JOHN JAY'S

FINEST

**outstanding undergraduate writing
from across the curriculum**

Jeffrey Heiman
Adam Berlin
Editors

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

The *Finest* is forty, and at forty a journal (or a person) will have seen some changes. If every issue of this journal is a capsule of its moment, what politics pressed in on us in 1985? What social issues? What movement in science? What music? Russia was still the USSR, Reagan had most of the decade, and Michael Jackson was everywhere. And one thing certain is in 1985, *JJ's Finest* writers were as politically alert, as intellectually curious as their moment in history needed them to be. Just as now, we respond to the issues that call for attention.

Maybe every period in history feels itself to be at a precipice, but in our time of jarring change and looming threat, we see the *Finest* writers looking both ways and taking it all in. The view this year is of human rights and body rights, of immigration, race, gender, police in their communities, and of course social media. There is impressive research, innovative argumentation, and rigorous attention to form. And there's more: the introspection that urges itself on keen observers and critics, people for whom our historical moment registers internally, in personal narrative and fiction. A writer casts a clinical eye on events around her own birth. Another overcomes a physical challenge. A young daughter is able to be for her mother a quiet, listening, healing presence, and yet another walks straight through Whitman's *Song of Myself* into her own Brooklyn. What pulls this all together, as in every year of the *Finest*, is the movement toward clarity that comes with careful thinking and precision on the page.

No publication is its writers and editors only, and the *Finest* would surely not be possible without the support of many at John Jay. We thank President Mason and Provost Pease and all in their offices for supporting the project. Several years ago, the *Finest* joined forces with Bettina Muenster and the Office for Student Research & Creativity. We thank Bettina for extending the reach of the *Finest*. For their logistical support, we thank Raeanne Raices and Maribel Perez. And this year, we are grateful to Laura DeVries for her vibrant cover design. And a perpetual thanks to Alex De Leon and the print shop folks for the physical volume itself.

To John Jay College's professors, who inspire, who challenge, and who demand careful, responsible, and effective writing, we salute your dedication. And, of course, our admiration and congratulations go to all the students in this year's issue. We are proud to publish your fine work.

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Jeffrey Heiman
Adam Berlin
April 2025

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♦ ENGLISH 101

DROP DEAD GORGEOUS!
THE TROUBLING OBSESSION
WITH AESTHETICIZING
THE FEMALE CORPSE

NATALYA SINGH

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SUICIDE" IS AN OXYMORON that encapsulates society's unsettling attraction to the aestheticized female corpse. This phrase is attached to an image of Evelyn Frances McHale. On the first of May in 1947, McHale, a 23-year-old California native, ended her life by jumping off the 86th floor observation deck of the Empire State Building. After she landed on a parked car, Robert Wiles, a photography student, took her picture as she lay on top of the crushed car. The image was iconic. It was published in *Time* and *Life* magazine. Andy Warhol and other artists were inspired by the image of the beautiful, lifeless body of McCale. Until today, not many know her name, but they know the picture. She was too attractive and peaceful looking to not be photographed. McHale became famous for her appearance in death.

Depictions of female corpses are not new, with McHale's image as part of a longstanding historical trend. Dead women are portrayed in Victorian literature and art as serene and beautiful. This persisting aestheticization of the female corpse reveals deeper and troubling societal attitudes toward women in general. Historically, women have been reduced to their visual appearance, not escaping this even in the case of their death. This romanticizing of women in death perpetuates stereotypes and ideals that have consistently harmed women throughout history. Women have become objects of fascination, rather than real people with agency. Stripping the reality and tragedy of a woman's death, and only focusing on its visual allure proves the media's objectification obsession with women. Across art, literature, and media, the romanticization of women's death reflects an ongoing tendency to reduce women to only objects of aesthetic, stripping them of their individuality and reinforcing societal ideals of female purity, passivity, and beauty.

Victorian art and literature portrayed women as serene and beautiful in death. This ingrained ideals of purity and passivity into the image of women of the time. In *Over Her Dead Body*, Elisabeth Bronfen discusses how Victorian society elevated women in their deaths by connecting their image to innocence and beauty. This transformed the deceased female form into an aestheticized symbol of purity and allure (Bronfen 66-72). These depictions put forward deceased women as ethereal beings, untouched by the harsh realities of death, reinforcing a vision of femininity that was passive and idealized. The character Ophelia from *Hamlet*, for example, became a popular figure in Victorian art. Her death was depicted as beautiful, focusing on the visual allure rather than the actual tragedy that was her life (Bronfen 90-96). Such portrayals reinforced society's preference for women who embodied compliance, setting an important precedent for the "beautiful corpse" as a cultural image.

Expanding on this idealization, Judith Pike's *Exquisite Corpses* notes that Victorian ideals often confined women to roles that emphasized passive beauty and purity. These qualities were deemed most valuable in life but also extended into portrayals of female death (Pike 78-81). The habit of glorifying women as angelic figures reflects the reluctance of society to recognize women as the complex individuals that they are. Portrayals of figures like Ophelia highlighted a cultural need to present the feminine character as serene and uncomplex, with women in death embodying purity rather than personal autonomy. Bronfen and Pike both suggest that these Victorian portrayals of the beautiful female corpse laid a foundation for modern depictions that reduced women to objects of beauty alone (Bronfen 180-186; Pike 98-101).

Modern media plays a crucial role in perpetuating the romanticization of women's deaths, thereby reducing their tragedies to mere visual spectacles. Evelyn McHale's story is an important example. The incident was entitled "The Most Beautiful Suicide" after she jumped from the Empire State Building in 1947. Her death was immortalized by a photograph taken just minutes later. Brenna Mulhall's article *The Romanticization of the Dead Female Body* delves into how McHale's death became such an important part of popular culture, not for her tragedy but rather for her perceived beauty in death (Mulhall 3). The fixation on her serenity overshadows

any conversation on her struggles or agency, transforming her into an object of fascination. Rather than address the complexity of her life, and events that may have led up to her death, modern media has reduced McHale to a hauntingly beautiful image, further reinforcing the longstanding stereotype of the female corpse.

The cultural fixation on aestheticizing women's deaths extends beyond real-life tragedies to media like fashion and entertainment. Mulhall critiques a 2008 episode of "America's Next Top Model" whereby the contestants were styled and posed to look like victims of fictitious death, ranging from causes like poisonings to drownings. Mulhall argues that the photoshoot illustrated how women's deaths are turned into a commodity and spectacle ready for social consumption, reinforcing the beautiful female corpse trope once again (Mulhall 5-6). Death is treated as a concept rather than a reality. This death-themed photoshoot diminishes the reality and pain of mortality and underscores societal ideals of beauty and passivity of women. Mulhall notes that this reduction of the female death to its visual allure parallels the media's treatment of Evelyn McHale, which focused solely on her beauty.

In Thelma van Rensburg's *Uneasy Bodies*, she describes a "fetishization of the female dead body" (van Rensburg 15). When analyzing contemporary art and fashion photography, van Rensburg explores how the female corpse is depicted in serene poses, erasing any evidence of violence, trauma, or realistic tragedy. Portrayals like the Top Model photoshoot reinforce societal attitudes that prioritize the visuals over the person herself, objectifying and even idealizing women in their deaths. In *Over Her Dead Body*, Bronfen notes that this aestheticization reduces the harsh reality of what death is and makes it more palatable for society by portraying death as something serene and peaceful (Bronfen 214-220). These examples reveal the media's role in perpetuating the objectification of women and reinforcing societal ideals of purity and beauty. Both Mulhall and van Rensburg highlight how depictions of women sanitize death and turn it into just another aesthetic tool to push standards of beauty. This again ignores the humanity and complexity of the woman who died.

The cultural implications of romanticizing female death reinforce the harmful stereotypes about women's roles and their value in life. Mulhall writes that this "beautiful corpse" trope positions purity, passivity, and beauty as measures of a woman's worth (Mulhall 6-7). The idealization of the female corpse allows society to communicate that the only lasting attribute of a woman is her beauty and visual allure. Aestheticized depictions of women in Victorian art send the message that a woman's value lies in how they look and their visual appeal to others rather than their own lives, victories, defeats, and all their experiences. Mulhall criticizes this narrative because it erases women's agency and humanity, turning them into an object of fascination for a voyeuristic, superficial, and insensitive society.

In addition to dehumanizing women and aestheticizing their deaths, the "beautiful corpse" trope trivializes their lives. This idea is further explored in Lucienne Bestall's *Except for Breath*. Bestall examines how images of death often strip away the individuality of the subject, in this case, the subject is women, and turns them into objects of cultural significance and aesthetic (Bestall 4-5). This allows the viewers to then engage with the image in a detached way rather than fully confronting the subject's humanity. Women are ignored for their lives and only glamorized for

their visual appeal in death alone. This idea of Bestall further supports Mulhall's critique of the Top Model photoshoot, as it transformed death into a concept meant for perpetuating the perceived beauty of women in death, disregarding the emotional and physical reality of death (Mulhall 6). Bestall and Mulhall argue that this tendency maintains the cultural narrative that prioritizes aesthetic value over personal depth – women as passive and ornamental.

From Victorian art to modern media, a persistent cultural tendency to reduce women to objects of fascination ready to be aestheticized is evidenced. Historical portrayals, like Ophelia in Victorian literature, laid a framework for valuing women for their passivity and beauty, in life and sadly, in death. This paradigm became longstanding, leading modern media to focus on appearance of a woman. From Evelyn McHale to America's Top Model photoshoot, these portrayals dehumanize women and perpetuate incredibly harmful stereotypes.

Society produces stereotypes that harm women in both life and death, turning them into romanticized symbols. This aestheticization trivializes their life and their pain, leading viewers to perceive them as spectacles to be looked at and idealized. As these harmful patterns persist, they nag at questions about what real value is placed on women's lives. Recognizing and challenging these patterns is vital to breaking this narrative of the "beautiful corpse" trope that objectifies women. With this, perhaps a cultural shift is possible in which women can finally be valued as the complex individuals they are, giving them back their agency and humanity, both in life and death.

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⬥ ENGLISH 101

BLOCKED FORGIVENESS

OLIVIA LUNG

I LAST SPOKE TO MY MOTHER, whom I call Lindsay, on New Year's Day 2022. She caused her final scene at my family's yearly Christmas party the previous weekend, and I could no longer stand to associate with her. I spent 16 years yearning for a relationship with her, and on that day whatever hope that remained finally fizzled out.

I was born at Good Samaritan Hospital in Clifton, Ohio at 6:30 pm on November 26, 2005. I was delivered via emergency cesarean section and weighed a whopping 6 pounds 8 ounces. My mother and father were both in their early 20s. At the time, neither had a secondary education, stable career, or a house to call their own; what they did have was a dependency on drugs. Unlike my little sister Calie, I was lucky enough not to suffer withdrawal upon birth.

Not long after I entered my parents' lives, my father Dave was hospitalized, leaving him unable to be an active caregiver in my life. He would later die after a short yet aggressive battle with Ewing Sarcoma. This presented my mother with a challenge. Could she be there for me? The short answer is no. It was rare that the two of us were ever together. As an infant, I spent many days and nights at various family friends and relatives' homes. It did not take long for my family to get CPS involved.

My great aunt Lynn and great uncle, coincidentally also named Dave, felt a personal obligation to fight on my behalf. They began to keep detailed journals that included every time and date my mother proved herself unable to fulfill a parental role. These entries would soon be used in a custody battle.

June 26, 2006: Lindsay has not been heard from for 5 days. Olivia is staying with us.
June 30, 2006: Lindsay was banned from Dave's hospital. Using his morphine drip.
July 11, 2006: Lindsay left for a cruise yesterday, and left Olivia with Grandpa. Midnight, Robert arrives at our home and surrenders Olivia to us. He couldn't stand her screaming.
July 20: 2006: Olivia was hospitalized after a seizure linked to dehydration.

On a snowy day that December, Uncle Dave nearly found himself arrested for kidnapping. He had been using my great-grandmother's computer when Lindsay rushed inside and began to frantically pack her bags along with the small amount of clothes she had for me. He knew in his heart she was heading to a crack house in Indianapolis and was planning on bringing me with her. He snuck out and drove to my babysitter's house where I was blissfully napping. Lindsay arrived shortly after him and a fight broke out on my sitter's white lawn. The police were called and Lindsay wanted Dave arrested for kidnapping. He was placed into shiny silver cuffs, but the tables would soon turn.

"Before you arrest me, would you please just search her car? I promise you that baby is not safe with her."

It was then that the police pulled enough paraphernalia from her 2001 black Chevy to line the trunk completely, and she was taken into custody. The next day Lynn and Dave went down to the juvenile courthouse where they were awarded temporary custody. The same day the station released Lindsay. She decided to give my great aunt and uncle a phone call.

"Where are my drugs? What did you do with them, where did they take them?" my mother howled.

"You'll have to ask the police what they did with them. Don't bother coming back to get Olivia."

"You did it, didn't you? You went to the courthouse." She hung up.

In the following months, my mother found herself involved in many more crimes. She failed to appear at a few of my custody hearings due to a warrant being out for her arrest. Before one particular CPS home visit, she and her father had to make a great effort to stage their home as if I had been living there. My mother didn't even own a high chair for me by the time I reached 10 months old. Fortunately, it is pretty easy for a social worker to tell when a home is lived in versus when it comes out of a Walmart catalog. Because of that, along with her growing criminal record–which now displayed 3 felonies–Lynn and Dave were awarded permanent custody of me. I give sole credit to them for the person I have become today. They gave me what

my mother wouldn't. A roof over my head, food in my belly and, most important, an education and all the support I could ever need.

The Judge ordered that every Saturday I was to have supervised visitations with Lindsay. Her father, Bob, was to be the supervisor. So, every Saturday until I was twelve years old I would spend the day with my grandpa, whom I called Papaw. We would go to McDonalds, roller skate, and play at the park. In the fall he would take me to pumpkin patches and every year I helped him make a scarecrow that would be proudly displayed in his front yard. It wasn't until after he stopped coming that I learned those visits were supposed to be for my mother. She rarely came. Visitations stopped when I was twelve because in my grandfather's words he "no longer felt like coming to get me."

The only time outside of those Saturdays I saw my mother was on holidays. She never once called, or asked to go out to breakfast. Every year she got me some art kit because all she knew about me was that I liked to draw.

The older I got, the more I resented her. She would go around telling all her friends on Facebook how much she loved her two daughters. I call this Playing Mother of the Year; it's her favorite activity.

"I would do anything for my girls. They mean the world to me."

Anything except get clean? Anything except give your oldest a call once in a while? Anything except teach my sister how to read? My sister is in 9th grade now and is barely reading and writing at a 5th-grade level.

By the time I turned sixteen and she did not even text me to wish me a happy birthday, I knew I wanted nothing to do with her. I dreaded having to see her at my family Christmas party in December. To my surprise, I learned I wouldn't have to. If there is one thing you need to know about my mother, it's that she cycles through men faster than she does couches to sleep on. Her latest boyfriend, Charles, had banned her from coming to the Christmas party because Calie's father, Lindsay's ex, was going to be there. Hallelujah! I could enjoy my day this year. Much to my dismay, around 4 pm my mother rolled up my great-grandmother's driveway in her beat-up minivan. She came inside and slumped into the blue velvet chair in the living room. I immediately noticed she was drenched in sweat, despite only wearing a T-shirt in the middle of December. She could not sit still, her hands were trembling. I wanted nothing more than for her to leave. *Is she on something right now?* Calie approached her and asked softly if she could put her presents into the trunk.

"NO. I just sat down, Calie, wait a goddamn minute."

My great uncle Dave got up and left the room. He cannot stand when my mother yells at my sister. I didn't even notice him leave. I was too busy staring down at my feet and turning my phone on and off to see how many minutes had passed by. The next thing I knew my mother was also gone, and there was screaming coming from the front room of the house. She re-entered the living room, Dave close on her tail.

"What's my problem? My problem is how you talk to your daughter!"

She began to gather her belongings, yelling for my sister to come because they were leaving. She grabbed a can of pop off the table nearest to her and threw it across the floor. Lynn reached her breaking point. Screaming erupted. I left the room.

I grabbed my dog by his collar and walked down the hall to close myself in my great-grandmother's bathroom until whatever was happening was over. All of a sudden I was a kid again, asking myself why can't my family just get along? My body slid down the tile and I just held my dog close to me. His ears were pinned back to the sides of his head; he was listening. Even my dog never liked Lindsay, and they always seemed to know who to trust. It took about 5 minutes for my mother to finally leave. The whole house was looking for me. Lynn and Dave were crying. They told me how sorry they were that this happened, but it wasn't them I was angry with.

After this incident, my mother texted me every single day. After sixteen years it was only now that she seemed to care.

"Hi, how are you?"

"Good morning."

"Did you have a good day at school?"

"Do you want a relationship with me?"

I had been ignoring her efforts until the last message. I couldn't bring myself to respond at that moment, but I knew what my answer was. Up until this point, she did not care to foster any sort of relationship between the two of us. I found it rather audacious that she tried to establish one now, after everything that had just happened. On New Year's Day, I finally told her that I did not want a relationship and that I would appreciate it if she would stop trying to contact me. She made her bed, now she can lay in it. At least, that's how I saw it. I simply blocked her number and moved on with my life. It was not easy, but I learned that mothers are not always the ones who give birth to a child. Mothers are the ones who, like my great-aunt Lynn, step up when they are needed. They make sacrifices for their children and give them a life better than what they had. Lindsay had never once attempted to be a mother to me, and I could not forgive her. I don't think she could ever forgive herself either, if she ever got sober.

♦ PHYSICAL EDUCATION 111

MY SWIMMING JOURNEY

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FATIM OUOLOGUEM

BEFORE ENROLLING IN PED 111, AQUATICS I: BEGINNER SWIMMING, I had never even dipped a toe in a pool. While I always dreamed of learning to swim, I had never taken the plunge. As a person with asthma, I was often told that swimming would be an ideal sport for me because it could help with breathing control and improve lung capacity. While I still don't know if that's true, the thought of swimming and its potential benefits always lingered in my mind. The fear of water, however, was a bigger obstacle. Despite this fear, I also felt a certain draw to water, an inexplicable feeling that pulled me toward it. It's difficult to describe, but it was as if I was both afraid and fascinated by it at the same time. I signed up for the class hoping that it would help me conquer these feelings and at least allow me to become comfortable in deep water, a goal that seemed both exciting and intimidating.

The night before my first class, I couldn't help but feel a mixture of emotions. I excitedly shared with friends that I was finally going to learn to swim. There was an overwhelming sense of anticipation, but it was coupled with anxiety. I wasn't sure how the class would go, or whether I would be able to meet my goals. But when the instructor began talking about his previous students' success stories, describing how they overcame their initial struggles and learned to swim, I started to feel a bit more at ease. I realized that swimming wasn't about perfection; it was about progress. This encouraged me and strengthened my resolve to give the course my best effort.

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The Assignment and the Writer: In this course, an introduction to fundamental swimming, students keep a journal culminating in a Reflection Paper. This provides an opportunity for participants to develop insight while learning a life skill and understanding the importance of water safety. Fatim immersed herself in this task as she eventually did in the swimming pool. In her paper, she vividly recounts the experience of challenging herself to overcome her fear of water. Fatim, who had "never even dipped a toe in a pool" before taking this class, conveys how perseverance, patience, and practice helped her to succeed. Her fluid writing style parallels the various swimming strokes she has come to develop.   **– Professor Gerald Bryant**

However, the first class didn't go as I had hoped. Despite the positive atmosphere and the encouragement from my classmates and instructors, I struggled immensely. The most challenging part for me was trying to position my body horizontally in the water. It felt unnatural, and I couldn't seem to get it right. As a former Taekwondo practitioner, my first instinct was not to push harder physically but to apply the mindset, I had developed through martial arts. In Taekwondo, I learned that technique, balance, and mental focus were just as important as physical strength. So, I realized that swimming, much like martial arts, wasn't about brute force. It was about finding the right technique, trusting the process, and being patient with myself. I had to let go of the notion that I could just force my way through, and instead, focus on controlling my body and my breathing, something that took time and persistence to master.

Despite my initial frustration, I wasn't ready to give up. I spent time researching swimming techniques and began practicing on my own. The community pool hours allowed me to practice outside of class, and I made it a point to attend regularly. It wasn't easy, but the more I practiced, the more comfortable I became in the water. Progress was slow, but it was steady, and I began to see small improvements each time I swam. It was empowering to feel myself getting better, even if it was just by a little bit each week. I also found that the more time I spent in the water, the less fear I felt. The fear of being submerged, of being in the deep end, began to dissipate. I was no longer afraid of the water itself, but rather of my own limitations.

Throughout the course, I often told myself that I was the worst swimmer in the class, but that didn't deter me. It only made me more determined to keep pushing forward. I knew that improvement wouldn't come overnight, and that slow and steady progress was better than giving up. The support I received from my classmates and instructors played a huge role in my motivation. There were times when I felt discouraged, when I didn't think I was improving, but my classmates were always there to offer encouragement. We celebrated each other's victories, no matter how small, and helped each other through difficult moments. This sense of camaraderie created a positive and supportive environment that made it easier to keep going.

One of the most significant breakthroughs I had during this course was mastering the seal roll. It took several weeks of practice, but eventually, I succeeded. I remember the moment clearly—the sense of accomplishment, the relief, and the pride I felt. It was a small step in terms of the overall course, but it felt like a huge victory for me personally. It was a reminder that perseverance pays off, and that the hard work I was putting in was leading to tangible results.

Another major hurdle for me was learning how to breathe properly while swimming, particularly when doing the freestyle stroke. Alternate breathing is one of the most difficult aspects of swimming for me. I struggled to coordinate my breathing with my strokes, and often found myself out of breath or feeling disoriented. This has been one of the biggest challenges of the course, and it's something I will continue to work on. However, I've come to understand that this is a process that takes time, and I need to be patient with myself as I improve.

In addition to the technical challenges, I also had to confront my fear of heights. This fear became particularly apparent when we were asked to jump into deep water

from a standing position. I had no idea that I had a fear of heights until that moment, and it took me by surprise. The anxiety I felt before attempting this jump was intense, and I found myself hesitating each time I had to dive. However, as with the other challenges, I was determined to push through this fear. I told myself that I would not let it stop me. While I haven't completely overcome my fear of heights yet, I am proud of the progress I've made. Each time I jump, I feel a little more comfortable, and I know that, with continued practice, I will eventually master it.

Reflecting on my experiences, I've learned a great deal about myself. This class has taught me the importance of perseverance and patience. At times, I wanted to quit, to give in to my fears, but I kept going because I realized that overcoming these fears would be incredibly rewarding. I also learned the value of community and support. This course wasn't just about learning to swim; it was about being part of a team, where everyone helped each other to succeed. The encouragement from my classmates and instructors made all the difference in my experience.

In addition to the physical skills I gained, this class taught me to approach challenges in a new way. I've learned that it's okay to struggle, as long as you keep moving forward. It's okay to not be perfect, and it's okay to take things one step at a time. What matters is the effort you put in and the progress you make, no matter how small. This mindset will help me in other areas of my life as well. I can apply the lessons I've learned in this course to any challenge I face, knowing that persistence, support, and a positive mindset are key to overcoming obstacles.

Looking ahead, I am excited to continue my swimming journey. There are still skills I need to master, particularly with breathing during freestyle and diving into deep water. I'm committed to working on these areas and improving my swimming overall. I also plan to conquer my fear of heights completely. This course has shown me that with patience and practice, anything is possible.

This class has been the most rewarding experience of my university career. It wasn't just about swimming—it was about growth, community, and the power of perseverance. I look forward to continuing to learn and grow, both in the pool and in life.

◆ ENGLISH 101

COOKIES AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

JERELY VASQUEZ

COOKIES ARE FASCINATING. Not so much the actual dessert but the word in itself. Cookies. Say it. *Coooookies*. For you it may be easy and something you learned to say perfectly before you learned to properly ride a bike. However, it has taken me years to perfect my pronunciation of the word *cookie*. Until the age of nine, a *cookie* was not part of my vocabulary, and there is a clear before and after in my life which has been marked by its introduction.

I was born in the Dominican Republic to first time parents. English is not my first language, so I never did ask for *cookies*; to me they were *galletas*. A very small and seemingly meaningless dessert, but they harbor so much of who I am today. I immigrated to the United States at the tender age of nine years old and found myself in a completely new environment. I was frightened and my worst enemy was that lovely *galletas now* turned *cookies*. I struggled to form the syllables, and my tongue refused to be tamed. The combination that makes up this word seemed silly, I could perfectly say "cook" but the addition of "ie" threw me completely off course. I felt targeted by the horrible enunciation of it, never mind the looks from my peers and the

never ending "it's pronounced 'cook-ies.'" Becoming bilingual was an alienating process, the transition from one country to the next and one language to the other has been one of the biggest obstacles I've had to overcome. Training my mouth to roll out these new words and unlearning to roll my r's when speaking in English felt as though I was letting go of something dear to me. And I was. I needed to reconstruct my identity, and I did so with a cookie.

The transition from the Dominican Republic to the United States was a unique process; I went from going outside multiple times a day in the warm sun to staying home all day under gray, cloudy, snow-filled skies. I could no longer play on the streets and run around with all of my neighbors because I didn't even know what the new person next door looked like. The buildings seemed to reach the skies, and the stars had gone into hiding. I found myself in a place that I did not want to be, where I desperately looked at the sky for an answer, hoping that God himself would offer his hand and take me back home. But He did not, and so I had no other choice but to make the United States my new home.

When I was in fourth grade, my teacher asked me to read out loud to the class. I didn't know how to read proper English yet, but I did so anyway. It is safe to say that even I myself had no idea what I had just read. But I had been brave, and it was empowering. I took this experience and I made the most of it; by lunch the next day, I was asking the few other kids who I had befriended if they would like a "*cooookie*." I said, "Good Morning!" to the security guard every day when I walked in. I raised my hand in class when the teacher asked for volunteers to read. I talked to the kids who only knew English because then I would be forced to do so as well. I did not have access to Duolingo, only my young, determined mind and a whole lot of newfound courage. I was not going back to the Dominican Republic, and teletransportation was out of the question.

For many years to come, my accent was still very apparent. A source of weakness which I attempted to mask every time that I spoke. I was incapable of escaping the questions: "Where are you from?" being the most popular one. It was obvious that I did not belong. I wanted to blend in with the rest, but this seemed impossible. As the conversations passed along the many writing assignments that I did for school, the quality of my English increased profoundly. I read many books and absorbed as much information and new vocabulary words as I could. I realized that I had worked too hard to be ashamed of my accent. At the end of the day, it is a representation of my home that I carry with me everywhere I go. My accent is one of my strengths; I can understand twice as many things as the average person and speak to twice as many people. I have immense gratitude towards myself for that.

I do not have to pick between *cookies* and *galletas*. It is a privilege to speak two languages, and I now embrace it wholeheartedly. My accent will still come through when asking for a blueberry cheesecake cookie, but now I know not to hide behind the guise of an American accent. I have two homes, speak two languages, and now harbor a deep desire to learn more.

♦ LITERATURE 109

HOLMESIAN MATHEMATICS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY IN CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCES

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CAILYN MACLELLAN

ABSTRACT: *I opted for two Sherlock Holmes stories—"The Red-Headed League" and "The Blue Carbuncle"—and one math model: pinpointing their (comparable) timelines using the numbers in their literature. I aim to identify and analyze discrepancies and uninformed references to answer the underlying research (question) of reconciling fictional sequences with historical timelines.*

IINTRODUCTION

MY FIRST SELECTION was "The Red-Headed League," in which Watson and Holmes investigate the case of a man with "fiery red" hair, Jabez Wilson, who is recruited to transcribe a version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* through an ad posted by the Red-Headed League until, one day, he finds out that he was fired, the League disbanded and, ultimately, a fake charade invented to keep him out of his shop so that the perpetrators could discretely tunnel underneath it to rob the bank vault next door.

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The Assignment and the Writer: For her final, Cailyn was asked to select two stories from Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and analyze them using some kind of graphic representation. What insights into the stories could graphic representation give us that reading alone could not? An acute observer of detail, Cailyn developed her own method and model out of dating irregularities she uncovered in the Holmes stories. Balancing the internal evidence of the stories with historical research, she uses her findings to make reasonable assumptions and build a plausible timeline. I love how open she is about the limitations of her study (e.g. conflicting or lack of evidence) and how she works within them to make a convincing argument. A natural-born researcher!

– Professor Valerie Allen

First, I selected this story as I found it to fit the classic archetype for the Sherlock Holmes stories, making it my control group. Second, it hosted many instances of historical inaccuracies that fit my research topic of correcting timelines: Contextually, the referenced *Morning Chronicle's* final publication was in 1865 (*Morning Chronicle*), and the dates provided by Watson in the story, mathematically, did not add up as Watson identified the setting as being "one day in the autumn;" Wilson explains that the advertisement was placed in *The Morning Chronicle* "just two months ago" on April 27, 1890; and the announcement of the Red-Headed League being dissolved came after six months had passed on October 9, 1890.

My next selection was "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," where Watson and Holmes are presented with a case involving a stolen blue carbuncle, a valuable gemstone found in the crop of a Christmas goose.

First, as opposed to my control, this story's status as a *Christmas Special* made it my experimental group. Second, it also contained various historical inaccuracies, including the disputed existence of blue carbuncles, as carbuncles traditionally represent a cabochon-cut, red gem–typically rubies, which are the *red* versions of sapphires–and thus the "carbuncle" is, in reality, a sapphire (*Ruby Symbolism and Legends*).

The two stories contrasted in that the formulaic "The Red-Headed League" occurred over two months, where Holmes prevented a crime from happening, arresting the guilty parties; however, the double-coded "Blue Carbuncle" took place over approximately one week, in which Holmes resolved a case in which a crime had already been committed, allowing the criminal party to remain free. More importantly, however, the cases shared one key element: (the case of) Mary Sutherland, allowing for a timeline in which both exist and, as such, can be used to compare against the other.

METHODS

For "The Red-Headed League," I had to sort and filter the differences between the two- and six-month accounts. Firstly, I wanted to make sense of Watson's (unreliable) referencing of "autumn" as the transition from summer to winter, considering the story's start in April. This fact is justified and confirms Wilson's two-month recollection as the summer of 1890 was notably cold, even setting a Central England Temperature record (*Weather in History*). Secondly, the story is actively playing out on a Saturday as confirmed by Holmes' "To-day is Saturday, and I hope that by Monday we may come to a conclusion" and Banker Merryweather's "It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber." This is important regarding Wilson's eight weeks of employment with the League and Holmes' "Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon." In fact, Sarasate did perform at St. Jame's Hall on a Saturday eight weeks after April 27, on **June 21**, 1890 (Concert Programmes).

For "The Blue Carbuncle," I was missing the year it took place, so I started by tracking the adventure of the blue carbuncle itself, starting from the referenced Amoy River in southern China. From my research, I found that the Amoy River was

a fictional name, but a city known as "Amoy" was at the mouth of a river in China: Xiamen Bay. Secondly, I had to determine when Englishmen (as the stories are set in London) would have most likely been in China, fitting the predetermined life of the stone as "not yet twenty years old," and the closest event I could find was the Second Opium War, ending in 1860 and about ten years shy. Next, I tried to find where blue sapphire deposits were sourced in the 1880s and came up the Kashmir region of the Indian Himalayas, the first of which was discovered in 1881 after a historic landslide (LaTouche, 1890). As my research about the sapphires was too open-ended, I further developed my timeline using other references in the literature, the most helpful being the reference to the hotel the Countess of Morcar was staying at–the Hotel Cosmopolitan–which was rebuilt from an older hotel on the site in 1885, marking the earliest year possible that the story could take place in (*The Cosmopolitan Hotel*).

Returning to the text, I found the names of various newspapers–the *Globe*, *Star*, *Pall Mall*, *St. James's*, *Evening News*, *Standard*, and *Echo*–and deduced that all these papers must have existed in the same year. Two of the papers were particularly insightful: Of the aforementioned papers, *The Star* was founded last in 1888 (*The History of The Star*), moving the earliest possible year from 1885 to 1888; most importantly, however, *The Evening News* was rebranded and styled as *The Evening News and Post* in 1889; the British Newspaper Archive documented the name change for the first time on May 13, 1889 (*Evening News*). As the story fell on Christmas, the year must have been **1888**.

These updated dates are corroborated by the canonical tie-in between the two: "the very simple problem presented by Miss Mary Sutherland." In "The Blue Carbuncle," the reader is set up to believe that her story is untold at the time; even chronologically, it was the next published case.

Mary Sutherland's "A Case of Identity" is attributed to March 1889 and is the verifiable in-between of my two selected cases.

FINDINGS

My official (consolidated) timeline is as follows: "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" falls on **December 27, 1888**, "A Case of Identity" on March 1889, and "The Red-Headed League" on **June 21, 1890**. As such, given the references listed in each respective text, author Arthur Conan Doyle did incorporate aspects of historical timelines despite his intentional lack of dating in the stories.

DISCUSSION (LIMITATIONS)

Given the discrepancies in "The Red-Headed League," I chose to use verifiable historical records based on literary analysis to plot dates. That said, there is no conceivable way to bridge the difference between the two- and six-months. For "The Red-Headed League," I used the two-month timeline, which most closely fits historical records; however, the alternative date, or *outlier*, would be Saturday, October 11, 1890, as the announcement of the Red-Headed League being dissolved came on October 9, 1890, after six months had passed. Either way, neither timeline takes into consideration *The Morning Chronicle*'s final publication being in 1865;

however, there is some reasonable assurance that the newspaper was faked as the article itself was fake.

As for "The Blue Carbuncle," the newspaper names were already shortened and abbreviated in the list provided by the text. One could assume that the shortened version of *The Evening News* included the amended "and Post."

Finally, though not necessarily a flaw, but a consideration worth mentioning: "A Case of Identity" was not one of my selected stories; I did not personally configure its date, and, as such, it may be subject to the same misconstrued dates of "The Red-Headed League" and "The Blue Carbuncle."

MATHEMATICAL MODEL

Regarding the model itself, I have chosen a box and whisker plot shape as it fits the use of descriptive statistics to demonstrate locality with a functional number- and timeline. In place of the box plot, I used a regulatory network with interactions/movements as edges and targets as nodes.

JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

From my literary analysis, I found that both "The Red-Headed League" and "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" shared the crime of thievery. Given the deteriorating social and economic conditions in London in the 1880s and 1890s, I thought it would be fitting to comment on the justice aspect of both stories.

For one, Jabez Wilson speaks on his financial position, explaining to Holmes that his work as a pawnbroker "has not done more than just give me a living" and that "[he] used to be able to keep two assistants, but now I only keep one" for "half wages" (which is reliable in itself given that wages were particularly low in the 1890s). Furthermore, Holmes explains that Wilson was lured with four pounds a week. Wilson's tricky financial position made him desperate enough to look past any suspicious behaviors exhibited by Spaulding, like the rejection of all contenders prior to Wilson's visit.

"The Blue Carbuncle" provides an even more in-depth insight into the *justice* and *mercy* that applies to our current moral and legal system: What is the appropriate course of action in distributing justice? Holmes allows the true perpetrator, Ryder, who had attempted to frame an innocent man, to escape unpunished and identity unrevealed as "[sending] him to gaol now […] would be to] make him a gaol-bird for life." Was this appropriate justice for everyone involved? What about the maid, Catherine Cusack, and the unfairly accused John Horner? Is the Countess of Morcar truly the victim as an obscenely wealthy woman offering a reward equivalent to years of income for the working classes? Is Ryder a victim of the economic system? If so, should he be punished for that? A case in point is the iconography we discussed in Week 05 of Lady Justice, who is blindfolded, though wielding a sword, which leaves her unable to see what she is striking and the collateral damage to follow, particularly against those of lower socio-economic standing (Miller, 2009).

Key:
Green Bubble(s) - Selection(s) (Verified)
Yellow Bubble - Canonical Tie-In (Neutral)
Red Bubble - Outlier (Flaw Consideration)

Consolidated Timeline

| 27 December 1888 | March 1889 | 21 June 1890 | 11 October 1890 |

"The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle"

"A Case of Identity"

"The Red-Headed League"

Confirmed By (Historical References):
"Globe, Star, Pall Mall, St. James's,
Evening News, Standard, Echo
(and as such, all papers must exist in the same year)
The Star was founded last in 1888
(first issue January 17)

(Set up to believe that story is untold at the time;
chronologically, the next published case)
"the very simple problem presented
by Miss Mary Sutherland"

Advertisement: April 27th
+ 8 Weeks
= Saturday, June 21, 1890

The Evening News was rebranded and styled as
The Evening News and Post in 1889
(The British Newspaper Archive has the earliest
documentation of the name change as occurring
on 13 May 1889)

Confirmed By (Historical References):
"Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon."
Sarasate did perform at the St. James's Hall on June 21, 1890,
(almost exactly eight weeks and on a Satuday).

Given the story's status as a "Christmas Special,"
the year would have to be 1888 due to the
name change in May 1889.

"To-day is Saturday, and I hope that by
Monday we may come to a conclusion."
This is reaffirmed by Banker Merryweather's "It is the first Saturday
night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber."

Alternative (Flaw Consideration):

The announcement of the Red-Headed
League being dissolved came on October 9, 1890
(six months had passed)

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⬥ ENGLISH 101

THE IMPACT OF NON-NATIVE ACCENTS ON IMMIGRANTS

GIOVANNY KLYD EXILUS

"I WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING, BUT I WAS WORRIED ABOUT HOW I WOULD SOUND." This simple yet powerful phrase is, in my opinion, one of the most common sentiments shared by immigrants in the United States. It captures the fear of expressing themselves in social, educational, or professional settings—a fear rooted in how others might perceive not only their accents but more importantly, their person. This phrase is to immigrants what "Can I have a bacon, egg, and cheese?" is to many New Yorkers: a kind of slogan, a rite of passage. It resonates because of three key elements: memorability, repetition, and emotional weight. It's memorable because immigrants carry this fear with them as a constant reminder that they are not native speakers. That fear is only amplified by the constant repetition because they are often in a position where they have to constantly repeat themselves to be understood, however tiresome this might be. Lastly, emotional weight, because behind every *"I wanted to say something, but I was worried about how I'd sound"* lies countless stories of struggle, rejection, and perseverance. This raises the question: how do language barriers, specifically foreign accents, affect immigrants' self-perception and

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The Assignment and the Writer: My English 101 course explored the theme "Finding Home in the United States Today." Giovanny's paper asked how language barriers, specifically foreign accents, affect immigrants' self-perception and emotional well-being in academic, social, and professional settings. Giovanny went beyond the requirements of the paper by conducting interviews and distributing a survey. He asked over 100 participants with foreign accents nuanced questions such as, "How do people typically respond when they hear your accent? Do their reactions influence how much you speak or participate in conversations?" and open-ended questions such as, "If you could say one thing to someone who struggles with accent-related insecurities, what advice would you give?" The resulting paper persuades both with logical appeal and with emotional resonance.   **– Professor Yasmin Dalisay**

emotional well-being in academic, social, and professional settings? Accents contribute to a sense of insecurity and vulnerability for many immigrants by highlighting their foreignness, which can reinforce feelings of social exclusion and disadvantage. The connection between accent, national origin, and perceived social class deepens immigrants' insecurities and affects their integration in academic, social, and professional settings.

To answer my research question, I have identified several focused sub-questions that will guide my examination of how language barriers, particularly accents, impact non-native speakers' insecurities and sense of belonging. One might ask, what internal and external factors contribute to non-native speakers' insecurities about their accents? How do accent-related insecurities affect their social life, mental health, and self-perception? Additionally, how does the intensity of self-consciousness vary across different environments, and how can these environments support non-native speakers in overcoming their insecurity? By exploring these questions, I aim to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and social challenges faced by non-native speakers and the potential solutions to alleviate these barriers. To explore these questions, I conducted a literature review, and a 10-question survey to analyze case studies. My literature review focused on academic articles, such as "The Legitimizing Role of Accent on Discrimination Against Immigrants," "Effects of Speech Accents on Interpersonal Evaluations: Implications for Counseling Practice and Research," and "What's in an Accent? General Spontaneous Biases Against non-native Accents: An Investigation with Conceptual and Auditory IATs." These articles were particularly helpful in uncovering the psychological and social impacts of language barriers. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with numerous non-native speakers from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds to understand their personal experiences. Additionally, I analyzed real-life examples highlighting the common challenges faced by immigrants with non-native accents. Prior to beginning this research, I viewed accents primarily as a social barrier. However, as I delved deeper through my research, I discovered their profound effects on mental health and self-perception. This realization has shifted my focus to include the emotional and psychological struggles of non-native speakers, emphasizing the importance of both social and individual dimensions of this issue.

It is essential to analyze both internal and external influences that shape non-native speakers' self-perception and sense of belonging. Only by doing so can one understand the root causes of their insecurities regarding their accents. The findings from this analysis will reveal how accent-related insecurities affect social interactions and emotional well-being, while also highlighting opportunities to foster inclusivity and support. Though, these insecurities are not merely about how their accents sound; they are shaped by internal factors like self-esteem and external influences such as societal pressures and stereotypes. For instance, because discrimination is discouraged by the anti-prejudice norm (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000, as cited in de Souza, 2016), even more prejudiced individuals need to engage in a legitimizing process to discriminate, and they do so by using a seemingly unprejudiced justification (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005, as cited in de Souza, 2016). This reflects how non-native speakers' accents can become a focal point for discrimination, as people often rely on subtle,

socially acceptable justifications for exclusion. As a result, these subtle biases contribute to a stigma around accents leading to a heightened sense of self-consciousness for many immigrants.

Data from my survey, which was distributed to non-native English speakers through various channels—including coworkers, personal connections, social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram, as well as immigrant-focused organizations—reveals striking trends. Out of the 61 participants, 72 percent worry about being judged as less competent or excluded from opportunities because of their speech. Additionally, 70 percent have faced challenges or felt excluded in social situations because of their accent, while approximately 34 percent believe their accent has been a barrier to forming meaningful relationships. Finally, 61 percent expressed a heightened sense of insecurity in environments such as school, work, and social events.

For immigrants with non-native accents, the issue is not only that their speech may close doors to opportunities but also that it opens the door to intrusive questions about their identity—questions they may not always feel comfortable answering. As Edwards (1999, as cited in de Souza, 2016) explains, "A speaker's accent constitutes an important part of his/her social identity." In other words, an accent often signals one's origins, social status, or economic background, giving others clues about where they might be from and the class they belong to. These signals can invite stereotypes or judgments, creating a stigma that can diminish an individual's self-worth, credibility, or confidence in social and professional contexts.

This feeling of stigma is reflected in my survey results, where nearly 75 percent of participants reported feeling anxious, self-conscious, or embarrassed because of their accents. These responses highlight how accents can serve as both a marker of identity and an excuse for exclusion. For some immigrants, an accent that reveals their country of origin may lead to discomfort if that region is associated with negative stereotypes. For instance, an immigrant from a region stigmatized in the media might choose to avoid conversations about their background altogether, further distancing themselves from their cultural identity.

The social construct of accent hierarchy adds another layer of complexity to this issue. Certain accents are perceived as more prestigious or desirable than others, reinforcing societal biases and amplifying feelings of exclusion. Immigrants from Latin America, for example, may experience greater stigma surrounding their accents compared to immigrants from Europe, leading to heightened self-consciousness and anxiety (Fuertes et al., 2002). This hierarchy perpetuates discrimination and judgment, as assumptions about skills, education, or social worth are often unfairly tied to the way someone speaks. By understanding the interconnection between these factors—identity, stigma, stereotypes, and accent hierarchy—one can better grasp the profound emotional and social impacts of accent-related challenges and work toward fostering more inclusive environments.

Having established the root causes of accent-related insecurities, it is essential to examine their profound effects on non-native speakers. Specifically, one must explore how these insecurities impact their social lives, mental health, and self-perception. The insecurities sparked by both internal factors, like self-esteem, and

external pressures, such as societal expectations, can have long-lasting repercussions on non-native speakers' lives. These effects extend beyond just the moment of feeling insecure; they ripple out to influence their social interactions, often making them feel isolated or misunderstood. Furthermore, these insecurities can take a toll on mental health, leading to anxiety, stress, or even depression. Most importantly, they shape how individuals view themselves, often causing them to internalize negative stereotypes or feel less confident in their abilities, which affects their overall self-worth. Research conducted by Tan et al. (2015), found that accent-related insecurities could potentially lead to psychological problems. "Non-native speakers who speak English with an accent expressed negative feelings, such as annoyance, humiliation, and regret... They felt excluded and undervalued at work... These negative feelings can lead to anxiety, which characterizes a mental and psychological problem." (Tan et al., 2015). Emotions such as annoyance, regret, and humiliation often stem from how non-native speakers perceive themselves after speaking English with an accent. These feelings are frequently triggered by the reactions of listeners, including stereotyping and microaggressions, which lay the foundation for exclusion. Over time, this emotional burden can result in stress, anxiety, and even feelings of inadequacy. The repeated need to clarify themselves in social and professional settings adds to this frustration, and the constant anxiety of potential ridicule amplifies these emotions. In professional environments, the bias that associates an accent with competence or intelligence can make non-native speakers feel undervalued and overlooked, further diminishing their sense of self-worth and hindering potential career advancement.

