



The American Papers

2019-2020



The American Papers

2019-2020

Volume 38

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The artwork on the cover of this journal was designed by CSUF student Michelle Okawa, with additional design assistance from Layout Editor Nicole Dean. The cover was designed using resources from [Freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com).

Professor Kanosky would like to thank the editors for their hard work, camaraderie, professionalism, and resilience while preparing this edition of *The American Papers*. Their willingness to give freely of their time—even over summer break—to add to this journal and departmental tradition is very much appreciated. I would like to commend the authors for their exceptional papers and good-natured responses to the editorial process.

Thanks to editors Rachel Seymour and Aisha Monks-Husain, as well as American Studies Student Association representatives Brandon Ruiz and Julian Orozco for their assistance securing funding from the InterClub Council so that the journal could be printed. Thank you to the staff at PM Group for their work in printing the journal. I also would like to recognize Aisha Monks-Husain and Sarita Espinosa for supervising the editing process as Managing Editors, and for helping to perform secondary edits to all papers. And thank you to Michelle Okawa for designing the artwork for the cover of this year's journal.

While the publication of *The American Papers* always requires the commitment and hard work of its student editorial team, this year made that task exponentially more difficult. Our editorial team persisted despite the myriad challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shut down our campus in an historically unprecedented way. Despite the regular demands of their school work and personal lives, this pandemic required extraordinary efforts to finalize the publication of this journal. Nicole Dean deserves special recognition for her excellent work on the layout design of this issue despite the campus shutdown.

Finally, I especially would like to thank Laura Fauvor and Naja Shabaka for serving as this volume's Editors in Chief. Their shared leadership, diligence, creativity, vision, and commitment to ensuring a democratic process made the production of the 2019-2020 issue possible. For their tenacity and commitment to *The American Papers* in the midst of this period of uncertainty, Laura and Naja deserve the highest of praise.

In recognition of his many contributions to the American Studies department since 1972, and the invaluable lessons he has imparted to his students, the 2019-2020 issue of *The American Papers* is dedicated to Professor John Ibson, who retired in 2019.

Welcome to the 2019-2020 issue of *The American Papers*!

This issue of *The American Papers* continues the tradition of presenting a selection of quality papers written by undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in American Studies courses at California State University, Fullerton during the preceding academic year. Each paper makes a valuable contribution to the field of American Studies and the legacy of this journal. The essays included illustrate the journal's progress and strengthen the foundation on which it can evolve, demonstrating the work that has been done and calling attention to issues that are still in need of examination not only within the academic field but society as a whole.

The papers featured in this year's issue focus on race, gender, sexuality, public memory, and more, reflecting the diverse courses offered by the American Studies department at CSUF. These courses engage students in various avenues of study with the intention of examination from an interdisciplinary perspective.

This year's journal is organized thematically, linking papers that examine similar subject matter to demonstrate the range of study that can be conducted within the various aspects of American culture. We begin with a discussion of Gender and Education before learning about Imagined Communities and their importance. We then see the way Substances and Stigma collide. Afterwards, we look at the messages embedded in and the potential impacts of Pop Culture in America. Next, we learn about Culture and the Environment, particularly the effects that they have on one another. We conclude with crucial observations of Race and Resistance.

Each year, *The American Papers* publishes an exceptional paper chosen by a committee of professors to honor Earl James Weaver, one of the founding professors of American Studies at CSUF. This year's winner is Laura Fauvor for her paper, "Take a Seat: Huey P. Newton's Infamous Chair and the Memory of the Black Panther Party."

Similar to the work done in any American Studies course, we hope that this year's journal is knowledge inducing, sparks critical thought, discussion, and action. The Editors-in-Chief thank our contributors and our editorial board for working together to create this year's issue. We also thank Michelle Okawa for creating this year's cover, reflecting the journal's themes. It has been a pleasure to work with our students and our supportive faculty advisor, Professor Alison Kanosky.

- The Editors

Course Descriptions

301: American Character

Cultural environment and personality. The extent to which there have been and continue to be distinctly American patterns of belief and behavior. Similarities, as well as class, ethnic, sex, and regional differences among Americans.

345: The American Dream

An interdisciplinary analysis, in settings both historical and contemporary, of the myth and reality surrounding the notion of America as a land of unparalleled and unlimited possibilities, especially in the achievement of personal material success.

350: Seminar in Theory and Methods of American Studies

Provides an understanding and appreciation of methodology, theories of society and images of humanity as they affect American studies contributions to scholarship.

377: Prejudice and American Culture

Concepts and methods of American culture studies as tools for better understanding the origins and appeal of intolerance, past and present. Particular focus on racism, ethnic and religious bias, sexism, and homophobia.

401T: American Culture and Nature

Analyzes the meaning of nature in American culture, past and present. Traces the development of environmental attitudes as reflected and shaped in such cultural landscapes as the frontier, countryside, city, suburb.

401T: American Culture Through Social Science

Explores the earliest efforts of American sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and political scientists to study American culture, and the ways that they understood urban life, racial and ethnic identity, and the role of the individual in modern society.

401T: Race in American Culture

This seminar examines how racial difference is constructed in American culture. Readings offer perspectives on the racial meanings within cultural products and practices, the intersection of stereotypes and social experience, and the changing notions of race over time.

428: American Monsters

Interdisciplinary study of the monster in American culture. Monsters in historical context as reflection of fears and anxieties surrounding nature, science, gender, race, community, the body. Images of monstrosity in film, literature, folklore, television, performance art, youth culture.

442: Television and American Culture

American television as an interactive form of cultural expression, both product and producer of cultural knowledge. Structure and content of television genres, and social-historical context of television's development and use, audience response, habits, and environments of viewing.

502: Seminar on Public Memory

Analyzes narratives of the past encapsulated in museums, memorials, historic preservation sites, living history projects, and popular culture. Emphasizes the cultural politics and packaging of public memory and tension as between national identity and local, ethnic, and regional identity narratives.

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Gender and Education

What to expect and questions to consider while reading:

In this section, students explore topics in their work that examine how culture influences gender and education.

How might culture dictate gendered experience with education?

What They Taught Me

Emilia Gazzoni Gaskell

AMST 301: American Character

This paper was written for American Studies 301: American Character taught by Professor Sharon Sekhon. At the start of the class we were asked to define what it meant to be an American Character. I defined it in three traits: determination, optimism, and boldness. Our final assignment was to pick three women that we learned about that semester and one from our own lives that have taught us something about what it means to be an American Character. As you read through my paper think about how those three traits set these women apart from the rest and how they encompass what it means to be an American Character.

I define the American Character as one of determination, optimism, and boldness. In my experience, these traits are exhibited by all who are deemed “American Characters.” American Characters are the people who shape the world view of the United States and give it its soul. Thus, most “Americans” aspire to exemplify such traits. American Characters are often determined to reach a certain goal, like money or fame. Sometimes they want to show a certain truth, or what they deem to be truth, such as the idea of hard work equaling success. They are optimistic and full of hope -- one has to be if they are going to facilitate change. If you do not believe it’s going to happen, you are not going to fight for the change; optimism is key. The last trait I think all American Characters have, is boldness. It takes boldness to go against the grain and to demand change, justice, or opportunities for all. In looking for American Characters, one might come across many great individuals and people who show aspects of the traits listed above. Finding people, specifically women, who are recognized as representing the determination, optimism, and boldness that keeps our country’s moral arc bending towards justice and equality is even harder. Janice Tanaka, Michelle Alexander, and Mamie Till embody what it means to be an American Character. In addition,

they are all great examples of the kind of might it takes to be one.

Janice Tanaka is the first of these American Characters this paper discusses. She is the writer, producer, editor, and director of the documentary titled, *When You're Smiling: The Deadly Legacy of Internment*. Throughout this film, Janice Tanaka was determined to share with us the untold and unseen story of the repercussions of the Japanese Internment camps of WWII.¹ She researched and interviewed many people just like her and brought to the surface stories of trying to “fit in,” trying to “be good,” and trying to piece together the experiences of what they had only ever heard referred to as the “camp.” In telling the story of her life, her strong sense of optimism shows. Optimism told her that if you share your story, you will create change and a path to acceptance by the Americans that have othered you your entire life. The Americans you are rightfully one of. Lastly, she shows her boldness by talking about issues like drug and substance abuse that lead to many deaths during the 1970s when Japanese American children were fighting against the “Model Minority” myth that they could never live up to.

It takes a lot to go against the grain, and to speak up when no one else dares. It takes a lot to go digging for answers and then to put those answers on display -- even if it might embarrass your family. I learned to be bold from Janice Tanaka. I learned to question, and to dig, and to search for answers. It is important to hear from people like Tanaka because the “Model Minority” myth gives us only a single story of the Japanese-American (and now it seems to encompass all Asian-American) experiences. It is important to hear from people who have been lumped into a single stereotype and story in order to build a more complete picture of what their lives are really like. The Japanese-American community suffered greatly; not just physically and financially from the internment camps, but emotionally for years to come. It created a cultural trauma that penetrated every generation that came after, and it is important for people to know these things happened and to know that the repercussions are still in effect. It is important to learn about Janice Tanaka and watch her documentaries so that something like what happened to her family, does not happen again.

The next American Character I will discuss is the author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Michelle Alexander. Michelle Alexander completely opened my eyes to our “justice” system and the prison system that comes out of said “justice.” She is determined to

show us facts that demonstrate increasing incarceration rates despite declining crime rates. She shows us boldness when she isn't afraid to call things by their names -- racism -- and who is to blame -- white nationalists. She tells it how it is and sometimes you cannot even believe the statistics that come out of her book. I grew up in mostly all white neighborhoods and was aware of a couple of white drug dealers that provided some of the white kids with drugs. I saw them never receive more than a slap on the wrist from the same criminal justice system Alexander discusses in her book. Because of my experiences, I know her boldness to be true and justified outrage. In the end, she finds a way to be optimistic for change; if we can work together, we can change the system little by little. We can create coalitions of people from different backgrounds and races, but similar economic standings. For instance, Alexander's last section is titled *All of Us or None* and opens our eyes to the idea that the *us* seems to be everyone but white men.² She mentions how poor and working-class whites were given "racial bribes" and these bribes caused them to place "racial status interest over their common economic interests with Blacks."³ Taking this argument and applying it to today's political climate one can see that there is currently a demographic of poor, working class, white people who support Donald Trump and are being told that the cause of their low economic standing and unemployment is the fault of immigrants and people of color. Immigrants and people of color, as a whole, are statistically lower on the economic ladder in America due to many systemic and social prejudices that keep them from benefiting from things that someone who is white might benefit from. What we come to learn as being "the public and psychological wage" paid to white workers, who depended on their status and privileges as whites to compensate for low pay and harsh working conditions."⁴ If the population of poor white Americans who support Donald Trump joined forces with immigrants and people of color who are in the same economic position that they're in, then they would be able to facilitate change that would benefit them all. When we deal with things from an economic standpoint rather than by skin color, we often find that we are fighting for the same things. We become a part of Alexander's "us" as we find that we are hurt and upset by the same things and can be stronger together to fight against these injustices. People in the same hard position should be able to bond instead of be torn apart because of skin color.

I learned to be optimistic from Michelle Alexander. I learned that

it's time for me to put my body on the line to help communities of color have the ability to exercise their rights to the same extent as white people. That's why it's important to read her book; it creates allies and an inspiration to facilitate change. Her book gives us statistics that help put the everyday into perspective. More and more we are shown videos of (mostly white) police officers using extreme force on people of color for committing minimal offenses, like selling cigarettes or holding an airsoft gun inside of a store where airsoft guns are sold. Sometimes there are "offenses" one does often, like buying a bag of skittles on a cold rainy night and walking back home with your hoodie over your head so you don't get wet. None of these "offenses" seem to be worth losing one's life for. The Black Lives Matter movement is something we hear about almost daily in today's time as the massive reach of social media shows us more and more discrimination. We see white people calling the police on Black people for having a BBQ at the park, canvassing a neighborhood for votes, or for helping their child sell water to neighbors on a hot day. Black lives have always mattered, and it is time to join the movement and put our bodies on the line to help bring about change. Michelle Alexander's book inspires that movement and opens up people to the ideas of working with the Black community to help them fight for the rights and decency white people have always been granted.

This last American character encompasses all three of the traits aforementioned. She displays these traits in a situation that she did not choose, nor would ever choose to be in. She did so with dignity and strength. Her name is Mamie Till and her 14-year-old son was brutally and unremorsefully killed by two white southern men, who got away with his murder. Mamie Till took her child's beaten and tortured body and put it on display for the world to see. This was said to have been the spark that ignited the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950s. Mamie Till showed boldness when she decided to even look at her dead baby's body; I do not think I could be that strong. Her determination took over when justice was not met in our courts. A jury of white men completely exonerated the suspects of the gruesome crime they had committed and Till did not feel justice had been served. Mamie Till decided to get justice anyway by displaying her son's mangled body to the entire world. She was determined to show them the great and utterly disgraceful wrong her government and her "peers" committed against her and her son. An injustice that justified killing for no other reason but the color of one's

skin. An injustice that was met with sympathy, not for the victim, but for the accused. Mamie Till was optimistic that it would bring change. She was optimistic and continued to be optimistic even though she lost everything that meant anything in her life.

She taught me to be determined. If you don't get the answer you were looking for and you know you were wronged, you take matters into your own hands and do whatever is in your power to move the needle a bit. She did the only thing she could think to do and it formed a coalition for change. In recent footage, she still seemed strong and determined for change, as it is still a predominant issue. It's important that people know about what happened to Emmett Till and how Mamie Till responded to it because first, it gives us insight into how truly terrible and racist our government and people were (and arguably still are) and secondly, it inspires us to create the change that we are able to create, especially when our justice system, or government, wrongs us.

When looking at these women as American Characters, I was inspired to look at my own life for women who show these traits. In trying to find someone that embodies the American Character it turned out I did not have to look far. This woman is a mom like Mamie Till, a daughter of immigrants like Janice Tanaka and a member of a small and mistreated minority like Michelle Alexander. She is my mom. Born Viveca Elisabeth Sotola in Cordoba, Argentina, she immigrated to the United States with her three-year-old daughter (me) while also pregnant with her second child. She learned English as an adult and worked as a Costco sample person, had a paper route, and finally as an apartment manager where she was able to put herself through school as a now divorced mother of three. She graduated and got a job as a physical therapist assistant and bought a house in Orange County, California-- all by herself! She is determined, bold, and optimistic. She was determined to create opportunities for herself and a better life for her children. She was bold when she left her native country and enrolled into college as an adult with English as her second language. I saw her optimism year after year as she fought her way through the tangled immigration system. She is an American Character just like the ones we learned about. She is now an American Character who is also an American citizen. She sits with her voting booklet every year and figures out what will be best for her children and for the generations that come after them. If people were able to read the book on her life they would be inspired to follow their dreams and de-

terminated to make said dreams happen. They would be shown another side of the immigrant story like Janice Tanaka did for Japanese-Americans. She will make you feel like you can do anything because she did everything with three children, no family support, no spouse, and in a land of unfamiliar customs and language. She is proud to be an American and proud to be able to, one day, in the far distant future, have something to leave to her posterity. She's what makes America great and what helps contribute to our American ideals.

Determined, optimistic, and bold. These three traits are what help make people great. They turn average people into powerful influencers. They are gender neutral. They don't belong to one generation over another. You are not born with these traits, but can develop them over time. America uses these traits to lure people over from all over the world. Our society begins instilling these traits to our children through folk tales and the "rags to riches" stories we hear of so often. These stories that tell us that hard work and a good attitude will lead you to success. It will give you the American Dream. It uses these traits to make heroes and shape the path to a better America. "We the People" creating a "More Perfect Union" through incredible people that rise above the rest and nurture the seeds of change for "Ourselves and our Posterity." Determined, optimistic, and bold. It is the American mantra.

References

- 1 Janice Tanaka, *When You're Smiling: The Deadly Legacy of Internment*, DVD (Los Angeles: Visual Communications, 1999).
- 2 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (New York, The New Press, 2012), 255.
- 3 Ibid., 256.
- 4 Ibid.

Women in Education

Valery Zavala

AMST 301: American Character

This essay was written for Professor Carrie Lane's American Character course in the fall of 2018. Students were asked to explain the different ways in which formal education shaped the lives of women in the books *Hidden Figures* and *Educated*. Throughout this essay I shed light on the various obstacles and achievements these women made while on their educational journey.

The books *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly and *Educated* by Tara Westover both centralize the accounts of women whose lives were shaped through education. *Hidden Figures* takes place from the 1930s to the 1960s, focusing on the untold stories of two extraordinary black women, Dorothy Vaughan and Katherine Coleman. Throughout the book, Shetterly shows how Vaughan and Coleman beat the odds by contributing to America's success in the space race, despite living in a time of racial injustice. Set during the 1990s, Tara Westover shares the story of her life in her memoir *Educated*. Westover shares about her childhood in Buck's Peak, Idaho, where she lived with her family in isolation. She then recounts her journey to discovering a new world after deciding to leave the mountain and enroll at a university. Although the stories and lives of these women are drastically different, they share a similar underlying message. Both books share unique journeys with formal education from the factors that helped shape access to education, the nature of the education, and how it shaped their personal and professional lives.

In *Hidden Figures*, author Shetterly begins by describing the upbringings of both Dorothy Vaughan and Katherine Coleman. Dorothy Vaughan, born in 1910, was the daughter of a man who worked for a successful restaurateur. Vaughan's stepmother also worked to provide for the family. Although she was not her biological mother, Vaughan's stepmother "took Dorothy as her own daughter and pushed her to succeed, teaching the precious girl to

read before she entered school, which vaulted her ahead two grades.” While attending Beechhurst School, “a consolidated Negro school,” Vaughan thrived, earning valedictorian and a scholarship to the country’s oldest private Black college, Wilberforce University.¹

Katherine Coleman had a similar upbringing to Vaughan’s. Katherine’s intellect and success in math led her in 1932, at the age of fourteen, to graduate high school. As a result of her extraordinary intellectual abilities, Coleman was able to tackle some of “the isolation and scrutiny that came along with being a black student on the front lines of desegregation” and by 1940, she became one of three African American students who began their graduate studies at West Virginia University in Morgantown. Although they lived in an era where there was little opportunity for African Americans, especially for African American women, Vaughan and Coleman’s brilliance, their family’s economic status, and undying support granted them access to formal education unavailable to many African Americans.²

Both Vaughan and Coleman excelled in college, opting for degrees in mathematics. At Wilberforce University, Vaughan achieved top grades and graduated at the age of nineteen. After graduating, Vaughan’s professors recommended she continue her studies at Howard University and pursue a master’s degree in mathematics. At the time, Howard University was considered “the summit of Negro scholarship.” There, Vaughan had the opportunity to come “into close contact with some of the finest minds in the world” including Elbert Frank Cox and Dudley Weldon Woodard, who were the first two African Americans to complete mathematics doctorates at Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania, respectively. Coleman, began her college career at West Virginia State Institute. It was there where Coleman met math professor William Waldron Schieffelin Claytor, the third African American in the country to obtain a Ph.D. in mathematics. Claytor mentored Coleman and created advanced math classes specifically for Coleman. After graduating summa cum laude, Coleman went on to begin her graduate studies at West Virginia University in Morgantown. Ultimately, the nature of the education that Vaughan and Coleman received was almost elite, and catered to their intellectual abilities.³

The lives of Dorothy Vaughan and Katherine Coleman were drastically shaped professionally and personally by their formal education. For African Americans living in the early to mid-1900s, occupations such as

“teacher, preacher, doctor, lawyer” were considered “very good black jobs.” However, as Shetterly states, “the Negro’s ladder to the American dream was missing rungs, with even the most outwardly successful blacks worried that at any moment the forces of discrimination could lay waste to their economic security.” But in the case of Vaughan and Coleman, their ability to thrive in the formal education scene set them up for success, allowing them to surpass expectations, and establish careers in the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). This was something unimaginable for many African Americans, considering the fact that “in 1940, just 2 percent of all black women earned college degrees” and “exactly zero percent of those 1940 college graduates became engineers.” With their full-time jobs at NACA, Vaughan and Coleman were paid at an annual rate of \$2,000, “more than twice the \$850 annual salary” they earned as teachers. Vaughan’s career at NACA allowed her husband and four children to live comfortably in their large Victorian home.⁴

Tara Westover’s road to formal education differs from the women in *Hidden Figures*. Instead of receiving support from her parents, Westover was deprived of a formal education by her father who believed “public school was a ploy by the Government to lead children away from God.” As a result, few of her siblings attended public school and instead received homeschooling by Westover’s mother. However, this was only temporary, as her mother soon began taking a similar approach to formal education as Westover’s father, stating, “All that really matters is that you kids learn to read. That other twaddle is just brainwashing.” By the age of eight, Westover had “settled into a routine that omitted school altogether.” At the age of sixteen, when Westover expressed the desire to go to college, she sought help from her older brother Tyler who was studying mechanical engineering at Brigham Young University (BYU). Tyler became her main source of support, encouraging Westover to take the college entrance exam, he also assisted in tutoring her. When Westover passed the entrance exam, Tyler advised her to apply to Brigham Young University and completed the college application for her. Tara Westover’s access to a formal education was limited, but through the help of her older brother Tyler, she was able to achieve it.⁵

Once Westover began attending college, her world was opened. At home, Westover was exposed to snippets of American history, math, and some science through textbooks her mother kept hidden in the basement.

After attending her first classes at BYU, she found that what she had believed to be true from those textbooks, were merely single stories about America. Westover states, "I had read that slaves in colonial times were happier and more free than their masters, because the masters were burdened with the cost of their care." Westover also learned the true story behind Ruby Ridge, which differed from what she was taught by her father. Occurring in 1992, Ruby Ridge was an eleven-day standoff between the FBI and the White separatist Weaver family. The siege resulted in the death of two members of the Weaver family and a federal agent. Since Ruby Ridge took place in Idaho, with a family similar to the Westovers, the story fed her father's paranoia. This caused Westover to learn a distorted truth. "For thirteen years, I'd assumed that this was why the Government had come for Randy: to force his children into school... Then I understood; white supremacy was at the heart of this story, not homeschool." After learning that many stories she learned, were all misconceptions, she states, "I suppose I was in shock, but whether it was the shock of learning about something horrific, or the shock of learning about my own ignorance, I'm not sure." The overall nature of the education Westover received while she was in college allowed for the discovery of a world she was unaware of as well as the correction of misconceptions she once believed to be true.⁶

By allowing herself to pursue a formal education, Westover opened her eyes to a new world and new perspectives. When thinking about Buck's Peak in comparison to the world she was now a part of, Westover states, "the contrast here was too great, the world before my eyes too fantastical." Westover graduated from BYU and was awarded the Gates Cambridge Scholarship, allowing her to continue her education at Cambridge University. After completing a visiting fellowship at Harvard University, Westover earned her doctorate from Trinity College, Cambridge. Looking at her life in retrospect, Westover states, "I had built a new life, and it was a happy one." Westover and her brothers Richard and Tyler were the only three who left the mountain in pursuit of a formal education. Westover's four other siblings stayed in Buck's Peak alongside their parents, neither earned a GED or high school diploma, leaving them financially dependent on their parents. By leaving the mountain and seeking a formal education, Westover made a better life for herself personally and professionally.⁷

Formal education had a major effect on the lives of Dorothy

Vaughan, Katherine Coleman, and Tara Westover. For Vaughan and Coleman, their education fueled their careers at NACA, setting them up to become heroes. Not only would Vaughan and Coleman come to be considered heroes of America, but the intersections of their identity made them heroes to African Americans, women, and African American women. For Westover, school served as an escape from isolation and a passage into a new world. By pursuing an education, Westover was able to find herself and go on to accomplish great things such as, graduating from BYU and attending prestigious universities. For these women, education opened the doors of opportunity and ultimately transformed their lives.

References

- 1 Margot Lee Shetterly, *Hidden Figures: The American Dream And The Untold Story Of The Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win The Space Race* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2016), 12.
- 2 Ibid., 24, 25.
- 3 Ibid., 13, 24.
- 4 Ibid., 16, 11, 40, 21, 10.
- 5 Tara Westover, *Educated* (New York, NY: Random House, 2018), 4, 45, 126, 148.
- 6 Ibid., 46, 177, 209, 157.
- 7 Ibid., 243, 319, 326.

Imagined Communities

We build identity and communities around personal lived experience. The work in the following essays explores how Americans build community.

Questions to consider while reading:

- How does the experience of immigration in America influence how community is built and found?
- Like the witches of Whittier, how might people who seem to have little in common find community with each other?

The Duality of Dreaming

Kira Sherman

AMST 345: The American Dream

When I was first given the prompt in Professor Elaine Lewinnek's AMST 345 class that inspired this paper, I had a hard time choosing what to write about. The prompt was to pick a piece of art (film, play, music, paintings, etc.) and discuss what kind of "American Dream" the piece depicted. Finally, I settled on a topic. In Loleta California there stands an empty cliff, windswept and grassy it overlooks the blue-gray waters of the Pacific ocean. Although no humans live there now, this cliffside used to house a Christian Commune called the Lighthouse Ranch. My paper examines the documentary of the Lighthouse Ranch filmed in 1972 by the WGBH Boston for a segment dubbed *Religious America*. Film is recorded and edited to tell one story, in this case, a hopeful tale of young dreamers living the best way they know how. But it also reminds us to seek the other side to every story, for you never know what is a dream and what is reality.

In Loleta, California, there stands an empty cliff, windswept and grassy. It overlooks the blue gray waters of the Pacific Ocean. Although no humans live there now, this cliffside used to hold a group of hopeful young dreamers desperately seeking a stable home. In 1969, a Christian pastor by the name of Ken Smith, purchased seven acres of this land to convert into a home for himself, but more importantly, a communal home for those in need. He used an old coast guard station to create a space for young adults in search of a safe haven and spiritual guidance, calling it The Lighthouse Ranch.

Many who lived in his shining city on a hill rejoiced in its peaceful nature; others found only toxic values and regret. There are two sides to every story, so I present to you, "The Duality of Dreaming." How can one place be both a haven and personal hell, but only recorded and portrayed as one? Filmed in 1972 by WGBH Boston for a segment dubbed *Religious America*,

the Lighthouse Ranch documentary portrays an American dream of community through religious connection and separation from material needs.¹

The late 1960s and early 1970s were rife with drug abuse and all the side effects that come with it. Low-income young adults searching for a place of peace and love were often associated with drugs or the harsh conditions of living in a drug ruled neighborhood. Many were drifting, searching for a peaceful existence away from the older generation that tried to keep them down, as well as the dangerous areas where they lived. When Ken Smith founded The Lighthouse Ranch, he offered those young adults the place they were searching for.² The documentary opens with sweeping, aerial shots of The Lighthouse Ranch, underscored by a soothing guitar melody. The scene looks serene, peaceful, and separate from the noisy industrialized world. The calming “ooooooooing” of a female vocalist comes in, and we see the gray, crashing waves on the beach. So tranquil.

Akin to John Winthrop’s hope for colonial America from his 1630 sermon *City Upon a Hill*, The Lighthouse Ranch was meant to be a beacon of light for those in need. Winthrop said, “For this end, wee must be knitt together, in this worke, as one man. Wee must entertaine each other in brotherly affection. Wee must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of other’s necessities. Wee must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekeness, gentlenes, patience and liberality.”³ The documentary shows the inhabitants of The Lighthouse Ranch tried to do just that. The scene transitions from the exterior buildings, to the interior of the dining hall. Tables are filled with unshaved and rustic looking people, holding hands, and singing together. The first cinematic shot of human beings is one of unity, expressing the idea that this is a community dream carried on the shoulders of many. Underscored by the passionate voices of the young dreamers, we transition to scenes of men hoeing fields. They work the land together in order to care for the group. No one frowns or curses the back-breaking work, only smiles and “hallelujahs” abound.

Next, we are introduced to two members of the commune whose testimony further supports the message of the documentary. They share the message of Jesus and The Lighthouse Ranch, to spread the word of the gospel to all in need of it. The young man being interviewed by the film makers tells of the small businesses and services the Ranch has opened in order to provide for its members.⁴ The money is earned not for the profit of the community

members, but to expand the Ranch's message of peace through Jesus Christ. This is a severe departure from American Dreams of success through financial gain. Through popular works such as *Ragged Dick* by Horatio Alger and NBC's TV show, *The Apprentice*, the American Dream is portrayed as an individual's rise to success after beating the odds. In 2018 this idea is still a popular definition of the American Dream. Yet, the portrayal of life at The Lighthouse Ranch shows us that wealth need not equate happiness. Folks living dollar to dollar in a commune seem to have richer lives and healthier souls than all *The Apprentice* competitors combined.⁵

Another departure from a popular American Dream is the communal living itself. A young woman by the name of Sara tells us how she found the Ranch after years of selling drugs for a living and trying to support a child in a toxic, materialistic world. Her testimony shows us how someone newly converted can learn and flourish at the Ranch and find the personal peace and fulfillment she couldn't find in the big city of San Francisco. She says: "And that's how we can live in this communal situation, 120 people living on five acres and three or four homes, it's ridiculous no one would try it."⁶ Indeed, very few would try it.

In the 1960s, many policymakers felt pressured into opening federal homeownership opportunities to lower income families. The idea of Americanness being tied to owning your own home had been lauded for years now and voluntary communal living was somewhat societally deviant. Marisa Chappell, an American historian and Associate Professor at Oregon State University, writes, "Even while making it difficult for the poor to share in homeownership, policymakers promoted homeownership as an instrument for establishing political stability and as an antidote to the 'culture of poverty.'"⁷ Yet poverty persisted. The documentary filmmakers show us a different American Dream, where homeownership needn't be a necessity. Perhaps good Christian, communal living can be more beneficial to those in squalor.

However, similar to the predicament of the Joad family in the 1939 movie *The Grapes of Wrath*, the ideals of the commune were not always as they were portrayed. The Joad family is lured by the promise of stable jobs and opportunities in California only to find they've been sold a dream that isn't as good as it's made out to be. The same fate awaited many members of the commune. Although the directors of *The Lighthouse in Loleta* documentary,

Boyd Estus and Philip Garvin, capture the positive aspects of community values and spiritual peace, they neglect to touch on the darker side of the Ranch.

On December 17, 2018, I conducted an interview with ex-commune member Sara. This was the same Sara seen blissfully singing through much of the documentary. She informed me of some negative aspects of living on the Ranch. She spoke of the stench of the expired eggs donated to the commune by an inhabitant of the nearby town, and the blandness of the cheap grain they bought in place of wheat. The sustenance they required to survive was often slightly stale or rotten. According to a *New York Times* article by journalist David Leonhardt,

Not even the oldest baby boomers, born in the late 1940s and early 1950s, would be quite so lucky. Economic growth began to slow as they were entering the job market in the 1970s, thanks in part to the energy crises. Still, more than three-quarters of these early Baby Boomers would ultimately make more than their parents.⁸

But in this commune there resided the one-quarter who didn't or couldn't make more than their parents. Sara said that for her it was ultimately the strain of living in extreme poverty that drove her away from the Ranch.

In addition, she touched on the toxic values perpetuated by the pastors and religious leaders; women seen as second-class citizens who needed to submit to their husbands; commune leaders supporting the beating of children as punishment; and the exhausting poverty due to the mandatory pooling of slim wages. Two sides of the same story, but only one caught on film.

The documentary offers insight to a different, but equally valid, American dream. A home to those without one, a hot bowl of food for those with empty bellies, but underneath hides a strict religious patriarchy. The film is recorded and edited to tell one story, in this case a hopeful tale of young dreamers living the best they know how. But it also reminds us to seek the other side to every story, for you never know what is a dream and what is reality.

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The Witches of Whittier: Exploring the Monstrous and Identity

Sarita Espinosa

AMST 428: American Monsters

For AMST 428 Monsters in American Society with Professor Adam Golub, we were assigned a paper in which we had to conduct a mini ethnography to see how the public engages with “monster culture.” Since witches are a group who have been considered monstrous in the past, I thought it would be valuable to understand how modern witches identify. So, I conducted interviews with members of my tarot class who identify as witches.

Monsters, examined as a cultural document, provide insight into social norms and anxieties of the culture that constructed them. Scott Poole in *Monsters in America*, describes monsters as, “meaning machines’ exuviating all manner of cultural productions depending on their context and historical moment.”¹ Poole emphasizes the role society plays in what is described as monstrous. What does it mean when a part of your identity is considered monstrous? Witches are a group of persons whose identity has been considered monstrous. For example, scary stories about witches emerged just before the women’s suffrage movement that began during the late 1840s. Poole states, “The subtext of ‘Young Brown Goodman’ calls into question antebellum America’s fascination with female sexual purity and the engines of control built from that obsession.”² Hawthorne novels also represent an instance in which the monster serves as a warning for what is to come. Within the context of the #MeToo Movement and the recent Women’s Marches, it makes sense that a group of women seeking to unlock their power would be viewed as monstrous. The purpose of this ethnography is to gain a deeper understanding of how witches use psychic tools to improve their lives.

“Only listen to yourself, only your spirit knows your path,” our teacher, Roman Gonzalez, tells the class in response to a student’s question about taking advice from her deceased grandmother.³ Tarot class takes place

in the back room of the spiritual shop Aura's World in Uptown Whittier, California. With uneven brick sidewalks, large shady trees, and historical buildings dating as far back as 1888, the mysterious space of Uptown Whittier is the perfect meeting space for witches to learn psychic tools.

Aura's World is a spiritual shop owned by Laura Gonzalez and her partner Silvia. The shop sells crystals, offers tarot card readings, healings, and yoga classes. Laura previously held a support group for the LGBTQA community at the shop. However, due to low turnout, it was canceled. Women teach the majority of the classes and services offered by the shop. The only exceptions are the weekly meditation class and tarot class taught by Roman. Aura's World is an inclusive environment where patrons go to improve their lives through magic.

Tarot class consists of eight women ranging from ages 22 – 43, led by 29-year-old psychic Roman Gonzalez. For the past sixteen weeks, class met on Saturday evenings. Participants learned how to give tarot readings and improve their psychic abilities. The cultural phenomena of tarot classes are classified under witch culture, using psychic tools to gain a better understanding of oneself. Upon participating in the class, I found that the students of the tarot class have adopted a “monstrous identity” to cope with the monstrous ways in which they have been treated by society.

Tarot class introduces tarot cards as a psychic tool. The primary objective of the class is to learn how to read people clairvoyantly. To read safely, it is important that students have seniority over their aura (energetic field, usually a three-foot radius around the body). Class begins with grounding, achieved through a half hour self-guided meditation. Described by Roman, the purpose of this meditation is to, “clear out the energy of trauma, drama, and hysteria of the week. Please leave your boyfriend at the door. He is not paying to take this class, you are.”⁴ Once the class is grounded, Roman lectures on topics such as the afterlife, spirits, earth energy, and cosmic energy. After the lecture, the class applies the topic by conducting psychic exercises. For example, the class practiced remote viewing for three weeks. Remote viewing is seeing the location of a target through the use of psychic ability. To practice this, the student assistant Sandy hid at another part of Uptown Whittier. Students shared with the class what they saw. Once each student verbally shared what they saw, Sandy revealed where she hid. After completing the psychic exercise of the week, the floor is opened up for discussion. The

class concludes with a self-guided meditation where students are expected to set their intentions for the week. For the purpose of analysis, I choose to focus on two essential psychic tools taught and heavily used during class: third chakra balancing and the rose of separation. Third chakra balancing and the rose of separation are tools used for students to gain seniority over their lives, and are a useful tool for the women in the class to exert power.

