consideration that maybe irreligious people seek education as a substitute for religion, while more religious people are content in their religion, and therefore don't seek out an education.

In conclusion, in general, education has a negative effect on religiosity because it teaches rationality, scientific ideas that go against religion, and exposes students to new and diverse ideas. But this effect is not the same for all types of religions; some religions because of their high network closure or their emphasis on education are positively correlated with education. Also, not every type of religious belief and act is negatively correlated with education. Some religiosity doesn't clash with education at all and therefore won't be secularized by it.

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The Will of Wild Tongues: Rallying Against the Deficit View of “Other” Language Use

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Linguistic oppressors beware. According to the (paraphrased) Civil Rights Act of 1871, those who seek to suppress or in any way censor another individual’s method of expression are in direct violation of the victim’s constitutional rights and are liable to be sued. Though the Third Enforcement Act primarily seeks to protect the safety and peace of mind of private citizens and residents alike from state actors (those acting on behalf of a governmental body), it is not an easy one to feasibly enforce on a day to day basis when the aggressors are other private citizens. This is because suppression is so prevalent and it is difficult to equate to other, more substantial federal offenses when for many, their language(s) are not even viewed as deserving enough to require a distinction or receive justice.

It is easy to see, after close analysis of both Gloria Anzaldúa’s and James Baldwin’s texts, “How to Tame A Wild Tongue” and “If Black English Isn’t a Language, Then Tell Me What Is?,” that these authors not only oppose such beliefs but were able to unknowingly corroborate examples of the validity of their respective languages. Both Anzaldúa and Baldwin were, in their own right, prolific writers whose works spanned multiple literary mediums. Their works shared mirrored ideas by providing context on the historical relevance of Black English and Chicano Spanish as well as by detailing the correlation between language use and (self) identity. (These themes above all else demonstrated the will to rally against the deficit view of their languages as “other” and contested the right of nonnative speakers to classify that which they had no business to.)

Both authors foreshadow the thematic exploration and unapologetic tone of their respective essays through the use of rhetorical questions early on in their works. For Baldwin one needs to look no further than the wording of his title, to start feeling the beginnings of his debate, “If Black English Isn’t a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?” Anzaldúa’s approach of an extended tongue metaphor followed by an equally baffling question on how to tame it gives one the same feeling. How

can we answer these impossible questions? How *does* one tame a wild tongue or better yet, categorize Black English? More importantly *should* one even attempt to do so? The key to these answers lies in the perspective from which the authors chose to write both essays.

The 1980s and '70s were a polarizing era for many of the marginalized communities both authors were members of. In a time when silence meant compliance or worse: defeat, these authors went above and beyond in distinguishing both themselves and the languages of their people from those who were of the opinion that their speech wasn't "enough" as compared to the American Standard. The thread that connects both Anzaldúa's and Baldwin's arguments is their insistence that language-use speaks to the culture and life experiences of a specific subset of people; therefore, the standard grammar of English cannot possibly be used as a true mirror to validate the African American Vernacular English of the Black (wo)man or the Chicana of the Mestizos. These languages operate and define people in vastly different ways.

James Baldwin set the stage for this discourse by penning his editorial in 1979. His stance is that at its core the issue of the validity of Black English—otherwise called African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or Black Talk—has never been (and will never truly be) an issue of standard grammar or structure. To bring across this point, he writes: "Language, incontestably, reveals the speaker. Language also, far more dubiously, is meant to define the other—and in this case, the other is refusing to be defined by a language that has never been able to recognize him" (5-8). To paraphrase Baldwin's own words, the development of language establishes the formation of an individual's distinct identity. This then means that development effectively allows a collection of people to express their realities as opposed to being misrepresented by the group responsible for their oppression. He also suggests that language acts like a social compass to reveal many things about American society, chief of which is its reliance on language as a "means and proof of power" (33). This can be taken to mean that the use of language itself establishes some sort of segregational tool used to create or maintain an imbalance similar to that of pre-colonial America. An example of this tool at work is seen often in the workforce with African-Americans who use some version of Black English. They risk being labelled as less marketable than their non-black peers despite sharing the same same skillsets or degrees and may be passed over for a job position.

This injustice opens the door for Baldwin to discuss the cultural significance of AAVE being a language born of the immediate need to have a way to communicate without alerting the "white man" during the era of slavery. This kind of necessity is what drove Black English to initially be created without prioritizing grammar. Baldwin then believes that to categorize (and judge) such a dynamic language and journey with the lens of those who have no possible way to bridge the gap to empathize is blatantly wrong. That is to say, nonnative speakers are not equipped with the life experiences sufficient to parse the underlying significance of

a language whose very existence hinges on past and present systematic oppression at their own hands.

This core inability to relate is what prompts Baldwin to say that "it is not [Black American's] language that is despised: It is his experience" (97-98). The significance of this statement increases when we note that at the time of this essay's publication there was an issue of appropriate language use in academic settings. This would prove a problem for those African-Americans being taught by "anyone who despises him. . . [anyone] whose demand is that he enter a limbo in which he repudiate his existence" (98-100). This would create an existential situation where the child is robbed of a vital part of his sense of self. As a result of being untethered to his culture he would exist in a no man's land where he is "lost." Lost in the sense that he can no longer be a participating member of his culture and actively preserve a part of his heritage (that of spoken word). One can also argue that this child is now more likely to be taken advantage of. This is because the values normally instilled through the use of language (as a socialization tool) are unable to be learnt and appreciated later on in life.

Similarly in "How To Tame A Wild Tongue," Anzaldúa speaks of her experiences at school— being physically punished for speaking Spanish at recess and being forced (along with her Chicano counterparts) to take two speech classes for no other reason than to "get rid of their accents" (23). These examples painted a picture of lifelong micro-aggressions and attempts at both cultural and self erasure all done in the name of speaking "American." Incidents where she was chastised by members of her own community for "speaking the oppressor's language" (54) and "ruining the Spanish language" (55) may seem excessive to some, but for those members of her culture, this harsh reaction could be deemed justifiable since cultural identity and language use are virtually synonymous and abandoning them in favor of other is akin to treason/selling out. The same can be said of African Americans who code switch to make assimilation easier. They are ridiculed for "white speech" and relegated to being Oreos (black on the outside, white at the core) in the eyes of their own people.

Another example of this long standing erasure can be seen in yet another one of Anzaldúa's accounts. A chance encounter with "two women, a Puerto Rican and a Cuban" (40), ended with her discovering the existence of the Spanish term "*nosotras*" (41), which had previously been inaccessible to her (and her people). This anecdote, though brief, was ideal in highlighting two important themes later explored in her (and Baldwin's) work: the existence of an expected, default way of speaking (in her case it was the strict male forms of speech and in Baldwin's it was primarily "white" speech) and the need to manipulate language use to reflect one's own experience. Her initial reaction in the above mentioned memory demonstrates exactly why it is wrong to enforce a default. Up until that point, Anzaldúa had been referring to herself and others with "*nosotros*," the masculine form of the Spanish term meaning "us." With this newfound knowledge that a feminine way

of grouping herself and others had been in existence for all these years, Anzaldúa admitted to feeling “robbed of” her “female being” (41).

The existence of gendered language results in the inability of (those who identify as) women to successfully discuss themselves and in essence command their own lives. In the case of Spanish where the innate form of words is usually masculine, these gendered ideals manifest as sexist ideals created in order to police female behavior and speech. This can be seen in Anzaldúa’s childhood memories of being subjected to derogatory words and stereotyped actions such as being a big mouth, being a gossip . . . words that were only existed to be presented in the feminine form to enforce and strengthen the gap between genders. “Wild tongues can’t be tamed, they can only be cut out” (26). The statement immediately stands out because despite its brevity, it truly packs a punch by painting a gruesome picture in the reader’s head. It also provides an answer to the seemingly rhetorical nature of her title. There is no “taming” a wild tongue. Language is so closely tied to one’s identity that by subduing it, by making it less potent, you achieve nothing more than remove an integral part of your being. This insidious practice speaks to just one of the underhanded ways those in power (linguistically, socially, economically etc.) sought not only to suppress the voice of minorities but to eradicate anything vaguely reminiscent of their culture.

Perhaps the most ironic similarity between both authors’ discourse is their extremely effective use of the very language they’re spurning to prove their particular points. As readers we are able to infer that their ability to write and appeal to individuals on both sides of the proverbial fence has played a role in preserving their legacies and prolonging the discourse surrounding the propriety of a Standard English dominant culture. Language purists, by masquerading their biases under the age-old grammar argument, challenge the very nature of minority groups; time and time again this excuse is used to invalidate and belittle language forms that were not given the same time as English to undergo maturation. This lends itself to authorities on language using the subjective terminology of “good” or “standard” as a label for entire populations occupying various rungs of the social ladder, which is not only incredibly limiting but speaks to linguistically ableist viewpoints.

Although I have come to agree with some of the reasons given in favor of “standard” language use (such as making oneself more marketable, avoiding conflict by being better able to assimilate etc.) it is indisputable that the current climate is undoubtedly and unfairly in favor of the Standard. For nonnative speakers this means that the pressure to conform and risk jeopardizing our bicultural identities is at an all time high. In the same vein as Baldwin and Anzaldúa, I must pose several questions: in a self-titled pluralistic society why is the default expected to be English? Why is bombardment enforced over tolerance and mutual respect?

Our native, home and intimate languages are essential to the stability and development of our identities; they are as much parts of us as the pigments of our

skin or the type of blood coursing through our veins. In the words of Anzaldúa, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic – I am my language" (192-193). We are not lesser for using them or wanting them to be respected and seen as separate and apart from traditional classifications of Standard English. We are valid. Just like Anzaldúa and Baldwin and millions of other who share some linguistic overlap: I am still valid. The distinction of my language from the standard allows the freedom to live my truth by asserting my identity and constructing my own narrative.

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A Pictorial Arc: Iconography of the Black Female Body from Racist Caricature to Vehicle for Decolonization and Self-Determination

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ART 8121 | Independent Study
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Contextualizing my artwork within the canon of art history led me to investigate the historical arc of images depicting the Black female body generated by White imperialist perspectives as well as Black authentic representation.

In her essay, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, African-American theorist Bell Hooks acknowledges the crucial role representational imagery plays in liberating a subjugated population. As she posits, “Representation is a crucial location of struggle for any exploited and oppressed people asserting objectivity and decolonization of the mind.”¹ In other words, an oppressed Black population will judge themselves through the conceptual associations that a dominant culture superimposes upon them. In this context, examining the ways in which White social construction employs imagery to subjugate the Black female body so the dominant, White population could continue to exercise slave-like cues in service to the domestic and political agendas of White supremacy.

The historical arc of how the collective culture was encouraged to perceive the Black female body through the lens of racial stereotypes has played a significant role in distorting perceptions on the journey towards self-determination and decolonization. Visual characters were powerful messengers of White suppression in populations where illiteracy was prevalent and Black agency most subjugated.

At the inception of Jim Crow during the 1870s, visual representations of African American culture, and by extension the Black female body, were predominantly derived from the dissemination of Black caricatures. White imperialism gave rise to visual tropes that were exploited for the purpose of maintaining socio-political control over the newly emancipated Black body. Promulgated throughout White popular culture, these subjective visual manifestations formed the optical

1 Hooks, Bell. 1995. *Art on My Mind*. New York: The New Press.

field of Black female iconography, strongly influencing and establishing the White cultural lens through which the Black female body was perceived and invariably subjugated. Culturally condoned White racist notions undermined the Black female psyche, as well as the broader Black collective consciousness, by perpetuating the colonization and commodification of the Black female body via stereotypical imagery.

Two dominant caricatures, the *Mammy* and the *Jezebel*, depicted Black female bodies as sub-human entities possessing desexualized or, antithetically, hyper-sexual propensities. These images, which were divested of the multi-dimensionality and emotional nuance that constitutes universal humanness, enhanced racist narratives that fueled misperceptions of the Black female body, along with justifications for its abuse.

The *Mammy* caricature was created during the era of American slavery for the purpose of reinforcing the White notion that institutional slavery was a humane endeavor. The *Mammy* possessed physically appealing traits that were developed to safeguard the White mistress from the threat of omnipresent sexual exploitation of Black female house slaves by their White head masters. To achieve this end, the *Mammy* embodied an old, desexualized, significantly overweight, yet perpetually optimistic house slave, whose sole purpose of existence was to remain in servitude, diligently overseeing the domestic duties of the White household.



Actress Tess Gardella impersonating Aunt Jemima, 1928

Post-Civil War, the optimistic and contented disposition of the *Mammy* caricature expanded into the role of product branding. With the marketing tagline “the promise and delivery of an experience,” the smiling face of the *Mammy* ensconced itself within American consumerist culture and, more broadly, within the optical field of Black female iconography, her body branded as a reliable commodity for the purpose of domestic servitude.

Antithetical to the desexualized *Mammy* caricature, the *Jezebel* caricature evoked sexual promiscuity as her most salient characteristic. The social construction of the *Jezebel* caricature was predicated on the notion that Black womanhood was inherently hyper-sexual, lewd, and beguiling. This vilification of the Black female body was a powerful rationale for provoking the omnipresent sexual abuse of the White man onto the Black female body.

Conceptualized within the social construct of Eurocentric mores and aesthetics, the Black female body, as seen through the lens of the *Jezebel* caricature, created an oppositional binary by subverting the cultural standards of physical beauty and moral temperament. To the degree the White woman’s body was perceived as exemplifying qualities of modesty, self-control and chastity, the Black female body was engulfed with its binary opposite. To the extent Eurocentric aesthetics lauded fair complexion and thin lips, White perceptions equivocated the most salient features of the Black female body with the most lascivious notions the White imagination could conjure.

Although these prevailing convictions of the Black female body determined the culture’s over-arching visual field and narrative, these convictions unwittingly coexisted with the collective consciousness of their sufferers. Living within the tangible schism generated by White perception and Black self-consciousness, the experience of the Black (female) self, as lucidly summarized by W. E. B. DuBois’ term “double-consciousness,” brought to bear a unique perspective that lay the groundwork for the expression of self-determination through image-making.

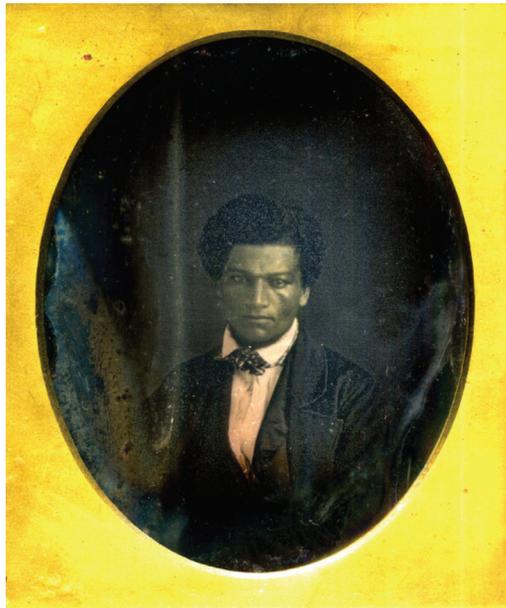
This unique perspective was expressed through theological narratives that were applied into the Bible quilts of African American artist Harriet Powers (1839-1910). Within her quilts, self-determination was exercised through her fusions of traditional West African and Christian symbols. For example, notions of decolonization were elicited through her images of the Jacob’s Ladder spiritual used to symbolically project a vehicle for escaping bondage.