Building on the emotional and psychological toll of accent-related insecurities, in 2015, research conducted by Tan et al., revealed how these insecurities manifest in both academic and professional settings. "On the one hand, victims displayed decreased academic achievement and poorer self-esteem that led to higher anxiety and withdrawal from life experiences. On the other hand, victims at the workplace displayed negative interpersonal deviance and increased stress levels, which suggested their state of unhappiness." (Tan et al., 2015) Insecurities related to accents are often the cause of a decrease in academic performance due to emotional barriers interfering with learning. This ever-perpetuating fear of being discriminated against will also result in lower self-esteem. At a later stage in life, in the workplace, those non-native speakers will oftentimes experience a lot of interpersonal deviance meaning tension with colleagues, withdrawal, irritability, and ultimately an overall bad workplace environment.

This evidence illustrates the deep, pervasive nature of how accents influence individuals beyond their speech alone. The long-lasting impact of accent-related insecurities is not confined to isolated instances of exclusion but instead affects key areas of life, including academic success, mental health, and interpersonal relationships. Understanding this connection is crucial because it sheds light on the need for more supportive environments that address these issues and promote inclusivity, ultimately helping non-native speakers overcome these challenges and thrive.

A non-native speaker's sense of insecurity can vary based on their environment. The social and professional contexts they navigate play a fundamental role in

how their insecurities manifest. Therefore, it is essential to explore how these environments can either heighten or ease these feelings and to propose solutions that could help foster more inclusive and supportive spaces. By addressing these environmental factors, one can better equip non-native speakers to overcome their insecurities and ultimately achieve full inclusion. The main factor driving non-native speakers' insecurities is how their listeners react to their speech. This creates a feedback loop: when listeners respond positively, it can boost the speaker's confidence, making them feel less self-conscious. On the other hand, negative reactions can reinforce feelings of insecurity, causing the speaker to withdraw, avoid speaking, or feel reluctant to engage in conversations. Therefore, the way listeners react plays a critical role in either decreasing or amplifying the speaker's insecurities. A positive, supportive response can encourage non-native speakers to engage more fully and improve their self-esteem over time, whereas a negative or dismissive response can discourage non-native speakers from engaging, potentially reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and lowering their self-esteem over time. This theory is supported by researchers like de Souza who mentioned "Non-native speakers may still sense underlying biases, contributing to a heightened sense of self-consciousness. Internalized language standards and perfectionism further exacerbate these insecurities, as many individuals feel pressured to meet unrealistic standards of 'proper' language use." non-native speakers become hyper-aware of themselves and the reactions of others due to their increased sensitivity to bias– even subtle signs of judgment or discomfort from listeners, whether intentional or not, can be detected. This acute awareness often becomes a 'sixth sense' that immigrants develop over time, making them scrutinize every interaction. As a result, they impose very high standards on themselves, particularly if they have already achieved proficiency in their native language or other languages. This can lead to a cycle of self-criticism, where they constantly seek perfection in their speech to avoid perceived judgment, which only reinforces their insecurities. According to Fuertes et al., 2002, "Despite efforts at multicultural education in the field of accents, a troubling level of non-native accent prejudice persists among speech-language pathology students and practitioners [2]. Although these people have the privilege of being inducted into multicultural education, they remain prejudiced toward non-native accent speakers. This suggests that multicultural education alone is inadequate in creating awareness on the issue of respecting those who speak with a non-native English accent. More action must be taken to enhance the effectiveness of multicultural education in mitigating the prejudices and discrimination toward speakers with non-native English accents."

Non-native speakers often view their accents as a barrier that distances them from social acceptance and undermines their efforts to fit in. This struggle can put them at a considerable disadvantage in various aspects of their lives. An accent, closely tied to one's identity, can have such a profound impact that it affects their personal, academic, and professional experiences.

By examining both internal and external influences, one can better understand the profound ways in which accent-related insecurities shape non-native speakers' social experiences and emotional health. It's essential to recognize how accent-related insecurities not only disrupt non-native speakers' social interactions and mental well-

being but also deeply influence their self-perception and sense of identity. The core of non-native speakers' insecurities often lies in the responses they receive from others, creating a feedback loop where positive reactions boost their confidence, while negative ones exacerbate their self-doubt. My argument encourages readers to be more mindful of their reactions to non-native speakers, as these responses can deeply affect their social, mental, and emotional well-being. It also aims to help non-native speakers better understand the challenges they face, offering them a clearer perspective on the insecurities tied to their accents. Ultimately, this awareness fosters empathy and support for those who are struggling with these barriers.

This essay has explored how non-native speakers' accents contribute to insecurities that affect their social, academic, and professional lives. These insecurities stem from the way others perceive their accents, leading to exclusion and discrimination. Recognizing these biases is essential for creating a more inclusive environment for non-native speakers. As a society, we must be mindful of our reactions to other's speech impediments and how these responses can either support or harm their sense of belonging. Moving forward, we should actively challenge our prejudices, support non-native speakers in overcoming these challenges, and foster environments where all voices are valued, regardless of accent.

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◆ HISTORY 240

HEADLINES OF HATE: ACCUSATIONS AND NEWSPAPERS IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY U.S. RACE RIOTS

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KIANA PARKER

THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY was a period marked by intense racial tension and violence in the United States. As Black communities started to gain economic and social footholds through urban migration and resilience, they faced systemic backlash and resistance from white communities who were intent on preserving racial hierarchies. Race riots and lynchings became distressingly common manifestations in both the North and South, especially in cities where Black residents began challenging segregation and asserting their rights. Events like the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot, the 1919 Chicago Race Riot, and the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre were not only brutal but also stood as representations of the deep-seated fears and stereotypes that shaped American society. Often sparked by false, exaggerated, or unproven accusations, these riots painted Black individuals as threats to white society, particularly white womanhood. Media coverage and institutional shortcomings played

significant roles in fueling these fears, often turning baseless allegations into justifications for racially motivated violence.

In my literature review, I will be examining how accusations and newspaper accounts contributed to race riots by promoting racial stereotypes and legitimizing violence. Much of the existing scholarship on this topic has focused on the media's role in shaping racial incidents, pointing out how newspapers, law enforcement, and societal elites used these events as tools to maintain white supremacy and social control. Claims of Black criminality, often involving white women's stories about threats, were frequently used to incite and justify violence against Black neighborhoods.

A focal point of my overall review will be synthesizing scholarship that explores the institutionalization of these stereotypes, the manipulation of public perception through media, and the social impact of these riots, ultimately revealing a calculated use of fear as a mechanism to uphold social order and suppress Black resistance. The scholarship on this subject includes a wide range of perspectives, from historical accounts of major race riots to sociological studies on media framing and cultural narratives. I'd like to take this analysis a step further by exposing the patterns of race riots as revealing a systematic use of racial fear and unverified accusations as tools to maintain control. In particular, the accepted and media-amplified processes of criminalizing Black communities effectively transformed racial prejudice into sanctioned acts of mass violence. Through media-driven hysteria, public fear was crafted and wielded as a weapon against African Americans, deepening societal acceptance of racial stereotypes and attacks as a justified response. By outlining and analyzing these patterns, I hope to demonstrate how the repeated use of accusations and media portrayals did more than provoke individual riots; they created a self-sustaining cycle of violence, fear, and control. Understanding these strategies allows us to see race riots not as isolated incidents but as deliberate instruments of structural oppression. This approach will help shed light on how racial violence also functioned as a reflection of the deep insecurities and fears within white society about the shifting dynamics of race and power in America.

A deeper understanding emerges when we consider these as components as part of a larger system of social engineering—one where fearmongering and emotional manipulation kept a racial caste system intact. White society weaponized notions of white womanhood and Black masculinity, painting white women as symbols of purity in need of protection and Black men as inherent threats to that purity. This dynamic contributed to a systemic process of myth-making, where recurring accusations and stereotypes embedded fears of Black criminality deeply into public consciousness, sustaining a "moral economy" in which racial violence was not only accepted but viewed as morally justified within white communities. White men, believing that "their women" were under threat, often saw violent reactions as honorable and called for. Over time, selective memory and the erasure of Black suffering and the silencing of their narratives were paired with the replacement of those stories by white narratives of victimization and heroism. Since white women's accounts of vulnerability and white men's portrayals of righteously "defending" their

families dominated, Black experiences were overshadowed and invalidated. Rather than acknowledging their role in initiating and perpetuating unwarranted racial violence, white communities were able to construct a reality in which their actions were framed as moral and civic duties responsible for keeping the peace within their community. In addition to distorting history and absolving guilt, this process reflects a societal tendency to overlook or deny the realities of systemic racism. It has enabled future generations to distance themselves from what has happened in our country's past. This in turn fosters a dehumanization of the African American population, decentering their struggles and leading to a lack of empathy, understanding, and even awareness of the injustices they endured. By framing race riots as necessary, defensive, or even inevitable actions, historical narratives preserved a view of white violence as justified, minimizing or ignoring the trauma experienced by people of color. I believe that this erasure has left a lasting impact on how these events are remembered—or forgotten—in historical records. Furthermore, within this landscape, Black identity was significantly shaped by the struggle and need for resilience and agency.

In the early 20th century, race relations in the United States were defined by rigid social, economic, and legal systems that upheld segregation and marginalized African Americans. Following Reconstruction, the implementation of Jim Crow laws in the South legally segregated public spaces, education, housing, and employment, creating a society where Black Americans were systematically deprived of rights, opportunities, and subjected to daily humiliation and oppression. Walter Rucker and James Upton's *Encyclopedia of American Race Riots* explains how both legal and extralegal systems combined to ensure this, as well as the fact that this segregation extended beyond the South. Even in Northern cities, discriminatory housing policies like redlining restricted Black families to impoverished neighborhoods, redlining, or making it impossible to receive mortgages in order to prevent Black people from living in areas with white people furthered racial segregation.

The Great Migration, a movement of Black Americans from the rural South to urban areas in the North increased this hostile and detrimental treatment. Many Black people sought better opportunities and a reprieve from the oppressive Jim Crow legislation, but the migration triggered a wave of backlash as white communities viewed Black economic and social progress as a threat. Jan Voogd's *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919* emphasizes how this migration contributed to racial animosities, particularly in cities like Chicago and Washington, D.C., where competition over jobs and housing was fierce. Voogd describes how Black veterans returning from World War I faced hostility and violence instead of the equality they had hoped for, and the so-called "Red Summer" of 1919 became a period of heightened racial violence as riots broke out across the country in response to the perceived threat of Black empowerment.

To clarify, violence, alongside the institutionalized segregation and economic restrictions, was a constant and brutal reality for Black communities. By the late nineteenth century, lynching had become an all-too-common occurrence, "a code word for the murdering of blacks [and they] grew up knowing that their lives could be snuffed out for no reason at all" (Rucker and Upton, 63). As Robert Gibson notes

in his article, "The Negro Holocaust: Lynching and Race Riots in the United States, 1880-1950," lynchings were not only socially sanctioned but were also public spectacles, carried out with impunity and sometimes celebrated by white communities who used them as displays of power to instill fear. Under these conditions, this method of violence became both a widespread and largely unchecked phenomenon, especially in the South, where local authority often ignored or tacitly approved of these acts. Sometimes, this mob violence would extend into urban race riots, "in which white mobs inflicted violence on a group of black people, or on a black community as a whole" (Voogd, 13). This inevitably created a climate that instilled a lasting sense of vulnerability within Black communities, who were forced to navigate daily life and live with the ever-present fear of brutal reprisals, shaping their experiences and interactions within society.

Accusations against Black individuals, especially those involving alleged threats to white women, frequently served as the immediate catalysts of racial violence throughout this period. Such claims, often unfounded or exaggerated, held immense sway within white communities, triggering brutal assault on Black neighborhoods and residents. Voogd explains that mobs often used "an alleged crime or social trespass of some sort" as an excuse to justify attacks against African Americans. These accusations could range from serious charges of sexual assault, the most common one, and murder to trivial acts such as "the failure to remove a hat" (19). In this context, the accusation itself became less important than the opportunity it provided for white communities to retaliate against perceived threats to their dominance. This dominance was closely tied to a rigid social hierarchy that demanded constant performance of deference from Black people. Rituals of submission, such as keeping one's eyes lowered, stepping aside, addressing white people with respectful titles or honorifics, and using separate, inadequate spaces and facilities, were deeply ingrained expectations. Any deviation from this racial etiquette, even minor or accidental, was regarded as a serious affront to white authority and the social order, and as such, were met with swift, brutal consequences. The disproportionate reactions were not signs of strength, but manifestations of an obsessive need to control and mask the underlying fragility of the existing power structure—an anxious, insecure foundation that feared even the mere possibility of its collapse and equality. This meant that no matter how improbable an accusation was, it was often accepted as truth and without question. Rucker and Upton mention the Southern "code of honor" and the rhetoric of protecting "white feminine virtue" (390), which served to justify mob violence in cases involving alleged transgressions such as rape, an accusation readily weaponized by white society against Black men under the myth of hypersexual Black male aggressiveness. This stereotype, they argue, rationalized the brutality of lynchings and riots, with threats against white women symbolizing racial rebellion and societal disruption. Many African Americans, particularly in the South, lived in constant awareness that the slightest infraction—or none at all—could provoke violent reprisals.

Historical studies of specific riots further reinforce the centrality of accusations as triggers. A striking example of this pattern was in Springfield, Illinois, in 1908. Mabel Hallam, a young white housewife, accused a Black man, George Richardson, of breaking into her house and assaulting her. When the angry white mob

was unable to lynch Richardson because he had been transferred to another jail, they redirected their violence toward Black homes and businesses over the next three days. After the riot, Richardson was released due to medical evidence, and Hallam later admitted she had fabricated the story to cover up her affair with a white man, who assaulted her (Rucker and Upton, 616). One of the most notorious examples of this trend was the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. According to Rucker and Upton, a young Black man named Dick Rowland was accused of attempting to assault a white woman, Sarah Page, in an elevator. Most accepted accounts suggest that Rowland merely tripped while entering the elevator and grabbed Page's arm to steady himself, startling her. A white clerk misinterpreted the scene and reported it as assault. Though the case was later dismissed when Page declined to press charges, the accusation spread rapidly, and ultimately set off the horrific destruction of Tulsa's prosperous Black neighborhood, Greenwood (650). In "Intersectional Violence, New Media, and the 1923 Rosewood Pogrom," Edward González-Tennant also pinpoints the role of a false accusation in inciting a mob-led massacre against Black residents of Rosewood, Florida. Fannie Taylor, a white woman, claimed that a Black man attacked her in her home while her husband was at work, "though some Black families suggested and most researchers today agree that the assailant was a White man with whom Fannie was having an affair," similar to the case of Tulsa (67). Perhaps more significantly, González-Tennant shows how this "intersectional violence" targeted not only individuals accused but also broader symbols of Black community prosperity and autonomy, reflecting intertwined racial and economic motivations.

Again, the cultural fixation on Black male sexuality and the fear it engendered typically drove these accusations, and thus they were little more than unfounded projections grounded in racialized myths and paranoia rather than fact, yet they quickly gained traction. But as Gibson explains, "[being] charged with a crime did not necessarily mean that the person charged was guilty," and many of those victimized in these racialized attacks were innocent. He states that, in a special study drawing from nearly a hundred lynching cases, Arthur Raper concluded that "approximately one-third of the victims were falsely accused" of sexual assault (3). In many cases, these accusations were not only baseless but openly manufactured. Gregory Mixon's study of the 1906 Atlanta Riot in "'Good Negro—Bad Negro': The Dynamics of Race and Class in Atlanta During the Era of the 1906 Riot" provides examples this manipulation. He notes how influential figures like the Governor-elect and news editors used "every hellish device to precipitate a race war," fabricating stories of assaults to stoke public outrage and use it to their advantage, when "no 'carnival of rapes' precipitated the riot" (616). These accounts expose the strategic deployment of accusations as tools to purposely trigger violence, using the stereotype of Black men as predators to justify brutal retaliation.

Stanley Lieberson and Arnold Silverman's sociological breakdown in their article, "The Precipitants and Underlying Conditions of Race Riots," expands on the patterns seen across these incidents, arguing that most race riots start with a specific incident or "precipitant," often involving allegations of violent crime. These accusations are rarely isolated; they are enmeshed in an environment where racial tensions are already high due to social inequalities, such as segregation, economic

competition, and systemic failure by authorities to address Black grievances. In their review of 76 riots, Lieberson and Silverman conclude that events like interracial fights or alleged assaults are not merely catalysts but are symbolic acts that elicit disproportionate responses from white populations, often due to underlying fear of Black resistance and retribution (897). Thus, accusations of violence by Blacks against whites, particularly white women, consistently functioned as mechanisms for initiating large-scale violence.

A recurring theme in the historiography of U.S. race riots is the instrumental role of the media in amplifying and legitimizing these accusations, often using sensationalism to heighten public fear. Newspapers across the country, particularly in racially divided regions, consistently portrayed Black men as beasts, framing allegations as undisputed facts to fuel moral panics. In Derrick Jones's critique, "Fake News and Fading Views: A Vanishing Archive of the 1906 Atlanta Race Massacre," he argues that newspapers like *The Atlanta Georgian* deliberately depicted Black masculinity as a pervasive, sexual danger to white femininity, with headlines such as "Negro Clubs the Cause of Assaults" and "Burly Negro Attacks White Woman but is Frightened Off" (522). Gibson supports this, describing how the *Atlanta Journal* reported Black crime in an "inflammatory fashion," as "Twelve rapes of white women were reported in one week" by the press, giving the impression of "an epidemic of Black rape" with exaggerated stories that fed white paranoia (5). By choosing to emphasize accusations against Black males, newspapers helped create a narrative that positioned Black individuals as an enduring menace to white safety. What's more, these narratives persistently obscured the agency of Black voices in the historical record, reinforcing racial hierarchies long after the riots themselves. This phenomenon of selective reporting and omission contributed to a one-sided narrative of Black culpability, which both enabled racial persecution and further marginalized Black experiences.

This sensationalist approach was not limited to the South. Terry Ann Knopf's "Race, Riots, and Reporting" Knopf scrutinizes how mainstream media systematically depicted Black communities as the primary instigators of riots while minimizing or ignoring white aggression. She details how during the Red Summer of 1919, particularly in Washington, D.C., local newspapers like the *Washington Post* "played up" these alleged attacks, using "large front-page headlines" such as "Negroes Attack Girl… White Men Vainly Pursue," directly causing a four-day riot, despite the lack of substantiating evidence (310-311). In reality, Black women made up more than half of the victims in these vaguely reported assaults that week, and some white male suspects were later prosecuted for these crimes. In her analysis of the East St. Louis riot in 1917, Knopf also notes how unverified reports of an "invasion army" of armed Black men circulated in response to the influx of Black migrants and their increasing visibility in the city (309). Similarly, before, during, and after the 1919 Elaine riot, local newspapers cast Black sharecroppers who met to organize efforts for fairer wages as violent insurrectionists: the *Arkansas Democrat* claimed to have heard that Black people "were massing from over the county," while the *Arkansas Gazette* warned of an "organization of negroes antagonistic to the white residents" and alleged that they had been "holding secret meetings at night" (313-314).

Chris Messer and Patricia Bell's article, "Mass Media and Governmental Framing of Riots: The Case of Tulsa, 1921-2010," also highlights this active role of newspapers in distorting the narrative to cast the Black community as responsible in the Tulsa riot. Media coverage portrayed Rowland's actions as an affront to white female purity, effectively mobilizing a white mob under the guise of retributive justice. Rucker and Upton specify that the front page of *The Tulsa Tribune* declared, "Nab Negro for Assault on White Girl," inciting "lynch talk" throughout the city (650). Furthermore, Messer and Bell observe that this framing tapped into broader fears of Black socioeconomic advancement, with Greenwood known as "Black Wall Street, exacerbating anxieties about Black mobility. They show how the press not only misrepresented Black self-defense as "aggression" but also shaped long-term public memory of the event. The riot was often described as a "ghetto uprising," which positioned the destruction of Greenwood as a necessary measure for restoring social order, while white rioters were depicted as "defending" their community (852). Messer and Bell argue that such framing legitimized white violence and justified the lack of accountability, while contributing to the erasure of Black suffering from the archive for decades.

Through such coverage of riots, we see how the media wasn't just reporting on events but actively shaping public opinion. The use of dramatized, racialized narratives reflects a broader societal tendency to pathologize Black communities. By portraying Black men and spaces as imminent, destabilizing threats to white men and public safety, newspapers not only misled the public but effectively sanctioned mob violence as necessary defenses. This in turn has allowed white society to maintain an image of innocence while presenting Black communities as deserving of what befell them or unworthy of sympathy, acknowledgement, or justice. Personally, I believe that this characterization is also among the most enduring and omnipresent in American society, given that the public consciousness and various institutions still, even implicitly, view violence against Black men as both necessary and justified at times. By extension, media sensationalism has long operated as an instrument of racial control that continues to influence racial attitudes and policy well into the 20th century.

The media was not the only institution complicit in the unfolding of race riots: the justice system, far from providing safety and fairness, repeatedly failed to protect Black communities, which became a defining feature of race riots during this period. Its role in enabling racial violence extended far beyond passive neglect. In many instances, authorities actively participated in or tacitly approved the aggression towards Black communities. Furthermore, Lieberson and Silverman state that a number of riots were triggered by "highly charged offenses" involving police brutality or conflicts against African Americans that law enforcement failed to resolve impartially. In the 1917 East St. Louis riot, for example, "No action was taken by the police in regard to the white assailants" who shot into Black homes (Knopf, 3), while Black residents defending themselves were quickly subjected to police violence. Similarly, according to Jonathan Coit in "'Our Changed Attitude': Armed Defense and the New Negro in the 1919 Chicago Race Riot," a police officer's refusal to arrest a white man who killed Black teenager Eugene Williams by throwing stones at him

as he drifted into a whites-only section of the beach was a catalyst for the 1919 Chicago riot, as Black witnesses protested the officer's inaction. Additionally, the justice system often manipulated situations to favor mob actions, as seen in a Florida case during the Red Summer when an officer "convinced the accused that whether he was guilty or not, confessing guilt would be the only way to save himself from the mob outside" (Voogd, 158). A particularly stark example of institutional complicity occurred during the 1921 Tulsa massacre, where local authorities and the National Guard not only did "little to disperse the White mob" but also deputized white rioters and provided them with guns. This effectively gave legal cover to racial violence, transforming what could have been a law enforcement response to quell violence into an organized and sanctioned attack on the Black community. What's more, the sheriff tasked with protecting Rowland, a Black arrestee, admittedly took a nap while on the job, and "the police chief would eventually be fired for his neglect of duty during the riot" (Messer and Bell, 859).

Beyond law enforcement, other branches of government also contributed to this systemic failure. Historians like Mixon note that a number of white city officials and politicians scapegoated Black communities, using inflammatory rhetoric to exploit and encourage white fears and violence in order to gain support. Voogd describes how mobs felt emboldened because "their betters [the ruling class] either consented quietly or, more often, definitely approved" (140). For example, during the 1906 Atlanta riot, gubernatorial candidate Hoke Smith's campaign was marked by overtly racist appeals in support of Black disenfranchisement (Mixon, 595). The Black community was portrayed as an inherent "problem" rather than as victims of violence, and in Tulsa, "it was a concern among many city officials that the riot and destruction remain in 'Little Africa.'" The riot, by extension, were framed as lawless, ghetto, "negro uprisings," and the police commissioner warned Black residents that they would be held responsible for any unrest (Messer and Bell, 858). This pattern of behavior by white leaders, whether through direct incitement or a passive endorsement of violence, sent a clear message that Black lives and communities were expendable in the pursuit of maintaining white dominance and security.

In the face of these institutional failures and injustices, Black communities responded with resilience, self-defense, and organized advocacy. Leaders, journalists, veterans, and everyday citizens alike came together to mobilize against racial violence and demand justice on both domestic and international stages. Going back to the role of newspapers, it comes as no surprise to learn that, as Rucker and Upton point out, less than 5 percent of journalists were Black during this era, understandably leading to a heavy reliance on police and city officials as primary sources. Black journalist J. Max Barber was even "run out of town for penning a letter refuting" *The Atlanta Georgian*'s account of the 1906 Atlanta riot as a "negro crime wave" (Jones, 523). In contrast, a notable form of resistance that (understandably perhaps) isn't covered extensively in the historiography came from the Black press, which usually provided the only counter-narratives to the predominantly white media. Founded by Robert S. Abbott in 1905, *The Chicago Defender* became the most widely circulated Black newspaper in the country by 1916. It not only reported on lynchings, police brutality, and racial discrimination but also actively encouraged Black migration to the North,

offering hope and escape from the violence of the Jim Crow South. However, this campaign ended when the Red Summer riots of 1919 exposed the realities of racism that still existed in the North (Rucker and Upton, 99-100). Nonetheless, Abbott's editorial following the Chicago and Washington riots that year described them as "a disgrace to American civilization" and condemned lawlessness on both sides. But he still defended the right of Black men to resist second-class citizenship, arguing that "the younger generation of black men are not content to move along the line of least resistance as did their sires" (Coit, 254). In a similar vein, *The Messenger,* a Black socialist magazine based in New York City and led by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, portrayed the Chicago riot as a "total war" necessitating Black armed resistance and even retaliation against systemic racism. In addition to challenging traditional Black leaders who promoted measured assertiveness and "respectable masculinity," Randolph and Owen framed any Black participation in race riots as revolutionary acts driven by Black workers' grievances and veterans' military skills (250-253).

As Julie Cary Nerad highlights in "Leaping into the Fire: Women in United States Race Riots," prominent leaders like Ida B. Wells, a pioneering Black female voice in the anti-lynching movement, tirelessly and meticulously documented the horrors of racial violence in the U.S. She also took her campaign abroad, addressing audiences across Europe to hold America accountable on a global stage. Her work lambasted and debunked the justifications used to rationalize the violence against Black men in particular and pushed for institutional reform. Wells was also a staunch proponent of armed self-defense, once asserting that a "Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home" to provide the protection that the state refused to offer (Wells, qtd. in Nerad, vii).

This ethos of self-protection and resistance resonated deeply within Black communities during this post-World War I era, especially during the Red Summer, and at times was actively practiced by leaders and veterans, who went as far as to organize armed defenses to protect their neighborhood. For example, in Tulsa, a group of armed Black residents arrived outside the courthouse to prevent the rumored lynching of Rowland and ended up clashing with the hostile white mob present. The 1923 Rosewood massacre also exemplifies this shifting sentiment: when a white mob tried to enter the home of a black man named Sylvester Carrier, he and others in his house took up arms and opened fire to protect themselves, leading to a deadly standoff that lasted into the early morning (González-Tennant, 69). González-Tennant's research also highlights how other Blacks in the community coordinated defensive strategies and sought refuge in nearby swamps to evade the mobs.

Black women, too, played vital roles during and after these riots, stepping into leadership positions amidst the crisis, though this is often overlooked as well. As Nerad details, during the Red Summer, they emerged as defenders of their homes and often risked their lives to protect children and gather resources. In the 1919 Washington, D.C., riot, they also actively participated in neighborhood patrols, challenging the norm of passivity assigned to them in both public perception and historical accounts. During the same riot, Carrie Minor Johnson, a Black teenage girl, famously shot and killed a white policeman who broke into her home with numerous

other white men. Charges against her were ultimately dropped after her second trial when the judge acknowledged her actions as self-defense. Beyond individual acts of resistance, Black women organized patrols, protected children, and provided direct material support like clothing and food to riot victims. Many also worked through preventative programs and clubs to support victims like Johnson, address inequities, and curb further violence.

Despite the significance of early 20th-century race riots, many of these events have been systematically erased from mainstream narratives, contributing to a national amnesia that downplayed or ignored the extent of racial terror. Scholars like Rucker and Upton argue that this absence from official histories allowed white society to avoid accountability, effectively rewriting history to suit a narrative of racial innocence. This not only dishonors the victims but perpetuates ignorance and reinforces cycles of trauma within Black communities. In effect, the legacy of race riots and racial violence as a whole in the United States is deeply marred by selective memory and historical erasure.

The 1906 Atlanta riot exemplifies this "historical denial." Monuments in significant areas like Five Points honor white leaders but fail to commemorate the site's connection to the racial violence that took place there. Jones believes that this omission not only distorts public understanding but also perpetuates "symbolic violence" by refusing to recognize the suffering and resilience of the African Americans communities. The 1921 Tulsa riot also serves as a case study in how public narratives have obscured systemic failures and justified violence. For decades, it was recognized as an insurgence as opposed to a massacre, leading to a lack of reparations or formal acknowledgment until the late 20th century. Messer and Bell discuss how a commission's findings in 1996 revealed decades of institutional neglect, yet subsequent legislative resistance to reparations highlight an ongoing reluctance to fully reckon with this history. González-Tennant expands on this, describing such erasure as a continued assault on memory that deprives affected communities of opportunities for reconciliation and healing. His work on Rosewood emphasizes the role of new media in reclaiming erased histories, using digital storytelling to provide an accessible and interactive way to understand these events.

Selective historical memory has profound implications for American society, shaping collective consciousness and reinforcing racial hierarchies. Lieberson and Silverman convey that the portrayal of race riots as isolated, spontaneous acts, rather than as the result of systemic failures, contributes to a sanitized public memory that protects those in power. This, they contend, hinders public understanding and justice by obscuring the root causes of racial violence. The cumulative impact has left many communities without a proper record of their history, forcing Black Americans to grapple with a narrative that excludes their experiences.

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FROM TIKTOK TO THE BALLOT BOX

GABRIELLA DREYMAN

GROUNDBREAKING TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS, booming online platforms and a hunger for instant information make everyone a reporter in today's world. In the past, the political world was dominated by experts, journalists, policymakers, and television hosts leading political segments—those with formal institutional qualifications. However, with the chokehold that social media holds over the nation, the landscape is rapidly changing. With millions of followers, influencers can spread ideas quickly. Many of these influencers also have a presence across multiple platforms to broaden their reach, with nearly two-thirds active on more than one site (Stocking et al., 2024). Now, influencers have more power than ever, with public opinions being formed through a single swipe and shared with a mere click. To many Americans, these individuals are not just entertainers but rather actors who shape how political issues are perceived and discussed. According to a Pew Research Center study, nearly one in five Americans regularly turns to such figures for his or her news, showing just how essential they have become in everyday life (Burt, 2024). In the past, the political world was dominated by experts, journalists, policymakers, and television hosts leading political segments—those with formal institutional qualifications. However, with the chokehold that social media holds over the nation, the landscape is rapidly changing. With millions of followers, influencers can spread ideas quickly. Many of these influencers also have a presence across multiple platforms to broaden their reach, with nearly two-thirds active on more than one site (Stocking et al., 2024). So, by using their platforms to offer new perspectives, raise

awareness about ongoing issues, and call for movements that transcend beyond the digital world, influencers may be the key to bridging the gap between politics and the public. Yet, the question remains: should influencers be regarded as political agents? Despite the inherent lack of traditional credentials, social media influencers are becoming a necessary part of the political landscape, using their platforms to democratize access to the political realm.

While the prominence of influencers seems undeniable, there are serious concerns about their integrity. Critics of these personalities argue that many of them deliberately adopt political stances. They suggest that online personalities, leveraging their influence, exploit the malleability of their viewers to manipulate existing followers and grow their audience (Goodwin, Joseff, & Woolley, 2020). Social media platforms—especially algorithms that prioritize engagement—reward content that generates a high level of interaction. Political content, particularly controversial content, tends to attract more engagement. As a result, influencers may be incentivized to create political posts, knowing they have a higher chance of going viral. Motives like these can lead to the exploitation of political issues to grow their following, as platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube provide monetary rewards for increased engagement. In such cases, political provocation becomes a calculated strategy for influencers to benefit from. Furthermore, although social media influencers have a wide reach, they lack the skills that traditional political entities do. A UNESCO study shared that 62% of surveyed influencers do not fact-check their political content before sharing it (Reilly, 2024). The lack of verifying information raises serious questions about the spread of misinformation since influencers risk giving a voice to inaccurate content. Additionally, over 40% of influencers said they determine a source's credibility by its popularity rather than verifying its accuracy. Shockingly, only 17% rely on documented sources when judging credibility (Reilly, 2024). By prioritizing engagement numbers over fact-checking, these influencers lack the necessary skills to evaluate competently the information they share. As a result, their content may be oversimplified and superficial since there is no thorough evaluation of its quality.

Given the increasing number of controversies we face as a nation, these concerns are valid. With the amount of news we receive daily, it is entirely reasonable for people to want to be confident in both the accuracy and credibility of the information they consume. However, while these are logical concerns, it is important to remember that not all influencers are motivated by personal gain or contribute inaccurate information. In fact, the growing presence of influencers in the political sphere is not inherently negative. By making political content more accessible, they help educate the public and encourage engagement with important issues. For example, groups like Gen-Z for Change have successfully used social media platforms like TikTok to mobilize followers and advocate for modern crises like climate change, the war in Gaza, and abortion rights. With over 450 content creators in their force, Gen-Z for Change was able to direct over 45,000 people to Civic Unplugged's Voter Registration, a voter registration tool (Gen-Z for Change, 2024). These efforts turn social media into a tool for civic participation, not just entertainment. By grounding

its content in humor, this organization resonates with a demographic that may feel disconnected from traditional political processes. Additionally, platforms such as X, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Threads, and TikTok are praised for their "convenience, speed, and…element of social interaction" (Wang & Forman-Katz, 2024). For that reason, influencers can reach diverse audiences with their content. This accessibility is not only about easy access but also about how influencers can help people understand politics. Research shows that news influencers significantly affect the way people understand current events. For example, Democrats who follow social media influencers who focus on news and current events are more likely than Republicans to say these individuals help them better understand important issues (69% vs. 62%) (Stocking et al., 2024). Furthermore, influencers on social media have helped 65% of users better understand current events, with only 9% saying they have become more confused by the content (Stocking et al., 2024). Therefore, social media influencers positively impact public understanding. Their ability to break down political issues in relatable ways is useful, especially in a society where traditional media may not always be regarded as engaging or accessible. But beyond just educating people, influencers have created an environment in which politics is no longer taboo. People are more open to learning about current issues and discussing them with others, even when they disagree. Such open, respectful dialogue is crucial for fostering democratic participation. In fact, the increased political content on social media in the 2020 election cycle led to higher voter turnout among 18-29-year-olds compared to previous elections (Sigala & Alexander, 2024). Influencers help break down barriers, encourage conversations, and ultimately foster greater involvement in the democratic process.

As political discourse has traditionally been seen as distant, formal, and even taboo, influencers have played a major role in changing that. By making politics less intimidating, these figures have shifted the conversation from an arena dominated by experts to one that feels more accessible in daily life. Politics is now something that is part of the ongoing, everyday conversation, even across party lines. This democratization of discourse is not just a trend; it is part of a broader societal shift toward more open, direct, and diverse participation in democracy. Yet, as with any rising social movement, there are inherent challenges. The speed at which information is shared on social media means that concerns like misinformation can spread just as quickly as accurate information, leaving the public to their own discretion. But rather than dismissing their role entirely, the American public must realize that influencers are becoming a compulsory part of the democratic system. Rather than becoming a replacement for traditional news or expert opinions, influencers can complement these sources, normalizing them in the everyday experience. The future of political engagement lies not just in the hands of experts but also in the collective responsibility of American citizens, where all parties involved are aware of their role in the political realm.

♦ ENGLISH 245

ON PATROL

CHRISTINA GREENE

I am 5.

No, not years old. It's my number.

Dad started this thing where he refuses to be called by name. He only responds to "44."

He asked everyone to pick a number. I picked 5. Erin chose 7.

Even our dog, Buddy, has a number. He has no choice. His number is 9 because, as 44 puts it, "He's a K-9."

Mom refuses to feed into it, so she doesn't have a number yet.

Even though mom doesn't like it, it's catching on. My friends all asked for numbers. Tracy called dibs on 21. Miguel chose 23. Even our manager asked Erin and I to assign her a number. We chose 12.

People laugh when I tell them about this new rule but 44 takes it pretty seriously. He goes "on patrol" with Buddy most nights. They drive around town in the middle of the night, hunting for crime.

The Assignment and the Writer: Creative Nonfiction writers aim to deliver the truth, artfully told. "But where's the line?" folks ask. In Eng 245, the ethics of artful truth-telling exist where content (the what) meets craft (the how). Through deliberate rhetorical choice-making, writers in this class work to ethically mold *exact* truths for the entertainment of their audience, which is exactly what Christina Greene accomplishes in "On Patrol." In this portrait piece, Greene employs a technique called braiding for which she weaves several disparate moments of time and place in order to offer a kaleidoscopic view of the subject: her father. Through her careful portrayal of his fascination with numbers as the essay's driving force, Christina sensitively represents the truth of how her family lives with, and even thrives within, the confines imposed by mental illness. Notably, Christina carefully develops her subject and her narrator (herself) as inspired by Lopate's "On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character" and she is also attentive to details, particularly the mundane ones. Herein lies this essay's success.

– Professor Christen Madrazo

He keeps a notepad full of cryptic, indecipherable notes.

He calls 911 at least once a day to report a crime or emergency he "witnessed."

He even texts in cop lingo:

> *5, what's your 10-20?*
>
> *Receive*
>
> *Copy*
>
> *44, on a stop*

It sounds funny on paper. It's even funnier when I tell people about it out loud. But that's because I try my best to make it sound like a joke. I think everyone is under the impression that 44 is just really committed to the bit. But the truth is, he really thinks we need to talk in code, conceal our identities, and go off the grid. He thinks he's being followed.

Many people suffer from seasonal depression in the wintertime.

But 44, and many other bipolar people, get manic when the summer swaps places with the spring.

I always have to remind myself that none of this is normal.

I don't think other people freak out at their child for accidentally answering the phone "Hey, dad."

"It's not dad. I'm 44! I'm 44!"

Or scream at you to shut your location off because they think the car behind you has taken one too many of the same turns as him.

Or give their kids 10 minutes to pack a bag before dragging them to some hotel where they will unknowingly live for half the summer claiming "the phones are tapped" and not allowing them to tell their friends where they are.

I wish I could be as nonchalant as mom. I feel like she should do something to protect us. All she says is, "Oh well" and shrugs or says, "let him" and tells me to leave her alone.

I try to make her understand how frustrated I feel. She has to know that something is wrong. There's no way she thinks this is okay.

Normal people don't have two personal phones. They don't make their kid memorize which phone to call for which reasons. 375 is connected to the car's Bluetooth so that's the line we use to ask for a ride. 355 is for wellness check-ins. "Intel" must be saved for in-person. Intel is any report of suspicious activity like the sketchy van parked outside of Tracy's house that scares us out of walking home at night.

If you make the mistake of bringing up intel on the phone, 44 immediately cuts you off.

"DONT. Don't say another word. I'll meet you at the rendezvous in 2 minutes, 5."

I don't like to be in the car with him when he's like this. He's suspicious of everyone, especially on the road. Cars with tints. Cars that speed. Cars that crackle as they weave between other cars.

Yet, from where I'm sitting, he is the most suspicious driver of all. Sometimes, he even retaliates against those types of drivers who are actually just clueless strangers. He swerves the car. Brake checks them. Curses under his breath. He reaches over to turn on his dash cam. He calls the nonemergency line because they said he had to stop calling 911.

He starts screaming out numbers and letters and states for you to jot down on that legal pad where he documents evidence of his mania... Or suspicious activity in our suburban neighborhood. The most common crime here is auto theft, which shouldn't be a problem because he almost never leaves his car.

Yet somehow, mom swears he's not sick. That this isn't mania.

When we tell other people about our code name system, they laugh. The person we are sharing the story with always turns to mom at some point and asks her, "Wait so, what's your number?"

And she always says something like, "Oh please. I don't have a number. That shit is stupid."

I know this is temporary. The mania will eventually melt away. I try to remember the place between the mania and the depression. No paranoia or anhedonia, just dad.

The man who has held onto every certificate I've brought home from school. Who urges me to put them into a scrapbook to match the one he made for himself to preserve his achievements in football.

The man who wished 7 didn't stop recording after he fell off a skateboard in the middle of Kmart so that she could have captured a few more seconds of our favorite memory together.

Who teaches me all the big words I know like recalcitrant, remuneration, veracious, and loquacious.

Who is always the first to show up to the midnight snack.

And talks in movie quotes.

The man who taught me that hope stands for "Hold On, Possibilities Exist."

Who helps others no matter how inconvenient the circumstances. Watch him give motivational speeches to schools and churches for free. Give away our only umbrella to an elderly woman walking past the pizza shop window. Pull over into the gore point of the highway to talk a friend down from the edge on the way to our vacation. Drive 2 hours away to check another into rehab.

It's so easy to forget that he never stays in one state forever. He's either in bed speechless, in the car screaming, or out and about making jokes.

How could one person be so many different people?

Even though I only get in the car with 44 for 16 minutes a day – 8 minutes to and from the mall where I serve ice cream – I can't wait around for him to get better. It's time to stop depending on him.

I need to face my greatest fear which is, unfortunately, driving.

But if it means a break from 44 and all those stressful car rides, I have to do it. I need to dust off my license and start the search. I have the means and the motivation.

I just need one more thing: a car.

44 drove Erin and I to work while I saved up. I knew I needed to get serious about looking for a car because Spring sprung up on me and I could not spend another summer in the back seat of 44's car, hoping no one would trigger him until after I got out.

After 5 months, I did it. Bought my own used Ford Fusion.

No more crazy car rides where I hold my breath every time a car with tints flies by in the left lane. No more flinching at the beep of the dash cam. I have my own car now. Would I miss the rides with 44?

Turns out, I wouldn't have a chance to find out. Today, my neighbor's 16-year-old, unlicensed friend, Guy, took his Miata for a spin. Guy whipped his car around the corner on Hoboken Road. He lost control of the steering wheel just as he made his way onto 8th street. Both sides of the already narrow street were lined with cars.

The good news is that Guy was able to avoid hitting all but one of the 12 cars on the block this afternoon.

The bad news is that the one car he hit was mine.

I was already starting to forget which number was for what.

Now, I'm stuck dialing 375 every day.

"Hey, 44? Can you give me a ride to work?"

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I'm finally starting to find the 44 bit funny.

He just learned how to send voice notes over text. He uses it to pretend he's on a walkie-talkie. 44 has perfected his radio voice and you wouldn't believe how good he is at mimicking the static noise.

His impression of a police siren makes me laugh every time.

I even have a 5 jibbit on my crocs.

44, 7, and I still use our numbers to refer to each other most of the time.

Mom still refuses to engage.

Up until this Christmas. As we make cookies at a friend's house, we all explain our numbers and then my aunt Gina gets to the point in the story where she starts to wonder the same thing as everyone else. What's mom's number?

We all wait for mom to say her usual: "that shit's stupid" or to just roll her eyes.

But today, she doesn't.

Instead, she holds up a finger.

"One," she says before a pause. "Because I'm # 1."

♦ AFRICANA STUDIES 227

REBUILDING TRUST:
COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO POLICE REFORM

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JOSHUA HALL

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT has been long marred by systemic inequities, mistrust, and violence. Decades of racial profiling, police-perpetrated violence, and lack of accountability have taken a disproportionate toll on Black individuals, fraying the social contract between these communities and public safety institutions. Studies such as those by Ben-Menachem and Torrats-Espinosa bring into sharp focus how police violence engenders a severe loss of trust within Black communities. This distrust not only weakens community-police relationships but also hampers public safety efforts as the affected people become uncooperative with law enforcement. Systemic racism within policing practices continues to be a pressing issue that demands solutions that can be taken and actioned upon in pursuit of trust, accountability, and equity.

Community justice, also commonly referred to as community-based justice, refers to an approach to handling crime and public safety with direct involvement from the community. However, both terms are different. Community justice emanates the integration of the criminal legal system more into the community through collaboration and partnerships, emphasizing principles of restorative justice within the

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The Assignment and the Writer: For this assignment in AFR 227, Community-based Approaches to Justice, students investigated a community-based solution to a vexing community justice and/or public safety issue. Students must differentiate between community justice and community-based justice, and they must synthesize course information and additional research in their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of community-based solutions. Joshua Hall did an excellent job of delineating these differences, and he applied his understanding to finding solutions that address racism in policing at the community level. His well-written and well-researched paper presents a comprehensive range of solutions, focused on addressing structural inequalities often through community initiated and controlled practices. He provides critical analyses of a variety of community justice and community-based justice strategies that include restorative, procedural, and transformative justice practices, community-based mental health initiatives and trauma-informed and liberation psychology practices, along with internal reforms and structural changes in local policing practices.
– Professor Jessica Gordon Nembhard

framework of the law, whereas community-based justice does not (Karp & Clear, 2000). By contrast, community-based justice shifts greater control to the community itself, focusing on public safety, community well-being, and systemic change through grassroots involvement and healing processes. While both approaches value community engagement, they differ in emphasis between the collaboration of institutions and autonomy of the community. Community justice often rests upon a restorative practice by fixing the harm and promoting offenders' reintegration, while the community at large and victims focus on their needs.