To avoid carrying the energy of the environment, students are taught to open their first, second, and third chakras at specific percentages. The first and second chakras should be open at 10%. Male students must open their third chakra at 40%, and women are instructed to open their third chakra at 75%. According to the Tarot class handbook, “The navel chakra [third chakra] is about asserting yourself in a group. When it is open, you feel in control, and you have sufficient self-esteem [...] When your navel chakra is under active, you tend to be passive and indecisive.”⁵ When first introducing the exercise, Roman shared with the class that most women do not have their third chakras open typically. Students are expected to balance their chakras in the morning, at night, and whenever they get upset. By sharing with the class that women need to be assertive, it challenges the stereotype that women are naturally shy. Expecting students to balance their chakras daily relays the message of female empowerment through being assertive and expressing yourself.

The rose of separation is another psychic tool students use to maintain control over their aura in a uniquely feminine way. During meditation, when students envision something that they did not create, we are instructed to, “imagine a rose, put that spirit in the rose, and burn it.” The purpose of this exercise is to “separate” our energy from the energy of the entity that was in our space. It is important to note that we “separate ourselves” from energy rather than fight against it. If we “fight against” energy then we give power to that energy, and it ultimately makes it even more challenging to remove from our space. This exercise is not limited to issues associated with psychic activity. Students are encouraged to use the rose of separation to separate from everyone they encountered throughout the day, to make sure that we maintain seniority over our aura. The use of a rose as a source of empowerment contrasts the representation of women’s empowerment in monster culture as a violent endeavor. For example, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Jowett states, “The premise of *Buffy* and its use of horror and action means that violence is an integral

part of a fight between good and evil...Buffy's Slayer power is equated with physical prowess another way of universalizing 'masculine' attributes. Buffy uses phallic, penetrative weapons."⁶ By using the feminine tool of a rose to detach from evil, the witches of tarot class challenge the dominant narrative of empowerment through violence.

Shante Noyola, 22 years old, is one of the participants of the class. She supports herself by working at Smart and Final and lives in Norwalk. Growing up, Shante was physically abused by her father. Shante said, "I took the class to raise my vibration and work with my energies. I enjoy being able to view things under my control. Well, not control because that I feel like that word has a wacky energy behind it. But I clear the past out that is in my space. No one is going to ever push me around again."⁷ Before taking the class, Shante thought joining the Navy would be the only way she would gain stability in her life. Now she is aware that by dealing with her internal problems, she can change her external world.

Sasha Juarez is a 43-year-old Human Resource specialist. Since she was a child, Sasha has seen spirits (sometimes referred to as demons) and communicated with them in her dreams. In the past, spirits would move her furniture, and talk to her in her waking life. She took tarot class to learn how to make the ghosts leave her alone. "Once I took the tarot class, I've been able to see the dead people that follow me more clearly. By that I mean I am able to see them for who they really are, not just some scary demon. In my past, omens would happen all the time. Like candles would flicker and break to pieces. Roman asked why are you afraid? Now that I have my tools they don't bother me as much. After a year of taking that class I am comfortable with saying that I am a witch."⁸ Based on Shante and Sasha's comments, tarot class is a liberating experience in which witches are empowered to remove pain and foreign energies out of their space.

Sasha shares her personal experience with her witch identity, "When I was in my 20s I had a really hard time because those fuckers [ghosts] would speak to me in my dreams. Often times, my furniture would move. I was always afraid to sleep over at guy's houses because I didn't want them to see what I was."⁹ The witches in this tarot class are classified as monstrous because outsiders are unable to identify them at a glance. Cohen's monster thesis states, "And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions."¹⁰ The binary in this case is mortal

or supernatural. Since witches have no clear bodily difference, they represent a category crisis.

Shante shares why she thinks people are afraid of witches, “I think they are afraid of us because of what they see on TV. They think that we’re going to randomly get mad at them and cast a spell so their teeth fall out or some shit. It’s stupid because Roman teaches us to stay in our own space, to only have seniority over our own arura, no one else’s.”¹¹ The idea of power ties into themes presented Urbanski’s theory of speculative fiction, “The issue of power, who wields it and the consequences for those who do not [...] speculative fiction reflects our power nightmares.”¹² Based on Shante’s comment, it seems that the public fears witches because they do not understand them, and because they are afraid that they will have unjust power over them.

Sasha shares, “I am not afraid of the demons that I see when I meditate. Because I know that if I give them my fear, I give them my power. So I just put them in a rose and say goodbye to those fuckers.”¹³ Being assertive is an essential part of giving tarot readings. Without seniority over your aura, the beings of the person that you are reading will enter your space. Exploring basic tools such as chakra balancing and the rose of separation reveals that the participants of tarot class identify as witches to collect the power that was taken away from them at certain points in their life.

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“Better Me Than Someone Else”: Making Sense of Multiple Publics in Little India

Aisha Monks-Husain

AMST 502: Seminar on Public Memory

This paper was written in AMST 502 with Professor Alison Kanosky. Drawing on public memory theory and original ethnographic research, this essay argues for the ethnic enclave of Little India in Artesia, CA as a public memory for three distinct publics. The first public is made up of the Indian business people who own and operate businesses selling Indian products and food, ultimately reclaiming a colonized culture and past. The second public is made up of South Asian immigrants who use the space of Little India as a prosthetic memory to remember their home and cultures, despite cultural differences between India and their respective cultures. For the third public of South Asian Americans, Little India is a site of prosthetic memory where they access and learn about their parent cultures, homes, and memories they might not have access or opportunity to experience firsthand.

A district in Artesia, California, transports people home without the hassle of a passport, flights, and funds. Located on Pioneer Boulevard between 183rd and 188th Street, “Little India” sits in what is officially known as the International Cultural District.¹ A 1986 *Los Angeles Times* newspaper article titled “‘Little India’: Enterprising Immigrant Merchants Adding Spice to Artesia’s Main Street” addresses one tension surrounding the business district:

Enterprising Indian merchants, some of whom were operating elsewhere in the United States have seized the opportunity, giving a new spice to the small, middle-class city of 14,400. In the process, they have begun to revitalize an aging business district, according to city officials—and, inevitably, it has ruffled some local feathers.²

The ruffled feathers allude to the tensions surrounding the unofficial name of Little India: the community of Little India pushed for a sign defining the space and were opposed by the diverse community of Artesia pushing back against any official marker.³ This article was written in 1986, however as of May 2019, there is no sign labeling the district of Little India; yet it is still known as Little India amongst the business owners and consumers. Little India is surrounded by Asian, South Asian, and European restaurants and stores, which signifies the larger, diverse community of Artesia.⁴ The name Little India suggests this place is strictly rooted in Indian culture and peoples. However, the space is dotted with businesses and people who identify within the larger South Asian community. The continued use of the name “Little India” implies a silencing of South Asian cultures.

You know you have arrived in Little India because the names of the restaurants and stores are distinctly labeled as Indian, like the State Bank of India. Little India is a compact business district containing over one hundred sari shops, jewelry stores, shops filled with pots, pans, henna pens, Bollywood DVDs and bhangra CDs, and restaurants. The restaurants of Little India vary in aesthetic and type, ranging from order-at-the-deli-counter, to buffet-style, to sit-down. A handful of the restaurants brand themselves as “Pakistani and Indian.” The clothing stores sell a variety of traditional Indian and other South Asian styled outfits: *saris*, *kurta*, *salwar kameez*, and *dupattas*.

I have been going to Little India for as long as I can remember. My first salwar kameez was purchased from my aunty’s friend, who works at one of the sari shops. I grew up celebrating Muslim holidays, specifically Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, here with my family. At least once a month, I visit Little India with my Dad to stock up on spices, his favorite rice, and if in season—mangoes. When I was young, my Dad taught me how to pronounce and identify every treat in the deli window. As we walked down every grocery store aisle, Dad would see something, grab it, and say, “My God, we have this at home!” I knew he didn’t mean Fullerton; he meant Karachi, Pakistan—his place of birth.

My Dad’s memories are a driving force in my research of Little India as a public memory. I define public memory within the context of Diana Taylor’s theory of performance regarding the archive and the repertoire. The archive is a body of historical artifacts determined relevant through the lens of traditional Western notions of what should be preserved and what is accepted

as history. This privileged English text-based evidence produced by and about elites.⁵ The repertoire is a sum of cultural performances and knowledge passed down generationally, often through embodied, not written, transmission; memories passed through the repertoire are historically excluded from the archive based on Western ideas of relevancy, power, and history. Public memory includes both archival and repertory remembrances of a history. At times, the public memory reveals a silence within dominant, typically Western, historical narratives.⁶

I was led to research this space as a public memory through my Dad's cultural past. I wanted to know why Little India exists; why is it important; who is it for and who is left out? What is remembered here, and who is doing the remembering? To answer these questions, I went directly to the source. I interviewed business owners and customers within Little India, as well as family members. I also use my own memories and experiences with Little India in an attempt to better understand myself and the larger cultural work of Little India. Through ethnographic research, I found that the Indian business owners I interviewed are not remembering home through the commodification of their culture—this was one of my assumptions of the cultural work of Little India. Rather, my ethnographic research shows Indian business owners use the space of Little India to gain profit and success in America through the act of selling their own culture to the larger public, ultimately re-claiming "Orientalist" ideologies imposed on India.

Through interviews, I also found Little India reminds several South Asian immigrants of their home countries. This suggests South Asian immigrants find Little India to be the closest thing they have to the home they left—a home that no longer exists or ceases to exist as it does in their memory. People with South Asian roots negotiate their place within Little India by making a space for themselves using the food, spices, sweets, clothing, and celebrations as prosthetic connections.⁷ I also discovered new generations of South Asian-Americans learn about their parents' home countries and culture within the space of Little India.

In this essay, I argue Little India is a site remembering a past and culture that serves as a public memory for three publics: Indian immigrants, South Asian immigrants, and South Asian-Americans. First, it is a memory for the Indian immigrants' public who created this space and continue the tradition of Indian commerce in America. Second, the layers of space, place,

and culture attribute to how Little India acts as a public memory for the South Asian public—a place for them to remember a migration past, to remember what they no longer have or what no longer exists as it does in their memories. This district is a space for the South Asian diaspora to access cultures of their past—their previous way of life. Third, through the transmission of memory, Little India is a place where new generations of South Asian-Americans can access the culture of their families' past.

Little India: An Origin Story

There is a hidden history and dynamic of Indian merchants in the United States, which is crucial in understanding the history of Little India.⁸ Mass consumerism and trade are visible within the function of Little India today, which underscores the origin of this ethnic enclave. Both Little India and the city of Artesia are defined by British imperialism, American immigration acts, and migration patterns of Dutch, Portuguese, and South Asian peoples.⁹ Little India is one result of the East India Trading Company setting foot in India in 1765, ultimately a catalyst to British reign over India in 1818.¹⁰ Consequences of British imperialism are visible in early migration movements of Indian merchants into the United States as the importation of machine-made products into India undermined products handmade by Indian women and sold by male Indian merchants.¹¹ Along with destabilizing Indian trade, British rule imposed high taxes on merchants' products in an effort to curb wealth and independence.¹² In *To My Countrymen*, a collection of Desa Bandhu Chitta Ranjan Das's presidential addresses, Das writes: "economically the British rule has had a disastrous effect on our national well being."¹³ British rule over India negatively impacted India's trade, agency, freedom, and independence.

British imperial rule in India is responsible for the influx of South Asians into the United States in the late 19th century; the displacement of trade and livelihoods led merchants to travel elsewhere to continue their livelihood and provide for their families. Beginning in 1847, Indian merchants migrated outside of India and into other Asian countries, Australia, Europe, and the United States to sell their handmade products. Immigrant media studies scholar Vivek Bald describes this migration:

They traveled thousands of miles...to a place where the scarves, handkerchiefs, tablecloths, and wall hangings

embroidered in Hooghly villages had become the stuff of fashions, fancies, and fantasies.¹⁴

The “stuff of fashions” refers to the global boom of Orientalism, which coincided with Indian merchants’ migration patterns. The term “Orientalism”—academically coined by Edward Said—and the global phenomenon of Orientalism shaped merchants’ success throughout the world and the United States, as Bald writes:

For Americans of the era, “India” was presented as part of a mysterious and exotic “Orient” that took in the entire swath of North Africa, the Middle East, India, and Ceylon. This “Orient,” in turn, was a blur of images, stories, references, and fantasies, derived from the contexts of the British, French, and other European empires. In their original context, Orientalist narratives and imagery had performed a particular kind of work. The British portrayal of India as the seat of a once great but now decaying civilization provided moral and political justification for the imposition and maintenance of colonial rule. In the American context, Orientalist notions were more free-floating.¹⁵

India was presented as something “Oriental” to Americans as the term was associated with an exotic, fantastical way of life. Americans participated in the appropriation of Indian fashion and aesthetic, without extending any imperial power over India. However, Europeans’ conception of “Orient” as part of a “decaying civilization” implied that it was desperate for colonial rule and support, hence the history of imperial rule in India and South Asia.

Edward Said’s canonical work on Orientalism argues individuals within the space defined as the “Orient” had little to do with the terminology:

The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be “Oriental” in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it could be—that is, submitted to being—made Oriental. There is very little consent to be found.¹⁶

As Said demonstrates, the term “Orient” comes from the perspective of a colonizing nation, rather than the colonized people and nation defining themselves. Therefore, the Orient creates otherness through the silencing of the appropriation of Indian products and culture and the interpretation of

the South Asian past. This imperial identification, which silences the identity of the colonized people, connects to Michel-Rolph Trouillot's argument that archival sources reproduce power and determine who is included in the historical narrative. Trouillot argues that Haitian history is not written by and for Haitians, but "has been shaped by Western conventions and procedures for westernized Haitians who have literacy and formal access to a Western language and culture."¹⁷ As history unfolds—as the British empire rules India and restructures trade routes and dynamics—silences are produced; these silences are visible in the creation and popularity of the term "Orient" and the appropriation of Indian culture. Trouillot's research on the westernization of Haitian history mirrors the appropriation of Indian culture and Said's "Orient." These parallels show how imperialism and colonialism impacted colonized countries and the experiences of colonized peoples in regaining control of how they define themselves.¹⁸

The way in which these cultures and histories were displayed and consumed by the Western world altered the popular memory of the colonized past and present. The market is a space where an Orientalist public memory became their own—they chose how it is displayed and sold. The appropriation of Indian products and culture was mostly visible in Europe and the United States, in parlor rooms and public spaces like Coney Island.¹⁹ Mass consumerism of Indian products and culture grew in the United States; cultural products including "silk scarves and shawls, cushion covers, wall hangings, rugs, brassware, carved and enameled boxes, jewelry, incense, perfume" were wanted not only by elites but also by all classes within America.²⁰ By the 1900s, some Indian merchants began integrating into the social and economic fabric of the United States, while seasoned merchants made trips back to India to restock and bring new merchants.²¹ Bald points to the silenced history of an American obsession with Indian culture and argues the obsession was greater than that of 1960s hippie era:

...it is largely forgotten that at the turn of the twentieth century the United States was in the grips of a craze over India and "the Orient" ... Between the 1880s and 1920s, Americans from all classes and walks of life were drawn to an "India" that was, in essence, a collective fantasy.²²

Bald brings light to the intricate trading systems and influence Indian merchants had on Americans subscribing to Indian culture. This cultural

and historical context amplifies the importance of Little India as a place of business. Operating businesses that sell some aspect of Indian culture allows for a re-appropriation of culture by Indians, as well as a way of surviving in America.

The emergence of a South Asian community in America is a direct result of lax immigration laws in the 1800s that allowed South Asian migrant workers and immigrants to easily move into the United States.²³ Migrant workers and immigrants were hired alongside groups of Asian laborers to build railroads and cut down trees.²⁴ The maneuverable laws and landscape changed with the Chinese Exclusion Act—the first in American history to ban specific ethnic groups from entering the United States.²⁵ The bill passed on April 12, 1882, and was signed in for ten years yet remained implemented until the Magnuson Act of 1943. The success of subsequent Immigration Acts of 1917, 1921, and 1924 continued legislation restricting immigration of specific groups of people, specifically Asians—impacting Indian merchants and the larger South Asian community.²⁶ These immigration policies maintained until the American Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which removed nationality-based quotas and restrictions on people from Asia and Africa. The effects of the change in 1965 immigration laws were visible in the 1970s and 1980s, where 35.2% of new immigrants came from Asia.²⁷

Following the removal of nationality quotas and restrictions, an influx of South Asians entered the United States.²⁸ Immigration policy played a significant role in the construction of Indian communities and space in America as well as in the city of Artesia. In 1986, Steven Churm of *The Los Angeles Times* wrote:

Artesia lies within minutes of 10,000 to 12,000 Indian émigrés who have settled in the suburbs straddling the Los Angeles-Orange County line over the last two decades. Indian businessmen spotted the demand and began setting up shops in Artesia in the late 1970s. It was easy for Indians to locate in the city's slumping business district—a victim of regional shopping malls and changing times. Leases were cheap and available.²⁹

Detailing Artesia's population growth and demographics, Churm describes the genesis of Little India. As Indian immigrants moved into the United States and settled into cities like Artesia, there was a demand for all things

Indian. In 1970, the Indian grocery store Selecto Spices moved from Hollywood to Artesia.³⁰ Selecto Spices moved to better serve clients who lived in Artesia, a move that was “a response to the consumer needs of an increasing population of immigrants.”³¹ Indian business owners took full advantage of the growing demand and more businesses began to crop up. With a renewed obsession with Indian culture in the countercultural movement, Little India appealed to consumers outside of the Indian community as well. Shukla argues Little India performs a community for both the *inside*, the public of the Indian community and the *outside*, made up of the publics of South Asian immigrants, South Asian Americans, and people without South Asian roots: “Artesia has absorbed and accommodated the recent fashion craze over things Indian... In this way, the area performs Indian community for both the ‘inside’ and ‘outside.’”³² Shukla’s theory of multiple communities is crucial to my argument on the public memory and cultural work of Little India. Applying Shukla’s theory, I believe Artesian-Indian business owners use Little India as a performance of community for multiple publics, ultimately using the space of “consumption-oriented Artesia to serve as a cultural and political focal point for the broader non-resident Indian community.”³³

Making Sense of Multiple Publics: Indian Immigrant Business Owners, South Asian Immigrants and South Asian-Americans

Products of culture perform work. Little India is a product of culture that performs public memory for multiple publics. The publics can be loosely divided into Indian immigrant business owners, South Asian immigrants, and South Asian-Americans—children of the latter publics. The memory of both the public of South Asian immigrants and that of South Asian-American children can be understood through Alison Landsberg’s theory of prosthetic memory and Diana Taylor’s theory of performance and memory.

Alison Landsberg’s theory of prosthetic memory helps to further understand how the public of South Asian immigrants use Little India to remember their home and culture. It can also be used to better understand how South Asian American children use Little India to learn about their parent cultures and homeland through the process of memory transmission. Using Landsberg as a foundational theory, I argue that prosthetic memory occurs not only through technology but also through ethnic enclaves. Defined as “an experience that occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself

into a larger history,³⁴ Alison Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory through technology works to build a connection between an individual and a historical narrative of the past.³⁵ The physical business district of Little India is a performance of culture and, as such, is a prosthetic memory for immigrants and South Asian-American generations.

Diana Taylor argues the "repertoire enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge."³⁶ Little India is an embodied memory—a performance of culture that transmits memory and knowledge. The performance is Little India itself, the entire business district selling and creating a space that mirrors a past. Taylor argues, "performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called 'twice-behaved behavior.'"³⁷ As a performance, Little India transmits cultural knowledge and memory, assisting participants in gaining and sometimes performing a sense of belonging and identity.

The Public of South Asian Immigrants

For South Asian immigrants, Little India is a place where they perform belonging and remember home through a prosthetic public memory. While Landsberg focuses on technology as transmitting memory, prosthetic memory occurs in the ethnic enclave of Little India. South Asian immigrants perform belonging; the business district is the closest space they have to the memories of their home and culture, yet it is still not specifically their home or culture being remembered. This prosthetic connection was evident in several of my interviews; I spoke with Tanvir in an interview at a Pakistani-Indian restaurant in Little India. He is Pakistani and has traveled back to Pakistan since he moved to Diamond Bar in 1979. He goes to Little India frequently with members of his family who are visiting or who have moved here from Pakistan as well; they spend their time in Little India shopping and eating. Tanvir shared how Little India reminds him of his home before he left,

I have been back and it was hard. Everything was falling apart. Buildings, roads, restaurants. Before I left it was clean and safe. Now you have to be careful going out after certain times. You get robbed at gun point. You can't go eat with your family. It is scary. It used to be so fun. And clean.

Seeing it like that was hard. I think that's why I come here.
It reminds me of home but I shouldn't say home. My home
doesn't exist like that anymore.³⁸

Tanvir recounts that on his trips back to Pakistan, he was surprised by the changing landscape of his home and reveals that his memories differ from the current state of Pakistan. The home Tanvir left no longer exists as it does in his memory. Instead, the landscape has changed, cementing his memories in an unreachable past. For him, Little India is a place where he performs a sense of belonging and identity. The district is the closest thing he has to the home he left and is a place for him to relive memories of home. He shares that going out to eat with family is unsafe. In Little India, he and his family share a meal culturally similar to Pakistani food. Tanvir negotiates his place within this ethnic enclave in an effort to continue participating in cultural traditions and to keep the memories of his home alive. Applying Landberg's theory to Tanvir demonstrates how ethnic enclaves act as a prosthetic memory for immigrants. Little India acts as a prosthetic memory for Tanvir's cultural past.

Tanvir's story reflects that of several individuals from South Asia who remember their home differently than what it is today. My father is a Pakistani immigrant and found Little India when he moved to California in 1987. In an interview with me, he shares,

I came here and it was the closest place I had to home. Some of the food is different, but it feels like home with the smells and people. People spoke the same languages as me and I liked coming here when I first moved to the U.S. I brought my kids here and it just always felt like I was back home.³⁹

My Dad acknowledges how the culture sold in Little India is different from his own; however, he recognizes the culture is as close as he can get to home without traveling there. The similarities between the South Asian communities is evident in the recognition of shared languages and smells. Little India is not only for Indian people, but is a space for South Asians to perform belonging, transmit memories, and negotiate a place for themselves. Diana Taylor argues "performance transmits memories, makes political claims, and manifests a group's sense of identity."⁴⁰ Building from Diana Taylor's theory of performance and memory, performances of belonging in places like Little India transmit memories and manifest a group sense of identity for South

Asians, ultimately cultivating a sense and act of agency for historically oppressed peoples.

I remember going to Little India as a young girl and my father and his siblings shared their stories of home while we were eating and shopping. It was from these remembrances in Little India I learned about Pakistan and Pakistani-Muslim culture. My Dad and his siblings transmitted their memories of home and belonging when they said: "we grew up with these at home," or "I haven't seen this since I was in Pakistan" or "when we were kids..." They shared these memories with their children; they created and nurtured an understanding of their culture, experiences, and homeland. My Dad and his siblings did this in hopes of teaching a new generation about their homeland and culture. It was important to them that despite leaving their home country, that they carried on cultural traditions.

The Public of South Asian-Americans

For the public of South Asian Americans, Little India acts as a prosthetic public memory where they access and learn about their culture. In an article titled, "The 1.5 Generation of Russian Immigrants in Israel: Between Integration and Sociocultural Retention," Larissa Remennick argues, "second- and third-generation immigrants often reclaim their ethnic roots and reestablish social and economic links with their long-lost homelands."⁴¹ This rekindling of ethnicity and culture is evident in the experiences of South Asian Americans I interviewed in Little India. Little India is a place for them to access a cultural heritage and a past that they might not otherwise experience. I interviewed Naveed at a restaurant we've both been coming to for most of our lives; we discussed the role of Little India in teaching him about his parents' homeland, culture, and past. Naveed's parents are from Bangladesh and have lived in California for almost thirty years. He shared with me:

My parents are from Bangladesh. We never had money to go but we could make it to Pioneer. I remember being a kid and I thought it was cool to go out and see people who kind of looked and dressed like my parents and me and my brother. I remember my Dad showed me how to eat with my hands at a restaurant like this one. He must have been sick of feeding me. We're Muslim, right? But we would celebrate Eid here and my Dad always shared his emigration story before we ate. I didn't care when I was younger but, yeah, as I got older

it became more important for me to know. I think that's part of it though like as you get older you care more about where you come from. I think that's why I like coming here still, it reminds me of learning about myself and where I come from even though I've never been I think Little India makes me feel less disconnected than I might if it didn't exist. ⁴²

Naveed shared that his family wasn't financially capable of visiting Bangladesh, but they could "make it to Pioneer." At times, children of immigrants don't necessarily have the means to actually visit their parents' home country. In Little India, Naveed engaged with his parents' culture despite not having access to Bangladesh. In Little India, Naveed and other second-generation South Asian-Americans can both learn and remember a country and a culture they haven't physically experienced before. Naveed went on to describe seeing people in clothing styles similar to his family, something that he did not often experience in other areas of Orange and Los Angeles County. This is a significant and common experience of the larger South Asian-American public. Similar cultural traditions and signifiers create a sense of community for individuals who feel disconnected from their cultural heritage. Little India acts as a prosthetic memory for Naveed and other South Asian-Americans like him, where they can experience and engage with their cultural past.

Naveed remembers his father teaching him how to eat using his hands as a sort of natural, God-given utensils. Learning to eat with your hands means using what you have to eat. I remember my Dad teaching me how to eat with my hands, and it felt like a cultural milestone in how my fingers became stained from the turmeric just like my Dad's. Eating with my hands taught me about a culture I felt disconnected from, a part of me I couldn't grasp because I wasn't fluent in Urdu and because we loosely celebrate Christmas. It gave me a way of inhabiting myself, an initiation into a club. Our experiences paralleled Taufique, who I interviewed at a restaurant while we ate samosas. He shared:

My mom is white...I grew up in Orange County, I always felt...distant from Dad's culture. But I remember going to Pioneer and being excited to...eat Pakistani food. You know, mom doesn't know how to cook it. I'd learn about my Dad and he taught me...what to order and how to order it the way Pakistanis eat it and how to eat with my hands like other Pakistanis do. I just thought it was cool to be like my Dad...

we still go here.⁴³

Taufique's memory of Little India mirrors Naveed's in how they both experienced the positive impact of representation. They both grew up in an area where their culture was not necessarily visible or accessible. However, this changed when they entered Little India. Both reflect on the disconnection from their parents' cultures and reveal that through food and cultural similarities, they felt closer to their parents and their culture. Food, the ritual of sharing a meal, and eating with your hands are what Prashizky and Remennick discuss in their article, "Celebrating Memory and Belonging: Young Russian Israelis Claim Their Unique Place in Tel-Aviv's Urban Space," define as "tangible signs of ethnicity that play an important role in the encounters between immigrants and locals in the host society. In the multicultural reality of contemporary cities, they are a part of the sensory experience of difference in the urban space."⁴⁴ While their argument centers on the relationship between immigrants and non-immigrants in urban spaces, I believe it can be applied to the experiences of Taufique, Naveed, and other South Asian Americans who learn about and prosthetically connect to their parent's culture. In this way, Little India acts as a prosthetic memory for South Asian-Americans where they can learn rituals, traditions, and customs like how to eat curry with a piece of naan.

Naveed remembers his father sharing his migration story while celebrating Eid in Little India. He reflects on how he didn't care about the story when he was younger, but as he grew up, it became more important. He says, "Little India makes me feel less disconnected than I might if it didn't exist."⁴⁵ When he is in Little India, he remembers learning about his culture and his father, yet he also acknowledges this persistent cultural disconnect. Naveed's reflection shows a sense in which he "acquires these memories and is led to feel a connection to the past while remembering his position in the contemporary moment."⁴⁶ Naveed recognizes he is still disconnected from his parents' culture, yet in Little India, he feels a connection to not only his childhood memories but to his culture itself.

The Public of Indian Business Owners

For the public of Indian business owners, Little India isn't simply a business district—it is a cultural business district. This distinction is necessary

in understanding how the “consumption-oriented Artesia serves as a cultural and political focal point for the broader non-resident Indian community. It was there that the fiftieth anniversary Independence Day took place.”⁴⁷ For Indian immigrants, Little India is largely a place to make a profit and practice their culture. It is also a place for them to remember their home or a past way of life. Shukla argues Little India has “become representative of Indian culture to outsiders.”⁴⁸ This is evident in the dynamic of the multiple publics that Indian businesses serve and the ways in which these publics are served. For the public of Indian business owners, Little India is a place where they can profit from selling and displaying their culture.

Little India is also a place for Indian business owners to continue the tradition of Indian entrepreneurship and agency in the United States, as Anup Sheth argues business owners play a significant role in the development and continuation of Little India.⁴⁹ Interviewed by Andrew Perry for the City of Artesia’s YouTube channel, Jurpal Singh comments on the Diwali Festival: “all of the merchants on Pioneer Boulevard are the organizers.”⁵⁰ Singh touches on the community of Little India coming together to organize the Diwali celebration. Since these events were organized by Indian business owners, there is a sense of credibility and authenticity. Little India allows anyone to access a cultural past. Coupled with the public acknowledgment of Diwali and Indian Independence Day, business owners and attendees place this cultural past in the present. What we see in these celebrations is how business owners are working to not only claim a space but also to incorporate a cultural past into the same space.

The celebrations of Diwali and Indian Independence Day are performances and connect to Diana Taylor’s repertoire of untraditional cultural knowledge. Performing belonging through the public memory of Little India, the larger South Asian community experience a sense of belonging upon arriving in Little India. On November 10, 2013, the Little India Chamber of Commerce and the City of Artesia hosted an event in honor of one of the most honored Indian holidays: Diwali. Diwali is a festival that holds different meanings for different religions within India. While many Americans know Diwali as a festival of lights, the celebration is tied to historical events and has deeper meanings than the lights that have come to be associated with the religious holiday. In an interview at his restaurant, Indian business owner Tariq describes Diwali:

To celebrate Diwali there are two religions of the Indian culture. One is Hinduism, the other is Sikhism. In the Hinduism, their ruler returned and most of the people celebrated his coming over there. The proclaimed individual comes to the city and they celebrate his return, a welcome to him. For Sikhs, they celebrate because of the return of Guru Har-gobind who was captured by an emperor but released and that is what they celebrate. This is both of the communities celebrating.⁵¹

Tariq's explanation of Diwali touches on the groups of people within the space of Little India and India itself. The vastness of India is mirrored within the space of Little India in how he describes both religious communities celebrating Diwali within Little India. Here, Little India mirrors the variety of regions, peoples, and religions found in India in how different groups use this space to celebrate Diwali, despite celebrating the holiday for different reasons.

Through the performance of the Diwali celebration, knowledge of a cultural past is made available to Indians and other South Asians. In their article on memory and belonging, Anna Prashizky and Larissa Remennick argue the role of collective memory in migration experiences, specifically looking at how Russian Israelis in Tel Aviv use holidays and rituals to perform a sense of belonging and claim space:

Commemorative ceremonies are frameworks provided by the group to individuals, within which their memories are contextualized, mapped and transferred to next generations.⁵²

The celebrations of Diwali and Indian Independence Day act as the frameworks described by Prashizky and Remennick. They offer a way for Indian immigrants and people with Indian roots to access a cultural past through rituals and performances. In doing so, they are able to perform belonging and claim the space of Little India.

The City of Artesia's website contains "News Flash" sections where events and press releases are shared. On August 20, 2018, the city posted a recap of the Indian Independence Day celebration (hosted by City of Artesia) held on Saturday, August 11, 2018. The post describes "54 vendor booths ranging from mango ice cream to fine jewelry and almost everything in between."⁵³ Families, locals, city council members, and members of the Indian, South Asian, and non-Indian community made up the estimated

four thousand people that attended the event.⁵⁴ The diverse makeup of the attendees suggests that Diwali is transforming with the migration of Indian immigrants, as Prashizky and Remennick argue: “holiday celebrations evolve and attain local cultural elements, expressing immigrants’ hybrid identity and enabling their feelings of belonging in the new urban space.”⁵⁵ Diwali has evolved to include not only individuals with Indian or South Asian roots, but through the space of Little India, individuals outside of the South Asian community attended these events.

Indian dances were performed by youth groups and Indian musicians. A fashion show showcased the latest Indian fashion and ended with participants singing the Indian National Anthem “Jana Gana Mana.”⁵⁶ Singing the Indian National Anthem at an event celebrating Indian Independence transformed the crowd into a group performing a ritual of a cultural past. The celebration of Indian Independence Day is not a memory of home, but rather, a performance of a ritual that asserts group identity and agency for a group of people with a colonized past.

The public of Indian business owners are not remembering home in their business endeavors. Rather, Little India is a place for them to make a profit selling their culture and to reclaim a colonized past. In this aspect, Little India is a memory for the public of Indian immigrants who created this space and continue the history of Indian commerce in America. Through the act of selling their own culture to the larger public, Indian business owners ultimately re-claim traditional “Orientalist”/othering ideologies surrounding Indian culture. This was all apparent in an interview with business owner Chunda, who very briefly talked about her migration story and what she came to America to do: make money.

It took me a long time to get here from Mumbai. But then you come and you find some way to make money. That’s why I’m here. I started a business because that is what you do here. I guess it just made sense to sell saris. I mean I know about them and better me than someone else.⁵⁷

Chunda owns a sari and fabric shop in Little India. In the interview, Chunda talks about how she came here to make money, which is not unusual for immigrants. However, what struck me was that she specifically chose to sell saris because she knows about saris and fabric in general, but also because “better [her] than someone else.” When I asked her what she meant by this, Chunda

said: "people who aren't Indian don't really know about saris they just know what they see in Bollywood." Chunda recognized the demand for Indian apparel, taking advantage of her cultural knowledge she runs a business and reclaims a space that has been historically appropriated.

Indian businessmen continued to recognize the demand and opportunity for economic success. Thus Little India grew into the business district we know it as today. In an interview with *The Los Angeles Times* writer Steven Churm, business owner Malani shared that economic opportunity ultimately drove him to open a business in Little India:

Sari shop owner Malani is typical of Indians setting up shop in Artesia. He is young, educated, and aggressive. And he shares a belief by many of his countrymen who move here: 'There is no place like America to make a buck.'⁵⁸

Malani's story reflects the history of Indian merchants using the United States consumer culture to make a profit. He believes "there is no place like America to make a buck," which attests to how economic opportunity drives many immigrants on a journey to the US. It also reveals the way Malani sees himself and his business endeavors not as part of remembering his culture and home, but as a way to use his culture and persevering ideas about the Orient to make a profit and achieve financial success.