Self-determination of the Black female body was revealed within the luminous paintings of Clementine Hunter (1886-1988). Working from memory, Hunter’s depiction of plantation life through the brightly colored and highly detailed painting “Picking Cotton” (ca. 1965) portrayed a repetitive mosaic of Black female bodies toiling in a field of cotton. Her authentic and humanistic portrayal of the Black female body, which had been used as a mechanism to satiate the economy of White social construction, exemplifies Hunter’s unique perspective from within the schism of White perception and Black self-consciousness.



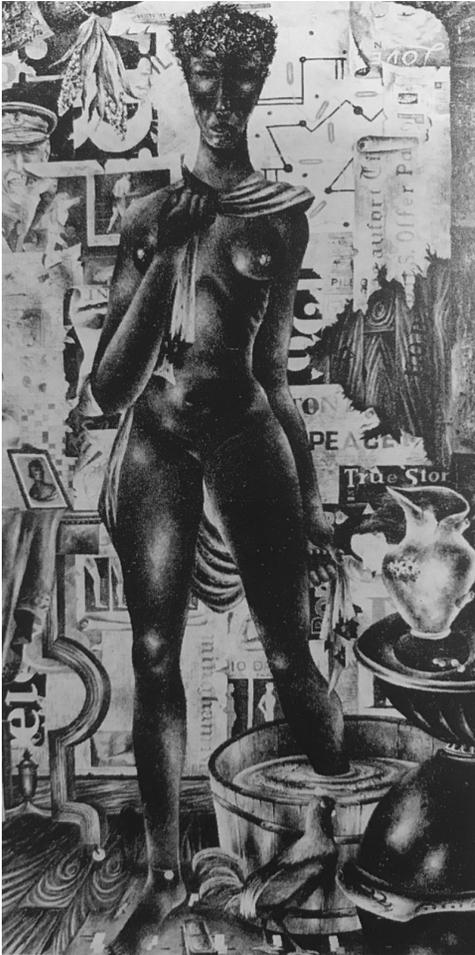
Clementine Hunter *Picking Cotton* ca. 1965, Oil on panel, 16x24in

Frederick Douglass, who recognized the inherent value of image making as being a potent vehicle for self-determination and decolonization, labored to photograph and archive his Black body over the span of his entire adult life on a prolific scale. Through documentation, he endeavored to effect political change by confronting the dominant White narrative with the paradoxical narrative of the Black experience. Douglass articulated: “Poets, prophets, and reformers are all picture-makers---and this ability is the secret of their power and of their achievements. *They see what ought to be by the reflection of what is, and endeavor to remove contradiction.*”



Frederick Douglass. “Pictures and Progress.”
Source: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mfd.28009>

For African American sculptor Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877-1968), her creation of *The Awakening of Ethiopia* (c. 1914) was the embodiment of self-determination and decolonization. The sculpture depicts a standing Black female figure dressed in traditional Egyptian pharaoh garb, her limbs mummified and constrained by bandages below, out of which her torso rises as it is infused with life-force. She gestures with a hand on her heart, exuding humanity and tenderness. For Fuller and her Black audience, the vehicle of the Black female body is depicted as the metaphorical embodiment of the awakened consciousness to the origins of a vast Black diaspora.



Eldzier Cortor (1916 - 2015), *Americana*,
Etching with Aquatint, 1947

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance, i.e., the “New Negro Arts Movement,” generated a culture for disseminating and promoting African American social issues within the context of a myriad of artistic disciplines and social programs. Out of this renaissance, the consciousness of the “New Negro” was developed and with it a nexus of progressive principles and modernized aesthetics were employed to express self-determination through representation. In fulfilling the progressive objectives of the “New Negro,” aesthetic associations that were perceived as transgressive or antiquated were eschewed for fear that these associations would delineate an inextricable bond between Black representation and prevailing White subjectivity.

By the 1940s, with the discovery of folk artists Horace Pippin (1888-1946) and Bill Traylor (1854-1949), “Negro Folk Art” began to shift public perceptions of Black imagery and gain popularity within certain milieus. Figurative painter

and draftsman Eldzier Cortor (1916- 2015) employed the genre of folklore and surrealism to authentically depict the Black female body and her environment. Cortor’s interest in African-American ancestry led to an in-depth exploration of the Gullah population that resided on the remote Sea Islands off the coast of South

Carolina and Georgia. Cortor was drawn to the Golluhs by virtue of their limited physical proximity to the mainland, which resulted in retaining a strong African heritage culture. This appealed to Cortor's objective to study the formal elements of the Black female body as existing within a cultural context that was explicitly connected to its origin.

One of Cortor's etchings, *Americana* 1914, depicts a self-determined Black female body emerging from a foot bath. Behind the figure, the wall is covered in deteriorating ephemera, evoking the unmet promises of the American Dream as ensconced within the White social construct. The figure stands within the schism of White perception and Black consciousness.

Black consciousness is represented by the warmth of the elements within her domestic surroundings; the photograph of a relative, an iron stove, drying corn on the cob hanging above her and a live chicken roaming the foreground. The formal elements that depict the figure do not conform to the traditional White notions of physical beauty. The facial expression evokes resilience and tenacity, possessed by a sense of self-determination.

A coeval to Cortor, African American female artist Betye Saar (b. 1926) reinvented the ubiquitous image of the *Mammy*. Through her assemblages, Saar repurposes the Mammy caricature and her accoutrements into mechanisms for confronting the racial grid irons of White social construction.

Saar's reappropriated *Mammy* is empowered by the same tools of domesticity that were originally intended to fulfill the requirements of the White domestic sphere by repurposing washboards, clocks, and brooms into tools of empowerment. In her piece titled *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), domestic tools once employed for the purpose of satiating White demands now hold a new meaning in the possession of Saar's *Mammy*. What was once an optimistic disposition designed to serve White domestic labors now reflects this Mammy's unbounded enthusiasm for destabilizing the status quo. The altar-like boxes, where Saar's Mammies exist, evoke Mexican retablos and suggest Saar's re-personification of the *Mammy* as an ecclesiastical figure, dominating her space with her



Betye Saar (1926-), *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, Mixed media, 1972

motives realigned in allegiance to her self-agency.

Within the milieu of contemporary visual art, representational imagery depicting the Black female body is varied in comparison to the historically limited representations generated by White social constructs. The historical misperceptions of the Black female body, as once illustrated through racist iconography, still reverberate, playing out through current cultural representations.

Whether the generation of Black female imagery is motivated through the lens of subjugation or self-determination, depicting the Black female body through visual representation is a political endeavor.

Through formal representation, my artistic process investigates the self-perception of the Black female body through the mode of “double-consciousness” as it traverses the history of enslavement, emancipation, and redemption while ultimately arriving at self-agency. In my work, I investigate and develop a contemporary notion of self-agency impacted by self-determined vulnerability as another link in the evolutionary chain of self-determination.

*

Note: Please see the on-line version of Distinctions 14:2 for the complete illustrations to Lilia Teal's essay project.

Diagnostic Labels

Sholom Gutleizer

Fall 2018

MH 3100 | Mental Health: Principles of Interviewing and Group Leadership
Professor Michelle Billies

Diagnostic labels cause many issues, mostly related to stigma. I want to discuss why I think we need these labels and that, therefore, we need to look at minimizing stigma. The methods I think most useful are different kinds of education. Through giving people a true understanding of another's humanity, regardless of their mental conditions, can help minimize the negativity and help people receive the treatment they need. So, how can we keep diagnostic labels, yet circumvent negative stigma?

The question of why and how we categorize and label has been taken up by many diverse modern fields, such as the "Labelling Theory" in criminology, which studies how people in power use negative labels, which often cause undesirable behavior (Ahmed, n.d.), as well as in medicine, categorizing different diseases (Jutel, 2011). The pros and cons of this proclivity have been discussed, but most important to this essay is the way it is viewed in terms of social relationships. In psychology, this phenomenon, as it relates to interpersonal relationships, has been studied under the category (yes, even the discussion of categorization is a category) "Social Categorization." This is the study of how and why humans categorize themselves and others:

Categorization is a process whereby we make sense of the world around us by separating things into different classes or groups. When we learn which categories that objects belong to, we also learn about relationships between those objects. Social categorization involves applying that same process to people, including ourselves. It is not only a cognitive process for understanding and explaining the world, but it is part of the way we organize the world. That is, the groups we belong to such as genders, ethnicities, religions, and nations are based on social categories, and thus phenomena such as stereotyping and person perception

rest on social categorization. (McGarty, 2018)

In this definition, we see elements of why we need to categorize ourselves and others, yet we also see the dangers and negative connotation that can result therefrom. We need to label to make sense of ourselves and the world, but we tend to end up with prejudices and unreliable assumptions. Therefore, it would seem labeling must be done, albeit carefully.

The medical field depends on the use of labels and categories. They do this for many reasons; Annemarie Jutel explains: “Classification shapes medicine and guides its practice” (Jutel, 2011). Without the classification of diseases, symptoms and methods of treatment, we would hardly have the medical community and its achievements to date. For example, there is a category of disease called cancer within it, there are many types and varieties. Through this classification, treatments of all kinds were developed, some of which work for all types of cancer. Jutel mentions two levels of medical classifications: *silent and non-enunciated* and *formal and institutionalized*. The *silent and non-enunciated* classifications are not included in taxonomies—that is, things like the difference between patient and doctor, sick from well, and benign from serious. However, *formal and institutionalized* classifications include symptoms, particular diseases associated with them, whether the disease is real, psychological or physical, and what treatment is necessary (Jutel, 2011). In this article, Jutel elucidates the sociological importance of diagnosis. Some of the important factors are the disease’s undesirability, the capacity for discernment, and a collective will to classify it as a disease. In describing the double-edged sword of issues that stem from classification she writes:

Each and every classification engages some social perspectives and shuts down others, but once a classification is established it reproduces itself in an intuitive way that silences debate. In classifying, medicine takes a snippet of nature but often fails to recognize that the bounds of that slice are socially agreed upon, according to the dictates, conventions, and abilities of the field, rather than already-out-there objects waiting to be discovered. (Jutel, 2011)

Classifications have a complex nature, in that they explain certain parts of reality, but fail to incorporate the idea in its entirety, like missing important sociological factors which play a large role in the classifications. It is clear that even in the more objective sciences (e.g. medicine) we find some serious positive and negative aspects stemming from the necessary tendency to classify and label phenomena.

In the above-mentioned article, Jutel mentions the psychiatric field as a specific example of negative outcomes and problems inherent in diagnostic labeling.

There is a long-standing general debate regarding this exact subject. On one side D. L. Rosenhan elucidated an experiment showing the problems of diagnostic labeling (Rosenhan, 1973), and a counterargument was proposed by R. L. Spitzer in which he criticized the conclusions drawn by Rosenhan (Spitzer, 1975). This argument reflects much of the controversy that arose with the advent of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders*, a critique which is outlined by Khoury, Langer, and Pagnini in a critical review of the DSM (Khoury, Langer, & Pagnini, 2014).

Rosenhan set up an experiment described in “On Being Sane in Insane Places.” His main question was “Do the salient characteristics that lead to diagnoses reside in the patients themselves or in the environments and contexts in which observers find them?” (Rosenhan, 1973). He had eight pseudo-patients walk into 12 diverse hospitals around the country (he made sure they were diversified in location, funding, and the like in order to be able to generalize his findings) and declare that they were hearing voices, whose content they could not recall; although they described them as “empty” and “hollow” (these types of hallucinations have never been recorded in the medical literature). Beyond these symptoms and falsified identities and occupations, the pseudo-patients did not change any facts about themselves. They described their lives as they occurred, with pain, joy and all other events and emotions exactly as they happened. Once admitted and surprised at the ease with which they did so, they showed some nervousness at being in a psychiatric ward, although nothing out of the ordinary; in addition, they had to behave properly in order to be discharged, so they were as obedient as they could be. They took notes of all the happenings, secretly at first, but then realized that they could do so openly. All the patients, except one, were admitted with the diagnosis of “schizophrenia” and discharged with “schizophrenia in remission.” They were held for an average of 19 days, and no one suspected that they were really sane people without any psychiatric issues. Once they were diagnosed, it stuck. So, obviously, when they were discharged, it was done with the pretense that they were in remission, not that they never really suffered an issue at all. This could not be due to insufficient observation, as they were there for a while and it was not caused by abnormal behavior, as they behaved normally.

Failure to detect sanity during the course of hospitalization may be due to the fact that ... physicians are more inclined to call a healthy person sick ... than a sick person healthy. ... The reasons for this are not hard to find: it is clearly more dangerous to misdiagnose illness than health. Better to err on the side of caution, to suspect illness even among the healthy. (Rosenhan, 1973)

This is a large problem when it comes to psychiatric diagnoses, due to the

personal, legal and social stigmas. After the study, he told a hospital which doubted his findings that he would send a few pseudo-patients there in the upcoming three months and all the staff were tasked with weeding them out. At the end, out of 193 patients, 41 were alleged with confidence to be pseudo-patients by at least one staff member. In fact, Rosenhan did not send any fake patients at all!

The reason the patients were never discovered is because once they were labeled as schizophrenic, everything they did was considered a manifestation of the disease, even though it was normal behavior. Past relationships were seen by the doctors as problematic and their note taking was considered a pathological behavior. They could not shake off the diagnosis. The best they got was a tag of “in remission.”

Rosenhan concludes this study emphasizing the powerlessness and depersonalization that happens in psychiatric hospitals. He goes on to decry how we utilize labels to justify things that we do not know, as if we know them. The diagnosis, he says, is in the mind of the observer. The issues that arise from improper diagnoses are numerous. How many people are “sane” but not recognized as such? How many people lose their rights needlessly? How many were stigmatized due to erroneous diagnoses? These are serious issues, and overall this is a serious critique of our diagnostic system as it stands. He proposes instead that we focus on behaviors, provocative stimuli and their correlation. The answer to his research question is that the salient characteristics that lead to diagnoses reside in the patients themselves in the environments and contexts in which observers find them. This is a seemingly strong critique; however, this evaluation did not go unchallenged.

Spitzer was appalled by this essay and wrote “On Pseudoscience in Science, Logic in Remission, and Psychiatric Diagnosis: A Critique of Rosenhan’s ‘On Being Sane in Insane Places.’” Spitzer goes through each one of Rosenhan’s conclusions and categorically disproves almost all. His assertion is that his experiment reflects the inability of the mental health community to distinguish the sane from the insane. There are three ways that this can happen: 1) during the evaluation, the doctor can recognize that the patient is feigning the symptoms and is really sane; 2) the doctor admits the patient and only after a few days of observation realizes that the original claim of the patient was false and he or she is really sane; or 3) the patient is committed as insane, then observed as sane, and the doctor concludes that the insanity is no longer present (Spitzer, 1975).

Spitzer goes on to explain each scenario, starting with number 3. Rosenhan asserted that diagnosing the pseudo-patients as “schizophrenic in remission” was a failure to recognize the patients true state: sanity. However, in reality, the diagnosis of schizophrenia in remission is rarely ever used. Therefore, its implementation here can only be as a recognition of the patient’s sanity, unlike Rosenhan’s conclusion (Spitzer, 1975).

In addition, Rosenhan mentions the comment of one of the nurses regarding the writing habits of one of the pseudo-patients as proof that all activity is seen

in the light of the diagnosis. This is in fact untrue, as one of the responsibilities of the nurses is to note the general behavior of the patients, not only odd behavior (ICanNotes, 2018). Furthermore, the nurse mentioned nothing of this being a symptom of the illness, rather just noted the behavior.