Karp and Clear (2000) argue that traditional justice cuts the crime off from a social context, while community justice re-links these elements; a holistic approach is thereby realizable. Community-based justice, on the other hand, builds on this foundation by engaging communities in devising their own strategies for public safety that prioritize the prevention of harm, healing from systemic injustices, and addressing root causes of crime. For example, community-based approaches might include developing local safety networks, providing resources to reduce poverty, and fostering dialogue to rebuild fractured relationships. This paper addresses the problem of a relationship between African American communities and police that is fraught with systemic racial bias, over-policing, and excessive use of force.

The issue at hand, in part, concerns the over-policing of Black neighborhoods, generally under the auspices of keeping people safe, but it culminates into disproportionate stops, arrests, and violent interactions. Studies have indicated that a Black citizen is nearly three times as likely to be killed by police officers compared to the white citizenry. According to recent studies, a Black individual is almost three times more likely to be killed by police officers than the white population. This disparity demonstrates larger systemic inequities that are part of the criminal justice system and needs immediate reform. The interactions with police and African Americans tend to dehumanize them. According to Howard and Vine, "too many Black people report being made to feel like animals,"(Howard & Vine, 2024) which only furthers and diminishes notions of police legitimacy and perpetuates community-police tensions. This kind of dehumanization undermines safety when cooperation is obstructed and alienation is heightened, usually causing more extreme plunges into violence and mistrust, including heightened stress, mental health challenges, and diminished trust in law enforcement. This mistrust often self-perpetuates cycles of violence, eroding both public safety and the legitimacy of law enforcement in these communities.

To these challenges can be added the promising framework of restorative justice. It pursues the repair of harm not just punishment, in itself, and opens up opportunities for dialogue between law enforcement and communities to confront historical injustices. As Collins (2021) said, police working in collaboration with African American communities is rooted in recognition of systemic racism and opens up pathways to sustainable and long-term solutions. In addition, community-based justice has the added value of empowering communities to design and implement their own safety and healing initiatives, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and resilience.

The issue of systemic racial disparities in policing, especially as it relates to African American communities, is deeply entrenched and complex. African Americans are disproportionately targeted for aggressive policing practices, such as excessive use of force, racial profiling, and over-policing of predominantly Black neighborhoods. These have been major contributors to generalized distrust between African American communities and law enforcement and have also continued cycles of violence and systemic inequities in the larger criminal justice system.

Statistical evidence underlines the gravity of these disparities: African Americans are nearly three times more likely to be killed by police than white individuals, and this is a stark reminder of the racial disparities embedded in law enforcement practices (Ben-Menachem & Torrats-Espinosa, 2024). In addition, Black Americans are disproportionately stopped, searched, and arrested, even in the absence of any criminal activity. Studies reveal that Black individuals comprise 28% of those fatally shot by police in the United States, despite making up only 13% of the population (Pryce & Whitaker, 2023). This overrepresentation extends to other interactions with law enforcement, further exacerbating feelings of alienation and mistrust within African American communities.

The psychological toll of such systemic inequities cannot be overstated. Police-perpetrated racism is associated with heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among African Americans. Hoggard and Lutchman (2023) point out that exposure to racially biased policing can result in chronic health conditions such as hypertension and post-traumatic stress disorder. These negative health effects are exacerbated by the dehumanization that occurs in these interactions.

Restorative justice has emerged as one potential solution to these systemic challenges, offering a framework for repairing harm and rebuilding trust between communities and law enforcement. Beneke (2020) discusses the application of restorative justice in educational settings, where it has been used to address conflicts and foster reconciliation through structured, inclusive processes. Community-based restorative circles, where the victims, offenders, law enforcement, and other stakeholders come together, share experiences, address harms, and collaboratively decide on steps for accountability and healing-in policing, is one such form of restorative justice. These circles place the offender's accountability, the victim's need for closure, and the greater community's actions in fostering a sense of safety and belonging at the forefront.

Beckman et al. (2024) then discuss restorative justice diversion programs as another strategy that have a particular effect on how youth have contact with the justice system. Instead of punitive measures, young offenders are referred to community-led panels that determine alternative resolutions, which include restitution, community service, or participation in counseling programs. The aim is to prevent rearrests by attempting to resolve the social or personal issues that have contributed to their antisocial behavior. Such programs often involve close coordination among police departments, community organizations, and local schools to make sure all parties are working in concert toward the same goals and that resources are sufficiently allocated.

Restorative justice programs require community buy-in and institutional support for successful implementation. Without the buy-in of all stakeholders, most importantly law enforcement, such efforts might only lack credibility and the drive for resources to realize any change. Critics like Afuape and Oldham 2022 sound warnings that restorative justice programs might turn superficial unless they engage with the deeper roots of racial inequity and police violence. For instance, while these initiatives may offer temporary relief by reducing tensions, they do not directly confront issues like discriminatory policies or union disciplinary protections that shield officers from accountability (Hodge & Boddie, 2022). As a result, restorative justice must operate alongside broader reforms addressing structural inequalities to achieve lasting impact.

Additionally, transformative justice can also play a part. A transformative justice program would focus on power transformation and the root cause of harm through collective community action. Afuape and Oldham (2022) indicate that transformative justice, emanating from liberation psychology, concerns itself with systemic issues, such as economic inequality and institutional racism. These programs would be community-driven and involve training of the community, especially the youth, in leading and advocating for the transformation of oppressive systems, with the aim of finding alternatives to punitive measures. For example, such programs would include workshops on youth organizing, community dialogues about dismantling institutional racism, and the building of collective resilience. Long-term in nature, this model is required by both resources and institutional change and faces resistance from persons with vested interests in status quo, but it empowers the communities to confront the causes of violence and develop sustainable solutions.

Reforms in the structure of policing are intended to uproot the source of systemic injustice by altering institutional practices that perpetuate racial disparities. According to Hodge and Boddie (2022), there is an urgent need for reform within police union disciplinary procedures, which tend to insulate officers from accountability in misconduct. A key aspect of structural reform is the creation of independent oversight bodies that can investigate allegations of police brutality and misconduct without the interference of police unions (Hodge & Boddie, 2022). These reforms may also include changes to police training, focusing on de-escalation techniques and anti-bias education, as well as implementing civilian review boards to evaluate complaints (Beneke, 2020). Additionally, improving transparency in police practices, such as making disciplinary records public and creating clear channels for citizens to report misconduct, can help rebuild trust. Structural reforms like these aim to dismantle the systems of protection that enable police misconduct and establish a more equitable justice system (Pryce & Whitaker, 2023).

However, while procedural justice is important for the restoration of trust, on its own it cannot help overcome the structural injustices in policing. According to Pryce and Whitaker (2023), procedural justice focuses on the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability in discretionary policing, thus helping to build better individual-level relationships between the police and the community. However, these micro-level contacts should be supplemented by more macro-level structural changes if long-term impacts are to be achieved. Structural reforms provide the framework for

lasting change, ensuring that the principles of procedural justice are embedded in law enforcement agencies and upheld in all aspects of policing (Beckman et al., 2024). Together, these reforms help to challenge and ultimately dismantle the systemic racism embedded within law enforcement institutions, creating a more equitable and just policing system (Afuape & Oldham, 2022).

Community-driven actions have started to be recognized as central in trying to solve the systemic problems that exist in police-community relations. Beckman et al. (2024) review the impact of restorative justice diversion programs, which use the aim of reducing rearrest rates as their yardstick for effectiveness; diverting individuals, and notably youth, away from a traditional criminal justice system and into community-led restorative circles allows opportunities for victims and offenders to dialogue with the view of promoting accountability and healing. Such programs prioritize rehabilitation over punishment, seeking to address the root causes of criminal behavior. They also play a role in rebuilding trust between law enforcement and the community by empowering community members to lead interventions, thereby creating a more collaborative approach to justice (Beckman et al., 2024). Sarnoff and McDonough (2021) extend that idea by calling for a transformed public safety system, wherein mental health crisis response teams and community-based violence prevention programs are front and center. That is to say, these programs would seek solutions to problems at the societal level without the need for punitive enforcement, centered on community well-being and preventive care. For example, mental health teams provide professional handling of emergencies, thus preventing potential harm caused in situations that might involve the police. These shifts focus on long-term solutions and trust-building, which are essential for breaking down the systemic barriers between communities and law enforcement (Sarnoff & McDonough, 2021).

While community-led initiatives are important, they must be accompanied by structural reforms within law enforcement to ensure lasting change. Hodge and Boddie (2022) argue that police union disciplinary procedures must be overhauled to hold officers accountable and address abuses of authority. Without these internal changes, reforms from the outside will likely fail to realize significant advancement. Along with such reforms, Pryce and Whitaker (2023) highlight the importance of procedural justice in building trust between police and communities of color. They state that law enforcement should make fairness, transparency, and accountability core parts of their practices, particularly when dealing with African American communities. However, Afuape and Oldham (2022) note that procedural justice cannot tackle the structural issues, such as economic inequality and institutional racism, which are at the root of systemic violence. Instead, they argue for transformative justice, which seeks to dismantle oppressive systems through community empowerment and collective action. This is a broader approach that tries to address systemic conditions contributing to harm, hence providing an overall solution toward justice reform. Pryce & Whitaker, 2023; Hodge & Boddie, 2022; Afuape & Oldham, 2022.

Policy reforms also have a very critical role in addressing systemic inequities within the implementation of law enforcement. Sarnoff and McDonough (2021)

indicate that alternative models for ensuring public safety-such as mental health crisis response teams-can reduce reliance on police and thus help reduce the root causes of crime. Such reforms require high investment, much political will, and a shift in societal attitudes toward policing and public safety. Hodge and Boddie (2022) inform that structural reform to police union disciplinary procedures is most needed; otherwise, it will protect the officers and further nurture a culture of impunity.

Mental health is important both for community well-being and effective law enforcement. Police officers often work in high-stress environments that can lead to burnout, trauma, and poor decision-making, which may escalate tensions with the communities they serve (Sarnoff & McDonough, 2021). Because of this, providing mental health support for law enforcement is a must in order to help improve their emotional resilience and decision-making when out in the field. Such interventions would better prepare officers with ways to de-escalate conflicts and reduce the chances of negative outcomes in police encounters, especially within communities already feeling disenfranchised or distrustful of law enforcement.

Similarly, addressing mental health within communities, especially among those from marginalized groups, contributes to healing and social stability. For many individuals in these communities, traumas are often increased through interactions with the police or living in settings where systemic violence, poverty, and inequality persist. Community-based mental health programs, including crisis intervention teams and community mental health services, can help to provide more appropriate responses to people in mental health crisis situations. By addressing these issues, communities can build resilience and reduce the need for police intervention, allowing for more compassionate, effective solutions that prioritize the well-being of all individuals. These efforts not only improve community relations but also contribute to a healthier, more supportive system for both law enforcement officers and the public they serve (Pryce & Whitaker, 2023; Beckman et al., 2024).

Recommendations for addressing systemic issues in police-community relations include expanding restorative justice programs, implementing procedural justice practices, and investing in community-led initiatives. Restorative justice programs, when genuinely community-driven, have the potential to repair trust and reduce recidivism (Beneke, 2020; Beckman et al., 2024). Procedural justice practices, such as equitable treatment and transparent communication, can rebuild trust and address systemic inequities (Pryce & Whitaker, 2023). Community-led initiatives, such as restorative justice diversion programs and youth leadership development, offer a path to sustainable change and community empowerment.(Beckman et al., 2024; Afuape & Oldham, 2022.)

Structural changes, like reforming police union disciplinary procedures and adopting other models of public safety, are vital in ensuring accountability and rooting out systemic inequity. As Hodge & Boddie (2022) and Sarnoff & McDonough (2021) find, such reforms must go hand in hand with deeper work on upstream contributors to systemic violence, including economic and racial discrimination. Afuape and Oldham (2022) believe that transformative justice and liberation psychology provide a framework for addressing such systemic challenges by emphasizing collective action and community resilience.

In conclusion, issues in police-community relations have to be approached on many levels-restorative practices, procedural justice, community empowerment, and structural reforms. These strategies give priority to the voice and experiences of marginalized communities and have the potential to lead to a more just and equitable society. Continued research and advocacy are needed to ensure that these solutions become actualized and sustained with a focus on root causes of systemic violence and community resilience.

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⬥ HONORS 201

WHY THE UNITED STATES SHOULD RATIFY THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

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LAILA MANSOUR

DEEP SEA STRIP MINING is the process of retrieving minerals from the ocean floor, at depths ranging from hundreds to thousands of meters below the surface (Ashford et al. 2024). The minerals most commonly mined for are copper, cobalt, and nickel, as well as other metals found on the ocean floor (Ashford et al. 2024). These minerals have been of interest for decades, but it wasn't until recently that the technology required to obtain them became available. Yet, as the growth of deep-sea mining continues to increase, the legislation regulating it has drastically fallen behind. The United Nations is the sole governing body regulating the practice under the Law of the Sea and International Seabed Authority, but its jurisdiction only covers international waters, leaving mining practices in national territories, or exclusive economic zones, at the discretion of the governing nation (United Nations 2024). Furthermore, regulations it sets forth only apply to involved members, which excludes

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The Assignment and the Writer: In this Honors Seminar on the Climate Change Crisis, students presented upon a climate crisis topic, and then developed their course papers based on their presentations. Laila Mansour's topic was "deep sea strip mining" and her paper argued that the US should formally ratify the UN's Convention on the Law of the Sea. Laila compellingly argued for why it is in the US's best interest to do so, especially since it voluntarily complies with the Convention anyway. Laila also detailed the extreme dangers to our planet posed by indiscriminate strip mining, and deftly explained how the Convention is the only existing effective international mechanism establishing rules for how and where the mining is to be conducted.   **– Professor Andrew Majeske**

the United States who has yet to ratify it. It is critical, then, that the United States ratifies UNCLOS in order to prevent a significant decrease in the biodiversity of the deep-sea through the direct and indirect killing of marine life, which will result in the disruption of the ocean's carbon cycle and ultimately rises in the global temperature.

Deep-sea strip mining mainly encompasses the mining of three main types of metallic deposits on the seabed: polymetallic nodules, cobalt crusts, and sulfide deposits. Polymetallic nodules, also known as polymetallic manganese nodules, are the primary focus of most deep-sea mining expeditions, forming several thousand meters below sea level as the result of metals precipitating out of seawater (Runwal 2023). These deposits grow very slowly, increasing one centimeter in diameter every million years. The composition of each node varies, but, on average, approximately 25% of each is manganese and 3% is a combination of nickel, copper, and cobalt (Runwal 2023). The remaining percentage is non-valuable material in terms of economic benefit. A study by Sweetman et al. published in the Nature Geoscience journal in July 2024 found that these nodules produce oxygen, making the mineral both the first non-living substance found to produce oxygen and the first of any specimen to do so without sunlight. The study proposed that seawater electrolysis reactions, reactions in which an electric current drives chemical reaction, driven by the high voltage potentials on nodule surfaces, are the cause of this unusual oxygen production. Because these nodules are found in areas of rich biodiversity, it is probable that they supply these deep-sea ecosystems with at least a percentage of oxygen necessary for species' survival.

Cobalt crusts are also commonly mined for, and form on rock summits and seamounts, which are underwater volcanic mountains, as the metal precipitates out of the seawater (Runwal 2023). These crusts also grow at minimal rates, averaging a few millimeters of growth every million years and reaching an average thickness of 5-10 cm but growing as thick as 25 cm (Runwal 2023). In addition to cobalt, these crusts contain nickel and other metals of interest. However, these crusts are harder to mine than the nodules because they are more difficult to strip from the underlying rock (Runwal 2023). Sulfide deposits are also commonly mined for and form on chimney-like seabed structures known as hydrothermal vents as acidic fluid resulting from interactions between volcanic rocks and heated seawater spews out from these vents (Runwal 2023). The precipitated sulfide from this fluid is then deposited on the seafloor. These sulfide deposits also contain metals such as zinc, silver, lead, and copper, all valuable minerals for industrial productions (Runwal 2023).

The process of mining these nodules has become more efficient as technology has developed. A robotic collector vehicle attached to a mining ship is sent down to the seafloor, using seawater to create high-pressure water jets that stir up seafloor sediment and dislodge the nodules (Runwal 2023). However, extracting the cobalt crusts and sulfide deposits requires different equipment because the crusts stick to the rock surfaces on which they grow. This can be an issue, as collecting too much of the rock while mining the crust dilutes the deposit. Remotely operated vehicles that first peel off the crust and then cut and crush it into smaller fragments have been developed to overcome this exact problem (Runwal 2023).

The areas in which deep-sea strip mining is performed can be placed into two categories: exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and non-exclusive economic zones, or international territory. Exclusive economic zones are that which fall under the territory of given countries, accounting for one-third of the world's oceans (Ashford et al. 2024). This becomes relevant mainly for island nations that are surrounded by deep seas in which they could mine. Because only international territory is regulated under the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and because deep-sea strip mining is still a developing process, these EEZs are very lightly regulated, enhancing the opportunity for the exploitation of the seafloor (Ashford et al. 2024).

The Clarion-Clipperton Zone, located in the northeast Pacific Ocean, is the most common strip utilized for deep-sea strip mining. Spanning 4.5 million square kilometers between Hawaii and Mexico, it is approximately the size of Europe (Ashford et al. 2024). It has one of the highest nodule abundances and contains more nickel and cobalt than all terrestrial deposits combined, which totals to around 70% of the planet's known reserves (Ashford et al. 2024). Additionally, the Prime Crust Zone, located in the central-west Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and the Mariana Islands, is another highly mined region, containing some of the world's thickest and most valuable crusts (Ashford et al. 2024). Indeed, these crusts contain four times as much cobalt and nine times as much tellurium as all known land deposits combined.

Because of the sheer breadth and prevalence of these deposits, deep sea-strip mining has become a focus of climate debates. Proponents of the practice argue that one of the biggest benefits of strip-mining is that the materials obtained from it are used in low-carbon technologies such as wind turbines and solar panels (Ashford et al. 2024). Estimates suggest that demand for these minerals could increase by 400-600% in upcoming decades, so expanding mining efforts beyond land would help keep up with this growth (Ashford et al. 2024). Additionally, deep-sea strip mining can focus efforts away from terrestrial mining, avoiding other environmental concerns such as deforestation and freshwater pollution (Ashford et al. 2024). Furthermore, since deep-sea mining is becoming highly regulated, smaller-scale mining operations would not be as prevalent and stronger regulation of labor conditions may be feasible, avoiding human rights abuses that occur in some terrestrial mining operations (Ashford et al. 2024).

However, it is clear deep-sea mining has its risks as well, and these risks arguably far outweigh the benefits. As recently discovered, polymetallic nodules have been linked to oxygen production (Sweetman et al. 2024), so removing them could have detrimental effects to marine life, especially as there is still so much scientists do not know about the ecosystems of the deep sea. What we do know, however, provides reason for concern. The deep sea is the largest habitable space on the planet and is home to tens of thousands of species, with 5,000 new ones recently discovered in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone alone (Ashford et al. 2024). Deep-sea mining could directly harm these species through contact with mining equipment and sediment plumes the machines create, which could smother and suffocate deep-sea organisms and inhibit food sources (Ashford et al. 2024). Warm mining wastewater could also kill marine life through overheating and poisoning (Ashford et al. 2024). Of course, damage to these species would have long-term ecosystem effects as well. Light and

sound pollution as well as the removal of the polymetallic nodules, which serve as the habitat for many of these species, could lead to species extinction, devastating these slow-developing ecosystems (Ashford et al. 2024). Additionally, waste discharge from mining vessels could spread miles across the water, threatening fish populations (Ashford et al. 2024). The socioeconomic impact of this must also be considered, as fishing drives the economies of many small islands in the Pacific. Deep-sea mining would also require shoreline facilities, which would require developing land, leading to potential terrestrial habitat loss (Ashford et al. 2024). Current regulations also promote more revenue flow to developed countries and shareholders of mining companies, once again leaving developing countries out of the picture (Ashford et al. 2024). Ultimately, the biggest impact will most likely be a decrease in deep-sea biodiversity. Many microscopic organisms play a role in absorbing around 25% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, so the loss of any of the contributing species could affect the ocean's carbon cycle, the impact of which will be seen in global temperature rises (Ashford et al. 2024).

These high risks are the reason regulation of deep-sea strip mining is so important. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, abbreviated to UNCLOS, and the 1994 Agreement established the regulations regarding water beyond national jurisdiction that the world still follows today, as well as organizations to implement these rules (United Nations). Though deep-sea strip mining is a newly developing process, regulation actually dates back to the 19th century. In March of 1874, the British ship HMS Challenger collected the first known deposits of manganese nodules. Analysis of these samples in 1891 revealed the metallic makeup known today. In the 1950s, numerous companies began exploring known nodule hotspots to estimate their economic potential, discovering what is now known as the Clarion-Clipperton zone.

It wasn't until 1970, however, that the UN General Assembly began to regulate these expeditions. They declared that resources of the seabed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction to be "the common heritage of mankind" (United Nations 2024). The Seabed Committee in 1968 and the nine-year Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea led to the adoption of the Law of the Sea Convention in 1982 (United Nations 2024). The UN continues to help nations understand the convention and utilize their marine resources with minimal conflict. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) helps coordinate the UN's programming concerning marine activity (United Nations 2024).

The United Nations also gives assistance to the two newly created institutions - the International Seabed Authority, or the ISA, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. In 2021, the two-year rule was established, requiring the ISA to "consider" and "provisionally approve" applications to mine after two years of the date of an initial notification in 2021 (Ashford et al. 2024). In 2023, at this two-year mark, the ISA still had not determined a final rule. The council is working to adopt official regulations by 2025. The ISA also sponsors a Contractors' Training Program. Contractors have a legal obligation to provide and fund training opportunities for personnel from developing States and those of the ISA in order to provide operational expertise for deep seabed mining (International Seabed Authority).

These advancements leave the UN with a lot of work on their plate as the world of deep-sea strip mining is beginning to seriously be explored. Their focus will be working with nations to uphold UN guidelines, monitoring their deep-sea activities, and assisting developing countries in taking full advantage of their rights. Most recently, the 29th session of the International Seabed Authority in Jamaica and the seventh ISA annual contractors meeting in Korea were hosted to discuss evolving policies. The seventh ISA annual contractors meeting occurred in the city of Busan in the Republic of Korea from September 30 - October 2, 2024 (Cooper & Dingwall 2024). The theme was "Fostering dialogue and collective actions for effective regulatory compliance of activities carried out in the Area." The meeting was held in collaboration with the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST). Dr. Do-Hyung Kang, Minister for Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, emphasized the importance of balancing resource development with environmental protection. He also notably presented the vision of the deep seabed as "the last frontier" of Earth (Cooper & Dingwall 2024).

The ISA has also issued the Mining Code, which comprises rules, global regulations and procedures to regulate prospecting, exploration and exploitation of marine minerals (International Seabed Authority). There are three sets of exploration regulations in place that cover the prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulfides, and carbon-rich ferromanganese crusts. Their exploitation regulations ensure that economic needs are not prioritized at the expense of environmental protection.

However, the focus on environmental protection set by UNCLOS only applies to international territories and those who have ratified the Law of the Sea, which the United States notably has not. In 1982, with the passing of UNCLOS, President Reagan announced the United States would not sign, stating, "We recognize that world demand and markets currently do not justify commercial development of deep seabed mineral resources, and it is not clear when such development will be justified… When such factors become favorable, however, the deep seabed represents a potentially important source of strategic and other minerals. The aim of the United States in this regard has been to establish with other nations an order that would allow exploration and development under reasonable terms and conditions" (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). However, the United States has continued to adhere to the regulations described in UNCLOS despite not being an active participant.

Upon reviewing the regulations set forth by the United Nations, the Reagan administration sought out a "frontier mining code," one in which "the first company to lay claim to mining territory would own the area outright and face no international regulations except taxing power," as well as "excessive voting power for themselves and close allies in the International Seabed Authority" (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). When these propositions seemed doomed to fail, the United States Special Presidential Envoy on the Law of the Sea Treaty Donald Rumsfeld attempted to dissuade other industrialized nations, primarily Great Britain, from approving the treaty (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). Ultimately, however, the United States was one of only four countries to oppose the convention, alongside Israel, Venezuela, and Turkey (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). Britain

abstained from signing the treaty until 1997. In 1983, the Reagan Administration released the *Oceans Policy Statement*, which declared a U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone "protecting sovereign rights to resources within 200 nautical miles of its coasts" (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). In this statement Reagan also expressed his desire to collaborate with nations to "develop a regime, free of unnecessary political and economic restraints, for mining deep seabed minerals beyond national jurisdiction," establishing a precedent of obeying UNCLOS guidelines even without official acceptance of the convention (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). In December of 1988, President Reagan continued to align U.S. policy more closely with UNCLOS, extending the United States' territorial waters from three to twelve miles (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023).

Approving UNCLOS gained favor under the Clinton administration, especially after the *Agreement Relating to the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS* was finalized in 1984, granting the U.S. more influence over decisions and protecting prior U.S. mining expeditions (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). However, despite growing support for the treaty from the Democratic party, the 1994 midterm election that elected eight new Republican senators brought the party back to where it started. In the face of Republican opposition, President Clinton passed his own policies that aligned with UNCLOS, including the establishment of a U.S. Contiguous Zone in 1999 that extended the United States coastline control up to 24 nautical miles off the U.S. coast (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). This "tightened law enforcement authority over irresponsible fishing practices and pollution by foreign vessels," also reducing competition for domestic fishing enterprises (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023).

Similarly, the treaty gained support under the Bush administration, but a decision was ultimately tied up due to opposition in the Senate and the upcoming 2008 presidential election. The Bush administration established an *Ocean Action Plan* in 2003, including U.S. ratification of UNCLOS. According to the SAIS Review of International Affairs, at the time of the 2003 committee hearings on the convention, "more than 140 nations, including every other permanent member of the UN Security Council and all but two other NATO members, had fully acceded to the treaty." Republican Senator Ted Stevens was one of the senators in favor of adopting the convention, referencing the *1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement*, which was ratified by the United States, as "proof that UNCLOS was an effective framework for advancing responsible international management of the oceans" (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). The coastal territory of Alaska was also an important factor, as the Arctic continental shelf, which "comprises two-thirds of the United States' total area of oceanic continental shelf and presents lucrative seabed mining opportunities" extended past the U.S. exclusive economic zone, making it fair game for Russia who was beginning to propose claims to the area to the ISA (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). Stevens argued that Russia would be favored for the territory because they were an ISA member, so ratifying UNCLOS and sitting on the ISA committee could help the U.S.'s claims to this additional territory. However, despite unanimous support in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, in addition to support from the U.S. Navy, the National Ocean Industries Association, the U.S. Outer Continental

Shelf Policy Committee, the American Petroleum Institute, and the Chamber of Shipping of America, the adoption of UNCLOS was once again halted when Senate Majority Leader William Frist "declined to put the treaty vote on the calendar" (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). Even after growing support for the treaty in the aftermath of the events of early 2004, the treaty once again was pushed aside due to the 2008 Presidential campaign.

The Obama administration continued in the path of its predecessors, and between the 2008 Great Recession, wars in the Middle East, and a focus on healthcare policy, UNCLOS once again remained unratified. The first push for ratification came in 2010, but remained unattended until a series of hearings in 2012, in which Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Robert Papp, the American Petroleum Institute, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, the Seafarers International Union, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, the National Resources Defense Council, Lockheed Martin, Verizon Communications, and Exxon Mobil each expressed support for UNCLOS (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). However, before the hearings were concluded, former Secretary of Defense and UNCLOS negotiator Donald Rumsfeld published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal against the treaty, swaying Republican representatives from approving it.

After the Senate once again failed to ratify UNCLOS during Obama's second term, it was China that brought UNCLOS back to U.S. attention in 2014 when the China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) "made significant territorial claims in the South China Sea" (SAIS Review of International Affairs 2023). It is this competition for sea territory and resources that keeps the issue on the radar of the United States. According to Caitlin Keating-Bitonti in a report for the Congressional Research Service in November 2024, some members of Congress have called for the Senate to adopt UNCLOS amid expectations of countries and companies applying for ISA exploitation contracts in 2025. Ratifying the convention would provide the U.S. with the power to set and vote on ISA policies. Some members have opted for a different approach, promoting legislation in a June 2024 letter to President Biden that would prohibit deep-sea mining altogether until more research has been done or place a moratorium on the practice until the ISA "adopts a regulatory framework based on comprehensive scientific understanding of the potential impacts on the ocean" (Keating-Bitonti 2024).

Yet, the likelihood of deep-sea mining stopping altogether is highly unlikely, as both the United States, ISA committee members, and private companies have vested economic interests in the practice. Therefore, adopting UNCLOS, which would, at the very least provide a guideline for regulating the practice, seems to be the best solution. Primarily, UNCLOS addresses the environmental concerns associated with deep-sea mining. The Convention, which is backed by environmental agencies including the National Environmental Trust, Ocean Conservancy, and World Wildlife Fund, sets requirements for states to "take measures to address pollution from vessels and land-based sources, to prevent the introduction of alien or invasive species, and

to conserve and manage coastal fisheries" in addition to requiring them to collaborate in the protection of the ocean through the "management of high seas fish stocks, as well as stocks that migrate between the high seas and exclusive economic zones, setting the stage for regional agreements essential to managing ocean fisheries" and the protection of marine mammals, "which are given special protections under the Convention" (Sandalow 2004). According to Sandalow in his 2004 article, "Law of the Sea Convention: Should the U.S. Join?," the "standards for environmental protection set forth in the Convention work strongly to the advantage of the United States," which has already met and even exceeded these regulations but requires the collaboration of other nations to see a true impact in the protection of the marine environment.

In addition to environmental considerations, Sandalow also argued for national security benefits that UNCLOS would provide. The Convention recognizes "navigational and overflight freedoms within 200-mile exclusive economic zones and through key international straits and archipelagoes" as well as the "rights of passage through territorial seas, without notice and regardless of means of propulsion, as well as navigational and overflight freedoms on the high seas" (Sandalow 2004). This would provide the U.S. Navy and Air Force with greater operational mobility and reduce the risk of international conflicts. Because the U.S. is not a member, however, they have no ability to propose or contest amendments from other parties that might not be in national interest.

Of course, economic concerns are those at the forefront of UNCLOS debate since the U.S. economy depends on trading goods across oceans, oil and gas from offshore wells, fisheries, and submarine cables for global communications. The Convention recognizes navigational freedoms that facilitate trade and reduce international conflict and provides exclusive authority to resources within 200 miles of the shoreline, extending this territory beyond the 200-mile radius to the edge of the continental shelf for coastal nations such as the United States, which would gain large quantities of territory surrounding Alaska, Maine, and other coastal states that could facilitate oil and gas production (Sandalow 2004). However, this extension is only applied to members of the convention.

Based on environmental, national security, and economic considerations, it seems in the favor of the United States to ratify UNCLOS. The process for this has been initiated many times throughout U.S. governmental history but has yet to be successful due to differing viewpoints, mostly in the form of Republican dissent. Essentially, the president submits UNCLOS to the Senate to be considered as a treaty, which is then referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC). The SFRC holds hearings in which stakeholders provide testimony arguing for or against the treaty. The Senate then votes, with ratification requiring the approval of two-thirds of the Senate vote. Even if it met the two-thirds majority, the U.S. would most likely have to devise and employ further domestic legislation strengthening the policies outlined in UNCLOS. Based on historical precedent, this will be no easy feat, especially following a presidential election that addressed the climate crisis only to a minimal extent. However, in the meantime, the United States still could regulate its own exclusive economic zone, through environmental protection laws, mandating

licensing for deep-sea mining under the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, expanding the National Marine Sanctuaries system, enforcing penalties for non-compliance with environmental protocols, and economic incentives. Furthermore, though UNCLOS may not formally be accepted, the U.S. government has long aligned with some UNCLOS policies and will most likely continue to do so, reducing the severity of the threat to the seabed.

Deep-sea mining poses numerous threats to the climate. The removal of oxygen-producing polymetallic nodules and the destruction of deep-sea habitats threatens the biodiversity of the deep-sea and ultimately could result in a rise in global temperature, killing the species that help regulate the carbon cycle. While international regulation exists through the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the United States has failed to ratify the treaty, posing a threat to deep-sea ecosystems not only in international waters but in its own exclusive economic zone. Therefore, it is crucial that the United States ratifies UNCLOS and adopts policies that will enhance deep-sea mining regulations, preventing too much damage to the deep-sea before the extent of the effects of the resulting destruction has even been definitively and scientifically established.

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⬥ History 204

The Collapse of Hideyoshi's Ambitions: Revisiting the Imjin War in East Asian and Global Contexts

Luis Alvarado

Introduction

After defeating the Hojo clan in the four-month siege of Odawara Castle (1590 AD), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598 AD) successfully united most of Japan under his rule. This achievement solidified his place as one of the three unifiers of Feudal Japan. However, with Japan unified, Hideyoshi turned his ambitions outward, targeting the Korean Peninsula as a stepping stone for a larger campaign to conquer the Chinese Ming Empire (1368–1644 AD). In May 1592, this vision sparked the Imjin War (1592–1598 AD), as Japanese forces led by generals So Yoshitoshi (1568–1615 AD) and Konishi Yukinaga (1555–1600 AD) landed in Busan. After initial victories, Japan established a foothold in Korea, plunging East Asia into a prolonged and devastating conflict.

Despite early successes, Hideyoshi's campaign was ultimately doomed. His forces faced insurmountable challenges, including the tactical brilliance of Admiral Yi Sun-sin (1545–1598 AD), the decisive intervention of the Ming Dynasty, and the persistent resistance of Korean partisans. These factors collectively undermined Japan's efforts to dominate the region and revealed the limits of Hideyoshi's imperial ambitions.

While traditional scholarship on the Imjin War has often focused on national heroes and isolated military victories, more recent studies emphasize the broader East Asian and global contexts of the conflict. Building on this emerging perspective, this paper explores the interconnected roles of Admiral Yi, the Ming Dynasty, and Korean partisans in Hideyoshi's defeat. Drawing on primary sources such as *Nanjung Ilgi* (Admiral Yi's war diary) and recent scholarship by Kenneth Swope, Robert W. Strayer, and JaHyun Kim Haboush, this paper illuminates the key factors behind Hideyoshi's failure, highlighting the dynamic interplay of local resistance and regional geopolitics.[I]

ADMIRAL YI'S NAVAL BRILLIANCE IN SCHOLARSHIP AND HISTORY

Admiral Yi Sun-sin stands as one of the most pivotal figures in the Imjin War, whose strategic brilliance and unrelenting leadership thwarted Toyotomi Hideyoshi's vision of regional dominance. Even as Japanese forces secured initial footholds in the Korean Peninsula—occupying key areas such as Busan, Kimhae, and Seoul—Yi's naval campaigns disrupted Hideyoshi's broader strategy by severing critical supply lines and crippling Japan's ability to sustain its invasion.

In the early stages of the war, Admiral Yi's reconnaissance missions in the Busan and Tsushima regions enabled him to gather crucial intelligence on Japanese naval movements. Acting on this intelligence, Yi joined forces with Admiral Won Gyun (1540–1597) and led the Korean fleet in the Battle of Okpo (1592). This engagement marked Korea's first major victory in the war, as Yi's disciplined formations and superior tactics resulted in a decisive win without the loss of a single Korean ship. The victory not only boosted Korean morale but also destabilized Japan's logistical network, demonstrating that the seas—vital for transporting supplies—were far from secure.

Yi's career was defined by consistent strategic brilliance. Despite his forces facing severe shortages and hardships, including starvation and limited rations, Yi maintained an unyielding resolve. As he writes in his *Nanjung Ilgi* (War Diary), "There was no other way to prepare it, so we had about 500 troops in Suncheon-bu." This quote captures his ability to inspire his men and persevere under dire conditions.[II]

Near the end of the war in 1597, Yi was reinstated as commander after being removed from his post due to false accusations of treachery. His return to leadership revitalized Korea's naval resistance. Yi implemented exemplary tactics, such as a pincer attack that demoralized Japanese forces, and demonstrated the psychological impact of his fleet's dominance. He described the enemy as "very afraid," showcasing how his strategic superiority undermined Japanese confidence.[III]

The Battle of Myeongnyang (1597) stands as a defining moment in Yi's career and a turning point in the war. Facing overwhelming odds with only 13 Korean ships against over 300 Japanese vessels, Yi exploited local sea currents and psychological warfare to achieve a stunning victory. His use of "turtle ships" and mastery of terrain solidified his reputation as a strategic genius. This battle decisively ended Japan's ability to maintain naval dominance, effectively crippling Hideyoshi's ambitions in the region.

Yi's contributions went beyond individual battles. His relentless defense of Korea's maritime routes underscored the peninsula's strategic importance and compelled the Ming Dynasty to provide additional military and logistical support. This collaboration between Yi and the Ming forces exemplified the interconnected resistance against Japanese imperial ambitions.

The global implications of Yi's naval brilliance cannot be understated. By neutralizing Japan's naval threat, Yi not only safeguarded Korea but also reinforced the Ming Dynasty's position as a dominant power in East Asia. His victories highlighted the critical importance of maritime strategy in regional geopolitics and demonstrated how local resistance could disrupt imperial ambitions. As JaHyun Kim Haboush notes in *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation*, "Securing the region made it possible to keep the routes between Kyongsang, Cho'lla, and Chungchong open for Koreans, and, with Admiral Yi Sunsin's naval victories, it cut the invaders' supply lines. This is regarded as the major factor that destabilized the Japanese."[IV] Yi's successes, therefore, were not isolated military feats but key elements in the broader collapse of Hideyoshi's campaign.

While Admiral Yi's naval brilliance undermined Japan's logistical capabilities, it was the Ming Dynasty's strategic intervention that provided the additional military and political support necessary to turn the tide of the war. The Ming's involvement not only reinforced Korea's defenses but also reshaped East Asia's geopolitical landscape, illustrating the critical interplay of resistance forces in countering imperial aggression.

THE MING DYNASTY'S ROLE REVISITED

Toyotomi Hideyoshi's ambitions extended beyond Korea; he viewed the peninsula as a strategic stepping stone for a larger campaign to conquer China and assert Japanese dominance over East Asia. The Ming Dynasty's response to this aggression was both immediate and transformative, underscoring its geopolitical significance in the region. Recognizing Korea's pivotal role as a buffer state, the Ming intervened not only to safeguard its own borders but also to maintain the balance of power in East Asia.

Hideyoshi's focus on China stemmed from its status as the economic hub of the region, controlling vast trade networks and wealth. By securing Korea as a staging ground, Hideyoshi aimed to launch a full-scale invasion of the Ming Empire. However, the Ming Dynasty, aware of Korea's strategic importance, acted decisively. As Kenneth Swope notes in *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, the Ming rapidly mobilized military resources, recognizing that the loss of Korea would leave China

vulnerable to further incursions.[V] This intervention marked a shift from Korea's role as a tributary state to an active partner in regional defense.

The Ming's involvement dramatically altered the course of the war. While Japan's initial victories allowed it to establish a foothold in Korea, the Ming's coordinated efforts, combined with Admiral Yi's naval successes, disrupted Japan's logistical capabilities and weakened its military momentum. Ming forces not only provided critical reinforcements but also demonstrated superior organizational and tactical skills in major battles, such as those near Pyongyang and Ulsan. By aligning their military strategy with Korean resistance efforts, the Ming ensured that Japan's supply lines remained vulnerable, further destabilizing Hideyoshi's campaign.

The geopolitical consequences of the Ming's intervention extended far beyond the battlefield. By decisively defeating Japan, the Ming cemented its role as the dominant power in East Asia, reinforcing its influence over Korea through the re-establishment of a tributary relationship.[VI] This restored balance to the region and highlighted the interconnectedness of East Asian politics during the late 16th century. Furthermore, the Ming's actions demonstrated the importance of regional alliances in countering imperial ambitions, setting a precedent for future conflicts.

The Ming Dynasty's motivations were not purely altruistic. Their actions reflected a pragmatic understanding of regional dynamics, prioritizing the protection of their own borders and economic interests. As Robert W. Strayer observes in *Ways of the World*, Korea's history of resisting direct Chinese control while adopting cultural and economic ideas from China made it a critical buffer state. The Ming's intervention reaffirmed Korea's strategic importance while showcasing China's capacity to defend its sphere of influence.

By thwarting Hideyoshi's ambitions, the Ming not only safeguarded East Asia's political and economic stability but also reshaped its geopolitical landscape. Their actions underscored the critical role of alliances in resisting imperial expansion and maintaining regional equilibrium. Alongside the Ming's strategic contributions, the Korean partisans' guerrilla warfare played a crucial role in the broader resistance, directly undermining Japanese forces on the ground. Together, these forces created a unified resistance that ultimately defeated Hideyoshi's ambitions and demonstrated the enduring power of collective action against imperial aggression.

THE RESILIENCE OF KOREAN PARTISANS

While Japan's forces made significant territorial gains across the Korean countryside during the Imjin War, the Korean partisans played a crucial role in resisting the invasion behind enemy lines. These partisans, composed of local militias and civilians, conducted guerrilla warfare that disrupted Japanese supply lines and undermined their ability to sustain prolonged occupation. Their contributions complemented the naval strategies of Admiral Yi Sun-sin and the military interventions of the Ming Dynasty, highlighting the interconnected nature of Korea's resistance efforts.

Korean partisans utilized their intimate knowledge of local terrain to engage in hit-and-run tactics that targeted Japanese vulnerabilities in remote and forested areas. As Kenneth Swope notes in *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, partisan forces

excelled at ambushes and sabotage, effectively severing supply lines and creating confusion among Japanese units.[VII] These tactics were not only militarily significant but also psychologically impactful. The unpredictability of partisan attacks instilled fear and frustration in Japanese troops, contributing to lowered morale and hampering their ability to consolidate control over occupied areas.

The flexibility of the partisans allowed them to operate in ways that larger armies, such as those of the Ming and Korean governments, could not. Unlike formal military forces, partisans were not bound by traditional combat structures, enabling them to exploit Japanese weaknesses in logistics and mobility. As Swope emphasizes, their ability to "strike and vanish" rendered counter-guerrilla operations by the Japanese ineffective, further destabilizing the invaders' campaign. These efforts complemented Admiral Yi's naval victories, which cut off Japanese reinforcements and supplies, amplifying the logistical strain on Japan's forces.

Although some scholars have argued that the contributions of the partisans were secondary to the interventions of the Ming Dynasty, this view underestimates their critical role in the broader resistance effort. The Ming provided troops and resources, but it was the partisans who engaged directly with Japanese forces in ways that regular armies could not, particularly in regions where the terrain was unfavorable for large-scale operations. Their actions created a constant state of insecurity for the Japanese, preventing them from achieving stability in occupied territories.

The psychological impact of partisan warfare was equally significant. By targeting supply lines and ambushing isolated units, the partisans eroded the confidence of Japanese soldiers and commanders. Swope notes that this persistent harassment "contributed to their growing frustration and loss of resolve," a factor that compounded the challenges Japan faced in maintaining its invasion.[VIII] The partisans' efforts also reinforced the broader narrative of resistance, inspiring local communities and fostering a collective determina- tion to resist occupation.

Ultimately, the Korean partisans were an essential component of the multifaceted resistance that defeated Hideyoshi's ambitions. Their ability to disrupt Japanese operations behind enemy lines complemented Yi Sun-sin's naval strategies and the Ming's military support, creating a unified effort that proved insurmountable for the invaders. The resilience and ingenuity of the partisans demonstrated the power of localized resistance in shaping the outcome of the war and contributed to the ultimate failure of Japan's campaign.

CONCLUSION

The Imjin War stands as a testament to the power of alliances and localized resistance in countering imperial ambitions. The collaboration between Admiral Yi Sun-sin, the Ming Dynasty, and Korean partisans exemplifies how diverse strategies and collective efforts can overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. Together, they not only thwarted Toyotomi Hideyoshi's plans for regional dominance but also reshaped the geopolitical dynamics of East Asia.

Admiral Yi's naval brilliance disrupted Japan's supply lines and ensured control over critical maritime routes, depriving the Japanese army of the logistical

support needed to sustain their invasion. The Ming Dynasty's timely intervention reinforced Korea's defenses, demonstrating the importance of regional alliances in maintaining stability and countering aggression. Meanwhile, the relentless efforts of Korean partisans complemented these larger military campaigns by engaging in guerrilla tactics that undermined Japanese morale and logistical capabilities. Each of these contributions was indispensable, creating a multifaceted resistance that made Hideyoshi's ambitions unattainable.