Cultural Work of Little India

Initially, when I approached my research project, I hypothesized that the business owners of Little India remembered their home and migration through their business endeavors; what I discovered was far from my initial assumption. Through ethnographic and historical research, this paper details the multiple publics found in Little India. For the public of South Asian immigrants, they use Little India to remember their home culture through a prosthetic connection. For the public of South Asian-Americans, Little India is a place where they access a cultural past and knowledge about their culture that they might not have access to otherwise. Finally, for the public of Indian business owners, Little India is a place where they reclaim ownership of their culture and colonized past through the selling of Indian products and food. The cultural work of Little India and the dynamics of these three public memories suggest a larger silencing of South Asian cultures within Little India. While Pakistani culture exists within Little India, there are a plethora

of cultures and countries within South Asia that are lost in the space of Little India.

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- 4 "Who Are South Asians?" n.d. *South Asian Concern*. <http://southasianconcern.org/south-asian/>. The non-profit organization South Asian Concern defines "South Asian" as individuals from "Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Sometimes Myanmar (Burma) is also included."
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- 24 Bald, *Bengali Harlem*, 9.
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Substances and Stigma

What to expect and questions to consider while reading:

- The influence of culture and society on identity
- How might aspects of American culture create the desire for substance use?
- How does American culture stigmatize those struggling with substance use?
- The conditions that lead to substance use
- The priority placed on ensuring the welfare of humanity

The Moral Corruption of Jessica Hernandez

Jessica Hernandez

AMST 377: Prejudice and American Culture

When I enrolled in Professor John Ibson's class entitled Prejudice and American Culture, I expected to be spending my semester merely learning about how prejudice and intolerance have shaped American society. I never imagined that I would be asked to examine my own innate biases. However, on that first day of class, I was given an assignment that asked me to do just that. Students were tasked with attending a place that was frequented by individuals who were different than them and write a journal entry about the experience. The following text is my journal after attending one such place. It is comprised of three parts: before, during, and after. "Before" serves as an insight to my upbringing, analyzing how my personal biases formed. "During," reads as my inner monologue, chronicling every detail of my outing. "After," is my reflection on the experience, what it taught me, and the change it spurred within me. Initially, the thought of completing this assignment made me quite uncomfortable, but the experience that arose from it was transformative. I hope reading this encourages others to look within, examine their own biases, and resolve to do something that makes them uncomfortable every once in a while.

Journal Location – The Various Bars of Downtown Fullerton

BEFORE – "A Tale of Temperance"

I am 21 years old and have never tried alcohol before. Whenever I tell someone that, I am met with disbelief. It is as if I told them I have never seen sunlight, or am the proud owner of a third arm. It is a social norm that people, especially ones my age, drink alcohol. Now, I am going to interject to

say that I have never been a particularly good young person. My music library is comprised primarily of show tunes, and I watch far too many historical documentaries. However, these behaviors are generally accepted, and I never have to explain my rationale for why I like these things. But when I tell people I do not drink, they always ask for an explanation. People have asked all sorts of questions when I tell them, ranging from the ever so common “Is someone in your family an alcoholic?” to my personal favorite, “Are you like a Mormon or something?” All of these people are fishing for a justifiable reason as to why I would violate the norm. The truth is, the answer to this question is much more complicated than a simple yes or no answer. It is a convoluted amalgamation of my upbringing, religiosity, and insecurities, which has forged a prejudice within me against those who drink.

So where did this negative bias of those who drink alcohol arise from? Well, let’s start from the beginning. I grew up in a bad neighborhood. Rates of poverty and crime were high, and the graduation rate was low. Everything is harder for those who grow up in rough areas. Everything is seemingly against us. We have to try twice as hard and be twice as good to make it. You need to want the things you strive for wholeheartedly, or else you will fail. I internalized this added pressure to succeed, resolving to be “perfect.” I felt that if I made the slightest of errors, my entire life would be derailed, and I would be forced to reside the rest of my life in the town in which I was raised. This led to an extreme sense of paranoia. I felt that if I did anything wrong, showed any inkling of rebellion, that I would somehow get caught, and as a result, my life would be ruined. So in high school, when my friends would go out partying and drinking, I would stay home. My mind was plagued with vivid images of house parties being stormed by the police, who would handcuff all those present, throw them in a police van, and charge them for underage drinking. Even though I never heard stories of this actually happening, I was sure that if I partook in those activities, that somehow I would get arrested and be unable to apply to college or get a respectable job. It is here where the first negative images I had of drinkers formed. I began to see them as people who were seemingly throwing their lives away, choosing to put their future at risk for a couple of hours of fun.

At this same time, I entered a Catholic high school. Now, the religious education you receive in a Catholic high school is mainly comprised of: do not have sex, do not do drugs, and do not drink. We were inundated

with the moral consequences we would suffer if we committed any of these offenses. Our teachers always told us that sin was a slippery slope and that if we started down any of these paths, we could end up leading a life of immorality. Looking back at this, I realize on a surface level, they were trying to keep kids out of trouble, but at the time I truly internalized this idea. This narrative played into the emerging negative view I had of drinkers. Not only was I securing my earthly future by staying away from criminal behaviors, but I was also securing my heavenly future by staying on the righteous path.

Abstaining from drinking thus gave me a sense of moral superiority. I began to feel that I was better than those who drank. I had more willpower than they did. I was not led into temptation like they were. In all honesty, I liked this feeling. I enjoyed feeling like I was better than someone, relished in it even. As are all teenagers, I was extremely insecure. I would constantly compare myself to other girls at my high school, weighing my physical appearance against theirs. I would think, *“Surely, I could never be as thin as that girl, or as beautiful as this girl, but I know she drinks, and I don’t, so at least I am better than her in some regard.”* Not drinking gave me a reason to view myself as being above those I felt threatened by. While I believed I could never surpass them when it came to beauty, I could exceed them in moral righteousness.

As I transitioned out of high school and into college, this ideology still lingered. While I stayed the same, the environment around me changed. My world was becoming more diverse. My classmates were no longer restricted to Catholic teenagers, but now students of varying ages and backgrounds. Suddenly, I was viewed as an adult by my peers. Most of my classmates now assumed that, like most adults, I had tried alcohol. This assumption was perhaps the most jarring to me. I will never forget the time I was offered champagne at a New Year’s Eve gathering and cried. They knew I was not twenty-one yet, and still insisted on giving me a glass. How dare they assume that I was this moral deviant that drank and broke the law? I realize now that this was an extreme overreaction. However, this story reflects the warped image I had of alcohol and those who consumed it. It illustrates both the fear I had about “breaking the law” and ruining my life, and the perception I had of those who drank as morally deficient.

My view of drinking and those who partook in it became so negative that I can vividly recollect advocating for the reinstatement of prohibition.

I perceived drinkers as messy, sloppy, drunks. I envisioned them as people throwing up on sideways and driving recklessly. I purposefully avoided situations where I knew drunk people would be abundant, like concerts, because I was afraid of their lack of physical control due to their inebriation. Then one semester, I took a class that challenged these beliefs.

The class was called “The American Drug Scene” and was offered through the Sociology department. Throughout the semester, we discussed various substances people took to alter their states of consciousness. One particular class period, we had a group discussion on alcohol. Everyone spoke of pleasant memories, equating alcohol consumption with fun social gatherings, and youthful carefreeness. For the first time, I thought: “Have I been missing out on something? Were the strict views I had preventing me from experiencing a social rite of passage? Was I somehow missing out on the best part of being a young person?” I began to examine the origins of my beliefs and consider alcohol consumption in this new light.

At this point, however, not drinking had become tied with my identity. I felt that so much of who I was had been built upon those many years of refuting alcohol offers. So often I had identified myself as someone who “didn’t do that.” Who would I be if I did? If I started drinking, would it be disingenuous to who I was? Additionally, after years of separating myself from those who drank, I felt isolated from the culture. I had never been to a bar, and the thought of doing so made me physically uncomfortable. How do you order? What are the social rules? I felt utterly clueless.

When it came to picking a location for my journal assignment, I knew that going to a bar would be a perfect place for me to go, as I would be a total outsider, and had even harbored prejudice against people who frequented them. It also gave me a justifiable reason to go to a bar for the first time, as I could reason it was for “educational purposes.” Under the guise of ethnological research, I could go see how “the other half lives.” My friends jumped at the idea when I told them, insisting they escort me through my first “Downtown Fullerton experience.” Half of me is worried about going. Am I going to get completely overwhelmed and have a panic attack in the bathroom? It seems like a possibility. However, the other half of me is excited. Maybe I will have a good time and see that the thing that I have vilified for so long is not as bad as I thought. I am hoping for the latter, but only time will tell.

DURING – *Jessica Hernandez: Proper Young Person*

“Don’t bring a purse!” my sister yells at me as I am getting ready. “Make sure to bring cash in case there is a cover charge!” she adds. “That’s a thing?” I ask. I have no clue what I am doing. A look of confusion spreads across my face, and I suddenly feel overwhelmed. I am a novice when it comes to the bar scene, and it is clearly showing at this moment. In an instant, I am regretting my decision to go. An image flashes in my mind of a couple of weeks back when I told my high school friend, Ceci, that I planned on going to the bars of Downtown Fullerton to complete an assignment. Straight-faced, she looked at me and said, “Don’t go. You’ll hate it.” I brushed her comments off at the time, but now I am starting to believe they may have some merit.

Once I finish getting ready, I head over to pick up my friend, Dana, who will be accompanying me on this excursion. I sent her a text to inform her that I am on my way, and she texts back expressing her happiness in the fact that we are “finally” going out together. After reading her text, the excitement starts to creep in. After years of dodging invites, I am finally being a proper young person and going out to a bar on a Friday night. Still, I have Ceci’s words wracking the back of my mind, and my nerves are still on edge. Simultaneously, I feel both nervous and excited.

As we are driving to the location, I express my worries and fears to Dana. “It will be fine,” she says. While she knows that this is my first time going to a bar, she does not seem to grasp the severity of the situation for me. “It is not a big deal,” she says. As we approach the area, I let out a nervous chuckle and say, “Is this the beginning of my moral corruption?” She laughs and keeps repeating reaffirming phrases. To her, it was a funny remark, but to me, it was a real concern.

Finally, we arrived at our destination. The area is bustling with young people, walking from bar to bar. Many young ladies were making this pilgrimage in short dresses and high heeled shoes. I looked down at my floral shirt and brightly colored sweater, suddenly feeling underdressed. Within minutes of arrival, I am escorted by my friends to a sports bar. The façade was brightly lit, and there was sawdust littered about the ground. “You have your I.D?” my friend asked as she swiftly pulled hers out of her pocket and showed it to the security guard at the front door. “*Oh, this is happening now,*” I thought as I scrambled to get mine out of my wallet. My initial thoughts

upon walking in were 1.) *It's hot* and 2.) *It's loud*. Overall, I felt out of place and uncomfortable. My perspective of my surroundings shifted from that of an active participant to an observer. I could envision myself walking timidly through the bar like a lost child. My senses were overloaded. I felt like an overstimulated infant, given too much to look at too soon. The sensation to run overtook me. I wanted out of there as quickly as possible. Politely yet frantically, I asked my friends if we could go somewhere else, and they ushered me to a different location.

As we left, I realized that to an outside observer, I looked like I belonged. None of the patrons were staring at me or wondering what I was doing there. All of my anxieties and uneasiness were internal, visible to only me. To the other patrons, I was just a typical college student hitting the town on the weekend. It was a strange sensation to be roaming around feeling entirely out of place without anyone else aware of it. To survive this night, I thought, I must have a change of approach. I needed to relinquish my fears and play the part of a typical college-aged student. Today, I was going to be playing the role of a "proper young person." In other words, I was going to fake it until I made it, pretending that the things that usually made me uncomfortable were no big deal to me.

This approach worked pretty well. I was able to relax a bit because, in my mind, it was not Jessica that would be having fun, but this new version of her I constructed. It allowed me the freedom to get out of my head and focus on my surroundings. Traveling from bar to bar, I got to observe some of the patrons. Most of them were not the annoying drunkards I envisioned, unable to stand up or form sentences. They were people socializing and laughing with friends, families reconnecting over a glass of beer, enjoyers of live music, and couples on dates. Previously, I had this mentality of extremes: a person was either completely sober or a drunk. Observing these people showed me that there were in-betweens. Most of the individuals were not alcoholics setting out to get black-out drunk, but were people just looking to have a fun evening and enjoy a few drinks.

That is not to say that I did not witness my fair share of drunken fools. I saw one girl haphazardly climb up on a table and then proceed to dance on top of it. Her dance moves did not coincide with the music that was playing, and it was clear that this was not the "tabletop dancing" type of establishment. She was quickly ushered down by her friends, all of whom

looked mortified. There was also a young man who was violently throwing up on the sidewalk, mere inches away from a trash can. A year ago, stumbling across this scene would have been my worst nightmare. But “proper young person Jessica” just brushed it off, lamenting his misfortune with my friends. Perhaps the most exciting thing I witnessed all night, was a bouncer chasing a man down the street. I have no clue what caused the altercation, although many in the crowd assumed that he left without paying. I will never forget the rush of adrenaline as the man and the bouncer whooshed past me. Cops were abundantly present in the vicinity, so one can surmise that he was probably apprehended.

The excitement of the altercation aside, it was now time for the ceremonious and long-awaited event of the evening: the ordering of my first ever alcoholic drink. My friends insisted I try something, and as I was leaning into the whole “proper young person” thing, I relented. I ordered what I hoped had the most sugar and the least amount of alcohol. “Those are dangerous, aren’t they?” the bartender asked after I ordered. “I don’t know,” I responded, “this is my first time trying alcohol.” A look of disbelief spread across his face. “Like ever?” he asked. “Yes, like ever,” I responded. At this response, he stops drying the glass he had been working on, putting it down and leaning forward, looking me directly in the eyes. “Can I ask you a personal question?” he asked, “Feel totally free not to answer it.” Cautiously, I responded, “Sure.” He then asked, “Has someone in your family abused alcohol before?” As this is a common question I am asked when I tell people I do not drink, I responded with the prepared Cliff Notes version of my reasoning for not drinking. After doing so, he then proceeds to tell me his entire life story, detailing the alcohol abuse in his own family. While it was nice that he felt he could confide in me, he was inadvertently stoking my fears about heading down the “immoral path” of alcoholism.

After some time, the drink I ordered had finally arrived. My friends were all armed with their smartphones, ready to record my reaction. Honestly, I thought the drink tasted gross. When my friends asked me what it tasted like, I likened it to drinking one of those scented Bath and Body Works hand sanitizers. However, I paid for it, so I was determined to drink the whole thing. Part of me hoped that my new bartender friend would give me the drink for free, but alas, he did not. Eventually, the ice began to melt, and I found the drink more tolerable.

When envisioning this moment, I had always expected some cosmic shift to occur. I felt that there would be two versions of Jessica: the one before trying alcohol and the one after. The truth is, none of that occurred. At my core, I still felt the same. I still liked musicals and history documentaries, only now I had tried alcohol. Perhaps the only thing that did change was my perception of those who drank.

AFTER – *Fearless*

Writing this journal entry was difficult for me. It forced me to confront the prejudice I had towards those who drink. In the past, I have thought and said extremely negative things about people who consumed alcohol. For years, I viewed them as moral degenerates, sloppy miscreants, and people who were seemingly willing to put their future in jeopardy. Upon further reflection of these beliefs, I realize that the primary contributing factor to these views was fear. I was afraid of ending up trapped in the same rundown neighborhood I was raised in. So I hid behind virtuosity, claiming to take the moral high ground. In actuality, it was not so much the act of drinking that I was troubled by, but the possible ramifications of it. This anti-alcohol ideology emerged as a form of self-preservation. Drinking and partying were things that could put my upward mobility in jeopardy, so I vilified them so much as never to be tempted to partake in them. However, the problem was that I was projecting these fears onto other people, making them out to be villains for indulging in something I was too afraid to try.

Examining my own prejudice has led me to the realization that so much of prejudice is motivated by fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of something different, or in my case, the fear of things staying the same. I am grateful for this assignment. Without it, I do not know if I would have ever gone out of my comfort zone and had this experience. Truthfully, I do not think I would have ever had the courage to do so. This experience has given me a better understanding of the motivating factors behind people's prejudices. Often people's prejudices are labeled as moral defects. Their disdain attributed to them being an innately bad person. However, sometimes, people are not bad; sometimes, they are just scared.

“They Survive in Perpetual Crisis:” Ethnographers Encounter the Addict

Nick Catt

AMST 401: American Culture Through Social Science

This paper was written for Professor Leila Zenderland’s American Culture Through Social Science course in the fall of 2018. For our final research project, we were instructed to choose two texts, written at least 30 years apart, in which social scientists dealt with a specific problem and analyze how they approached and handled the topic. This paper deals with two ethnographies, written over 70 years apart, on heroin and opium addicts. I explore the ways in which the authors use ethnography to provide visibility to the often-invisible plight of addicts unafforded for by medical and legal discourses. As America is currently experiencing an epidemic of opiate addiction, I believe it is necessary to understand the phenomenon of addiction from the point-of-view of the addict. By doing this, the stigma placed upon addicts can be combated and we can better devise strategies to provide them the support they so desperately need.

Heroin addiction requires a tolerance to pain and suffering almost unknown to those addicted to other substances. This is displayed, effectively and explicitly, in one account of homeless drug addicts. It describes in gruesome detail a man self-lancing one of his many abscesses:

He slowly inserts a pair of manicure scissors into the center of the inflammation, pushing one of the blades all the way up to the handle. He then slowly swirls the blade around to loosen the flesh. Pus flows out of the gash like a weeping eye. He finally pulls the scissors out and, with slow deliberation, squeezes the gash between his two thumbs to “drain it.” After ten or twenty seconds of grimacing and squeezing, he pokes a toenail clipper into the center of the abscess, using it as tweezers. He pulls out some sort of black gunk and,

satisfied, holds it up for me to photograph: “This is the poison causing my pain.”¹

Such disturbing behavior, while not typical of all heroin addicts, was captured by an ethnographer. As a genre, ethnography seeks to capture the unfamiliar. It allows us to see new realities—even gruesome ones. Ethnographers do not merely tell us these stories on behalf of their informants. Instead, they allow them to speak for themselves.

This study will examine two attempts by ethnographers to allow addicts to speak. Although they were produced seventy years apart, both addressed some of the very same issues. In this paper, I will explore how each used ethnographic methods to try to answer three key questions: what is addiction, who is the addict, and what can be done for them.

The problem that these ethnographers addressed, opium or heroin addiction, is neither new nor unique to American society. In fact, by the 21st century it had become what the *Los Angeles Times* in 2018 called a crisis of epidemic proportions.² As with all major social issues, this problem is inherently overdetermined. Therefore, any meaningful study must map out the complex interplay of personal, social, and cultural variables.

In *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America*, William White argues that throughout the last 250 years America’s response to drug and alcohol issues has been characterized by “cycles of despair and hope.”³ Periods of despair were marked by a general lack of treatment resources as well as repressive state responses. Both ethnographies considered here were produced during such periods. In response, each attempted to humanize opium and heroin addicts, a population not only criminalized, but also devalued.

Published in 1937, Bingham Dai’s groundbreaking ethnography *Opium Addiction in Chicago* became the first sympathetic account of addiction. Dai was born in China and came to America in the late 1920s to study sociology at the University of Chicago. He had been involved in anti-opium movements with his uncle, a man who would later die as an opium addict. At the time, opium use in America was seen in a highly racialized manner—that is, as primarily a “Chinese problem.” For example, a *New York Times* article from 1937 detailed how America was “threatened by the ‘opium menace in the Far East.’”⁴

Two decades earlier, in 1914, the United States had for the first time

regulated and criminalized drug use with the passage of the Harrison Anti-Narcotic Act. This law abruptly changed the availability of drugs such as opiates and cocaine from uncontrolled access to access regulated by medical professionals.⁵ Physicians were required to prescribe progressively declining doses of such drugs. With later amendments, the state prohibited possession categorically. These laws reflected a fundamental lack of knowledge about the dynamics of addiction, especially the phenomenon of relapse.⁶ With the criminalization of drug use, many narcotic treatment clinics were closed.⁷ In 1934 the term "addiction" appeared for the first time in the American Psychiatric Association's Standard Classified Nomenclature of Disease.⁸ State-sponsored attempts at rehabilitation during the 1930s largely took the forms of imprisonment or commitment to psychiatric hospitals. Soon these resources became strained as the numbers of institutionalized addicts skyrocketed. Dai felt such measures did nothing to solve the problem. In response, he decided instead to use ethnography to understand the point of view of the addict.

Much in the same way, but over seventy years later, Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg published their ethnographic work, *Righteous Dopefiend*, in 2009. Both medical anthropologists, they spent over a decade studying a community of San Francisco heroin addicts who they call the "Edgewater homeless" to produce their book. Like Dai's study, the research for *Righteous Dopefiend* was produced during another period of darkness in terms of treatment possibilities as the War on Drugs was reaching its height. The criminalization of narcotics which began in the early-20th century would reach a logical extreme with the draconian drug laws and zero-tolerance policies of the 1980s and 1990s. White states that during this era "the 'war on drugs' turned quickly into a war against drug users (particularly poor drug users of color)" and "cultural ownership of drug and alcohol problems shifted from institutions of compassion and care to institutions of control and punishment."⁹

The parallels between American responses to perceived crises of drug use and addiction in the early- and late-20th century are striking. During both periods, the government attempted to "incarcerate its way out of it drug problems" rather than addressing the social and cultural issues that allowed addiction to flourish.¹⁰ Bourgois and Schonberg responded to these attitudes by showing how institutional forces such as the law and economic policies guided by neoliberalism weighed upon vulnerable communities and allowed abuse and violence to thrive. They saw the suffering of homeless heroin

addicts as a political phenomenon that involves multiple abusive relationships, both structural and personal. In allowing addicts to tell their stories uncensored, they too used ethnography to provide a much-needed visibility to the violent reality in which the most desperate addicts struggle to survive.

In considering both changes in the behavior of addicts and changes in ethnographic methods over this seventy-year period, this paper will compare how these two studies answered some basic questions about the nature of addiction, the kinds of individuals affected by it, and the potential solutions available within American society.

What is Addiction?

“Addiction is a slippery and problematic concept.”¹¹

In the early 20th century, most doctors viewed addiction as a medical disease experienced by individuals with inherent mental defects. Physicians such as Emil Kraepelin, a founder of scientific psychiatry, believed that opiate addiction “is a form of toxic psychosis and is therefore an outcome of one’s defective constitution.”¹² Addicts were understood to possess psychopathic personality traits and were degenerating their brains through drug use. Others were formulating conceptions of addiction that had a social edge, such as T. D. Crothers, who thought of opiate addiction as a “disease of modern civilization...because continuous use of morphine relieves the pain of neurasthenia, a consequence of modernization upon constitutionally vulnerable individuals.”¹³ Even with this understanding the use of opiates was viewed as a coping mechanism and a symptom of an inability to meet the demands of modern life. Thus, the problem of addiction remained wholly within the individual.

By contrast, Bingham Dai sought to study opiate addiction as a social behavior. He thought the explosion of addiction in the 19th and 20th centuries was due to a “psychology of exploitation, resulting from the ascendancy of commercial and pecuniary interest in highly industrialized cultures.”¹⁴ It was in this sense that Dai saw addiction as a problem greater than any individual addict. He insisted that any meaningful study must understand the relationship of the addict to the society and culture. Adopting what was then a very novel approach, Dai explained addiction as “a sociological problem—one that reflected tensions in the way individuals related to their social worlds—and not merely as a medical or psychiatric one.”¹⁵

One method used in *Opium Addiction in Chicago* is what Dai calls "the ecological approach," which locates addicts spatially within the city. He saw such knowledge as "an essential, though preliminary, step in exploring what may be called the addicts' social and cultural environment."¹⁶ Dai also provided demographic characteristics of addicts such as race, family background, education, sex, religion, occupation, marital status, age, and criminal involvement. Using records from federal narcotics agencies, local police, and hospitals, he secured data on over two thousand addicts and several hundred drug dealers from 1928-1934.

Much to the surprise of his contemporaries, Dai found that opium addiction was not isolated to any one race. In fact, four-fifths of Chicago's addicts were white. Dai also reported a general lack of meaningful organization in what he referred to as primary group associations. Family and community life were almost non-existent in areas with the highest addiction rates. Such areas were "characterized...by a loosening of the normative and affectional ties that promoted social organization and harmony."¹⁷ Thus the environment inhabited by addicts was one in which "individuals live mostly by and for themselves, in which the amount of social control is reduced to the minimum, and in which opportunities for unrestrained dissipation and various forms of personal disorganization abound."¹⁸

Also employed in *Opium Addiction in Chicago* is the prolonged interview method—a technique that reflected Dai's training in psychoanalysis. He believed it essential to "construct the addict's social world as they experienced it,"¹⁹ since "it is to this world of his own and not the observer's world that the addict reacts as he does."²⁰ He interviewed over twenty patients at the Cook County Psychopathic Hospital, several from shelter houses, some known to law enforcement, and others introduced to him. He found that addiction was a means to resolve multiple tensions, including failure to live up to social norms, particularly regarding gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status.²¹ Many addicts revealed childhood traumas and other personal issues that Dai believed predisposed them to opium addiction.

For example, Dai interviewed a hospital patient first prescribed morphine after a surgery. A show business friend told her he could supply the drug for less and thus she began her life as an addict. The woman insisted that "she came from a good family...they are politicians, and that is why she could get into the hospital."²² She also described her desire to open an

auto-repair shop and become a car mechanic. Dai attributed her addiction to multiple factors: her operation, addict friends, failure to live up to her family's success, and her desire for a typically masculine job—all compounded by access to drugs. Dai believed his subjects exhibited “maladjusted personalities” and a degree of emotional pain for which they found relief through opiates. These personality traits, which in the language of Alcoholics Anonymous would be called “character defects,” combined with a proximity to what Dai called the “underworld,” created a milieu in which addiction thrived.

Bourgeois and Schonberg approached addiction in a very different way in *Righteous Dopefiend*. Whereas Dai studied a city, they focused on the micro-community they call the “Edgewater homeless.” Their goal was to expose the “continuum of structural, symbolic, everyday, and interpersonal violence as experienced by homeless addicts to describe and explain the logic and dynamics of their addiction.”²³ Further, they saw an urgency in exposing pain and suffering. As their book stated, “They survive in perpetual crisis. Their everyday physical and psychic pain should not be allowed to remain invisible.”²⁴ Bourgeois and Schonberg framed their work around a theory of abuse that explains the “suffering of homeless heroin injectors” as “a politically structured phenomenon that encompasses multiple abusive relationships, both structural and personal.”²⁵ The Edgewater homeless are marginalized by forces outside of their control such as the “restructuring of the labor market, the War on Drugs, the gentrification of San Francisco’s housing market, the gutting of social services, the administration of bureaucracies, racism, sexuality, gender power relations, and stigma.”²⁶ Together, these forces created a marginalized status fraught with emotional, physical, and psychological pain. To escape such pain the Edgewater homeless turned to temporary relief provided by heroin, which then consumed their lives.

The most novel aspect of *Righteous Dopefiend* was its use of Jeff Schonberg’s black and white photography. Most images depicted “a squalid reality that is difficult to grasp relying on the text alone.”²⁷ While the addicts are given pseudonyms, their faces are boldly shown in the photographs. To justify this decision, Bourgeois and Schonberg wrote on asking an addict about how she felt about them using a picture of her cooking heroin. She replied, “If you can’t see the face, you can’t see the misery.”²⁸ These photographs ran the risk, as two reviewers noted, of turning *Righteous Dopefiend* into a “voyeuristic pornography of suffering” but Bourgeois and Schonberg chose to

take that risk to provide visceral evidence of pain and suffering.²⁹

Besides explicit images of drug use and squalor, Schonberg captured moments of love, friendship, and comradeship. For example, one photograph depicts a couple, Carter and Tina, locked in a loving embrace while cooking dinner. Another emotional moment between Carter and Tina is captured as they huddle together crying in a church as a pastor and church-members hold them together in prayer. These photographs bring the reader so much closer to the everyday realities of the Edgewater homeless in a way that "refuse[s] to whitewash or romanticize" them.³⁰

Like Dai, Bourgois and Schonberg also paid close attention to where addicts live. However, they "examine[d] in detail the micro-level mechanisms through which externally imposed forces operate on vulnerable individuals and communities."³¹ They argued that homeless addicts often live in "gray zones" in which the repressive forces of the state and society converge to create a "morally ambiguous space that blurs the lines between victims and perpetrators."³² Because of this, they are victims as well as agents of abuse.

The principal site of Bourgois and Schonberg's fieldwork was an area called "the hole" in which these addicts have set up their encampments, a no-man's land nestled between multiple intersecting freeways out-of-sight from the public. "The hole," barely visible, became a refuge safe from the threat posed by law enforcement. Bourgois and Schonberg pointed out that the "criminalization—not just of heroin but also of syringes—as well as the enforcement of local city ordinances...pushes drug users into the farthest margins of public space," often the filthiest nooks and crannies of the city.³³ This was a principal site of suffering as the Edgewater homeless were often cold, wet, hungry, and exhausted. One man even died there during their fieldwork. Bourgois and Schonberg "explain[ed] this suffering as a product of the intersection of structural forces and individual actions."³⁴

In both ethnographies, addiction was presented as a social behavior and a social experience. Therefore, it is a phenomenon that extends well beyond any individual addict or group although it manifests in them. It will always be inextricably intertwined with the social and cultural conditions in which it occurs.

Who are the Addicts?

"I'll let y'all know why I'm like this. Let me tell my story." —Tina³⁵

In considering who became an addict, Dai's 1937 study once again took a novel approach. "If the addict is taken into account at all," he wrote, "he is usually looked upon by the law-enforcement officers, physicians and the general public as an individual with a diseased body, or a weak will-power, or a defective mentality, or still a psychopathic personality."³⁶ Dai instead insisted on viewing the addict as a person, not as an outsider: It "may be said that every human individual, be he a holy man or an opium addict, is invariably a social as well as a cultural being."³⁷ Dai's approach was groundbreaking in humanizing the addict.

His interviews gave him an unprecedented degree of intimacy into the emotional lives of his subjects. One man interviewed at a men's shelter house for instance, revealed that he had lost both parents by the age of eight. At twelve he was selling newspapers and became familiar with "underworld characters," and lost his virginity to a prostitute at the same age. Surrounded by successful gamblers and prostitutes he quit school after deciding that "it does not take brains to make money."³⁸ By eighteen he was a pimp for a sex worker who introduced him to opium; once she left he had to fend for himself. "I felt the bottom had dropped out of everything," this man added. "I did not know where to go... I did not know what to do... It was as if the world had stopped and all of us were flying around hellbent for some place."³⁹ Responding to Dai's questions about the influence of women, he said,

If all the 'junkers' had mothers to whom they could go to, they would not be 'junkers' for long, 'cause if a fellow knows someone who cares, he will try his damndest. But what is the use of bucking the world, when one is lonesome and none of the rest of the world gives a damn if you come or go? Why take the cure? Why live at all, in fact, except to use more of the stuff and wonder what it is all about? If I had a mother I would be a different man today.⁴⁰

In analyzing this story, Dai stated, "In that kind of environment where the most fashionable people were the gamblers, the prostitutes, and the pimps, it seems only natural that a boy should strive to be one of them."⁴¹ Regarding the psychological dimension, Dai believed, "The man was not far wrong when he said what he needed is a mother. He has been and probably will always be looking for one, but he will never find her and probably will always feel unhappy and despondent."⁴² Through including this man's story and delving into his psychology, Dai provided a glimpse into a life shaped by trauma

and loss. Rather than condemning the man, he reconstructed his history to provide an intimate, emotionally charged understanding of addiction. Dai's conclusion was that the man is flawed in the way all humans are flawed and, like anyone else, shared a human need for family, love, care, and a place in the world.

Many other interviews also exposed such vulnerabilities. He sympathized with these addicts, including several whose introduction to opiates came from a doctor. This situation, described here in 1937, is all too common today as many Americans unknowingly become addicts under their doctor's care. Combined with environmental and psychological factors, including feelings of insecurity or emptiness, an individual can acquire a life-long addiction. This was the case with a man who suffered a spinal injury when performing with a circus at age nineteen, having been prescribed narcotic drugs. A fellow performer offered to provide it for him at a cheaper cost. Some months later the man realized he was an addict and felt defeated by the habit: "Moreover, thought[s] born of hopelessness and incurability of the habit is one great contributing factor...that it is futile to attempt to quit."⁴³ By presenting his participants as vulnerable Dai infused them with a humanity and complexity new to studies of addiction.

By contrast, in describing who is an addict, Bourgois and Schonberg studied a much smaller cohort. Completed over seventy years later, Bourgois and Schonberg did not need to convince their audience that the addicts of their study are human—as Dai did. However, they revealed the humanity of the Edgewater homeless in much the same way, by presenting moments of vulnerability and personal strife. These moments elicit a strong degree of sympathy even when contrasted with stories of criminal activity and interpersonal betrayal. They stated that, "Our challenge is to portray the full details of the agony and the ecstasy of surviving on the street as a heroin injector without beatifying or making a spectacle of the individuals involved, and without reifying the larger forces enveloping them."⁴⁴ In this sense, the authors humanized the Edgewater homeless by exposing their everyday lives and struggles to new audiences.

They focused, for instance, on an African American woman named Tina addicted to crack and heroin. Like many of Dai's subjects, Tina came from a broken home and had turned to sex work as a means of survival as a teenager. Tina shared intimate accounts of her past but needed to be

“emotionally prepared” for such encounters, with interviews often planned days in advance.⁴⁵ Tina had also separated herself from her children “as a strategy for breaking her family’s transgenerational cycle of abuse and for managing her oscillations between maternal love and anger.”⁴⁶ In one encounter with Schonberg, she created an “imaginary household” with dolls scavenged from a nearby dumpster. She gave the dolls the names of her real-life daughters. Eventually, however, this play became too much for her, and she told Schonberg:

Nobody tell me a damn thing. I’m hard headed. But it’s no excuse, because I put myself in this position. And I pray to God that he help me along the way. Okay? I don’t wanna talk anymore, Jeff. Let me smoke this crack. It frees my brain. I don’t think about nothin’. I don’t want to think about all this, what I shared with you...my children, my kids.⁴⁷

Tina was shown in an extremely vulnerable position and her words speak volumes about the nature of addiction. As her life spiraled out of control, drugs became a means of survival and addiction a symptom and a cause of her misfortune. While readers probably cannot relate to Tina’s addiction, they can relate to her desire to escape from trauma.

Bourgeois and Schonberg also focused on relationships between the Edgewater homeless, the personal bonds necessary for survival. The authors described a “moral economy” in which “cooperating to purchase bags [of heroin] is not simply a pragmatic, economic, or logistical necessity; it is the basis for sociality and establishes the boundaries of networks that provide companionship and also facilitate material survival.”⁴⁸ Beyond drugs, these addicts shared many necessities—food, blankets, clothing, shelter, needles, money—as well as emotional support needed for psychological survival.