Next Spitzer explains why scenario number 1 (during the evaluation, the doctor can recognize that the patient is feigning the symptoms and is really sane) is untenable. Rosenhan's contention with the fact that this type of hallucination was never recorded is not in contradiction to the diagnosis. How should the doctor know that this type was never recorded? Should he or she know all the literature available? Also, he does not give us full information regarding what occurred during the interviews, as the pseudo-patients must have explained more than just their symptoms in order to be committed. What else did they say? They must have complained of their hallucinations occurring for a three-week period at the least to be committed. If that was not present, there could not possibly be a diagnosis. Who knows what else they said (Spitzer, 1975)?

Finally, scenario number 2 (the doctor admits the patient and only after a few days of observation realizes that the original claim of the patient was false and he or she is really sane) is also nonsensical. Why would a doctor ever think such a thing? Schizophrenia is not a persistent disorder and can subside; therefore, lacking a reason to suspect the patient is lying, the doctor would assume he or she truly suffered the symptoms and that they later subsided (Spitzer, 1975).

Other critiques were made. The construction of the experiment is what led to the conclusions, by sending in people to fool the doctors. It would have been better to try to find the percentage of actual patients who were misdiagnosed rather than send these pseudo-patients, who are in reality a separate population than of those who were committed without feigning their illness. The issues Rosenhan proclaimed regarding the treatment of patients inside hospitals is highly suspect and he offers no proof to his claims, nor proof that the maltreatment is due to the diagnosis. The assertion that the mental health community does not know a lot about mental health disorders is just plainly untrue, as a lot is known. Aside from all this, observes Spitzer, labels are useful (Spitzer, 1975).

We need labels so that professionals can: A) talk to each other and communicate about disorders (the diagnoses function as a language); B) better understand the pathological process; and C) control the disorder, i.e., predict its presence and outcome, prevent it from occurring and treating it once it has occurred. The benefit of diagnosis is mostly seen in C. And although diagnoses are wrong at times, this is not unique to the mental health community, it occurs in all of the medical community. And just like it is necessary there, it is vital here. Spitzer concludes that we mustn't throw the baby out with the bathwater, and we should most definitely make use of diagnostic labels (Spitzer, 1975).

It would seem that Spitzer agrees with the problems that Rosenhan saw but recognized the need for labels for the field to actually have an effect in helping

people. Just discussing symptoms, without an umbrella, would lead to unnecessary complexity. Really, we should be focusing more on getting rid of the problems created by labels rather than the labels themselves.

So, the issue with diagnostic labels is something that both Rosenhan and Spitzer agree upon. Rosenhan had some faults in the method he proposed for his study and Spitzer is a bit rough on Rosenhan by not truly recognizing the devastating results that can come from these labels, nor the problems of misdiagnosis.

Until now, I discussed the idea of labels, their history and use in the medical field, and a central controversy regarding diagnostic labels in mental health. These all dealt with their need for professional use in general, but what of the consequences on the one labeled? This idea must be explored.

A study was done to investigate the stigma associated with the label of dementia and to find ways to overcome it (Garand, Lingler, Conner, & Dew, 2010). Although this is a particular mental health disorder, because of the inherent similarities in its stigma and the results therefrom, we can make some generalization to the broader topic at hand. Dementia negatively influences the functioning of the individual. This functional impairment affects all those around the patient. This is similar to almost all mental health disorders. The reason why we need to label people, as stated earlier, is because labels help 1) separate a group into definable boundaries, regardless of the individual differences in the onset of the disease; 2) help describe a category and provide prognosis; 3) can help show the way toward interventions; however, despite these benefits, labels seem to cause a twofold problem. First, due to the negative cultural ideas that are associated with the disorder, the patient will identify with them and have a more negative view of self. Secondly, they will precipitate the rejection because of the latter, and will act in defense to prevent rejection (Garand, Lingler, Conner, & Dew, 2010).

At this point we should better define stigma. According to Goffman, it “will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman, 1963). That is, these people are different from others in an undesirable way. They become a completely discredited person, instead of a whole person with a specific issue. They end up feeling different and alienated from others because of the way they are treated. We can split stigma into both of its elements: enacted and self-stigma. Enacted stigma is when these people lose their status in the community, and self-stigma can occur because of this. This self-stigma can deter people from seeking help, even when it is available, in order to avoid the loss of status. It even tends “to spread from the stigmatized individual to his/her close connections” (Goffman, 1969). So, stigmas associated with disorders pose serious issues and create environments where people are less likely to get treatment or be involved in trials served to create newer and better treatments (Garand, Lingler, Conner, & Dew, 2010). I believe that the need to remove stigma of all kinds is obvious.

Before getting into specific methods to remove the negative stigma

associated with diagnostic labels, here are a couple of facts showing how this would help. Some studies show that certain labels, specifically dementia and MCI, can evoke sympathy and helping behaviors. This shows that the label is not so much the issue as the negativity associated with it (Ray, Raciti, & MacLean, 1992). Some studies show that relatively (even) brief educational programs lead to significantly improved attitudes about mental illness (Corrigan & Penn, 2015). Therefore, we don't need to get rid of labels and diagnoses; rather, we need to get rid of the negative stigma.

There are many studies that have been done in an attempt to find methods to get rid of stigma. One that I find worthy of mention was done in the area of stigma related to people who suffer from substance use disorders, or in vernacular, addiction. This study found a few ways to relieve stigma. Psycho-education, acceptance and commitment training, positive educational leaflets, motivational interviewing, contact with the afflicted and much more (Livingston, Milne, Fang, & Amari, 2012).

Therefore, after seeing all this, I would conclude that diagnostic labels include issues of stigma. This can cause many problems for the people who suffer from the diseases with which they are labeled. However, since diagnostic labels are necessary for the furthering of our understanding, we should not dispose of them. Rather, we should focus heavily on relieving stigma. This way, we can help further our understanding of the issues associated with diagnoses as well as understand and help those afflicted without putting them in a negative box.

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Politics of Identity: The Identity of an Addict

Nicholas James, Sholom Gutleizer, Kyle Reese, Emmerline Ragoonath, Iffat Tariq, Jacqueline Ahmed, & Camilo Florez

Authors' Note: This is an original project completed for the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society Honors in Action Project.

Abstract

There is an underlying stigma associated with addiction. We set out to explore this issue in our community as it as it pertains to the rising opioid epidemic in America, and felt the topic needed more advocacy in our campus. Our team focused on the importance of identity and sought to find how changing the community's perception of people suffering from alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder (AUD/SUD) would benefit individuals struggling to overcome "addiction." We explored how individuals with AUD/SUD identify themselves, how are these identities are received by others, and how education can be used to transform perceptions, and in turn allow room for empathy towards individuals in recovery.

Our research shows that identity acceptance can relieve stigma. Thus, our Honors in Action project focus was to raise awareness among college students and change preconceived notions regarding "drug addicts." Our chapter hosted a Recovery Awareness Day, which allowed for a safe space where students in recovery shared their personal struggles in overcoming addiction, where social work professionals engaged the community on various topics related to addiction, where classes came to learn as a group, and where the visibility of support systems were highlighted. In so doing, we shift the narrative from addiction to recovery, and re-introduce faces to individuals with alcohol and substance use disorder, "Hello, I am PTK, and I am an addict."

Objectives

The Xi Kappa HIA project sought to increase awareness on self-identity

conflicts of recovering addicts, provide a platform of support for individuals battling AUD/SUD, change the perception of the general public towards AUD/SUD, and to reduce stigma associated with addiction through our Recovery Awareness Day (R.A.D.). In doing so, we hoped to impart an understanding of addiction from a humanized perspective.

We initiated our academic research strategy by individually gathering research articles and summarizing them on an online working group (Google Docs). We met four times over the summer to discuss and narrow down the articles that we felt were the most pertinent to our topic. Our research showed that ownership of an identity allows individuals with AUD/SUD a starting point towards recovery. Thus, it became evident that our action plan would focus on the politics of identity.

We sought collaborations from within the college, external help, and reached out to our alumni. We worked with the Substance Abuse and Counseling program to secure a faculty speaker. In addition to advertising the event to the entire college community, we invited individual professors to bring their classed by highlighting the R.A.D. topics for the hours that would align with their class times. Our goal was to reach as wide an audience as we could.

For our action plan, we worked with college events management to secure a date and location for R.A.D. We used our club budget to buy snacks and beverages for the event. We tasked one officer to ensure that invited speakers were present for their allocated hour-long segments of our R.A.D. All the speakers we invited came without charging speaking fees, and we prepared certificates of appreciation that were signed by the Dean of Faculty, Dr. Catherine Leaker, and the Honors Program Director, Professor Homar Barcena. We also prepared gifts to show our appreciation to speakers, which included PTK shirts, pens, and notebooks. Lastly, we developed and conducted a survey for college students during their attendance to our event with before and after questionnaires, to assess the effectiveness of our HIA event. In order to encourage students to fill the survey, we announced a raffle for free tickets to see the movie *About a Boy*. Our goal was to provide a friendly and safe space for discussions.

Research Background

Our academic research was guided by the experience of one of our PTK officers who is in recovery. This was a surprising revelation which made us question the identity of an addict. In other words, how do the ways in which people suffering from alcohol and substance use disorder identify themselves, how are they perceived by others, and how can education be used to transform others' perceptions?

Our research made it clear that stigma is a major issue confronting individuals suffering from alcohol and substance use disorder. It affects those around the afflicted, as well as the afflicted themselves. It causes much suffering, isolation, and

prevents people from seeking help. We found that the most effective intervention strategies were educational in nature (Livingston, Milne, Fang, & Amari, 2011). Therefore, we decided to use a series of seminars using our education platform to engage the community in many aspects of alcohol and substance use disorders, and to help relieve the stigma associated with them. This way, absent of stigma, there will be more love, understanding and help for all those who need it.

Literature Review

Overcoming alcohol and other drug addiction as a process of social identity transition: the social identity model of recovery (SIMOR). Best, et al.

This paper explores how social identities change when an individual goes through substance abuse treatment. The authors found that it is more helpful for those in recovery when the mental model of recovery is a social process rather than an individual process. This is argued through the various papers they cite and the well-established success of the Alcoholics Anonymous programs around the world.

Social Identities as Pathways into and out of Addiction. Dingle, et al.

Researchers interviewed 21 adults from a residential drug treatment program to distinguish how different identities affected the course of their recovery. Two major pathways were identified: a “positive identity” and a “social isolation” pathway. The goals for both pathways were strong motivational factors for recovery. The study concluded that if social identities are used to decrease stigma around individuals and the recovery community as a whole, there is a much higher rate of successful treatment.

Effectiveness of peer-led media education program for drug prevention among students. Hasel, et al.

This study sought to show that peer-led recovery treatment programs could be more effective and less expensive than traditional, professional-led programs. They utilized a school-based intervention education program in several high schools. The researchers found that compared to the control group, the peer-led group showed a significant decrease in drug use.

The Influence of Social Recovery Capital and Stress on the Health and Well-Being of Individuals Recovering from Addiction. Hillios.

This dissertation from Boston College explores the physical health effects of drug use and asserts that while the mental health of individuals seeking recovery is usually significantly improved, physical health issues are not often addressed sufficiently in treatment. The study was longitudinal and looked at trends of change over long periods of time and utilized data from the Pathways to Long Term Abstinence Study as a main resource. The conclusion reiterates the obstacles

faced by individuals with physical health issues, and the struggles that women face in recovery.

Practical support aids addiction recovery: the positive identity model of change.

Johansen, et al.

This research team studied individuals who were chemically dependent on different drugs to determine how social motivations affected their recovery, and developed a treatment model around that. They found that the outcome was, in part, dependent on how their social support was perceived (positive/negative). The individuals who utilized this treatment model experienced an increase in self-esteem, which is vital to recovery.

Does it matter how we refer to individuals with substance-related conditions?

A randomized study of two commonly used terms. Kelly & Westerhoff.

A survey was given to 728 mental health professionals between two professional conferences addressing whether or not stigmatized language affects these individuals' substance abuse treatment due to stigma. The researchers expected to find that the subjects would see their clients with substance use disorders mostly in a more empathic light, but there was more of a response to a "perpetrator-punishment" label. This confirmed their notion that if providers were looking at their clients as perpetrators, then surely the language perpetuating stigma would be a major obstacle in clients' attempts to obtain sufficient treatment.

The effectiveness of interventions for reducing stigma related to substance use disorders: a systematic review. Livingston.

This study sought to review ways to decrease stigma relating to substance use disorders. The researchers found that group acceptance and commitments are helpful in addiction therapy. Motivational interviewing was found to be helpful in reducing social stigma, thus improving treatment outcome for individuals participating in the study. It also looked into many varieties of educational methods to reduce stigma, as well as their efficacy.

Stigma and Self-Stigma in Addiction. Matthews, et al.

The authors of this paper used empirical and theoretical data to study the part that stigma as perceived by the individual in recovery and those around them affect the outcome of the individual's treatment. They found that there is a substantial link between shame and public stigma, which in turn increases self-stigma, and that this gets in the way of recovery. It further confirms that recovery is partially dependent on the way those attempting to attain recovery are perceived and treated in society, their communities, and their families.

Methods/ Actions

The service component of our HIA project, Recovery Awareness Day, was inspired by our academic research. In order to bolster the academic content of R.A.D., we invited Dr. Monica Joseph, former Vice President of Treatment Services from ARTC/URI and professor at Kingsborough Community College (KCC), to lead a seminar about addiction, how the brain's physiology is altered by addiction, and finally the steps to recovery and the benefits it yields. We also invited an external speaker, Mr. Menachem Poznanski, LCSW, who is co-author of *Stepping Out of the Abyss: A Jewish Guide to the Twelve Steps*.

We also heard personal testaments from four students (from KCC and other schools) who are in recovery from AUD/SUD. They shared their personal experiences about overcoming addiction, and how these coping mechanisms helped overcome school challenges. One of our invited student speakers is a KCC alumni who is a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Winner and a former Honors student. Another student talked about how she developed AUD/SUD as a young person within the Jewish faith, and her constant struggle to remain sober. The goal was to help the community empathize and see how AUD/SUD affects students from all walks of life.

Two professors brought their classes to R.A.D. because they thought that the sessions were topical and useful for their students. Many other professors commented that this was a very important discussion to be had by the college, in particular, Professor Maria Bartolomeo, who brought her Introduction to Psychology class.

In all, there were eight sessions throughout R.A.D. where anyone could attend any talk. At the start of each session, attendees were given questionnaires. The completed surveys were collected before each speaker began. The exact questionnaire was administered at the end of the presentation and collected. This was done in an attempt to determine the impact of our education platform on reducing the stigma of addiction.

Results and Conclusions

From our academic research and from the invited talks during R.A.D., we learned more about addiction in college campuses and how this remains to be a growing issue. While the professional speakers educated us on the unfortunate rise in addiction, personal accounts from invited students in the workshops provided a human face to AUD/SUD. Our chapter experienced how the Politics of Identity could acknowledge the individual and transform perceptions society has on addiction.