The broader implications of the Imjin War extend beyond its immediate historical context. It underscores the enduring significance of cooperation among nations and communities in resisting imperial expansion. The Ming-Korean alliance highlighted the necessity of regional solidarity in safeguarding sovereignty, while the role of local partisans showcased the power of grassroots resistance in shaping the outcomes of larger conflicts. These lessons remain relevant in contemporary geopolitics, where alliances and localized efforts continue to play crucial roles in addressing complex global challenges.

Further research could explore the Imjin War's impact on the Ming Dynasty's subsequent decline, as well as the war's influence on Japan's evolving foreign policy in the Tokugawa period. Comparative studies examining similar patterns of resistance and alliance in other regions could also deepen our understanding of how collaborative strategies shape the trajectory of historical conflicts. For instance, the resistance to Napoleonic expansion in Europe or anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa provides valuable parallels in the ways alliances and grassroots efforts effectively countered imperial ambitions. Exploring these examples could illuminate broader patterns of interconnected strategies and highlight how regional solidarity and localized resistance continue to influence global political landscapes.

By synthesizing the contributions of Admiral Yi, the Ming Dynasty, and Korean partisans, the Imjin War illustrates how interconnected strategies and collective resilience can decisively alter the course of history. It serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring importance of unity and adaptability in the face of aggression, offering timeless insights for navigating the geopolitical struggles of both the past and the present.

NOTES:

I.   Yi Sun-sin, *Nanjung Ilgi: War Diary of Admiral Yi Sun-sin*, ed. Pow-key Sohn, trans. Tae-Hung Ha (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1995); Robert W. Strayer, *Ways of the World: A Brief Global History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009); Kenneth Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592-1598* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016); William Haboush and Jisoo Kim, eds., *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

II.   Yi Sun-sin, *Nanjung Ilgi*, 83.

III.   Ibid., 763.

IV.   Haboush and Kim, *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation*, 61.

V.   Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, 155.

VI.   Strayer, *Ways of the World*, 235.

VII.   Ibid., 185.

VIII.   Ibid., 186.

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♦ ENGLISH 260

THE CITY THAT IS ME:
AN INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY
THROUGH THE SYLLABUS

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VICTORIA RINGSTON

I AM WRITING THIS TO ALL OF YOU straight from my living room in Borough Park, Brooklyn, in the same apartment where my mother grew up. My computer is plugged into the wall, which still runs off the wiring my grandfather had installed in the '80s. The wall is adorned by the peeling floral wallpaper that has been around for about as long. It all starts right here.

It's funny, you know. Growing up, I didn't live here, yet I spent more of my childhood on this block than ever in Ozone Park or Howard Beach, Queens, my former official residence. I was born at what used to be Lutheran Hospital on 55th, about ten minutes from here, now a hospital of a different name. I can say the same for many local businesses and institutions in my lifetime; my mother could tell you more. But

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The Assignment and the Writer: This Introduction to Literature class started with a deep dive into Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* and used that text as a touchstone to see who Whitman was responding to and how writers responded to him. Given the point of the poem, the assignments for class invited students to think about songs of themselves and how the material we read resonated in their own lives. Victoria accepted this challenge and ran with it, sharing a song of her family's arrival in and attachment to Brooklyn while also responding to the many writers (from Lorraine Hansberry to H.P. Lovecraft and N.K. Jemisin) who directly and indirectly engaged with Whitman's concerns and geography. Like Whitman's, Victoria's voice is funny, irreverent, and insightful, and in her intellectual journey through *Song of Myself* she tells a New York Story that is continuously revised.

– Professor Caroline Reitz

amidst the changing scenery and shifting demographics, one thing has remained a stubborn constant: my family. In this building alone, sixty-one years. In this neighborhood? Almost ninety. In this city? Well over a hundred, and that's just my maternal grandmother's side. Throughout this course, we studied a plethora of works that were a journey through New York City in all its stages: what it was, what it is, and what it could be. It is nearly impossible for me to take this intellectual journey without considering my family's place within it—because my story didn't begin on that muggy Tuesday, July morning in 2003. It is a story that spans many lifetimes and generations and across thousands of miles of Atlantic seawater from Sicily and Naples, to plant its roots right in the heart of the world's capital.

"Weariness has, in fact, won in this room. Everything has been polished, washed, sat on, used and scrubbed too often. All pretenses but living itself have long since vanished from the very atmosphere of this room."
(Hansberry Act 1, Scene 1 stage directions).

Luckily, I don't have to move an inch for the first stop on our excursion. I live in one of the several apartment buildings along 45th Street, where my family has presided since the early sixties. Upon reading "A Raisin' In The Sun," I quickly identified with the struggles of the Younger's living situation: before my grandparents passed, seven of us shared this apartment. We initially lived in a house on Peconic Street in Queens but soon moved to an apartment in another Queens neighborhood, Howard Beach (remember this detail for later). A few years later, this landlord nearly doubled our rent unannounced, leaving my mother, three siblings, and I with no other options. It wouldn't be the first time three generations lived under the same roof: my great-grandmother moved in here when my mom was a teenager, until her passing in 2009.

Weariness has, in fact, won in this room more times than I care to count. I know so from all the nights I'd wake up to my mother crying to my grandmother about how much of a failure she felt like, that she wasn't enough of a mother that her oldest often had to take her place. Weariness had won. Everyone in this house, living and past, had or still has chips on their shoulder about what life could've been if we didn't endure what we did. If my dad didn't leave, would we have that big house on Long Island he always envisioned for his family? If he didn't blow my mother's credit to shreds, would she be able to buy that house for her kids independently? What about school? How was she to go back to school to become a teacher now? What if…? Why me?

"You could kill yourself with the what-ifs and the why-me's, but this is your life now. There have been plenty of other women who have gone through worse than you, and you're acting like I let you fall on your ass? Look at where you are!"

This is not an excerpt from any of the works we've read but from one of the many fights between my mother and grandmother when we first moved here. Not as even-tempered or soft-spoken as Lena, my grandmother was the same proud matriarch

who never shied away from smacking some sense into those she loved (both literally and figuratively). The excerpt I showed above could easily be a less graceful rendition of something Lena remarked to Ruth in Act 1:

"MAMA: No – there's something come down between me and them that don't let us understand each other and I don't know what it is. One done almost lost his mind thinking 'bout money all the time, and the other done commence to talk about things I can't seem to understand in no form or fashion. What is it that's changing, Ruth?"
(Hansberry, Act 1, Scene 1, Line 292)

Like Mama and her children, a rift formed between my mother and hers, an old wound made fresh again by the new circumstances. This idea of failure consumed my mother, and my grandmother couldn't understand why my mother wasn't more grateful not to be on the street.

It is not that my mother wasn't thankful for having a place for us to call home. It is more that she had gone three steps forward only to be knocked ten steps back. After my parents got divorced, it took her a long time to gain her land legs as a single working mom. Everyone in the neighborhood knew our business, but at least she could hold her head high, knowing she was making a life for herself and her kids. But then that damn landlord had to go and screw everything up.

Her humble dream of stability was **deferred**, and the bitterness had **festered like a sore** for quite some time. The bitterness made further ambitions, like returning to school, seem like an even further cry. My grandmother was sick of it. Like Mama, she thought she had raised her daughter to know better than that. Even if life didn't go your way, you still have a family that cares enough to see it through with you. Is that not something to cherish? What has changed?

Tensions only seemed to diffuse as my grandparent's conditions worsened as time went by: bruised egos seemed trivial in the face of death. Their passings were several months apart, and it was at this point my mother was at her lowest since the divorce. The festering bitterness my grandmother loathed seemed on the edge of return, but she understood it would be the equivalent of spitting on her grave. This mission to make her parents proud felt like a **heavy load** on her back, but it must be done.

She had to swallow her pride. Everything my grandmother had tried to drill into her was now starting to make sense: she was not empty-handed; she never was. She had a home, a steady ground. She had a community of extended family up and down the block that rallied behind her and her children. She embodied the stubborn Brooklynite spirit passed down from her parents. She has everything in the palm of her hands, and it was through their grace that it was so.

She finally got accepted into the master's in teaching program at Touro College just last week.

Because that dream didn't **dry up like a raisin in the sun.**
Thanks to her heavenly army, that dream…
…**exploded.**
(Hughes, Harlem)

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"The population is a hopeless tangle and enigma; Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and Negro elements impinging upon one another, and fragments of Scandinavian and American belts lying not far distant. It is a babel of sound and filth, and sends out strange cries to answer the lapping oily waves at its grimy piers and the monstrous organ litanies of the harbour whistles." (Lovecraft, The Horror at Red Hook, pg. 6)

Well, asshole, it is a melting pot, after all.

The next stop on our journey is the 500 block of Columbia Street, Red Hook East Housing Projects, where my grandfather Joseph was born. I'm on the corner of Columbia and Lorraine, having passed a deck of Citi bikes a few feet back: one of the modern telltale signs of gentrification. They match perfectly with the chain-link fence that surrounds the area, casing in tank-like contraptions and bare earth. I can feel the spirit of Joe Cassar turning in his grave.

Now, first and foremost, despite what H.P. Lovecraft may have told you, I'm having a hard time imagining my grandfather running amok in these streets from the age of three to snatch other young children to bring back to his mother for the weekly basement sacrifice. But twenty years after Horror at Red Hook was published, the neighborhood was more homogenized and predominately Italian, so who knows? Maybe the Stregas had a different game running.

But if anything, my grandfather was running away from an entirely different set of demons. See, my great-grandmother Josie fucking hated this country. She had come from a well-to-do family in Sicily, the daughter of a longshoreman who never worked a day in her life and was rather disenchanted by her new one here in the States. My great-grandfather Salvatore had been in this country a few years before her, working like a dog since the day he arrived, and was not more a ray of sunshine than she was. My grandfather, a wild young thing from the day he was born, was the perfect catalyst for their anger and misery.

In "The Horror at Red Hook," Lovecraft wrote these fantastically bigoted depictions of the evil in this neighborhood embodied by the neighborhood people, specifically the dark faces and foreign tongues. While he was correct that evil did exist, I argue that aside from child abusers, the evil lay in fear of the unknown. It is a fear that breeds disgust and hatred of what is foreign to you. It makes you see danger where it doesn't exist. This phenomenon couldn't be better exemplified in N.K. Jemisin's The City We Became, a novel that is a direct response to Lovecraft as a whole, especially in this scene:

"Aislyn can barely feel the hand…By contrast, her other arm—the one grabbed by the Black man on the ferry ramp—still tingles. Did he do something to her? Were there maybe drugs on his hands, and are they seeping through her skin? Her father warned her that some drugs work this way."
(Jemisin, The City We Became, pg. 93)

This evil plagued the sheltered Italian-dominant block of Columbia, who soon grew weary of the influx of black residents entering the neighborhood. It is no secret that anti-blackness runs rampant among Italian-Americans, even more, ironic when you consider that upon their own arrival to the States, they were not welcomed by the open arms of the mighty white majority. To join that majority and all the promises and protections they entailed, you had to give into the evil and prove you were one of them, and rule number one: alienate yourself from Black folk. My great-grandparents were no exception to this and tried to instill it in their children. But my grandfather could never truly be swayed by the fear, even when he was getting his ass kicked every other day by the new kids on the block. What's there to fear when you know you have the same thing coming when you get home?

Tight curly hair colored dirty blonde, deep olive skin with Afrocentric facial features, these new kids never knew what to make of my Sicilian grandfather. But he was a lanky, lonesome creature, so easy pickings nonetheless. It wasn't until the fifth public beatdown that someone intervened on the boy's behalf, an older Black gentleman, Jig, who figured little Joseph could use some pointers. Like something from a coming-of-age film, Jig took my grandfather under his wing and taught him how to fight. He let my grandfather in on all the neighborhood marble games, and domino matches in nearby Coffey Park when he wasn't giving lessons. Jig was a surrogate big brother to my grandfather for all the years he knew him, and it is something my mother recalled to me quite fondly.

The same community that was an alleged threat to the welfare of the neighborhood was the only one looking out for my grandfather's welfare when it counted.

Now, I can feel the spirit of Lovecraft turning in *his* grave.

I hope it's uncomfortable.

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"Yeah, thought so," Brooklyn says, grinning. "Ain't nothing more Brooklyn than a brownstone, baby." (Jemisin, The City We Became, pg. 204)

Our next stop is just over the fence in Carroll Gardens on the 400 block of Clinton Street: the beautiful, multi-million-dollar brownstone that once housed my father's entire family. Interestingly enough, our old pal Lovecraft eventually moved to a similar-looking brownstone at 169 Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights, about a 15-minute walk from here. It's funny; this neighborhood is considered just as much South Brooklyn as Red Hook, yet they feel worlds away. Maybe because I think of them in the context of who I've known to grow up there and how drastically different *they* are. My dad and grandfather come from households ruled by the old-world, off-the-boat Italian mentality: rigid and cold. But while one was a street kid so desperate to run away he'd hang off the backs of moving buses, the other grew up rather posh in a cozy brownstone where he was rarely let out of his mother's sight.

As Padmini thought of Brooklyn, I also assumed growing up that my dad's family was wealthy because of their home. I heard the word "yuppie" thrown around

a lot, and to my understanding, it was these young, overpaid professionals who moved into neighborhoods, claimed these pre-war, family-owned units as luxury spaces, and drove the rent through the roof. These "yuppies" had taken over neighborhoods like my father's and, in more recent history, even parts of Red Hook, turning these once shrines-to-the-immigrant-struggle to affluence and, ultimately, inaccessibility. It was my earliest understanding of gentrification.

Clinton Street was an institution in my dad's family: the epicenter of generations of the paternal bloodlines since they planted their roots here in the early 1900s. Clinton Street was one of the last family-owned buildings on the block and a staple of my childhood, even if it never felt like the warmest place. As I sit here, I can almost see the rows of white, monstrous tendrils covering the iron railing if I squint hard enough. I can't dwell here for much longer to fight them off, though, for as of 2019, this building was no longer mine to defend. When my great-grandmother, Anna, passed in 2018, the house was sold not too long after.

If it's anything I learned from my upbringing, you couldn't put a price on family. But you can probably guess how much a brownstone goes for these days.

Clinton Street's remaining defenders made a move to the Island, filled with copy-and-paste houses, not homes, and where even Stevie Wonder could see the tendril towers rooted in every front yard.

Now, I will give the old lady some grace. She and my dad's father have been getting developer offers to buy the property for years, and if you were an elderly couple living on social security, you'd maybe do the same thing to make the back end of your life more comfortable. But, even with this in mind, it never sat right with me. How do you go from years of bashing the yuppies for taking over your neighborhood to then becoming an older variant of them?

Perhaps it would be a leap to use the sale of a family home for a white-picket-fence paradise to compare my grandmother to R'lyeh, the Woman in White. But selling properties, like Brooklyn's brownstone to the Better New York Foundation or the food establishment in Bronca's neighborhood, is one of the Woman in White tactics to maintain footholds in New York City, connect it to her world, and ultimately destroy ours. It is this premise that reminded me of The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas:

"It is the existence of the child, and their knowledge of its existence, that makes possible the nobility of their architecture, the poignancy of their music, the profundity of their science. It is because of the child that they are so gentle with children. They know that if the wretched one were not there sniveling in the dark, the other one, the flute-player, could make no joyful music as the young riders line up in their beauty for the race in the sunlight of the first morning of summer." (LeGuin, pg. 4)

In the short story "Omelas," the city's flourishment depends on a child's suffering.

In the novel "The City We Became," R'lyeh, a fictional Lovecraftian city, depends on New York City's suffering.

In my story? The suffering of my siblings and I was mere collateral damage.

At the beginning of the essay, I asked you to remember mentioning a house on Peconic Street in Queens. That house belonged to my dad's parents, but his mother kept an eye on it. When love became war, we became refugees, having to leave Peconic Street, and last I heard, it was renovated to the nines and sold to a more deserving family.

I can concede that this is perhaps a reach of character analysis, and you might be right. But whether it's a city, a home, or an innocent child, I understand all too well how it feels to be the means to an end.

In my mind, Clinton Street's sale confirmed a pattern of greed; seemingly sacrificed for a purpose more tangible than family.

Just like I was.

_____

"I am an acme of things accomplished, and I an encloser of things to be."
(Whitman, Song of Myself, Line 1148)

Our journey comes full circle as we return to the same spot we began: the humble apartment in Borough Park. Whitman's dynamic poem about self-discovery and identity within a developing nation was best reserved for this conclusion of my own story, as all the narratives I have brought forth throughout this journey have been secondhand accounts of other people. I may carry the blood of my parents, their parents, and the parents before them, but I have not their eyes and do not see the world as they have seen it. The best I could do is bring justice to their essences, or the worst, my honest critiques of them.

This excerpt comes from section 44 of the poem, which discusses eternity. This section as a whole, this line in particular, is a simple summation of my introductory paragraph, where I make a grand observation that my life did not start the day I was born. I am the apex of what my family has achieved in their own lifetimes, as I would not be alive without thanks for their choices and the circumstances they had to endure. Across oceans, disease, poverty, adversity, and loss, they triumphed over death every single time, and I am evidence of that.

Whitman makes the connection that life is not the physical body but the soul, which is an unyielding cycle. Just as your face is a collage of all the faces that have been loved before you, your soul is a quilt of pieces of all the souls that have roamed this earth before you. Through you, your ancestors still live, and through your vessel, you will continue the legacy of triumphing over death to make possible for yourself what may not have been possible for them.

Whitman continues this line of thinking in the final few stanzas of this section, symbolically depicting the fantastical miracle that we exist at all:

"Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid…nothing could overlay it;

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,

> *The long slow strata piled to rest it on,*
> *Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,*
> *Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it with*
>   *care.*
>
> *All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,*
> *Now on this spot, I stand with my soul."*
>   *(Whitman, Song of Myself, Lines 1163-1169)*

The sauroids Whitman mentioned in line 1167, according to the OED, are a classification of fish that he describes as the symbolic transporters of the orb of his soul into existence. I make the literal connection that who were my ancestors, if not seafaring creatures, whose navigation to this land gave rise to my being? Whether it is across oceans, rivers, or puddles, is it not the case for every human that our existences hinge on the movement of our ancestors? Some of my family came to New York City because they wanted to; others came here because it's what the rest of my family wanted. Regardless, they came here, and they stayed here. So it is here that I stand.

While I am keeping with the knowledge that the soul will never die, the death of my physical body does not scare me any less. My energy will live on, for it is an endless cycle, but I'm still thinking about it manifesting as another person, which we all know will not continue forever. It is foolish for humans to believe us to be any different than the dinosaurs or other prehistoric creatures: we will one day cease to exist. We got up close and personal with this unsettling concept with Ross Gay's 2015 poem "Catalogue of Unabashed Gratitude." It is a poem that celebrates the mundanities and the exquisite joys and tragedies of life, all the simple pleasures and quiet moments in between, and how every minute is worth celebrating. I didn't realize how extinction played into this until the final stanza, which reads:

> **"...Soon it will be over,**
>
> **which is precisely what the child in my dream said,**
> **holding my hand, pointing at the roiling sea and the sky**
> **hurtling our way like so many buffalo,**
> **who said *it's much worse than we think*,**
> **and *sooner*; to whom I said**
> **no duh child in my dreams, what do you think**
> **this singing and shuddering is,**
> **what this screaming and reaching and dancing**
> **and crying is, other than loving**
> **what every second goes away?"**
>   *(Gay, A Catalogue of Unabashed Gratitude, Lines 269-279)*

Although buffalo are no longer in danger of going extinct, the species were very close in the past. There have been a few times throughout history when we were also close to extinction and barely escaped by the skin of our teeth, like the Cuban Missile Crisis. Right now, the threat of nuclear Armageddon still lingers over our

heads, as does the threat of climate change, bringing about rising tides and destroyed ecosystems. But even if we reinvest the money we put into warfare to save Mother Nature, the natural course of history tells us we're doomed anyway. It is inevitable. In my eyes, that makes life that much more precious. Every breath you take in this world, no matter how labored, is a triumph over death.

And one day, when our bodies will be dust indistinguishable from the barren planet's dust, the energy our vessels once housed will find a new home. We are more than we realize, and Walt Whitman and Ross Gay couldn't describe it more eloquently.

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I am comfortable concluding our journey on that note. This task seemed daunting initially, not because I thought it would be challenging to carve my narrative out of these six separate works but because there would be too much history to touch upon. Upon reflection, I may have included too much history. Maybe there are many things here that didn't need to be shared.

But this was a journey of the stories we studied through the lens of New York City, and as I stated in the beginning, it would be nearly impossible to take this journey without exploring my family and my place within it. Every moment of my family's history not spent in Italy was spent right here. Their story is the story of New York City: long, complicated, and ugly at times, but remarkable nonetheless. And it is that intertwining of narratives that gives me the confidence to say:

I am the city. The city is me.

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♦ ENGLISH 212

SUNFLOWER STEMS

GRACE O.F. DRIVER

DRIVING DOWN THE HIGHWAY, the baby screaming in the back, you in the passenger seat. I'm making everyone listen to Boy Harsher. Dark techno that belongs in an underground Berlin club, not a minivan barreling towards the Raleigh I-40 exit. It's a taste left over from college. Makes chips of freedom melt on my tongue, reminding me of a better time. A time before you made me trade in my cherry red convertible for a sad gray minivan. It makes me feel like my mother.

The tires crunch over the gravel of the parking lot. Mother's Day, and we decided to go to the Farmer's Market. How fucking original. I get out silently, grabbing the reusable bags out of the trunk. It's too hot to be outside. Droplets of sweat begin to collect on my spine. This stupid velvet dress is going to cling to me all day. The baby stopped crying, probably because you're holding her. She's never liked me too much. Feeling's mutual. Every cry in the middle of the night, every coo after mealtime, every passing stranger that compliments her giant blue eyes. One day, they'll triple our vision insurance. I look into them and I hate her.

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The Assignment and the Writer: Grace O. F. Driver's hard-edged short story "Sunflower Stems" shows the internal life of a disgruntled mother who's not living the life she'd envisioned. The piece is small in scope—a few minutes in a crowded Farmer's Market on Mother's Day—but the implications are wide. As the narrator remembers her deferred dreams and the relationship she had with her own mother, recently dead, a quiet acceptance emerges. Even in its final optimistic note, Grace's story never reads sentimental. Tactile and beautifully paced, "Sunflower Stems" gives us a present-tense snapshot into the head and heart and guts of a mother who begins to feel, with tenderness, the quiet joys of the here and now.
– Professor Adam Berlin

"I was thinking I'd pick up some tomatoes, see if I could get a fresh baguette. I'm thinking of bruschetta tonight, your favorite!"

My lips flash a hollow smile. You've always tried so hard. I told you I didn't want anything fancy, just to get your mother off my back. I know that's asking too much, though. Bruschetta will have to do. My favorite is avocado sushi. I told you that on our first date. It doesn't matter, avocado season isn't for another month.

"Everything alright?"

You're standing in the late morning sun. Weight shifting between your feet in the loose gravel, holding the baby. Blocking the sun with her little ladybug hat. She's in a black sundress, purple flowers printed on soft cotton. Both of you are smiling, she's looking up at you. I can barely see your expression, but I know you're looking me dead in the eyes. Eyes that make our vision insurance twice what it should be. I can't meet your gaze.

"I wanna take a look at the peach selection. Could be fun to pack for work. Not everyone gets to stay at home at the time"

I don't mean to hit you with a sharp tongue, but I can hardly breathe. Just yesterday we were barely legal, sneaking Fireball shooters into our pockets and smoking weed so shitty it was basically oregano. Getting cigarette ash on my fake leather pants was my biggest concern, because how would you take them off of me if they were melted?

I haven't had a Newport in 10 years. Blinking back my tears, I toss you a Harris Teeter bag. "The best tomatoes are probably from that Mennonite farm." Taking one last look at the scene before me, I turn away and head into the crowd of suburban busy-bodies. No one told me my first Mother's Day would be so hard.

The red pavilion is packed. It's nearly impossible to see the vendor's faces, backlit by the sun. I'm thankful for these stupid sunglasses. Giant black hearts that look ridiculous, I'm sure. You told me I look like a cartoon character. I like the anonymity they give me. No one knows who I am. No one can see my eyes. Eyes that doubled our vision insurance. Eyes that are too sensitive to light. I tell myself they're watering from the sun, but we both know better.

You wanted me, and I wanted something more beautiful from life. I still have fantasies of leaving. I fear I always will. To live in New York again, to cut my hair and my skirts far too short with kitchen scissors. I'll always resent her and I'll never forgive you for trapping me. I had imagined something better for myself, something beyond being a woman. I told you I wouldn't get married until I turned 27. Until you had a license. Until I had my degree. I outlived Amy Winehouse, you took the driving test, I walked across the stage and got my stethoscope. You thought we were running out of time. I only ran out of excuses. May 31st, I traded my lab coat for an eggshell gown. I used to think I looked good in white. Looking in the mirror of that bridal suite, I realized I much preferred black. Oh well. No going back now.

Scenes of happy families slip by me, disappearing in between the peaches and the carrots. A mother holding her toddler's sticky hand as they share a honey stick. A father watching his tween pick out a cactus. I bet it'll be dead within the week. Grandmas knocking on watermelons, picking out the sweetest ones. I don't know where I'm headed. You grocery shopped yesterday. We don't need any more fucking

produce. I wish your gift was a one way ticket out of motherhood. I shut my eyes and press my hands against my temples. A vain attempt to make the ice pick in my forehead disappear.

"Watch it, bitch!" I almost stepped on Sticky Hands. Honey Mom pulls him away, shooting a nasty look at me. Maybe don't let a two year old lead you through a crowded pavilion, *bitch*.

At least her kid can walk. That's Mom of the Year material right there. All my life, I never once daydreamed of watching my child's first steps. Even with the baby, I still don't. I've spent every day building my career. That probably makes me heartless, but I don't care. A career, education, success, these are things no one can ever take from me. Family? That's a different story. One I don't need to write. I dream of leaving every day.

The Mennonite stand is in its usual spot, tucked between the blueberry plants and the honey stand. The little girl working the money box is almost swept away in a flood of heirloom and beefsteaks. The reds blur together. My eyelids feel heavy. I should've faked a fever and let you take the baby out to a park or something. I pick up a better boy and pretend to inspect it. Turning it over in my hands, I look for you. On your mission to make the best bruschetta, yet you're nowhere near the best tomatoes. Maybe you've picked up lying from me. I wonder if the baby will pick it up too.

I still remember the day the test read positive. I knew it would happen- we'd been trying for months. Tears still splashed onto the tile floor of our apartment. So many salty drops fell, the medicine cabinet threatened to float away. I knew I wasn't ready, but I knew I never would be. No reason to keep you waiting. No reason to waste time. I wiped my mascara away before you came home. I plastered the biggest fucking smile on my face. I knew that's what you wanted, anyways.

A black mass began growing in my stomach, heady and evil. The worst nine months of my life followed. I lost five months of work, gained 50 pounds, found 500 new stretch marks. Threw up emotions in between rounds of bile. You stood by me. You did everything right. I hated you for it. I never wanted this. I grew into your dream.

Putting the tomato down, I thanked the Mennonite girl for her time. Her little capped head bobbed up and down as she wished a blessed day upon me. She didn't help me with the tomatoes, but I hope I helped her. Maybe I'm a miserable enough poster child of motherhood to scare her into a hysterotomy. I don't think they even believe in modern medicine. Maybe God will intervene to save her from my fate. Probably not, though. She'll be just as miserable as me soon enough.

Another jab of pain hit me. Driving here, the baby wouldn't stop screaming. I told you she needed a bottle before we left, but what the fuck do I know about parenting? Best said by your mother, I spend too much time in the morgue and not enough time at home. Well, Mary, I'm sorry people keep murdering each other. It's not really something I can control. At least it keeps food on the granddaughter's table.

Maybe I'm overthinking it. It's funny how quickly we turn into our parents. I see threads of your mother coming through. When I don't salt my food enough and your eyebrows knit together in worry, that's pure Mary. Every day the reflection

watching me brush my teeth is closer and closer to my mother. I never felt that close to her. I have her eyes, her nose. She called me 'mini-me' until I was 30. I didn't realize I had my own name until middle school. I've spent so much time trying to fill the Birkenstocks she left behind. She went into science, I became an MD. She lived in a beautiful brick house, I bought a McMansion in the suburbs. She kept a tomato plot, I told you to build our own Eden. I just wanted to impress her. I never expected to run out of time.

The peach stand looks abysmal. We've got three weeks before the season starts. Standing behind the rows of pale and lumpy fruit is an elderly woman. She has more lines on her face than ripe peaches for sale. Her straw hat looks cartoonish on her tiny frame. She smiles and nods, standard fare. I flash that practiced hollow smile. I have to buy peaches. I can't lie to you about that. It wouldn't be worth it. I pick the least offensive basket. Six fruits: two with worm holes, one with a gangly stem, and the rest pale enough to be unappetizing. It doesn't matter, I didn't plan on eating them anyways. I hand her a crumpled ten, the only cash I've got. She smiles and shuffles to her money box for change. Her shoes *shh-shh* across the concrete. A familiar noise I haven't heard in years. She's got Birkenstock mules on, in that mauve color they only sell at Costco. The same type my mother wore. The same type I've been trying to fill all these years. Cradling my misfit basket, I turn into the crowd. She shouts that I've 'left my change, dearie' but she can keep it for all I care.

Faces rush past, looking straight through me. I wonder if my mother can still see me. She was Catholic in theory, but a scientist at heart. I never asked if she believed in the afterlife. I guess I didn't want to know. The last thing she told me was to change the world. She believed I was going to discover something amazing. So far, the only thing I've discovered is how expensive diapers are. Not exactly revolutionary.

The Mennonite stand has two little capped heads now, peeking out from the mountain of tomatoes. An older woman counts the money, in her mid-50s. Or maybe mid-30s. It's always so hard to tell with those Amish clothes. They look related, maybe she's a mom or an aunt. Aren't all Mennonites related, anyways? It doesn't matter. The younger girl nods along as she restocks tomatoes. She says something, and the older woman laughs. The sound bounces off fruit, onto the passing heads, and straight into my ears. It doesn't sound forced or hollow. It's round, hearty, life-giving. It sounds like the laugh of my mother. I turn and run as far as my feet will take me.

You are the only person that could make me laugh like her. You were the only person that held me the day I learned she was metastatic. You cooked me her coconut soup when getting out of bed was impossible. I did nothing to deserve it. You fought for me to keep my position after missing months of work. I used my job to avoid time at home with you and the baby. You clasped my dress the day we buried her. I blamed you for not losing all the baby weight. Through it all, you kept a smile. Apologetic, hopeful, real. You never left my side. You were a rock, but I was looking for a glass window. You never deserved that.

I don't know where you are now. I don't know what time it is. My phone is trapped in the car. I didn't want you to bother me. My velvet dress is wet with sweat. I'd give anything to see you. The afternoon sun is starting to beat down on me mercilessly. I have no more cash. The mascara I put on this morning is beginning to

streak down my face. My sunglasses have to stay on. I don't know what time it is. I have no idea how much time we have left. The basket of misfits is heavy in my arms. Almost as heavy as the baby. Do you remember when we said we'd never have children?

A green flannel walks by me. I reach out, but it's not you. Flannel heads to the Henderson fruit farm stand. The cherry bags look at me mockingly. Each berry is attached to its other half by a thin stem. How lucky. I've never missed you before, but right now I am a single misfit cherry. Stemless and pitted, no fun to eat and no good in pie. The pavilion is buzzing with lively chatter, but I am a statue. The tomato stand is empty, save for the sweet Mennonite girl I wished a hysterectomy upon and her mother, still smiling. Sticky Hands is trying to grab a flower off a cherry seedling. Mom of the Year sweeps him up, both laughing. Belly laughs that come from deep within. The cherry tree vendor wishes them both a happy Mother's Day.

I've seen enough. I head back to the car but I don't have the keys. The gravel shifts under my feet. I'm alone, walking like a duck, with giant sunglasses and mascara caked on my cheeks. What a sight. I hope my mother can't see me now. What a woman I've become. What a change in the world I've made. I'm running out of time to become the woman she saw in me. I'm running out of time to become the woman I need to be.

Looking around for a pole to sit against, I spot another green flannel. This one is holding a brown paper tube. Not tomatoes, so it's not you. I slide down a bumpy support beam. My back hurts and my pity party is only just beginning. I shove my fingers against my temples, trying to soften the stabbing pain. My head slumps between my knees. The gravel pokes my legs through the dress, leaving little indents on my skin. Will the baby be this sensitive? She's already paler than me. Will she have terrible eyes? As far as the DMV is concerned, both her parents are legally blind. Can't get much worse than that. Will she be able to make friends? She doesn't babble much, like she doesn't have anything to say. Will she be successful? Will she make money? Will she have kids? Will she have a good career?

Will she wake up every morning in my shadow? Will I leave boots too big to fill? Will I have enough time to watch her grow?

I miss my mother. She would have the answers. She would let me know if I was a terrible parent. She would tell me how to do this right. I wish I could fill her big Mom shoes. I wish I could be better, like her. I'd give anything for just another hour. Just one more hearty laugh. Just to call her Mom one more time. Another wave of salt begins to trickle down my cheeks. It's only 24 hours of the year. Such a small portion of my life. She never told me Mother's Day was so hard.

One day, the baby will wish to call me Mom just one more time.

One day, I won't be there to hear her.

A pair of black sneakers appears in front of me. I look up, blinking into the sunlight. You're standing above me, holding a brown paper in one hand and our baby in the other. The sunlight forms a halo around you, silhouetting everything. I can't see your expression but I can feel your smile. Hopeful and real. I get up, knees popping and glasses falling down my nose. I take them off and our gazes meet. Your smile

fades as you take in the black rings around my eyes. Silently, you hand me the brown paper.

A bouquet of sunflowers. My mother's favorite. I don't know if you did it on purpose, but it doesn't matter. The soft fuzz of the stems tickles my palm. You've only been gone an hour, but I feel eternity coming to an end. A smile finds its way onto my lips. I step back, taking in the scene. You're smiling, holding our daughter and a bag of avocados.

"For sushi!" You gesture to them. "I remembered we still have some of that seaweed in the pantry." Our daughter coos to mimic you. The sun hits her face, and you adjust her ladybug hat. When we were dating, I told you about the ladybug beach set my parents dressed me in as a baby. When you came home with that white ladybug hat, I never put the two together. Her black dress catches the wind. You dressed her to match me today. I've never noticed the little details. I've never realized we only have so much time.

I may never wear mauve Birkenstocks. You may never know my mother's favorite flower. We will never be perfect, but I know you'll try until it kills you. I can only promise I'll never leave. I'll give my time until it kills me. I wouldn't miss our daughter's first steps for the world.

◆ SOCIOLOGY 301

A SIN TO CARE: A LOOK INTO CHRISTIANITY, POLITICS, AND HOW WE TREAT THE INCARCERATED

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ABIGEAL R. CALLAHAN

IN MATTHEW 7:12, JESUS CHRIST PROCLAIMS the Golden Rule of Christianity, "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Gateway, 2011). This doctrine not only summarizes the duty you have to your neighbor, but imposes a fundamental code of ethics upon the believer. For a statement with very limited parameters, Christians seem to find a lot of wiggle room. Does it refer only to your next door neighbors? What about your friend down the block? And if you live near a prison, do those inmates count?
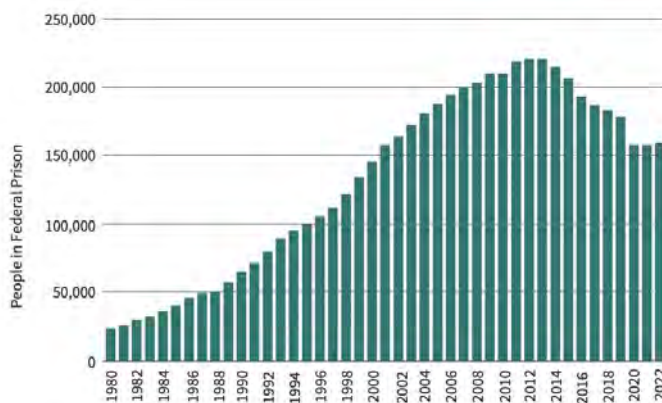
Former President Donald Trump, a proud Protestant, signed the First Step Act into law in December of 2018. This piece of legislation allows convicted individuals to attend recidivism reduction programming and earn "time credits." Such credits would allow the offender to cash in an early release from secure custody (Sentencing Commission, 2024). The program has seen some success and has been responsible for the release of over 30,000 inmates from 2018 to 2023 (U.S. Senate Committee, 2024).* Unfortunately, President Trump envisioned "using the legislation to make major inroads with Black and moderate swing voters" (McGraw, 2022). The First Step Act was never about providing reentry or rehabilitative services, it was about bringing

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The Assignment and the Writer: In this course we explored our assumptions about punishment's purposes, functions, and utility. Students studied punishment's various practical goals and considered the validity of its conflicting moral justifications, as well as the effects that punishment has on individuals and communities. The core of the assignment was straightforward. Students were encouraged to strike out on their own to research something more exciting, and Abigeal was one of only a few to choose the harder road. She explored the relationship between American bipolar Christianity and the persistence of dehumanization in prisons. She drew from about 15 high quality sources to expose the hypocrisy and moral poverty of conservative Christian doctrines that permit some to dehumanize others. Abigeal wisely argued that major structural changes are first required if a truly rehabilitative culture is ever to thrive in prisons because, as she wrote, "Rehabilitative care was championed by the Lord, but not his followers."   **– Professor David Green**

in a new demographic of voters. Calling this piece of legislation 'The First Step Act' would have one assume that multiple other steps were proposed to prevent recidivism and aid in rehabilitation. Unsurprisingly, President Trump hardly talked about prison reform after the introduction of the act.

Of the 237 pardons President Trump provided during his term in office, he most notably pardoned Paul Harvey Pogue. Among many of the white collar criminals Trump pardoned, he received the biggest payout from Pogue. After pleading guilty to underpaying his taxes by over $400,000 in 2010, Pogue served 8 years in prison before his family made over $230,000 in donations to Trump Victory, a fund-raiser for the Trump campaign and the Republican National Convention. They later contributed another $200,000 for the President's campaign bus. Seven months later, Pogue was pardoned from completing his 14 year prison sentence (News, 2020). President Trump granted amnesty to seven congressmen, received tens of thousands of dollars in bribes, and only pardoned six people for crimes relating to the disruption and sale of marijuana (*Pardons Granted by President Donald J. Trump (2017-2021)*, 2017). None of the six pardoned were convicted of a smaller crime like possession.

In a study published by the Pew Research Study, data found that 44% of Republicans believe that inmates get too little time in prison. Conservatives barely beat them at 49% (Gramlich, 2021). This is hardly surprising considering a majority of republican and conservative politicians lobby for harsher punishments and longer sentences. Campaign contributors like GEO Group, CoreCivic, and GEO Acquisitions have spent millions of dollars getting right leaning politicians on the side of private prisons.** The largest spike in contributions was seen during the 2020 election cycle. Private contributors donated a combined $1.83 million to candidates like President Donald Trump, Senator Rick Scott, and Senator Marsha Blackburn. Democrats, while receiving less on average compared to republicans, also received a payout. Unnamed democratic nominees garnered $190,000 in total (Open Secrets, 2024). This abuse of power not only corrupts politicians, but also convinces the public of a falsehood. These politicians do not believe in longer prison sentences because they are just, they push the narrative in order to ensure a larger check.

In a speech made at the 2024 National Religious Broadcasters Association International Christian Media Convention, President Trump made the bold statement that he had used his first term to do "more to uphold religious freedom than any administration in history" (Weissert, 2024). President Trump has stood up for the rights of other Christians time and time again, "… No

one will be touching the cross of Christ under the Trump administration, I swear to you" (Weissert, 2024). However, famously in 2017 President Trump was responsible for the ban of citizens from six Muslim-majority countries entering the USA (Amnesty International, 2020).
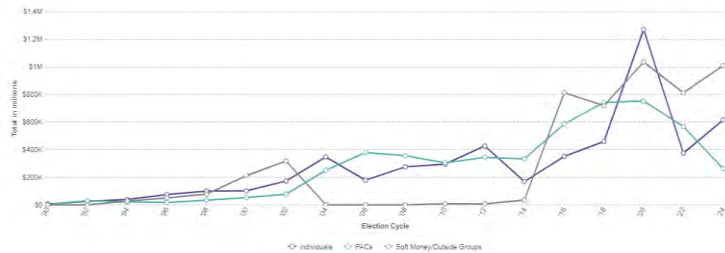
Making up 9% of the general prison population, Muslim men and women experience a high degree of discrimination while in prison. Private and public prisons across America have yet to universally adopt halal food as a needed dietary supplement. In addition, while most prisons have a chapel or prayer room, in some prisons, inmates have to provide the reading material they need in order to worship. "[Inmate] explains that federal prisons allot a certain amount of money to buy books for the chapel. That means that the cost of practicing one's religion falls on inmates, who are forced to use money from their prison wages, which can be as low as 5 cents an hour. He explained that a Quran can run $20 in prison. 'For some, that might be their whole monthly paycheck. This is for the people who don't have family or friends on the outside who can purchase a book for them. That is one hurdle,' Nsour adds" (Khan, 2021). Discrimination towards minority groups runs rampant in correctional facilities, but ideologies pushed by politicians worsen the experience inside and outside prisons.

Unfortunately for conservative Christians, they have yet to look to their faith as a source of rehabilitative aid. In a study conducted by Sung Joon Jang and Byron R. Johnson, research suggested that faith-based rehabilitation reduced the depression and anxiety rate within a state correctional facility. Aggressive interactions between inmates also reduced (Jang & Johnson, 2022). Faith-based rehabilitation not only provides access to services like pray groups or meditation, but also opens the door for higher thinking. Lessons from scripture require a deep understanding of virtues, ethics, and morals. These lessons also encourage the reader to look outside themselves and think critically about their fellow man. A decrease in prison violence could be caused by a new found respect for an inmate or a bond made over religious text. In many interpretations of the Bible, Jesus Christ is seen eating with "sinners." He invites them into his home no matter what their circumstance is. The adoption of this thinking has been lost on many Christians, but it's not impossible in prisons. In Mark 2:15-22,

Jesus says to the Pharisee "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Gateway, 1993b). Rehabilitative care was championed by the Lord, but not his followers.

In *A Place of Redemption: A Christian approach to Punishment and Prisons*, the author highlights the use of restorative justice between victims and offenders. Restorative justice provides a one-on-one experience for the two parties that could lead to a fruitful conversation. "This kind of teaching embraces many principles of Christian teaching such as right behavior, repentance, forgiveness, healing, and restoration. Most of all, it recognises the value of each and every individual" (Smith, 2004). Restorative justice can be seen as a rehabilitative aid for both the victim and offender. In addition, restorative justice affirms values that are key to Christianity and being a follower of Christ. Praying to a god can only take you so far. It's important to have hard conversations and face your fears in order to discover the truth.

Rehabilitative punishments like restorative justice can be overshadowed by penal goals like 'Just Desserts.' For a large part of the bible, God is full of wrath and dishes out extreme punishments for less than deserving crimes. The Old Testament God is vengeful and believes civilization must atone in order to learn from their crimes. Most notably, God sends 10 plagues down onto the Egyptians when Pharaoh refuses to free the Jewish people from slavery. In Exodus 11:5-7, Moses says, "'This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel" (Gateway, 1993a). This is more than an overreaction on God's part, but in the face of freedom he acts on instinct. This penal goal works in his favor, however, and his people are set free. Later in the Bible, after fathering a son, God is seen as compassionate and forgiving. This total 180 is a great example of change within, not only God, but also his followers. All Christians have the capacity to reteach themselves and learn forgiveness and they do not need to have a son to do it.

Influences like religion and political beliefs not only shape our personalities, but our perceptions of the people around us. Being told to think one way your entire life can spell out your life's path. Fortunately, the opposite can also be true. Faith based rehabilitation is a proven aid in the lives of the incarcerated, but prejudice must first be removed in order to accept all, without exception, into the church.

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✦ POLITICAL SCIENCE 316

THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS HISTORY

EMILY MADRAY

VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE MANIFEST themselves in every society, leaving deep imprints on many individuals. Among the most marginalized groups, the working poor and people in poverty endure a unique blend of economic, social, and racial (ESR) violations. Concurrently, violence rooted in gender and sexuality, as well as racial and ethnic discrimination, further compound the challenges faced by minority populations. The intersectionality of these issues highlights the structural and cultural barriers perpetuating cycles of marginalization. Nevertheless, the state, corporations, unions, and well-off members of society should take active steps to address ESR violations, paving the path toward a more equitable society.