A chapter is devoted to “male love” in which Bourgeois and Schonberg examined intensely intimate, yet non-sexual, relationships between male community members. They detailed the “homosocial” relationship between Hank and Petey, quoting Hank as saying, “I never let anybody get close to me. But when Petey walked into my life...I couldn’t stop it. It is hard to put into words. It’s a closeness thing. It’s not about sex, never was. I really love that guy.”⁴⁹ In such relationships men often displayed physical affection, such as hugging and sleeping together for warmth, and assisted each other through rituals of mutual grooming. Yet even with so much “homosocial affection,”

the men were often extremely homophobic: "They levied the epithet 'homosexual bitch' only at their worst enemies."⁵⁰ Bourgois and Schonberg did not sugarcoat or gloss over the ways in which these men reproduce the hatred and symbolic violence which played a part in their marginalization. The result was that these addicts were humanized as "neither victims nor heroes; they are complex, contradictory human beings, victims and victimizers at the same time who live (and die) under conditions (both material and symbolic) not of their own choosing."⁵¹

Both *Opium Addiction in Chicago* and *Righteous Dopefiend* emphasized the perspective of the addict, allowing them to speak without passing judgment. They presented addicts as vulnerable people with rich emotional lives and a complex personhood all their own. In short, as more than merely "addicts." These works differ, however, in how they analyzed their evidence. Dai, a trained psychoanalyst, often tried to connect their addiction to early childhood and sexual experiences, including homosexuality. Bourgois and Schonberg, on the other hand, relied more on social theory to decipher their material. At times, their use of such theory was dense and highly academic, enough to certainly alienate readers without an adequate interpretive background. They are right when they said, "The Edgewater homeless did not analyze their personal problems in terms of Foucault's biopower and governmentality, or Bourdieu's symbolic violence and misrecognition."⁵² Even so, their tendency toward theoretical abstraction did not detract from the power of their research. Although they often stepped back, as did Dai, they all inevitably jumped right back in with captivating personal stories that add complexity in answering the question of "who is an addict."

What Can be Done?

"If we knew why we were out here, then something could be done. None of us going to say, 'I want to be a dopefiend all my life.'—Sonny⁵³

In *Opium Addiction in Chicago*, Dai provided a view of what treatment looked like in the 1930s, especially in private sanitariums. This usually entailed a hasty detoxification in which an addict was discharged in as little as ten days. Many in Dai's study had sought treatment on multiple occasions through state psychiatric institutions, private sanitariums, and local hospitals, but inevitably relapsed as these "cures" had no after-care. Dai believed these failures were due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the interplay

of personal and social factors, since they would be detoxed and released back into the same social environment. With no support to help them cope with readjusting to the normal world, addicts suffered social anomie and isolation. One woman Dai interviewed described a cycle of recovery and relapse. After one such “cure,” she managed to stay clean for eight months, but relapsed after running into an old friend who was a drug user. The friend offered her morphine and she obliged—mainly, she told Dai, because she was depressed and had no one to talk to. She would continue to use, sometimes hesitating but eventually giving in to an inner voice that kept saying, “What is the use?”⁵⁴ Dai reinforced the point that opium addicts have connections to an “underworld” largely due to the criminalization of drugs and the social stigma attached to addicts. Since they “are always afraid of...being discovered that they are ‘dope fiends’...they tend to associate exclusively with themselves.”⁵⁵ Also discouraging was “a general belief...that once an addict always an addict, and that there is no cure for drug addiction; and yet practically all of them keep on hoping that some day they will be cured.”⁵⁶

Dai did, however, cite a few cases of successful rehabilitation, at least during the time of his study. One consistent social factor among those who remained clean was a physical or social separation from other drug users by cultivating relationships with “respectable society.” Personal factors were also important, since addicts needed to regain a sense of self-worth, reestablish healthy roles with family, and rediscover that life was worth living. For example, one man abandoned his opiate habit in prison where entrusted with maintaining the dining hall, since he found he “did work a lot better without the stuff.”⁵⁷ As Dai noted, “He explained that he had a lot of pride in himself...and he wanted to show to others that he alone of all addicts could get rid of his drug habit if he chose.”⁵⁸ After leaving prison, he came into contact with “university men” who helped him settle into a career. Dai found that effective recovery required social and personal reorganization. While such cases were rare, Dai still insisted that “the only intelligent and humane way is to understand each and every drug addict as a member of society and to help him or her achieve a satisfactory social adjustment.”⁵⁹

Treatment resources were also scarce during the period when Bourgois and Schonberg conducted their ethnography. Over seventy years later, addicts once again had few options and were generally seen as criminals in the eyes of the law and society. Interestingly, during the mid-20th century,

options for compassionate drug treatment existed and it seemed a period of advocacy would follow shifting public attitudes on addiction from stigma to understanding. Unfortunately, this did not happen. War on Drugs influenced rhetoric which dominated political discourse and policy shifted towards “restigmatization, demedicalization, and intensified criminalization.”⁶⁰

The addicts of Bourgois and Schonberg’s study were affected by these shifts in policy. With few options for recovery, they adopted what the authors called an “outlaw” mentality. The title of their book, *Righteous Dopefiend*, came from the fact that the “Edgewater homeless embrace the popular terminology of addiction and, with ambivalent pride, refer to themselves as ‘righteous dopefiends.’”⁶¹ Bound together by their marginalized status, this provided a “solution to the riddle of how to simultaneously accept the identity of addict while sustaining one’s self-esteem.”⁶² Bourgois and Schonberg noted that in 1996 the San Francisco Department of Health advertised on-demand treatment services for drug users—but such treatment was never available to the homeless. They criticized such methods since “addiction is not simply biologically determined; it is a social experience that is not amenable to magic-bullet biomedical solutions.”⁶³ Seventy years later, their argument echoed Dai’s, especially in emphasizing that addicts should not just be sent back to their old milieu after a hasty detox.

Even with these obstacles, all members of the Edgewater homeless desired to get clean and some did receive formal drug treatment. For example, Tina was assisted by a public health outreach team, but it still took six weeks for her to be admitted to an inpatient detox center. If not for the assistance of Schonberg who made sure Tina did not miss her intake appointment, it was likely that she would never have been admitted. After a maximum thirty-one days, the program’s bylaws required that they “graduate” and released Tina without any meaningful post-detox services. They placed her in a women’s shelter in an area known for drugs and crime. Tina relapsed soon after and Schonberg found her washing car windows for petty cash. When asked about her relapse considering her success in detox she replied,

’Cause I wanted to, Jeff. I’m a dopefiend... I’m a lovable person, but I’m a failure. I wanna be clean and sober... But I don’t know why everything changes when I’m on dope... I don’t have no place to go right now... So I just gonna stay out here and tough it out and get my ass together and just go on.⁶⁴

Bourgois and Schonberg made the point that the only free and accessible forms of post-detox services in America during this time were the twelve-step meetings of Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous which rely on a fellowship of support and spiritual solidarity. Such programs require addicts to construct new senses of self-worth and meaning which unfortunately often results in addicts “fall[ing] back on their more familiar and persuasive righteous dopefiend ways of being in the world, and they seek out old drug using friends and acquaintances.”⁶⁵ Like Dai, Bourgois and Schonberg found methods of rehabilitation largely ineffective due to a fundamental failure to see addiction as a social behavior instead of merely a disease.

Bourgois and Schonberg ended *Righteous Dopefiend* by proposing strategies of combating both addiction and homelessness in trying to link theory with practice. Some suggestions were quite lofty as they provided a critique of American economic neoliberalism and advocated for a restructuring of political, economic, and social policy to prevent the marginalization of such “lumpen” communities. Although it is unlikely that these hegemonic relationships of power will change based on the advice of liberal anthropologists, their profound cry for change exemplifies activist scholarship. They suggested practical strategies for recovery, treatment, and maintenance to improve the quality of life for homeless addicts and end the cycle of abuse. Bourgois and Schonberg concluded their study in a way Dai could not, as they could see the repercussions of drug control policy over the course of the 20th century.

Conclusion

The greatest similarity between *Opium Addiction* in Chicago, published in 1937, and *Righteous Dopefiend*, published in 2009, is how they understood the problem of addiction. Despite their differences, both described addiction as a social behavior rather than as merely an individual disease. As Dai wrote, “opium addiction is essentially a problem of the one and many, a problem of the relation between the individual and society, between personality and culture,”⁶⁶ while Bourgois and Schonberg addressed addiction by clarifying “the relationships between large-scale power forces and intimate ways of being.”⁶⁷

In considering “who is an addict,” however, these two ethnographies moved in different directions. Dai interviewed a very diverse set of people: his

addicts are doctors, professionals, and circus performers as well as convicted criminals, pimps, and sex workers. Bourgois and Schonberg instead focused on a micro-community consisting of only the most marginalized individuals. Even so, both works, produced within a social, political, and cultural climate that stigmatized and demonized addicts, insisted on humanizing them by letting them describe their lives.

When taking into context larger historical trends, these two ethnographies showed the arc of American drug control strategy across the 20th century. Dai's research followed the passage of America's first attempt to regulate and criminalize drug use in the early decades of the century. Bourgois and Schonberg's research was conducted during the end of the century's War on Drugs. Both *Opium Addiction in Chicago* and *Righteous Dopefiend* viewed criminalization as an inadequate response that only exacerbated such problems. It seems that even after seventy years the dominant medical and legal discourses on drug use and addiction had not evolved much.

Recent history and public opinion generally agree that such measures have been a colossal failure. Yet there is a present urgency to the problem of opiate addiction. By 2018, the National Institute on Drug Abuse had called this issue a "public health crisis" with over 115 people every day dying from opioid overdoses in the United States.⁶⁸ Claire Felter, a writer for the Council on Foreign Relations website, adds that the current opioid crisis poses risks that transcend public health to affect the economy as well as national security. She also believes that the problem will only get worse as "some experts say the death toll may not peak for years."⁶⁹

It will be interesting to see how opiate addiction will be dealt with in the current climate of crisis. While drug laws are beginning to be relaxed, many questions remain. For instance, will there be a new understanding of the social as well as medical elements evident in the meaning of "addiction"? Will the changing of the general profile of addicts—25 to 45-year-old males are reported as being the most vulnerable population to succumb to opiate addiction and to die from accidental overdoses—affect how the problem is dealt with?⁷⁰ Will they become more visible? Will new and more viable options for treatment and recovery be created for this newest cohort of opium addicts? Or will addiction continue to be stigmatized, as well as misunderstood on a national level?

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Popular Culture

Popular culture influences how Americans both self identify and perceive others.

Questions to consider while reading:

- How might content and representation alter our understanding of others and of ourselves?
- How can visual tales both of reality and fiction help us create spaces to confront difficult topics such as family, gender, sexuality, misogyny, sexual violence and bullying?

Queer Eye for the Straight Guy: Creating Space for Queerness Through Reality Television

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AMST 350: Seminar in Theory and Method of Americans
Studies

This essay was constructed for Professor Dustin Abnet's course, American Studies 350: Theories and Methods of American Studies. This essay intends to explore the relationship between queer identity and heteronormativity as represented through the rebooted, *Queer Eye*, and how this reality show has influenced the perception of queer culture. The *Queer Eye* cast incorporates social commentary to promote the idea of tolerance and growth between opposing identities. This approach has contributed to the widespread popularity of the series, allowing for the queer-identified cast to become iconic figures outside of the show. Before reading, I would like readers to reflect on how they perceive the queer community and how these ideas came to be. I would challenge readers to consider the different identities that exist within the queer/LGBTQIAA+ community and think critically about the way queerness is represented.

Queer Eye explores the way urban queer culture exists within rural American spaces. The Netflix reality television show, rebooted from the 2004 Bravo series, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, stars five gay men who travel to different areas of the American South to give lifestyle makeovers. The group is referred to as the Fab 5, which features two men of color, Karamo and Tan, and three white men, Bobby, Johnathon, and Antoni. Each man has a different makeover focus: clothing, cooking, home, beauty, and the self. In the series premiere, the Fab 5 visit rural Georgia to makeover Tom, a middle-aged, heterosexual white man. In their time together, the Fab 5 and Tom build a close relationship that communicates the possibility of finding commonalities

between opposing identities. *Queer Eye* juxtaposes queer culture with heteronormative expectations to appeal to both queer and cisgender, heterosexual people. By introducing ideas of queer culture that fit within the standards of heterosexual America, *Queer Eye* can infiltrate mainstream media, allowing the queer cast of the show the power to reclaim and represent their identities on a large-scale platform. The normalization of queer culture within the heteronormative spaces featured on the show allows for the normalization of queer identity within its audience, while contributing the erasure of other queer experiences.

The cast of the show uses the series opening to share that their intent is to find common ground between the queer community and others. The first statement comes from Tan France, who justifies the *Queer Eye* reboot by saying the original show was “a fight for tolerance, our fight is for acceptance.”¹ The diction of “our fight” communicates to the audience that the cast will advocate for the queer community and thus, the show itself can serve as resistance against heteronormative ideas. This theme is continued by Karamo saying, “We all got to come together in a way where we can understand each other.”² Both phrases carry the same tone of inspiration and emphasize the idea of multiple perspectives working together toward progress. It is relevant that the first season of the *Queer Eye* reboot premiered in February 2018, amidst a polarized political climate following the 2016 presidential election that prompted increased exposure and debate of the queer community. As such, the cast is taking part in James Scott’s notion of a public transcript to appeal to opposing ends of the political spectrum with the intent of garnering support for the show.³ Rather than outwardly expressing a stance on queer-related political discourse, the show gives a call-to-action for its audience members of different identities to support one another. By not specifically speaking of queer experiences, the cast creates the potential for the content of the show to be relatable and inspirational for any person. While this is beneficial in allowing the show space in mainstream television, it only represents one experience of queer identity, thus limiting the voices of others. By only showing images of queerness that fit within the boundaries of what heteronormative society expects, it further isolates minorities within the queer community, such as queer women or trans/nonbinary folk.

Candid moments of cast interactions speak to their personal insight as minorities. When Karamo and Tom are reflecting on the process and shar-

ing their appreciation for each other, Karamo tells Tom, “I didn’t really expect to have this moment with you and you are such an amazing man.”⁴ Here, the audience gains insight into the hidden transcript of the cast.⁵ This scene was shot during the candid portion of the show, suggesting to the audience that this moment is more authentic than the scripted introduction. This comment comes from the only Black cast member, who is also the only cast member of color who grew up in America. Therefore, Karamo is the only person on the show who can speak to the lived experience of being a queer person of color within American culture. His comments represent the layers of experience that can be complicated by carrying multiple identities. His hesitancy to connect with Tom, a white, cisgender, heterosexual man speaks to the power difference between people like Tom and people like Karamo. The communities that Tom belongs to are the same communities that have created and contributed to homophobia and racism, which are social factors that oppress the communities that Karamo belongs to. In this, Karamo can represent the way minorities must conceal their true opinions, and fears, from their oppressors for the sake of harmony. This is especially relevant given that even while Karamo has power over Tom, he is still an employee of the show who has to abide by the values of his company to ensure its economic success.

Queer Eye encourages the idea of an imagined community between queer and cisgender, heterosexual people.⁶ The series premiere ends with Antoni saying “it doesn’t matter if we’re gay or straight. A common thread that holds every human together is that we wanna be loved.”⁷ Antoni attempts to appeal to all viewers by using love as a unifying factor of identity. This choice is intentional, as “love” serves as the basis of queer activism. By showing that Tom, a man from rural America, has the capacity to embrace the Fab 5, a group of feminine, queer men, it communicates to the audience that the same can happen between any sector of America. However, this notion does not take into consideration the complexities of power and oppression that limit potential harmony. By suggesting that unity is possible if enough work is done, it suggests that minorities have the responsibility to ignore the realities of discrimination for the greater social good. In turn, this alleviates responsibility from those in power (as represented through Tom) to unlearn and restructure social hierarchies that marginalize populations (as represented through the queer-identified Fab 5).

The justification for Tom’s makeover reinforces the use of transfor-

mation as a means of conforming to social expectations. Antoni tells Tom that his relaxed style of dress and limited beauty routine is why “women don’t want to be around him.”⁸ In this, Antoni reinforces ideas of hyper-masculinity by placing Tom’s identity in relationship to women. By saying that Tom’s lifestyle choices are the reason for singlehood, it redirects blame onto Tom while leaving other factors outside of the conversation. It also suggests that a monogamous relationship with a woman is a marker of success for heterosexual men and that the makeover is a means of attaining that version of success. By teaching Tom how to present himself and interact with others in a way that is conventional, the show reinforces the concept of performativity. In this, the cast is not encouraging Tom to be his authentic self, but rather a version of himself that will be celebrated by broader society. Tom accepts these changes due to his own desire for social recognition and identity affirmation. After his makeover “transformation,” Tom’s friends and family host a party to celebrate his new appearance.⁹ In this, Tom is allowed a sense of community and pride through his performativity. While Tom is not a minority outside of the context of the show, in this situation he lacks power and is only able to attain community through appealing to the expectations of the majority. This encourages the subversion of identity rather than using identity as a tool to reimagine social values.

The positive reception of *Queer Eye* from the queer community speaks to dynamics of identity politics and the desire to feel represented and connected. *Out*, a queer-owned magazine and prominent media outlet within the queer community, named *Queer Eye*’s Fab 5 as their “Entertainers of the Year” in 2018.¹⁰ They justified their decision by saying the Fab 5 communicated to its audience that “LGBTQ people, rather than being a burden, have the ability, strength, and desire to improve people’s lives.”¹¹ The success of *Queer Eye* is largely due to its ability to relate queer identity into mainstream America by adding value to queer experiences. The show reverses the handling of power by limiting the agency of its makeover subjects, who are majority white, straight men who otherwise would have social power over queer men. This dynamic is possible due to the respectability of queer men within the fashion and beauty industries. Members of the cast use their success to transfer their skills into the hypermasculine spaces that often ridicule such femininity. In doing so, the Fab 5 allows for its queer audience to feel a similar sense of power.

While the pilot episode has been well-received, there has been criticism of how much the show is doing to advocate for the queer community. A smaller queer magazine, *them*, in a 2018 column refers to the show as “yet another example of reducing gay men to what they can do for straight people,” and points out the lack of LGBTQIAA+ diversity within the cast. *Them* challenges the type of representation that is being broadcasted and suggests that the essence of the show invalidates the depth of gay men by placing them in stereotypical roles. The writer also calls into question the validity of referencing the show as “queer” when only feminine gay men are featured on the cast, therefore limiting the umbrella term to only encompassing one identity. However, the writer closes their column by saying *Queer Eye* “doesn’t have to be queer. It can just be a show we enjoy watching.”¹² In this, the writer articulates that not all representations of queer identity have to equate to queer advocacy. Queer identity can exist beyond its political discourse, and therefore, like cisgender, heterosexual identity, queer people can have meaningful reality television. While these opinions contrast each other, they both sustain that *Queer Eye* contributes to society more than it takes away, and parallel the majority support of the show by the queer community.

Queer Eye follows the expectations of representation from the queer community while also maintaining relatable content for its other audiences. The essence of the show promotes the collaboration of people of opposing identities for a greater benefit. By placing urbanized queer men in solidarity with a ruralized straight man, the show creates space for such relationships to exist in the real world. Because the queer community is less prevalent in suburban and rural areas, this contrast communicates to the audience that queer people exist in all spaces, and queer culture can exist harmoniously within preexisting communities. In this, the show speaks to polarizing political discourses specifically related to queer identity by encouraging the entirety of the political spectrum to build community with one another. While the show does not outwardly promote queer activism, it speaks on queer identity within its capacity to continue to have a large, versatile platform. This platform allows for queer faces, perspectives, and community to be broadcasted to audiences who otherwise would not know of queer identity.

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A Body of Collective Trauma: Subversion of Patriarchy and Sexual Assault in *Teeth*

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AMST 428: American Monsters

This paper was written for AMST 428, Monsters in America, taught by Professor Adam Golub. This assignment was to analyze an American film that featured a monster, and explain how it connected to a longer history of American monsters. In this paper, I discuss the ways in which the 2007 film *Teeth* addresses sexual violence and trauma through the lens of the monstrous. I examine the film's cultural context and contribution to the creative discourse surrounding sexual assault and the monstrous female. I also criticize the film's shortcomings, particularly its failure to portray a sustainable and inclusive feminism.

Monster stories serve several purposes in terms of cultural work. Monsters can simultaneously subvert and reinforce societal structures and beliefs and provide an opportunity for collective experiences to be discussed and explored in a somewhat removed space. These elements are evident in the movie *Teeth*, directed by Mitchell Lichtenstein and released in 2007. *Teeth* follows the story of Dawn, a teenage girl who discovers monstrosity in her own body in the form of *vagina dentata*, meaning that there are teeth in her vagina that have the power to sever a phallus. Dawn's body and cultural context both harken back to the narrative traditions of vampires and cultural creatures like Godzilla. While the movie subverts patriarchal power structures within Dawn's own experiences and offers a space for fantasizing about vengeance for sexual assault, it falls short of addressing an effective solution to collective trauma even in fantasy.

The movie begins with two soon-to-be stepsiblings in a kiddie pool together, Dawn and Brad. Brad is giving Dawn a hard time when suddenly he cries out in pain. Their parents rush over to find a mysterious bloody wound on his finger, and no explanation is ever given. The movie then moves to the

present, with Dawn in high school serving as a primary member of a Christian chastity program. Dawn's mother is sick, and Brad has become a deviant, violent, and disrespectful adult who still lives with his parents. Dawn's fierce commitment to chastity is her most defining characteristic, and it stands in stark contrast with her stepbrother along with his girlfriend, who is portrayed as extremely impure and is sexually abused by him. Dawn regularly speaks at in-school events and proudly wears her purity ring. One particular scene in her health class highlights a double standard that she has clearly been immersed in. On one page of their health textbooks, the students can see a detailed scientific sketch of the male reproductive system. When they turn the page, they each find a sticker covering the diagram of the female reproductive system. The teacher is not even able to bring himself to use the word vagina and explains that of course, the school cannot show that. While many students voice disapproval for this double standard, Dawn offers the explanation that "women have a natural modesty" and the class ridicules her for it.¹

With this context established, Dawn meets a boy named Toby who has just arrived at her school and claims to share her views on chastity. The two teens go on a supervised double date and later decide to go on a solo date swimming in a nearby river. They are unable to resist the temptation of each other in their bathing suits, but Toby goes much too far and rapes Dawn after she tries to get away and repeatedly says no. While the rape is happening, Toby suddenly cries out in pain and pulls away to find his penis severed from his body. Dawn, unsure of what to do, runs away. Toby's body is later found in the water. Dawn begins to experience a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as she is catatonic, detached, and blames herself for losing her purity even though the sexual activity was nonconsensual. She begins to research what happened and discovers the mythological *vagina dentata*. The myth, as she reads, "springs from a primitive masculine dread of the mysteries of women and sexual union... fears of weakness, impotence, it is a nightmare."² Dawn is repeatedly sexually assaulted throughout the film, and each time the teeth maim the man committing sexual violence against her. Dawn's condition fits in well with all seven of Jeffrey Cohen's theses on what constitutes the monstrous, but one of the most relevant of the theses is the assertion that "the fear of the monster is really a kind of desire."³ Men lust after Dawn and the sexual violence that comes from their lust is what leads to each of their demises.

Vagina dentata is closely related to vampiric themes in terms of the physical aspect of monstrous teeth, as well as the intimate nature of the violence, the sensuality associated with the 'bite,' and other sexual aspects like bodily fluid exchange and actual intercourse. These themes are evident, of course, in the story of Dracula. Some scholars directly compare the two, describing Dracula's bite as a "penetrating kiss approximating the *vagina dentata* and thus operating as a kind of hermaphroditic sexual organ."⁴ Vampires are traditionally portrayed as sexually alluring and seductive, a framework that Dawn certainly grows into as she discovers the power that the teeth grant her in sexual situations. Comparatively speaking, the sexuality of her bite is much less metaphoric, as her teeth are literally a part of her sexual organs. *Teeth* brings many of the subverted anxieties and desires surrounding vampires to the forefront, but Dawn's monstrosity remains trapped in a strictly heterosexual framework. While Dracula's non-gender-exclusive victim choices can easily be read as queer, *Teeth* does not create the same space for *vagina dentata*. The only sexual experiences Dawn has are with men, therefore all of her victims are male. Dawn and Dracula share physical similarities in their monstrous bodies, and both bring the intended audience's intercourse-related anxieties to the surface.

While Dawn's story upholds heterosexuality as the only visible sexual orientation, the traditional patriarchal power dynamic in which the female is subordinate to the male is certainly challenged. Dawn finds herself equipped to fight back against sexual violence perpetrated against her by men in a way that women with typical sex organs do not, reclaiming a power that is not usually granted to victims of sexual violence. The use of a monstrous body to discuss and subvert collective trauma can also be seen in the story of Godzilla (or Gojira, the original Japanese name). While this may seem like an unlikely connection, the relationship between Godzilla and the traumatic aftermath of the nuclear bombs dropped in Japan contains a lot of the same devices used to discuss and process the collective trauma of male sexual violence against women through a monster who has the power to both experience and subvert this violence.

Monster narratives "provide a place to hold conversations about our public anxieties. Our monsters register our national traumas... the monster itself, as omen and portent full of cultural meaning, does exist in the middle of a matrix of history and reflection of the meaning of history."⁵ For

example, the context of Godzilla's stories always involve nuclear warfare, at least metaphorically. Godzilla's body is also reminiscent of the *hibakusha*. The *hibakusha* are a class of Japanese people with keloid scars left from the atomic attacks. The people who suffer this visible reminder of the national trauma are shamed and outcast from society. They are "treated like mutants, an omnipresent threat to the structure and health of Japan itself. Such foreignness is also inscribed on Gojira's body, and it is the monster's corporeal form that sets it apart from any other monster."⁶ Godzilla's skin is scaly and highly textured one of the features that links his body to nuclear trauma. The actual humans who bear these scars are not pitied as victims or revered as survivors but are instead ostracized and rejected by their own society. Their bodies are physical reminders of the trauma that their country still struggles to come to terms with. Though *Teeth* does not show a large-scale collective female response to Dawn's *vagina dentata*, the reaction of repulsion toward these damaged bodies is similar to Dawn's reaction to her own body when she discovers the teeth after she is first sexually assaulted. The repulsion stems from fear of the unknown, but also from the shame she has already internalized and demonstrated. The need for monstrous protection calls attention to the history of bodies being conquered and invaded, and in both of these cases, the aftermath of carried trauma is not to be celebrated.

No text exists in a vacuum, so it is necessary to consider the specific context in which *Teeth* was released. Even though the film did not achieve any kind of blockbuster fame, it remains part of an ongoing conversation about sexual violence and is often referred to as a feminist horror movie. The film was released in 2007, the same year that The National Criminal Justice Reference Service released the final report from the Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study, which states that one in five female college students in America has been the victim of sexual assault. Additionally, "in the vast majority of sexual assaults experienced by university women, the perpetrator and victim know each other in some way. In the National Survey of College Women, 93% of sexual assault victims reported that they knew the perpetrator."⁷ While the methods and scope of the study have been criticized, this statistic has become widely cited in discussions of sexual assault in America. Of course, the prevalence and frequency of sexual assault is not a new experience. However, this definitive and high statistic of women experiencing sexual assault on college campuses challenged the widely accepted notion that women

could be safe, even in privileged economic or educational positions. The film does not address intersectional feminist issues such as the role that race and privilege play in a woman's potential risk of sexual assault. Dawn is a white woman in a mostly white community, and this silence may speak to the film's intended audience. Dawn's privilege and chastity do not protect her from suffering multiple sexual assaults, potentially appealing to the freshly awakened anxiety raised by the CSA report.

The themes of sexual assault and female self-defense in *Teeth* create a resonant violation.⁸ Sexual assault is both familiar and disturbing to modern audiences, and the portrayal of the familiar violation coupled with a violent fantasy solution places *Teeth* in the horror genre. All of the assaults Dawn experiences take place in realistic settings that are reported in America daily. All five men who ironically fall victim to her teeth represent unfortunately common situations. The first boy, who rapes her, Toby, is her age and appears trustworthy and respectful until he can no longer control his sexual desire. This assault from a peer directly echoes the findings of the CSA survey. Dawn's second 'victim' is a gynecologist who also appears trustworthy and comforting at first. However, once he realizes it is her first visit to the gynecologist and she does not know what to expect, he takes advantage of the situation by removing his glove and forcing his whole hand into her vagina while she screams in protest. This scene echoes a long history of women being abused and violated by medical practitioners.

Dawn's next victim is another male friend, Ryan, who she goes to seeking safety. He offers her a pill his mother takes for her nerves, leaving her hazy, drugged, and unable to stand on her own. Their sexual interaction is not consensual because of this context but is portrayed as such in the beginning. Dawn tells Ryan the frantic story about her *vagina dentata*, including the research she found stating that the only way to stop it was for a "hero" to conquer her. Ryan believes himself to be that hero, as the teeth do not come out in the beginning of their intercourse. However, Dawn revokes her consent and realizes that she can actually control when the teeth come out, leaving Ryan in the same condition as her other victims. Once Dawn makes this discovery, she is no longer afraid of her own body and begins to harness this newfound power. She uses her teeth to take revenge on her abusive step-brother and avenge the recent death of her own mother, which she blames him for. At the end of the movie, Dawn hitchhikes to escape the town full of

police officers looking for her. The man who gives her a ride will not unlock the doors of the car. After a brief moment of panic, Dawn realizes what the consequences of his actions will be and smiles knowingly at the camera, implying a continuation of her serial kills.

Teeth switches the gender roles that are traditionally expected in horror films, with a female acting as the killer and the victims all being heterosexual white men. In "Her Body, Himself" Carol Clover discusses generic gender roles and expectations in a wide range of slasher films. The killers are predominantly mentally disturbed men, and sexually active women are almost always among their victims. Clover explains that most female killers generally "show no gender confusion. Nor is their motive overtly psychosexual, their anger derives in most cases... from specific moments in their adult lives in which they have been abandoned or cheated on by men."⁹ Dawn mostly fits this mold, although the sexual nature of her violence is atypical for a female killer. The subversion of gender in the film may partially explain why it did not garner much popularity. As Clover discusses, the intended audience of the horror genre is mostly male, which relates to the common gendering of the 'final girl' as masculine and the male killer as sexually or intellectually disturbed. These generic components, however, are not present in *Teeth*. If we read Dawn as a sort of 'final girl' who survives multiple violent attacks by men, she is a final girl that a male audience is not explicitly invited to identify with. She is completely feminine throughout the movie and never performs any kind of masculinity in order to assert power. Though gender cross-identification is entirely possible, most horror movies make the process more palatable for their male audiences. In stark contrast, Dawn harnesses an exclusively female weapon to physically and brutally dismember men.

It is interesting to note that while the *vagina dentata* myth stems from a tradition of male anxiety and fear, the movie grants no merit or sympathy to the male victims. None of the men who are dismembered are portrayed as redeemable in any way, they are one-dimensional sexual assailants who earn their fate one way or another. It is understandable, then, that the movie was not celebrated by typical male horror movie audiences. However, this film has not achieved widespread celebration in the feminist community either. Dawn does not have any strong, influential female characters in her circle who can offer her support or contribute to the plot. This lack of community makes Dawn's condition even more isolating and blocks potential

feminist interpretations of her situation that would involve women collectively healing from collective trauma. Instead, one single woman is empowered to rise above the violence. Dawn's isolation, which prevents her from safely telling anyone about her condition, is similar to that of Dracula's in that she is unable to share her journey with any companion because her monstrous body will not allow her to do so in her social circles, even in friendship. The only other woman that Dawn is close to is her mother, who is weak and dying for most of the movie. The juxtaposition of Dawn's horrific and powerful ability and her mother's fragility creates an important and polarizing dynamic of femininity. The women in the movie can either be weak and abused, like Dawn's mother and her stepbrother's girlfriend, or violent and monstrous like Dawn. This is a very simplistic and harmful representation of femininity and, ultimately of, victimhood.

The most resonant aspect of Dawn's journey in *Teeth* is the realistic and commonplace nature of Dawn's encounters with sexual violence. As Poole observes, "monstrous metaphors in American historical life have a way of becoming real, intertwined with attitudes and social structures that make monsters possible."¹⁰ Dawn's isolation from other women is a part of the attitudes and social structures that surround sexual assault and victimhood. She finds herself in real-life situations that women and girls fear and face in their daily lives, but she is actually equipped to enforce consent as mandatory for the survival of her partners during sex. This monstrous ability empowers her and grants her the sexual agency that chastity did not, but the escape from patriarchal sexual violence is limited to her as a lone survivor.

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Freaks and Geeks: An Internal Critique

Brandon Ruiz

AMST 442: Television and American Culture

This paper was written for Professor Sandra Falero's AMST 442 class. The '90s are a decade that I have always found to be incredibly profound. As a child, I grew up with my sister Janet's leftover memorabilia from the decade which gave her so much joy. Whether it was her old gray Game Boy, her colorful Pogs, or her pink Barbie roller blades, I always found each and every one of her toys more intriguing than the last. Therefore, when Professor Falero assigned her final paper on a television show of our choice, I knew exactly what show to pick. This paper is dedicated to everyone and their awkward experience they endured while in high school. I wrote this paper as a tribute to all the real Daniel Deasrios or Bill Haverchucks of the world. High school was brutal, but it's a time that allows us to grow and mature to become the amazing people we are today. Hopefully, you'll get some satisfaction from reading about one of my favorite shows from one of my favorite decades.

During the 1990s, television began to see a culture shock. It was during this time television executives began to focus on programming, which would be inclusive to an expanding American demographic. This was incredibly successful as we saw more shows in the 1990s centered around female characters; shows such as *Roseanne* highlighted the inclusivity of the 1990s. In addition, it was also becoming more inclusive of the LGBTQ demographic. It was during this time that we saw shows such as *Will and Grace* decimate the rating system and showcase our ever-expanding diverse audience. However, one thing a lot of these shows failed to do was to depict what most of us view as "the real world." The greatest example can be seen in teenage programming. The teenage demographic was heavily targeted during the 1990s with shows such as *Saved by the Bell*, *Dawson's Creek*, and *90210*. The problem

with these shows was they depicted high school as an amazing atmosphere with no consequences and an overall loving support group. As many of us know from our previous high school experiences, this was, and still is not, the societal norm. This is what differentiates *Freaks and Geeks* from its competition. Although it only ran for one season, *Freaks and Geeks* did an amazing job of capturing the actuality of high school life while relating both to the audience from the 1980s and 1990s.

To understand *Freaks and Geeks* and its popularity, we first have to discuss why the show itself was so appealing to the American audience. Around the 1990s, television audiences were bombarded with a disconnected depiction of high school life by television executives. Jason Mittell, author of *Television and American Culture*, talks about the constant stereotypical depiction of teenage life in television: “viewers were offered the figure of the mook, a crude and obnoxious prankster who mocks social norms using bathroom humor. Female viewers were given ‘the midriff,’ a hyper-sexual girl who aggressively flaunts her sexuality.”¹ Mittell argues that although these types of characters exist in the real world, they framed the ideal teenage depiction on television and legitimized an ongoing cycle which continued throughout the decade. This was the problem during the 1990s. Shows which were aimed at teenagers were formulated using the same oversaturated concept. This not only depicted an unlikely representation of high school life but also minimized the identification of high school characters on television. This, in turn, is what made *Freaks and Geeks* so appealing. David Lavery writes, “teen depictions often reflect out of touch projections by adults producing either desired youth or feared youth.”²

From the airing of its first episode, the audience knew *Freaks and Geeks* would be something different in contrast to the already established teenage programming. Although the pilot episode of *Freaks and Geeks* portrays an image of a beautiful cheerleader and jock, the screen quickly pans away to a group of burnouts talking about the existence of God and a bunch of nerds reenacting a scene from *Caddyshack*. Murray Milner Jr., author of *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids*, writes about the social hierarchy, which is prevalent in the American high school experience: “The social scene... was split broadly into two extreme groups commonly called the ‘jocks’ and the ‘freaks’... If there is a ‘top,’ there is also a ‘bottom.’ Toward the bottom were the ‘geeks’ or ‘nerds.’”³ This, in turn, is what made the show special right off

the bat. Instead of focusing on the top 1%, they focused on the lower 99% with real, raw emotional stories. *Freaks and Geeks* went to places many shows wouldn't go; the realism and serenity was the catalyst behind its success and fortunate legacy.