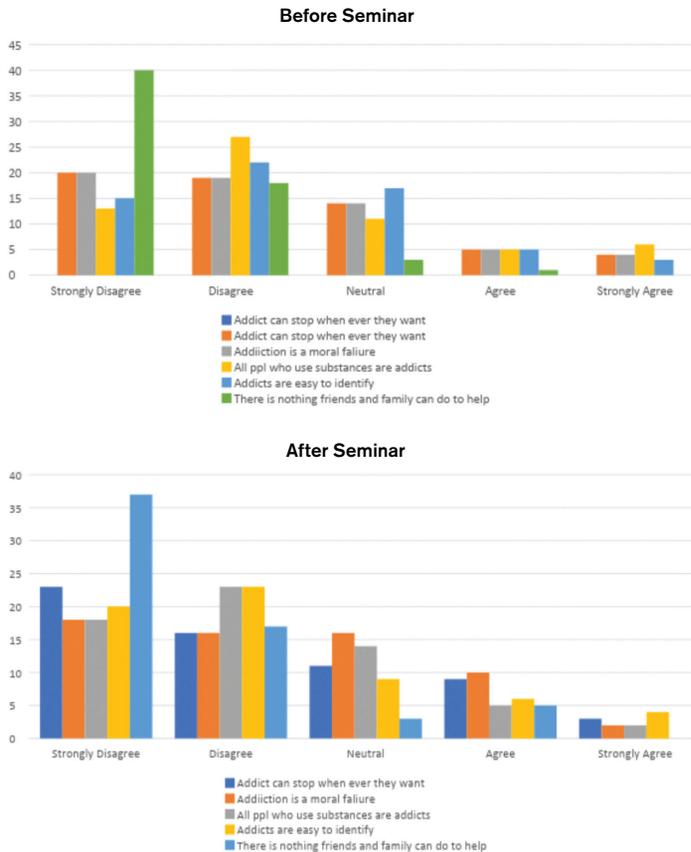
Our event advocated for students who are suffering with addiction and brought to light that ignoring these problems on campus, in our communities, and society affects us all. One positive outcome is that R.A.D. raised awareness about

resources that students could take advantage of to assist in their recovery.

There were 124 student attendees at our R.A.D. event. These students were given questionnaires as part of our field study to collect raw data about student perceptions to assess our effectiveness of transforming the identity and changing stigma. Our data shows that the R.A.D seminars were a success, and we noted the following:

- 15% increase in respondents strongly disagreeing that addicts can stop whenever they want
- 10% increase in respondents disagreeing that addiction is a moral failure
- 38% increase in respondents strongly disagreeing that all people who use substances are addicts
- 33% increase in respondents strongly disagreeing that addicts are easy to identify
- 7.5% decrease in respondents strongly disagreeing that there is nothing friends and family can do to help

The results can be seen below:



Another positive outcome of R.A.D. is the visibility of PTK Xi Kappa to be agents of change within the college. We were invited to collaborate with our Student Wellness Center in providing a Narcan (Naloxone) Training Seminar. We discuss this in our college project entry, and our collaboration was a success, so much so that the New York State Department of Health Opioid Overdose Initiative had to back-order Narcan kits for attendees of the event.

Our HIA project allowed members of our chapter to work as a team and accomplish our goals for our community to learn and engage in changing their notions about AUD/SUD. The effort required to organize such a large-scale event was beyond our imagination. It was difficult, time consuming, and without cooperation and communication among us, it would have been impossible. We also learned about ourselves from this experience. One officer recognized the dangers of excessive drinking and made the correlation to their own life about how it is masked by the excuse of partying. Through discussions about the research we realized our own misconceptions regarding substance abuse. Many of us did not realize the prevalence of substance use on campus, nor in society at large.

In conclusion, while the Politics of Identity tell us that we are the sum of our experiences, we are not defined by the weight of one experience. Theme 3 tasked us to examine how we “see the best of what all people bring to society ... and use them to transform humanity.” Our HIA experience shows that even when we are not at our best, through acknowledging our weaknesses, through empathy, support, awareness, and recovery, we elevate our humanity.

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Nature Versus Nurture: The Timeless Debate

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Fall 2018

PSY 1100 | General Psychology

Professor Rosemarie Goodridge

For centuries, researchers and scientists have been attempting to explain the root of our societal and individual identities, and what triggers our infinite behaviors. At the center of this search for these answers lies the infamous Nature versus Nurture debate, the timeless debate in the field of psychology. This paper will explore how much of an individual's personality and behavior is a result of nature, and how much is a result of nurture. It will explore whether adoptions studies, however unethical, give a solid illustration of the extent to which nature and nurture affect development. This is an archival study, utilizing sources in the forms of books and journal articles from the Kingsborough Community College library and several psychological journals. The film documenting the journey of the well-known triplets from the Louise Wise Agency's twins studies will also be reviewed, as the majority of data from this study is either redacted or sealed. This paper will not present new experimental or case study research, but instead summarize and analyze existing information, providing a supported conclusion towards the end.

The majority of works found concluded either that nature and nurture cannot be separated or were simply inconclusive. Those that conclude that a separation cannot exist argue that personality and behavior both contain traits that are influenced by both heredity and environment to differing degrees. The summaries of several of the studies themselves could not come to a conclusion, because evidence existed in favor of both heredity and environment. These authors also seemed to be searching for a polarized answer. It was difficult to locate sources that were based on real, non-biased research that argued for solely one or the other.

The basis of the nature versus nurture debate dates back to the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., when Hippocrates and Aristotle were both searching for a way to explain human behavior and animation of the body. In 1874, Dr. Francis Galton wrote that nature and nurture "are a convenient jingle of words, for it separates under two distinct heads the innumerable elements of which personality

is composed. Nature is all that a man brings with himself into the world, nurture is every influence from without that affects him after birth” (Lock, 2016).

Not long after, Erasmus Darwin and his grandson Charles did in depth research on animal evolution that was applied to human development. Erasmus Darwin noted: “... that conditions ... were not predestined by nature, but predisposed ... Heredity is the result of a malleable admixture of nature and nurture.” Charles Darwin was the first documented researcher to suggest that the environment can have an effect on genetics that can last through generations; this study is now called “epigenetics,” which translates roughly to “around or inside of.”

Many studies have been done that involve adopted twins because this seems to be the most solid way to measure differences. Monozygotic (identical) twins exhibit what appear to be mirror-image traits, and researchers rely on this as a secondary control to their control group. In Minnesota in the 1970s, child psychologist Sandra Scarr did a study on the comparative IQs between adopted children and their adoptive parents and siblings using cohesive biological families as controls. Scarr found a strong correlation between biological predisposal and quantitative intelligence (Figure 1). Adoptive parent-child pairs had the fewest similarities, with no genes shared and a 22 percent correlation. Siblings that were not full blood relatives had only slightly more similarity in IQ scores, with half-siblings appearing to be the segue to much more profound similarities. Parent-child pairs and fraternal twins raised together shared 50 percent of their genes and had a 45 to 63 percent correlation. Interestingly, identical twins who were raised apart, sharing 100 percent of the same genes, had the highest correlation at 78 percent. Because of this strong correlation, Scarr argued in favor of heredity, stating that the characteristics of both parent and child determine the child’s environment. Therefore, a child could never be truly affected by nurture, only nature (Goldhaber, 2012).

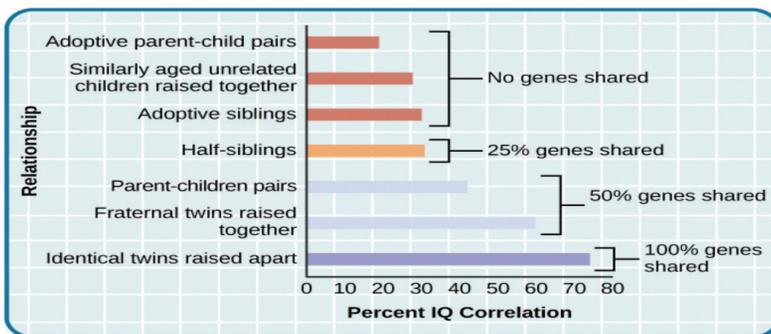


Figure 1: Correlation between quantitative intelligence and biological family members

In her argument, Scarr noted that while development is a product of nature and nurture, an individual’s experiences are actually driven by their genes. She believes that organisms could change their surroundings, and that perceptions would

cause one to experience the world differently. She asserted that this predisposal was genetic and the basis of our development. She set out to learn how nature and nurture work together to produce “variation[s] in development” (Scarr, 1983). In her adoption study, despite feeling that our development is genetically driven, she did acknowledge that adopted children have higher IQs than their biological parents, and that this was likely due to a more nurturing environment provided by the adoptive parents. She still contradicted this by saying it was written in the adoptive parents’ genes to provide such an environment. Additionally, Scarr found that twins raised separately still seemed to have the same hobbies, interests, friend choices, academic achievements, and even food choices.

The strength of genetic predisposition was also illustrated in the extremely unethical and sweeping study of twins and triplets done by the Louise Wise Agency in New York City. In this study, researchers utilized this adoption agency to place single-child girls in families with whom they intended to place separated twins in order to provide a control. In the most well-known case, they placed each boy from a set of triplets with families of different socioeconomic backgrounds to see what effect this would have on them. When the triplets were 19, they found out about the study and it affected them deeply. One of the boys was so affected by this discovery, as well as their shared mental illnesses, that he ended his own life. It was further discovered that there were many sets of twins, all with sisters of the same margin of age difference in varied adoptive circumstances. The researcher who headed the study gave all records to Yale to be sealed until 2066, long after his death. Because of this, and the study head’s death, the actual breadth of the Louise Wise Agency’s twins’ study is unknown beyond those twins that have already come forward.

Because these records are sealed, access to the actual data from researchers is unobtainable. However, the remaining two triplets did recently make a documentary, featuring interviews from people who have known them their entire lives, as well as clippings that show the uncannily similar behaviors that were exhibited whenever they were recorded for interviews or home videos of them simply being around each other. These clips show similarities between these individuals who had never met, from their nearly identical face and body composition – those close to them were taken aback that they all had the same very unique hands. The boys all moved with the same patterns and displayed the same mannerisms – which is uncanny, since they were raised separately. It is thought that these types of behavior are learned. In addition, the boys all suffered through moderate to severe mental health problems from their teenage years on and did tend to overindulge with drugs and alcohol – this was by no means congruent with their family lives (Read, 2018).

Through study after study, we appear to be becoming less and less sure of genetics than we were in 1990, when scientists began the human genome project. It is still easier, however, to define heredity than it is to define environment: environment can include any factor from events, to people in our lives, to illness.

Additionally, individuals' perceptions can potentially make the same exact factors wildly different between two people. This can cause a single situation involving two people to be completely separate experiences that mean different things (Goldhaber, 2012).

One of the earliest known studies, though not an adoption or twins' study, is the study of "Little Albert" by psychologist John Watson in 1920. Watson showed that behavior can be learned by taking a small child with no previous fears and instilling fear in him. He did this by letting Albert play with various animals, to show that he wasn't afraid of them, and then building an association between those animals and loud, scary noises. At the end, not only was Albert afraid of the specific animals, but his fear had generalized to anything resembling them. There is question to the ethics and efficiency of this study, as Watson appeared to antagonize the child after associations had been made (Goldhaber, 2012).

While each of the boys from the Louise Wise triplets struggled with mental health problems, they also were able to overcome them, at least for some time, due to the environments in which they were raised. When they were a bit older, they lived together in an apartment and discovered very quickly the differences between them. Their very different households, while all very loving, were run in very different ways. Because of this, they all had very different cleanliness standards – a major problem for anyone living in the same space. They also had very dissimilar methods of dealing with stress and interacting with the world. Some years later, when they had all gotten married and moved out, they opened a restaurant in Manhattan together. Again, their differences showed in clashing management techniques and levels of commitment. This eventually caused one of the triplets to leave the business. Not long after, the middle twin committed suicide and the restaurant was shut down.

Each of the seven psychological perspectives (biological, evolutionary, cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic, behavioral, and sociocultural) take respective positions on the nature versus nurture debate that can be shown on a visual scale (Figure 2). On the "nature" end is the biological perspective, arguing that genetics and heredity count above all others. The biological perspective of psychology puts emphasis on genetics and human development as a biological function. On the opposite end, the sociocultural (behaviorist) perspective argues that environment and circumstances influence development more than anything else. These psychologists work off of the idea that everything a person does is a matter of choice, and that they can drastically change the course of their lives and everything around them. The humanist perspective takes all things into perspective by looking at the person as a whole, taking their perspective, experience, and predispositions into account. Humanists take Maslow's hierarchy of needs very seriously in practice, which shows that an individual must have its most basic of needs taken care of before they can reach self-actualization, that is, until they can reach their fullest potential mentally and socially. For this reason, humanists fall

in the middle, taking both nature and nurture into account relatively evenly.

The Seven Psychological Perspectives that enter into the Biopsychosocial model.

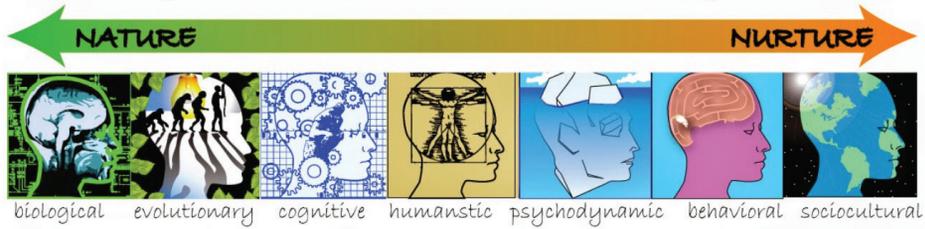


Figure 2: Scale of psychological perspectives on nature versus nurture

A great many studies have been done to observe whether behavior and personality are created by heredity or environment. While the scientists behind this research provide strong arguments on the specific traits and circumstances they researched, twins’ studies have been largely inconclusive overall and don’t shed much light on solid answers. Evidence exists in support of both heredity and environmental factors and the interplay between them.

While comparing a study in favor of nurture to a one in favor of nature, one will likely find that the arguments on either side are based on the deficiency of the other, and therefore do not provide the evidence needed to build their own cases to stand alone. In 1925, biopsychologist Leonard Carmichael studied fish and amphibians for physical changes caused by environment, and was able to apply his epigenetic findings to psychology:

These changes develop as a result of the interplay of heredity and environmental factors, so in order to have a ‘normal’ individual it is necessary to provide a very specific environment in which development is to take place... the question of how to separate the native from the acquired in the responses of man does not seem likely to be answered because the question itself is unintelligible.... The effort to sever modifications due to the environment from those which are innately given is impossible, save at the level of sterile, verbal abstraction. (Goldhaber, 2012, 22-27)

Unfortunately, this is not well known because it wasn’t given much attention, but in short, Dr. Carmichael understood that there is no situation in which an organism can exist without environmental influence, because environment will always exist. He also felt that the question of nature versus nurture is “unintelligible” because it was too simplistic; too much goes into the development of behavior and personality to boil it down that way.

Similarly to Dr. Carmichael, *Neurons to Neighborhoods*’ author Jack Shonkoff acknowledges that it is logically impossible to separate nature from

nurture:

It is impossible to think of an organism that interacts with the environment without considering the genotypical uniqueness of that individual.... It is time to reconceptualize nature and nurture in a way that emphasizes their inseparability and complementarity, not their distinctiveness: it is not nature versus nurture, it is rather nature through nurture. (Shonkoff, 2009)

Despite the fact that the majority of twin's studies were found to be inconclusive, most of these researchers working on these projects do acknowledge that any behavioral and personality trait is influenced by both heredity *and* environment to some degree. Certainly, each individual will be predisposed to behaviors and personality traits, but the extent has not been researched. Revisiting Scarr's study, in her conclusion she totally disregards events and circumstances that are out of any individual's control, such as (but certainly not limited to) illness, large scale events, and culture. Her study was one-dimensional because it fails to take into account the infinite and uncontrollable variables that occur in any individual's life that drastically shape how a person behaves. This kind of single-sightedness does a great disservice to the psychological and biological communities. Shonkoff argues this point as well, saying that it is "potentially misleading to try to finely distinguish the relative importance of nature and nurture in the course of human development" (Shonkoff, 2009).