The working poor typically endure numerous ESR violations. Under capitalism, economic value produced collectively can be owned and disposed of in contravention of the needs of those without whose work it would not have been possible to produce in the first place. Thus, capitalism makes shipping grain abroad during a famine and using water to grow avocados possible when people nearby have

no clean water or food (Chadwick, 2020). Additionally, within capitalism, disadvantaged people serve as contingent workers who do not require sustained investment beyond their immediate use. With their low-paying jobs, these workers have limited access to comprehensive healthcare, leading to disparities in health outcomes. Lower economic status correlates with reduced access to quality education. Education and health disparities cause contingent workers to be the first to be fired during cutbacks, compounding the existing wealth disparities (Estes & Dicarlo, 2019).

Structural factors underpinning poverty and ESR violations include economic policies favoring deregulation, privatization, and reduced government spending on social services, exacerbating income inequality. Globalization can lead to job losses in specific sectors and a race to the bottom regarding labor rights and wages, disproportionately affecting populations of lower socioeconomic statuses as well (Chadwick, 2020). Cultural factors underpinning poverty and ESR violations involve societal norms that condition society to believe people deserve to stay in poverty due to their lack of effort.

The ICESCR contains equitable provisions for the right to work, health, and education. Article 6 advocates for the right to work, including the choice of work and protection against unemployment, as governments must ensure full employment and job creation initiatives, particularly for the working poor. Article 7 mandates that all workers have the right to just and favorable work conditions, including fair wages and protections against arbitrary dismissal. Article 11 also requires governments to ensure access to healthcare services and education for all, including the working poor and their families.

In addition to the working poor enduring ESR violations, violence based on gender and/or sexuality is also common. Physical and sexual violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and rape, disproportionately affect females. Specifically, female genital mutilation still occurs today. While the procedure carries no health benefits, female genital mutilation aims to control women's sexuality and is believed to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity (Keck & Sikkland, 1998). Furthermore, domestic violence frequently occurs today, resulting in long-term physical and psychological trauma. Females almost exclusively endure domestic violence and rape. In the United States, "one in four women has been the victim of a completed rape, and one in four women has been physically battered" (Farmer, 2009).

The state carries out some violence against women, such as rape being used as an in-strument of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia or prison guards abusing women prisoners (Keck & Sikkland, 1998). These power structures within society can perpetuate structural violence against women, as inequitable distribution of power and resources creates conditions that enable and perpetuate violence. Nevertheless, most violence against women is carried out within the household or community. In cases like female genital mutilation or domestic violence, the key perpetrators are mothers or moth-ers-in-law, aiming to control their daughter's sexual activities, and husbands or fathers who want to control their daughter or wife's behaviors.

CEDAW addresses the structural and cultural underpinnings of gender-based violence. Article 5 calls for the modification of social and cultural behaviors that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination, emphasizing the importance of

changing harmful stereotypes and attitudes. Article 16 recognizes women's right to equality in marriage and family relations, including entering into marriage only with their full consent. While CEDAW addresses the underlying causes of gender-based violence and promotes gender equality, its effectiveness depends on the implementation and enforcement by states, as well as efforts to challenge cultural patriarchal attitudes towards gender and sexuality within society.

Violence based on race and ethnicity also remains a significant issue, manifesting through physical attacks, systemic discrimination, and police brutality against racial minorities. Numerous reports from various countries indicate that racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement, leading to a higher incidence of harassment, arrests, and killings. Black Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than whites despite constituting only 13% of the population. Black Americans are also 1.3 times more likely to be unarmed when killed by police (Beckett & Hankins, 2021).

Deep-seated structural and cultural factors uphold racial and ethnic violence, often stemming from historical injustices like colonialism and slavery. In her analysis, Carol Anderson illustrates how postwar and Cold War policies such as the Truman Doctrine and McCarthyism targeted Black activists critical of American policies, constraining Black internationalism. These policies perpetuate surveillance and legal harassment, hindering the Black community's advocacy efforts (Beckett & Hankins, 2021). Media, education, and public discourse also sustain racial and ethnic stereotypes, normalizing discrimination and violence against marginalized groups. These cultural narratives desensitize society to the disproportionate harm experienced by minority communities.

CERD is designed to combat racial discrimination. Article 4 condemns all propaganda and organizations based on ideas of superiority of one group or attempts to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination, urging states to adopt immediate measures to eradicate such practices. To add onto CERD, the UNHRC passed A/HRC/RES/43/1, condemning racially discriminatory and violent practices perpetrated by law enforcement agencies against the Black community and structural racism in the criminal justice system. These provisions are aimed directly at dismantling the cultural norms and institutional frameworks that perpetuate racial discrimination.

The vulnerabilities created by poverty exacerbate hardships and create additional layers of disadvantage when intersecting with racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. Racial discrimination often forces people of color to endure barriers to employment advancement, causing them to be predominantly employed in low-wage sectors with few benefits and protections. Estes and Dicarlo also note that "people of color disproportionately occupy low-paying jobs that cause more wear and tear on the body, and which are injudiciously called 'unskilled labor' by many labor economists" (Estes & Dicarlo, 2019). Systemic racial discrimination in housing caused segregated communities to have unequal access to resources, including schools, healthcare, and transportation. For South African Blacks, increased mortality is caused by the lack of access to resources, as poverty was the leading cause of diseases and hunger (Farmer, 2009). People of color living in poverty often experience

worse health outcomes due to unsuitable living conditions and minimal access to medical care.

Moreover, women, particularly women of color, are disproportionately represented in lower-paying jobs and more likely to live in poverty. Women in poverty face specific health challenges, including access to reproductive health services. Specifically, poor women bear the brunt of domestic violence, assaults, rape, and medical diseases. As anthropologist Martha Ward points out, the majority of women with AIDS in the United States are poor. Additionally, not all women experience an increased risk of adverse outcomes during pregnancy. In 1985, the World Health Organization estimated that maternal mortality is approximately 150 times higher in developing countries (Farmer, 2009). Women of color are more at risk for developing life-threatening medical issues because of poverty, highlighting how intersectionality between race, class, and gender can create compounded barriers that hinder people's quality of life.

States have an obligation to address these ESR violations. States must ensure their actions do not prevent individuals and groups from accessing essential resources such as food, water, and healthcare or enjoying their rights, such as the right to work and education. Additionally, states should prevent third parties from interfering with the enjoyment of ESR. Thus, states must regulate corporations and other non-state actors to ensure they do not violate the economic, social, and cultural rights of others. Moreover, states should actively engage in activities to fully realize ESR, such as improving access to education and ensuring that healthcare is accessible.

States can adopt accountability mechanisms through legal and cooperative measures to meet these duties. States should adopt laws and policies that explicitly recognize and protect ESR, ensuring these laws comply with international human rights standards. States can also strengthen judicial mechanisms to allow individuals to seek redress for violations of their ESR, such as the right to challenge policy decisions that negatively impact ESR through administrative and court processes. States can engage in international cooperation and assistance, sharing resources, technology, and expertise to promote the realization of ESR globally, particularly in developing countries as well.

Given their resources and influence, corporations, unions, and well-off members can significantly advance ESR. In societies dominated by corporate power, workers' rights are continuously challenged to maintain profit margins, develop real estate, and maximize the financialization of most relationships (Estes & Dicarlo, 2019). As a result, corporations can adopt corporate social responsibility policies that respect ESR. Ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and respecting workers' unionization rights are fundamental ways corporations can advance ESR. Corporations can also invest in initiatives that promote education, health, and communal development.

Unions can vigorously advocate for workers' rights and negotiate for better pay, safer working conditions, and reasonable working hours. Unions also play a critical role in educating their members about their rights and the importance of ESR. Through informational mechanisms, unions can conduct training sessions, workshops, and campaigns to raise awareness about these rights. Moreover, wealthy individuals

can provide financial resources to support various initiatives to advance ESR, including funding educational scholarships, healthcare services, housing projects, or cultural programs. Wealthy individuals can invest in or start enterprises that address social and economic issues as well. Through these actions, corporations, unions, and affluent individuals can significantly contribute to advancing ESR, leveraging their influence and resources for the common good.

In confronting the complex web of ESR violations, gender-based and/or sexuality-based violence, and race and/or ethnicity-based violence, the responsibility to address these injustices transcends individual action. The state, corporations, unions, and the wealthy wield significant influence in shaping societal structures and policies, thus bearing a collective obligation to rectify these violations. By leveraging their resources and influence, these groups can actively contribute to fostering environments of equity and justice for all. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these issues and the shared responsibility to address them, collaboration is essential to create sustainable solutions and pave the path toward a more inclusive society.

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♦ LITERATURE 373

BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION: EQUIANO'S AFRICAN CHILDHOOD RECONSIDERED

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YANIRAH RODRIGUEZ

IN *THE INTERESTING NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF OLAUDAH EQUIANO, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, Equiano recounts in detail an upbringing among the Ibo people of West Africa in two chapters. However, several contemporary scholars like Brycchan Carey have raised doubts about Equiano's origins, suggesting he may have been born in the Carolinas rather than Africa. Despite the controversy surrounding his birthplace, Equiano's narrative provides a compelling exploration of identity's complexities and the diverse cultures he encountered. Equiano's elaborate portrayal resonates as an imperative testimony to the multifaceted experiences of displaced and racialized individuals, whether rooted in historical fact or fictional invention. Although Equiano's true origins await authentication, his narrative has catalyzed discourse within the abolitionist movement by underscoring slavery's pervasive inhumanity. Equiano's powerful voice among slave narratives challenges readers to confront the nuances of identity, culture, and the universal yearning for freedom, making his narrative a rich lens into the dehumanizing legacy of slavery.

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The Assignment and the Writer: For the final paper in Topics in 17th- and 18th-century Literature, students did a close reading of the African passages in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789*),* an early slave narrative. What is the implicit argument of the African childhood scenes, and does it matter that he may have borrowed details from other Ibo people he encountered as a sailor? Why or why not? In the second part of the essay, a literature review, students were to put their own argument in the context of at least two articles from a 2010 special feature in a scholarly journal on Equiano's origins, whether African or American. In her response, Yanirah Rodriguez sustains her argument across the two sections of the research paper whereas less experienced writers lose track of their own theses while navigating through the secondary sources. Writing with empathy, she shows how life writing can make an implicit argument in the service of a larger cause.   **– Professor Ann Huse**

Through detailed accounts spanning various aspects of life including administration of justice, marriage ceremonies, and religious practices, Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* provides insights into the cultural richness and social dynamics of Africa. He asserts, "Of these the most considerable is the kingdom of Benin, both as to extent and wealth, the richness and cultivation of the soil, the power of its king, and the number and warlike disposition of the inhabitants" (Equiano 953). Equiano strived to counter prevailing European misconceptions about Africa by highlighting several key aspects: the wealth, the cultivation of its soil, the power of its king, and the warlike disposition of its inhabitants. In this picture, he illustrates Africa as a region with sophisticated political structures, thriving economies, and vibrant cultures. Equiano's narrative sought to dismantle the dehumanizing stereotypes often perpetuated by Western societies, asserting the humanity and dignity of African peoples. He challenges such notions by stating, "We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets" (Equiano 954). Furthermore, he highlights the cultural practices and customs of the African people, providing insight into their way of life. Equiano writes, "Before we taste food we always wash our hands: indeed our cleanliness on all occasions is extreme; but on this it is an indispensable ceremony" (Equiano 955). By accentuating their cleanliness, Equiano hoped to counter the stereotypes about African hygiene and civilization prevalent in Western societies during his time. Additionally, he draws parallels between African customs and those of the Jewish people, declaring, "We practised circumcision like the Jews, and made offerings and feasts on that occasion in the same manner as they did" (958). Equiano implicitly suggests that African civilization is not fundamentally different or inferior to European civilization. In summary, Equiano wanted to defend the complexity and richness of African identity while challenging racist ideologies perpetuated by slavery and colonization.

In the second chapter of *The Interesting Narrative*, Equiano recaps an African upbringing, and the harrowing experience of being torn from his family through a traumatic kidnapping, and the brutal reality of subsequent enslavement. His reflection on Africa encapsulates a bittersweet sentiment, as he recalls, "I still look back with pleasure on the first scenes of my life, though that pleasure has been for the most part mingled with sorrow" (Equiano 960). This quote reflects the experiences of countless Africans who had their lives shattered by the brutality of the slave trade. Furthermore, Equiano graphically describes the agony of being torn from his sister to stress the anguish experienced by enslaved Africans when forcibly separated from their families. Equiano captures the heartbreaking toll of being torn from his sister in a simple, raw statement: "I cried and grieved continually; and for several days I did not eat any thing but what they forced into my mouth" (Equiano 961). Equiano's inclusion of this quote serves as a critique of the inhumanity of the slave trade. He goes on to add, "The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable" (Equiano 966). By depicting the profound suffering enslaved individuals faced, Equiano essentially condemns the cruelty and injustice of a system that tore families apart and subjected human beings to such profound emotional trauma.

Through *The Interesting Narrative*, Equiano exposes the moral contradictions of the slave trade, questioning if professed values merely masked economic

exploitation. By juxtaposing the harsh realities of slavery with the lofty ideals of humanity, Equiano challenges readers to confront the moral hypocrisy inherent in systems of oppression and exploitation. He proclaims, "O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you?" (968) Equiano's question draws upon the basic Christian principle of treating others with the same kindness, respect, and fairness that one desires for oneself. Equiano's critique likely stems from his personal experiences and observations of the profound injustices and suffering inflicted upon enslaved Africans. Nevertheless, Equiano's interrogation flips the narrative on its head, suggesting that true civilization is not measured by technological advancements or cultural norms but by the moral treatment of fellow human beings. Moreover, his question confronts the Western notion of civilization itself, challenging the very foundation of Western society. In the eyes of many Europeans, Africans were often deemed primitive and uncultured, lacking the apparent sophistication of European society, which forces a reconsideration of who holds moral authority. This exposure of the fallacy of racial superiority propagated by colonial ideologies reveals the moral bankruptcy of Western civilization in the face of systemic oppression and exploitation.

One scholar who offers valuable insight into Equiano's use of religious themes is Brycchan Carey. In his essay "Olaudah Equiano: African or American?," Carey examines how Equiano strategically employs religious motifs to convey his narrative and critique the institution of slavery. Equiano's deliberate choice of biblical verses and his presentation of his own name, as Carey suggests, reflect upon the power of identity and the significance of naming. Carey asserts that in "Naming, the author of *The Interesting Narrative* seems to be telling us, is at the center of both spiritual and temporal power since it is by invoking a name that a broken body can be healed, or a sinning soul be eternally redeemed" (Carey 231). In this quote, Carey claims that Equiano's invocation of Jesus Christ exemplifies how names can symbolize a transformative shift from subjugation to liberation. Additionally, he is suggesting that names aren't just labels; they carry deep meaning and can even change lives. Also, Carey states that *The Interesting Narrative* is not solely confined to depicting enslavement, but also encompasses "a voyage narrative, a conversion narrative, an economic treatise, and an abolitionist tract" (Carey 229). Therefore, Carey argues that Equiano's narrative reflects the multiplicity of his identity through his adoption of various names throughout his life, each representing different facets of his journey, experiences, and cultural affiliations. Nonetheless, the question of Equiano's true birthplace continues to provoke debate among modern scholars, raising profound inquiries into the complexities of identity, racial narratives, and historical authenticity.

In the essay, "Olaudah Equiano, Autobiography, and Ideas of Culture," Sarah Brophy examines the scholarly debate surrounding Olaudah Equiano's narrative and its portrayal of identity, culture, and resistance to slavery. Sarah Brophy, citing scholar Adam Potkay, suggests that Equiano's narrative is influenced by a Christian, rhetorical, and colonial mindset. Potkay advises against interpreting Equiano's work as overtly resistant or subversive, indicating that it operates within the dominant ideological frameworks of its time. It states, "Equiano's narrative presupposes as a

condition of its intelligibility a world very different from, and in many ways antagonistic to, the world inhabited by many of his recent critics: his is a Christian, an oratorical, and a colonial world" (Brophy 249). Brophy then compares Potkay's angle with that of Srinivas Aravamudan, who argues for a reconsideration of the narrative's political significance. Aravamudan argues, "the presence of the past has to be reinterrogated and recontextualized, arguing that to reduce Equiano's narrative, as Potkay does, to the 'rhetorical genre of anger is to 'evacuate' its significance as 'a political manifesto" (Brophy 250). In this quote, Aravamudan emphasizes the need to understand the broader political and social significance of Equiano's narrative beyond just emotional expression. Then, Brophy draws attention to Vincent Carretta's examination of Equiano's biography, which raises questions about Equiano's true origins, challenging assumptions about his identity and the reliability of his account. Carretta contends that Equiano's African narrative should be questioned because the "baptismal and naval documents suggest Equiano's birthplace was South Carolina" (Brophy 251). Providing an Africanist perspective, Paul Lovejoy, as cited by Brophy, argues that his "narrative reflects Equiano's childhood acculturation as Igbo and fluency in the language, and points out that Equiano and others repeatedly defended in public his claim to have been born in Africa" (251). This argument lends credence to Equiano's African origins despite the ongoing debates. Furthermore, Brophy suggests that reading Equiano's narrative through the lens of cultural discourse allows for a deeper understanding of its complexities and implications.

In its essence, Olaudah Equiano's narrative not only serves as a chronicle of personal struggle, but also as a powerful indictment of the cruelties inherent in the systems of slavery and colonialism. Regardless of the ongoing debates surrounding the specifics of his origins, Equiano's narrative transcends the confines of individual biography, emerging as a resounding call for justice and the rights of humanity. Through his eloquent storytelling, Equiano urges readers to confront the brutal realities of racism and oppression, compelling society to acknowledge its moral failings and systemic injustices. By delving into complex themes of identity, race, and culture, Equiano challenges readers to reevaluate their preconceptions and biases, fostering a deeper understanding of the human experience. As we reflect on Equiano's enduring legacy, we are reminded of the transformative power of authentic storytelling in promoting social change. Equiano's narrative serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the obligation of bearing witness to the struggles of the marginalized.

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◆ LITERATURE 305

RACIAL INJUSTICE AND THE JAPANESE HERITAGE INTERNMENT IN *WHEN THE EMPEROR WAS DIVINE* AND *CITIZEN 13660*

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ROWEN HOLDER

1.2.3.4.5. Numbers are used for a variety of purposes: to count the number of students in a classroom, to label streets, to rank a professor's performance, or to determine the cost of an item. However, during the Japanese internment in the Second World War, numbers were used to dehumanize Japanese heritage Americans and resident aliens.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States entered World War II and racial tensions intensified across the country, leading to anti-Japanese fear and suspicion. A few months later, in February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 9066, and this order served as the basis to exclude civilians from military areas. The President authorized the Secretary of War

> to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. (Roosevelt, *Executive Order No. 9066*)

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The Assignment and the Writer: Rowen Holder's fine essay fulfilled the research paper requirement for LIT 305, Foundations of Literature and Law. The assignment was to create a research project around one of the novels that we read in class. Ms. Holder chose *When the Emperor Was Divine*, which explores the human impact of the Japanese heritage internment during World War II. She juxtaposed Otsuka's novella with *Citizen 13660*, Okubo's graphic journal created during her time in Topaz camp. Ms. Holder also provided historical-legal background on how more than 100,000 United States citizens and resident aliens could be put in camps without due process, while also drawing astute parallels between the outraged voices in Otsuka's novella and Fanon's in *Black Skin, White Masks*. **– Professor Toy-Fung Tung**

While a particular race or ethnic group was not specified in *Order No. 9066*, on the authority of *No. 9066* and acting for the Western Defense Command, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt issued Public Proclamations No. 1 and No. 2 on March 2 and 16, 1942, respectively, by which Military Areas along the West Coast were designated, and from which Japanese heritage civilians were subject to exclusion, meaning they would have to vacate their homes. While "General DeWitt first encouraged voluntary evacuation by Japanese Americans from a limited number of areas," on March 29, he issued Public Proclamation No. 4, which "began the forced evacuation and detention of Japanese-American West Coast residents on a 48-hour notice" (National Archives "Executive Order No. 9066," hereafter "No. 9066"). Additionally, in order to give legal force to these Proclamations, Congress "passed Public Law 503, which made violation of Executive Order 9066 a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison and a $5,000 fine" (National Archives "No. 9066"). Following the Public Proclamations, more than 100 individual Exclusion Orders were issued calling for forced evacuations of roughly 122,000 Japanese-heritage civilians, 70,000 of which were American citizens (National Archives "No. 9066").

Prior to their internment, Japanese heritage Americans and resident aliens were sent to an Assembly Center, where they received a number that acted as a "last name," while an initial designating each person's position in the family served as a "first name" (National Archives "World War II Japanese American Incarceration"). These numbers were used by the government and military for administrative purposes and to keep track of the property of the interned individuals. Because of the war with Japan, the internment was rationalized by the government and the American public as a "military necessity" for purposes of national security (Public Proclamations No. 1 and No. 2). Yet, the internment of Japanese heritage citizens and resident aliens was done without due process and was a racist violation of civil rights. These conclusions were determined by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, established under President Carter. In its June 1983 Report containing recommendations, the Commission stated:

> In sum, Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions that followed from it—exclusion, detention, the ending of detention and the ending of exclusion—were not founded upon military considerations. The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership. (*Personal Justice Denied Part 2,* 5)

The media and United States government promoted a carefully crafted picture of life in the internment camps through "state-sponsored documentary films and photographs, and by stories found in humor magazines and editorial cartoons" (Zhou 52). One such work, the *Guidebook* to Topaz Camp, had the audacity to call Topaz a "city" (2) and the internees "neighbors" (4). However, both the novel *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002) and the graphic diary *Citizen 13660* (1946) describe the experiences of individuals who lived through the internment during World War II, and

they counter the narrative produced by the media and government. While *When the Emperor Was Divine* is a fictional text that Julie Otsuka wrote based on true facts, *Citizen 13660* is a diary with sketches on every page. The author of *Citizen 13660,* Miné Okubo, created her text and the series of images during her internment, and it serves as a first-hand account of what life was like for the Japanese heritage internees. On the other hand, in Otsuka's *Emperor* especially, we can see the mechanics of what the Commission called "race prejudice" and "war hysteria." Racism involves a systematic devaluation of the "other" in a binary that Frantz Fanon called a "'delirious Manichaeism'" (quoting Dide and Guiraud 161). Fanon's "Black-White binary," as explicated in *Black Skin, White Masks*, is based on "othering," along with the "cultural imposition" of the idea that Black is 'bad' and White is 'good" (Fanon 160, 167-69). While "Yellow" people are not referenced in his text, Fanon's ideas regarding racism and the binary divide are applicable to Asians and any anyone else who is culturally and socially ostracized as the "other." During World War II, the Japanese "other" was characterized as a dangerous enemy. For Fanon, racism has devastating psychological effects, and he suggests that the racial binary must be countered by conscious attempts at "disalienation" by both sides of the binary (Fanon xiii-xv, 201). In this connection, *When the Emperor Was Divine* and *Citizen 13660*, both contain anti-racist narratives and strategies that attempt to re-humanize the Japanese individuals who were dehumanized by the events and discourse of internment. The difference is that *Emperor* probes the psychological costs of internment, while *Citizen 13660* recreates the physical and material deprivations. Both texts also slyly engage the reader as a surrogate for the dominant perspective of "cultural imposition." Yet, it should be noted that whereby the enemy in World War II was 'racialized' for Japanese citizens and aliens, individuals of German or Italian descent were treated on an "individualized" and "selective" basis (*Personal Justice Denied Part 2,* 3). "No mass exclusion or detention . . . was ordered against American citizens of German or Italian descent. The ethnic Japanese suffered a unique injustice during these years" (3).

There are many examples of counter narratives that resist racist stereotypes within *When the Emperor Was Divine*. Three of these are the mother's interactions with Joe Lundy, the father's confession, and the killing of White Dog. To emphasize the dehumanization of internment, the four protagonists in *Emperor* are called generically—mother, father, girl and boy—and this corresponds to how internees were actually designated by a family number, plus an initial denoting their family position. At the start of the novel, Joe Lundy's kindness to the mother contrasts with the later recounting of her mistreatment by her neighbors, such as the postman, Mr. DeNardo, who warned that anyone writing to the family would be "guilty of helping the enemy" (Otsuka 121). At the time of the interaction with Lundy, the evacuation order had already been posted. However, Lundy still complimented the mother's glasses and red dress, as if everything were normal, and asked about her leaky roof (5-6). Lundy humanizes her at a time in her life when she was being treated as less than a person, and his statement "You can pay me later" (5) suggests that Lundy has faith in a return to normalcy. Lundy chats with the mother not as a White man to a Japanese woman, but simply as neighbor to neighbor, and he gives her two caramels for her children. When their exchange ends, the mother calls Lundy by his name,

"Joe," for the very first time, which demolishes the boundary that race once put between them. Previously, she felt uncomfortable at calling Lundy by his name, but now in this moment of final farewell, she also acknowledges how their entire relationship dissolved the racist binary: "It sounded strange to her. Wrong, almost. But she had said it. She had said it out loud. She wished she had said it earlier" (6).

The Joe Lundy prelude to internment contrasts sharply with the conclusion of the novel, where the father's obviously fake confession can be read as an anti-racist rant. In confessing to being the composite 'enemy within,' the father shows the insanity of the claims made by the government and society, such as Japanese individuals' sprinkling food with insecticide and arsenic, placing dynamite alongside railroads, or climbing into bed with their neighbors' wives (140). The father creates a visual of the absurdity of his enemy status by stating, "I leaned out my second-story window and signaled to [the enemy's] aviators with my red paper lantern. *Come on over!*" (141). In recapitulating and taking on all the false claims made against his entire race, the father mocks the racist narrative propagated by the media, government, and fearful minds of ordinary Americans, which resulted in the Japanese heritage people in America being branded traitors and saboteurs, without any proof (141-43). When the novel ends with "Now can I go?" (144), the reader is left with the intense understanding that racism in this time allowed for men and women to be so dehumanized that they would confess to any narrative of the dominant group in order to feel less pain. In fact, the father's full final words echo the mother's defiance in her totally opposite exchange with Joe Lundy, when she says: "It [Joe's name] sounded strange to her. Wrong, almost. But she had said it. She had said it out loud. She wished she had said it earlier" (6). Whereas the father says: "[W]hat I most wanted to say . . . was this: I'm sorry. There. That's it. I've said it. Now can I go?" (144).

The novel's last chapter, recounting post-war racism with its depiction of the father's confession, is a call to action for the reader, since the father's last comments seem to be addressed to the reader as well as his interrogators in the camp for enemy aliens. At the novel's conclusion, the father is now a broken man, even to his children: "He did not draw for us or sing songs for us . . . . He did not read us stories. On Sunday afternoons . . . he did not tie pieces of bent tin onto twigs and put on shadow plays for us" (132). In the father—who once went back and forth to Europe for business and took his family to Yosemite with a private driver (40)—the reader is forced to confront the dark effects of racism and its enormous human cost, not only for society but for the individuals perceived as "other," simply because of a different physical aspect or cultural heritage.

Finally, perhaps the most shocking anti-racist narrative within the novel is the tale of the death of White Dog. At the start of the novel, as the family prepare to leave their home, the reader watches the mother prepare to fulfill the guidelines laid out in Evacuation Order No. 19, which was posted around her community. At Lundy's Hardware, she tries to purchase a hammer, asking Joe Lundy "Do you have anything bigger?" (5). A few pages later, the reader horrifyingly learns that this hammer was to be the instrument that the mother planned to use to kill the family pet, who could not come along with them to the assembly center. While the scene where the mother actually kills the family dog with a shovel is gut wrenching, Josephine Park's article,

"Alien Enemies in Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine*," alludes to an even darker meaning. During this scene, the mother tells White Dog, "You've been a good dog," right before she asks him to play dead (Otsuka 11). When White Dog obediently "turned his head to the side and closed his eyes" and his "paws went limp" (11), she kills him by "bring[ing] the blade down swiftly on his head" (11). Park suggests that, much as the father in the novel, the "good dog plays his part" (142). Yet, just as the father pays for the confession he is forced to make, the "dog pays for his performance" (Park 143). Further, Park writes that the dog demonstrates the impossibility, at the time of this novel's setting, for there to be a "good Japanese" (143). Park adds that "this scene [the killing of White Dog] reminds us that 'the only good Jap is a dead Jap'" (143). With this scene, Otsuka reminds the reader of the impossible expectations placed upon Japanese heritage Americans and resident aliens during World War II. The death of White Dog becomes an emblem for the reality of this time, where loyalty and obedience—qualities symbolized by the dog—were not enough to save Japanese heritage civilians from persecution. By mirroring both White Dog's death and Joe Lundy's kindness in the father's coerced confession, Otsuka highlights the futility of acquiescence in a society that encourages racism.

Some of the most heart-breaking moments in *When the Emperor Was Divine* involve desperate attempts by the mother and girl and boy—who are respectively 41, 10 and 7 when their ordeal starts (Otsuka 13)—to hide their Japanese identity and conform to the dominant narrative to appear more like a "friend" to their community. Even before the exclusion mandated by No. 9066, the word "Japanese" is shunned. For instance, the boy mentions that the "Japanese Tea Garden" is renamed the "Oriental Tea Garden" (76). On the streets, the boy sees "real Chinese . . . wearing buttons that said, I AM CHINESE, and CHINESE, PLEASE" (76). In order to reduce her children's appearance as "Japs," the mother sends her children to school with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for lunch (75). The mother also states "No more rice balls" (75) because this dish made the children stand out from their classmates. She also tells them to say that they are Chinese (since China was America's ally during WWII), at which the boy repeats "'I'm Chinese,'" while the girl replies "'And I . . . am the Queen of Spain'" (75). Remembering his mother's earlier pleas, "if anyone asks, you're Chinese" (75), the boy later tells a man he is a "'Chink,' and ran away as fast as he could." Then he turns around and yells defiantly, "'Jap! Jap! I'm a Jap!' Just to set the record straight" (76). Around the time of the sandwich incident, the mother also destroyed most of the family's mementos of their cultural heritage, such as family photographs, silk kimonos, Imari dishes, the Japanese flag, and even an abacus (75). During their time in Tanforan, the children fantasize about going home; they desperately hope that they will belong and promise to conform to the dominant culture and to erase all connections to the racialized "enemy":

> We would dress just like they did. We would change our names to sound more like theirs. And if our mother called out to us on the street by our real names we would turn away and pretend not to know her. We would never be mistaken for the enemy again! (114)

When the family returns to their broken homestead after the internment is over, the children long for a past when they played with their friends, seemingly oblivious of race, but these previously held notions prove unreachable.

Just as in *Emperor,* portions of *Citizen 13660* serve as an anti-racist narrative. Okubo's diary allows the author to re-humanize herself and other Japanese heritage internees. *Citizen 13660* proves to be a very effective anti-racist narrative because of the subtlety of Okubo's combination of words and pictures. Okubo uses the intimate description and depiction of everyday needs that these individuals lacked—such as privacy in living spaces and bathrooms, or the ability to take a hot bath—to diminish the racist separation between her race and those who "othered" them. By illustrating that the Japanese heritage individuals who were placed in these camps were just like the rest of humanity—people who needed and wanted a warm home, a sanitary environment, healthy food and water—she repositions the Japanese heritage internees within humankind as a whole rather than outside the racial barriers that divide it. Readers of Okubo's text can see themselves nakedly exposed in a communal public shower, as the naked women and children in one image (Okubo 75) or having to use toilet stalls without doors (74). Readers would understand the shame and embarrassment this must have caused the Japanese heritage women, and the text elsewhere reminds the reader that the internees were placed in these situations without due process and because of unsupported race-based fears.

Additionally, Xiaojing Zhou's article, "Spatial Construction of the 'Enemy Race': Miné Okubo's Visual Strategies in *Citizen 13660*," explains that *Citizen 13660* gives a visual depiction of the Japanese internment that contrasted with the official narrative. Zhou explains that the "War Relocation Authority (WRA) hired Asian photographers to produce an official version of camp life, imposing restrictions on what could be 'documented'" (Zhou 53). Zhou's article reveals that the WRA wanted no images of "barbed wire or watchtowers or armed soldiers guarding the camps" (53). The government also censored the famous photographs taken by Dorothea Lange, even though they had hired her to photograph the process of exclusion and internment (Gordon 1). Not only does *Citizen 13600* depict all the images the government did not want the public to see, but the diary also gives an intimate look into the day-to-day life of the individuals interned. The daily acts of dehumanization that the internees experienced serves as a much more horrific visual than any image of a soldier with a gun. While Okubo's diary also shows how Japanese heritage Americans attempted to live a normal life, aligning with the images of "Boy Scout parades, and baseball games" (Zhou 53) that were officially released, she also shows that these acts of normalcy were not because the interned individuals were happy and comfortable. No, daily life in a Tanforan Racetrack horse stall could never be normal, especially when the inhabitants "discovered that linoleum the color of redwood had been placed over the rough manure-covered boards" (Okubo 35). Further, Zhou explains that government propaganda suggested that "'Japanese Americans continued to pose dangers' even in the camps" (53). Zhou cites a Superman comic strip created where Superman, "disguised as a reporter" (53), uncovered "villainous-looking" Japanese individuals planning an escape which involved kidnapping two WRA staff members (53). Yet, no such incident ever happened. Rather, Japanese heritage

individuals, as we see in Okubo's narrative, experienced the "stench from the stagnant sewage" at both the Tanforan Assembly Center and later at Topaz Camp (Okubo 78, 185), as well as the constant terrible wind and dust storms at Topaz (Okubo 182-84), not to mention internees' having to stand in long lines "for mail, for checks, for meals, for showers, for washrooms, for laundry tubs, for toilets, for clinic service, for movies . . . for everything" (Okubo 86).

Additionally, both *When the Emperor Was Divine* and *Citizen 13660* depict the humiliating process when internees were processed and reduced to a "family number" by the United States government. During *Emperor*, as the family prepares for transportation to the Tanforan Assembly Center, the mother states that in a few hours she and the children "would pin their identification numbers to their collars" (Otsuka 22). Similarly, during *Citizen 13660*, Okubo describes registering her family of two—herself and her brother—at the Pilgrim Hall of the First Congregational Church. She states, "my family name was reduced to No. 13660. I was given several tags bearing the family number, and was then dismissed" (Okubo 19). However, unlike *Emperor*, the graphic diary does not show many racist interactions between the narrator and non-Japanese heritage individuals, such as the situations described in *Emperor*, where the children brought peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to school instead of their traditional Japanese foods in order to appear less Japanese. Rather, *Citizen 13660* shows the author being "othered" through images of physical discomfort. For example, on page 12, Okubo depicts herself in the middle of a crowded form of transportation with all of her fellow White passengers staring at her with unhappy and distrustful faces. Interestingly, Okubo draws herself into every frame, enshrining the fact that she was not only a victim, but an artist with agency, recording and documenting a historical moment. Also, unlike *Emperor,* which has very few instances of the family experiencing kindness from, and close relationships with, other non-Japanese Americans, Okubo describes instances where her friends attempted to provide her support. This portion of the text conflicted with my preconceptions that Japanese internees experienced total social ostracization. For instance, Okubo describes a friend who waited three hours in a line to bring her "my favorite egg-flower soup," which had dripped out of the carton onto his pants due to the long wait (79). Okubo states that after this interaction she discouraged her friends from trying to visit her at Tanforan, where she was held pending transfer to Topaz.

Both *When the Emperor Was Divine* and *Citizen 13660* paint a picture of Fanon's model that the dominant race formulates their perception of a superior "self" by creating a category of "other" in which to place all individuals that they deem inferior. This distinction inflates the dominant binary's feelings of self-worth. In Fanon's birthplace, Martinique, this self versus other was White versus Black. Yet, in the context of the events that occurred during World War II, this binary became non-Japanese versus Japanese, and it should be noted that the Chinese aligned themselves with the dominant. Further, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* suggests that a Black person's perception of self is tainted because it cannot be separated from "cultural imposition" or the subliminal brainwashing of the masses into believing that whiteness = purity and "blackness = ugliness, sin, darkness, and immorality" (Fanon 169). A clear example of this brainwashing in *Emperor* is the father's confession at

the end of the novel. During this confession, the father facetiously affirms the dominant culture's perception that he is immoral and sinful, despite the non-existence of any wrongful actions. The father knows that he will never be perceived as "pure" due to his race, so he says, "I'm sorry" (Otsuka 144), for he is unable to change the part of himself labeled as evil. This scene in the novel plays out Fanon's idea that the sheer presence of the White part of the binary affirms that the Black part is the "lesser" race in society, since the White Gaze makes blackness = bad "undeniable" (Fanon 96). We can see how Fanon's own exasperation at the inescapability of the dehumanizing binary is a model for the father's confession in *Emperor*:

> I slip into corners, my long antenna encountering the various axioms
> on the surface of things: the Negro's clothes smell of Negro; the
> Negro has white teeth; the Negro has big feet . . . I slip into corners;
> I keep silent: all I want is to be anonymous, To be forgotten. Look I'll
> agree to everything, on condition I go unnoticed! (Fanon 96)

In Fanon's tirade, we hear reflected the father's tone in *Emperor*, when he, after confessing to everything imaginable, says, "I'm sorry . . . . Now can I go?" (Otsuka 144).

Fanon alludes to the idea that the Black part of the binary is unable to create its own identity because it is trapped in a system that will never allow the escape from the valuation that black = bad. Fanon's ideas are clearly reflected throughout both the texts of Otsuka and Okubo, which show that the internment of the Japanese heritage individuals reminded them that their skin was the sole reason for their predicament and that this was not something that could be changed. For instance, the family in *Emperor* are unable to forget the "bad" or "demonic" connotations associated with their race, for they cannot even walk down the street without being questioned about being a "Chink or Jap?" (Otsuka 76). The answer to this question determines the dominant society's opinion of their being "good" or "bad.

With the creation of the non-Japanese versus Japanese divide in *Emperor* and *Citizen 13660,* we, the reader, see and feel the reality of the world that these books depict, and must also confront our own complicity in the generalized social "cultural imposition" of good and bad races. Fanon explains this idea simply, by stating, "Everything that is the opposite of this black behavior is white" (Fanon 169). Much as the peanut butter sandwich incident described in *Emperor*, cultural imposition requires acquiescence also by the "othered." In this sense, the mother erases her children's connection to their Japanese culture by changing their lunch to a meal that is aligned with the dominant culture; the mother does "the opposite" of Japanese behavior, and the reader is horrified. By making the reader empathize with the Japanese heritage internees, both Otsuka and Okubo succeed in writing a counter-narrative to the dominant racist discourse of that era, which helped enable the political internment.

When the Emperor Was Divine and *Citizen 13660* contain powerful anti-racist narratives that seek to re-humanize the Japanese heritage Americans and resident aliens these texts describe, while critiquing systemic racism. Through the portrayal of

internment experiences, both works shed light on the human cost of discriminatory practices targeting a single race, justified under the guise of national security. These texts align with Frantz Fanon's critical race theory, illustrating the creation and effects of an oppressive binary between the dominant and the "othered," while showing the devastating effects that "cultural imposition" can cause—which in this case was the internment of 122,000 innocent Japanese heritage civilians for more than three years in concentration camps established by the United States government, due to "race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership" (*Personal Justice Denied Part 2*, 5). *Emperor* and *Citizen 13660* counteract the sanitized narratives of the time, while highlighting the importance of understanding and confronting the mechanisms of racism to ensure that the horrific events of the Japanese heritage internment are not repeated.

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⬥ Interdisciplinary Studies 334

BRUNCH

FATIMAH ABOURYA

This play is set in an ordinary corporate office of a management firm in an unnamed city. The first act takes place in the employee break room. The second act takes place in an unknown, exclusive location.

The Main Characters

AMIRA- (32) *female, Corporate Saleswoman, coworker and good friend of Kendra.*

KENDRA- (37) *female, Administrative Manager, coworker and good friend of Amira.*

MARLIN- (28) *male, Corporate Salesman, close friend of Rhett. Caty's husband, Emma's father.*

RHETT- (33) *male, Human Resources Director, close friend of Marlin. Anya's husband, Adam's father.*

UNNAMED WOMAN- *female, a high-society young woman and victim of organized sex-trafficking.*

RAPER- *male, the masked man who attacks and rapes the unnamed woman.*

The Minor Characters

CATY- (30) *female, Project Manager, casual friends with Amira. Marlin's wife, Emma's mother.*

ANYA- (28) *female, Hair Stylist. Rhett's wife, Adam's mother.*

ADAM- (6) *male, Rhett and Anya's son.*

KINGSTON- (34) *male, Corporate Salesman, coworker of main characters.*

EMMA- (10) *female, Caty and Marlin's daughter.*

SCENE I

Two women enter the stage. They walk into the break room of their workplace; they are in the middle of a conversation. The room is small and empty. The fridge hums in the background.

AMIRA

When you're highly respected you can just be a dick.

KENDRA

Yeah I know, how the fuck hasn't HR gotten a handle on this already?

<div style="text-align:center">AMIRA</div>

I don't think it's HR's job to curb our bosses, Ken.

<div style="text-align:center">KENDRA</div>

That, quite literally, is their job. But…I've been here long enough to know nothing's gonna change.

<div style="text-align:center">AMIRA</div>

Hmm…we should quit.

<div style="text-align:center">KENDRA</div>

Funny.

<div style="text-align:center">MARLIN</div>

What is?

A man barges in. He walks up to the two women. His posture relaxed, his disposition cheerful.

<div style="text-align:center">AMIRA</div>

Nothing. How'd that meeting go?

<div style="text-align:center">MARLIN</div>

Great. Actually, Kingston and I were just talking and thought if we really clean up our proposal for the board next week, we could be up for promotions by the time investments are cleared.

<div style="text-align:center">KENDRA</div>

A promotion? For what?

<div style="text-align:center">MARLIN</div>

I just told you.

<div style="text-align:center">KENDRA</div>

No, no. I mean what's your proposal about?

<div style="text-align:center">MARLIN</div>

Just some new suggestions for interdepartmental upgrades. For better workflow. We're looking at a 20% increase in productivity.

The women share pointed glances.

KENDRA

You're kidding.

MARLIN

Nope. The plan is pretty simple and efficient. It'll barely put a dent in our budget.

AMIRA

How'd Caty take the news?

MARLIN

Caty? Why?

Both women shift.

AMIRA

Well…

KENDRA

Wasn't she the one who pitched the whole upgrade thing to her boss last spring and he rejected it? If I remember right, hers boasted a thirty-

MARLIN

If you see it that way. Fine. But that's not what happened. She was rejected because her framework was weak and her presentation was mediocre at best. Even *she* knows that now.

AMIRA

She was pissed about it. Wouldn't stop talking about how she was gonna cold quit the next day.

MARLIN

Look, Caty already knows. She hardly cares, even wished me good luck this morning. She's great like that.

The women exchange another look.

MARLIN

Have you ladies got any innovative ideas I don't know about? You must be holding out on me cuz I haven't seen either of you write up a proposal since…well my whole time here.

AMIRA

That's not saying much considering you've only been here a couple of years.

<div align="center">MARLIN</div>

You're right.

How long have you worked here?

A short silence.

<div align="center">MARLIN</div>

Must be frustrating.

<div align="center">KENDRA</div>

She holds back a sneer.

You've no idea.

<div align="center">MARLIN</div>

You're right, I don't.

Welp, see you ladies around. Don't work yourselves too hard.

He presents an easy grin then slowly turns and exits.

<div align="center">SCENE II</div>

Marlin enters the stage and approaches another man who is transfixed by the scene unfolding in front of him. He sees a masked man and a young woman on the ground beyond a glass panel a few feet away. The glass between the two pairs wobbles at every strike. Both rooms are sterile and unfurnished.

<div align="center">MARLIN</div>

What's going on?

<div align="center">RHETT</div>

Oh yeah, she's just getting raped.

<div align="center">MARLIN</div>

Oh okay.

<div align="center">RHETT</div>

Yeah.

<div align="center">MARLIN</div>

How long you been here?

                              RHETT

Oh like ten minutes.

                              MARLIN

Ah. So I haven't missed anything.

                              RHETT

No, no, you're good. I already picked her if you don't mind.

                              MARLIN

Not at all.

The attacker is stripping her of her clothes. She covers her chest. He grips her face and shoves his fingers in her mouth. The disjointed audio pours from the intercoms on either side of the two men with resounding clarity. The men remain unstartled.

                              MARLIN

So how's the wife—shit that looked expensive.

                              RHETT

Definitely doing better than her right now, amiright?

He slyly gestures at the scene in front of them.

                              MARLIN

Oh I bet. Hahaha.

                              RHETT

Hahahaha.

                              MARLIN

Kids too?

                              RHETT

Yeah, all good, all good, can't complain. You?

                              MARLIN

Emma's been having some trouble with Math. Other than that, *perfect*. Kingston and I might even be up for promotions so...

He rubs his hands together.

MARLIN

Oh look, she's crying now.