One of the issues *Freaks and Geeks* manages to tackle well is the idea of masculinity. Katie Barnett, a writer in *Children, Youth, and American Television*, writes, "the Geeks' adolescence is shaped and reshaped by their necessary negotiation of the different images of adult masculinity available to them, primarily through their fathers."⁴ This is highlighted in two particular episodes of the series. In "Dead Dogs and Gym Teachers," we get a better glimpse of Bill, one of the geeks, and his life outside of school. He goes home after a hard day of school to his comfortable life of grilled cheese sandwiches, hostess cakes, and stand-up comedy routine specials. He has no father and lives with his mother, but is content because it doesn't change who he is. This all comes knocking down when his mother tells him she has been seeing somebody and wants to introduce each other during dinner. The person she has been dating is Bill's gym teacher, Mr. Fredricks.

From the first interactions we see between Bill and Fredricks, it is obvious the two men are very different. Bill is a tall, meek, and awkward kid who doesn't enjoy sports but rather enjoys comedy as an outlet to express his own opinions on the outside world. Fredricks, on the other hand, is a jock. He enjoys the *Rocky* franchise and loves to indulge in physical activities both for pleasure and in a mentor role. Bill sees this as a threat. Barnett states "Bill's own father is absent. Although he seems unfazed by it, a father figure may be beneficial to Bill's adolescent development."⁵ However, this does not sit well with Bill, who constantly bickers with Fredricks both in and out of school. The problem is Bill is very content with his life and ultimately sees Fredricks's arrival as an invasion into his lifestyle. Bill had taken care of himself for years, along with his mother. Now his gym teacher is swooping in and implementing himself in the role of the father figure, which Bill never longed for. This also relates to one of the final scenes in the episode where Fredricks takes Bill and his friends to Go Kart City as a way to bond with Bill and the boys. Ultimately, Fredricks blows it by crashing into Bill. In a vile rage, Bill screams: "I hate you; you always have to win! You don't care about other people's feelings!"⁶ However, after this, we see a personal talk between Fredricks and Bill. Fredricks recognizes he portrays the image of a dumb jock,

but he ultimately cares for Bill's mom and just wants to be with her. After this talk, Bill cries because he realizes his fears are very prevalent. Bill doesn't like the idea of change, especially from a jock who is stepping into his life out of nowhere. This man will now pick up the mantle of Bill's father figure and guide him just as his mother previously had. At the same time, though, Bill loves his mother just as much as Fredricks does. He knows in order for her to be truly happy, he has to learn to get along with Fredricks.

This episode is relatable to a teenage audience on many levels. In one instance, Bill's life is a realistic depiction of the average teenage life. According to Claire Miller of *The New York Times*, "The divorce rate peaked in the 1970s and early 1980s."⁷ The scene connects to the fact that not all families around the setting of the show and airing of the episode were in a traditional family such as those in the '50s or '60s. In addition, these moments adhere to the nostalgia of the 1980s, which is a lingering topic highlighted throughout the series. Fredricks is the epitome of '80s masculinity. He is a byproduct of Reagan's conservative era, which was, as Barnett puts it, "the articulation of masculine ideals." Further, the character of Fredricks would be "equally pertinent to a late '90s audience over Clinton's own masculine credentials."⁸ The episode managed to find a modern storyline which adhered to both the reality and angst of a teenage audience from the late '90s and the nostalgia of an adult from the 1980s.

Masculinity is talked about a lot in *Freaks and Geeks* because of the setting. According to Nadir Yurtoğlu, "Reaganism functioned as the key signifier of the authentic America and the glory days of American National preeminence."⁹ This is why the role of the father figure plays such an important role throughout the show. The 1980s saw a resurgence in the parental figure, which can be signified through the series. The episode "Noshing and Moshing" managed to tackle the realities of masculinity, depression, and humility. This episode is a continuation of a previous episode in which Neal, another geek, and main character, found out his father has been promiscuous and cheating on his mother. This revelation shocks Neal who tries to find ways to cope with his distraught reality.

The role of the father figure plays a very important role in the show. Nick, another main character in the show, dreams of being a professional drummer but is shunned by the expectations of his militaristic father. Sam and Lindsay, two other main characters, have a father figure in Harold Weir,

who epitomizes the Reagan mystique. This nonetheless has the same consequences that plague Neal. Neal admires his father. He looks up to him and cherishes him. The realization of his father's infidelity echoes in what Barnett calls "a layer of paternal betrayal."¹⁰ As Barnett puts it, "Neal's own confidence stems from the influence of his brash, exuberant father. When the father figure is revealed as imperfect, Neal crumbles."¹¹ You can see Neal idolized his father early on in the show. He talked in exuberant mannerisms such as his father and even went as far as to create his wardrobe in the same fashion as his dad. However, when the truth is revealed, Neal can never look at him in the same way. This is highlighted in the dinner scene when you can feel the tension between Neal and his father as Neal stares him down in disbelief.

In addition to dealing with the backlash of his father's infidelity, Neal now must face reality in the form of a new opponent; his brother Barry. Neal's brother has graduated from high school and is now a college student in Wisconsin. To say he's changed would be a bit of an understatement. Now in Barry's own words "in high school I got picked on and beat up more than Neal ever did," but as soon as he got to college he changed all that.¹² He exemplifies masculinity and is seen by Neal as an alpha in contrast to his beta. In reality, this shuns Neal. While he's hanging out with his brother, Neal works up the courage to confide in him about his father's infidelity. However, to his surprise, his brother is well aware of the situation. Overtaken by shock, Neal realizes, in reality, Barry does not care nearly as much as Neal does and obviously wants to push it under the bus. However, things finally erupt when Neal is present at his father's annual party. Here he sees his cooler, more attractive brother kiss his crush and is tormented by his father's presence around other women.

The problem within families is something that is often forgotten. These teenagers, although somewhat mature, are still in the stages of learning and are still incredibly naive and adolescent. The kind of pressure placed on Neal is one that is too common today and incredibly depressing. The episode concludes with Neal crying in his mother's arms while telling her the truth. To his dismay, she too already knows. Jan Jagodzinski, author of *Television and Youth Culture* summarizes the conclusion with these words: "Neal must now learn to live with his dad's indiscretions since his mother has accepted them as a sacrifice to protect her two sons. The economic exchange has been exchanged for the price of repressing this secret, maintaining dental clients,

and providing both sons with a college education.”¹³ Overall, it’s a sad predicament that *Freaks and Geeks* portrays in this episode that is all too real. It refers back to the previously mentioned study of rising divorce rates during the 1970s and ‘80s but also highlights the reasoning behind it. Some couples are absolutely unethical when it comes to their relationship. They live in infidelity without thinking of the repercussions to their loved ones. They continuously hurt their loved ones while focusing solely on personal gain. The sad truth is someone always pays the price and that someone who pays is always the one who deserves it the least.

Jagodzinski states, “*Freaks and Geeks* takes place in the 1980s where the link to resistance, rebellion, and deviance is particularly strong.”¹⁴ This description by Jagodzinski is the exact reasoning which revolves around the plot of the freaks throughout the series. However, no character in the show is more complex than Daniel Desario. From the start of the very first episode, we get introduced to Daniel as this laid back cool guy who doesn’t care about school, absences, or his own personal reality. He has the mystique of the bad boy, which has women gravitating towards him. However, behind the tough exterior is a frightened child who lives within unbearable circumstances. In the episode “Noshing and Moshing” we get a glimpse of Desario’s personal life and see the overall impact his home has had on his personal life. Jagodzinski illustrates the depiction of Daniel and his girlfriend Kim Kelly by stating, “[they] would be marked as delinquent and working-class from ‘broken’ homes... [Daniel] has a sick father and a brother who is addicted to painkillers. His working-class mom appears tired and word down by shouldering the full burden.”¹⁵ This, in turn, is why Daniel lashed out against his girlfriend Kim, calling her “annoying” or a “bitch.”¹⁶ It is also why Daniel seems to gravitate towards a new girl with a punk life lifestyle throughout the entirety of the episode.

As many people know, punk was a counterculture movement with roots in the late 1970s. They were, as Murray Milner puts it: “a rejection of both adult authority and the cultural dominance and superior status of the popular crowd.”¹⁷ It seems fitting that Daniel Desario himself would gravitate towards a punk lifestyle because the overall concept of the music is made for him. He sees music as a “protective wall,” and according to Jagodzinski, “indicates how the song speaks to his interior being.”¹⁸ Towards the end of the episode, Daniel tries his hardest to catch the attention of the earlier refer-

enced punk girl by any means necessary. He dyes his hair, changes his clothes, and wears makeup in order to impress her. However, it is right as he is about to get his nose pierced that he realizes he's everything that every punk rocker hates to be called, a poser. It is at that moment he leaves and goes to his ex-girlfriend's house and they embrace in tears. It is this feeling of sentimentality that highlights how amazing this show was and still is. Although many view going back to your ex as a form of weakness, realistically speaking, Daniel and Kim are perfect for each other. They both come from a broken home and are understanding of each other's situations. They realize that they are both byproducts of the forgotten. They're just kids, but they're all they have for the time being. Although the show showcases a "punk" depiction of brash head-bangers, crazy hair, and loud music, the real punks here are Daniel and Kim who endure the hardships and reality which has been bestowed upon them by a forgotten family.

Since its release in 1999, Paul Feig "envisioned a show that was honest about the pain of the high school experience."¹⁹ In reality, this is what makes the show so special. It offers the viewer a realistic depiction of high school life and creates the assurance to many that they are not alone with their terrifying endeavors. High school to many is probably the worst time of their life. It's awkward, scary, and oftentimes disappointing. It should then come as no surprise that the show, which only ran for one season, gained a cult following long after its dismissal and is now regarded as one of the greatest shows of all time—part of which should be thanked for its realism. As previously mentioned, *Freaks and Geeks* went places many other shows at this time wouldn't go. Its depiction of angst along with its ode to the nostalgia of the 1980s showcased the realities of teenage life in both the '80s and '90s. It's most likely why the show has managed to stay relevant this long. It's real—it's that simple. It adheres to anyone, whether you were a freak, geek, jock, or nerd. The show deserves to live on forever and should be thanked by audiences for shedding a light on the awkward reality which is high school.

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Culture and the Environment

Questions to consider while reading:

- How does culture affect the environment and vice versa?
- What are the societal implications?
- What are the effects of environmental exploitation?

Shrouded in Darkness: The Lasting Effects of Las Vegas's Atomic Age on American Popular Culture

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AMST 401: American Culture and Nature

This essay was written for Professor Sara Fingal's American Culture and Nature class in the Spring of 2019. The purpose of this research paper was to provide an interdisciplinary look into one or more of the four themes of the class, which included: bodies, landscapes, animals, and politics. The main takeaway of this work is to demonstrate how concepts surrounding nature and the environment can intersect with various other aspects of American culture. Therefore, this paper aims to demonstrate how a phenomenon that happened in the 1950s, such as atomic tourism, can still be correlated to 21st-century American pop culture.

Atomic bombs were a sight to see in the "Up and Atom" City of Las Vegas, Nevada, in the 1950s. Visitors from around the nation would come out to witness nuclear detonations at a seemingly safe distance of 75 miles away.¹ It would later be discovered this distance was not nearly enough to prevent the harmful side effects that resulted from the constant exposure to radiation and toxic chemicals known as fallout. However, tourists at the time were eager to catch a glimpse of the "mushroom-shaped cloud" that would form in the sky. These mushroom-shaped clouds could easily be seen from the rooftops of many Las Vegas hotels and casinos.² Witnessing these atomic detonations was such a popular pastime that people would set their alarm clocks for as early as 3 a.m., for a chance to see a glimmer of the atomic bombs going off from their windows.³ This newfound obsession with nuclear power and Las Vegas's proximity to the Nevada Test Site allowed atomic bombs to become such a powerful tourist attraction. It is one whose impact would go way beyond what anyone in the 1950s could have imagined.

Despite having been a short-lived tourist attraction, this atomic

bomb fever era had a lasting effect on not only Las Vegas, but America as a whole. The repercussions of this era physically altered Las Vegas's economy, culture, landscape, and even the people during the 1950s and onward. It also brought along with it a larger cultural shift within America. Atomic bombs went from being widely accepted and encouraged to being feared, and a sign of unfathomable demise. Yet, today, atomic bombs are still being portrayed, and arguably even profited from, in mainstream American media. Therefore, this research paper aims to shine a light on the side effects that the atomic bomb era from the 1950s had on Las Vegas and America, ultimately showcasing how it transcended Las Vegas's borders and permeated into 21st-century American popular culture.

The Introduction of Atomic Bombs in America

The beginning of the atomic bomb era did not necessarily start in Las Vegas, Nevada. In fact, the first atomic bomb detonated on American soil began with the creation of the Manhattan Project. This project commenced under the direction of former United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was under President Roosevelt that the U.S. government began testing the possibility of creating a nuclear weapon that could defeat Nazi Germany from winning during World War II. However, following President Roosevelt's death in April of 1945, Vice President Harry Truman would later become the person in charge of leading the Manhattan Project.⁴ Just three months after President Roosevelt's death, President Truman would give way in initiating the first-ever testing of an atomic bomb in Los Alamos, New Mexico on July 16, 1945. This nuclear test would be known as the Trinity Test, which would come to leave an "imprint on the human consciousness as a symbol of power and awesome destruction."⁵ However, it is one whose power would be put on full display in Japan shortly after its testing.

It was arguably due to the buildup of American resentment from the Japanese attack on the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbor in 1941, and the desire to end World War II led President Truman to order the use of this newly tested nuclear weapon on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in August of 1945.⁶ There is no denying that the effects from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki left a mark that is hard to erase from history. As *The New York Times* details in their simulation video, "The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima," the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima instantly killed an estimated 80,000

people. It was said the bomb was detonated with “the same force of 15,000 tons of TNT.” Also, the atomic bomb destroyed every building within a mile of the epicenter, and the fires caused by the intense heat lasted for days, killing over 50% of the people from burns.⁷ The intensity of the damage the heat caused to Japanese civilians can be seen in a 1940s photograph, which displays the “victim of [an] atomic attack with the pattern of her clothing burned into her back.”⁶ However, many of those who were not killed by the flash burn, blast, or fire still died of radiation poisoning. Those remaining alive were left with several health complications, such as cancer and birth defects, that have been resented for generations.⁷

Although the details of the aftermath of the first-ever use of an atomic bomb are devastating, these nuclear weapons would later come to serve as a symbol of patriotism. This becomes glaringly evident in songs such as Karl and Harty’s 1945 song titled “When the Atom Bomb Fell.” Some of the lyrics read: “Smoke and fire it did flow through the land of Tokyo/There was brimstone and dust everywhere/When it all cleared away there the cruel Japs did lay/The answer to our fighting boys’ prayers.”⁸ This song explicitly describes the animosity many Americans felt towards Japan due to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the rising tensions from World War II. The feelings expressed in songs like these were widespread. It is presumably also what led many Americans to justify and even encourage the “patriotic” pastime of atomic bomb watching in Las Vegas, Nevada. However, not every American felt that atomic bombs should be celebrated as a new world power. Some Americans such as physicist Louis Ridenour and authors Theodore Sturgeon, William Rose Benet, and Ray Bradbury, instead warned America about the dangers that would come with the “misuse of such great power.”⁹ Nevertheless, the American government would not heed these warnings. They would instead come to use atomic bomb testing as proof of their power and as national security.

The Establishing of The Nevada Test Site

As was previously demonstrated, the resentment many Americans felt ran deep, and with it, this sense of patriotism, power, and duty filled many with desires. Specifically, the U.S. government saw a need to continue nuclear testing on American territory to better understand the atomic bomb’s power. At the time the U.S. government took an interest in Nevada as a possible

nuclear testing site, there were only about 40,000 residents. The fact that the area of interest, Clark County, had so few residents is what may have first drawn in the federal government's attention in wanting to establish the Nevada Test Site there. Also, according to the *Las Vegas Sun's* timeline, the Nevada Testing Site would be 65 miles from downtown Las Vegas, which was seemingly far enough to avoid any dangers.¹⁰ This is something the U.S. government kept reassuring to the 40,000 individuals who resided within Clark County.

The U.S. government argued for the establishment of the Nevada Test Site not only because of its small population, but it also promoted the Nevada Test Site as a necessary asset for the defense of the country. As the PBS article titled "The Atomic Age" further outlines in an excerpt from a 1957 booklet, "Each Nevada test has successfully added to scientific knowledge needed for development and use of atomic weapons [...] needed to strengthen our defense against enemy weapons."¹¹ In the eyes of the U.S. government, the Nevada Test Site was ideal because it greatly contributed to the defense of the nation. It did so by providing the American government with the efficiency they needed. The U.S. government explained it was imperative they establish the Nevada Test Site specifically in Clark County because "conducting low-yield tests in Nevada, instead of in the distant Pacific, also has resulted in major savings in time, manpower, and money."¹² So, not only would the Nevada Test Site contribute to the defense of the country, but it would also prove to be the perfect location to save the time and energy needed in the case of a nuclear attack. The Nevada Test Site's importance would come to be ingrained in the minds of many Americans as the necessary action needed to take in order to combat the evil in the world.

Eventually, due to the U.S. government's persistence and reassurances, the Atomic Heritage Foundation explains, that it was "on January 27, 1951, when nuclear testing officially began" in the newly designated area that would be known as the Nevada Test Site. The fact that the Nevada Test Site was established in the 1950s is important to note because that was a critical time in American history. The height of the Cold War was during the 1950s, in which there was a rising fear of Communism and a possible nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Therefore, the U.S. government began conducting hundreds of nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site. The Atomic Heritage Foundation claims that in about the four decades following 1951, the Ne-

vada Testing Site would conduct over 1,000 nuclear tests, 100 of which were “atmospheric,” or above-ground.¹³ This brought in a mixed reaction from the residents near the testing site. As Catherine Caufield tells in her book, *Multiple Exposures: Chronicles of the Radiation Age*, many people did feel “proud, that the nuclear testing site was held in their territory,” and that they could be a part of “something so important to the defense of their country and the defeat of Communism.”¹⁴ However, other locals did not like the idea of having atomic bombs near their homes—yet they still “accepted the government’s assurances that the tests were controlled, scientific experiments, conducted under strict conditions of safety.”¹⁵ Perhaps it was due to the allure of patriotism, and the sense of duty that led many to partake in atomic tourism. This, in turn, amounted to increased acceptance of atomic bombs in Las Vegas, which quickly helped to expand its economy and population.

The Beginning of Atomic Tourism in Las Vegas

With the introduction of the Nevada Test Site, many Las Vegas businesses were quick to indulge in the monetary gains atomic tourism brought in. As Jim Cullen details in his book, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*, it was through the introduction of atomic bombs in Nevada that Las Vegas’s economy and popularity as a tourist attraction skyrocketed. More explicitly, Cullen mentions, “nuclear bomb explosions—brought large sums of money to an area that would otherwise have been impoverished.”¹⁶ This draws a direct reference from the fact that so few people actually lived or visited Las Vegas in the beginning.¹⁷ Therefore, atomic tourism gave Las Vegas businesses the perfect marketing campaign to present tourists with. As Catherine Caufield further details in *Multiple Exposures*, “given the unusual nature of Las Vegas’s tourist industry, the bomb actually proved to be good for business.”¹⁸ It was this same “unusual nature” of Las Vegas’s atomic tourism that would allow for even the Nevada Chamber of Commerce to give out calendars with Nuclear Test dates for tourists to come see, adding to the city’s annual income.¹⁹ Indisputably, this tourism created a new source of income for the businesses as well as the city of Las Vegas.

Although atomic bombs were not the only thing drawing in tourists to Las Vegas, they still played a significant role in the popularization of the city. As the Smithsonian Channel details in their video, “How 1950s Las Vegas Sold Atomic Bomb Tests as Tourism,” “between 1950 and 1960, the

population of Las Vegas grew by 161%.²⁰ This was in part due to the casino industry, but also largely due to the presence of the atomic bombs in Las Vegas. Within one decade, following the establishment of the Nevada Test Site, atomic bomb tourism drew in an astonishing influx of people into Las Vegas. This notably helped to boost Las Vegas's economy. So, for better or for worse, atomic bombs permeated Las Vegas's economy far longer than the casinos and hotels could have alone, even in the decades following the 1950s.

Las Vegas's Newfound Atomic Bomb Culture

The atomic bomb craze provided Las Vegas with a booming economy that brought along with it a new atomic culture. This was made apparent through the new products and activities that were created as a result of the atomic bomb fever of the 1950s. As the *Los Angeles Times* article written by Ashley Powers, "Tourists Revisit the Cold War at Nevada Test Site," details, many places in Las Vegas began to sell "atomic cocktails." These atomic cocktails were made up of "vodka, brandy, champagne and a dash of sherry," that people could order to "celebrate" during "Dawn Parties."²¹ It was during these Dawn Parties where tourists could drink, gamble, and then enjoy an evening out on the rooftops of various hotels and casinos, witnessing the explosion of an atomic bomb going off in the distance.²² Dawn Parties became the quintessential signifier of the atomic bomb era in Las Vegas, as they allowed for the recreational use of atomic bomb watching. Because of these Dawn Parties, the mushroom-shaped cloud would also come to symbolize "an era of atomic fantasy," in which, it would represent power, patriotism, and even a "romantic fantasy."²³

This symbolism became especially evident with Las Vegas's "Miss Atomic Bomb" beauty pageant. The pageant attempted to downplay the fatal effects of the atomic bomb by insinuating that in this Las Vegas-based pageant, women would be seen to "radiate loveliness instead of deadly atomic particles."²⁴ The Miss Atomic Bomb pageant heavily played into the atomic bomb fantasy, which romanticized the mushroom-shaped cloud, and the whole atomic bomb culture. They did this through the title the pageant contestant would be crowned with, as well as with the winning outfit that quite literally personified the atomic bomb. This was because the winner of the Miss Atomic Bomb pageant would have the opportunity "to dress in a fluffy white dress shaped like a mushroom cloud."²⁵ However, this atomic bomb

fantasy was far from the reality of the physical alterations that were seen developing on Las Vegas's landscape and overall environment.

Las Vegas's Changing Landscapes and Environment

Amid this new atomic bomb culture came the creation of new landscape changes within, and around, the Nevada Test Site. Specifically, the Nevada Test Site saw the creation of fake towns used as "test subjects" for nuclear testing. The Smithsonian Channel's video, "Intense Footage of Fake Towns Used for 1950s Nuclear Tests," details these creations labeled "Doom Towns." The video mentions these fake towns were created to test the power or effect atomic bombs could have on populated areas. Therefore, it is described in the video that, "technicians built entire fake towns, with houses, shops, and even mannequin families," to see the impact that an atomic explosion would have on an inhabited area.²⁶ This instilled increasing fear within Americans, as they began to visualize the effects a nuclear war could have on American people. This was eye-opening to some Americans who were unaware of just how deadly these atomic bombs were and the devastation they had caused in Japan. However, the U.S. government continually reassured Nevada residents that having a nuclear testing site in their territory was "safe and controlled." As the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's website informs, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) assured residents close to the Nevada Test Site that "radiation levels were only slightly more than normal radiation which you experience day in and day out wherever you may live."²⁷ However, the physical damage nuclear testing had on the land was far more destructive than the government was willing to admit.

As a testament of its destructive power, the decades of nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site left the area covered with craters. Perhaps one of the most visible craters left at the Nevada Test Site is the Sedan crater. This crater is a result of a 1960s U.S.-conducted nuclear test, which had the explosive power of an "equivalent of around eight Hiroshima bombs." It is said that the explosion "displaced more than 12 million tons of soil," and that it "created the largest man-made crater in the United States."²⁸ To think the largest man-made crater would be in the Nevada Test Site speaks volumes of the effect nuclear testing had on the landscape. However, these physical damages only equated to the effect that atmospheric testing left behind in the Nevada Test Site. This did not account for the destruction left on the environment

due to the many years of underground testing.

The toxic fallout that stemmed from the years of nuclear testing seeped into many of the vital water sources used by Las Vegas and neighboring residents. As Ralph Vartabedian mentions in his *Los Angeles Times* article, “Nevada’s Hidden Ocean of Radiation,” “the Energy Department estimated that more than 300 million curies of radiation had been left behind, making the site one of the most radioactively contaminated places in the nation.”²⁹ Without a doubt, the biggest resource contaminated by so many years of underground nuclear testing was the water supply. After nuclear testing ended in 1992, it is estimated that “the underground tests polluted 1.6 trillion gallons of water.”³⁰ The fact that so much of Nevada’s natural resources were affected shows the impact atomic testing had on the environment. Further, according to Vartabedian, the Nevada Test Site “receives about \$65 million a year from the department’s \$5.5-billion annual nuclear cleanup budget.”³¹ However, this amount of allocated money is presumably insufficient to counteract the damage that the decades of nuclear testing left behind on the land, and subsequently even on the people.

The Repercussions of Las Vegas’s Atomic Tourism on People

Eventually, the harmful effects that fallout had on people’s health could no longer be hidden from the many Las Vegas residents and tourists that had once come to witness the explosion of the atomic craze. It became so bad that a local Nevada family retells the story of driving home from Las Vegas and being told to “burn their clothes, wash their car, take a shower, and wash out their hair,” by government officials that had created a roadblock for all cars coming from Las Vegas. However, the worst of it all came decades after the atomic tourism era ended in Las Vegas. This became excruciatingly obvious with the passing of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act that Congress enacted in 1990, which acknowledged that “individuals in Nevada, Utah and Arizona were unwillingly exposed to radiation, which caused an excess of cancers.” It was an apology many activists were unwilling to fully accept. The Act merely gave residents affected with the fallout monetary compensation for the decades of harmful chemicals they were being exposed to. This still did not change the fact that many lives were lost due to cancer. Therefore, all those who were exposed to fallout must get regularly tested for thyroid cancer because, “they are almost expected to get cancer.”³² The atomic

era not only took a physical toll on people's health, but it also affected many residents emotionally.

An account of the psychological anguish certain individuals felt growing up during this era can be seen through Dennis McBride, the director of the Nevada State Museum in Las Vegas. McBride retells growing up during the "duck and cover drills" in schools and witnessing people build atomic bomb shelters in their backyards. Because of this, McBride grew up feeling that "he didn't bother making friends as a child and found himself unable to plan for the future" due to the fear of the atomic era.³³ It is the sad reality that many people affected by the atomic craze in Las Vegas, and Japan, have had to experience. It is a feeling of lost history that does not get the compensation and recognition it deserves. Because of this, the atomic bomb's image would begin to shift from being an emblem of breathtaking power and patriotism, to one of fear and death.

The Prevalence of the Atomic Bomb Culture in America

However, when looking at modern American popular culture, there are still remnants of that same glorification of the atomic bomb era from Las Vegas. This is evident in the *Fallout* video game series, which is named after the harmful chemicals that would fall from the sky after the detonation of an atomic bomb. Almost every year, a new rendition of this video game series comes out, with the most recent having been released in 2018. It is obvious that the screenplay of this video game series emulates the atomic age present during the 1940s and '50s. Specifically, in *Fallout: New Vegas*, players can see the game is set in a nuclear war-torn Las Vegas. In various scenes of the game, viewers can see a red-colored sky filled with an abundance of smoke and clouds that cover the whole city of Las Vegas. Even though this "fantasy" projection is very similar to the reality of many Japanese civilians in the 1940s, the game simply advertises itself as a "made-up post-apocalyptic world." As the website of these video games further details, the scenarios played out in the games are just "simulations," or projections of what the nuclear war aftermath could look like in a "fictional" world.³⁴ Even though it is astounding to see that a video game can be made and sold to thousands of people that allows for the "recreational use" of this atomic bomb culture, this serves as a perfect example of how the atomic age from Las Vegas is visible in American popular culture.

Another instance in which the atomic bomb culture can be seen in mainstream American media is in the 2008 movie *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. This film is set in the 1950s during the atomic age. Looking closer at the movie, there is a specific scene in which Indiana Jones goes to the Nevada Test Site and comes across one of Las Vegas's fake towns. Indiana Jones decides to hide in a lead-lined refrigerator, as an atomic bomb is scheduled to be detonated soon. This scene once again perpetuates the same image of power and awesome destruction atomic bombs were thought to have had during the 1950s. However, the movie portrays atomic bombs in a rather glorified way, as Indiana Jones survives the explosion because of the refrigerator.³⁵ This scene can be perceived by many to be insensitive, due to the realities of many families who were truly affected by the atomic era. Yet, this clip still profits from, and plays into that idea of representing atomic bombs as powerfully "controlled" experiments.

Additionally, there is the continued romanticizing of the mushroom cloud that became a staple when discussing the atomic bomb culture. These mushroom-shaped clouds appeared repeatedly in the retelling of the atomic bomb culture in Las Vegas. It is also one that remains a relevant symbol. The appearance of this symbol can be found in the 2012 song "Miss Atomic Bomb" by the Las Vegas rock band, The Killers. This becomes evident through the lyrics: "and when I look back on these neon nights/The leather seats, the passage rite/I feel the heat, I see the light/Miss Atomic Bomb."³⁶ When listening to these lyrics and the entirety of the song, it becomes clear that the whole song alludes to the atomic bomb culture of Las Vegas. It also draws a direct reference to the "Miss Atomic Bomb" beauty pageants in Las Vegas, the same image that helped popularize the mushroom cloud into one of romance and fantasy. Even though the song is more about heartbreak, it still personifies the atomic bomb in a way that romanticizes it to the listeners.

In Conclusion

The blinding light and mushroom-shaped cloud that emanated from a nuclear explosion, easily witnessed from the rooftops of many hotels and casinos in Las Vegas during the 1950s, started as a symbol of "awesome power," patriotism, and even romantic fantasy. Las Vegas raked in the monetary profits that came with the introduction of these atomic bombs in the Nevada Test Site. It saw the emergence of a new atomic culture that came in the form of Dawn Parties and atomic cocktails. The Miss Atomic Bomb beauty pageant

helped to popularize and even encourage atomic bomb watching, through its play on romantic fantasy.

However, beyond the monetary gains and emerging new atomic culture, there were negative challenges arising. These altercations came in the form of physical and environmental changes happening in the landscape surrounding Las Vegas. Fake towns were being built in the Nevada Test Site with the purpose of being destroyed. It also saw the creation of the largest man-made crater in the whole nation, the Sedan Crater. But perhaps most importantly, people's lives were being negatively impacted. This became apparent with the discovery of fallout, a harmful chemical that was proven to cause cancer and other health defects. Even though the U.S. government had constantly reassured Las Vegas residents that they were at a safe distance from the Nevada Test Site, now evidence proved otherwise. So much fallout had been emitted from the nuclear tests that Nevada residents were told that they were almost certain to get cancer. The U.S. government was hit with multiple demands by people, that Congress eventually enacted a law that would grant affected individuals with monetary compensation for their losses. This compensation, however, was not enough to take back the physical and psychological trauma that the atomic era of the 1950s had left on them.

Eventually, the image of the atomic bombs of the 1950s in Las Vegas, Nevada became one of fear, destructive power, and apocalyptic demise. But it is one whose image is still openly shown in modern American culture today through video games, movies, and even songs. The takeaway of this research is to open a discussion in an area about Las Vegas's past that is hardly talked about in conjunction with American popular culture. Not only did Las Vegas's economy, culture, landscape, and people see themselves affected during the 1950s and onward, but America's culture as a whole has been affected from this time in history. It is important to realize Las Vegas's atomic bomb culture is still very much alive in 21st-century American pop culture. It has once again shifted into a new phenomenon in which people partake in, but only behind a computer or television screen. People are no longer going out of their way to physically watch atomic bombs, but people are still participating in the recreational use of the atomic bomb culture due to mainstream American media.

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WPA National Park Posters: Preserving a Memory of Innocent Colonialism

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AMST 502: Seminar in Public Memory

This paper was written for the Public Memory course under the guidance of Professor Alison Kanosky in the spring of 2019. The assignment was to write a research paper rooted in a cultural object that explains how the object frames collective historical memories in American culture. This paper specifically identifies how the WPA style Yosemite National Park posters by Ranger Doug shape public memory and sculpt American identity. By presenting America's National Parks as innocent, the posters actively silence native peoples' culture and deflect the power and influence of the federal government.

Doug Leen, a former National Park Service (NPS) Ranger for the Grand Tetons, currently focuses his time on creating and selling replica National Park posters. Most of the posters were originally created and distributed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) between 1935-1943.¹ The majority of these original WPA National Parks posters were destroyed over the subsequent decades.² Ranger Doug Leen, also known as Ranger Doug, uses modern screen printing technology to replicate these posters, once believed to be lost to history.

Doug's original discovery of a WPA Grand Tetons poster in 1971 spurred a twenty-year search for other posters made by the WPA. His search led him to find thirteen black and white negatives in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. Ranger Doug, with the help of his team, discovered 41 total posters that he now uses as inspiration to replicate the original posters using correct dimensions and accurate colors. What originally began as a passion project for Ranger Doug has now become a successful business venture and a popular form of souvenir among national park goers.³ In more recent years, many parks have commissioned contemporary poster designs in the WPA style to be created by Doug Leen and his partner, Brian Maebius.⁴ Ranger Doug's

website has even pushed into other forms of kitsch souvenirs based on the original WPA art style, including products such as pocket knives, window stickers, calendars, postcards, and notecard sets.⁵

Of the 41 posters that have been uncovered, many carry different claims of history. Each poster created by the WPA displays different visions of natural beauty in America. The natural beauty in these posters is juxtaposed by the fact that they were created in the midst of the Great Depression. In our contemporary moment, the posters Ranger Doug replicates reflect a new sense of nostalgia for park goers and Federal Art Project enthusiasts. People who buy posters from Ranger Doug, such as the ones depicting Yosemite National Park, are oftentimes taking home a personal memory in order to commemorate an experience. While these experiences mean something personal to the buyer, it is likely that consumers are unaware of the implications these posters have on our collective public memory and how they construct a unique American identity.

These posters contain visual and textual evidence that construct a sense of what the parks look like, what one does at the parks, and which government bodies maintain and control the public land. As these posters present a claim on spatial history, they also omit information, which is equally important to the conversation about Yosemite National Park. In order to place these objects within the scope of public memory, I use Marita Sturken's theories in *Tourists of History* to place the posters in the context of kitsch memorabilia. Sturken provides a framework for understanding how seemingly harmless or innocent objects construct public memory in a way that masks colonial violence.⁶ I also analyze the history of these objects through Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire* to show how colonial powers have laid claim to public memory through forced assimilation, criminalizing indigenous cultural norms and performances, and controlling the archival memory of native peoples.⁷ I also utilize Taylor to argue that Anglo Americans create their own performative expressions through tourism and the creation of art as a way to create a unified white American identity. Lastly, I use the theories of Kirk Savage to argue that artworks often posture as depoliticized cultural objects.⁸ In reality, art is constructed in a political battlefield, where the victors are able to control a narrative through popular forms of artistic expression.