The triplets from the Louise Wise Agency also clearly show that a combination of factors aid in our development. Though data relating to the study itself is currently unavailable, the mannerisms and lives of these three individuals can easily be observed in the many different media platforms on which they were featured. Their documentary also gives very clear examples of characteristics that are influenced both by their genes, as well as their environment and upbringing.

There have also been extensive biological studies of brain development that show a strong correlation between nature and nurture. Researchers have found that the integration of nature and nurture is vital for brain growth and development, and thus that our experiences influence our genetics and our genetics influence our experiences. We are programmed genetically to expect certain experiences to occur as a catalyst to our development. Researchers have proven this by depriving infants of patterned light and auditory stimulation and showing that these can cause deficiencies in how a child behaves for the duration of their lives. In addition, as individuals experience new things, their brains are stimulated to grow. This is called experience-dependent brain development (Shonkoff, 2009).

The sides of the nature versus nurture debate, if one can look past the argument itself, complement one another. The biologists arguing in favor of nature fill the gaps where those in favor of an environmental argument fail. Likewise,

those arguing nurture fill gaps where biologists fail to explain behaviors. Though many adoption studies are inconclusive, they are only inconclusive in finding nature *or* nurture to be their answer; they do not sufficiently consider that both play an equal or varying role in the development of behavior and personality. Perhaps more compelling are the biological studies of genetics and the human brain in which scientists have documented since the early twentieth century that genes and biological structure of the brain as well as body are indeed influenced by the environment in which an organism lives.

Researchers have also shown that new experiences trigger new brain growth, thus showing that development may indeed be dependent on our life experiences, and what we see in the world around us. Many early and modern biological studies also plainly show that the environment plays a role on the biological, as well as behavioral characteristics of organisms – which could be considered more profound than the effect of the environment on human behavior. The twins in both Minnesota and New York City have shown us that there is much variation in what may play a role in our development. Adoption studies, therefore, would illustrate the varying degrees of interplay between nature and nurture.

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Schizophrenia: Effects of Biological and Environmental Factors on the Human Brain

Surayyo Khusenova

Fall 2018

NUR 2000 | Nursing the Emotionally Ill

Professor Erin Smith

We often tend to have less sympathy and more stigma towards people who struggle with mental illnesses. One such illness is schizophrenia, a mental disorder that interferes with thinking, perceptions, and behavior. Signs and symptoms can be disabling for the patient, therefore meticulous assessment and diagnosis should be done to treat the patient.

According to *Psychiatric Nursing* by Mary Ann Boyd, patients with schizophrenia may have positive and negative symptoms. The difference between positive and negative symptoms is that positive symptoms are adding something to people that some don't experience. Negative symptoms are patients lacking something that they need for everyday life. Positive symptoms include delusions and hallucinations. Positive symptoms can be very debilitating to the patients, because they may hear voices and may believe that someone is harming them, without an external stimulus. These can be very disturbing to the patients as well as others around them. Bard mentions that delusions are false beliefs that are not real. There are various types of delusions such as grandiose, nihilistic, persecutory and somatic. Hallucinations are seeing, hearing and feeling things that don't exist. They include the five senses, but patients mostly experience visual or auditory hallucinations (Boyd, 2018). Negative symptoms interfere with normal functioning. A person might neglect personal tasks such as hygiene, may appear disheveled, and have decreased fluency in their speech. They also can have a loss of interest in everyday activities and lose the ability to experience pleasure (Boyd, 2018). In addition to positive and negative symptoms, patients may also have neurocognitive impairment with disorganized symptoms and experience confused speech and thinking (Boyd, 2018). Disorganized behavior may cause an overall decline in daily functioning, thus interfering with the patient's emotional responses.

When it comes to mental disorders, some cultures fail to cope with them, including my culture and society. Growing up in a Muslim community I remember our neighbor, Mrs. A, having a mental disorder. Before she had been diagnosed

with schizophrenia, none of us knew that she had a mental dysfunction. We thought that she was a witch. My parents didn't let us go near her. However, as teenagers my brother I used to pass by and go near her house just to see what was going on. We used to hear her screaming, "Don't hit me, don't hit me." We were so curious about her talking to someone that we used go near her door and listen to her conversation. It was so scary for me when she talked to herself and laughed; I now think she was having auditory hallucinations. Mrs. A lives with her husband and her husband is her support system. My mom told me Mrs. A had two children and both of them died. I never asked my mom how she lost her children. All I know is Mrs. A had schizophrenia with intense signs and symptoms. In our community, if the family member of the patient who has a mental disorder doesn't want to put the patient in the hospital it is their right to take them home and care for them. So, Mrs. A's husband didn't want to put her in the hospital, where they wouldn't have done anything anyway; he instead wanted to care for her. He works and takes care of her at the same time. When he goes to work he locks her in the room and then leaves. Before, when he went to work, he used call neighbors or relatives to sit with her, but I think she wasn't comfortable with someone in the room, so she didn't want anybody in the house. Even if she wanted company, the way she acted used to be as if she was talking to someone, laughing with no reason, or crying and yelling, and no one wanted to come anymore.

One day, my mom and I were cooking for dinner, and Mrs. A came over, scared of something. She told us that her husband had put poison in her food and wanted her to die. She asked for help. My mom calmed her down and took her back to her house. When my mom came back, she said that Mrs. A used to be one of the beautiful women in the community and was the director of the school. My mom said that we can never know when someone can have a mental disorder. Mental disorders don't choose a profession or age. When I think about Mrs. A and how highly educated she is, no one would believe her current situation. Schizophrenia is one of the mental disorders that is very hard to cope with, and one of the most debilitating.

In spite of research for more than a century, the cause of schizophrenia still remains challenging. Schizophrenia is believed to be caused by biological predisposition in combination with environmental factors (Patel et al., 2014). Further, studies have shown that genetic factors can predispose to schizophrenia as well. For this reason, the risk of getting this disorder is 10% for a first-degree relative. In monozygotic twins, if one has schizophrenia, the risk of getting the disorder for another one is 48% (Patel et al., 2014)). Equally important, in the case of both parents having the disorder, the risk of having a baby with the disorder is approximately 40%. Environmental stressors that predispose to schizophrenia are trauma during childhood, minority ethnicity, residence in an urban area, and social isolation. Social stressors include discrimination and socioeconomic adversity (Patel et al., 2014). In addition to causes above, the Mayo Clinic emphasizes it

may be associated with imbalance in the brain involving the neurotransmitters dopamine and glutamate (Mayo Clinic).

According to the research in the *Psychiatric Nursing* by Boyd, some additional risk factors that may lead to schizophrenia are early neurologic problems; events or experiences; moving from one place to another; having an older father; toxoplasma gondii antibodies; prenatal malnourishment; lifetime cannabis use; and obstetric complications (Boyd, 2018). Another study by the Mayo Clinic shows that inflammation, autoimmune diseases and taking psychoactive or psychotropic medications which are considered mind-changing drugs in early teen years and adulthood can trigger schizophrenia (Mayo Clinic).

In Mrs. A's case, she experienced environmental stressors such as the trauma of losing both of her children at the same time, and may have had a genetic predisposition. After her children's death, she didn't go out for a long time and stayed in the house crying. She became antisocial, less talkative, and kept every single obstacle she was experiencing to herself. Even years after their death, Mrs. A never talked to anyone about her children, and if anyone wanted to talk about them she used to get angry and irritated. In my opinion, these emotional pains she had for years with poor coping skills may have led her to a mental disorder.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5), specified that in order to diagnose a patient with schizophrenia signs and symptoms such as positive, negative symptoms, disorganized speech and disorganized behavior should be present for at least one month. Some symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations, or disorganized speech called active-phase symptoms must be present to qualify for the diagnosis of the disease (Patel et al., 2014). In addition to active phase symptoms, it is claimed in the article that the DSM-5 emphasizes patients should also have functional impairment at work, difficulties dealing with interpersonal relationships and decreased participation at activities of daily living such as self-care and eating with continuing signs of schizophrenia for at least six months (Patel et al., 2014). The best thing to do for making a diagnosis is to rule out other medical conditions that may be causing a mental dysfunction. Careful medical history, physical examination and laboratory exams should be taken to rule out other medical causes.

Mrs. A has had hallucinations and delusions for about seven years now. Her speech is disorganized. She repeats other people's words; when she talks her words are not connected and she jumps from topic to topic. Her speech also has no meaning or concrete thinking. She also has disorganized behavior such as aggression. She believes that someone is going to harm her. Hyper-vigilance is another behavior she has; she looks around all the time as if someone is watching her. Regressed behavior is an immature behavior. Sometimes she acts like a child. I remember her crying over the candy my brother had, and she couldn't have it, and that's why she cried. Having schizophrenia for so many years, Mrs. A can't get any better. There were times that she really used to be nice and talk in a normal

way. Her acting normally might have been because her auditory voices stopped talking to her. Then when they returned, she became different again.

The goal of treatment is to prevent relapse and returning patients to their baseline level of functioning. We can achieve these goals by using pharmacological therapy and nonpharmacological therapy. According to Boyd, in pharmacological therapy, antipsychotic medications play an important role in the treatment. Antipsychotic medications can be typical, which are older medications, or atypical, which are newer medications. Antipsychotics are used to decrease the symptoms of psychosis such as hallucinations, delusions, bizarre behavior, disorganized thinking and agitation. Since these medications reduce the psychotic symptoms of schizophrenia, they allow the patients to function more effectively and appropriately (Boyd, 2018). Typical medications are chlorpromazine, haloperidol, fluphenazine, loxapine, molindone, pimozide, and thiothixene. Atypical medications include clozapine, risperidone, olanzapine, ziprasidone, quetiapine, and aripiprazole (Boyd, 2018).

Patients who have schizophrenia should take their medication on time and for the rest of their lives. Under some circumstances, they should be stopped, such as if the patients develop neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS), which is a medical emergency in which a patient develops severe muscle rigidity with cascading symptoms including malignant hyperthermia, change in the mental status and tachycardia. It is found that agranulocytosis (low levels of neutrophils), fever with rash, and swollen lymph glands are the only reasons for the medications to be stopped (Boyd, 2018).

“Schizophrenia: Overview and Treatment options” states that, according to the American Psychiatric association, atypical antipsychotics are the drug of choice with the exception of clozapine. Clozapine is only used when other antipsychotic drugs stop working. This drug has a black box warning that it causes agranulocytosis (Patel et al., 2014). Agranulocytosis is a condition that the white blood cells level fall below $< 500 \text{ mm}^3$ and therefore can cause sudden death (Boyd, 2018). Moreover, Boyd states during typical antipsychotic therapy, 10% to 30% of patients show little improvement while 30% to 60% of the patients show partial or somewhat improvement with undesirable side effects. In these cases, clozapine plays an important role in managing treatment-resistant schizophrenia. If clozapine doesn't help in treating the patient then Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is used (Boyd, 2018).

As everything has good and bad side effects, medications have therapeutic and side effects, too. There are many medications that Mrs. A could take to get better. However, there are medications whose risks outweigh the benefits. I mentioned some of the side effects above; however, there are more adverse effects that can be dangerous to patients such as Mrs. A. These side effects need to be taken seriously as they can impact a patient's life either temporarily or permanently.

Medication-related movement disorders, also called extrapyramidal side

effects are the movement disorders that can be acute or chronic. According to Boyd, acute effects are dystonic reactions, pseudoparkinsonism and akathisia. These are the side effects that go away. She also states that chronic effect is tardive dyskinesia, which, when it develops, is irreversible. Dystonic reactions develop very rapidly and can be very dramatic and challenging to the patient. From what I understood from *Psychiatric Nursing*, a patient can develop oculogyric crisis, in which the eyes roll back as if the client is looking towards the ceiling. The muscles of the neck pull the head to one side. This patient is at risk for aspiration and may experience difficulty swallowing. To reverse the effects of the medications, health care providers decrease the dose of antipsychotics and administer benztropine and diphenhydramine (Boyd, 2018). According to *Psychiatric Nursing*, before giving benztropine, patients need to be checked if they have any other medical conditions such as angle closure glaucoma, pregnancy status and whether they breastfeed. Taking these into consideration, and if they have any of them, they need to be given different medication because it is contraindicated with those patients (Boyd, 2018).

Pseudoparkinsonism patients look just like patients with Parkinson disease, including a mask-like face, drooling, and shuffled gait. When a client develops these signs and symptoms, the dosage of the antipsychotic medications needs to be decreased and benztropine administered (Boyd, 2018).

Boyd describes akathisia as a state of agitation, distress, and restlessness. It is misdiagnosed as anxiety most of the time. So, careful monitoring is needed. Then, to treat this adverse effect, beta blockers such as propranolol are required and the dose of antipsychotics should be decreased (Boyd, 2018). Equally important, Boyd made clear that tardive dyskinesia is characterized by abnormal involuntary movements of the face and jaw such as lip smacking, sucking, tongue protrusion, grimacing, and eye blinking. Treatment of tardive dyskinesia is a medication called valbenazine (Boyd, 2018).

In Mrs. A's case the most important side effects that need to be considered are the medication related movement disorders, as some of those can impact on patient's life permanently. Mrs. A needs to be treated not only with medications but also through psychotherapy that involves the family, friends, group therapies, and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Although the central component of schizophrenia treatment is pharmacotherapy, nonpharmacological treatment plays an important role, because some of the signs and symptoms may remain after medication use. In "Schizophrenia: Overview and Treatment Options," psychotherapeutic treatment is explained as consisting of three parts: individual therapy, group therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy. People who have mental disorders are more likely to be noncompliant with their medication regimen. They may experience adverse effects of the medications, which can make them not take their medications. Some may deny that they have a mental disorder or some may think that they don't need to take their medications. Therefore, psychotherapeutic treatment can help patients to remain compliant with

their medication regimen (Patel et al., 2014). Some of the clients with schizophrenia stop taking their medication for any of the reasons above. These patients tend to have reoccurrence that can cause them to come back to the hospital. That's why it is important to make sure they are well informed about their illness, the risks and the benefits of the medication treatment. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and compliance therapy are psychotherapies that help educate patients about how important it is to take their medication.

Treatment programs mostly focus on patients. However, studies have shown that if treatment programs encourage family members to support their loved ones who are suffering from mental disorder, patients tend to have fewer hospitalization trips and it can improve their social functioning. Thus, family involvement is a very important part of psychotherapy (Patel et al., 2014).

As time passes, there might be more treatment options available for the patients with schizophrenia. In "He Got Schizophrenia. He Got Cancer. And Then He Got Cured," Moises Velasquez-Manoff wrote about a man whose delusions started when he was 23 years old. Eventually, he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. He started taking antipsychotic medications which didn't help and his symptoms were "treatment resistant." A year after his diagnosis of schizophrenia, he developed acute myeloid leukemia. It is a type of cancer that targets blood and bone marrow, leading to an increased production of immature white blood cells. In order to survive, he needed a bone marrow transplantation. After he had a transplantation, his delusions and paranoia went away. It is like a miracle, but his schizophrenia was cured by the bone marrow transplantation. His recovery shows that his immune system was the cause of his psychiatric symptoms (Velasquez-Manoff, 2018).

Velasquez-Manoff says the idea of the brain and immune system having contact with each other seems odd, but the brain and immune system are entangled in mental disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder. This theory is not just one case. There are multiple cases where patients got better after they had some kind of immune system diseases (Velasquez-Manoff, 2018).