RHETT

Ya know we got a phone call from Adam's teacher the other day.

MARLIN

Oh yeah? What about?

RHETT

Craziest thing, his—do you think he's even enjoying himself?

MARLIN

Hm? Uh well he sure seems to be.

RHETT

Right…and her?

MARLIN

Can't tell.

RHETT

Yeah, me neither. She seems… *perturbed*, maybe.

He clamps her mouth and squeezes her jaw, muffling her shouts. Both men tilt their heads inquisitively.

MARLIN

Maybe.

A long pause as they watch her struggle for a little while with wistful expressions on their faces. Her pained noises only deepened them.

MARLIN

So, Adam?

RHETT

Right. So this cunt, miss who gives a fuck, calls up the house and before I can even get a word in she asks for *Anya*.

MARLIN

Anya? Why?

                              RHETT

That's what I'm saying, must be a new way of doing things even though
Adam's my fucking *son* but whatever, ultramodern.

He makes weak jazz hands. Marlin absently nods.

                              MARLIN

Damn, she got away.

She crawls away and presses her back to the wall. Her palms reach up in supplication

                              RHETT

Apparently Adam was "harassing" some younger kid for toys or something.

                              MARLIN

Oh? Still don't get why they asked for Anya.

                              RHETT

Yeah, me neither. I'm telling you buddy, the world's against us, we gotta strike
back.

                              MARLIN

Save it for Thanksgiving.

                              RHETT

Ha. Ha.

Anyways, he was "harassing" this kid for toys and "crossed the line."

                              MARLIN

Oh I bet.

                              RHETT

Anya was pretty pissed.

She asks him to stop. He slaps her across the face.

                              MARLIN

Anya's always pissed.

                              RHETT

Yeah, but this time she was livid. Never seen her like that before. It was fucking
weird.

MARLIN

Over a damn toy?

RHETT

That's what I said.

MARLIN

How'd he cross the line?

Marlin furrows his brows in thought as her cries grow hoarse.

MARLIN

Ya know…she sort of looks like Caty.

She doesn't get her hair done like that though.

He grabs her ankles and drags her back.

RHETT

What?

He presses her face into the floor. Despite her efforts, he persists.

MARLIN

Ouch. Bit much, eh?

A short pause.

So, how'd he cross the line?

RHETT

Oh…Adam? She, uh, said something about...oh, I don't know, he just took it too far trying to get the toy back. Laid hands on her, something like that…

You know what, I think she's enjoying it.

MARLIN

Yeah probably.

RHETT

Looks like they're just about done.

MARLIN

Shame.

RHETT

You wanna check out that new burger place on 45th?

MARLIN

You sure?

He checks his watch.

MARLIN

Rhett, it's only 2 PM. Plus, we gotta get back in like 15 minutes.

She shuffles into the corner and curls in on herself. Her tightly clenched fists tremble at her knees with what only she knows is fervent rage.

RHETT

Yeah why not, we'll be quick…I'll bring something back for Adam too.

MARLIN

Alright.

He claps him on the back.

Good man.

The Assignment and the Writer: In our Interdisciplinary Studies class that combines theater and anthropology (ISP 334), known around the College as "Seeing Rape," sexualized violence and harm are examined across disciplines and in various genres. Students' final projects are short plays that deal with rape. Fatimah "T" Abourya's short play "Brunch" came out of this final project assignment. T explores the disturbing nature of everyday sexism through two scenes, office workers talking about their work place in small talk, and then two men who work there, talking about work while watching a rape take place in the background as if it were a sporting event. T uses her playmaking skills to create a powerful, realistic scene that is reminiscent of the most critical plays of the Theater of the Absurd.

– Professors Shonna Trinch and Barbara Cassidy

◆ ENGLISH 320

THE HAIRPIECE

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KYMBERLEY SMITH

MY MOTHER TOOK US TO AMERICA and we moved into our aunt's basement. They gave us a room. Up against the wall was a queen-sized bed, and under light covers were a hundred dead flies and sometimes a live spider. Next to the bed was a wooden dresser, paint chipping. The lights were yellow, which made the room look dirtier than it was. My aunt, Rhonda, said the dogs would sometimes come down here and "do their business" and they hadn't been able to get the carpet completely clean. She assured us it was vacuumed and safe…just stained.

My mother tried her best to make our room into a home. She put up pictures from back home in Jamaica—us on our leather couch, me by our huge Christmas tree on the veranda, Evan holding a soccer ball for a professional baby photoshoot. She placed her jewelry down in plastic containers. Real gold rings and necklaces, everything that she didn't sell to friends or pawn when we moved to America. She got new sheets for the bed since she couldn't use our old ones from back home. There her bedroom had a high king-sized bed that I always struggled to climb when I wanted to sleep with her.

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The Assignment and the Writer: What we say in writing workshops is _find your voice_. That's especially challenging in autobiography because the writer has to come at it from two perspectives; in Kymberley Smith's beautifully-crafted reflection, it's the young child who experiences and the adult who has to make meaning. Which voice, child's or adult's, is right for the telling? Too knowing, and you'll empty the piece of its drama. Too innocent, and a reader will wonder about your point. Here, the child's intuitive eye guides Kym to the details and the discoveries, and it's the precise adult observer who recognizes the love and care in her younger self's last gesture. Read through at your pace, but slow down at the last paragraph.   **– Professor Jeffrey Heiman**

Here if she wanted to cook, she'd wait till late night or early mornings to quietly prepare little meals for my brother and me upstairs in their kitchen. When we needed to use the bathroom, we'd have to go upstairs and hopefully stay out of my aunt's husband and kids' way. Sometimes at night, my uncle Kameron would sit on his living room sofa and watch the bathroom door in the dark. If my brother and I had to use the bathroom at night, we knew we were being monitored.

Mom didn't know him well at all since they weren't really related. She told us to call them aunty and uncle since she knew Rhonda from high school and grew up with her. So, she watched Uncle Kameron keenly. She was weary of all men when it came to us. She knew the stories of children being taken advantage of by close family friends and tried her best to protect us from that.

Uncle Kameron wasn't a bad man, but his look didn't help him. He was over 6 feet tall, wide and muscley. In my head I called him 'The Big Man' but only in my head. He had dreadlocks that fell to his back, always frizzy and thrown into a ponytail. He never yelled, and he didn't smile too often. When he spoke, he talked to you like you were grown. With a voice that held a deep timbre he would scold my brother and me if we did something bad, and he didn't mind cursing either. He would also take us and his step kids out to arcades, and he'd let us watch tv upstairs if we wanted to. But the movies he watched with us weren't so kid friendly, and my mom didn't like hearing that we'd seen a movie with cussing and nudity. Or even worse, a horror movie. From then on my mom set a rule for us. We were to stay to ourselves while she was gone, which meant we had to hold our bladders most of the time.

Every morning when my mom left for work, she'd have my brother pull this big blue container filled with non-refrigerated foods, up against the door. Heavy pastas, cereal boxes, crackers, and cans were our barricade against our uncle. At 5am, when mommy left and the blue box was set, our room became a different world and my brother and I became different people. The stripped walls, stained carpets and yellows lights became whatever I wanted them to be. In the worlds my brother and I acted out, I often imagined I was in my old house. Our basement walls became my Jamaican home where I had my own room. There were two bathrooms, a living room with white leather couches and a dining room with fancy countertops. In this dream world, I was a real woman with fashion and flair.

I grabbed a scarf hung over the dresser and wrapped it around my shoulders, and I applied lip-gloss I found in my mother's makeup drawer. To finish the look, I carefully picked up my mother's hairpiece from the back corner of the Chester drawer, making sure not to twist or wrangle the curls. In my mind I was the prettiest woman alive. I was my mommy. Mommy had fair skin, that looked beautiful against any color. In Jamaica, I remember the looks my mother would get. Men would slow down to capture a mental picture, and women would often compliment her style. Even my uncle here had eyes on her, but he had eyes on everyone. She always wore lip-gloss which accentuated the plumpness of her lips, and her hair was loose and curly, unlike mine. Mommy's hair was soft and easy to handle. With a bit of water, she could swoop her hair into a tight ponytail and would attach her hairpiece to the back, allowing the curls to cascade over her shoulders. I looked better in my head pretending to be her. The scarf practically swallowed me and against my darker complexion the color sank.

My lips were big like hers, but mine didn't fit my face. Though the curls of the wig were pretty, they couldn't handle the kinkiness of my hair that needed way more than water to sit still.

The hairpiece was longer on me than on my mother. Looking in the mirror, I saw a beautiful woman. My eyes sparkled under the dim lights, and in a swift movement, I threw the scarf further over my shoulder. In the mirror, I saw perfection. Even my voice got deeper and turned me from a girl into a beautiful woman.

My brother and I played for hours. I cooked, I cleaned, I fell in love. I argued and fought and even cried in this grand production. There were no windows beaming with sun to tell us the time of day. In that room we were shut out from the world, so I made my own. All day we held our bladders, and we only ate what was in the pantry box by the door.

Mom gave my brother and me one shared phone to reach us at all times. It was a blackberry phone with manual buttons to press and a small blue screen on the top. Suddenly it rang and my brother went scrambling toward its sound. He answered it with our usual greeting.

"Yes, mommy?"

She told him to open the back door for her, as he always did. He didn't like opening the door for her though. He was excited to see her, but sometimes my uncle would be in the kitchen and stare into him. I would stay downstairs and clean up whatever mess we'd made since in that small space my mom had no patience for anything not 'spick and span.'

I cleaned up our stage. I took the props off the carpet, threw away the cheeseball bags and took off my costume. I hung the scarf back over the dresser corner, wiped the lip-gloss off with my wrist and put the wig back on the Chester drawer, where I found it. Just in time.

Mom came down the stairs. I sat on the edge of the bed and once she was in, I ran to hug her thigh. She patted my head. Her smile was soft but her eyes were puffy and made her look like she'd been crying. I took her bag from her. I helped take her jewelry off. This was our routine. Mom comes in, I take her bag, help her change out of her work clothes and get the blue night dress she wears every night.

I gave her the jewelry, and she went over to the drawer and put her earrings in their box, but before covering it she froze. From behind, I saw back stiffen and her head tilt. She lifted her shoulders in a heavy sigh.

"Kymberley?" she called, mad. I could hear the tone. I answered.

"Mi neva tell yuh nuh fi touch mi hair?"

Her body swung around. Her tired red eyes scrunched up and shifted from me to my brother. She always spoke in Patois when she was angry. Her volume was sheer and ear piercing. My brother drew closer to me, knowing that soon enough I'd start crying.

"She never touched it, mommy," my brother lied, holding onto my wrist.

She ignored him. "A weeh wrong wid yuh child! Suh yuh tell mi weh it de now eei!"

Her voice just kept raising, making me feel smaller and smaller. My voice couldn't carry like hers. My retorts disappeared as soon as they left my lips.

My mom was tall. She threw her hands around, pointing at me, slamming her fist on the Chester drawer and staring me dead in the eye.

"You know what, Kymberley, you're a liar! Look at all I do. You think I like cleaning shit! You think I like it!"

She looked at me like I was the devil, and, in that moment, I felt like I was. I really did put the hair back; I know I did. It was gone now. I couldn't explain why it was gone...it was there before. Did I put it back? I felt the back of my head to check if it was still clipped in, but it wasn't.

"None of you appreciate what I do. I work hard, picking up for people who don't give a damn about me"

I stood there.

"I only got $20 today Kymberley! 20! And you know what I thought of?"

I couldn't move, but my brother went searching. Under the bed.

"Kymberley needs a winter jacket," she cried, counting off the many worries she had on her fingers.

Under the pillows.

"Evan needs schoolbooks." She drew closer to me, pleading as if she thought I'd hear better if she did.

He pulled the dresser back and dipped behind it.

"Food, clothes, shoes and toys! And nobody gives a damn about what I do to get it", she said, her chest rising and falling and her eyes wet.

My brother shot up from behind the dresser, holding the hairpiece in his hands. His chest heaving, he held up what could end this all.

But she didn't see. She raged. Again, she called me a liar, and unappreciative. She talked about my father, and how it was all his fault, and how he never cared about her either. She talked about my grandmother who told her it was all her fault why daddy left her. She talked about the old lady she took care of today, who was mean and unfair. I drank it all in like an empty well, hoping soon enough it'd be all over. My brother looked for an opening to speak, knowing that he wouldn't be heard over my mother's voice.

"But mommy, I really didn't take it, I promise—"

My eyes closed. My neck twisted. She slapped me. I could feel a muscle spasm in my neck. Her rough hand made my face burn. Her hands were rough from cooking and the chemicals from hand washing clothes. My palm against my cheek did nothing to cool the burn and my crying did even less against my mother's blaring voice.

"It's right here. It's right here," my brother finally shouted from behind her.

She turned toward him and saw the hairpiece between his fingers. Her shoulders slumped, and she started to breathe slower. Her hands dropped, defeated. A squeaking noise left her lips at the sight of the hairpiece and her hands rushed to cover her face.

Then she curled over, her knees trembling, and she crashed onto the bed, hid her face to muffle the sobs and said over and over again, "I'm so sorry..."

It was like her body moaned. The bed rocked slightly. Tears from my own eyes came. I sat next to her and laid my swollen cheek on her thigh. Her thigh was

warm and soft. I clasped her leg with my tiny hands and told her it was okay and not to cry. I told her I was sorry, that I shouldn't have played with it. I told her I didn't mean to make her sad.

She kept saying she was so sorry, and she played with my hair. My brother sat beside her on the bed, his head down. I said, "It's okay, mommy." Like many nights before, she told the story again. How it wasn't supposed to be like this. How we were supposed to continue building the house. We used to have lots of money, and we could go anywhere we wanted. Do you remember when I took you guys to the zoo? Do you remember how we'd go to resorts every year? Do you remember how mommy would get your uniforms for New York for you guys to wear? Do you remember mommy and daddy used to be happy?

I didn't remember anything at all. I don't remember seeing a giraffe when I was two or going to the resorts when I was three. I don't remember him taking our two cars or packing up and leaving the house. I remember her crying next to me at night in bed. I remember her arguing with dad over the phone in front of us. I remember her secretly cooking in their kitchen at 4 am. I remember her leaving breakfast on the dresser and kissing our heads before she left for work at 5. I remember her fishing for coins and stuffing them in her winter jacket to ride the bus on cold dark December mornings. I remember her coming home with little snacks for us to enjoy and happy meals at 10 pm after she came home. I remember nights like this when all she needed was a listening ear. So, I pressed my cheek firmly to her thigh, and I listened.

♦ CORRECTIONS 302

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN MATERNAL HEALTH

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NAYA MELLETTE

MATERNAL HEALTH DISPARITIES AMONG WOMEN OF COLOR are an issue rooted in inequality and racial bias, leading to disproportionately poor outcomes for Black and Indigenous women. Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women in the U.S., due to inadequate access to quality healthcare, implicit biases in medical treatment, and higher rates of chronic health conditions exacerbated by stress and poverty. Economic and social challenges, including low income, unstable housing, and lack of workplace protections, further deepen these disparities, creating additional barriers to receiving proper care while being pregnant. Moreover, cultural differences often hinder effective communication with healthcare providers, reducing the quality of care. Addressing these problems requires tackling the barriers that make it difficult for many women of color to access the care they need, which is essential for improving maternal health outcomes in high mortality communities.

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The Assignment and the Writer: In this class, we examined the roles of race, class, and gender in the correctional community. The assignment required a short research paper on racial disparities in maternal health, focusing on the root causes and racial biases in the healthcare system. In her incisive review of articles highlighting health disparities, Naya focused on how systemic racism affects access to care and health outcomes. She carefully assessed socioeconomic factors such as income and education and their influence on maternal health. In clear and concise writing, Naya presented strong evidence and context that effectively elucidated the issues within the healthcare system.

– Professor Shanitra Hood

Systemic racism in healthcare refers to unfair policies, practices, and cultural norms within the healthcare system that disadvantage people of color while benefiting others. This manifests itself in several ways, such as underfunded and understaffed hospitals in predominantly Black neighborhoods compared to better-resourced facilities in wealthier, white (Birthing While Black, 2021). For example, "Black women living in Los Angeles County, as well as other major cities in California (e.g., San Francisco), reported that their symptoms of depression and/or anxiety were dismissed by their obstetric provider or misdiagnosed as side effects from medications" (Floyd James et al., 2024, pg. 1). This reflects the implicit biases within the healthcare system, where providers may fail to take Black women's mental health concerns seriously. As a result, these women are denied appropriate care, exacerbating existing health issues. Furthermore, further illustrates the barriers Black women face in receiving adequate maternal care, particularly for mental health are massive and widespread throughout the states. While stigma and mistrust of healthcare providers are significant factors, the data underscores the more critical issue in the situation: clinicians' failure to adequately address and treat mental health concerns in Black women. According to said case study in California, "Despite engaging with the healthcare system, the majority—69.1% to 86.5%—of Black women with moderate-to-severe depression do not receive the mental health treatment they need" (Floyd James et al., 2024, pg. 1). This neglect has serious consequences, increasing the risk of adverse outcomes such as premature birth, low birth weight, difficulty bonding with infants, and even leading to suicide in new black mothers.

The study conducted appears to be reliable due to its structure and has a clear-cut methodology in how it was done. The inclusion of 27 detailed questions and follow-up probes allowed for a comprehensive review of participants' experiences during pregnancy, labor, delivery, and postpartum. Also, using professional transcription services to ensure accuracy in the interview data demonstrates a commitment to integrity. However, the study's reliance on remote interviews might have excluded participants without internet access, potentially skewing representation self-admittedly – However for the participants who did fully participate the data they provided was invaluable for training purposes in California due to the success they later had in decreasing the amount of issues between patient and provider.

Black maternal health is in crisis, as evidenced by the statistics. In Los Angeles County, Black women, though only 9% of the population, exhibit the highest rates of depression and anxiety during pregnancy and postpartum, with 38% experiencing these symptoms compared to women of other racial groups (Floyd James et al., 2024). This is stacked on by failures from the healthcare system, including obstetric racism and clinician neglect, where Black women's symptoms are often dismissed or misdiagnosed as medication side effects (Floyd James et al., 2024). And this type of neglect exacerbates risks for adverse maternal and infant outcomes, such as preterm birth and impaired bonding, while leaving perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) untreated which leads to tragic long-term preventable medical events (Birthing While Black, 2021). To fix this issue healthcare systems must prioritize competent care, improve mental health screening and treatment access, and actively address implicit biases among medical providers (Birthing While Black,

2021). Additionally, improving, and bolstering funds for community-based programs that provide support and destigmatize mental health care could further empower Black women to seek and receive adequate care pre and post pregnancy to insure both mom and baby are all right. Ensuring accountability through policies and training is essential to dismantling obstetric racism and building trust between providers and patients to improve maternal health overall.

The additional evidence underscores the systemic barriers women face in accessing quality maternal care, with particular attention to the disproportionate challenges experienced by women of color. For example, lapses in insurance coverage significantly contribute to maternal mortality, with nearly one-third of pregnancy-related deaths occurring up to a year postpartum. Women of color, particularly non-Hispanic Black women, and Spanish-speaking Hispanic women, are disproportionately affected, experiencing discontinuity in insurance at alarming rates (Birthing While Black, 2021, p. 3). This highlights the critical role of sustained postpartum insurance coverage in reducing maternal mortality rates and addressing health inequities. Participants in the Kantor et al. (2024) study provided firsthand accounts of additional structural barriers, including understaffed healthcare facilities, and rushed appointments that limited the quality of care. One participant noted feeling neglected as most of their appointment time was spent with medical assistants rather than the doctor, leading to inadequate communication and a lack of personalized care (Kantor et al., 2024). Financial barriers added onto these challenges, as many participants struggled to afford essential supplements like prenatal vitamins, which were not covered by insurance, further emphasizing the need for affordable and comprehensive healthcare support during pregnancy (Kantor et al., 2024). Moreover, the emotional and physical needs of women were often overlooked. Some participants felt coerced into unplanned cesarean sections and expressed frustration at the lack of alternative options provided by their healthcare providers (Kantor et al., 2024). Others reported insufficient postpartum support, with healthcare providers often focusing more on the baby's wellbeing while neglecting the mother's recovery, leaving new mothers feeling isolated and unsupported (Kantor et al., 2024). These testimonies reflect the issues of inadequate communication, financial prioritization over patient care, and insufficient follow-up after delivery for Black moms who often cannot afford the specialized care their richer white counterparts can.

This study benefits from its use of community-based research (CBPR), which prioritizes the voices of Black women who gave birth and had negative experiences within the Heathcare system. And because with a topic like this, you often want a more qualitative approach, as it considers barriers, such as insurance gaps, provider negligence, and financial challenges related to prenatal care that often times cannot be studied in an official raw data setting because of how it happens or if its covered up or not. Additionally, the study's focus on lived experiences highlights areas for policy and healthcare improvement, such as the need for better communication and postpartum support for new mothers. However, the study has limitations, including potential sample bias, as participants who are more comfortable engaging in research may not represent the greater population of black moms who will not come out and say something. The reliance on self-reported data also introduces the possibility of

recall bias, and the small-scaled nature of the research may limit generalizability to other regions/states. Despite these flaws, the study offers valuable perspectives for addressing Black maternal health disparities and it really dives into the main problems that typically go unaddressed when it comes to maternal health.

Jackson v. Dobbs involved Mississippi's Gestational Age Act, which was passed in 2018 and prohibited most abortions after 15 weeks (about 3 and a half months) of pregnancy, with exceptions only for medical emergencies or severe fetal abnormalities. The law also imposed penalties, including license suspensions, on abortion providers who violated it. Jackson Women's Health Organization, the last remaining abortion clinic in Mississippi, filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the law. Thomas Dobbs, Mississippi's State Health Officer, was the petitioner in the case. The Supreme Court granted certiorari to review whether all pre-viability prohibitions on elective abortions are unconstitutional (Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org., 2022). In the decision, the Supreme Court ruled to overturn Roe v. Wade (1973) and Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992), both of which had established a constitutional right to abortion prior to fetal viability. The Court's ruling in Jackson v. Dobbs upheld Mississippi's 15-week abortion ban, and it allowed states to regulate or ban abortion entirely. This effectively removed the federal constitutional right to abortion, returning the issue to individual states to regulate. The majority opinion was delivered by Justice Samuel Alito, who reasoned that the right to abortion was not "deeply rooted in the nation's history and traditions," and therefore was not constitutionally protected. The Court held that the decision to allow or restrict abortions should be made by individual states, emphasizing that Roe v. Wade and Casey were wrongly decided (Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org., 2022). The majority argued that abortion laws should reflect the views and values of the people in each state, rather than a federal mandate. Justice Alito highlighted that the right to abortion was not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, and because of that, the Court had no authority to create such a right. The dissenting opinion, written by Justice Stephen Breyer, joined by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, argued that the majority's decision was a setback for women's rights and would have devastating consequences for women's health and equality (Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org., 2022). The dissenters contended that the right to an abortion was grounded in the due process protections of the Fourteenth Amendment, as it was integral to a woman's autonomy and ability to participate equally in society. They warned that overturning Roe would lead to significant disparities, particularly for women of color, low-income women, and those living in rural areas, who would face greater obstacles in accessing safe abortions.

The decision in Jackson v. Dobbs has setback maternal health back 50 years (Black Maternal heath especially) especially for women of color who already face disproportionate issues in accessing quality care for them and their baby. The restrictions on abortion will exacerbate existing health disparities by forcing women to carry pregnancies to term against their will, increasing risks associated with maternal health complications. For Black women and other women of color, these laws may worsen health outcomes, as they are already more likely to face barriers such as inadequate access to healthcare, financial instability, and systemic

discrimination in the healthcare system. The case is famous for the intersection of reproductive rights and maternal health, legal restrictions on abortion can and has deepen the maternal health crisis by limiting women's ability to make choices about their pregnancies and health care which in turn worsens care outcomes for vulnerable populations for that pregnancy and future pregnancies they may or may not have.

In conclusion, systemic racism, healthcare disparities, and the erosion of reproductive rights has led to a worsening crisis in maternal health for women of color, particularly Black women. Despite the noteworthy progress made in addressing healthcare inequities, decisions like Jackson v. Dobbs have the potential to reverse these gains, disproportionately impacting women of color. The two study's findings highlight the role of access to healthcare, the dismissal of mental health concerns, and the financial barriers faced by women of color in navigating the healthcare system leading to negative outcomes for mom and baby. These issues are worsened by the legal landscape, where restrictive abortion laws deepen existing health disparities by denying women the autonomy to make informed decisions about their pregnancies. Addressing these disparities requires not only policy reforms but also a cultural shift within the healthcare system to ensure that all women, regardless of race or status, receive equitable, compassionate care that prioritizes both maternal and infant health.

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⬥ ANTHROPOLOGY 450

THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF ADOPTEES IN THE TROUBLED TEEN INDUSTRY – CONTRIBUTING FACTORS & CONCERNS

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SOPHIA R. MANNING

SCOPE & OVERVIEW

CURRENT RESEARCH SUGGESTS that approximately 137,000 children and adolescents under the age of 18 are placed in some kind of extra-judicial residential treatment or congregate care facility annually in the United States. Of these 137,000, approximately 57,000 are privately placed by their parents or guardian rather than through court order or by foster care authorities (Chatfield, M. M., 2019). These facilities, including residential treatment centers, therapeutic boarding schools, wilderness / outdoor programs, and other congregate care facilities, comprise what is colloquially known as the Troubled Teen Industry (TTI). Despite accounting for only 2% of the general population, adoptees comprise between 25 – 30% of residents in these facilities (Brodzinsky, D. et al., 2016).

The Assignment and the Writer: In this senior capstone assignment for the Deviance Crime and Culture major (ANT 450), students were asked to devise an ethnographic or archival research project for which they develop and operationalize a set of research questions, conceptualize and justify a methodological and theoretical framework and then implement data collection and complete an analysis. Sophia Manning took up this mission with vigor and commitment, as well as with a topic very close to home for her. She aimed to explore why adoptees were over-represented in what has been called the Troubled Teen Industry (TTI) – essentially a constellation of adolescent treatment centers, including rigorous wilderness camps aimed to coercively "correct" behavior and put an individual on the "right path." Using interviews from her own network and a survey instrument she devised herself, the researcher's data yields some complicated and at times tough findings, leading us to probe into this difficult and challenging world of troubled youth. One of her critical conclusions is that the TTI is a form of human trafficking, a controversial theory but one certainly worth exploring further.

– **Professor Edward Snajdr**

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The purpose of this study is to explore the reason for the overrepresentation of teenage adoptees in adolescent residential treatment programs. It is guided by a few questions, with the primary one being:

1. What dynamics exist in the adoptive home that might account for this overrepresentation?

Other probing questions include:
- Are the people who become adoptive parents more likely to have a parenting style that would align with sending their kid to treatment?
- Does adoptee status play a significant role in a teenager's mental and behavioral state, and is this role proportionate to the overrepresentation of adoptees in the TTI?

METHODOLOGY

To conduct research that seeks to explain this overrepresentation, I have utilized several different data gathering methods. I began with a literature review, where I examined the current research on the overrepresentation of adoptees in the TTI, as well as contextual research on the TTI and on adoption as an institution, with a special focus on adoption trauma. There is very limited academic research on the adoptee population in the TTI, but there is a lot of informal discussion of it online on sites such as Reddit. I developed a lot of this project through cyber ethnography in the subreddit r/troubledteens, a forum where survivors and other interested parties discuss the TTI. There, I observed user interactions and posts to gauge the attitudes people had towards the overrepresentation.

I began this semester with the idea of my central data gathering method being a quantitative survey that could be used to assess the opinions and perspectives of adoptees who went to treatment and their feelings toward their adoptive parents, dynamic in the home, and experiences in treatment. As I began my literature review and interviews, I used my questionnaire as a focal point. However, the more work that I did in the field, the more qualitative data I gathered outside of just the actual survey.

I conducted three in-depth but informal interviews with three of my friends from treatment, all of whom are adopted. We all lived together at a residential treatment center in Montana in 2020. In these interviews, I asked for their opinion on the reason for this overrepresentation, as well as posed the questions I had come up with for the questionnaire and asked for their help and guidance in building the survey. I created the survey on the platform Qualtrics. After the questionnaire was finalized, I obtained moderator permission to post it in r/troubledteens. I also distributed it to my personal connections in the TTI and encouraged those I knew to send it to their connections as well. After posting the survey, I did a final interview with one of the respondents to it. All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

I included my academic email in my post on r/troubledteens, and New York City based lawyer Dawn Post reached out to me. She is a child's rights lawyer and activist who specializes in broken adoptions. She has done pro-bono work this year for youth who were abandoned by adoptive parents at Atlantis Leadership Academy,

a TTI facility in Jamaica that was shut down after allegations of severe abuse and neglect. We met for coffee to discuss our perspectives on this overrepresentation.

ANALYSIS

As I began this research, I began to see a few major themes emerging. First, there is the issue of money in regards of financial access to both the TTI and adoption. Stemming from this is the idea of both the TTI and adoption as forms of human trafficking. There is also the biosocial layer of adoption, which sits at the core of this research: the idea that there are different dynamics at play in adoptive families that ultimately lead to the overrepresentation of adoptees in the TTI. There are also concerns about the expectations adoptive parents have for their children and how this affects the family dynamic and welfare of the child.

FINANCIAL ACCESS TO TTI & ADOPTION

In our interviews, all three of my friends pointed to money being a relevant player in the reason for the overrepresentation. TTI programs are expensive, with monthly costs ranging anywhere between $5000 - $15,000 or more (Kushan, C. 2017). Access to the TTI is a class issue, as is adoption. In the U.S., there are four primary forms of adoption: Private, independent, intercountry, and adoption from the child welfare system. Adoption from the welfare system may be almost or entirely free of cost, and prospective parents may be able to obtain adoption subsidies from the state to offset the cost of raising a child. However, adoption is generally very expensive. Adoption through a private agency can cost anywhere between $30,000 – $60,000, adopting independently through an attorney anywhere from $25,000 - $45,000, and adoption through an international agency between $20,000 - $50,000 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2022).

Right off the bat, my friend Sadie identified money as the primary reason that there are more adoptees in treatment. When asked directly for her opinion on the reason for the overrepresentation, she said:

> I think it's because parents have the money to be able to do it, and they feel like a sense of, like, giving up and stuff ... they feel as if they tried everything and nothing's working. So they can't save you, so they want somebody else to save you.

When I asked if she thought that the dynamic of "giving up" would differ in a nonadoptive household, she said yes, but again highlighted money as being the core difference.

> So it's like, if you got the money to be able to adopt, you probably got the money to ship them away. Because this was, like, 10 to $15,000 a month or something. I don't know.

Sadie was adopted as an infant, a few days after birth; her biological mother

was financially unstable and using meth during her pregnancy. As we discussed money in relation to the TTI, Sadie shared that she had recently found out that her biological family had sought kinship custody when she was born.

> I don't think I would have been sent away [by my birth family] because my sisters and my grandma from my birth dad's side, they all, like, really wanted me. They were fighting for me against my parents fighting for me, basically, which I found out recently ... and I'm pretty sure my parents got me or something to do just because, like, I don't know... they have more money or something.

This theme was consistent across my interviews. When I interviewed my friend Jess, she also discussed class as an issue and money as an important element when considering the overrepresentation. She also specifically cited her adoption benefits, which her parents withheld from her, and also received while Jess was not in the home. The involvement of state money is another complex layer of this issue.

> **Jess:** Something else I also actually just recently found out. My parents were receiving well, while I was in treatment, my parents were receiving $10,000 [a month]. Uh-huh. Correct me if I'm wrong. That placement was only $7,000.

> **Sophia:** It was 7 or 8. Wow. That is crazy. So they're, like, actively making money and not having to house or feed you.

> **Jess:** Yes. And my parents, I don't know what benefits they got, but all I know is that I was used... my parents got my adoption benefits, like, um, extended until I was 21. I have never received a single paycheck. I have never received money from them. I have never, like I've, I've been homeless on the streets and called my mom, and she said, don't ask me for anything.

Jess was adopted when she was an infant by a young, single mother. When Jess was 5, she was removed from the custody of this woman due to her drug use and homelessness. The woman's mother gained kinship custody of Jess and had her for another 2 years before giving her back up for adoption. Jess was then adopted by her "forever family," who had her for all of 8 years before sending her to an RTC. Between the ages of 14 and 15, she spent 10 months at that RTC. After coming home, she was sent back less than a year later. She then spent 23 months at our RTC for the second stint and was finally released 3 days before her 18th birthday.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING
One emergent theme of this research has been the idea of the TTI and adoption / foster care being forms of human trafficking. Standard definitions of human trafficking denote it as the unlawful transportation or coercion of people to exploit them for profit, usually through labor or sex trafficking. However, broader definitions explain it as "stealing freedom for profit" (Polaris. 2024). Indeed, the confinement of

teenagers to TTI programs has staggering financial incentive for program owners.

When I met with attorney Dawn Post, I broached this idea of TTI programs as a form human trafficking, drawing a parallel to adoption and foster care also being forms of human trafficking. She readily affirmed this stance. She has done extensive work in the field of youth law and advocacy and has specialized in broken adoptions - that is, adoptive children who are returned to foster care or otherwise no longer living in the care or custody of the parents that adopted them. She is also an expert in adoption subsidy misuse – this is what happened with Jess. It is not uncommon for adoptive parents to retain adoption subsidies after their adoptive child is returned to foster care, runs away, or even after a child has died (Sarkar, S. 2024).

Ms. Post has spent much of her career working with and advocating for youth in foster care. She is very familiar with the TTI and has been highly critical of the state funneling foster kids into the industry. In one of the articles she has written on the matter, she notes that "States pay anywhere from $300 to over $900 a day to warehouse the youth that they have taken custody of in these residential facilities" (Post, D. J., 2022).

It was interesting talking to Ms. Post about her work with foster youth in the TTI, because my research has focused more on the private placement of adoptees into TTI programs, rather than through the state or foster care authorities. She shared that while for much of her career she has focused on the foster care angle, she has spent more time this year exploring and advocating against the disproportionate representation of adoptees in treatment due to private placements as well. In March of 2024, Ms. Post was contacted by a member of Paris Hilton's 11:11 Media Impact, a charitable arm that seeks to address institutional abuse in the TTI. She was asked for her legal and child welfare expertise in assisting a group of teenagers who were abandoned by their adoptive parents at a TTI facility in Jamaica called Atlantis Leadership Academy (ALA). Ms. Post traveled to Jamaica to represent the boy's pro-bono and help to find them placements. Of the eight teenagers removed from ALA, three were left in the permanent custody of Jamaica after their parents declined to retrieve them. All three were adopted and also happened to be the only three of color (Post, D. J. 2024). The abandonment should not come as a surprise – indeed, as Ms. Post came to learn, "one of the 'success stories' that ALA shared with prospective parents was one in which ALA warehoused an adopted youth until he was 18, dropped him off in Miami with some money, and told him never to contact his adoptive parents again" (Post, D. J., & McFarland, M. J., 2024).

It is very difficult to collect specific data on these programs due to the lack of transparency or oversight. A study from 2023 determined the average per-night cost of a wilderness therapy program is $558, with an average enrollment fee of $3194 (Wilder, J., 2023). Of my survey respondents, 6 reported attending a wilderness program. If the average program's duration is 8 – 14 weeks, then the roughly 11-week average stay costs $46,160, or $16,785/month. That means that for this study alone, roughly $276,960 was paid by 6 households for only their wilderness programs.

Finding average prices for a stay at a Residential Treatment Center (RTC) is even more difficult. 10 of my respondents attended an RTC. The RTC that I attended, along with my three interviewees, was $8,000/month. This is on the low end of pricing

– RTCs often run closer to 10 or 12 thousand a month, or more.

12 respondents to my survey reported a collective 302 months spent in treatment, with an average stay of 25.2 months per person.

This spread shows that most residents attended more than one program. This makes

What kind of program(s) did you attend? Please select all that apply 12 ⓘ

Q26 - What kind of program(s) did you attend? Please select all that apply - Selected Choice	Percentage	Count
Wilderness Program	50%	6
Therapuetic Boarding School	67%	8
Residential Treatment Center	83%	10
Residential Psychiatric Facility	33%	4
Psychiatric Evaluation Center	8%	1
Other (please specify)	8%	1

predicting an average total cost difficult, because of the variety of programs and pricing. Wilderness programs are typically more expensive than RTCs or Therapeutic Boarding Schools (TBS), as are inpatient psych programs like a psychiatric evaluation center or residential psychiatric facility. With this in mind, I will use a conservative estimate of $10,000/month to determine overall cost. This means that the average total cost of treatment for each of my survey respondents was approximately $252,000, or a yearly cost of $120,000. That's over 3 million in revenue for 12 respondents. Some of these costs may be covered by insurance, but more often than not parents are paying predominantly out-of-pocket for treatment.

A summary, taken from a study done out of the University of Utah, helps to provide a sense of scale in terms of how profitable this industry is. It should also be noted that while the researching institute officially recognizes 72 programs operating in Utah, due to the cottage industry nature of operations in the TTI, there are likely more facilities that fit the bill but fail to identify themselves as such to the state (Tannert, J. 2016). Utah is the state with the most TTI programs in the country, due largely to weak regulations and the age of medical consent – Utah is considered a "parent's rights" state, which means parents can make medical decisions on behalf of their child. Between 2015 and 2020, 34% of teenagers who crossed state lines for treatment went to a facility in Utah (Miller, J., 2023).

As my research developed, I began to see parallels between the TTI and adoption as an institution. In my questionnaire, I tried to draw this parallel and assess my respondent's perception of it.

Adoption as an Institution 9 ⓘ

TTI programs are a form of human trafficking
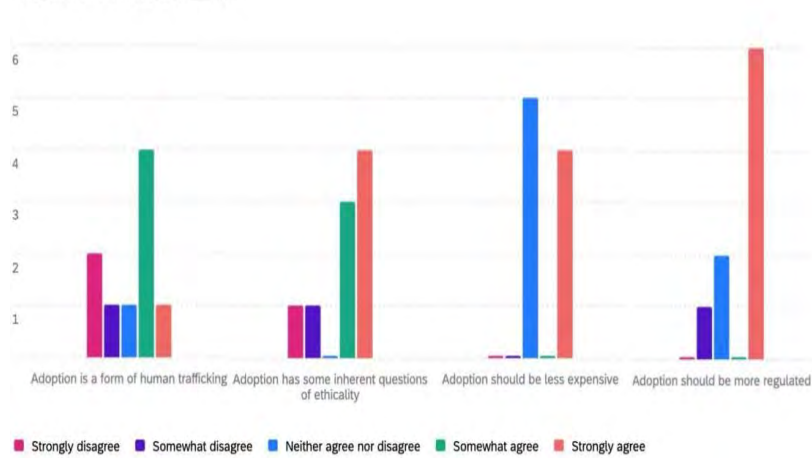
The Troubled Teen Industry (TTI) 10 ⓘ
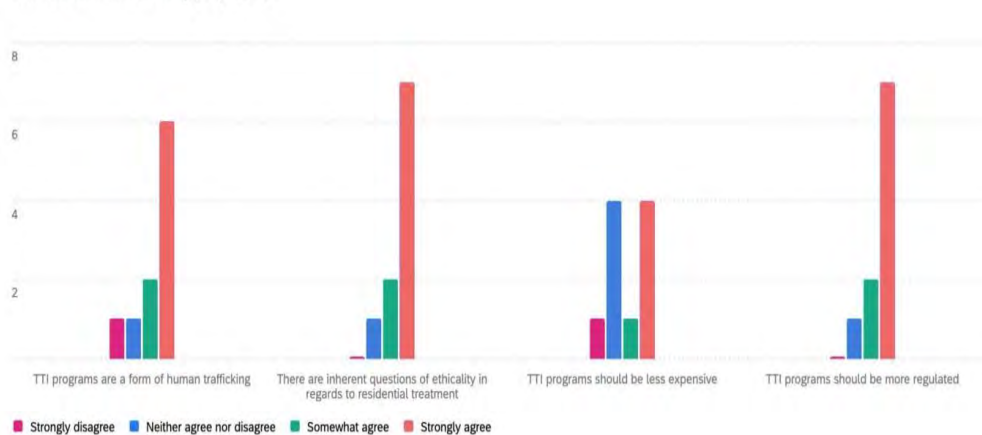
It should be noted that this project was the first time I've used Qualtrics, so my questionnaire is not as technically consistent as it would be on a more experienced pass. There were 9 responses to the first set of questions, and 10 for the second. Under the TTI portion, I neglected to add a "somewhat disagree" option, which makes the data slightly less easy to parallel. Still, the pattern is recognizable across both sets of questions – respondents generally perceived the TTI and adoption in similar ways in regard to ethics, cost, and regulation needs. Defining adoption as a form of human trafficking appears to be the most divisive – it is the area that is least consistent with the rest of the responses.

BIOSOCIAL ASPECT

The existence of the overrepresentation of adoptees in TTI programs suggests that there is a dynamic in adoptive households that differs from nonadoptive ones. All four

of the informants I interviewed discussed the relevance and importance of connection between an adoptive parent and their child.

> **Jess:** I think that it's kind of almost like giving birth and having your own kid is like a needed, um, aspect of having a correct child parent relationship. So I feel like when adopted parents, they just have a hard time connecting to their kid because this is not... it's not a piece of them. I wasn't a piece of my parents. I have different personality traits. Um, it's nature versus nurture, but there's a lot of nature in there.

> **Ora:** There's this level of disconnect between an adopted parent and child, and I think that is widened the more that you can't see yourself in your child, both physically and, you know, like, personality wise.

These quotes are from two of them. They explained that this disconnect was an important contributing factor to the overrepresentation, and that it is easier for adoptive parents to let go of parenting their children.

Another complicated element at play is that of race. In my questionnaire, only 3 out of 14 respondents had adoptive parents that matched their racial or ethnic background. When considering the importance of "seeing yourself" in your child, the racial disconnect may be an important factor. While exact numbers are difficult to gather, statistics suggest that between 77 – 84% of adoptive parents are white (Zill, N. 2017; Marr, E. 2017).

Were you adopted by parents who had the same race / ethnic background as you? 14 ⓘ

Interracial / Ethnic Adoption
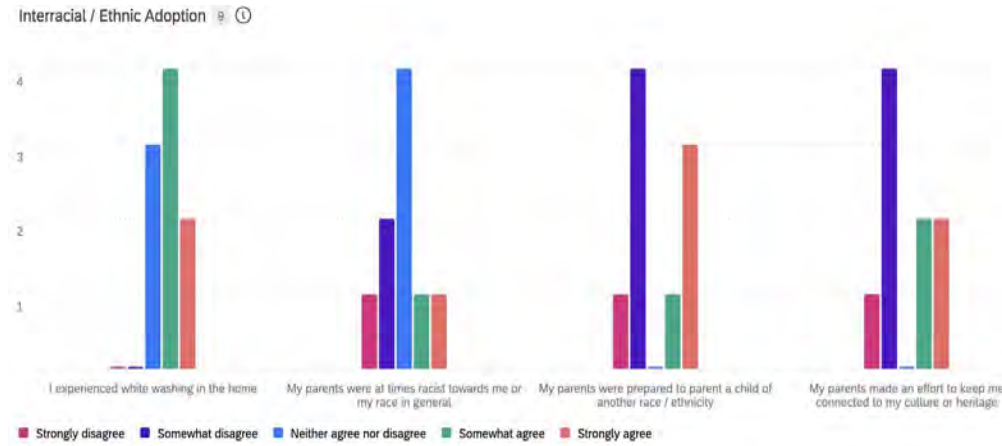
Perhaps even more concerningly, statistics show that transracial adoptions make up between 21 and 28% of adoptions (Allon, K. et al., 2020; Marr, E. 2017), compared to 79% of the adoptions recorded in my questionnaire. While it would be presumptuous to attribute the adoptive parent- child disconnect solely to racial differences, it is clearly a very important layer to the complex experience of identity and connection in relation to adoption.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS' DISPOSITION & EXPECTATIONS

One of my primary theories for this overrepresentation is that there is a dynamic in the adoptive home that differs from a nonadoptive household. I believe that part of this difference is due to the dispositions of parents who are more likely to adopt. While there is not necessarily a concrete way to measure this, I attempted to measure the perceptions that my respondents had towards their adoptive parents in regard to their standards, expectations, and dispositions.

This table tracks the answers of respondents on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. The majority of responses fall between an average of 3 and 4, indicating mostly neutral positions, leaning towards agreement.