This paper argues that the two Yosemite National Park posters, one originally made by the WPA and the other created by Ranger Doug and his

team, seemingly present an innocent snapshot of America's National Parks, while actively silencing indigenous peoples in Yosemite and averting attention away from the power and influence of the federal government. While Yosemite posters may appear to show innocent natural landscapes in the form of souvenirs, I argue that they actively silence the violent colonial past of the United States. The posters display scenic and often notable locations within each park; they also often allude to how tourists can interact with the land. The art has the potential to provide viewers with a sense of patriotism, as the National Parks, including Yosemite, are seen as collectively owned by the American people. These posters also display a passive federal government that merely maintains and preserves the land for public use. The art distances an aggressive government from their affiliation with public lands.

In order to demonstrate how these posters are part of a systemic silencing of Native peoples that also push to legitimize and ignite confidence in a strong central government, I will trace the processes that have impacted the way Americans view and interact with public lands. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather part of a long history of federal power. First, I explore the way that the United States has silenced Native peoples in Yosemite while simultaneously creating infrastructure to encourage and accommodate American tourism. I then analyze the way that the WPA during the Great Depression fostered American unity and patriotism using art and federal land as the focus and also created a cultural script of American identity. As park enthusiasts currently buy the WPA style posters to commemorate personalized memories and celebrate the American privilege of owning public lands, the posters perpetuate a collective amnesia of colonial violence. In doing this, the memory in the posters constructs the mythos that the federal government protects those who are vulnerable. It reinforces a trope that the government protects and preserves nature, while also providing social welfare to those in need.

The violence against indigenous people who had previously called the Yosemite Valley their home is not represented as part of the narrative of the WPA posters. In shifting the narrative from conquest to innocence, the posters not only remove themselves from the violence, but they create an image of the past that romanticizes the social welfare state for its role in employing millions of people during the Great Depression.⁹ The Federal Art Projects under President Franklin Roosevelt helped construct a sense of what the state

believed it meant to be an American.¹⁰ Through these projects, the federal government created a framework and cultural script for how people should understand their role as loyal citizens.¹¹ As part of the broader Federal Art Projects, other works commissioned by the federal government encouraged the myth that the government was able to resolve “economic, political, and ideological conflicts of a capitalist society in crisis,” all the while posturing as a form of “social utopia.”¹² The posters encouraged capitalism through various methods, including a push for Americans to participate in tourism, such as visiting National Parks like Yosemite, as a way to spark the economy.¹³

Ranger Doug sells two Yosemite National Park posters that can be viewed and purchased on his website. The first poster, titled *Yosemite National Park*, features El Capitan and is a direct replica of an original WPA poster that is believed to be the only one left in existence.¹⁴ The second poster, titled *Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias*, is not based on an original WPA poster. It was commissioned by the Yosemite Conservancy and designed by Ranger Doug as a way to help with the recent restoration of the Mariposa Grove.¹⁵ The fundraiser, with the assistance of the government, provided enough money and resources to reopen the Mariposa Grove in the Spring of 2018.¹⁶ While each of these posters were created in different historical moments, they both highlight specific historical themes and are part of a larger context that shapes public memory.

The Yosemite National Park posters provide a visual history of public lands and the United States federal government’s role in preserving them. Since both posters are stamped with The Department of the Interior seal, it indicates a joint relationship between nature and government. The first poster of Yosemite, *Yosemite National Park*, uses green tree silhouettes in the foreground that fades into a flat green that continues up the left side of the poster.¹⁷ The green of the trees frame the rock formation of El Capitan.¹⁸ While not explicitly presented in the poster, El Capitan is a solid granite rock formation that towers over the Yosemite Valley as the crest rises to 3,000 feet.¹⁹ The overall view of its height is also accentuated by the unique feature of it being a straight up and down cliff. This natural granite formation took approximately 100 million years to form.²⁰ El Capitan, surrounded by blue skies, has a monochrome green that surrounds the rock formation on the poster. The person viewing the poster might get the sense that they are almost viewing the natural landscape through a window from a great distance. The

layout of the poster ultimately puts the person viewing it as a spectator, rather than someone who is exploring the landscape first hand.

Within the green framing of El Capitan, the poster displays specific park information. At the top, it says “Ranger Naturalist Service” followed by “Headquarters Yosemite Museum.” The poster also displays the name of the park along with the two associated government agencies that maintain and employ within the park: The National Park Service and The Department of the Interior, as well as stamped with The Department of the Interior emblem.²¹ Posters made by the WPA display these common markings, seemingly for continuity purposes. In a way, their presence signifies the government’s claim to the land and the art. However, these markings carry significant meaning in how they transfer a sense of power to those that buy the posters. The memorabilia signify shared ownership between the government and the park enthusiast when the park enthusiast takes a National Park poster home with them.

Along the left side of the frame is a list of activities that one might do at Yosemite. The activities mentioned seem to be directive for how humans, in Yosemite, should interact with nature: including going on hikes, learning at the museum, practicing fire making, or even participating in “Indian [d]emonstrations.”²² While not explicitly stated, the list of activities promote a sense of acceptable forms of interaction and a division of participatory culture. It implies that hiking, firemaking, and learning are part of an American repertoire, whereas “Indian [d]emonstrations” are distinctly different embodiments of culture since they are mentioned separately. Since there is no further explanation of “Indian [d]emonstrations,” there is an indication that the indigenous cultural repertoire represents specific activities at the discretion of the National Park Service.

The second Yosemite National Park poster that Doug Leen created to emulate the WPA style, also utilizes natural elements to frame the visual scene.²³ Within the frame, there are numerous giant sequoias, some that are in the distance and fit within the poster, and some that are so close that they extend well above the confines of what the viewer can see. The sequoias that rise above the frame highlight their status as “giants.”²⁴ The top of the poster states the name of the location and claims the grove to be “centuries of history in the making.”²⁵ Through pointing out the time frame of the sequoias, the government distances themselves as actively controlling nature. Furthermore,

the emphasis on time actively ignores the colonial past by making it seem as though the state has always occupied the space. This poster also displays the name Yosemite National Park, the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, as well as the DOI seal—once again, to seemingly posture as agencies determined in their role to preserve nature.²⁶

This poster features a wooden cabin with a stone chimney at the center.²⁷ The cabin, with tiny toylike features, portrays a sense of grandeur at the feet of the giant sequoias. This sense of scale minimizes the human imprint on nature. Since the cabin was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (a New Deal agency) and is currently a museum in the Mariposa Groves, the addition of human features serves as a reminder of the positive impact that humans have had while interacting with the space.²⁸ As such, this particular feature allows for a subtle nod to both the natural wonderment of the Mariposa Grove Giant Sequoias, as well as the government agencies that have had an impact and continue to have an impact on the public land. It provides additional evidence that through these posters, the government created a narrative: the land is rightfully theirs to occupy and protect.

The posters' use of natural elements fosters a public memory that minimizes a violent history. By framing nature as innocent, representations of El Capitan and the Giant Sequoias of Mariposa Grove reinforce a long history of colonialism by way of taming the virgin land. The physical removal of people as well as the intentional gestures to create a framework of innocent entertainment within the Yosemite Valley space is a convenient way for the colonial power of the United States to remove itself from a violent history and create a memory of innocence. As Marita Sturken describes in *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, the “investment in reaffirming innocence not only functions to mask U.S. imperialist policies, and the history of the United States as an active history of empire, but also obscures the degree to which violent conflict has been a fundamental aspect of U.S. society.”²⁹ These posters, as forms of kitsch souvenir, mask American colonialism and redirect the narrative to one of travel and tourism. The art creates a conversation about “travel that wants to imagine itself as innocent.”³⁰ These posters intentionally silence the original story of the indigenous peoples in the Yosemite Valley, which creates a sense of historical amnesia towards colonial violence.

Colonizing Yosemite

The original people that lived in the Yosemite Valley comprised various linguistic and cultural groups. The majority around the Sierra Nevada mountains were called the Ahwahneechee, which is a mixture of Miwok and Mono Paiute tribes.³¹ Research done by historians such as Mark David Spence, Robert Keller, and Michael Turek reveals that despite 80 percent of indigenous people succumbing to colonial diseases and slavery, the groups in the Sierra Nevada did not come into direct contact and conflict with whites until mid-19th century miners arrived during the Gold Rush.³² The discovery of gold in 1849 “accelerated the process” of destroying the Native populations.³³ This event created a tumultuous relationship between miners and indigenous peoples as many of the miners who fled to the West were often disappointed by the lack of resources available for exploitation.³⁴ They relied on word of mouth and reports as a way to strike it rich. Many of those reports reflected misleading or outdated information. When miners felt duped by incorrect information, author Patricia Limerick, in *The Legacy of Conquest*, argues they started to define themselves as victims within the Gold Rush.³⁵ Miners often directed their misfortune at other miners, indigenous peoples, or the federal government.³⁶ They perceived the federal government as most responsible for their lack of success as the government was supposed to control the indigenous people, as well as nature, so miners could successfully acquire rich resources.³⁷ Limerick describes how miners developed a victim mentality that coalesced into a conflict between them and the Native peoples in the Yosemite Valley. The Mariposa Indian War, included invasion, lynchings, and the slaughter of the Ahwahneechee, but the Ahwahneechee did not completely die out during this conflict.³⁸ Whether the Gold Rush prospectors felt “[a]ttacked by Indians or threatened by nature,” miners directed their resentment at the government for failing to contain indigenous peoples and control nature.³⁹ The government seized this opportunity to assert their authority over the Yosemite Valley by claiming state jurisdiction over the land when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act in 1864, “upon the express conditions that the premises shall be held for public use, resort, and recreation.”⁴⁰ Through legal control over Yosemite, the federal government could control and exclude indigenous people by promoting the land as a recreational playground for Anglo American tourism.

LaFayette Bunnell, who fought in the Mariposa Indian War, wrote

his account of the events in a book titled *Discovery of the Yosemite and the Indian War of 1851*. He recounted how Yosemite's beauty resonated with him on an emotional level. He described it as "awe-inspiring," "exhorted [sic.]," and as a 'sublime vision.'⁴¹ Bunnell also believed it was his responsibility to violently remove the Native people from the Yosemite Valley. Apparently, "[t]he tactic of burning villages to starve or freeze the Miwoks into submission... did not disturb him."⁴² He was even proud of killing dozens of Miwoks and taking no prisoners. Bunnell expressed his emotions of the events in terms of his views of the natural landscapes that he was trying to conquer. In his book, he recounted his love of nature, that "as he later gazed at El Capitan, 'found [his] eyes in tears with emotion.'⁴³ LaFayette Bunnell's characterization of nature encapsulates the nostalgic narrative for natural beauty and how it has hidden the history of violence upon Native peoples in Yosemite. When a modern national park enthusiast buys a Yosemite poster, the natural beauty of Yosemite is reinforced through the representative art. Thus, the art encapsulates Bunnell's nostalgia for nature over his violent acts towards the natives. As such, the beauty described by Bunnell became the main focus for turning Yosemite towards tourism as a natural playground.

In order to promote Yosemite for tourism, the federal government began to redefine the "authentic" wilderness experience. The process involved restricting the physical presence of Native peoples as well as their cultural expressions in the valley. Mark Spence, author of *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, presented that Anglo tourists wanted to view "the wilderness as an uninhabited Eden that should be set aside for the benefits and pleasure of vacationing Americans."⁴⁴ Setting aside the allusion to the wilderness as biblically divine, he explained "[t]he fact that Indians continued to hunt and light purposeful fires in such places" meant natives could not completely comprehend natural beauty.⁴⁵ The indigenous peoples' way of life was seen as a "violation" to nature by the federal government, which accentuated the silencing of their culture. The United States implemented regulations with the view that "the first national parks necessarily entailed the exclusion or removal of native peoples."⁴⁶ This was part of a systemic process to control Native American cultural expressions by defining certain activities as improper in the pursuit of an "authentic" wilderness experience. Indigenous people's interactions with nature were silenced in the grand historical narrative of this space. The "authentic" wilderness experience was a dog whistle to exclude them from the Yosemite

Valley. By policing these cultural expressions, the federal government was forming a script for proper participation in the parks. This repertoire of tourism specifically favored Anglo American activities over indigenous peoples’.

Yosemite did not immediately become a tourist destination. In fact, only 406 European and American tourist visitors entered the park between 1855-1863.⁴⁷ The Transcontinental Railroad, completed in 1869, as well as the lodging built within Yosemite, made the park more accessible to tourism.⁴⁸ As the parks implemented accommodations for tourism, publications began to advertise and describe the natural beauty of the area to draw visitors.⁴⁹

Many early tourists were attracted to the presence of Yosemite Native Americans, like the Miwok. These Anglo tourists often viewed them through a “tourist gaze,” seeing them as part of the natural landscape of Yosemite.⁵⁰ As Kodak’s photography became popular, Native Americans commoditized their presence as “exotic naturalness,” and would often charge visitors to take pictures of them.⁵¹ Applying Diana Taylor’s theories on the archive and the repertoire, it is clear indigenous people were ensuring their presence was preserved in the historical archive through the process of commoditizing their “Indianness,” perhaps without even knowing it.⁵² However, while capitalist centric preservation can create a market that maintains their cultural repertoire, it also devalues certain cultural behaviors or cultural expressions. As such, the Miwok were culturally pruned. Through capitalism, Anglo tourists shaped which expressions would be passed to future generations and which would be restricted.

Since Yosemite natives were able to commoditize their “Indianness,” it was much more difficult to push the narrative that they were dangerous to visitors. Not only did the commoditization of culture prove indigenous people were not dangerous, but that they had market value within the park. Starting in the 1890s, however, the rhetoric shifted to reflect Native American as harmful to the environment.⁵³ The federal government’s plan was to assimilate indigenous people because they believed Americanizing them would prevent the “marauding savages” from threatening the “wild flora and fauna in the park.”⁵⁴ They also pushed the idea that “Indians could never become ‘civilized’ so long as they continued to frequent their former ‘wilderness haunts.’”⁵⁵ The shift to characterize Native Americans as dangerous—not to visitors, but to the preservation of any park—reinforces the federal government’s role

in silencing indigenous peoples, while masking it as part of innocent park preservation.

When Yosemite became a National Park in 1890, the state began to strictly enforce laws that prohibited trespassing and hunting.⁵⁶ This had a large impact on indigenous people living in the high valley.⁵⁷ Yosemite natives were not outright excluded from the park for two major reasons: they made up a large portion of park employees and the superintendent of the park, A. E. Wood, believed Yosemite natives would eventually die out or completely assimilate with American society.⁵⁸ The belief that Yosemite natives would either vanish through death or assimilation is part of the overall concept that removal of indigenous people was a key feature in creating an “authentic” natural landscape in places like Yosemite. As soon as the federal government could fully remove Native peoples physically and culturally, the easier it would be to establish a federal stronghold over the Yosemite Valley and its public memory. Diana Taylor argues the United States federal government has used their colonial power to police indigenous communities. She states that through these means, colonial powers are able to establish hegemonic claims on public memory.⁵⁹ Here, in the case of the parks, the indigenous cultural performances were criminalized and regulated, and thus, the United States began to control the cultural memory of these indigenous peoples.⁶⁰ This is how silencing operates. Culture is silenced on small scales, until it eventually fades away from public memory.

Masking Colonialism Through Tourism

When the National Park Service was established in 1916, the Department of the Interior could control and regulate under a centralized department. They began to “promote the parks as national ‘pleasuring grounds’” that would be accessible to the general public “by any means practicable.”⁶¹ Their version of the general public included Anglo tourists, but was exclusionary toward Native Americans. In order to accommodate the push for western tourism, the park had to build infrastructure. This included roads, trails, buildings, and utilized government agencies such as the “tourist bureaus, chambers of commerce, and automobile associations.”⁶² In the 1920s, the parks even created a park-to-park initiative linking National Parks through a highway system.⁶³

To build Yosemite into a “national playground,” the U.S. also sought

to implement a more playground friendly environment in the park. The park officials encouraged hunting predatory animals as a way to ensure larger populations of popular non-predatory game animals. This concept was certainly at odds with the regulation of indigenous peoples' hunting within the confines of the park. Yosemite natives would hunt for sustenance, while the park employees hunted as a way to control the natural environment. In addition, trees that blocked specific views of the park were cut back to create better visual opportunities for tourists.⁶⁴ Previously, the park regulated Native American activities such as hunting and fire burning because they believed that this showed a lack of appreciation of nature, despite the fact that they were participating in the same way that their people had for centuries. Native traditions of manipulating the land had created the exact natural conditions that the land had been in when the U.S. "found" it. The disparity and unequal treatment was justified through the need to create a perfectly structured park, even though the tourists believed they were seeing land stuck in time. By manicuring Yosemite, the park was as much fiction as it was land "centuries in the making." The WPA posters perpetuated this fiction within their artistic representations of the parks as a preserved natural playground.

Creating a perfect aesthetic and "authentic" environment for tourists was an intentional act asserted by the federal government. Despite masking their colonial acts through preservation, the parks department was hesitant to completely remove indigenous people from the land, and quite honestly enjoyed their marketability—on their own terms, of course. The government's image of Native Americans shifted from seeing their presence as dangerous to the belief that they were useful and controllable. In 1916, the same year that the NPS was established, Yosemite also inaugurated "Indian Field Days."⁶⁵ Instead of promoting Native Americans, "park officials sharply circumscribed expressions of Yosemite [native] culture."⁶⁶ Indian Field Days was a way to bolster tourism in the parks during slower seasons, specifically during the hot late summers when the waterfalls would dry up.⁶⁷ They wanted to promote interest through "native 'games and industries,'" but this was often seen as "little more than an excuse for tourists and park officials to pose in buckskin and feathered headdress."⁶⁸ Rather than learn about the Ahwahneechee and their intricate culture and way of life, tourists instead appropriated indigenous cultural expressions through kitsch experiences. Through these acts, the Indian Field Days fostered stereotypical understandings of indig-

enous culture, reinforced behavior the state found acceptable, and rebuked behavior seen as uncouth, ultimately furthering colonial control over the archival cultural expressions in the indigenous repertoire.⁶⁹

The WPA National Park posters produced in the following decades after the introduction of the Indian Field Days were a prime example of the park “othering” native expressions of culture. The Yosemite poster promoted an activity called “Indian [d]emonstrations,” which mirrored a similar spirit of cultural control as Indian Field Days.⁷⁰ The “Indian [d]emonstrations,” along with other Yosemite tourist attractions, showcased government approved culture. At this time, tourism, as specific to white Anglo identity, infantilized the activities, rather than promoting them as opportunities to learn about cultural expressions. The “detached tourist gaze” in conjunction with these embodiments established racial, cultural, behavioral, and hierarchical social orders.⁷¹ Tourism, as an activity, was a critical element in dissolving and reshaping the indigenous cultural repertoire in Yosemite.

In the late 1920s, Charles Thompson, the Superintendent of Yosemite, expressed the urgency to move indigenous peoples in the park and restrict them from professionalizing Indianness for fees.⁷² Thompson expressed great disdain towards the Native Americans in the park as “backward peoples,” but ultimately felt their removal from the park was comparable to losing local fauna, much like deer.⁷³ The Department of the Interior wanted Yosemite to be “authentic” yet manufactured. These steps by the federal government were part of the myth making process of Yosemite as a natural sublime wilderness untouched by human beings. It reflected the “park service’s goal of presenting a ‘scenic facade of nature.’”⁷⁴ The government had created a playground for American tourists to perform as 20th century colonial explorers through sightseeing. Tourists could explore with the peace of mind that the government controlled the inconveniences as described by the miners of the 19th century: natives and nature.

To accommodate an American identity rooted in colonial performativity, the United States built a year-round road to Yosemite in 1920. This project became “Yosemite’s ‘all-year highway’, Route 140,” which opened in 1926, and allowed for “easy access during the winter months.”⁷⁵ With easier access for white Americans to tour parks, via private automobiles and roads, the accessibility of tourism became prevalent and so did the parks as advertising symbols. In the early 20th century, places like Yosemite constructed

and perpetuated frontier myths of “westward expansion” through the “tourist gaze” in photographs or artistic advertisements.⁷⁶ Marguerite Shaffer, in *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940*, argues photographs of National Parks in the early 20th century “captured scenic views from their most alluring perspective, transforming the natural landscape into pristine iconographic images.”⁷⁷ She presents the very act of sightseeing by white Americans as a way to express superiority through a sense of a new colonial rule.⁷⁸ From the vantage point of those sightseers, the federally controlled land reflected an embodiment of state power over nature. The colonial state power over nature could be transferred to sightseers through acts of tourism or artistic expressions and advertisements, where they could interact with or view the natural facade as constructed by the government.

The highway systems set forth by the government in the early 20th century created opportunities for goods and merchandise to be shipped greater distances.⁷⁹ With the rise of commercial shipping, advertising became “more national in character.”⁸⁰ The advertisers used Yosemite as part of this American character to sell products by connecting them to nature and bringing the “tourist imagery into the modern era” of capitalism.⁸¹ These advertisements set the groundwork for other types of kitsch memorabilia that Yosemite tourists could purchase. Through memorabilia, tourists could enjoy the parks long after their visit. Tourists would use memorabilia to serve as tokens for their personal memories. However, in that same regard, these tokens would be part of the myth making process.

Commercial memorabilia was the primary contextual evidence for constructing how outsiders viewed the parks, as these artifacts would likely reach people who were unable to visit the parks in person. For example, Yosemite began selling products constructed from the giant sequoia trees.⁸² In the “nineteenth century pieces of sequoia wood were sold at the groves en route to the valley” through craft objects such as “wooden cabinets...canes, tables and buttons carved” from the sequoias.⁸³ The commercialization of the natural elements of Yosemite was not a sustainable process. The federal government was willing to commodify the natural allure of Yosemite to perpetuate a feeling that tourists could own and take home nature. The more sustainable option was through visual representations of Yosemite—such as posters. Posters were created in mass and showcased a curated vision of the park. This perspective was specifically catered to sightseers and as a way to construct the

narrative of government controlled land.

American Identity Myth Making Through New Deal Art During the Great Depression

As advertising and consumption of Yosemite became part of the American tourist identity, the United States entered an era of economic crisis. In 1929, the United States spiraled into the Great Depression. President Herbert Hoover believed the best course of action for climbing out of the Depression was to allow the markets to correct themselves instead of government intervention. The majority of the American population felt differently about the role of the government in the early 1930s and voted to replace President Hoover with Franklin D. Roosevelt. When Franklin Roosevelt was elected president in 1932, he established new government agencies under the New Deal with the purpose of putting people to work who were left unemployed. Some New Deal Programs created jobs with the purpose of building public infrastructure like school buildings, bridges, parks and dams, whereas other agencies attempted to beautify or highlight public spaces through art.⁸⁴ The Works Progress Administration (WPA), one of the New Deal government agencies, employed approximately eight million workers and devoted seven percent of its total budget for the purpose of creating art—amounting to around 470,000 total artworks.⁸⁵ Under the auspices of the WPA, operated between 1935-1943, the WPA “put unemployed artists to work in ways that would preserve their creative skills during the Great Depression and benefit the public at large.”⁸⁶ Thus, artists could be employed during the depression by the government. Their role was to create cultural expressions that were supported by social welfare and approved by the government. As such, their art often reflected a passive or supportive government, rather than a violent colonial power.

Since the New Deal era was about reconstructing a nation in depression, these artists were responsible for creating art that reflected the redevelopment of a national cultural identity. Jonathan Harris, in *Federal Art and National Culture*, describes these artists as “citizen-artists.” He states that “the Federal Art Project attempted to utilize artists in its reconstruction of the American people (including artists themselves) as citizens within the body of a reforming nation-state.”⁸⁷ This reconstruction of the American identity through art, however, had roots deeply embedded in previous notions of what

it meant to be an American as constructed by the federal government.

Reconstructing a new American identity through art, however, was actually part of a general cultural battlefield rooted in the binary political system. For example, “[s]ince the FAP embraced both liberal and conservative impulses, it must not be understood simply as the policy of cultural progressives but as an ongoing negotiation among competing ideas.”⁸⁸ The art created by the WPA was not part of a homogenous political ideology. With thousands of artists competing to create cultural expressions, undoubtedly there was art silenced from the official archive. The National Park posters that Ranger Doug eventually salvaged at one point had been approved for general consumption. While many of those posters might be hard to find now, each approved poster supported a narrative that promoted government owned lands. At the same time, many National Park poster designs were not approved for general consumption by the WPA, and are currently lost because their designs were never archived. Artists who were able to successfully create posters for general consumption had power to shape the political discourse and public memory surrounding the parks. These artists created visual representations that became identity markers based on their own political leanings. Their artistic representations, on a large scale, had the power to create a cultural script for how Americans spoke about natural beauty and the benefits of government preserved land.

The negotiation of cultural representation is not new amongst the creation of public art. As Kirk Savage argues in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, art, like Civil War Monuments in the case of Savage, can be used as vessels to perpetuate white supremacy.⁸⁹ As the south was able to seemingly “depoliticize” Confederate statues by turning the focus to the “white war heroes” and patriotic feelings of “duty” and “honor” to the country, the WPA National Park posters by the FAP were constructing narratives in the same fashion.⁹⁰ The posters depoliticize acts of white supremacy and colonialism through shifting the focus to the grandeur of nature. Instead of showing human conflict, the posters display a rock formation older than human existence. At 100 million years old, El Capitan transcends colonial violence and the silencing of indigenous peoples. Through Yosemite’s El Capitan and Mariposa Grove, the federal government disassociated themselves from their violent history in the Yosemite Valley and instead suggested Americans celebrate a strong central government that preserves nature. The posters create

an ultimate sense of innocence; tourists who buy these posters are blinded by the breathtaking scenes and their own personal memories associated with the land.

While indigenous people were silenced in the WPA posters, “[m]any of the modern artists employed by the art projects were inspired by the visual culture of ‘primitive’ peoples, from Native American abstract designs to folk art.”⁹¹ This abstract nature of folk art is present, but no credit is given for the inspiration. In silencing native peoples from the art, the art instead pushes a framework for Americanization and assimilation by creating an American-centric cultural script in the form of art. Grieve argues this process is done as a way to create a unifying identity during the Great Depression. Additionally, the art during the New Deal era was used as an educational tool for “recent immigrants, about the supposedly shared national values that defined the United States.”⁹² As such, as the art taught immigrants, and even American citizens, about the shared national values, it excluded the cultural role of Native Americans. Grieve argues, “the ‘discovery’ of folk art was intrinsically bound up with modern art and performed the ideological work of creating a national culture and identity based on the exclusion of Native Americans.”⁹³ This exclusionary tactic is visible in the Federal Art Projects products. The Yosemite National Park posters are evidence of this direct form of exclusion.

The posters exclude Native Americans in multiple ways. Yosemite natives are not present in the scenery of the posters, nor do they allude to them as inspiration for the abstract visions of the park. In addition, the posters are constructed with a specific narrative in mind—a narrative constructed over several centuries by the colonial federal government. The silencing of an indigenous repertoire is visible in how the posters suggest activities for park enthusiasts. In these suggestions, indigenous people are pushed to the margins of acceptable forms of participation. “Indian Demonstrations” encourage the “detached tourist gaze” where Yosemite natives show tourists obscure skills that are distinctly non-Anglo. Since the evidence shows the parks actively controlled indigenous expressions, the Indian Demonstrations were no more than government approved culture. In the ideological battlefield to unify Americans during the Great Depression, the Federal Art Project created art that was distinctly white-washed.

During World War II, artists who were utilized by the government for the New Deal were charged with creating art for the war effort. These fed-

eral artists shifted to creating camouflage, map making, or even “to illustrate government propaganda materials.”⁹⁴ The seamless transition from creating unifying domestic art that promoted American tourism, to using those same artistic skills in the war effort, shows how the state used art to control artistic expressions in their favor. In addition, the shift from the Great Depression to WWII might also explain how the earlier National Park posters were lost in the archives, since the war effort became the central focus of both domestic and international affairs in America.

When Ranger Doug rediscovered the WPA style National Park posters at the turn of the 21st century, he reintroduced these cultural expressions to the American collective memory. He was able to replicate these posters for people who appreciated the National Parks and the memories they represented for visitors. When people buy the posters, they take home their own specific memories of places like Yosemite, similar to that of the kitsch memorabilia sold by the parks in the early 20th century. Ranger Doug believes that by replicating these posters, he is “preserving” a cultural artifact of the NPS that was “almost lost to the dustbin of history.”⁹⁵ In a way, Ranger Doug is part of a long history of preservation and restoration of the National Parks. The federal government, to people like Doug, helped provide “unemployed Americans” with work, helped “preserve the parks and forests,” and made sure to continually upgrade “infrastructure and new amenities.”⁹⁶ Not only do the posters posture a history of an innocent preservationist government, but people also attach their own personal histories to their experiences with the parks that become entangled with the posters.⁹⁷

The posters often help people commemorate their personal memories and experiences with National Parks. Others might simply just appreciate the artistic style. However, the average consumer might not understand that these posters have greater symbolic value than what they seemingly present. The consumption of the art has been used as a tool to perpetuate a specific romanticized public memory. While they might show the government as innocent or even benevolent, the historical evidence presents a different story. These posters are part of a larger American repertoire that silences a violent colonial past. They represent and reinforce a reliance on the federal government and promote the parks as a permanent fixture of American identity. Americans have not only come to rely on the federal government’s paternalistic role, but they directly encourage it and, moreover, do not question it. The

reliance on a strong government has become a permanent fixture of American identity and the posters that Ranger Doug has brought back into the American consciousness continue to reinforce those ideals.

The public memory of the National Parks posters consists of a purposeful forgetting of colonialism and state power. The federal government's role with the National Parks has ultimately allowed the state to control a specific narrative. Through the construction of the parks, the early forms of tourism, and the posters created by the WPA, the government has controlled how people visualize and remember the parks. The United States government used Yosemite National Park to position nature as part of the national identity. By portraying them as innocent spaces, they have disassociated themselves from the violence perpetrated upon Native Americans. The WPA posters also reinforce the need for a strong social welfare state. Social welfare, as expressed in the subtext of the posters, was ultimately beneficial for helping the U.S. overcome the Great Depression and create unity during WWII. Through these actions by the government, the art celebrates the power of the state as a needed and trusted institution in preserving America's natural landscape.

Reinforcing State Control Through The Preservation of Nature

By the end of 2018, Americans saw first-hand what could happen if the federal government ceased to protect the parks. With the recent government shutdown, parks such as Yosemite, were forced to furlough their employees and shut down the National Parks. While there seemed to be an implication that park goers would treat nature with respect, the reality was that without government regulation, parks like Yosemite were inundated with "abandoned picnic areas with open food containers" as well as dogs being allowed to "walk off-leash, through sensitive meadow areas, risking damage to plant life."⁹⁸ While many volunteers helped to minimize damage, there came a point where the damage could have become permanent.⁹⁹ The federal government, through over a century of positioning themselves as innocent protectors of nature, once again were situated as the only solution. Americans looked to the government to reopen in order to preserve nature. With a long history of the frontier and nature shaping American identity, the government shutdown highlighted the need for the federal government's protection.

Ranger Doug has a clear passion for the National Parks. The posters he replicates and sells provide kitsch souvenirs for park goers to remember

their positive experiences in nature. However, these posters, stamped with the DOI seal, are part of a long history of the federal government shaping the American identity through cultural symbols. Ultimately, these posters shaped the public memory of Yosemite as a public good and continue to encourage the preservation of nature. The government shutdown of 2018-19 did not spur the American public to recognize how indigenous peoples have been silenced in the parks. Rather, it showed Americans as desperate for a working government so they could resume their normal tourism and consumerism. The reliance on the government as a preservation state has survived through the memory tied to these posters. As long as Americans are distracted through consumerism and tourism, the United States will continue rewriting history, pushing their violent colonial history to the margins of public memory.

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Race and Resistance

Questions to consider while reading:

- What purpose does the inception of the notion of 'race' serve?
- Why is it important who tells the story?
- What are the numerous components of struggles for liberation and their purpose?

Sorcerers, Fraudsters, and Crooks: Western Myths of the Romani People

Giulia A. Oprea

AMST 401: Race in American Culture

This research paper was written for American Studies 401T, a seminar with Professor Susie Woo on the matter of race. This work aims to further the understanding of the damage that Western academia has on non-Western cultures and to call for a better approach to the subject. The paper argues that the study of non-Western cultures from a Western perspective and with Western tools is inherently invasive, culturally flattening, and a reinforcement of a white, hegemonic, and imperialistic project. I specifically examine the Western creation of knowledge about the Romani population in the 20th century that were inspired by ideas put forth by the Gypsy Lore Society.

As a scholar trained under a Western academic institution, one of my biggest goals has been to remain critical of the master's tools. It's easy to be swept up the stairs of the ivory tower and gain identity and footing in the academy by subscribing to Western hegemonic ideas of intellectual thought, methodologies, and theories. But it is crucial to question what we have been taught, what purpose it serves, who it empowers, and, most importantly—who it doesn't. I argue that the study of non-Western cultures from a Western perspective and with Western tools is inherently invasive, culturally flattening, and a reinforcement of a white, hegemonic, and imperialistic project. In this research paper, I specifically examine the Western creation of knowledge about the Romani population in the 20th century. My study primarily looks at the legacy of the Gypsy Lore Society and examines subsequent texts written about Romani groups in the United States produced in the 20th century—these works largely stemmed from the work and ideas put forth by GLS scholars. I investigate how Western academic institutions use methodologies, theories, and world views to produce information about non-Western

cultures. I want to know who and what does the production of this information leave out and misunderstand? How does imperial power and domination play a role in knowledge production? I also want to explore the consequences of placing Western ideas as the standard and epitome of academic knowledge, and how the wide acceptance of this information leads to oppression, dehumanization, and violence toward non-Western cultures. Finally, I hope this work can contribute to a deeper understanding of what the decolonization of academia looks like and what it can achieve.

My goal in looking at how different types of institutions produce written texts with a claim of expert knowledge about Romani culture is to analyze what cultural work these texts do in constructing the stereotypical “gypsy” image, culture, and tradition. Within that, I want to contend the Western understanding of Romani culture by arguing that its basis, in a primarily imperialistic, white, and capitalistic archive, doesn’t allow for an academically decolonized understanding of the culture and its traditions—in which criminal activity, for example, can be looked at as survival tactics for cultural preservation, and how stereotypes can be reclaimed by Romani individuals. Finally, I want to frame the approach to these academic constructions through the concept of orientalism and explore the branch produced from it—gypsylorism.

The Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) was founded in 1888 by academics—mostly anthropologists, sociologists, and linguists—in the UK and moved to the United States in 1989.¹ In Vol. 1 No.1 of the journal, where the society first laid out their goals, they state that their aims are to find new information and rearrange old information in order to find “the final solution to the Gypsy Problem.”² In reading further, it becomes clear that the “Gypsy problem” that they’re addressing is finding where the Romani people originated from.³ The word choice, regardless of its intention, is important seeing as “the discursive construction of Gypsies as ‘problems’ has been deeply embedded in European popular and scientific discourses (including in the UK) for several centuries.⁴ Further, the use of this phrase describes Romani people as incompatible with European society and continues to carry with it “the power of ‘othering’, objectification, and labels Romani groups as inferior and deviant, which can have long-lasting and violent effects.⁵ Notably, in the same issue, the first section of the poem *Les Bohémiens* by Pierre-Jean de Béranger is included—translated from French to say, “Sorcerers, fraudsters

or crooks, remains filthy, of an ancient world; Sorcerers, fraudsters or crooks, gay Bohemians, where are you from?”⁶ The word *bohémien* in French came to mean “gypsy” from the French understanding that they originated from Bohemia.⁷ By understanding the poem in this context, the references to magic, crime, and filth simply state and reinforce the inferiority and deviance historically attached to Romani groups. Another example of the pervasive racism, found especially throughout the earlier volumes of the journal, can be seen in the 1961 article by Dr. H Arnold entitled “The Gypsy Gene” in which he accused “gypsies” of constant interbreeding with the host population” and “infiltra[ting] of Gypsy blood into the host populations”⁸—Rhetoric that blatantly equates the Romani population to a disease or a parasite. Fixating on biology is not new. A lot of written work in 1920s Germany put heavy emphasis on perceived Romani criminality, thought to be a transmitted genetic disease, which led to calls for sterilization and extermination.⁹

The current goals listed on their official website include “promotion of the study of Gypsy, Traveler, and analogous peripatetic cultures worldwide; dissemination of accurate information aimed at increasing understanding of these cultures in their diverse forms; and establishment of closer contacts among scholars studying any aspects of these cultures.”¹⁰ While the effort has been made to change the name of the journal to that of *Romani Studies* instead of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, the word “gypsy” is still liberally used throughout the website and continues to be a part of the society’s name.

One of the most prominent Romani scholars who speaks out on many issues surrounding the Romani community, specifically within academia, is Ian Hancock. He begins his 2002 book, *We Are The Romani People*, by highlighting one of the many definitions that the Romani population has had imposed upon them “...Though everybody knows the ‘Gypsies’, far fewer really know the Romanies.”¹¹ Here he describes the idea of having two identities, one being their own Romani identity, while the other one is the identity given to them by Western culture. He uses examples of classic novels like *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which constructed an image he calls both romantic and scary, “but not especially accurate.”¹² The key to identity begins with the name. Hancock explains the word “gypsy” was created by outsiders and came from inaccurate assumptions of Egyptian origin and continues to contribute to negative images.¹³ Popular culture is but one of the many places where people have tried to define, categorize, and explain the complexities of

a group of people which “have managed to maintain their identity, preserve their language, and retain their culture”—something many non-Western cultures have been unable to do.¹⁴ However, in explaining this anthropological fascination with Romani culture, Rena Gropper inadvertently points out the very irony of Western academic methodologies that seek to tell the stories of other cultures through a very limited lens.

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith acquaints the reader with the extensive and multi-layered effects of imperialism and colonialism within research and the implications it has on indigenous peoples—though we can easily relate this phenomenon to the study and academic work of non-Western cultures as well. Smith points out how imperialism masks itself as an “order” and has been used as the basis in the academic institution, with history and research being a big part of that. It’s important to note that whoever writes history has the power to control how it’s told. As Smith significantly points out, “Processes of dehumanization were often hidden behind justifications for imperialism and colonialism...clothed with an ideology of humanism and liberalism.”¹⁵ She adds that the “collective memory” of imperialism was preserved through how information about indigenous people was “collected, classified, and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized.”¹⁶ These pieces of information are crucial as they show how the foundation of academic research, history, and information about indigenous peoples and non-Western cultures has been formed from an imperial and Western perspective and embedded into our society. It’s equally as important to note a lot of this information has been used to not only justify violence toward indigenous cultures, and in this case, toward the Romani population, but to also make Western culture appear to be a savior of non-Western peoples and to set Western ideas as the standard and epitome of knowledge.

Orientalism essentially defines the relationship between the East (or the Orient) and West as one of power and domination.¹⁷ Edward Said explains that Orientalism is a style of thought rooted in otherizing those from the East. This otherizing was and continues to be used by the West to gain identity and establish strength and dominance. Looking at Orientalism within academia is important because this is one of the areas where the West studies, writes and teaches about the “Orient.” Said maintains that many writers and scholars have accepted the basic distinction between the East

and West and employ it as the starting point for academic and scholarly work revolving around the Orient, its people, and their cultures.¹⁸ The key is understanding Orientalism as a discourse. The power of discourse, which Said asserts through Foucault's theory, is what allow the systemic discipline with which the West was able to politically, sociologically, and ideologically manage and produce the Orient.¹⁹ This is important to understand because it helps us to critically analyze Western scholarship and assert its limitations. In its academic framing, Orientalism is situated as a truthful discourse, rather than as a structure of power and dominance that the West exercises this discourse continues to live on and be widely accepted throughout Western culture and conciseness is because of the continued investment in it—investment that Orientalists like the GLS put in since 1888 and continue to maintain today.²⁰

Inspired by Said's work, Ken Lee proposed a similar and parallel system to Orientalism, Gypsyism.²¹ Lee asserts that the GLS established "the gypsies" as specific subjects for examination in their journal and "claimed a privileged epistemological position, asserting that they were the only internally recognized source of scholarly information about 'the gypsies.'"²² As Vol. 1 No. 1 in the journal of GLS stated, there was an academic endeavor to understand the origins of Romani people. The uncertainty of their origins presented an on-going threat to European order and stability; because of this, they were always otherized in dominant narratives and situated as being outliers—"spatially, socially, and racially."²³ Lee explains how there was a shift in this understanding of the Romani people once Heinrich Grellmann posited that their origins lie in India. He explains that this made the understanding of their otherness an easier task and allowed the study of them to be built upon—thus allowing the GLS to hone in Romani people as specific subjects of study.²⁴ Early GLS scholarship was quite Orientalist in nature since they searched for exactly how Romani groups had moved from India to Europe and exactly how much of the culture and language they had held on to, in an attempt to define and categorize who they are.²⁵ Gypsyism is an important extension of Orientalism because in understanding that Orientalism was and continues to be deeply woven into a "Eurocentric epistemological framework", the scholarship that so-called "gypsyists" produced legitimized European global dominance, adding to the continued investment in Orientalism that I mentioned earlier.²⁶

Western institutions that rely on a primarily white and imperialistic acknowledgment and legitimization of intellectual thought produce widely accepted forms of information about non-Western cultures; this leads to the very same stereotypes the Hancock points to. Beyond creating stereotypes, the consequences of Western institutions in positions of information-creating authority have more detrimental effects on a culture. Throughout history, Romani groups have been continuously persecuted. Hancock gives a brief history of their journey from slavery to being subjected to various forms of social control.²⁷ He argues that the centuries of collective trauma endured by the Romani people have led to continuous oppression that still lives on today. He further explains that this oppression can take the form of stereotypical images that reinforce “antigypsy-ism”—an extreme prejudice toward the Romani people. Hancock writes that antigypsy-ism has risen from their being non-Christian, darker-skinned, nomadic, preferring a solitary culture, and a general misunderstanding of their origins.²⁸ This led to laws and political rhetoric that have controlled both their mobility and freedom of carrying out tradition. By not contributing to the labor force, owning property, or remaining in one place, the Romani people challenged and inverted a European and Western established way of life. This, alongside sensationalized origin stories and a belief in their inherent criminality, is what led to laws formed to regulate their movement and caused surveillance of their behavior—including extermination, banishment, and persecution. A recent example of violent political rhetoric by Zsolt Bayer, a Hungarian conservative party leader in 2013:

A significant part of the Roma are unfit for coexistence. They are not fit to live among people. These Roma are animals, and they behave like animals. When they meet with resistance, they commit murder. They are incapable of human communication. Inarticulate sounds pour out of their bestial skulls. At the same time, these Gypsies understand how to exploit the “achievements” of the idiotic Western world. But one must retaliate rather than tolerate. These animals shouldn’t be allowed to exist. In no way. That needs to be solved—immediately and regardless of the method.²⁹

This quote demonstrates how the use of the word “gypsy” otherizes, but also how this can easily turn into genocidal rhetoric by calling the group subhuman, posing them as a threat, and essentially demanding their extermination. This type of rhetoric and belief is responsible for much of the Romani group’s

historical persecution, as seen by the 500 years of slavery and the millions murdered in the Holocaust.³⁰ In understanding this long traumatic history, the GLS's continued use of the word "gypsy" in 2019 can only be understood as a reinforcement of and refusal to acknowledge a violent past that has been in part constructed by Western scholarly work.

In contemporary scholarship, there has been a more critical analysis of the GLS and the role it played in "contributing to a racist paradigm..."³¹ Jan Selling points out two separate occasions in which the GLS carefully danced around the idea of apologizing and taking responsibility for the racist work produced: the 2012 GLS Board meeting in Istanbul and the 2016 GLS Annual General Meeting and Conference in Stockholm. In 2012, a motion calling for an acknowledgment and apology was largely dismissed by most of the board.³² Selling calls out these "defensive maneuvers" and clarifies "the question is not about guilt but historical responsibility."³³ In 2016, a "compromise resolution" was presented, which Selling describes as "not an apology" but rather a prideful recollection of their contributions, a refusal to acknowledge the production of racist work, a "defense of the academic 'ivory tower.'"³⁴

In 2017, Yaron Matras, the former editor of what is now known as the *Journal of Romani Studies*, continued this defensive narrative, in his letter "from the outgoing editor" entitled "From Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society to Romani Studies: Purpose and Essence of a Modern Academic Platform." He explained his efforts in spearheading the GLS's name change to *Romani Studies* and steering their agenda towards one that strives "to signal that our interest was in populations that had agency and their own image of themselves"³⁵ and "adopting a title that flags a modern agenda without completely disowning the past."³⁶ Woven throughout this deceptively progressive declaration was a continuation of the GLS legacy, which I argue remains to be a defense of the imposition of imperialistic and Western ideals on Romani culture. This is visible in his concluding remarks in which he states:

Those entrusted with running academic platforms such as scholarly conferences and publications will need to take a firm stance on whether claims for symbolic power and representation made on behalf or even seemingly on behalf of constituencies, real or imagined, mean that this is a justified need to reconsider the broader epistemological basis of scholarly discussion... whether all those (referring here to the methods of the journal's selection process) are the exclusive

property of a “White” or “Western” way of doing things and should be abandoned or loosened under the pretext of affording representation to others, or whether they are universal norms that define a mission statement around which we can unite as scholars regardless of our diverse backgrounds.³⁷

In rhetoric that can be equated to that of a careful politician, Matras neither denounces the problematic history of the journal nor calls for a new approach to the white or Western way of doing things. Instead, Matras takes the middle road to say that someone will have to make these decisions eventually. The current editor of the *Romani Studies* journal is Kimmo Granqvist. In a 2018 letter from the editor, Granqvist maintains that his goal for the journal begins with ensuring that a multidisciplinary element is brought to the editorial board and the journal, including different academic traditions.³⁸ This could be interpreted as positive a step forward for the journal in potential efforts to distance themselves from Western academic traditions and encourage more Romani scholars to contribute, but this is not clearly stated in his carefully crafted letter. Similar to his predecessor, Granqvist fails to take historical responsibility for the society’s contribution to a racist paradigm— or propose that, for example, another step forward would be changing the name of the society to distance itself from the racist legacy that the word “gypsy” carries with it.

While it’s important to acknowledge the steps that the GLS has taken, which will hopefully lead to more steps in the future, the scope of this paper aims to make the case that its roots stem from a heavy Orientalist background.³⁹ This history permeates through the present day GLS and should not only be acknowledged but understood as a continuation of an imperialist project that needs to be addressed and expunged from contemporary academia. The second half of this paper will examine written texts about the Romani population produced in the 20th century, and which largely took the work that GLS and their scholars brought forth in the academic world. I do this to demonstrate the continued effects of Orientalism as well as the consequences of the racist legacy and history of the GLS. I will use the word “gypsy” in quotes throughout this examination for the sole purpose of exemplifying the Western perspective in written texts and how the word carries notions of criminalization with it.

Romani groups have been in the United States since British coloni-

zation. Romanies were transported to the colonies as slaves to Virginia and Louisiana. Policies that discriminated against them were put into place at the end of the 19th century in what was likely linked to the political climate at the beginning of Reconstruction.⁴⁰ They were mentioned in *Legislation for the Colored Man* in 1866, in which Andrew Johnson vetoed their right to vote in his fear that the civil rights bill would “operate in favor of the colored and abasing the white race [because they] comprehend...the people called Gipsies as well as the entire race designated as blacks.”⁴¹ Many oppressive laws followed the Romani people from Europe to the U.S. and existed in states like Mississippi, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Georgia, Texas, and Indiana—these laws placed extreme levels of surveillance upon Romani groups and specifically targeted types of labor associated with the groups and their nomadic nature.⁴² This information helps us situate the Romani people in the context of American racial structures and can provide a deeper understanding of how their roots in the United States began and contributed to their criminalization and surveillance.

I closely examine several parts from *License to Steal—Traveling Con Artists: Their Games, Their Rules, Your Money* by Dennis Marlock and John Dowling. It’s notable that Dennis Marlock, a retired cop from the Milwaukee police department, has also written a book in 2001 entitled *How to Become a Professional Con Artist* as well as the 1993 guidebook entitled *Gypsy Talk: Law Enforcement’s Guide to the Secret Language of the American Gypsy*, both of which stereotype, target, and criminalize Romani groups. In fact, there is a petition on activism.com that calls for an end to Romani persecution by Marlock and the Milwaukee police department that Romani people have written in response. The petition states:

We as Romani people and supporters of the Romani Gypsy community are protesting Dennis Marlock for Racial Crimes against the Romani people and the Milwaukee Police Department for not responding to requests from the community to investigate his use of police resources for personal use, and allowing him to continue to Defame, Harass, lie, and discriminate against the Romani people. We ask that Mr. Marlock remove all references to Romani, Rom, or Gypsy in relations to his materials on Scams, and we are asking the police department to terminate his access to police databases that allow him to investigate and harass people in retaliation.⁴³

There is much to unpack in the work of Dennis Marlock, which the scope of this paper cannot cover completely, as I will be focusing primarily on certain sections of *License to Steal*. In his book *Danger! Educated Gypsy*, Ian Hancock provides a closer examination of Dennis Marlock— one notable thing he includes in this book is a letter written to Dennis Marlock from Tomas Acton (a member and scholar of the GLS) in which he Acton writes:

Compared with the massive record of murder, theft, kidnapping, and other crimes by non-Gypsies against Gypsies throughout history, Gypsy crime against non-Gypsies pales almost into insignificance, so that to prioritize the study of the latter over the former shows a twisted sense of values.⁴⁴

This letter is significant because it directly connects the influence of the GLS on Marlock's work, but it also further demonstrates the racism embedded into the GLS, seeing as Acton wrote a large number of articles for the journal. Hancock also investigates the other author of *License to Steal*, John Dowling, and his prejudice toward Romani groups in an interview with Gerardo Rivera in April 1990 where he was introduced as a "gypsy expert" and distinguishes "gypsies" as the criminal portion of the Romani population; also adding "gypsies don't know the difference between right and wrong, like the rest of us do."⁴⁵ Understanding the authors' backgrounds provides an understanding of the way the book is framed and helps in critically approaching it.

The description of the book is "an in-depth study of the criminal element of the Romani population, a highly organized, secretive empire known as the Gypsy Mafia..." and asserts that information was gathered through police files, historical data, and interviews with victims.⁴⁶ In reading the description, it's clear that authors distinguish the Romani population from the otherwise "criminally" inclined "gypsies." If the name of this text doesn't provide an initial understanding of who the main subject of focus is, the cover certainly does. Pictured on the front is what I interpret to be a Western stereotype of a "gypsy" woman: complete with a mole, bandana in her hair, and two necklaces. It is unclear if the image was created for this cover or if it was a reproduction. In any case, the image is contrasted in such a way that she looks menacing. Next to her is an image associated with fortune telling—a palm surrounded by a moon and stars— implying that this woman is a fortune teller, a stereotypical role usually associated with Romani women in particular. The association of occult arts, such as fortune telling, to "gypsies" is a

widely accepted part of an anthropological perspective notably popular in the United States in which “gypsies” are primarily situated as the exotic “other” rather than a social group.⁴⁷ This text isn’t the first to stereotypically position the Romani population in relation to the occult arts by drawing its information from the early work of the GLS, another example is *Gypsy Demons and Divinities* written in 1973.⁴⁸

License to Steal is primarily framed as a book attempting to argue that “gypsies” are simply the bad seeds in Romani culture. In this section I will closely examine the first chapter of the book, entitled “The Gypsies,” which is dedicated to introducing this idea of the “good” and the “bad” Romanies and cites five GLS affiliated scholars as reference.⁴⁹ The chapter begins with commendation to Romanies who have assimilated, “Most Gypsies, or Romani, as they prefer to be call themselves have indeed assimilated but without giving up their ethnic identity, their language, or their heritage. They have joined the labor force, own homes, and serve in the armed forces.”⁵⁰ The emphasis on these American ideals are examples of what Jennifer Erickson calls “neoliberal models of good citizenship” that relied on economic self-sufficiency and achieving middle class status by way of education and waged labor.⁵¹ This statement also implies that subscribing to these ideals and assimilating is how “bad gypsies” can become “good” Romanies. This “bad” segment of the population has “not assimilated and shows no inclination to do so” because they “heartily reject, despise, and condemn American society...”⁵² Because of their refusal to assimilate, the authors brand them as criminals who live “by preying on those about them.”⁵³ It is implied here that subscribing to these apparently superior ideals is the only way that “gypsies” can absolve themselves of their implied inherent criminality. At the same time, any other way of living or a refusal to assimilate is equated with hating America and positions those who refuse to assimilate as an enemy of the state and a threat to citizens’ well-being.

The framing of this is representative of an Orientalist approach to understanding non-Western culture since there is an emphasis between “us” and “them”—this emphasis also builds and reinforces dominant Western identity because it equates a refusal to assimilate to a deviant and un-evolved identity. In Jennifer Erickson’s ethnography of Roma in Fargo, North Dakota she explains how attitudes that disregarded assimilation and insisted on engaging with the dominant public on their own terms challenged main-

stream understandings of what immigrants were supposed to be like—specifically eager to achieve a hegemonic citizenship status.⁵⁴ Erickson also takes a non-Western approach to understand how, because of centuries of historical and contemporary persecution and discrimination both in Europe and the US, Romani people weren't trusting of dominant Western institutions such as schools and governments.⁵⁵ She importantly states that because some Romani groups aren't "interested in their part of the citizenship bargain... the result was a poor reputation and increased surveillance."⁵⁶ This is made evident in the publication of *License to Steal* and much of Marlock's other work. In her ethnography, Erikson also makes the important case that most of the Roma people she studied lived middle-class lifestyles. Still, because of certain cultural practices that didn't fit into this neo-liberal model of citizenship, non-Romani people used their non-Western practices as justification for their "primitive" beliefs and traditions as a compared to "civilized" dominant culture.⁵⁷ This was also understood as proof that Romani people needed to assimilate in order to be considered "worthy" citizens—even when Romani people "challenged or subverted these systems, some people in the dominant population felt the need to further control or discipline Roma, which resulted in more work and more frustrations."⁵⁸ The issue with Western research is that it is primarily done with a set of standards and values in mind, therefore when approaching a non-Western culture and its traditions, it is automatically used as a point of comparison between civility and non-civility. A Western understanding of Romani culture will pathologize instead of attempt to understand different values and ways of doing things. Hancock explains that as a solitary people, Romani groups aren't keen to any form of outside control nor were they fond of interaction with non-Romani people, for they believed it to led to pollution of their culture.⁵⁹

In the same chapter, the authors attempt to give historical context as to who the Romani people are and where they came from. They reference early GLS scholar Jean Paul Clebert and his writing of early European "Gypsies" who were "...swindlers, dishonest traders and dealers..." and assert that many of the Romani people lived off of others by unlawful means.⁶⁰ It is here, three pages later, there is suddenly no longer a distinction between good and bad elements of the Romani population that was previously made, but rather "many of the Romani people." This also shows direct use of GLS scholarship as expert historical context employed to legitimize an argument

about the inherent criminality of “gypsies.” The framing of this chapter is interesting because it often attempts to not sound prejudiced by saying that it’s important for an analyst to empathize with their subject, “presenting the world as those subjects see it, comprehend it, and live it,” and asserts that this type of approach is valuable in how it expands cultural knowledge.⁶¹ But the authors also state this approach doesn’t work with “gypsies” as it does with other minority groups because “Gypsies support themselves predominantly by fraud and theft.”⁶² This too is Western framing of non-Western culture and tradition. As mentioned before, Romani culture largely engages with the outside world on their own terms—this is also practiced in practicing different forms labor that aren’t valued in dominant Western culture—that is, labor which doesn’t subscribe to neoliberal and capitalistic model of citizenry and success. Therefore, strategies that Romani groups may employ in order to survive in dominant culture and preserve their traditions are often criminalized and subjected to extra surveillance.

In her study, Erickson came upon the situation of Romani criminalization and surveillance often. She explains Roma people in Fargo utilized “a model of autonomy” that included relying on the state for welfare and aimed to not have to work for anyone else.⁶³ Welfare was an especially important survival tactic for women in how it gave them agency without breaking tradition.⁶⁴ The men in Erickson’s study found work within the scrap metal business. The scrap metal business wasn’t respected, it was seen “as a suspicious form of traditional income for Roma, deserving of surveillance...”⁶⁵ Erikson also adds that in former Yugoslavia, “Some forms of employment were negatively associated with Gypsies, like street cleaners, janitors, miners and scrap metal collectors...”⁶⁶ It’s important to take into account the type of jobs Romani groups found to be traditionally acceptable tended to be jobs that were unvalued and at the bottom of the most mainstream social pyramids, both in the U.S. and Europe. This is partly due to the nature of the jobs, which are chosen strategically in order to preserve tradition and avoid having anyone in charge of them; they often involve work with secondhand items or take on unconventional roles, other times they also reclaim the Western stereotypes and use it to gain mobility and agency.

License to Steal is fixated on understanding and explaining fortune-telling a preferred criminal venture of Romani groups. The fortune telling chapter first attempts to distinguish that not all “gypsies” specialize in fortune

telling, rather it is specifically American “gypsies” who do.⁶⁷ On the next page, however, the authors no longer stick to this distinction and state, “If Gypsies could really anticipate the future, they would have fled Germany in the 1930s, and half a million of them would not have died in Nazi concentration camps.”⁶⁸ As Hancock explains it, fortune telling is a common means of income—it’s a practice from India, it’s accessible because it doesn’t require a lot of equipment and can be set up anywhere, there is a steady demand (and I would argue, an expectation) from non-Romani people to have their future told, and it’s something that allows Romani groups to gain slight amounts of control and protection.⁶⁹ He, too, asserts that had Romani people actually been magically inclined, they certainly would try to improve their situation.⁷⁰ While both the authors of the book and Hancock reach the same conclusion in that it is unlikely Romani people actually have fortune telling ability, the respective framing of the two statements is important. The framing in *License to Steal* is disturbing and chooses to ignore the long and traumatic history of Romani genocide. However, it provides an example of how Western understanding of Romani culture can quickly escalate into ignorant rhetoric and broad statements. Hancock, on the other hand understands the use of fortune telling as a survival mechanism. Historically marginalized groups can certainly find agency in stereotypical roles that the West has exaggerated for them, as Adria Imada demonstrates in her research on Hawaiian Hula Circuits during the late ‘30s, when the Hula Maidens were able to use hula as a way to gain social mobility in the United States.⁷¹

Orientalism employs power and dominance in order to maintain a status quo by contrasting the ways of the “other” to the West. In *Wayward Puritans*, Kai Erikson touches on Durkheim’s theory of how crime and deviance may actually serve a purpose in society: one, to form a bond of solidarity amongst its citizens, and two, to have communities understand their boundaries.⁷² The criminalization of the Romani people, something this book (among many other texts) attempts to do, simply reinforces the project of institutional deterrence that controls the behavior of citizens to ensure they remain within the boundaries of the expected societal order as well as remain contributing members of society by owning property, selling their labor, and investing and trusting in their government.

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Fashion and Politics: An Insight into the Brown Berets and Militancy

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AMST 401: Race in American Culture

This essay was written in Spring 2019 for Professor Susie Woo's American Studies course, 401T: Research Seminar on Race in America. The goal of this paper is to depict the ways in which members of a community organize to create a social movement that challenges the status quo. The actions of the Brown Berets demonstrate the will of Chicax youth to challenge racial hierarchies by demanding visibility.

During the Chicano Movement in the late 1960s, many young Chicanos in Los Angeles rose to fight for equality and justice. Among these valiant young Chicanos, was a particularly distinguishable group named the Brown Berets who were determined to bring awareness to police brutality, educational equality, and social justice. Through a militant appearance, these individuals sought to be noticed and represented within the greater American society. Through insight into the tactics of the Brown Berets, this paper analyzes how their usage of militancy was used to combat social injustice and the important implementation of their own news sources to document their philosophy and achievements.

The Brown Berets rejected a complacency to the systems of oppression and thus demanded an end to the racial injustice that kept the greater Mexican community subordinate. To achieve this, the members of the organization utilized tactics of militancy to employ politics through fashion. Through the usage of a militant appearance, the Brown Berets were demanding visibility and representation across a multitude of platforms. They were demanding representation in the legal system, in the classrooms, and in the media. Thus, they decided to take on an approach that would make them clearly noticeable. By employing such tactics, they demanded that spaces heard their voice and acknowledged their demands. While the public did not receive the Berets well due to their militant tactics, it is nonetheless evident

that they made a mark in history. Regardless of public opinion, the Brown Berets definitely received the visibility they wanted. However, it is important to remain critical of the way in which the organization operated to determine how effective the usage of militancy was as a political tactic. It could in fact be argued that the usage of militancy in 1970s was distracting from their overall message as their militant attitudes were criminalized.

To begin examining the magnitude of this groups' efforts, it is important to understand their historical significance. Their roots lie in the Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA); these individuals were high school students who sought to provide community service to the Los Angeles area.¹ Through their service, the members started noticing the extensive amount of police brutality that was occurring in Los Angeles and decided to be proactive in efforts to halt these occurrences. In allegiance to the Black Panthers, members of this group began donning brown berets and field jackets.² Through this prominent image, these individuals portrayed that they did not want to succumb to the intimidation of police activity. After donning this militant style to protest the social injustice in their neighborhoods, the group became acknowledged as the Brown Berets.

With the rise of the Brown Berets, the Chicano Movement also demanded a drastic change to the social and institutional racist mechanisms of society. Those who could not see the vision were not invited to have a seat at the table. While some saw the Brown Berets as a militant group who sought to inflict violence, that was not necessarily the case. Some saw the militancy of these individuals as an understandable and responsive nature to the police brutality and oppressive means of American society in the 1970s. As society was not committed to giving Mexican-Americans opportunities, they took it upon themselves to fight for these justices. The Brown Berets had a ten-point program which outlined their demands from society and institutions. Amongst these central demands, they sought to end police violence against brown bodies and to have a right to defend themselves against such brutality.³ Further, their mission "To Serve, To Observe, and To Protect," which mimicked the LAPD slogan, demonstrated that they wanted to protect their community in ways that law enforcement wasn't.⁴ This mission focused on giving a voice to the Mexican-American community, watching agencies in power, and securing the rights of Mexican-Americans.⁵ The mission of the Brown Berets was nonetheless influenced by the Black Panthers and their

ideology of what it meant to defend their rights “by any means necessary.” However, idealistically, the Brown Berets aspired to have their goals met without the use of force.

To begin understanding the lived experiences of members in the organization, the first-hand account of Alice and Lorene Escalante provide an intimate insight into the lives of the Brown Berets. Through an interview conducted by a student at California State University, Fullerton, the two Brown Berets described the criticism they faced by the Chicano community and the greater American society. While this mother and daughter acknowledged that they faced a great deal of opposition from their own community, they did not seem discouraged to be active members in the organization. Lorene recounts a particular moment where she was met with hesitance by the Mexican community as she said, “The bus will be full and I’ll have an empty seat, and they won’t sit next to me ‘cause I have my beret.”⁶ Through this dialogue, there is a depiction of an uncomfortable and unpleasant nature that people experienced when they saw members donning the brown beret. This clear sense of discomfort demonstrates that it was the other members of the Chicano community which met the Brown Berets with resistance as they did not accept their tactics of militancy. Further, the peoples’ decision to not sit in close proximity to Lorene demonstrates practices of “othering” the members of the organization by displaying attitudes of dissociation.

The resistance that Brown Beret members experienced in public was ubiquitous as Lorene described that her experience at school was one in which she felt constantly policed by her teachers. The policing nature that Lorene felt at school demonstrates a criminalized perception of these individuals. As faculty were constantly checking up on her in class, Lorene described that she felt they were always investigating her. The policing of these individuals demonstrates a distrust in them and a perceived notion of danger. While Lorene did not cause any disturbances, the public still seemed to assume that she was a threat to the environment at school. While it is unclear if she was wearing the beret at school, it is nonetheless evident that there was a stigma that followed these individuals everywhere they went. Lorene described these antagonistic attitudes by stating, “some fear that we’ll keep on with these walk-offs and start causing riots like what happened in Watts.”⁷ In this statement, Lorene points out that a main reason people did not fully accept them was for fear that these members would incite violence. The fear,

discomfort, and anguish that people experienced in regard to the Brown Berets demonstrates how people felt that the organization was a threat to society and thus treated these individuals as though they were criminals or gang members. However, it should be noted that in these instances, the militancy that the members were utilizing was misinterpreted by the public. Thus, it can be questioned if this methodology was the most effective approach for their cause.

The criminalization of these young individuals occurred through society's negative rhetoric as well as political reinforcement which is reflected in cases like that of the East L.A. Thirteen and Biltmore Six. In the case of the East L.A. Thirteen, police responded to the East L.A. walkouts in which thousands of students were protesting the educational system. The police were led to believe the Brown Berets were a catalyst for these protests, which led them to investigate, arrest, and eventually press charges of conspiracy on members. The process of these arrests was described as, "the police confiscated subscription and membership lists, telephone numbers, and various publications from the Berets' headquarters."⁸ Through these arrests, it was evident that the police were determined to criminalize these young individuals and wanted to find anything possible to use against them in court.

The Biltmore Six were yet another example that made headlines, which prominent *Los Angeles Times* writer and Chicano activist, Ruben Salazar, sought to bring attention to. In this case, the police indicted Brown Berets who were allegedly involved in setting fires at the Biltmore hotel in protest to then-governor Ronald Reagan. Salazar's documentation of this event demonstrates there was a statement by David Sanchez, prime minister of the Brown Berets, in which he said that if his aides were involved in this incident then they acted as individuals and not as members of the organization.⁹ Through this distinction, it is clear that Sanchez did not want the members to be criminalized further than they already were and thus created a distinction in these actions. Another important factor to note is that Salazar was an ally to the Brown Berets who constantly attempted to deconstruct the negative stigmas around the organization through his work at the *Los Angeles Times*. Salazar provided a voice for the Brown Berets in the media which provided a grand distinction from the portrayal which surrounded them in society. Through the work of Salazar, there was an opportunity for the efforts of the Brown Berets to finally be heard and acknowledged in the greater

American mass media.

The controversy over the Biltmore fires began to create a larger debate surrounding the Brown Berets' involvement. To shine a positive light on the organization, Ruben Salazar wrote the article, "Brown Berets Hail 'La Raza' and Scorn the Establishment," which outlines some positive accomplishments of the organization. Salazar does this by alluding to the ties shared between the Brown Berets and Cesar Chavez, and by alluding to some of the feats they conquered. For example, the author states that "The East Los Angeles Free Clinic at 5106 E. Whittier Blvd. was opened by the Brown Berets May 31 with financial help from the Ford Foundation."¹⁰ By mentioning this fact, Salazar was subliminally sending a message to the reader that they should question the stigmas that surrounded the Berets. While Salazar is not neglecting the allegations presented against them, he provides a perspective and tone which are slightly defending the Berets. This is critical to look at as Salazar was a prominent ally to the group who constantly advocated for them. The representation in the media proves to be important in this case as Salazar attempts to disrupt the rhetoric in society at that time by providing an alternate view of these individuals. Through creating a contrasting depiction to these individuals from the criminalized view in society, Salazar provides a dialogue to shed a positive outlook on militancy.

The militancy that the Brown Berets demonstrated depicts the ways in which this organization utilized fashion and politics to gain visibility and call attention to their outcry for social justice. The militancy that the Brown Berets carried out can be analyzed by looking at a picture of the members which was published in the Chicana magazine, *La Raza*. In these images, there are a lot of factors which can be analyzed, ranging from the clear presence of the members in the photographs to the apparent gendered separatism. Through contrasting two images of Brown Berets, fashion and militancy as a political tactic can be explored more in depth.¹¹

The Brown Berets demonstrated through their strong appearance that they were using fashion as a mechanism to draw attention to their cause, or what they noted as "La Causa." Most notably, it is important to note the prominent characters which are presented in the images as they are seen marching through the streets with their fists in the air. Through this strong presence in the image, the members portrayed a prominent stance which seemed impenetrable. As the multiple members stand side by side, it is also

seen that the members presented themselves as a united front which would be difficult to dismantle. Furthermore, this sense of strength, unity, and camaraderie is depicted through their facial expressions. As some are presented as yelling, and others are gleefully smiling, there is a further familial depiction stated across both images.

Furthermore, the militant fashion which these individuals donned is also a very important aspect to discuss as it is one of the most prominent and cohesive factors within the images. In both images, members in the foreground and the background are seen to be wearing their statement brown beret. This is seen to be used as a clear indicator of identification to portray their allegiance to the Brown Berets. Also, the women in particular are seen wearing a militant style pantsuit which presented them in a very distinguished and clean-cut manner. As for the men, one particular member is seen to be wearing a sarape which is known to be traditional Mexican attire that is usually very vibrant with a variety of colors. By choosing to wear a sarape along with his brown beret, this individual demonstrated an allegiance not only to the organization but to his Mexican roots. This is a very important aspect of the berets as they attempted to portray their heritage through their statement Brown Beret.

To explore the ways in which the members paid homage to Mexican culture and traditions, the brown beret along with Lorene's insight will demonstrate the pride that members felt wearing this statement piece. While the brown beret was used as a tactic to demonstrate militancy, it was also meant to show the pride that these young individuals had in their heritage. This is seen as one beret mentioned, "The Brown Beret was chosen because it is a symbol of the love and pride we have in our race and the color of our skin."¹² Thus, it is seen that the members designed their outfits to reflect their political tactics as well as their cultural pride. Another important aspect of the brown beret is that there was a patch sewn on them which symbolically represented the motto of their organization. Lorene explains this by mentioning the different components of the patch and their respective symbolism by stating:

The yellow of the patch is...yellow because that's our—gold-en land, the Southwest that was taken away from Mexico.
The cross is the religion of most Mexicans, Catholic religion.
And then, in the back of the cross we have the—the rifles,

which, like I told you is the alternatives if we don't—if we can't get our goals by peaceful means, those are our alternatives, the rifles. That's what the patch means. The land, the religion, and alternatives.¹³

Through the insight that Lorene provides, it is evident that the Brown Berets were using fashion to communicate their ideologies and cultural pride. Through donning these significantly symbolic pieces, they were making a bold political and cultural statement that created an opportunity for the public to start a dialogue about the racial issues that were present in society.