Velasquez-Manoff concludes: "We now seem to have reached such a threshold with certain rare autoimmune diseases of the brain. Not long ago, they could be a death sentence or warrant institutionalization. Now, with aggressive treatment directed at the immune system, patients can recover. Does this group encompass a larger chunk of psychiatric disorders? No one knows the answer yet, but it's an exciting time to watch the question play out" (Velasquez-Manoff, 2018).

In conclusion, it is very important that we understand how hard and debilitating mental disorders such as schizophrenia are. Even though some people feel empathy and treat people with mental illness the way they treat others, there are still social stigma attached to it. Sometimes, I myself stigmatize some people without even realizing it, such as my neighbor, Mrs. A. Maybe one day there will be a significant treatment option available for Mrs. A or other patients with mental

disorders. In short, I feel more empathy towards patients with schizophrenia than before. I think it is because during my clinical course I listened to an audiotape of what patients with schizophrenia hear and how they feel when they have auditory hallucinations. It was such an educational audiotape that changed my mind about mental disorders.

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A Tour of the Monuments of Two Continents

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ENG 1200 | Freshman English I
Professor Eben Wood

Monday, 7:05 in the morning. The sun barely looks up from the horizon and slightly shines on sleepy houses, when finally it reaches my home at 3030 Emmons Avenue. Time to wake up and start another day. I automatically start packing my bag, take my phone, keys and a copy of Robert Smithson's "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey." As I'm getting ready I think about the monotonous life we have. Early mornings the whole world rushes to work, school or college, but it seems not to pay attention to what is happening around them. And it is truly remarkable to realize that year after year life goes by, generations fade and yet the world and our planet itself is here. It makes me think about the momentary role we have in this universe and how important it is to leave a legacy, memories to remember. From the origin of our kind, human beings have had a tradition of putting signs of their existence into art, books, and monuments. Monuments were always an expression of emotional connection, memories to be cherished and respected. Now, in the era of rapidly developing technology, it is common to capture valuable moments with a phone rather than with a camera, which was the only and most popular source some 20 or more years ago. But nowadays, when the phones not only have cameras but everything a modern person could want, it seems that the need for the physical world is more important than the virtual. It is the statues and monuments that connect our past and present that make us value the importance of material memory. A small phone became a big step in changing history and started a never-ending algorithm that will not let us return to our origins. Thus many events happen that lead to the irreversible consequences called entropy. Correcting mistakes never makes them completely gone, but it reduces their impact.

Smithson's "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" shows us a little journey of the author starting in Manhattan on Saturday, September 20, 1967, and ending in Passaic. A quite ordinary tour to one of the states and cities of America introduces us both to the specific city and to "a typical abyss or an

ordinary void” (72), as Smithson called it. Before taking a bus, the author buys a copy of *The New York Times* and a Signet paperback called *Earthworks* by Brian W. Aldiss, while holding an Instamatic 400, “or what the rationalists call a camera” (70). Soon the bus arrived to the first monument at the corner of Union Avenue and River Drive: the bridge over the Passaic River that connected Bergen County with Passaic County. “The still road that passed over the water was in part an open grating flanked by wooden sidewalks, held up by a heavy set of beams and a ramshackle network hung in the air” (70). With his camera, he takes snapshot after snapshot. Rotating on a central axis and having pole signs hung in a bi-polar manner, he called this bridge the “Monument of Dislocated Directions.”

As we move further, we are shown a future new highway, in part bulldozed, in part intact, where “since it was Saturday, many machines were not working, and this caused them to resemble prehistoric creatures trapped in the mud, or mechanical dinosaurs stripped of their skin” (71). But this road was only a lead to the second monument: a great pipe in the middle of the river, supported by a set of pontoons. “On the river bank, there was an artificial crater that contained a pale limpid pond of water, and from the side of the crater protruded six large pipes that gushed the water of the pond into the river” (71). Both monuments are similar to each other but connected the water and the land in different ways, which leads us to the idea of how humanity interferes in nature and its consequences for the future. The two monuments show the path that humanity chose as a development and growth: “a Utopia minus a bottom, a place where the machines are idle, and the sun has turned to glass” (72).

This view of an urbanized landscape was nothing but “a particular kind of heliotypy” (72), as Vladimir Nabokov said, “a kind of self-destroying world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur.” As a confirmation to the theory, Smithson approached to the next monument: a set of used car lots. This flat monument had nothing special, “yet it echoed a kind of cliché idea of infinity, secrets of universe” (73), where life is moving, but nothing is significantly changing. A few more shots were made of that lustrous site “littered with shiny cars and wrapped in blandness” (73).

This empty reflection of a city leads us to a thought about its past and possible future. As the author said: “If the future is out of date and old-fashioned, then I had been in the future” (73). And what if all these science-fiction movies about abandoned humanity are true? The further science goes, the less humanlike qualities are left in individuals. The last monument was a sand box, which “under the dead light of the Passaic afternoon became a map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness” (73). This small children’s playground seemed to resemble our not-so-far future with dried-up oceans, dissolution of entire continents and the absence of forests and mountains: “all that existed were millions of grains of sand, a vast deposit to bones and stones pulverized into dust” (73). This sand box was “a false mirror of eternity, an open grave, that children play in” (73). Those

children are us.

From my own experience I know how important it is to have something valuable and memorable. Sometimes it's what connects you to the place you miss or people you love. Brooklyn is not my native city and the USA is not my native country. I moved here from Ukraine less than a year ago and unlike most people I love change, I love exploring new places and seeing and learning new things. My personal voyage across the ocean was difficult but exciting. Leaving family and friends more than 9,000 kilometers away is a responsible step into adulthood.

One of my monuments that has an individual value is the compass keychain presented to me by my grandmother. As sweet and cliché as it is, it is my "eternal light at the end of the tunnel."

It leads me through good and bad and helps me stay focused no matter the circumstances. It is a sign that means I am always wanted and loved at home and that my decisions are always for the good of my family. Of course, nowadays, when technology each year goes further, it is easy to call or message anyone by phone, but different continents determine



different time zones and lives, and we should respect this. Sometimes I forget about my "Compass of Light," but it always warms my heart, as it contains the emotions and feelings I had at that exact moment of leaving, as if it photographed and preserved that "old me."

Before my new life in New York, I was an ordinary art student at a middle-class College of Arts and Computer Technologies and could only dream of moving to the Capital of the World. It's amazing how one's thoughts can materialize into a whole new chapter of life. Obsession with art and nature is a significant part of my personality, which is why I always look for something special, something usual but different at the same time, something unnaturally natural. One of such uncommon things for me was reconstruction of a long forgotten bridge area in my native city of Odessa. A major bridge called the Stroganovskiy, which connects different elevations of land, was a relic of the past built in late 1863, and after almost two hundred years was finally set for reconstruction. You would ask: what is so surprising about this event? Well, the odd fact is that the area of its settlement is Old Odessa, where you could feel the retro motifs. Anything new would be as surprising and unusual as a snowfall in the Sahara desert. So, here it was, the newly restored bridge next to a forever abandoned casino with a bad road and crashed walls. This collision of two epochs represents two entirely different worlds, where currently modern inventions will soon be the past and where the

past is being brought back to life: the unnaturally natural picture of change you are unexpectedly facing. This “Edge of the Worlds” would be a perfect place to film a science-fiction movie and show this historical moment.

This abandoned casino is a perfect example of history and nature taking their rightful place. Their connection means either humanity or nature is winning and show that no matter the scale of human’s impact, nature fights back. Human power is often measured with the size of an urbanized or cut off area, but nature’s way is a unique signature. One such monument of mine is a



secret garden known only for the residents of one small neighborhood in the heart of a central yet old area of Odessa. This huge natural monument of a wall of the living house was filled with leaves covering its whole surface and resembling the origins of our planet: pure and full of life. My “Wall of Life” was found unexpectedly on Sobornaya 17 Street, thus adding even more perfection to this blast of vibrant flora in the industrial downtown. The leaves were so gentle and bright green that even a slight gust of wind made this picture curve and breathe like a living creature, as if Mother Nature had responded to our admiring looks. This floral monument is like a next phase of nature conquering the human world from the previous monument of “The Edge of the Worlds.”

Fortunately, or unfortunately, my next monument was waiting for me all the way across the globe and, as usual, I found it by surprise. At that time of my adaptation to new surroundings and rethinking my life as a whole, I spent too much time on my phone, trying not to lose connection with friends and family. It was my personal phase of rejection of the change, my personal hell, when I finally decided to explore my neighborhood and memorize new streets and places. Wandering through streets and avenues, I somehow reached Avenue U and its set of small shops and 99-cent stores. But as we know, the best things are always hidden from the ordinary eye and my treasure was hidden on East 28 St. and Avenue U. A mural, which so precisely

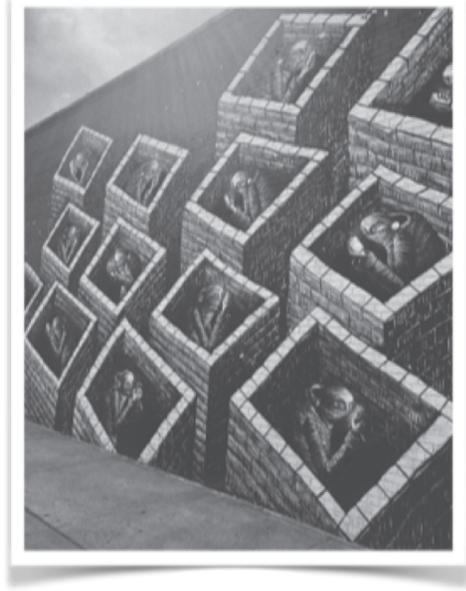


pictured humans in the era of mobile phones, struck me like lightning. I was so concerned about me being in a new environment that I had unconsciously locked myself in the cage of this small device.

This was the moment of me realizing what I wanted and what I needed to do to reach my goals. Modern society, the growing generation, is sinking in the everyday routine along with the non-existing problems, which leads us to thinking about the direction in which our future is heading.

What will be our legacy if we are more worried about the number of likes on our pictures and a new model of a phone? It is sadly disappointing to realize that as rapidly as we are going ahead, it is as fast as we are digging our graves. Ray Bradbury once said: "I once thought technology was going to be mankind's savior, now I think it may be our doom."

Slowly coming back from this image, I was heading back to my new home, but my thoughts were still flying somewhere I couldn't reach. Understanding that this country had more to offer to me than my native country was a fact, although a hard one

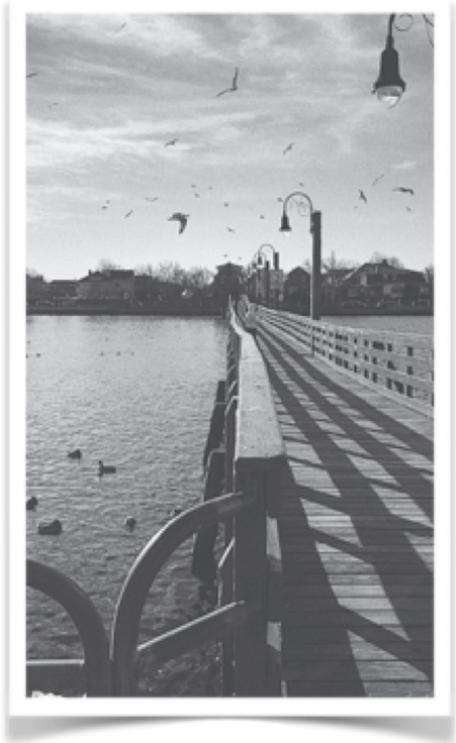


to accept. Sometimes you can feel with your senses that a better life is waiting and all you have to do is just make a first shy step. As I was analyzing this, I found myself on a wide avenue with open piers and multiple yachts, the street I now know as Emmons Avenue. As I walked along the benches and a few trees, I could see something narrow almost at the edge of the horizon. As I walked closer, I could clearly see a blue bridge situated over the water flowing to the bay. It was so long and bright in the morning's sun, as if was connecting little islands in some fairytale with swans swimming under it. First impressions are crucial, and at that exact moment I fell in love with my new monument and called it "Continental Bridge." Why "Continental," you might ask? This bridge was a simple answer to all my concerns about the past, present and future, as if it connected two different worlds for me: Ukraine and the U.S.A., Eurasia and North America.

And what was more important was the bright and sunny weather that showed me my bright future if I could manage to obtain peace between the two worlds. It is the balance and harmony that help our ambitions transform into actions. My "Continental Bridge" would seem total nonsense for anyone except me, but under those circumstances, it was my lifeboat and my turning point in a total accepting and changing phase.

If I have learned anything it is that everyone should have a monument, their safe place, a place of complete peace or a set of emotions that lead to important decisions. My monuments were my perfect pieces of art, puzzles of a whole picture of life. The irony of life is that you find what you least expect and lose what you cherish less. And if nature decides that buildings are no longer to exist, it will turn them to “*ruins in reverse*” (72), but it’s humans who transform nature into “a cheap copy of The City of the Immortals” (73). The entropy of our decisions, our irreversible impact divides the world, making it run anti-clockwise, but without the restoration of the original world.

The irony is that we have destroyed the world so much that the more we try to rehabilitate the planet, the more harm we are causing and the more fooled we are by the illusion of control over eternity. Our society should understand that the world is not a toy in a sandbox; it’s a strong power we cannot fight. Humankind must either respect this and live in harmony with the environment or we will experience the fate of hundred extinct species. The conclusion is quite sad: if we humans don’t change, there will be no happy ending, only a zero panorama and only a few monuments left of human history.



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An Open Letter to Society on Its Construction of Gender and Its Consequences

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Fall 2018
SOC 3800 | Sociology of Gender
Professor Dominic Wetzel

Dear Dimwits,

As a gender reject myself, I am particularly sensitive to the plight of the socially rejected: the people you left behind and cast out because they didn't fit into your impossible mold. I wish for them the same epiphanic moment I had when I realized that what you have bestowed upon me is nothing short of toxic baggage. What you have laid at my feet is a bottomless bag that can never be filled, with an incessant need to fill it. What started as a carefully staged power struggle has turned into a full gender war and I am no one's soldier. I was once a carrier of this baggage. I was one of thousands who struggled with being "right." I looked at those on the outside with pity. I respected their bravery; being alone is a hard thing to do, but at least I was "one of." One of what, I still don't know. Honestly, I don't think there ever was anything real to be a part of. I think we were all together, thinking the others knew what this was, when in reality, we were all chasing something different. A sad thing that was, to run after something I didn't want, let alone understand, and with so much baggage. Each thing I tried to be was another bag. The perfect student. The perfect daughter. The perfect friend. The perfect girl/woman. There are others like me, though you will deny it, who are looking for permission to be who they really are, not the person you tell them to pretend to be. Do you know how tiring that is? To be two people? I'm tired now and an amazing thing happened to me once I realized I was tired. I sat down. I put the bags down and looked at them. Not one of them bears my name.

And so, my dear Society, with this I give you your baggage back—postage due.

Let's start with the nonsense you have been trying to force feed me about what gender is. "Gender" is just the ideas we have connected to people with particular body parts. Those with vaginas are "women" and those with penises are "men." This seems simple enough, but we have divided people further by

folding them up and putting them into the gender binary. This limits people into *only* men or *only* women; which effectively excludes everything in between and stops any traffic between the two. I find the binary to be Suitcase Number One, specifically a suitcase that nothing fits in. Case in point: the personal exception theory of gender. This theory “allows those of us that don’t fit into the binary to reconcile our own complex identity with what we think we know about men and women by assuming that we are unusually unique” (Ferree and Wade 11). The gender binary is the result of a social ideology forced upon us by society and its various norms. It continues because we believe it exists and act accordingly. Our actions in relation to upholding the binary serve to legitimize and validate it. When we use generalizing language, “we routinely speak about men as if they’re all the same and likewise for women” (Ferree and Wade 10). This confirms in our minds, subconsciously or not, that there “are only two types of people” (Ferree and Wade 10). This goes against where the majority of people fall in the binary box, which is neither firmly here nor there. We even subdivide the binary in the places where it isn’t compatible with those it favors. “Things aren’t just masculine and feminine; they are more or less masculine or feminine” (Ferree and Wade 27). The binary seems to favor men more than women. This set of ideas, if upheld properly, serves to ego-stroke men by declaring them the strong providers. It also demeans women by mandating that they remain in roles deemed soft and less-than by society.