My adoptive parent(s)...	Average
Displayed narcissistic tendencies	3.20
Did not like talking about my status as an adoptee	2.10
Did not like to acknowledge I was adopted	1.90
Spoke poorly of my biological parents or the nature of my being put up for adoption	3.30
Expected me to conform to their idea of who I should be	4.10
Had higher standards for me than what is normal	3.30
Expected me to be grateful for them adopting me	3.10
Lied or withheld information about my adoption / adoptive parents	3.60
Had a savior complex	3.60
Showed me off / used my adoption as a token of their virtue	2.70
Did not like having their authority challenged	4.50
Were willing to work with me and my concerns Frequently brought up my status as an adoptee	3.20 3.20
Would not have adopted me if they could have a biological child	4.60
Encouraged me to explore my identity or status as an adoptee	3.10
Encouraged me to reach out to my biological parents / family	3.30

The most agreed upon statement was [My adoptive parent(s)...] "Would not have adopted me if they could have a biological child", with 9 out of 10 respondents responding, "Strongly agree." This is a widely acknowledged concern in the world of

adoption – that adoption caters more to prospective parents, who may be struggling with infertility or are otherwise unable to have a biological child, rather than the child they are adopting.

This sentiment was echoed in the troubled teens subreddit, where there is a wealth of informal discussion of this overrepresentation. Included is a comment from one sub member discussing the overrepresentation:

> Personally, I think adoption in our country is very parent focused. It's about adults finding a way to complete their families. Our trauma that is inherent to the process of adoption is overlooked and misunderstood. In my case, I'm also a different race than my adoptive parents. Never once in treatment was this explored.

The focus on the adoptive parents, or parents in general rather than the child, has alarming implications inside the TTI.

I felt that my parents were the real clients of the program, not me

🟥	Strongly Disagree	0	(0 Responses)
🟦	Somewhat Disagree	0	(0 Responses)
🟦	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	2	(2 Responses)
🟩	Somewhat agree	1	(1 Responses)
🟧	Strongly agree	7	(7 Responses)

This was one of the most well-agreed upon questions in my entire questionnaire. The simple truth is that parents are not paying to be told they are the

Expected me to conform to their idea of who I should be

🟥	Strongly Disagree	1	(1 Responses)
🟦	Somewhat Disagree	0	(0 Responses)
🟦	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	(1 Responses)
🟩	Somewhat Agree	3	(3 Responses)
🟧	Strongly Agree	5	(5 Responses)

problem. The TTI is for-profit – it exists to make money, not to provide therapy or healing to the teenagers it claims to serve. Parents are the ones paying for the program, not the teens, therefore programs will do whatever it takes to continue collecting a paycheck, even if it is at the expense of children.

While there are a variety of reasons that teens may be sent to treatment, there are a portion who are experiencing abuse in the home and then being sent away as

punishment for speaking out, or to cover up the abuse or allegations entirely. I witnessed this first-hand in treatment.

> **Phoebe:** Thats something I'll never forgive [our therapist] for, how she ignored the literal evidence of my parent's abuse and tried to convince me and get me to admit that I was a pathological liar when like... it takes one google search to try to find my father's mugshot and they don't just put kids into foster care for no reason.
>
> **Sophia:** Yes, [our therapist] and the program absolutely gaslit the hell out of you ... It was the same with Jess's parents too, they were abusing her and [our therapist] gaslit her about that too.
>
> **Phoebe:** ... my parents were the clients, they're not paying 8k to be told that they're abusive and that they're the problem, they're paying to get me to admit I'm lying and admit that they're good parents, and the only way I'll get out is if I just go along with it.

Phoebe attended the same RTC as I did. She is not adopted, but I am including her perspective because it is important. Phoebe's parents were physically abusing her, and she and her sister were removed from the home by child welfare authorities and placed into foster care. After regaining their custody, her parents sent her to treatment for continuing to speak out against the abuse. Jess shared a similar story, and there are plenty of others who do too. After being sent to treatment, teens are gaslit about their experience in the home. They may be forced to lie about or recant their experience of abuse, because programs will punish them for not buying into their parents' lies or living up to their wishes and conforming to their standards.

The statement [My adoptive parent(s)] "Expected me to conform to their idea of who I should be" was also largely agreed upon. The manifestation of these expectations can look like a lot of different things, from anything such as strict academic standards and behavioral discipline, or rigidity regarding identity and expression in general.

In my questionnaire, I did not touch at all on the dimension of queer identity and how that impacts family dynamics or the likelihood of a TTI placement. However, this is an important angle to consider, and in a more long-term study I would like to research it more. One of the friends I interviewed, Clarke, is FTM transgender. We met in the girl's group at the RTC we attended. His parents were not supportive of his gender identity, and thus the program was not either. Our therapist and the staff would deadname and misgender him, and we were expected to as well. Clarke's adoptive parents had a biological son as well as an adopted son. When deciding to add a third child to their family, they knew they wanted a daughter.

> **Clarke:** For me, a big thing ... it didn't mesh well, it kind of plays into my adoption in a way because [my parents] have 2 sons. And initially, they did want a daughter. But me, I have always kind of known since, like, as long as I can remember that I didn't identify with my, like, with being a female. And so and I only found out [what that meant] until much later on, and there was

a lot of, I guess, homophobic and transphobic, like...
Sophia: Attitudes, maybe?
Clarke: Yeah. But that's, like, putting it lightly. There were a lot of different kinds of rejection I faced, within the home, and when I was in treatment.
Sophia: Yeah, that makes sense.
Clarke: And so I couldn't even really explore what that meant to me or what like, I couldn't even really explore what it... what it might mean to me, like, trans or how my gender identity plays into things or what my sexuality means. Like, I didn't have that time because I was in, you know, treatment, not just in a natural, it's...
Sophia: Such a hostile environment.

As demonstrated in Clarke's case, queerphobic attitudes in the home can contribute to placement. When you hear about "gay conversion camps," what people are referring to are TTI facilities – private, for-profit programs that cater to the "rehabilitative" wishes of the parent, not the child (Golightley, S. 2023). While the RTC we attended was not overtly queerphobic, nor did it market itself as such to parents, the underlying attitudes towards queer identities, especially when paired with the disapproval of parents, created an incredibly hostile environment.

Custody & Parenting

One of my theories for the overrepresentation is the idea that adoptive parents may be more comfortable with an out of home placement because of their familiarity with the transferal of custody – adoption by nature involves the exchange of money

Do you think that your parents were more comfortable with the transferral of your custody to a TTI program that non-adoptive parents would be, due to the nature of the transferral of custody during the adoption process? 10 (i) >

■ Definitely not ■ Probably not ■ Might or might not ■ Probably yes ■ Definitely yes

and the custody of a child, as does the TTI.

Only 2 out of 10 responded in the negative. This suggests that the perception that adoptive parents have regarding their responsibility to a child might be different than a non-adoptive parent might have.

Ora: ...my mom calls it outsourcing parenting. So... I grew up with a nanny.

Sophia: Oh, okay. Wow. That's such an interesting...

Ora: Yeah. Like, that's right there. It's just super interesting dynamics. Like, you want to adopt a child, but then you don't really want to raise it. So, you get a nanny. You're already comfortable with outsourcing parenting. That's what she calls it.

Sophia: Wow. Yeah.

Ora: So I think that this just wasn't such a reach, but I think that she just didn't... I don't know. I mean, she's a lawyer. She's, uh, my dad's a doctor, so their careers always came first. Um, but I just don't... I think that's sort of the trail of, like, you know, you get into the adoption agencies, so you're comfortable with this sort of world.

I interviewed Ora after we connected on Reddit, and she had some really valuable insight. This idea of outsourcing parenting really stood out to me. Arguably, all TTI programs employ this outsourcing of parenting simply by gaining the custody of teens from their parents. The idea that this outsourcing begins at home, whether through attitudes regarding the responsibility to a child or through the more literal hands-off approach of parenting with a nanny, seems to be a crucial element to understanding the overrepresentation.

SUMMARY

The overrepresentation of adoptees in the Troubled Teen Industry has many complex and overlapping factors. Financial access to both adoption and the TTI is likely an important factor to start with, as the money needed for adoption precludes any other dynamics in the home and ultimately is needed to send a child to treatment. This research also suggests that identity and connection are relevant players in the adoptive family dynamic, and that a disconnect occurring due to appearance, personality, or otherwise may contribute to placement. On this front, it is clear that the interracial angle of adoption is hugely important, considering the disparity between interracial adoptions at large and the representation of those adoptions in the TTI. The disposition of adoptive parents should also be considered as it is hugely important in shaping the home dynamics as well as the relationship between the parent and child. Respondents to my questionnaire specifically cited the expectations that adoptive parents have for their child, as well as a parent's need to remain an unquestioned authority figure as two of the primary dispositions that contribute to the overrepresentation.

STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

I believe that my methodology was overall sound. I was able to utilize my personal connections in the space to help inform and guide me – the three friends that I interviewed were instrumental in the development of this project. I think that having an insider's perspective on the TTI was also very important for the progression of this project. As the researcher, I have been able to explore and unpack my own experiences

throughout the course of this project, and it has really helped to guide me.

The cyber ethnography I've conducted on Reddit in r/troubledteens was also a cornerstone of my research – it served as a launch pad for my survey and was a source of inspiration and guidance. Despite the dearth of formal research on the overrepresentation of adoptees in TTI programs, there is extensive discussion of it in r/troubledteens, and a large community of adoptees who went through it themselves. I have been able to observe different forums on the subject and was able to conduct an interview with an adoptee that I met in the comments of the post where I distributed my questionnaire. My presence in the subreddit outside of specific relation to the overrepresentation has also helped me to stay focused on the space in general, which has allowed for me to really immerse myself into this research.

A clear technical limitation is my unfamiliarity with Qualtrics. As mentioned, this project is the first time I've used it, so it was a learning curve for me while building the questionnaire. I also had several people who began the survey but did not complete it to 100%. Rather than only including those who completed it entirely, I chose to recognize the data collected by any number of responses regardless of completion. I made this decision because the sample size was already small, and I felt that analyzing their responses was valuable. However, this does contribute to a lack of consistency in percentages across questions. In a more long-term study, I would control for this better.

The biggest limiting factor of this research is the time and resources available as I've conducted it. This originally started as a semester-long project to fulfill my undergraduate capstone course, but I believe that with the proper time and resources there is a full thesis worth of research that could be conducted. I hope to continue this research, be it through finding a research position with my college or eventually going to grad school.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

I would be hard pressed to say that my research question is entirely answered by this project. However, the data gathered is supportive of the guiding questions in regard to the importance of dynamics at play within the home. Primarily, the data gathered by this study supports the idea of adoptive parent-child connection being hugely important and often hindered, as well as how influential money is in this space. While not explored fully in this report, I also gathered a lot of data on the perceptions of adoption trauma and what that means for identity, connection, and wellbeing.

There is a plethora of untapped data here. In a future study, there is so much that could be analyzed. I would recommend some sort of comparative analysis against non-adoptees in treatment, as well as potentially gathering the perspectives of the adoptive parents of teenagers who went to treatment. There is just so much to explore on every front. Examining the racial angle of this overrepresentation, focusing on adoption subsidy misuse, understanding the importance of connection and identity and expectations, gauging the personality differences in adoptive versus nonadoptive parents and their children... if I had more time, I could pull together a much more well-rounded project. Alas, time being what it is, I will delegate that for further study.

CONCLUSIONS

The Troubled Teen Industry is dangerous, abusive, and unethical. There are well documented cases of abuse and neglect in the industry spanning back decades, and institutional abuse continues to this day (Chatfield, M., 2019; Kopsick, L. L., 2022; Golightley, S. 2020, Szalavitz, M., 2006). This research is precluded by the abusive nature of this industry and the urgent need to regulate the facilities within it. With that in mind, understanding the overrepresentation of adoptees in the TTI is incredibly important. This representation shows that adoptees, as well as foster care youth, are a group who are more likely to experience victimization in this industry. Understanding the factors that contribute to this victimization is essential in correcting it and repairing the harms that are occurring and have previously occurred. It is imperative that further research is conducted, and that advocacy work continues to secure the rights of teenagers who were never given a choice about their custody – in, and out, of the Troubled Teen Industry.

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◆ Honors 484-485

WOVEN HOMES

RANDA ELSAYED

The following is an excerpt from my Capstone project, a book titled 'Woven Homes' which follows my real life inspiration, Khadija, on her adventures navigating different ideas of home as a Black, queer, woman in the US. In this scene, she is a student attending the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore, and is engaged with the end of the semester after the murder of Freddie Gray.

HER PROFESSOR TOOK A DEEP BREATH before starting, "The death of Freddie Gray has affected us all..." A kid to the left of her, Khadija thought his name could be Mike, nodded his head in quiet agreement. To Khadija's right, a girl, Anna, pursed her lips and sighed. Khadija couldn't help the eye roll she returned in response to the professor as she tapped her pen on her desk. It had been exactly a week since the brutal murder of Freddie Gray, and all Khadija had seen in terms of a response from her professors and peers had been performative solemnity and conversations alluding to a fear of external danger making its way to campus.

The Assignment and the Writer: In this year-long Senior Capstone Honors Program Course, each student selects someone they know who has faced a challenging justice-focused issue. They then conduct interviews, write outlines, and create an 80- to 100-page book featuring their subject's journey. The culmination of this course is a book reading. Randa chose her friend, Khadija, a young, Black woman who faced racial discrimination, housing insecurity, and family challenges with the criminal legal system. She meticulously explored the harsh realities Khadija and her family endured searching for permanent housing, and in careful prose she documented Khadija's struggles after her father was unjustly arrested and incarcerated. For the book reading, and for her submission to *John Jay's Finest*, Randa decided on a passage that depicted Khadija navigating school life in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray.

– Professors Raymond Patton and Andrea Clark

Khadija would wonder, time and time again, how, in the safety of the MICA bubble, with gates so high and glass walls so thick, the supposed danger of Baltimore would touch a single grass blade on the campus's perfectly trimmed lawn. The people who should be feeling any type of personalized emotion about the murder were Black people, and even then, so many of her and her Black friends were on an indefinable level of privilege existing in Baltimore as students of MICA. At MICA, they existed behind glass walls so clear they could witness the world beyond but so thick nothing could touch them, good or bad.

The professor rudely interrupted Khadija's thoughts by stating, "Let us all join together in a moment of silence for Freddie Gray…

Oh wow, Khadija thought as she saw Anna pull a tissue out of her bag from the corner of her eye. The room immediately grew silent. Khadija felt a tightness in her chest as she counted the seconds go by. She attempted to match her deep inhales to every five-second mark and listened to the few sounds of the room. *One* she thought as she heard a sniffle from her right. *Two*, a ping sounded from a phone behind her. *Three*, the sound of someone clearing their throat rose from the left. *Four*, Khadija tapped her pen a couple more times. *Five*, some commotion sounded from right outside the classroom door, someone chortled a loud laugh breaking the spell. Khadija took her breath as shuffling rose from the room and filled the space.

"Okay, everyone," the professor took a deep breath. "Please don't be nervous about speaking to me one-on-one or shooting me an email if you need to submit assignments a little later for any reason."

The noise grew in the room as everyone began packing their bags. Khadija pursed her lips and wondered if anyone from the class would ask for an extension because they were struggling with the murder.

"The final, however, will not be postponed. So, please reach out if you need any extra support before the final date." The professor finished before turning her back and gathering her own items together.

Khadija felt her face grow hot as she grabbed her things and tossed them in her bag, not thinking about where everything ended up. She could not believe the level of performative regard toward an issue that ran deeper than any individual in that room. Khadija could not fathom how individuals could plan a moment of silence and then follow up with a reminder about a final in the same breath. *Five seconds*, she thought, Five seconds was all the acknowledgment Freddie Gray got before life resumed as normal.

"That's a really good question," Khadija heard her professor say with a student by her side. "For your final paper," the professor started out loud.

Khadija did not let her finish as she started down the aisle towards the door with a quick, heavy, pace. "Just a moment, Khadija. This could be helpful to you," her professor said with a confused, albeit measured, expression. Khadija did not waste any time with a response. She looked at her professor, rolled her eyes, and promptly let the door slam behind her.

♦ LAW AND SOCIETY 425

THE LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DEFERRED ACTION STATUS

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SHANIA UPPAL

INTRODUCTION

     OUR WORLD IS EXPERIENCING the highest levels of displacement in human history. According to UNHCR (2018), nearly every two seconds, someone is being displaced. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) guarantees the right to seek asylum from persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group membership. This global displacement has resulted in 281 million international migrants, with asylum seekers comprising a growing segment. In the United States, the number of asylum seekers has risen exponentially, reaching half a million last year. U.S. immigration laws have evolved by introducing provisions like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which offers temporary relief to young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children.

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These immigrant groups occupy a unique position in the U.S. immigration system; they lack permanent residency but are not considered undocumented. This liminal legal position places them in a state of legal ambiguity, where they are neither fully included nor entirely excluded from legal protections. While legally permitted to work, they lack citizenship privileges, creating a "grey area" that prevents full societal integration while simultaneously stigmatizing their status. Prior research suggests that undocumented immigrants' vulnerable status shapes their legal consciousness, a concept described by Merry (1990) as the common-sense understanding of the law. For undocumented immigrants, this is often governed by fear, viewing the law as an adversarial force (Abrego, L. J. (2011); Bloemraad, I. (2018); Coutin et al., (2017). But what about individuals who fall within this "grey area"? What factors shape the legal consciousness of those with liminal status?

In this paper, I aimed to answer the question: "How do asylum seekers and people with deferred action in New York City perceive and interact with the legal system compared to undocumented people? By examining how their unique status influences their willingness to report incidents, given concerns about risks to their asylum processes, I discovered that asylum seekers and people with deferred action status gradually shift in legal consciousness over time. Initially hesitant and cautious, they eventually develop trust and confidence in engaging with the legal system.

The research primarily involved in-depth interviews with two asylum seekers, which, along with survey responses, revealed a shift from fear and mistrust to proactive engagement as individuals with liminal legal status experienced the protection of their status. Some noted that their limited legal recognition fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment, although tempered by the temporary nature of their status and fears for the future. Despite these uncertainties, both the interviews and surveys highlighted that they felt greater security and belonging than undocumented individuals, emphasizing the impact of their precarious legal recognition.

LITERATURE REVIEW
History of Asylum Seekers and Deferred Action Status Holders in America

There are four main categories of immigrants in the U.S.: citizens, residents, non-immigrants, and undocumented immigrants, each bearing different legal protections, ranging from being fully protected to facing the fear of removal. However, this categorization was not always the case, as for much of recorded history, refugees and migrants were not seen as distinct groups (Long, 2013). Seeking asylum is now recognized as a human right under the UDHR, and to abide by these international laws, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has implemented methods allowing migrants to apply for asylum in the U.S. while awaiting processing and receiving work permits. However, applicants cannot leave the country during this lengthy process, which can take years, sometimes decades, due to a significant backlog exacerbated by the pandemic (Maurer, 2023).

Similarly, following Barack Obama's creation of DACA, which provides protected status to children who arrived in the U.S. undocumented, offering them a

pathway to live and work in the country under contingent status, and the attempted implementation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) (LG Solórzano, 2022), recent developments like Deferred Action for Labor Enforcement (DALE) (Lin, DALE Staff Attorney, 2024) offer eligible immigrants temporary relief from deportation and work permits if approved. While migrants seeking asylum or those granted deferred action recognize that their cases may result in approval or denial, there remains uncertainty. For example, deferred action work permits can expire, and reapplying might not be possible due to changing legal circumstances, as seen with DAPA (LG Solórzano, 2022). This raises questions about the stability of their status in the United States, especially given the unpredictability of immigration laws and how this shapes their legal consciousness and perception of legal forces.

The discontinued DAPA program exemplifies the precarious nature of such protections. In 'We Are Not the People They Think We Are,' Solórzano interviewed families who saw DAPA's attempted implementation as a transformative moment in their perception of immigration law, only to have its subsequent failure expose the volatility of these protections. This aligns with my hypothesis about the instability inherent in deferred action status and its impact on immigrants' legal consciousness.

Perceptions of and by Asylum Seekers and Deferred Status Holders

How one is perceived plays a massive role in how one feels about belonging, which in turn influences one's legal consciousness. Undocumented immigrants often feel the need to remain hidden due to the fear of deportation (Abrego, 2011), which shines a light on how they sense the law perceives them, resorting to resisting it for the most part. Prior literature highlights how migration to the United States is shaped by punitive immigration laws and a hostile sociopolitical climate, fostering a "criminalized state of illegality" for undocumented immigrants that impacts their legal status and deportability (De Genova, 2002; Menjívar & Kanstroom, 2013). Studies show that this environment provokes fear, uncertainty, and stress, contributing to a diminished sense of self-worth among undocumented migrants.

This rhetoric of "illegality" also influences policies and perceptions. Historically, immigrants were viewed as an "economic boon," but shifting attitudes now characterize them as "encroachers," leading to the stigmatization of immigrants and increased enforcement of immigration laws (Coutin, 2011). These changes have created a legal framework that denies undocumented immigrants fundamental rights, such as due process and family unity, reflecting societal desires to exclude them from full membership in society (Coutin, 2011). The legal consciousness of undocumented immigrants is shaped by fear, uncertainty, and resistance, influenced by the ever-present threat of deportation and their exclusion from full societal membership.

While asylum seekers and people with deferred action status share particular vulnerabilities, their experiences differ from other immigrant groups due to their temporary legal protections. These protections, which include the ability to work legally, mitigate the immediate fear of deportation but do not provide the permanence or full inclusion that might alleviate their stigmatization and criminalization. As individuals with limited legal status navigate a precarious middle ground, they balance limited legal rights with the persistent barriers to full societal acceptance, setting them

apart from both undocumented immigrants and permanent residents. This exclusion is compounded by public perceptions, often shaped by volatile sociopolitical climates. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) provides a framework for understanding how these people perceive themselves within this liminal space, influenced by both their group identity and broader societal attitudes. These perceptions are not always negative. Eisenhauer's (2007) study of refugee perceptions in South Florida revealed that some communities hold generally favorable views of asylum seekers despitea limited understanding of their backgrounds. However, this perspective may not reflect current attitudes, especially in New York City, where public sentiments have become more polarized in the current day and age.

A clear example of the tension faced by asylum seekers and those with deferred action status is seen in the rhetoric of New York City Mayor Eric Adams, who voiced concerns that the influx of asylum seekers could overwhelm city resources, with some claiming that "migrants will destroy New York City" (Fahy & Vilchis, 2023). This public sentiment reflects the stigmatization and fear that asylum seekers and other immigrant groups experience, even though they may possess legal status. These perceptions may contribute to a complex dynamic where people with temporary legal protections still face exclusion, impacting their legal consciousness. Despite holding legal status, these people may perceive themselves as "outsiders," leading to feelings of insecurity, resistance, and marginalization when interacting with the legal system.

This phenomenon, rooted in societal perceptions, can shape how asylum seekers and those with deferred action status engage with the law. While they are legally protected, the hostile climate may still influence their view of the legal system as adversarial, affecting their willingness to engage with legal institutions and seek justice.

Contrasting the Experiences of Asylum Seekers and Deferred Status Holders with Those of Undocumented Immigrants

Existing literature often centers on undocumented immigrants and the broad impact of legal status, "implicitly suggesting a single, monolithic undocumented immigrant experience" (Abrego, 2011). Legal consciousness studies, such as Abrego's, emphasize that "illegality" shapes undocumented immigrants' views of the law since their mere presence is criminalized, framing their legal consciousness as largely "against the law" (Abrego, 2011). In the context of law and society, this means that undocumented people often adopt an avoidance-based approach to legal systems and authorities. Such legal consciousness among first-generation undocumented immigrants is often shaped by fear, as the precarious work conditions and a lack of legal protection make the law an ever-present threat rather than a source of support (Donato, 2020).

In contrast to first-generation undocumented immigrants, whose experiences are characterized by direct fears of deportation and instability (Abrego & Negrón-Gonzales, 2020), 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants, defined as those who arrived in the U.S. as children and grew up navigating its systems, experience a complex blend of belonging while carrying the stigma of undocumented status. This

highlights differences in legal consciousness within immigrant groups, focusing on those in liminal legal positions, such as deferred action recipients and asylum applicants, who transition from no status to partial recognition. The variation in legal consciousness based on age of arrival, as seen with the 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants suggests that age plays a key role in shaping undocumented immigrants' sense of belonging. I hypothesized that factors such as the circumstances under which individuals with liminal status arrive and live shape their perceptions of the law and societal inclusion. Similarly, individuals with liminal legal status, like 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants who feel a stronger sense of belonging from growing up in the U.S., may also experience heightened belonging due to temporary protections, though the extent remains unclear.

Abrego also highlights the legal consciousness of mixed-status families, where people with pathways to some legality often resist their status due to feelings of guilt for having a legal standing over their family members (Abrego, 2019). This raises questions about the emotional toll of leaving loved ones behind concerning legal status. Specifically, it prompts reflection on whether asylum seekers, who frequently flee their countries, feel guilt for abandoning their families or if people with deferred action pathways grapple with similar feelings of guilt for being "with the law," meaning they do not actively engage with the legal system but are willing to use it when necessary, while their family members remain outside its protections. Connecting this with Abrego (2011), I hypothesized that immigrant groups with unique immigration statuses may leverage their experiences for legal mobilization. When incorporated into academic literature, their emerging narratives could highlight the volatility of immigration laws and potentially lead to the development of new pathways and changes in policy.

METHODOLOGY
Positionality
Abrego (2020) acknowledges that the narratives of undocumented migrants are often excluded from legal studies. When immigrant voices are missing, their stories and experiences are frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted (Abrego & Negrón-Gonzales, 2020). Through my research, I aimed to highlight the narratives of people in liminal legal positions by conducting in-depth interviews with two asylum seekers and an attorney from a nonprofit organization that assists undocumented immigrants in obtaining deferred action status.

This research expands the literature on immigrant experiences, moving beyond a monolithic perspective to explore the diverse realities shaped by immigration laws. Drawing from my positionality as an immigrant, I recognize that personal ties to a study provide valuable insights (Maxwell et al., 2020). Reflecting on my experiences as an asylum seeker, as suggested by McCorkel & Myers (2003), I gained a unique perspective that enhanced my ability to engage with participants sensitively and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of immigration issues.

The primary methods used for data collection were two in-depth interviews I conducted with asylum seekers, providing lived accounts of their experiences. However, due to the limited time frame for my research and the challenge of finding

people with liminal legal status, I encountered reluctance from participants to engage. To address this, I incorporated additional methods, including a survey and an interview with an attorney working for an immigrant services organization in NYC that handles deferred action and asylum cases. While these sources do not provide direct accounts from the group of focus in my research, they proved to be useful substitutes under the circumstances, laying the groundwork for further exploration and providing valuable context for understanding the challenges faced by individuals in liminal legal positions.

Pre-Interview Survey and Limitations

Before conducting these interviews, I wanted to understand how people with liminal legal status perceive the U.S. legal and immigration systems. While I initially planned to target individuals with liminal legal status, it proved difficult to identify people who fit this criterion. To address this, I sent out a survey through different student WhatsApp groups at my university, an immigrant-serving institution, to reach a diverse immigrant population. I requested that those with liminal legal status respond. Although I received responses from students with other statuses (e.g., permanent residents, undocumented individuals, U.S. citizens), and as this was not a random sample, the results may not be fully representative. My intention was to gauge how immigrant groups felt about issues such as trust in law enforcement and perceptions of the legal system. The participants included students with a range of legal statuses, from permanent residents and U.S. citizens to undocumented individuals, those with deferred action, and asylum seekers.

One limitation of this data is that the sample comprises immigrants with different legal statuses, including U.S. citizens who were acquainted with members of the target group yet opted not to participate. Therefore, the survey may not completely reflect the experiences of individuals in liminal legal statuses. Nevertheless, it did indicate that immigration status influences trust in law enforcement and shapes perceptions of the legal system, which has led me to transition to in-depth interviews.

Interview Participants and Perspectives

The two asylum seekers I interviewed, Sam (pseudonym) and Carol (pseudonym), are both currently in the process of obtaining asylum. Sam, a 50-year-old from South Asia, moved to the U.S. five years ago, while Carol, a 30-year-old from South America, arrived about a year ago. Both reside in neighborhoods with large immigrant populations. I interviewed Sam in person, as he was more comfortable with this method, though he was hesitant throughout the interview. While he answered most questions, some responses were off the record.

In contrast, I interviewed Carol over the phone with the help of a Spanish translator, as she only speaks Spanish. Carol was noticeably more open and confident in answering questions, contrasting Sam's hesitancy. This difference aligns with my hypothesis that people demonstrating greater confidence may have different perceptions or interactions with the legal system, even in similar legal situations.

My questions included how their status, which temporarily protects them from deportation and grants them limited legality, impacts their interactions with the

law. I also gained insights into their journey before arriving in the U.S., including the factors that prompted them to seek asylum and the motives of those seeking deferred action status. An essential part of my questioning of the two asylum seekers focused on whether they feel more vulnerable to deportation, knowing that USCIS and other Homeland Security agencies have access to their information.

Through my experience in an immigration clinic with an immigrant services organization, I met an attorney who supports people pursuing DALE cases involving labor violations. My interactions with the attorney revealed their deep understanding of how immigrants navigate the legal system, which inspired my decision to include him in my research. Focusing on clients' emotions and strictly maintaining confidentiality, the attorney explained how immigrants perceive the law in today's political climate. This adds a nuanced, ethical dimension to my research, enhancing my understanding of immigrants with liminal legal status experiences.

A limitation of these interviews is that all participants are based in New York, which may not provide a holistic view of immigrant experiences across the U.S. New York is a sanctuary city, offering a more supportive environment for immigrants with access to various resources and legal protections, which may differ significantly from the experiences of immigrants in other states with less welcoming policies. This geographical focus means the findings may not fully capture the diversity of experiences in other states or regions.

FINDINGS
Survey Results

When asked about the survey participants' experience with the legal system regarding their immigration status, 18.2% described it as positive and supportive, while 27.3% reported neutral or mixed experiences or challenging interactions, and some preferred not to answer. A significant 90.9% of the survey participants believe the legal system treats people differently based on immigration status or country of origin, pointing to widespread perceptions of inequality. This is further supported by responses regarding whether immigration status affects their willingness to report crimes or incidents; 45.5% stated that it does, with an additional 9.1% noting it initially did but no longer does. Opinions on the fluidity of U.S. immigration policies were mixed, with 27.3% believing they are constantly changing and 45.5% expressing uncertainty. Lastly, media portrayals and stereotypes of immigrants were seen to negatively influence how survey participants felt perceived by others, with 45.5% indicating they "don't know" or "somewhat" felt negatively affected and 36.4% affirming a negative impact.

As I faced the challenge of finding participants to interview, this survey helped me gain an initial understanding of the survey participants' experiences and general perceptions. It also provided a basis for comparing the lived accounts shared by the asylum seekers I interviewed, offering a more nuanced perspective on how immigration status shapes legal consciousness. These findings support my hypothesis that liminal legal status impacts immigrants' sense of belonging and their interactions with legal and social institutions. These findings emphasize the role of legal status in shaping trust, vulnerability, and engagement with authority, laying the foundation to

explore how these factors influence the experiences of individuals with liminal legal status.

Initial Hesitance to Engage with the Law

Both asylum seekers fled their countries due to threats and safety concerns. Sam, upon arriving in the U.S., understood the asylum application process but faced unforeseen challenges brought on by the pandemic, such as USCIS office closures, limited access to affordable legal help, and delays in his application. It took him a year to submit his application, leaving him undocumented during that time. He had to work "under the books," a term that means working without formal documentation, typically paid in cash and without paying taxes or receiving standard employment protections. During this period of no status, he developed a strong fear of law enforcement. He recalled a time when police visited his workplace, saying, "I felt so much anxiety as I thought they were there for me, even though I was not doing anything illegal." This illustrates the common fear asylum seekers experience toward the law.

Carol, in contrast, expressed more trust in the law despite being early in the asylum process. She said, "I do not feel afraid to report crimes if I have to because I trust the laws that are in place in the U.S., and I know I am not doing anything wrong." However, she acknowledged that while she trusts the law, she lives in a Hispanic neighborhood with many asylum seekers who, despite their liminal status, still avoid police interaction, even as victims. Carol's trust was particularly interesting, and when asked if this had always been the case, she shared that her initial months in the U.S. were frightening due to the language barrier and fear of how she'd be perceived. Over time, her fear diminished, a shift similar to Sam's, who also feels more comfortable with the law now. This development in legal consciousness is a gradual process that occurs while navigating the asylum process.

Increased Willingness to Engage

What was common between Sam and Carol's experience, as mentioned above, is that their legal consciousness was influenced by their liminal legal status. After asking about how they initially felt being in the U.S., I shifted to asking how they feel interacting with the law now. Both of them felt the same way, saying that having a social security number and a work permit makes them feel like they are here legally and increases their sense of belonging.

Sam, as a supervisor at his place of employment, has to ensure that if any incidents occur, he must report them to the police. I asked if he felt the same nervousness as before, and he said "absolutely not" because he is authorized to work. I asked Carol the same question about her interaction with law enforcement. While she has not had any instances where she had to engage with them, only seeing them in subways and seeking their help for navigation purposes, she said that if she is a victim of a crime, she has no fear of reporting it.

Both their experiences with proactivity in engaging with law enforcement and making claims for themselves contrasts immensely with that of undocumented

immigrants, as "undocumented status has adverse effects on whether immigrants mobilize the law to claim legal rights and better treatment" (Tenorio, 2024).

Ongoing Vulnerability and Perception Issues

The current political climate, with election campaigns using rhetorical attacks on immigrants as a key element of their platforms, has shaped public discourse and defined political candidacies, especially this past year. As I am focusing on those with liminal legal status, I wanted to learn about their experiences with perception and their thoughts on the potential impacts of the upcoming Trump administration. Both expressed some reservations. Sam stated, "Even though I believe I am not at imminent risk of removal, I do not know what the future holds, which is why I am nervous, but I do not feel entirely fearful right now." Carol had a slightly different perspective. She acknowledged her fear of potential changes in immigration policies while maintaining optimism: "There are immigration laws in place for asylum seekers, and I think nothing adverse will happen to my case."

While neither expressed imminent fear, Sam's body language and hesitancy to answer questions about the new administration suggested some lingering anxiety. When I asked about how asylum seekers are perceived by media and political campaigns, Carol remarked, "yes, there are always a few bad apples within any group, but that does not affect how she feels she gets perceived." Carol did express concern for her children, who have faced discrimination in schools due to language barriers. Similarly, Sam believes asylum seekers are not perceived in the right light and hesitates to mention his immigration status to peers, though when pressed, he simply states that he does not want to.

Overall, both asylum seekers express a nuanced perspective, maintaining trust and faith in immigration laws and law enforcement while simultaneously harboring fears about the future of their uncertain immigration status.

Immigration Attorney's Lens: Navigating the Complexities of Liminal Legal Status

In my research on legal consciousness among people with liminal legal status, the immigration attorney's insights corroborated the perspectives shared by the two asylum seekers I interviewed. They also provided valuable information on individuals with deferred action status, helping to fill the gap in my research, which was limited to asylum seekers. While this data is not directly from individuals in deferred action status, it still proved insightful. It contributed to a broader understanding of the experiences of those with liminal legal status.

The attorney emphasized that while seeking deferred action status and asylum (when eligible) provides significant benefits, particularly in terms of self-advocacy, the transition from undocumented status does not completely eliminate fears associated with one's legal status.

Although they view this transition as a positive shift in legal consciousness, such individuals still generally experience anxiety when interacting with law enforcement. To make their point, they cited a current case in which an asylum seeker sued a Police Department for failing to address her concerns due to her limited English proficiency.

The attorney noted that language barriers can further complicate the ability of people with liminal legal status to make legal claims. However, they generally feel more empowered to do so than when they were undocumented.

The attorney raised a crucial point regarding the initial reluctance of eligible individuals to pursue asylum or deferred action status. This reluctance is primarily due to concerns about sharing their personal information with USCIS. However, they observed that their confidence typically increases once people begin the process. The attorney is also actively preparing for potential policy changes, particularly regarding deferred action status. Their recent work has focused on helping undocumented individuals who experienced labor law violations obtain deferred action status through the DALE program. Drawing parallels to DACA's trajectory, he anticipates similar challenges for DALE and has intensified his efforts to stay informed and connected with other immigration attorneys and nonprofit organizations. He mentions how education is a significant influence on immigrant groups in making claims, explaining that through various workshops, he works to educate people with liminal legal status and those without documentation about their rights. This proactive approach demonstrates that while liminal legal status does empower immigrants to assert their rights and engage more openly with the legal system, there remains an underlying current of hesitation and apprehension.

DISCUSSION

Based on my interviews and observations, I found that asylum seekers and people with deferred action status occupy a unique space between legality and illegality. Their legal consciousness is not static but a dynamic process deeply influenced by their liminal legal status. Even though they do feel some sense of belonging, they remain hopeful for changes in their immigration status. Early experiences mirror those of undocumented immigrants, marked by avoidance of law enforcement and nervousness during interactions with police. However, their apprehension gradually decreases as they progress through the asylum process and gain work permits and social security numbers.

The transformation of legal consciousness is particularly noteworthy. Sam and Carol demonstrated how obtaining documentation, even though temporary, fundamentally altered their perception of safety and interaction with legal institutions. The social security number and work permit became more than just pieces of paper; they represented a form of legitimacy and a preliminary sense of belonging. Yet, this belonging remains tentative due to the constant uncertainty of their immigration status. This point is supported by the immigration attorney's opinion on the confidence and sense of belonging that liminal legal status brings to such individuals. Despite this newfound confidence, their anxiety is persistent, especially concerning potential changes in immigration policies.

The upcoming administration also acts as a constant source of potential disruption. While they value the safety of a sanctuary city like New York and find support in their communities, fears about the future make them hesitant to speak openly about their experiences. Sam's body language and reluctance to discuss the

new administration, as well as Carol's careful optimism, reveal the psychological toll of existing in this liminal space. The immigration attorney's fear for the future and his hard work to help as many clients as possible within the 60 days since the election results were announced demonstrates both the urgency and precarity of liminal legal status in an ever-changing political landscape.

Their narratives highlight a critical aspect of immigrant experiences: the development of legal consciousness is not just a legal process but a deeply personal and emotional journey. The literature on undocumented immigrants suggests that uncertain status often leads to complete avoidance of legal systems. In contrast, asylum seekers like Sam and Carol develop a more nuanced approach, which is a cautious engagement that balances hope with ongoing anxiety. The intersectionality of their experiences is particularly compelling. Language barriers, cultural differences, and the fear of discrimination compound their legal uncertainty. Carol's concern for her children, who have faced discrimination in schools, highlights how liminal legal status affects entire families, extending beyond personal experiences.

Methodologically, this research contributes to our understanding by analyzing how broader political and legal structures are experienced at the personal level. The interviews reveal that legal status is not just a bureaucratic category but a lived experience that profoundly shapes one's sense of self, safety, and possibility. As a researcher, while I am grateful for immigration policies that provide options for liminal legal status, I recognize the need for more stable and permanent pathways to belonging. The volatility of these statuses and the psychological burden they impose highlight the importance of developing immigration policies that can offer more secure routes to full societal inclusion and permanent residency.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I found that people with liminal legal status demonstrate higher levels of trust and engagement with the legal system compared to undocumented immigrants. Through in-depth interviews, it became evident that their legal consciousness undergoes a complex transformation from initial skepticism to cautious engagement with legal institutions. However, this evolution is not linear or complete; their status remains temporary and uncertain, creating an ever-present undercurrent of anxiety. Despite these persistent concerns, participants reported a heightened sense of confidence and belonging, suggesting that even limited legal protections can significantly impact their sense of security and agency, though their legal futures remain precarious.

The findings highlight the nuanced relationship between legal status and legal consciousness, revealing how even partial inclusion in the legal system can foster meaningful changes in how people perceive and interact with legal institutions. This research also illuminates the importance of understanding liminal legal status not just as a legal category but as a lived experience that profoundly shapes individual identity and social participation.

Further research is needed to comprehensively analyze the journey of asylum seekers and deferred action status holders from the inception of their application process through the granting of status, an aspect this study could not fully explore. As

I was unable to interview individuals with deferred action status, this limitation highlights the need for future studies to include their perspectives to gain a more complete understanding of their experiences and interactions with the legal system.

Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking changes in legal consciousness over time would provide valuable insights into how these perspectives evolve. By creating space for research explicitly targeting immigrants within this liminal legal space, this study aims to encourage more comprehensive investigations of this understudied population, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of how legal status shapes their experiences and social integration in contemporary society.

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◆ HONORS 401

ANTI-ABORTION LEGISLATURE'S IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH: THE CASE OF ACCESS TO AN ANTI-RHEUMATIC DRUG

MAISHA AHMED

INTRODUCTION

FOLLOWING THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION to overturn Roe v. Wade, which protected the constitutional right to abortions, states hostile to abortions restricted access to abortions by criminalizing providers, banning abortion procedures, and prohibiting abortive medications, including methotrexate (MTX), the mainstay treatment for rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs). RMDs are a diverse class of disorders that affect the joints, bones, muscles, and connective tissues in the body and result in pain, swelling, and deformities that reduce the quality of life (Kapral et al., 2006). Due to the restrictions on abortive methods, people with RMDs have been unable to obtain their MTX prescriptions for their conditions. Many of those affected took to social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) to share their

experiences and called for their access to MTX to be returned. We conducted a mixed-methods study using social media (SoMe) data to perform two trials of SoMe data collection targeting different tracked terms on X. Posts that publicly referenced the terms "methotrexate" and "methotrexate and abortion" were tracked on the first anniversary of the overturn (June 24, 2023) for six weeks. A total of 1,526 posts were collected in the first trial for "methotrexate" and found that a majority of users (41.1%) posted from the U.S. In the second trial, a total of 103 posts were collected, with a majority of users (78.3%) from the U.S. and female users (76.2%) participating in the discussion. From the qualitative analysis of the posts, a high association between methotrexate and abortion-related topics was found and produced three main themes: (1) Denial of Methotrexate; (2) Denial of Methotrexate Treatment for Women; and (3) Methotrexate as part of Reproductive Healthcare. Our results highlighted that abortion legislation has endangered access to methotrexate, which poses a significant threat to the health of people with RMDs. By understanding the impact the Roe v. Wade overturn has had on the RMD community, we can begin to fully realize the full implications of the precedent set by the overturn.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Introduction
Anti-abortion legislation has been influenced by moral values rooted typically in religious beliefs and has been exploited to employ coercive measures to restrict abortions. The restrictions on abortions have compromised reproductive health outcomes by delaying care, contributing to maternal mortality rates, and exacerbating the barriers for marginalized groups. The ramifications of anti-abortion legislation include the limitation of methotrexate (MTX) used in rheumatology. MTX is a medication that has been widely used to treat rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs), including systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), and psoriatic arthritis (PsA). The effectiveness of MTX has been widely backed by research, making it the first choice in therapeutic strategies including monotherapy, combination therapy, and preventative treatments (Braun, 2011). However, emerging studies have highlighted experiences shared by people with RMDs being unable to obtain their MTX medication due to abortion bans (Negron et al., 2022) and further complications for the RMD community (The Lancet, 2022).

The Influence of Morality on Abortion Legislation
Historically, abortion has been a controversial topic for policymakers in the U.S. (Cappello, 2019) due to the moral ambiguity of the procedure (Medoff, 2016). Anti-abortionists (people who oppose abortion) take on a "pro-life" approach to abortion and believe that abortion is morally wrong because the fetus is a person, deserving of legal protections. This perspective is often influenced by religious teachings, as many religious institutions oppose abortions because it is an offense against God who protects the sanctity of human life (Frohwirth et al., 2018). In particular, the belief that "life begins at conception" is based predominantly in religious teachings (Paulson, 2022) to claim that the fetus has personhood and that abortion at any stage is murder (Hasselbacher et al., 2020). Anti-abortionists rely on

the "sanctity of life" argument toward the unborn fetus to appeal to society's morality regarding the well-being of children and influence legislation regulating abortions. Part of the anti-abortionist influence on legislation is the inconsistencies found in the language which, in effect, broadly restricts abortions. One example of this influence on legislation is in fetal viability laws.

Fetal Viability Laws

Fetal viability is a medical term used to define the point in pregnancy when a fetus can survive independently from the womb and is used to make important medical decisions by healthcare providers (Romanis, 2020). Fetal viability laws co-opt this concept to assign a gestational age in pregnancy as the point of fetal viability and ban abortions after this point (Peterfly, 1995). Most fetal viability laws disregard the medical criteria of fetal viability and assign an earlier gestational age as viable than what is medically accepted (Romanis, 2020). One example of states assigning earlier gestational ages as points of fetal viability is found in fetal heartbeat laws. Fetal heartbeat laws were first proposed in 2011 in Ohio (Evans & Narasimhan, 2020) and quickly spread to other states such as Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana (Romanis, 2020). These laws assign fetal viability at the point when the fetal heartbeat can be detected at 6-8 weeks from conception and ban abortions after this point with some exceptions for medical emergencies (Romanis, 2020). In Texas, Senate Bill 8 (SB8) exists as an extreme example of fetal heartbeat laws (Zielinski, 2022) which bans abortions after the fetal heartbeat can be detected without any exceptions for medical emergencies, rapes, or incest (Damante & Jones, 2023). Embedded within SB8 is a "vigilante" law (Solis, 2021) that incentivizes private citizens to report to the state and sue healthcare providers suspected of performing an abortion for $10,000 (Anderson et al., 2023; Bowman, 2022). The shortcoming of fetal viability laws is the reliance on inconsistent definitions of viability, which results in multiple states having fluctuating fetal viability points. It should be noted that some states rely on implicit definitions of fetal viability, allowing them to arbitrarily extend the viability threshold to allow for a wider range of abortion restrictions. It is especially misleading since viability is also dependent on individual pregnancies and cannot be held constant for every pregnancy. This creates legal confusion across states and prioritizes the fetus's potential for life over the health of the pregnant individual. Fetal viability laws force medical professionals to over-comply with the law to avoid criminal consequences undermining the care provided for pregnant individuals.