This ideology we adhere to is so strong that it imprints itself in our minds. Our brains “make literal connections between and among concepts, such that some ideas are associated with other ideas” (Ferree and Wade 29). These connections we make affect how we view our own gender identity, which is our perception of being male or female. We see the body parts we have and the small details that go with them (like height, voice, and muscle tone) and we connect these things to a particular gender even if we don’t fully identify with that conclusion. These connections are made because we wear “gender binary glasses, a pair of lenses that separate everything we see into masculine and feminine categories” (Ferree and Wade 26). We do this to other people, of course, which is why we find it so disturbing when people act outside of their gender norm. A drag queen, for example, is a person wearing flashy clothes, a lot of make-up, very high heels, and acts very dramatic and over the top. I also just described every Kardashian. The thing that makes a drag queen stand out is the fact that they are and do these things *while being a man*. Men, we think, don’t do that. We cannot make a comfortable connection between a man and the flashy, loud make-up. On the plus side, these glasses allow us to make predictions about behavior that help us interact with other people. This is called cultural competence, and it is important for the same reason stability and predictability is needed for small children. That is, anticipated behaviors bring anticipated responses. This conformity is really cooperation, and cooperation is needed to make society run smoothly.

The differences we have ascribed to the genders are a social construction;

but like anything that is constructed, it is supported by scaffolding. The way we look at and treat the genders is backed by gendered science and “binary language [that] say[s] that men have ‘male hormones’ and women have ‘female hormones’” (Ferree and Wade 45). The biological differences we have between us are not differences in the way we are made as much as they are differences in the way we *explain* how we are made. There are certain functions that occur in both male bodies and female bodies, albeit in different proportions. In fact, there are sex-influenced genes that “do different things in male and female bodies (that is, what they do depends on the gender of the carrier)” (Ferree and Wade 44). So even though “men tend to have higher levels of androgens and women higher levels of estrogens... research on other species shows that estrogen sometimes has the same masculinizing effects in females that testosterone has in males and vice versa for testosterone” (Ferree and Wade 45). By shaping the way we explain the science behind our bodies, we have given this ideology something stronger to lean on. Characterizing things that are natural to all bodies as either male or female serves as proof that there are indeed biological differences between the genders. Not only that, but it serves as a basis for what to avoid. Testosterone is responsible for facial hair growth; it is also a “male hormone.” This signals to a woman that anything this male hormone is responsible for must be removed at once because it must be unnatural if it has presented itself in a woman.

Not everyone looks to science to explain why we do or don't do things. Most of the time, we look to other people to make sure we are doing what is “right.” The ideals we assign to each gender are maintained by Gender Rules: “instructions for how to appear and behave as a man or a woman” (Ferree and Wade 61). These rules are enforced by gender policing: a “response to the violation of gender rules aimed at promoting conformity” (Ferree and Wade 71). We judge how well we are following the gender rules by looking at other people and we rely on them to make sure we are doing this “gender” thing correctly. These other members of society are the sources of the informal sanctions by which we live amongst others. If we follow the group, the group will let us stay. These sanctions give us the feedback we need to help us adjust to what the group wants. Because rules and norms are so important to the continuance of society, we invest in them heavily. In fact, “no matter how you do gender, doing it is compulsory if you want to be treated like an integrated member of society” (Ferree and Wade 78). Sometimes you don't have any use for a particular norm but will follow it for the sake of not being too different. Gender policing and gender rules aren't always about being a proper man or woman, sometimes it is being a proper whatever you are. All sectors of life have these norms and there is always a “right” and “wrong” way to do gender within that sphere. Being a lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or gay might violate the gender norms of a society, but within that, there are norms there too.

You, society, are decidedly male centric. You have constructed yourself in a way that favors men in almost all ways, including how people do and live as

their gender. Even the binary leans towards men; it is “hierarchical. It places men above women, values masculinity above femininity and routinely brings men and women together into relationships in which women are positioned as helpers to men” (Ferree and Wade 113). If the playing field on which the genders interact are leaning towards being male dominated, it makes society patriarchal. This further legitimizes the differences between the genders because it is everywhere. By a society being a patriarchal one, it puts women and the female gender on a different plane than the male gender. This androcentrism (“gender- based prejudice: the granting of higher status, respect, value, reward and power to the masculine compared to the feminine” (Ferree and Wade 119)) forces femininity into a subordinate position under masculinity along with anything associated with it.

“The hegemonic, hyper-masculine ideal” is an idea we as a society have of what a “real man” is. The “real man” shows little, if any, emotion, responds to perceived threats with aggression, has the body of a conditioned athlete and the wallet of an eccentric millionaire. It is the male equivalent of little girls wanting to look like the Barbie dolls of their childhood. The good news is that “all men, by virtue of being men, have some claim to these traits (of being a ‘real man’) even if they themselves don’t possess them” (Ferree and Wade 124). Which answers the question of why it is not challenged more often. As a man, even if you do not fit this impossible ideal and find yourself at the bottom of the hierarchy of men, you still retain some semblance of your male privilege. It is a socially warped reverse form of natural selection. Because we invest so heavily in the binary and all it stands for, men are all but guaranteed to come out on top. This system was created for men, which is also why women do not benefit from it. And when women start to do well in a previously male dominated area, the men leave. This male flight is “a phenomenon in which men abandon feminizing arenas of life” (Ferree and Wade 122).

In our society, we equate power with masculinity. Men are born with various degrees of this and will settle into their spots on the hierarchy as they age. In order for women to have just a little bit of that power, they have to act like something they are not: men. Women have to take something on to have power whereas men just have it by default. As a woman, no matter how much power you have, you are still expected to do or maintain feminine roles. “Notice that the most successful women ... usually rely on a team of other less advantaged women ... The surgeon may have achieved a level of prestige usually reserved for a man, but she does so on the backs of other women who do devalued, still-feminized work on her behalf” (Ferree and Wade 154). Men do not have to, nor are they really expected to, worry about housework or the kids’ schedules the way she does. This effectively puts forth the double bind that has become institutionalized. This double bind exists because masculinity has been established as the default, so women must work extra hard to maintain their position and also try to get a piece of what the men have. This gender-balance is taught to young girls at an early

age. Along with being flooded with femininity, girls encounter “parents [who] don’t typically approve of their sons being ‘sissies’ [but] they often embrace the idea of their daughters being ‘tomboys’ ... Since masculine activities are highly valued, it makes sense that girls would be drawn to them and parents would be proud” (Ferree and Wade 142). This sets women back because they have to carry extra baggage around: the weight of being a woman and the weight of being half a man. It is important that women encroach on their territory just a little “because power is gendered, the requirement to do femininity is also the requirement to do powerlessness ... A feminine person defers to hegemonic masculinity by letting men take care of her ... a feminine sexuality is one that waits and responds, never acts or initiates.” Being feminine in its intended context is disempowering and meant to be demeaning.

In contrast to the men, who perform their gender by over-exaggerating, women have different forms of femininity to choose from so that they can maintain their femininity *just enough* to dilute whatever masculinity they have so that they aren’t threatening to men; this is called the feminine apologetic. These forms of femininity are themselves pieces of luggage for women to carry around. Each bag brings its own consequences.

This delicate balance feeds the double bind women have to deal with. Hostile sexism is the “condemnation of women with negative instead of positive stereotypes and the use of threats and violence to enforce women’s subservience to men” (Ferree and Wade 150). When women don’t do what they are “supposed to do” they face a barrage of insults and violence that is meant to remind them of their place in relation to men. If you don’t take a compliment or want to sleep with an interested man, for example, you’re a prude or a bitch. There would be nothing wrong with the woman’s behavior if it existed *outside of their interaction with men*. It is only because she denies him something he is entitled to that she faces these insults and this hostility. “Violence is part of the way that male dominance is upheld, but it’s also a measure of the cracks in the system. If women never challenged male authority, there would be no need to reassert patriarchy by force” (Ferree and Wade 151). But let’s say that she does comply with his behavior, what she gets in return is not much better. Benevolent sexism is the “attribution of positive traits to women that, nonetheless, justify women’s subordination to men” (Ferree and Wade 147). A put down dressed up as a compliment is just a nicely worded insult.

Along with the gender binary, we have the power that comes from it. As humans, we are very good at categorizing things to make it easier for us to process them. We like to label things because labels come with instructions. We have already established that we categorize people according to gender, but we do this so that we know where we are in relation to them. The binary serves as a seating chart so that everyone knows where they belong, but a curious thing happens once everyone is comfortably sitting at their assigned tables. We start to use the binary

for its intended purpose: hierarchical interaction. The binary, then, is not just a system of classification, but a rule book for where your station in life is depending on where you are on the binary spectrum.

Once the industrial revolution hit, women were more sought after by employers than men because their labor was cheap, and they were a more submissive labor pool. This dragged the men's wages down, which meant the family would have to depend on both of them working to survive. This devalued the patriarchy because the patriarchy rests on the "fact" that only men should, because only men can. System-wide change had to happen, and it had to happen fast. Enter the family wage: "an income paid to one male earner that was large enough to support a home, a wife and children" (Ferree and Wade 201). The family wage meant that women could go back home where it was safe, which led to a new category of marriage: the breadwinner/ housewife marriage. "Unlike patriarch/property marriage, breadwinner/housewife marriage did not legally subordinate wives to husbands ... But, because this model of marriage was organized in a gender binary way, it continued to define the rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives differently. Women owed men domestic service ...; in return, men were legally required to support their wives financially" (Ferree and Wade 203). The separation of women from working life created space for separate spheres to grow and take hold. These spheres clearly marked the working world as masculinized and the home life as feminized with just enough room for the cult of domesticity (the blind acceptance that women should be happy to be quarantined at home where it is her life's work to make it a loving home for her husband) to form at its base. However, at the same time that this marriage model was taking hold, other women were also flocking to the workforce in droves. This family wage was out of reach for families of color where it was more of an ideal than an actuality. This ideal was only achieved by middle and upper class White families who could afford to have the wife stay home. Meanwhile, everyone else was struggling to make ends meet. Because "Black women were more successful at obtaining employment than Black men and were demonstrating that they could be self-sufficient and independent of the help of Black men," Black families were going through the same social crisis White families faced at the beginning of the industrial revolution. But there would be no family wage to bail out the Black patriarchy (Simmons 30). There was no fix to give Black men their power over their lives or their wives. This in itself had consequences. Neither men, nor women could perform their gender properly and as such, they couldn't do so together because one performance requires the other. And because men had to be the breadwinners, but couldn't be because of their various stereotypes, they had to prove their masculinity in other ways. You cannot be superior if no one is underfoot. Masculine dominance is maintained as long as she "knows her place" and what better way to do that than to systematically take all the legitimacy away from what little power she has?

It matters what people are doing in their homes because that is what they

are teaching their children. And if there are enough people with a similar behavior, it stands to reason that those behaviors will infect the places outside the home, in the institutions our world depends on. Those institutions influence how we are at home, bringing the cycle full circle. Like everything that must be built, the power that comes with our separation of the genders requires scaffolding that we have permanently built into the foundations of society. These institutions are “patterns of social interaction aimed at meeting the needs of a society that can’t easily be met by individuals alone” (Ferree and Wade 164). Institutions have cycles that are fed by norms which feed the policies that in turn feed the institution.

This in itself does not add to the power hierarchy. What adds to it, feeds it and legitimizes the power within these institutions are their gendered component. A gendered institution is one “in which gender is used as an organizing principle ... men and women are channeled into different and often differently valued, social spaces or activities and their choices have different and often unequal consequences” (Ferree and Wade 167). The power comes from the dividing of space and activities between the genders that we apply to everyday institutions. This division is upheld by its gender salience, which is “the relevance of gender across context, activities and spaces” (Ferree and Wade 169). This relevance is the landscape that makes up the geography of gender. If this structure wasn’t relevant, it could not continue. By making the topography of the gender divide, and therefore the gender binary, relevant, it legitimizes it. There are safeguards in place to keep everything subdivided, with men retaining all the power. The gender salience also doubles as the prescription for our gender binary glasses. We tend to naturally separate things into masculine and feminine based on connections our minds make between the thing/activity and the person. The connection to the thing/activity and the person’s gender is based on relevance and when you venture too far from the category you are put in, you become a blind spot.

Not only do the genders get paid differently, which serves to put women at a severe disadvantage, but there is a gendered job segregation issue to deal with. Gendered job segregation is “the practice of filling occupations with mostly male or mostly female workers” (Ferree and Wade 286). If you pay all the dental assistants the same amount, that is equality. If you only allow women to be dental assistants *in order to pay them the same amount*, that is not equality. It is especially not equal if the few men in the profession are paid more or are given higher positions sooner than they are qualified for them in order to justify the pay gap. Keeping women at a certain level or below traps them beneath the glass ceiling. The problem with that is that “jobs aren’t inherently masculine or feminine, of course, nor is it natural to fill certain jobs with one sex and not the other. Instead, jobs are socially constructed in ways that suggest they are best suited for stereotypical women or men, while other features that would undermine that idea are ignored” (Ferree and Wade 296-297). And if we can all ignore these other features, we can also ignore the fact that the gender pay gap is androcentric. Not only that, but the status of a job

depends on the segregation of the genders. The more women typically employed in a profession, the lower the status and the pay. This creates an image of wealth that is distinctly masculine and excludes women. With women working comes women's independence which calls into question the patriarchy and the general purpose of a man in a woman's life. The working woman is a symbolic threat to the institution of masculinity and the validity of male dominance.

When adults are not at work they are at home, where the unpaid work for one's ungrateful offspring called the "second shift" awaits. This is house maintenance and child maintenance. Traditionally, this is the mother's job. You see this reflected in media and advertising; Commercials for household products are "mom tested" and "used by (however many) mothers nationwide." This implied that (a) it's Mom's job to deal with the purchasing of this product, and (b) this is specifically not Dad's sphere. This sends a message that the second shift is feminized labor. This leads to a division of labor at home the way there is a division of labor at work. Men are above feminized labor *because* they don't do it, men also don't do feminized labor *because* they are above it. This devalues the work that is deemed as feminized as something that is supposed to happen, so it is not special.

The devaluing of traditionally feminized labor does two things. It reduces the amount and the influence of the power of the person who does it and it means that taking this labor on is almost a complete forfeiture of power. The mother-figure (not to exclude male/male relationships) will either reduce their hours working outside the home or will stop working altogether in order to devote all of their time to the kids. This means that they are now dependent on the working partner. If wealth equals power and the mother-figure has no money of their own, they also have no power. Yes, they might "run the house," but all of this is paid for by someone else. This does the opposite for poverty what wealth does for masculinity: it feminizes it. This is during the child raising years as well as after. By the time the mother-figure goes back to work after the kids are older, the workforce has changed. She doesn't pick up where she left off, she took ten steps back to square one. But his career is more than flourishing.

The androcentric structure you have built around us even has roots in our sexuality and how we express it. Before World War II, sexuality was bland, predictable and a private matter. After the war, the birthrates skyrocketed when the soldiers came home. These children, the baby boomers, started a revolution of anti-conformity. One aspect of this revolution was the uprooting of sexual conservatism and the liberating of female sexuality from its connection to male needs. "Reflecting the androcentrism of the time, women's sexuality was framed as 'suppressed' and men's as 'normal.' The very definition of sexual liberation, in other words, came to be modeled on a masculine version of sexuality that involved fewer restrictions on sexual behavior" (Ferree and Wade 223). This was new territory with new rules. However, this theory contradicts itself because this new feminine sexuality was still connected to male sexuality by mimicking it. It

still existed in relation to male sexuality, the only thing that changed was the lack of emphasis on male sexual pleasure.

With the restructuring of female sexuality came a change in how the genders interacted with each other. Women now had more power to say yes or no. But they needed men's attention for them to be able to say yes or no. This began an idea that some people are more desirable and worthier of attention (and the option to say yes or no) than others. This is yet another contradiction to "female sexual liberation." Instead of existing to serve/pleasure men, women were now making themselves appear or be available in ways that would make a man want to approach them—just for the option of saying yes or no. Which in itself is another contradiction. What would be the point of dressing, speaking or acting in a way to attract attention just to say no? The sexual revolution took the power away from men but gave it back in the form of control. Women now had the power to do as they wanted, but they still moved in relation to men because they still adhered to the heterosexual male gaze (the shaping of the media to conform to a "hypothetical heterosexual man" (Ferree and Wade 231)).

The restructuring of sexuality also means a restructuring of how our sexualities interact with those of others. Which is assuming that the coitus in question is voluntary. Right under the skin of society is a hyper-sexual culture with its own spectrum. On the extreme end of that spectrum is the rape culture that surrounds the dangers of not following the script. There are those who feel that there is no game, and so the thought that a woman might reject their advances is not part of the equation. The rape culture is the underlining environment right under the hyper-sexual culture. It is the enforcement for hostile sexism. The idea that the woman moves in relation to the man is so ingrained into our society that we tend to put the blame on her. Whatever she was wearing, drinking or doing is what led her to be raped. In removing the man as the perpetrator, it leaves the victim to be blamed. All of the risk and responsibility is placed on the woman, as if the rapist has no control over their actions; as if rape is the natural consequence of some action she has done. Because the blame and the responsibility are placed on the victim, rapes are sometimes not reported. The guilty never call the authorities on themselves, and if you are made to feel that you have done something wrong, why would you report it? In this way, rape is used as another tool to enforce the patriarchy and the power men draw from it.

In a way, we are all cars on a highway, trying to figure out which way to go. Gender is like a road sign; it is needed for us to know how to interact with each other, which depends on the power structure, which depends on your gender. "In this culture, gender attribution, like gender assignment is phallogentric. That is, one is assumed to be male until perceived otherwise," so without the instructions that come with gender, we are pretty much lost (Bornstein 31). The power you have comes from your gender, as spoken about by Kate Bornstein, someone who has been both and neither. If gender had nothing to do with the person's power,

there wouldn't have to be a reason for Bornstein, who is a transgender woman, to relearn basic mannerisms and etiquette as a woman. There is a way to be either gender and there is a reason for that. Those instructions "have their uses in much the same way that road signs make it easy to travel: they point out the directions" (Bornstein 25). In going from being a man to a woman, her power had to change, and she had to change with it. She could not keep the power she enjoyed as a man when she became a woman. Part of being one's gender properly is having the correct amount of power. This is why a female CEO is expected to forgo having a home life and focus on her career: if you're going to play the man game, you'll have to play it all the way. We need to have a concrete understanding of *what* you are to know what you are supposed to do.

The same way that knowing a person's gender helps us to know how much power to give them is the same way it is needed to take that power away. This is not something we really think about because we have been raised with the binary. This is what we know and anything contrary to this feels off and wrong. In this way, your gender becomes the face of the identity that faces the world. Having this identity means you have successfully "done gender" and doing so allows you to be part of that gender. You must be part of something to be accepted in society because society requires conformity. Bornstein learned this first hand once she started living as a woman. Her status was reduced, and her opinions were no longer listened to. She was the same person with a few alterations to her body. But with these alterations came the reality that "the differences in the way men and women are treated are real. And the fact is this difference in treatment has no basis in the differences between men and women. I was the same person, and I was treated entirely differently" (Bornstein 146-147).

Unfortunately, we put a tremendous value on gender, power and conformity. It is not comfortable, nor is it natural for every single person to behave the same way. People are individuals and as such, they tend to be different. This conformity to everyone else is what society needs to maintain control and to keep things moving smoothly. It works for you then that no one has the time to slow down and realize that. You are prepared for this, with convenient safeguards to ensure that everything goes according to plan. Gender (and everything that goes with it) tilts in favor of men. It's also safe to say that there are different layers within said binary. Race is one of those layers. During slavery, Black people were seen as helpless and in need of guidance and saving from their White masters. After slavery, that narrative had to change. "Since Black people were supposedly 'new' in the late 1800s, it would be expected that the old gender ideologies in which they adopted from their White slave owners during slavery would be erased" (Simmons 39). Black people went from being helpless to being overly aggressive and violent. Take that image and inject it into the binary and what do you get? Yes, all Black people are violent, but the women are less so because they are women. This new image, and the story that went with it leaked into the workforce. It was easier and safer to

hire a Black woman than a Black man. And “since it was thought that racism only plagued Black men, and Black women were making more progress as a result of Black men being racially oppressed,” it allowed Black women to get ahead while leaving Black men behind (Simmons 40).

Women’s lack of power is even seen in hindsight. Even looking back at history are women put on the back burner. The effects of slavery on women and mothers and daughters are not fully addressed as topics worthy of discussion on their own, away from those of men, fathers and sons. The research done on slavery is viewed from the perspective of how the Black patriarchy was undermined and the effect that has on Black men today. No one is discounting that. But men were not the only ones enslaved and so they cannot claim a monopoly over suffering. There is a counterargument to the one-dimensional view on the effect’s slavery had on Black men that not many people want to dive into. Angela Davis argues that the Angry Black Woman, who is too strong and stubborn for any man, started during slavery. It would have been inconvenient if slaveowners had an entire population of slaves that weren’t treated the same way or weren’t as productive. So, “when it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, they were regarded, in effect, as genderless, but when they could be exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women, they were locked into their exclusively female roles” in a way that men were not (Davis 6). Women’s roles were flexible in a way that men were not. Men were oppressed during and after slavery and are caught in a cycle of constantly trying to catch up and prove that they are not what is being said about them. Women, however, were/are oppressed depending on the need or the oppressor. Women were sometimes men, sometimes women, but were mostly something in between. This fluidity between the genders was “required by the masters’ demands to be as ‘masculine’ in the performance of their work as their men, [and so,] Black women must have been profoundly affected by their experiences during slavery. Some, no doubt, were broken and destroyed, yet the majority survived and, in the process, acquired qualities considered taboo by the nineteenth-century ideology of womanhood” and that behavior clashes terribly with our current take on what women are (Davis 11).

This path that we have been put on is not without its side effects. Media is one of the methods you use to keep us right where you want us. Using the media is perfect because “American teenagers spend more than 10 hours a day consuming media, most of it filled with content that objectifies women and distorts their bodies” (Miss Representation 2011). This in itself is not so bad *if and only if* the people watching are able to tell the difference between what is fake and what is reality. But once they cross that line and what is fake becomes an expectation for reality, we now have a bigger problem on our hands. The main problem being that “the message is that women are objectified objects, that that’s their primary being, that’s a very tough and challenging message for young women who think that’s their path to power” (Miss Representation 2011). When young girls and women see this

as the only way women are supposed to act, it confines them to the heterosexual male gaze. Not only is that not even representative for actual men, but it is next to impossible to achieve this.

In men viewing women as objects for their use and women receiving the message that they are not as important, it creates an internal dialog; and there is nothing to the contrary for young girls to see. They might feel that this system of oppression is wrong, but if what is around them tells them that they have no power and no right to power, what else are they supposed to think? The media does not show strong women, and if they do, it doesn't last very long. Strong female characters do not last long on TV. So, who do these girls have to look up to? The remaining strong women are criticized constantly and that gives them mixed signals. A young woman who wants to go into politics might think twice just based on the way we treat our female politicians. Whether you agree with her politics or her decisions, Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State. But when she ran for President she was criticized for her appearance, relatability, hair length, her choice of pant suit... *then* came the email and Benghazi scandals. But in reality, Secretary Clinton is everything we as a society want in our leaders: strong, void of emotion, able to put her career first, and unable to empathize with another human being; her only defect is that she doesn't have a penis. There is even a difference in how we refer to female politicians compared to our male politicians. Hillary, Nancy, Alexandria, Sarah and Elizabeth versus Obama, Biden, Trump, Bush or Reagan. That is an obvious jab at the respect we should be giving them and as adults we should know better.

While women are taught to not think much, men are taught the opposite. It is very hard to be a man, they are told, and it requires intense commitment. Anything less than that and you cease being a man. We start when boys are young, and we teach them that "there is a dominance hierarchy, there are tough guys at the top and there are weaklings (girls) at the bottom of the heap... this is the origin of sexism and homophobia. In sexism, it's that a girl isn't as strong as a boy. With homosexuality, the gay man becomes the most stigmatized version of weakness and sissy-ness. What happens in your relations with other kids is that you pick out someone who appears weak in that way and maybe you bully him or maybe it's just a more subtle kind of demeaning and you start hating that thing about him that you are afraid of in yourself" (The Mask You Live In 2015). What boys and men see is that there is only one way to be a man and any variation of this is wrong and must be eradicated, if not in himself, then in others. As if a lack of manliness in someone else will demean his masculinity by proximity. In chasing after this ideal man, men and boys chip little bits of themselves away piece by piece. They must break themselves to become what society tells them they should be. The same way not all women want to be the submissive housewife, not all men want to be ultra-aggressive meat-heads who go looking for fights everywhere they go. Most are just regular people who are just as confused by all of this as the women are.

This requirement to be stone-faced and emotionless providers puts an enormous pressure on them and that starts in childhood. What makes matters worse is that sometimes the fathers are not around to set a good example, or when they are, they set the wrong example. These kids are being bombarded with stimuli that tell them to be something they want to resist, and they don't know what to do about it.

When I came close to finishing this letter, I realized something. You need this. There is a feeling people have these days as the idea that gender is a social construction takes hold that is almost frenzy-like. People are either quick to abandon the labels or they hunker down and brace for impact. These are the traditionalists and your loyal fans; they never questioned you. But the others, the people like me who have come up for air, we threaten you in a way that scares you to your core. It is important for your survival that we don't ask questions and that we remain blind. Because if we don't, we would still need you. A society is a group of people that come together with a common goal. Our goals and needs have changed over the years, but we are still in need of the society around us for our survival. But if we can look at ourselves, really look at ourselves, we might see that we don't need most of what we hold onto. If we were able to use logic to restructure ourselves so that everyone had space, we would no longer have any need for you. The common goal we have been striving for would easily be achieved with no collateral damage. I am not so bold as to call for the deconstruction of gender or the gender binary, although that does seem like the best solution in my eyes. I cannot call for this, because I do not think we are ready to be mature enough to handle that. What would we think of each other without some common reference point to guide us? How would we interact? Does the thought of sharing power or having one's own power scare us so much that we would rather all be disadvantaged to some degree to avoid being uncomfortable? Yes, apparently, we would.

Not enough of us see the binary as the seating chart that it is, we are all still seated, watching the show. We see each other even though you try to separate us. The more of us there are, the harder it is for you to control everyone else. You cannot stop all of us and there are more than you think.

Intermission is coming.

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“Honestly, I never knew I could write well, but a great teacher can bring out your hidden talents. The essay and insightful lessons of Professor Wood changed my way of looking at my surroundings. As a result, I was not only able to scrutinize and identify the objective as well as the subjective changes in my neighborhood but also the connection between them.”



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Jillian Bevens is a recent graduate of Kingsborough, where she was a criminal justice major. Although writing will always be her first love, she intends to continue her education in criminal justice and sociology. On the rare occasion that she has a moment to herself, she enjoys reading, writing and pretending that she will ever have a chance to catch up on sleep.



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Levi Borevitz is a first-year math major, and his goals are to get a master's in science and do his own research. Levi loves to learn; as someone who grew up religious, the topic of how they influence each other is very interesting and he hopes that this essay will stimulate new conversations about this topic.



VIOLETTA BRIN

“My major is Art and Design, and it's amazing how college life encourages you to work harder and be open-minded for new passions, as now I have found mine. My ‘A Tour of the Monuments of Two Continents’ means a lot to me.”



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“I am a nursing student. I had always loved biology and knew I wanted to enter the healthcare field but was unsure exactly which path to take. I decided nursing was for me when I was in the hospital for minor surgery and saw how big an impact nurses can have on a patient’s hospital experience. My hope is to always create positive experiences for my future patients in what can potentially be a scary and overwhelming time.”



SHOLOM GUTLEIZER

“I am a mental health student, but my interests reach far beyond that subject. Of my interests, the moral landscape of our culture interests me tremendously. America as a nation started with specific principles, which have been largely abandoned. This was for the good as well as for the bad. I believe we have yet to find common ground as a basis for our newly found freedoms, a place where we all can meet happily and freely.”



SURAYYO KHUSENOVA

“We should never say that a mental disease will not happen to us. Before we judge someone with a mental disease, we should understand it. Before we speak, we have to think. Only then can we empathize with the pain they are going through.”



KOURTNIE RAMSAY

Kourtnie Ramsay has long since been an advocate of social issues and hopes to continue channeling this passion through her studies at the tertiary level. Originally hailing from the island nation of Jamaica, she currently resides in Brooklyn where she spends far too much time being inconvenienced by the MTA and dreaming of balmy winters. She plans to pursue a career in the field of corporate law.



KYLE REESE

“I am in my first year at Kingsborough as a Liberal Arts major, with intent to continue to a Psychological Sciences B.S. and eventually Ph. D. This piece was inspired by my own family, as myself, my sister, and our maternal cousins are adopted and display many expressions of nature and nurture that would come as a surprise to many seasoned psychologists. My future research interests are in vulnerable populations, specifically the LGBT community and gender variant population.”



LILIA TEAL

“I am a painter and writer who uses both mediums to investigate women’s history within the confines of patriarchy and the movements that have challenged this dynamic as it exists within societal contexts and our intimate, personal narratives. I live and work in Brooklyn with my husband and our three daughters.”



PHI THETA KAPPA HONOR SOCIETY

Nicholas James, Sholom Gutleizer, Kyle Reese, Emmerline Ragoonath, Iffat Tariq, Jacqueline Ahmed, and Camilo Florez

“We are all equal co-authors for the paper. It was divided up, the research was conducted evenly, and the project was a focus throughout its inception from the summer.”



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Distinctions welcomes submissions year-round. The deadline for the Fall 2019 issue is August 15. Submissions that come in after that date will be considered for the Spring 2020 issue (deadline: February 1).

Students: Please submit to *Distinctions* any outstanding research-related course work, whether you wrote it for Honors credit or not. As for visual art, the present editor is most interested in depictions and projects related to New York City and its environs.

Instructors: Please encourage your students who have conducted original and compelling research to submit it to *Distinctions*.

Email the file to me, Bob Blaisdell (Robert.Blaisdell@Kingsborough.edu), with the subject line DISTINCTIONS SUBMISSION and on paper to the Honors House in M377. Include your contact information. I will acknowledge all submissions upon receipt.