By assigning fetal viability at earlier gestational ages, legislators give the fetus personhood which opens up other legal and medical consequences. Personhood assigned to the fetus allows interpretations of abortion as homicide and fetuses as victims of homicide (Romanis, 2020). This is a particularly concerning consequence of the inconsistencies in anti-abortion legislation because abortion definitions vary across states, so medical procedures that can potentially harm the fetus, including intact dilation and extraction (Jones & Weitz, 2009), cesarean section, or induction of labor, can be classified as abortions and result in criminal consequences for providers performing the procedure (Heuser et al., 2023). It is also concerning for pregnant individuals as medically, an abortion is indistinguishable from a miscarriage so

miscarriages can be criminally prosecuted for an abortion (Baldwin, 2022; Clayton et al., 2023), which has been the reality for many living in hostile states already (Dirks, 2022). From 2016 to 2022 alone, there have been at least 1,300 cases of pregnant individuals criminally investigated for pregnancy loss, and that number is only expected to rise following the Roe v. Wade overturn (Hurtado et al., 2022). The inconsistencies of anti-abortion legislation are exploited by states to enforce stringent restrictions on abortions and consequences for abortions. In addition to inconsistent legislation, states implement policies that indirectly restrict abortions by setting requirements on protocols associated with abortions.

Indirect Strategies for Abortion Restrictions

State-reporting requirements for abortion mandate healthcare providers report patients' information for abortion procedures performed or self-managed abortions. The state can ask for patients' demographic information such as age, race, ethnicity, and marital status (Saul, 1998). A comprehensive quantitative study on the impact of state reporting requirements on reproductive health outcomes has yet to be conducted; however, the Guttmacher Institute has yielded valuable insights into how anti-abortionists have exploited state reporting requirements to undermine access to abortion services. The institute has highlighted how policymakers passed legislation that asks invasive questions about the patient's circumstances around their pregnancy (Guttmacher Institute, 2023). This legislation allows the state to inquire whether the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest, the patient's mental state, and the reason for the abortion. State reporting requirements perpetuate feelings of shame and distress within patients and deter them from seeking out abortions (Turan & Budhwani, 2021). There is a real concern among abortion seekers that their information will be used against them in criminal investigations, which occurs more frequently in restrictive states (Roberts et al., 2023). Information collected from state reporting on abortions was used against healthcare providers in cases where there was suspected non-compliance with the reporting requirements (Dreweke, 2015). This scrutiny is evident in Oklahoma's reporting requirements, which demand providers affirm multiple times that they have complied with the state's requirements (Guttmacher Institute, 2023). By implementing these policies, restrictive states can heavily delay and discourage abortions as the labor required to meet the requirements by both abortion providers and seekers is daunting. A similar tactic is used in targeted regulation of abortion providers (TRAP) laws, which place burdensome regulations on abortion providers that are beyond their means to comply with.

TRAP laws are a term used to collectively refer to laws that regulate abortion clinics based on building regulations, location requirements, and medical standards (Austin & Harper, 2022). The first model of TRAP laws was passed in Texas in 2013 but grew in popularity among other restrictive states and by 2016, most states had their own form of TRAP laws (Mercier et al., 2017). Some common regulations imposed on clinics by TRAP laws require that clinics be within a certain distance of hospitals, have admitting privileges to other hospitals, and function at the same standard as ambulatory surgical centers (Austin & Harper, 2022; Guttmacher Institute, 2023). Legislators justify TRAP laws by claiming that their requirements maintain a

safe space for abortions and protect women's health (Austin & Harper, 2022). This is directly contradicted by evidence that abortion is an exceedingly safe procedure that doesn't require a high level of maintenance. The regulations are also exceedingly difficult for clinics to comply with financially or logically (Austin & Harper, 2022), requiring providers to undergo additional training or make changes to the physical location of the clinics. As such, the requirements set by TRAP laws are unnecessary and only serve to create barriers to accessing abortions. Clinics found to be in non-compliance with TRAP laws are forced to close down (Austin & Harper, 2018), limiting the number of clinics available to provide a space for safe abortions accessible to abortion seekers (Grossman et al., 2014; Mercier et al., 2017).

The Primary Impact of Anti-abortion Legislation

Existing literature has well established that abortion restrictions have negative outcomes on reproductive health and numerous studies have examined the outcome of specific legislation on reproductive health. In one study by Jerman et al. (2017), the impact of TRAP laws on women's health was determined by conducting a systematic literature review and interviews of women seeking abortion services in Michigan and New Mexico. It exemplifies similar methods used in other studies examining the impact of abortion restrictions on reproductive health. This study found that TRAP laws reduced healthcare availability and delayed care for individuals seeking care (Jerman et al., 2017). The forced closure of clinics caused by TRAP laws resulted in a decline in the number of healthcare providers available. The withdrawal of healthcare providers meant that women seeking abortion services had to travel outside of their state for care, incurring additional travel and accommodation costs, lost wages, and childcare expenses (Jerman et al., 2017). Similar experiences have been reported in other studies (Smith et al., 2017; Barr-Walker et al. 2019) and have additionally described how some women were forced to travel for abortion services while actively suffering from medical complications from pregnancy and labor (Keegan et al., 2023).

Other literature has explored further the detrimental health outcomes for pregnant individuals due to abortion restrictions. Restricting abortions has been associated with increased maternal mortality rates (Addante et al., 2021), with the rate predicted to increase by at least 24% following the Roe v. Wade overturn (Mueksch, 2022; Surana, 2023). This rate doubles for Black pregnant individuals who are three times more likely to die from pregnancy complications (Mueksch, 2022; The Lancet, 2023) than their White counterparts (Cineas, 2022; Coates et al., 2023; Dumas et al., 2020). The criminalization of abortions has created anxiety among healthcare providers (de Londras et al., 2022; Simmons-Duffins, 2022) who delay care for their patients even when they have reached life-threatening status (Klibanoff, 2022; Schwartz, 2022). In restrictive states, reduced healthcare availability has resulted in maternity care deserts, with 36% of counties in the country lacking adequate facilities (Treisman, 2022) to care for the pregnant population (Cineas, 2022). The adverse effects of abortion restrictions on reproductive health are well documented and the Roe v. Wade overturn is only expected to intensify these outcomes.

The Impact Outside of Reproductive Health

Despite the extensive literature on the impact on reproductive health by abortion restrictions, emerging studies have reported on the ramifications anti-abortion legislation has had on other types of healthcare through the regulation of medications (Mahase, 2022). Most abortions performed in the U.S. are medication abortions where a patient receives a treatment plan consisting of the "abortion pill," mifepristone, and misoprostol (Beaman et al., 2020). Since most abortions use abortive medications, anti-abortion legislation has targeted medications that can be classified as abortive medications (The Lancet, 2023). This includes mifepristone and misoprostol, and other known teratogens (agents that cause fetal abnormality), including mycophenolate mofetil (MMF), cyclophosphamide, and methotrexate (MTX) (The Lancet, 2023), despite the fact that these medications are essential in the treatment of chronic illnesses (Hunter, 2022). These medications are subject to potential restrictions by anti-abortion legislation that passed after the overturn (The Lancet, 2023; Zernike, 2022). In the case of MTX, evidence has shown that it has been restricted in anti-abortion states even though it is a standard treatment for rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs).

MTX is a first-choice medication for RMDs due to its effectiveness in treating diseases at low doses (The Lancet, 2023) and minimal side effects compared to other treatments (Wang et al., 2018). MTX is part of a class of biologic disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (bDMARDs) used in the treatment of inflammatory arthritis diseases (Benjamin et al., 2023). MTX received approval as a therapy for rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic autoimmune inflammatory disorder that affects 0.6% of adults in the U.S. (Helmick et al., 2008), in 1988 (Braun, 2011) and since its approval, numerous research studies have proven MTX as an evidence-based standard of treatment for RA and other inflammatory diseases (Cronstein & Aune, 2020).

Methotrexate is a first-choice treatment for RA due to its immunosuppressive prop-erties, which reduce the overactive immune system in RA and manage its symptoms (Tanaka 2022). The immuno-suppressive effect of MTX is associated with its role as a folate antagonist (Wessels et al., 2008). MTX structurally resembles folic acid, a form of folate, and competes with it to bind to the enzyme dihydrofolate (DHFR), which is essential to the synthesis of tetra-hydrofolate (THF) used in cellular processes (Llyod et al., 1999). By inhibiting DHFR, MTX reduces the amount of THF available for
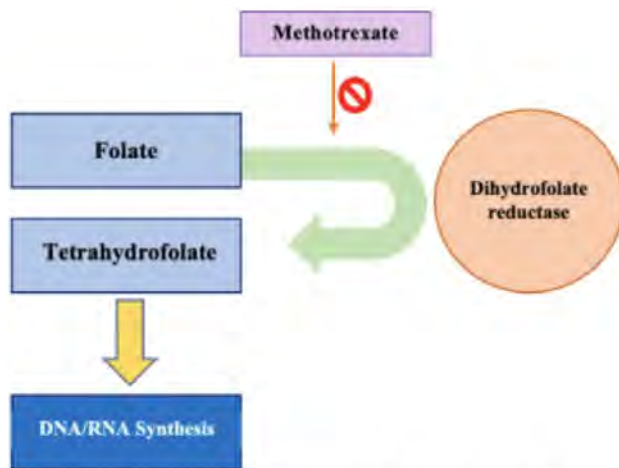

Figure 1. Methotrexate inhibits dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR).
Note. Adapted from *ToxCard: Methotrexate* [Image] by Kastner, M. (2021), emDOCS, http://www.emdocs.net/toxcard-methotrexate/

the synthesis of DNA, which is necessary for cell proliferation (shown in **Figure 1**). MTX suppresses this process in lymphocytes including T-cells (Freeman et al., 2022), resulting in its immunosuppressive effect and explains its effectiveness (Llyod et al., 1999).

The administration of MTX is typically done at a low oral dose and has been clinically proven to be effective (Franova et al., 2016), but patients have reported adverse side effects with the oral administration (Goodman et al., 2014). The adverse side effects of MTX include hepatotoxicity, bone marrow toxicity, and gastrointestinal side effects, which can also be attributed to its mechanism as a folate antagonist leading to an anti-proliferative effect (Wessels et al., 2008) and depletion of folate (Franova et al., 2016). However, these side effects can be minimized with the supplementation of folic acid, as it provides additional folic acid to support the cellular processes that MTX disrupts (Friedman & Cronstein, 2020). Recent clinical research has highlighted a subcutaneous injection of MTX as a beneficial alternative for patients intolerant to oral MTX before considering more potent bDMARDs (Tanaka 2022). The clinical effectiveness of MTX and its variety in administration have been established, but the appeal of MTX as a cornerstone treatment is not just based on these factors. MTX is also affordable, making it an accessible medication for people coming from low-income backgrounds, marginalized communities, or without healthcare (Bermas, 2023).

However, at higher concentrations, MTX can function as an abortifacient medication by inhibiting embryonic growth during pregnancy (Bermas, 2023; The Lancet, 2023). This can be attributed to MTX mechanisms as a folate antagonist resulting in folic acid deficiency, which is crucial to embryonic development (Llyod et al., 1999). Research has also shown that folic acid deficiency can cause fetal abnormalities that lead the body to terminate the pregnancy. MTX exposure during critical points in pregnancy can cause abortions and in one study, it was found that a high dose of MTX before 8 weeks of gestation resulted in an abortion in 95% of cases (Llyod et al., 1999). Despite the evidence of MTX's capacity as an abortive medication, most healthcare providers do not prescribe MTX for medication abortions. However, in light of the recent abortion restrictions, healthcare providers have been hesitant to fill out MTX prescriptions in states criminalizing abortions (The Lancet, 2023). Despite the U.S. Department of Health stating that healthcare providers are to continue to prescribe MTX within their medical judgment (Bermas, 2023), reports from news outlets and social media describe healthcare providers refusing to fill out MTX prescriptions or write them for their patients (Millhiser, 2022). Without MTX, patients with RMDs will have to delay their treatment or turn to other ineffective treatments to manage their symptoms (Bermas, 2023). The precedent shown with MTX also means that other medications like MMF and cyclophosphamide used for the treatment of SLE nephritis can face the same challenges.

Although there is limited quantitative data available on the impact of MTX restrictions, Negron et al. (2023) performed a mixed-methods study using social media analysis of X posts to understand the short-term implications the overturn had on the RMD community. Social media analysis provides valuable insights into the anecdotal experiences of users and acts as a platform for activism, allowing people to

express their opinions in real time alongside the issues they are facing. In Negron et al. (2023), the study found that the Supreme Court ruling resulted in the denial of MTX for people with RMDs who shared their experiences on Twitter. Healthcare providers also took to Twitter to express their concerns for their patients due to the ruling restricting MTX (Negron et al., 2023). It also discussed further implications of the ruling on healthcare disparities where reproductive-aged women could face the loss of MTX as a treatment and calls for action for the RMDs community (Negron et al., 2023). In this study, our objective is to expand on the understanding of the short-term implications in Negron et al. (2023) and explore the long-term implications of the overturn on the RMD community by utilizing a similar mixed-methods study of social media analysis of X posts on the first anniversary of the overturn (June 24, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

1. Study Design

In this observational mixed-methods study (Abbasi-Perez et al., 2023; Swanson et al., 2023), we focused on searching X posts made on the first anniversary of the Roe v. Wade overturn (June 24th, 2022) referencing the drug, methotrexate (MTX). Two trials of data collection were performed to capture specific metrics associated with the posts. Data was collected for six weeks, spanning from Saturday, June 24th, to Saturday, July 29th, 2023. Posts were included in the study in that they (1) were posted from a public account; (2) in English; and (3) were posted from Saturday, June 24th, to Saturday, July 29th, 2023.

2. Data Collection

The social media data was collected from X using the historical data tool from a third-party social media analytics platform, Keyhole. In the first trial, a global search for any posts referencing the tracked term "methotrexate" anywhere within the post such as in the actual text of the post, hashtags, or retweets, was performed to capture a broad array of posts. In the second trial, a global search for any posts referencing the tracked terms "methotrexate" and "abortion" anywhere within the post such as in the actual text of the post, hashtags, or retweets, was performed to capture posts referencing methotrexate used in the context of or associated with abortion.

3. Content Analysis of Social Media Data

For quantitative analysis of the metrics obtained for the accounts, Keyhole provided usage metrics of accounts using the tracked terms, participation with the tracked terms based on the region, and reach and impressions of posts associated with the tracked terms. The metrics provided were used to generate representations of the usage for the sex associated with the account making the post with the tracked term and type of posts made. A heat map was generated to represent the participation of users by state.

To perform a qualitative analysis of the content from the social media data collected, the text from posts collected from both trials was run through two content analysis software tools, Nvivo (Zamawe, 2015) and Leximancer (Ward et al., 2014), to generate word-frequency maps and concept maps to explore how often the concepts associated with the tracked terms in the posts appear and their relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 2. Sex associated with users' accounts.

A

"Methotrexate"

51.50%

48.50%

▪ F ▪ M

B

"Methotrexate" and "Abortion"

23.80%

76.20%

▪ F ▪ M
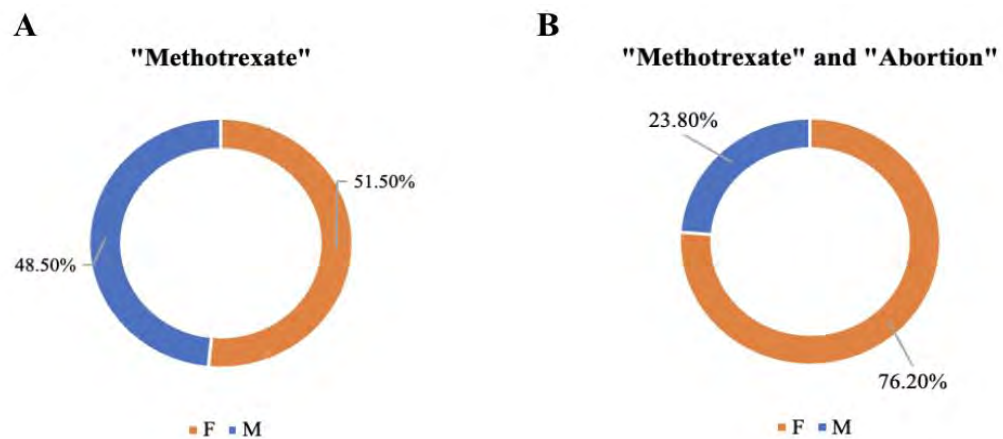
Figure 3. Types of posts made.

A

"Methotrexate"

24%

44%

32%

▪ Original Post ▪ Reply ▪ ReTweet

B

"Methotrexate" and "Abortion"

25%

16%

59%

▪ Original Post ▪ Reply ▪ ReTweet

Figure 4. Heat map of posts with the tracked term, showing the participation as a percentage (%) of posts by users per state.

Table 1. State Classification Based on Abortion Legislation.

Classification	States
Restrictive Laws for Medication Abortions	Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas
Non-restrictive or Non-restrictive laws around Medication Abortions	Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin

Note. State Classification Data is from the Guttmacher Institute (2023).

Figure 5. Word Frequency Map.

Figure 6. Concept Map.

Theme	Example Posts	
	"Methotrexate"	**"Methotrexate" and "Abortion"**
Denial of MTX Treatment	It happens a LOT. Opioids, methotrexate for women, I have had colleagues tell me that scripts for birth control were rejected. And then the pharmacist refuses to give the script back so the patient can't take it elsewhere. Totally legal to do this in many states	I am from MT but live in KS where an overwhelming number voted to keep abortion legal. Our Atty Gen is now suing pharmacies for dispensing methotrexate. So much for state's right. WE spoke and were ignored. We need a federal solution.
Denial of MTX Treatment for Women	It's not just pain medication either. Post menopausal women and juveniles with arthritis and lupus patients have been denied methotrexate, sometimes because of an individual pharmacist's "beliefs."	No Angie, just no. That is a stupid statement. If a pharmacist or physician denies methotrexate due to abortion laws to someone who doesn't have a uterus or who isn't yet menstruating, they are making a political statement at the expense of the patient. They should be punished.
Methotrexate as part of Reproductive Healthcare	Life News is leaving out the part where they want to ban all abortion pills, all procedural abortions, and probably even methotrexate for ectopic pregnancies—forcing people to have a fallopian tube removed as first line treatment. Unserious people	And the alternative to an ectopic pregnancy is abortion via methotrexate or salpingectomy. The surgery hinders fertility. The drug does not.

Table 2. Direct Quotations from Users by Main Themes

Performance Data Analysis

In this study, two data collection trials were performed with the tracked term, "methotrexate," to account for people's experiences with methotrexate from June 24, 2023, to July 29, 2023. However, in the second trial, an additional tracked term, "abortion," was included to collect specific metrics associated with the discussion of methotrexate in the posts.

For the first trial tracking "methotrexate," a total of 1,526 posts were collected with an even distribution of female users (51.5%) to male users (48.5%) weighing in on the discussion, as shown in **Figure 2.A**. Retweets occurred more frequently (44%) than original posts (32%) and replies (24%), as shown in **Figure 3.A,** representing the post types. The high percentage of retweets reflects its function as a way to express solidarity and enhance the topic's visibility through social media activism (Simpson, 2018). Users participated from 75 countries, however, a majority of the posts came from the United States (41.1%), and focus was placed on the distribution of posts across states given that the overturn affects those primarily in the U.S., as represented by the heat map shown in **Figure 4.A**. Five states made up 37.5% of posts in order: Texas (12.9%), New York (8.6%), California (7.1%), Oregon (4.6%), and Massachusetts (4.3%).

For the second trial tracking "methotrexate" and "abortion" within the same posts, a smaller volume of posts was collected at 103 posts with a higher distribution of female users (76.2%) to male users (23.8%) weighing in on the discussion, shown in **Figure 2.B**. The higher percentage of female users is expected as abortion is primarily a women's health issue and is more likely to affect women, prompting them to be more active in discussions about abortions. Unlike the first trial, replies occurred more frequently (59%) than original posts (16%) and retweets (25%), as shown in **Figure 3.B**. The higher percentage of replies is interesting because it reflects a more active line of communication among users that encourages social sharing of experiences which can lead to higher engagement with the posts and their topics (Goldenberg et al., 2018). Users participated from 6 countries, however, a majority of the posts came from the United States (78.3%) with three states, Texas (16.1%), California (12.9%), and Virginia (9.7%), making up 38.7% of posts discussing both terms, as shown in **Figure 4.B**. The higher participation from the U.S., in comparison to other countries, is also expected as abortion has been a mainstream topic in the U.S. following the overturn of Roe v. Wade.

One detail to highlight from the results of the users' geographical origins is that Texas had the highest percentage of posts referencing either tracked terms in both trials. This high participation from Texas residents on the topic of methotrexate and its association with abortion can be attributed to the fact that following the Roe v. Wade overturn, Texas implemented measures in its anti-abortion legislation that directly banned the use of abortion-inducing medications and specifically listed methotrexate as part of the ban (Huff, 2022; Mendez, 2022). The high participation on social media between both trials reflects the possibility that Texas residents are expressing their frustration with the legislation that is affecting their healthcare and

forming solidarity through their shared experiences online. Texas is one of fourteen states (Guttmacher Institute, 2023) to have implemented legislation that targets medication abortions as part of its regulations on abortions (see **Table 1** for other states), and the impact of this legislation has already had devastating effects on the residents of Texas, is likely to continue as they are denied their medication.

Aside from the user metrics, another important factor to consider is the reach and impressions of the posts for the tracked terms. The "reach" refers to the number of unique users who can see the posts made while "impressions" refers to the total number of views the post had. Public content generated using the search term "methotrexate" alone reached approximately 6 million unique users on X and had over 7 million impressions. For "methotrexate" and "abortion," over 164,000 unique users were reached with over 200,000 impressions overall. The relatively high value of the reach and impressions compared to the post volume demonstrates that these discussions were significant.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In this study, a systematic review of the posts collected from both trials was performed using content analysis tools, Nvivo and Leximancer, to generate representations of common concepts found between the posts. In both trials, word frequency maps (see **Figure 5**) were created to determine common terms associated with the tracked keywords for each trial. Concept maps (see **Figure 6**) were also generated to show important concepts associated with the keywords in the conversations. These maps were utilized alongside a qualitative analysis of the posts to produce three main themes: (1) Denial of Methotrexate Treatment; (2) Denial of Methotrexate Treatment for Women; and (3) Methotrexate as part of Reproductive Healthcare (see **Table 2**).

The word frequency map generated for each trial shows the highest frequencies of words that came up alongside the tracked terms. In the first trial for "methotrexate," the words with the highest frequency are shown closest to methotrexate itself (see **Figure 5.A**), and the words, "abortion" and "ectopic," demonstrate a high association with methotrexate. Similarly, in the second trial for the tracked terms, "methotrexate" and "abortion," the words, "methotrexate" and "abortion" had the highest frequencies (see **Figure 5.B**) which is expected given that the posts were collected specifically for those terms. There is a high association of abortion-related terms in the first trial despite not tracking "abortion" like in the second trial, where a high association would be expected. Comparing the word maps, although the frequency of abortion-related terms in the second trial is higher as expected, the high frequency in the first trial shows the relationship between methotrexate and abortion in conversations carried out on the X social media platform.

The concept maps generated for each trial show important concepts mapped alongside the tracked terms. In the first trial, some concepts mapped alongside the tracked term "methotrexate" referenced cancer, arthritis, and MTX's role as a clinical treatment (see **Figure 6.A**) which suggests that in the conversation, there is a concern about the need for methotrexate for patients and clinical use. Within the concept map for the first trial, abortion is not a separate concept but abortion-related terms are found

within the methotrexate concept along the periphery. This indicates that abortion is not a central concept in the posts collected in the first trial because people are not using it for abortion but rather for ectopic pregnancy and refer to it due to abortion legislation impacting access to methotrexate. The concept map for the second trial (see **Figure 6.B**) shows abortion and abortion-related concepts as central concepts emerging from the conversations in the posts. Within the methotrexate concept, there are multiple abortion-related terms shown in proximity with it, indicating that the posts collected in the second trial are referring to methotrexate in its capacity as an abortion-inducing drug more frequently which is expected. In the abortion concept bubble, Roe v. Wade appears as part of the concept demonstrating that conversations are also referring to Roe v. Wade, suggesting that people are recognizing the role of the overturn in the larger conversation about methotrexate. An interesting detail about the concept map for the second trial was "cvspharmacy" (CVS Pharmacy) mapping as a central concept within the map. The "cvspharmacy" concept refers to posts where CVS pharmacy was specifically involved by users, who were calling on its role in dispensing the medication and its denial of MTX. Within this concept, posts were also referencing state-level abortion bans in states like Texas affecting the operations of pharmacies, linking back to the high participation of posts collected in both trials from Texas.

A qualitative review of the posts collected in either trial was also performed and produced three main themes: (1) Denial of Methotrexate; (2) Denial of Methotrexate Treatment for Women; and (3) Methotrexate as part of Reproductive Healthcare (see **Table 2** for example posts). The first theme, Denial of Methotrexate Treatment, was generated from posts where users had highlighted that individuals were denied their methotrexate treatment, with some posts specifying that the denial was the result of state abortion legislation. The second theme, Denial of Methotrexate Treatment for Women, is similar to the first theme but was categorized separately since it affected women specifically, highlighting the disproportionate impact legislation has had on women even outside of reproductive healthcare. The third, Methotrexate as part of Reproductive Healthcare, refers to posts where users had discussed methotrexate's role as a treatment for ectopic pregnancy and advocated for its use in reproductive health. These themes were produced from the qualitative review of the posts collected in both trials and supported by the associations found in the maps generated from the content analysis.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Supreme Court's ruling to overturn Roe v. Wade had devastating consequences for public health as states passed abortion legislation that limits access to MTX, endangering the health of the RMDs community. The decision to overturn Roe v. Wade was politically motivated and created over-compliance through the fear of the repercussions, causing healthcare providers to deny individuals their MTX treatment within days of the decision. The denial of MTX has continued in the year following the decision, offering no reprieve for people suffering from RMDs as they take to social media to share their experiences. Our results follow through with the initial experiences shared by people with RMDs in the immediate aftermath of the

Supreme Court decision and validate predictions that women would face conditional access to MTX due to scrutiny produced by abortion legislation. This study offers an extended snapshot of the long-term implications of the Roe v. Wade overturn on methotrexate access for people with RMDs.

Future directions for this study should focus on comparing the state-by-state level impact of abortion legislation on methotrexate access for people with RMDs. A targeted analysis of posts associated with states compared to other states with different restriction legislation can offer more insight into the specific effects of the state legislation. Future research should also expand to other social media platforms such as Facebook (FB) to look at other user metrics and better understand how reduced access to medications like MTX can have affected people. Expanding on the experiences of people affected by the Roe v. Wade overturn can provide an important understanding of its impact on public health.

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♦ GENDER STUDIES 401

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG QUEER PEOPLE OF COLOR IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract: This research delves into the intricacies of intimate relationships among queer people of color, a demographic whose experiences have only recently gained recognition. Legal recognition of same-sex marriage only occurred in the past decade, and there is a pressing need to understand the complexities of queer relationships, particularly among people of color. Drawing upon intersectionality theory, this study aims to examine how the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and culture influences the dynamics of relationships among queer people of color. Through a deductive approach and qualitative methods such as phenomenology, surveys, and interviews, the proposed research would explore the impact of cultural and familial expectations of young adult queer couples aged 18-26. Building on existing literature, the study investigates minority stress, concealment motivation, and social stigmas, offering insights into relationship satisfaction and resilience. The findings aim to foster empathy, understanding, and advocacy for queer people of color in committed relationships, informing the development of tailored interventions and support services.

INTRODUCTION

MY RESEARCH AIMS TO TAKE A DEEPER LOOK into the intimate relationships that queer people of color experience. This experience is one that has only recently been more widely accepted and acknowledged. The legal marriage between two people of the same sex was only made legal within the past ten years, leaving a lot of room for research and study. We are only beginning to learn about the complexities of queer relationships and how they might be impacted by societal standards regarding gender, intimacy, and sexuality that have been in place for centuries (Hammack & Hughes, 2019). My study will not only aim to look at the complexities that are within queer relationships but looking specifically at queer people of color who are in relationships with each other.

I will apply the theoretical framework of intersectionality as it plays a role for queer people of color where their gender, sexuality, race, and culture play a significant role in their identity and how they interact with others romantically. Queer relationships where both individuals are white will not face the more dimensional dilemmas that relationships including two queer people of color will face. The implications of being a queer person of color in and of itself means likely going against what culture tells us to, and will likely mean some level of feeling out of place or being ostracized (Pepping et al., 2019). Being queer in families who are racial minorities often means having to choose between living as one's families expect them to, or being true to oneself and seeking queer spaces and relationships (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). My research aims to study how two people who came from this background and chose to pursue queer relationships feel that their own relationship is impacted (if at all) by external factors, namely cultural and familial expectations. I want to study the young adult demographics (ages 18-26) who are most likely going to still be in the process of adjusting to these societal expectations potentially playing a role in how they interact with their partner and their relationship as a whole.

Literature Review

There have been many researchers who have explored relationships among queer individuals. They typically take a comparative analysis to compare heterosexual relationships in order to create context for the research they're conducting. One significant research theory that is often referenced is minority stress theory, which refers to the additional stressors in socially marginalized groups that stem from social discrimination and stigmatization against their community (Pepping et al., 2019). In the case of same-sex couples, minority stress is referring to these additional stressors and challenges that individuals in non-heterosexual relationships may experience due to their sexual orientation. This stress comes from a lack of enough, or any, representation from their environment of their relationships and sexual orientation (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013).

A key aspect of minority stress among same-sex couples is concealment motivation. Concealment motivation is the intentional hiding of one's sexual orientation, or relationship, due to the fear of discrimination (Pepping et al., 2019). Pepping et al. focused their research on concealment motivation and concluded that

those who had higher motivation to conceal their same-sex relationship were more likely to report lower levels of relationship satisfaction (2019). They found that hiding one's sexual orientation and/or relationship led to increased stress within the relationship. This was a significant finding for my research because I am aiming to study people who likely come from cultures that increase the motivation for them to conceal their queer identity. In most racial minority communities' cultures, there are expectations of one based on gender. Gender often ties into what is expected of people from their families and culture in terms of relationships creating difficulties if one desires relationships outside of the expected.

Oscar Patrón provides the field with the framework of *precarious familismo* (2021). *Precarious familismo* builds off of *familismo,* which is the idea that strong loyalty is required among family members as a core value in Latinx culture. *Precarious familismo* is the idea that there are in fact exceptions to this rule that happen all the time and that exception is queer Latinx people who get ostracized for being open about their queerness. Here, we see an instance where someone who is queer and Latinx can face circumstances where being out results in rejection, and thus, a desire to conceal part of one's identity, which, as we learned from Pepping et al. can cause lower relationship satisfaction.

Authors Frost and LeBlanc focus their efforts directly on learning how stigmas can impact relationship satisfaction among same-sex couples (2021). They conducted a longitudinal study and surveyed couples one year apart. They were able to find a link between social stigma and relationship quality among these same-sex couples. The researchers found that if, within the year between surveys, the couple faced increased experiences of social homophobic stigmas, then the couples faced, "exacerbated differences between actual and ideal levels of closeness, which were in turn associated with diminished relationship quality" (Frost & LeBlanc, 2021). With their findings, we are able to conclude that societal stigmas are enough to create hardships for partners. This research focused on one aspect of the relationship- "closeness" and how the individuals and their partners defined the levels of closeness between them, both in actuality and in an ideal thought. This barrier is something that straight couples don't have to face in the context of their sexual orientation as we have not, as a society, deemed heterosexual relationships to be "odd".

On the other hand, there are studies where the researchers set out to find evidence that disproves the idea that same-sex relationships are perhaps more dysfunctional due to the research that indicates they have more hardships at hand. In one study, Perales & Baxter found that relationship quality was as high as in heterosexual couples (2018). Their results provide evidence, " to combat deep-rooted and erroneous social perceptions of same-sex relationships being conflictual, unhappy, and dysfunctional" (Perales & Baxter, 2018). Something notable in this research, which was conducted in the UK and Australia, is that 89% of the subjects were white, while 7% were Asian, 2% were Black and 2% were mixed race. This is important to take note of, as the people who were in this study were almost all not part of a racial minority, and were not facing the intersectional experience that I aim to research. We cannot know how these demographics may have impacted the results, and if having a more diverse makeup of subjects might have changed the results.

People of color have unique experiences with their identities and their relationship with others, namely their families.

Bi/plurisexual Latinx folks feel that they cannot express themselves for fear of not being included in the collective family, and thus ruminate on potential negative reactions from family members and even fear physical violence (Abreu et al., 2023). Queer Middle Eastern folks face the stress of feeling invisibility due to extreme lack of representation, and feelings that it is taboo to even discuss sexuality among family members (Ikizler & Szymanski, 2014). African American gay and bisexual men who don't feel positive self-attitudes regarding their sexuality were less likely to value themselves, protect their health and experience high levels of personal contentment (Crawford et al., 2002). All of these offer examples of how sexuality interacts with race to create unique experiences for queer people of color where they face unique barriers and challenges. I identify the gap in research regarding queer couples to be in researching queer couples of color. Although researchers have begun exploring this phenomenon, I aim to further explore this field and study what it truly means to be a queer person of color in a relationship. This research is important to those who belong to the community in order to better equip them with the tools necessary to have meaningful committed and satisfying relationships.

Purpose of Study

The research that I am aiming to conduct would serve the educational purpose of offering people the knowledge that queer folks of color go through unique experiences that potentially create hindrances that others don't experience. Ideally, this will offer a sense of community among queer people of color in knowing that they are not alone in any apprehensions that arise while seeking, and living in, committed relationships. I also hope that this research would encourage others to provide methods to work through the issues that are unique to queer POC relationships. This is of course with the assumption that my research proves that there are unique challenges that queer POC relationships face. Even if my research does not accomplish this, it will be useful information to be added to the growing pool of knowledge regarding queer folks who are in racial minority communities.

Additionally, the outcome of my study will be able to dictate what resources are available to queer folks of color and whether we, as a larger community and society, are doing enough to support those who may need additional resources whether it is community support programs, specific therapies, educational workshops, or online platform services. By shedding light on the unique challenges faced by queer people of color in committed relationships, this research aims to inspire greater empathy, understanding, and advocacy within broader society. Through increased awareness and education, we can create and grow a more inclusive and supportive environment that acknowledges and respects the intersectional identities of queer individuals of color.

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach I plan to use here is iterative and deductive. Firstly, I want to use iterative because I want to give myself the flexibility to learn as

I go if this is what my research requires. For example, I may have to adjust my survey questions, operational definitions, sample sizes, or my research question based on feedback, results, research, or other factors that may need me to adjust. By doing so, my research will be the most optimized it can be. Additionally, it can allow me to see any flaws or inconsistencies with my research plan that may not be apparent to me before I begin playing out these several stages of research. Using a deductive research approach, I want to begin with the theory that minority stress causes additional stressors in queer relationships of color that aren't apparent in heterosexual couples (both people of color and not). I want to test this hypothesis and use the data that I gather to tell me whether this hypothesis, or theory, is supported or not when analyzing the research results.

Additionally, I will be using phenomenology, which is qualitative in nature. This will allow me to study the collective experience of a specific group of people- queer people of color who are in committed relationships with each other- and their lived experiences. I will specifically be using surveys to conduct a comparative analysis where I can directly compare how different couples (queer non-POC, queer POC, heterosexual POC, and heterosexual non-POC). I will ask questions regarding their experience being in a committed relationship with someone else, regarding their identity, how they view their familial and societal standards affect their perspectives on their partners and relationships, and more. I will ask mostly open-ended questions, keep the anonymity of the subjects, and include some supporting Likert scale questions to provide me with a quantitative set of supporting data to my main qualitative set of data. The combination of these research methods will allow me to fully grasp the experiences of racial minority queer relationships.

Key Research Questions and Subquestions

The final key research questions that I am to prove are as follows: How do cultural and familial expectations impact the dynamics of queer relationships among young adults (ages 18-26) who identify as queer people of color and are in relationships with each other? How do the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and culture shape the experiences and perceptions within these relationships? These questions will allow me to really delve into the interplay between cultural and familial expectations and the dynamics of queer relationships among young adults who identify as queer people of color. By asking and aiming to answer these questions, I aim to support a richer discussion in understanding of the lived experiences of queer people of color in relationships and inform the development of targeted interventions and support services that address their unique needs and challenges.

METHODS
Data Sources, Sample and Recruitment Strategies

In order to conduct my study, which has specific requirements for who I want to interview and obtain data from, the best type of sampling for me to conduct is quota sampling. Quota sampling consists of intentionally seeking out participants based on their certain characteristics (Simkus, 2023). In this case, I would be specifically

choosing individuals who are in relationships, and looking at their race, and whether or not the individuals both identify as queer in the relationship. Quota sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, would provide me with the exact population of subjects I would need for this study. The advantages of this sampling will inevitably be convenience as I am going directly to the group of people I require for this, instead of having to go through significantly larger samples of individuals to identify those who fit the identity of those who I want to study. Of course, there will be limitations for this sampling, namely the nature of the sampling that is potentially not generalizable (Simkus, 2023). To combat this, I will try to create the largest sample size I can create. In order to do so I will incorporate snowball sampling, in which one subject can refer me to another subject that would be willing to participate in the study to create a larger sample and account for potentially having too small of a sample that will not be generalizable.

As for where I am going to acquire the participants of the subject, I will reach out to CUNY LGBTQ+ centers that likely have emails of students who identify as queer so that they can relay my study. I would provide the centers with a synopsis of what I am trying to achieve with this study, why it would be a positive contribution to participate, and my contact information. This would allow me to obtain the queer individuals who are in a relationship, and from there I can further divide the group into which POC are in relationships with other POC, and who is not. In order to obtain the participants who are in a relationship yet are not queer, I would put up flyers around CUNY campuses with the same information as would go in the email in order to reach the age range that I need, and gain participants who may not identify as queer to create a more in depth comparative analysis. From there, I would be able to find the contacts of people who are willing to participate in the study, and through snowball sampling, identify additional participants. In either case, with IRB approval, I would be able to move forward with reaching out to those who want to be in the study, and conduct interviews as outlined below. In all of these methods of reaching out, I would make sure to emphasize the voluntary aspect of participation and that consent will be needed throughout the entire process.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

At the interview stage, I will be using an outlined protocol to control the process for any discrepancies. I will begin outlining a preliminary informative monologue in which I will tell the interviewee about the process, research and myself. It will be important to tell the interviewee who I am and my identification as a queer person of color to create a sense of comfort and an understanding relationship that can make for a richer interview with more detailed and honest answers. The monologue will be as follows:

> *Hi there, my name is Emely Juarez-Cisneros, my pronouns are she/her and I will be conducting the research today. A little about myself- I am 21 and I identify as a queer woman with a Salvadoran background. Today we're going to talk about your experience as a queer person of color (if applicable to interviewee) in a relationship with another queer person of color (if applicable to interviewee). First and foremost, this*

interview will be completely anonymous and there will be no information in the final written article that will trace back to you. If at any point you wish to conclude the interview, omit any answer, decline to answer any question, or take a break that is entirely acceptable. This is entirely voluntary and if at any point, even after we conclude the interview, you wish to not have your interview, partially or entirely, included in this project, simply reach out to me and I won't include it in the project. If at any point you wish to take a break, that is okay, as well.

About the project itself: I am conducting this research because of the notable lack of literature and research about queer folks in intimate spaces. I hope to provide a platform for voices that have historically been marginalized and underrepresented in academic discourse. By sharing your experiences and perspectives, you are contributing to a broader understanding of the complexities and nuances of queer relationships among people of color. Your insights will not only inform academic scholarship, but also potentially influence social attitudes, policies, and support systems that impact the well-being of queer communities. I hope to create greater visibility, acceptance, and empowerment for all queer individuals, particularly those navigating relationships within racial minority communities.

At this point, after explaining the nature of the research, I can then proceed with the interview itself. The questions are written in a manner so that the interviewee can gradually get into questions that require more introspection and thought. The questions I will ask are as follows:

1. Can you tell me about your background and upbringing?
2. What does it mean to you to be in a committed relationship?
3. Tell me about your relationship- how long have you been together with your partner? How did you both meet?
4. Within your relationship what do you feel you value the most?
5. What are some challenges you have faced throughout your time as a couple? Are there any themes that continue to arise within relationship hardships?
6. What initially attracted you to your partner, and how did your cultural backgrounds influence your connection if at all?
7. Do you and your partner prioritize and celebrate your cultural heritage within your relationship? If so, how?
8. How does your family perceive your relationship? How do they show their support or lack of support?
9. Did your family have any influence over the way your relationship developed? What about now? Does it still dictate the way you navigate your relationship?
10. How do you see your upbringing influencing your role in your relationship?
11. Are there any specific resources, such as literature, support groups, or online communities, that have been particularly helpful for you and your partner in navigating your relationship? If not, are there any you can imagine would be particularly helpful for your relationship or even as an individual?
12. What strategies do you and your partner employ to cope with stressors related to your identities and relationship dynamics?

13. How do you and your partner navigate societal expectations and stereotypes regarding race, gender, and/or sexuality within your relationship?
14. In what ways do you and your partner navigate the intersections of your identities in your everyday lives, beyond just within your relationship?
15. How do gender roles, both within your relationship and in society at large, influence your dynamics as a couple? How do you challenge or negotiate traditional gender expectations within your relationship?
16. Can you share any instances where your race, gender, sexuality, and cultural background intersected within your relationship? How did you navigate these intersections?
17. How does your identity as a queer person of color influence your sense of self within your relationship?
18. Aside from each other, who else do you turn to for support during challenging times in your relationship? How do friends, mentors, or other support networks contribute to your relationship's resilience?
19. Looking back on your experiences as a queer POC couple, what insights or lessons have you gained about the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and culture? How have these insights shaped your understanding of yourselves and your relationship?

This list of questions will serve as the general pool of questions from which I will gather specific questions that are respective to the group that the interviewee belongs to whether they are a POC or not, and whether they identify as queer or not. Should I need to adjust the questions based on initial responses, I will do so because of the study's iterative nature that will allow me to change, add, or take out any questions that will help the interview feel more complete. The interview will be done in a college within a private room where the space will feel open and welcoming with a casual atmosphere instead of a professional interview style.

DATA ANALYSIS

One data analysis method I will be using for this study is comparative analysis. This will allow me to coherently use my data from interviews and surveys into a digestible analysis that outlines the different experiences of the different groups that are a part of my participants. I will be able to compare and contrast the responses and perspectives of queer POC couples with those of heterosexual POC couples, queer non-POC couples, and heterosexual non-POC couples. By identifying common themes, differences, and patterns across these groups, I can gain a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges and experiences faced by queer POC couples in comparison to other demographic groups. This comparative analysis will enable me to identify key factors influencing relationship dynamics, including the impact of cultural expectations, societal norms, and intersectional identities. Additionally, it will allow for the identification of areas where additional support or interventions may be needed to address the specific needs of queer POC couples. Another type of data analysis I will use for this is thematic analysis for the interviews. Thematic analysis consists of, "reading and rereading the transcripts in a systematic way" (Dawadi, 2021). This systematic approach allows me to identify the themes that arise, if they

arise in a patterned manner, and whether or not there are implications of the pattern in which themes arise in the interview transcripts.

IMPLICATIONS

This study aims to illuminate the often overlooked experiences of queer people of color in committed relationships, providing a platform for their voices to be amplified and their challenges to be better understood. By exploring the intricate intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and culture within these relationships, I want to foster educated awareness. The insights gained from this research have the potential to inform the creation of resources tailored to the unique needs of queer people of color in relationships. By cultivating a more inclusive and supportive general environment that acknowledges and respects their intersectional identities, we can contribute to the broader pursuit of a more inclusive academic field that acknowledges and aims to better understand queer folks' lived experiences.

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