It is also critical to discuss the importance of the photographs which historicize the image of these individuals and provides cultural artifacts for future generations. Their work not only brought attention to issues throughout the 1960s but it also shed light on the Chicana identity that arose during this time. These photographs serve as a testament to the faces and people who were behind the movement. The documentation of these individuals' lives and experiences provide a critical perspective of how some Chicanas were feeling. Leigh Raiford expands on the importance of this documentation in a social movement as it is stated, "These images also bring to light the medium's significance as a tool for mobilization and self-representation by movement organizers."¹⁴ By capturing images of these individuals, there are historical documents that future generations can reflect on. This further shows the critical nature to document organizations such as the Brown Berets and their respective feats.

The Brown Berets knew the importance of documentation as they produced their own newspaper, *La Causa*, which reported topics like their 13-point program. The outline of their goals through the implementation of a Ten Point Program was modeled after the Black Panther's Ten Point Program. While the Brown Berets originally started with a 10-point program that outlined their demands and expectations from society, they later reformed this after the Chicano Moratorium in which various Chicanos lost their lives, including Ruben Salazar. Some of the 13 points are outlined as:¹⁵

1. We demand the immediate end to the occupation of our community by the fascist police.
2. We want all Chicanos exempt from U.S. Military Service.
3. We want all Chicanos being held in all political jails released.

4. We demand a judicial system relevant to Chicanos and therefore administered by Chicanos.
5. We demand Chicano control of Chicano education.
6. We demand an end to the destruction of our land and air by the corrupt ruling class.
7. We as Chicanos stand in solidarity with all people who are engaged in the struggle for self-determination and freedom.
8. We denounce the U.S. system.¹⁶

Amongst the 13 points, there are an array of demands that the Berets are seeking in regard to social justice and systemic change to cause effectual change in society. To provide the most accurate representation of their views, the Berets were sure to include this dialogue in their own publication where they could freely exercise their freedom of speech.

In regard to the Berets' demands, it could be interpreted that some of these demands were extreme or perhaps a little radical—but for the organization it was just enough. As history has demonstrated the underrepresentation of people of color, it is no surprise that the Brown Berets were making bold demands. As these individuals were tired of being complacent with the systemic racism embedded in the laws, this organization set out clear cut goals to the systemic changes they wanted to see in society. Clearly these points demonstrate that the Brown Berets were fed up with the legal violence that was being forced on the community and took an approach of militancy in order to combat this. However, the Berets did not want violence to be the first reaction that members used to combat the problems they faced out in public. Instead, Brown Beret members were encouraged to use their militant appearance to provide protection for the community. Alice Escalante denotes this by stating that in many demonstrations the Brown Berets served as protection for the community so people would not be subject to police brutality.¹⁷

Furthermore, many of these points demonstrate a distrust in the government and law enforcement as these have historically been institutions that have racially discriminated against communities of color. Thus, through implementing these straightforward goals, the organization set out to change the hierarchies in which communities of color are kept subordinate to the hegemonic class. Thus, it is not surprising that a point is dedicated to address “the corrupt ruling class.” This point is seen to be directed toward the wealth-

iest members of society as it is aimed at those who are harming the environment, and this can be interpreted as wealthy owners of chemical industries. Also, the point in regard to the military service can be interpreted to be alluding to the Vietnam war in which Chicanos were disproportionately put on the front lines. As a result of this, many young men of color lost their lives at war at significantly higher rates which infuriated the Chicano community. This anger was then projected through methods of protests which involved methods of militancy.

Militancy wasn't always the most effective method to address these issues though as they often excluded women from the narrative. For example, in the pictures aforementioned it is evident that the two genders are separated within the demonstrations. Through contrasting the two images, there is a clear sense of gender dynamics that should be discussed. In the two images, it does not seem that the genders were all represented on the front lines together. This is due to the fact that often the leaders of the Brown Berets enforced having men in the front lines and women in the background doing the behind the scenes work. Lorene shed light on this by mentioning that men are the ones that made the decisions, handled the weapons, and so forth, meanwhile the women held secretarial positions.¹⁸ Through this, men were excluding women from holding positions which would give them more visibility. This was in part due to the role that militancy played in the organization at this time.

The militancy that was used within the Brown Berets demonstrated to be masculine which thus operated in a manner that reflected sexism within the organization. This sexism proved to be very problematic as it is described that, "Beret men also often believed that their masculinity required them to engage in militant actions, and in turn supposed that militancy confirmed their manhood."¹⁹ This is seen to demonstrate a protection of masculinity in efforts to not threaten the manhood of the young men within the organization. It should be noted that "heroic masculinity, however, did not make for smooth relations with women."²⁰ While men tried to employ their machismo, or hypermasculinity, women did not necessarily stay quiet. In fact, these practices had a very big impact on the organization as women felt excluded from many of the discussions since the men made the decisions. Therefore, the tensions of gender dynamics ultimately led women to leave the Brown Berets, which weakened the organization.²¹

With the women leaving the organization, this was the first sign to the future dissolution of the organization in the 1970s. Therefore, it can be analyzed that masculinity in militancy were major contributors to the falling out of this organization as even its own members did not agree with some of the ideologies that were being perpetuated. The militant aspect of the Brown Berets was successful in some ways, but it is also seen how the masculine mechanisms of this tactic led to the demise of the organization in the 1970s. The implications of masculinity demonstrate the flaw within militancy as it perpetuated gender norms within the patriarchal constructs of society. If women were being excluded from participating equally within the organization, then their needs were not being addressed properly and thus this creates more problems of representation. Thus, these gendered issues are a part of a critical insight into how militancy can prove to be ineffective in instances where it perpetuates hyper-masculine ideologies.

When the group became inactive in 1971, so did their newspaper, *La Causa*, but then it revived in 1994 when new issues of *La Causa* were being printed. However, the content of this newspaper demonstrated a shift from the past which reflected new ideologies within the Brown Berets. Through an article titled, "1994: The Berets Are Back," the reunified group claimed a new and distinct motto. Contrasting with the past motto of "to serve, to observe, and to protect," the article reflected a new motto as "to Serve, Educate, and Unify."²² The change of the motto reflects that the reincorporated group wanted to change the rhetoric being produced which could have led to any indications of violent action. Thus, the motto is more tailored in promoting awareness about the issues facing the community and unifying Chicaxs once again. After the divisive dissolution in the 1970s, the group wanted to incorporate a motto that would be more digestible for the public. However, something important to note is that the signature beret was still being implemented as it was stated, "as a Brown Beret, you will wear the Beret of pride which shows our love and dedication to our Raza."²³

While members of the Brown Berets were still expected to don the beret, they were not allowed to partake in any violent incidents. This demonstrates that the Berets believed it was possible to reinvent how people perceived the beret itself by deconstructing the negative stigmas associated with the organization. Through a new rhetoric, the Brown Berets wanted to display that they acknowledged their past as an organization but did not want

to continue with the motto “by any means necessary.” Therefore, it is seen that the Berets still wanted to have a militant appearance but did not support militant attitudes. Furthermore, this begs the question if militant attitudes and the donning of the beret for a militant appearance are mutually exclusive or if they have to coexist. In the 1970s, the Brown Berets emphasized a motto which reflected militant attitudes and therefore a militant appearance was not mutually exclusive with militant attitudes. During this time period, militancy was more ineffective than productive in the long run for the organization as their attitudes created an array of misconceptions. In this case, the militant attitudes of the organization hindered them from effectively portraying their message to the public. However, it is still important to note that their militant attitudes in this time period are understandable as the issues they faced were more drastic. Therefore, they had to take an approach that was bold and demonstrated they would not succumb to the hegemonic culture.

When the Brown Berets reintegrated, they still believed in the need for social justice and the original intent of the beret as a political tactic; however, they noticed that perhaps a new approach without the militant attitude might be more effective for their time period. In doing so, the Berets were attempting to show that militant attitudes and a militant appearance through the usage of the beret can be mutually exclusive. As the Brown Berets of the 1970s broke a lot of barriers, they created an opportunity for the Brown Berets of the 1990s to reinvent themselves. The 1994 Brown Berets emphasized their new image by stating that they wanted to start a war, but “a war against ignorance.”²⁴ Through this rhetoric, they were alluding to the militant attitudes of the past but attempting to deconstruct the violent nature of the earlier mottos. Further, the 1994 Berets stated, “the old days are gone and with it went the violent mentality.”²⁵ This rhetoric demonstrated that the more recent Berets wanted to stay true to the original intent of the brown beret. This original intent reflects demanding visibility and celebrating one’s culture through creating cultural awareness. By incorporating meaningful components to the Beret through the usage of the patch, this original intent is more evident. Further, the Brown Berets wanted to use the fashion as a tactic to combat social injustice by creating a visible marker to demonstrate their courage through creating a bold appearance.

Through contrasting the Brown Berets from the 1970s to that of the 1990s, the mechanisms of militancy as a tactic to create social and systemic

change can be analyzed. Through this analysis it shows that militancy is at times met with resistance by the public and thus is not always effective when it is paired with a militant attitude. However, in some respects, militancy as a political statement was effective as it brought attention to the racial dynamics within the United States during the 1970s. Furthermore, the Brown Berets served to establish an understanding of the new identity of Chicax youth. Thus, it is seen that the militant style the Brown Berets donned was effective in drawing a connection between fashion and politics. The Brown Berets used the beret to employ a militant appearance which created visibility and cultural awareness which in turn demonstrated to create a political statement. The beret was more than just fashion. The beret signified allegiance to their new-found identity as Chicaxs and to their beliefs in equality. The members of the organization used this militant appearance to be bold in society and claim pride in their identity to disrupt the racial conceptions produced by the hegemonic culture. Furthermore, these members knew that implementation of their own newspaper, *La Causa*, would provide a forum for them to document their feats and make a mark in history. Through the documentation of this militant group, generations in present-day America can learn more about how the Chicax identity began.

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2020 Weaver Prize

In the spring of 1993, the American Studies Student Association established the Earl James Weaver Graduate Paper Prize to honor the retirement of Earl James Weaver, Professor of American Studies, past Department Chair, and founder of the Department of American Studies at California State University, Fullerton. With an original endowment raised from the generous contributions of American Studies students and alumni, the Weaver Prize is an annual \$250 cash award for the best paper written by an American Studies graduate student during the preceding year. Every spring, a panel of American Studies faculty reads submissions and selects the winning essay.

The 2020 Weaver Prize was awarded to Laura Fauvor for her paper, "Take a Seat: Huey P. Newton's Infamous Chair and the Memory of the Black Panther Party." The Weaver Prize Committee reported that in a year with an impressive range of Weaver Prize submissions, this essay stood out as the most original and rigorous work. The committee appreciated the sophisticated use of theories of power, performance, liberation, and collective memory, combined with deep research into a skillfully-arranged set of sources. This is a well-developed, grounded essay, attentive to change over time. The author has creatively gathered multiple artists' interpretations of Huey P. Newton's chair in the 1960s and the 21st century, combining visual analysis with historical research, while attentive to contradictory rhetoric as well as ongoing civil rights struggles in the U.S. and beyond. Like the mirrored platform of Sam Durant's artwork, this essay holds up a thoughtful mirror to Newton's iconic chair and refracts new angles, offering insights into a revolutionary past and present.

2020 Weaver Prize Winner

Take a Seat: Huey P. Newton's Infamous Chair and the Memory of the Black Panther Party

Laura Fauvor

AMST 502: Seminar in Public Memory

This essay was written for AMST 502, taught by Professor Alison Kanosky. This project analyzes the cultural work of the iconic image of Huey P. Newton in his wicker chair as well as renditions of the chair in multiple art mediums and the larger work of the Black Panther memory. The power of this memory interjects in the broader scholarly and activist debates over the periodization of the civil rights movement. This memory questions the popular periodization of the civil rights movement as both created and resolved in the 1950s and 1960s and allows for an alternate view to be considered- of the long civil rights and liberation movement which began before the Civil War and continues today. Ultimately, this project argues that the cultural work performed by the memory of the Black Panther Party, through the renditions of the chair, allow for the collective imagining of a revolutionary future; for not only the Black community but for all marginalized groups to imagine and position themselves in seats of power in the face of oppression.

In 2016, the National Parks service awarded Ula Y. Taylor, the chair of the African American Studies department at Berkeley, a federal grant for \$98,000 in funding for a project that would memorialize the history of the Black Panther Party. Upon hearing about this project, the head of the Fraternal Order of Police, Chuck Canterbury, wrote a strongly worded letter to President Trump, complaining that the government should not fund the study of hate groups, insisting that the project would insult law enforcement officers.¹ Within the following week, the funding was pulled for the project. Questions flooded my mind; why was there so much public denial of the Party's history? How and in what forms did the memory of the Panthers survive in the face of this denial? This very public event of denying and defund-

ing historical research prompted my investigation of the Panther past.

The history of the Black Panther Party is riddled with struggle; over power and liberation as well as memory and recognition. Just like the many social and political conflicts of the 1960s and early 1970s, the historical record of the Panther past faces a struggle over power and memory. Popular historical narratives of the 1960s largely favor investigations of the Southern non-violent civil rights movement, ignoring and often demonizing the history of the Black Panthers. Any mention of the Party, if at all, in these narratives tends to equate radicalism with whiteness and leftist ideology of the university, while the brevity of Panther mention is positioned to solidify allegories of lawlessness and unprovoked racial violence.² The construction of the past surrounding the Panthers is crucial to understanding how its memory functions in American culture today. The survival of the imagery surrounding Panther history provides a wealth of sources to the archive, which has given the Panther memory the ability to combat popular narratives that diminish its cultural impact. Historian and theorist Michel-Rolph Trouillot states that the past serves as a productive force for the present. For those still struggling for liberation, the past of the Panthers provides a guiding light towards collectively imagining a revolutionary future. However, for many in historical and contemporary positions of power, it has been useful to deny the existence of radical resistance in favor of the non-violent protest past.

This project is an investigation of one of the Party's most emblematic images and how the memory of the Black Power movement continues to thrive through reiterations of this moment in history. This project focuses on the exhibition of political artist Sam Durant's piece entitled, *Proposal for a Monument to Huey Newton at the Alameda County Courthouse, Oakland, CA.*, at the Oakland Museum of California, as well as the subsequent reproductions in the arts, film and popular culture; all of which showcase how the memory of the Panthers works to create an imagined revolutionary future.³ I seek to answer cultural questions surrounding the image of the wicker chair: what it meant then and what it means now. How does the exhibition of the chair perform memory? How has its meaning altered? What does this image mean to its intended community and the external community? I analyze the chair and its contribution to Panther memory through the theories of public memory, performance and power. I investigate what cultural work is done by the memory of the chair, through working with primary documents from

the time as well as recent sources that refer directly to the exhibition of the chair. Ultimately, this project argues that the cultural work performed by the memory of the Black Panther Party, through the renditions of the chair, allow for the collective imagining of a revolutionary future; for not only the Black community, but for all marginalized groups to imagine and position themselves in seats of power in the face of oppression. The power of this memory interjects in a larger debate within scholarship and activism over the periodization of the civil rights movement. This memory questions the popular periodization of the civil rights movement as both created and resolved in the 1950s and 1960s and allows for an alternate view to be considered of the long civil rights movement, which began before the Civil War and continues today.

The iconic image of Huey P. Newton sitting in his wicker chair with a spear and a rifle represented the Black Panther Party and their ideals of power and self-defense. For many disenfranchised Black Americans, this image represented the potential of Black power, and for others, it represented opposition and dissent. The image of the Black Panther Party co-founder and Minister of Defense was utilized repeatedly as publicity for the spread of the movement in the 1960s. In nearly every edition of *The Black Panther* newspaper, the image of Newton in the chair was printed. Often the image was used in sections addressing readers directly. Many times, the image was featured on the cover of the paper itself.⁴ The repeated use of this image solidified the existence of Black power in the 1960s within the larger memory of liberation struggles not only the U.S., but globally.

(essay continues on next page)



Figure 1: original photo, 1967. Photograph by Blair Stapp, Composition by Eldridge Cleaver. Photo courtesy of the Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

In order to understand how the memory of Black power and liberation struggles perform cultural work today, this project analyzes the image of Newton in his chair in its original context and what it meant at the time of its initial circulation. The Black Panther Party in 1966 was conceived from the minds of Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale during the 1950s-1960s wave of the civil rights movement.⁵ The civil rights movement is now commonly categorized into two distinct forms: the non-violent struggle for Black freedom in the South and the violent Black power movement of the North.⁶ Panther historian Edward P. Morgan describes how the history of the Party has been constructed, as the popular narratives have left the Panthers,

Stripped of their experiential context in violent inner-city America in the mid to late 1960s, and detached from their political analysis of economic and racial exploitation, the Panthers are easy targets for the ongoing effort by the powerful to restore the hegemony threatened in the 1960s era... The Panthers have become synonymous with the “bad 1960s” and are discredited and dismissed.⁷

This distinction accurately frames the Panthers’ motives and ideals. In addition, the distinction highlights how they were received and perceived both by

the public of the time and in the historical memory. The Panther ideals were born in response to the racial violence and discrimination they experienced. By ignoring this “experiential context,” the popular historical record reflects how the Panthers were received by the public via mass media. Mass media in the 1960s often ignored the Panther’s “experiential context” and motives behind their ideals, instead categorizing them as “bad” men who committed acts of unprovoked violence and armed protest.

The Party arose out of a continued struggle for liberation despite the advances made by the Southern movement and the implementation of the civil rights constitutional amendments. The Panthers believed that the efforts of the previous movements fell short in the face of the nation’s continued racism, as Newton states:

Black people have begged, prayed, petitioned, demonstrated and everything else to get the racist power structure of America to right the wrongs which have historically been perpetrated against Black people. All of these efforts have been answered by more repression, deceit, and hypocrisy.⁸

The men were not explicitly critical of the efforts of the non-violent civil rights movement. Rather they critiqued that it was not enough to free the oppressed because they saw that institutional racism persisted in American society despite the passing of the civil rights amendments. Historian Nikhil Pal Singh expresses this sentiment, “In particular, Newton and Seale understood [that] the police had become the principal agents of official, state-sanctioned racism that had largely receded from public view only to be brutally reasserted at the margins in the policing of the Black ghettos.”⁹ Although the pinnacle of the Party’s platform was to raise the awareness of police brutality occurring in Black communities, they were also anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and anti-American.¹⁰ The Panthers were anti-American in the sense that they believed dominant American culture was responsible for perpetuating discrimination and suppressing the existence of Black culture within its borders. This position and rhetoric made the Panthers enemies of the state at the time, therefore causing their categorization as a part of the “bad 1960s” which perpetuated the historical ignoring of their existence as anything but “bad.”¹¹

Newton and Seale were college-educated, and both felt a unity in the desire and need for change and sought to create a political group that would

fight oppression through self-preservation. The men knew to create a strong political presence and achieve their goals, they had to reach audiences across all class and racial divides. They were aware of the strength of the media and their inability to control what was printed about them. However, they did know that they could control their images. Knowing that most of their audience was illiterate (Newton himself was illiterate upon high school graduation, later teaching himself and eventually obtaining a Ph.D.), the men asserted that images—photos and art—would be utilized to communicate their ideals.¹² Performance Studies scholar Diana Taylor explains how memory and knowledge can be transferred in ways specific to a particular cultural group: “If collective memory relies on social frameworks to enable transmission, then clearly the behavioral practices that define ethnicity participate in that transmission.”¹³ So for Newton, who knew the Black community experienced illiteracy, he understood the potential for images as a vehicle to transmit knowledge. To further explain how the Panthers communicated this radical cultural knowledge, Davarian L. Baldwin illuminates performance as a mode of knowledge transmission, “The Panthers were able to turn the streets and the mass media into literal theatres of war—as sites of struggle in the remaking of blackness into what they called revolutionary consciousness.”¹⁴ The performance of their political ideology in public view allowed the Panthers to transmit knowledge of their struggle to a wider audience through imagery and media coverage. This performance acted as a transmission of knowledge which added to what Taylor would refer to as the repertoire of Black revolutionary and resistant acts.

The ways in which the Party presented itself were, in every sense of the word, intentional. Aware of the lack of control they had of their image in popular media, they instead seized control self-produced media, thus creating a revolutionary culture. Creating a newspaper entitled, *The Black Panther*, with a subtitle of “Black Community News Service,” allowed the Party to control what was printed, and provided an avenue for communicating messages through words and images. The image of Newton in his chair was printed for the first time in the first official edition of *The Black Panther*.¹⁵ The iconic image was printed large on the top of page three, above the photograph read his title, “Minister of Defense.”¹⁶ To the left of the photo is the brief beginning of one of Newton’s essays, entitled, “Functional Definition of Politics.” To the right, sat the beginning of another essay, “Fear and Doubt.” Both

essays continued on the following page. Below the photo is the section where for the first time, the Panther's 10-point platform was printed. This section took most of the page, drawing the reader's eye to the photo and the words, "WHAT WE WANT NOW! WHAT WE BELIEVE." For the first time, the Black community saw mass produced images of Black men with guns printed with a positive connotation.

The image of Newton dressed in Panther uniform black beret, leather jacket, pants, shoes and a light blue church shirt, seated in his wicker chair atop a zebra skin rug, holding a rifle and an African spear mimicked traditional European art that depicted enthroned political figures. Jo-Ann Morgan has pointed out that this image most reflected an 1806 painting of Napoleon holding a spear and a staff.¹⁷ The positioning of Newton on his throne can be seen as an Afrocentric image of royalty that participates in a repertoire of Black power subverting traditional western and white images of power. To the observer, seeing a Black man enthroned and wielding weapons allowed for the imagining of Black power. This image, tied to the words of the Party platform, also allowed for the imagining of a powerful position with which oppressed peoples can inhabit power and where revolutionary ideals might actually be achieved. The composition of this image was in all ways deliberate and intentional. Seale analyzed what this image represented at the time, "So this is really what Huey P. Newton symbolized with the Black Panther Party—he represented a shield for black people against all the imperialism, the decadence, the aggression, and the racism in the country."¹⁸ Here, Seale enters Newton's image into the repertoire of Black Power. By claiming Newton's image as a shield against oppression, he is giving this image power of its own. The image represents strength, resilience, and through Seale's interpretation we can see how the image and the idea of power became a visual tool, signal and a weapon against oppression.

Recognition and representations of the past are crucial to the formation of an individual or collective identity, politics, and beliefs. All concepts of identity, culture, beliefs and politics are all in some way or another informed by the past. The treatment of Panther past in terms of mass denial and consistent negative and violent connotations attached to its popular memory leads this project to question of how this process occurs. Michel-Rolph Trouillot explains, "What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives... Only through that overlap can we discover the dif-

ferential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others.”¹⁹ Through the investigation of the Panther past, and the journey of those searching for recognition, we can see how power works in memory. The public denial of that past is an exercise of power; it works to restrict access to those whom this past belongs to and therefore denies the potential empowerment the Panther past could provide Black and other marginalized communities. This process is an exercise of hegemonic power in the sense that it explicitly claims value of one culture and set of lives over many others. Denying and problematizing a particular past, especially in the case of the Panthers, we can see how this process only serves to reproduce ideologies of discrimination. Reproductions of the past like the popular narratives of the 1960s, in the process of their creation, inherently produce silences and assert authority. Through Trouillot’s theories we can observe this process as an exertion of power, in that the story is not neutral nor are the sources on which the stories are based.²⁰ The Panthers’ historical record can be read as thus; through the creation of the popular narratives which overlook, minimize and demonize their past, we can see how power is exerted in stating which civil rights past is more desired and therefore valid.

Those to whom the Panther past matters most looked for historical interpretations outside the world of dominant academic institutions. The renditions of the chair, which will subsequently be discussed, provided much needed access to this past. These renditions represent a historical memory and the chair itself represents a seat from which one can retrieve the past. Trouillot writes, “history is to a collectivity as remembrance is to an individual, the more or less conscious retrieval of past experiences stored in memory.” From this, we can understand that history exists within memory—in relation to the chair, we can observe this history as a form of public memory where a particular past is presented.²¹ The effects of how this past has been perceived, retrieved, denied, desired and ultimately manifested in public can be best described through a Trouillot lens, which explains that there is no simple way of analyzing how the intensity and impact of the past relates to the generations which inherit it. However, through the renditions of the chair we can see how this past serves as position of power from which one can resist and imagine a revolutionary future. Just like the scars of slavery and colonization affected and motivated the Panthers, their iconic imagery and bravery have continued to influence movements and minds of today. Despite the public denial of its

past, the enduring memory of the Panthers inspired a resurgence of the image of the chair.

Since the image's original appearances, there have been several renditions of Newton's chair in political art and popular culture. From controversial pieces of political art exhibited in museums and monuments in foreign territories, to pop culture like Beyoncé's music videos and 2016 Super Bowl performance, as well as popular film, like Marvel's 2018 *Black Panther* film, images of Newton's iconic chair and the memory of liberation struggles have been consistently utilized to promote awareness of the continuing existence of the same struggle and to bring or claim power and recognition where it has otherwise been denied.

From the Party's decline in the late 1970s until recently, there has been only a slight increase in public recognition of the Black Panthers. In 2004, political artist, Sam Durant, created an exact bronze replica of the wicker chair Huey P. Newton sits on, in arguably the most iconic image of the movement. It was intended to be a monument to the liberation struggles in America that would be located at the Alameda County Courthouse where the Black Panther Party trials were held. Sam Durant's proposal was denied. It was the Senior Curator of Art at the OCMA, Rene de Guzman, who suggested that the sculpture be exhibited in the gallery, in an area with a large window that was directly facing the Alameda County courthouse. Placing Durant's piece was, in its own way, an act of defiance and resistance. By placing the piece in public view in front of the courthouse, OCMA proclaimed this resistant past as crucial, vital, important and not to be ignored. The sculpture is meant to be a monument to efforts of the Black Panther Party and the continued liberation struggles in the U.S. With this sculpture, Durant brings to light the need and desire for tangible recognition of the Black Power movement.

Durant's choice to create a bronze sculpture of Newton's chair acknowledges it as throne-like, urging its audience to recognize the power of this chair, of the movement and of the man. Although the sculpture hints to the memory of the man who sat in it, it is rendered empty. Removing the man from the chair has allowed for anyone to sit in the chair and recognize their power to resist. The removal of Newton's body within the sculpture is significant as sculptures have a long history of racialized representation. Art historian Kirk Savage explains that public space is a representational battle

ground where sculptures hold significant value. Savage explains that messages of meaning, values, and politics are heavily imbued in every aspect of sculpture making, from the positioning and depiction of the body (or bodies), to the material medium and size. Historically, racialized sculptures have been utilized to determine points of difference and value. By removing the body of Newton, Durant allows for any type of body or bodies to envision themselves in a position of power while simultaneously providing the opportunity to recognize the value and importance of this past as it can be representative of anyone who sits on the throne.

In addition, it is important to recognize the gendered history of the Black Panthers in relation to the renditions of the chair. The Panther past is riddled with conflicting rhetoric and images of inclusivity, female empowerment and misogyny. Within this exploration of Panther memory, the absence of a body within the sculptures can be understood as simultaneously silencing and opening this misogynistic past in an attempt to perhaps rectify gendered exclusion. The absence of a body and lack of gendered appearance, the sculpture provides a space for both men and women of oppressed groups to envision themselves within the Black Power past.

The removal of Newton from the sculpture also allows for it to function as a prosthetic memory in the present for anyone. Alison Landsberg, a scholar of memory studies, explains that prosthetic memory is obtained through an observable reflection of the past where those who are removed or not directly connected to that past can access that moment. An observable reflection of the past can be a multitude of things such as a museum exhibition, a film, a public monument or theatrical play. It is in that moment of contact with the past, that the observer can establish deeper, more emotional connection to the memory of the past. Landsberg argues that, "The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics."²² Durant's sculpture is interactive and performative, and serves as a site of prosthetic memory. Durant invites his audience to seat themselves in the throne-like chair. The throne sits upon a mirrored platform, which urges the person seated in the chair to reflect as they place themselves in the past and the legacy of the Black Power movement. The entire piece performs as vehicle from which one can explore, recognize and see themselves as a part of that past. By engaging with the performative prosthetic memory aspect of the chair, the Black Power past also becomes a part of the repertoire of power and

resistance.

To understand how messages of revolution and resistance are communicated through this sculpture, I had to observe the piece and exhibit myself. Since its original exhibition, Durant's piece briefly traveled the world and is now owned and displayed at OCMA as a part of the Black Power exhibit in the Gallery of California History. It has been there since the "Black Panthers at 50" anniversary exhibit in 2016. The piece is now displayed slightly differently than in its original exhibition. This new exhibition design is significant in that it more directly provokes the audience to engage with the conflicts of the Panther past in a way that simultaneously encourages the recognition of similar struggles in the present. Within the Gallery of California history, the exhibit can be found in the back-left corner just right of the Hollywood exhibit and just before the interactive "curiosities" section meant for younger audiences. The chair is the front piece of the Black Power exhibit, where it still sits upon a mirrored pedestal and now has the Party's 10 Point Platform written on a blue wall directly behind it.²³ Every aspect of this exhibit is designed to engage the audience with questions concerning social justice and the Black Power movement, with explicit homage to the Panthers. The fact that the wall behind the chair is a shade of light blue seems intentional as the Black Panther uniform consisted of a black leather jacket, pants, shoes and beret with a light blue church shirt.²⁴ There is a placard to left of the chair that reads, "We invite you to sit in this chair. Spend a moment thinking about with the 10-Point Platform means today." This placard directly positions the memory of the Panthers into the present by asking the audience to think about this past in the context of today.

This theme of weaving connections to the present through the past is inherent through the entire exhibit. To the left of the chair is a section on female leaders in the Black Power movement like Angela Davis, which discusses the duality of the struggle that Black women face. To the right of the chair on the adjacent wall, a panel connects Panther ideals to modern movements like Black Lives Matter.²⁵ The wall contains several postcard-size cards that quote the Party or point to the community of Oakland. Anyone can take a card and engage with the phrases. The back of the cards have thought provoking questions, suggested readings for further information on the topic, places of historical interest, and organizations one can go to be more involved.²⁶ The wall and cards invite the audience to interact with the past

as it relates to the present. For example, one card has the Panthers' 10-point platform printed on the front with the instructions on the back to read them out loud while asking yourself these questions: What resonates with you? What questions or reflections does it prompt? Questions like these and the cards as a part of the exhibit at large position the Panther memory into the present, urging its audience to place their understanding of the present into the conditions and demands of the past.

On the wall just behind the chair, there is a documentary video entitled, "Reflecting on the Legacy," playing on loop, which was originally made for the "Black Panthers at 50" exhibit in 2016. This documentary engages its interviewees with questions about the legacy and memory of the Black Panthers. This documentary provides a wealth of sources that attest to how the memory of the Panthers works in the present. The interviewees are asked questions like, "What issues that the Black Panthers addressed concern you most today?" and "What would a monument to the Panther Party look like?" These questions directly position the interviewees and the observers to draw connections about the Panther past and their fight for liberation to similar struggles today. In response to the question, "What issues that the Black Panthers addressed concern you most today?" Prince White, Oakland community organizer said, "Mass incarceration... one third of the population of Alameda County is incarcerated." David Levinson a physician who assists in free clinic work responded, "The threat of fascism in this country still exists. Racism still exists. The pervasiveness of racism in police departments across the country and police violence still exists. The struggle continues."²⁷ These responses are easily read as a direct connection of past struggles and revolutionary ideals to the present state of police violence and racism. The memory of this past allows for the people of Oakland and oppressed peoples nationwide to feel emboldened in their resistance. This exhibit functions as a prosthetic memory where observers can access the struggles of the Panther past and use that memory and the subsequent emotions to fuel their current fight for liberation.



Figure 2, Sam Durant's *Proposal for a Monument to Huey Newton at the Alameda County Courthouse, Oakland, CA*. Exhibited at OCMA in the Gallery of California History. Photo: Laura Fauvor, April 2019.

The exhibit's thought-provoking interactive displays were intentionally designed, creating cultural work. Curator Rene de Guzman acknowledged how effectively the Party was able to communicate messages of resistance through imagery, and sought to reflect that in the exhibit's design.²⁸ Guzman speaks to how the exhibit of the Panther past is designed to work in the present,

In many ways, the Ten-Point Program doesn't seem like history at all. It speaks about today. Our hope is that we can play a unique role in encouraging dialogue and discussion about these complex issues and their impact today. We believe this is a unique opportunity- and responsibility- for OCMA.²⁹

Guzman's comment on the exhibit's intended purpose highlights how the current presentation of the sculpture is designed to engage with the past as it relates to the present.

Through images of people sitting on the throne found on social media, Yelp, Flickr and blogs, we can observe how this exhibition and Durant's piece had been received by the public. Some of the photographs of individuals seated in the chair were used outside of the individual's perspective. A few of the images I found of people in the chair were utilized out of context, in blog posts or articles that were not always in direct references to the exhibit itself, but instead about social justice issues. For example, an article published

both in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and in its online platform utilized a photo of Juantia Tamayo (a Filipina American who led one of the most successful university strikes in San Francisco in 1968) seated in the chair with her right hand up in a fist, in an article about California Representative, Barbara Lee's plight for marijuana legal reform.³⁰ Although the article doesn't discuss the exhibit or the piece at all, we can observe through a close reading of the article that it was used in solidarity with a Black woman's plight to readdress systematic racism within the prison system now that marijuana has been made legal in the state of California. This directly connects to revolutionary ideas about resistance presented in the Panther exhibit and draws connections from Tamayo's personal experience with racial injustice at San Francisco State University. The use of the photo in relation to the current issue of systematic racial injustice, attests to the chair's ability to embody past revolutionary ideals and position that past to address the issues of the present.

The intentionality of the Panther imagery is matched in the construction of the renditions of the chair. Beginning with intentionality in the design in the OCMA exhibit, subsequent renditions of the chair follow the similar suit. I choose to read the subsequent renditions as evidence that speak to the lasting memory of Black Power and the Panther past. Since Sam Durant's piece in 2004, when he placed the Panther past in a position of throne-wielding power, there have been an increasing number of highly visible renditions of the chair. These renditions allow for the wider collective imagining of a revolutionary future, where one can claim this past and use it to place themselves in a position of power in the ongoing struggles for liberation. In 2013, artist Jennifer Moon created a photographic image of herself in the same fashion as Huey Newton. Her piece entitled, *You Can Kill My Body but You Can't Kill My Soul*, Moon sits clothed in a red beret and cheetah-print jacket, in the rattan chair with a microphone in one hand and a staff with a mirror fixed atop.³¹ Beneath the chair is a rainbow striped rug and her dog lying flat, also wearing a red beret. For Moon, this image is reflective of both her revolutionary politics and her personal history of being imprisoned. Placing herself in the same fashion as Newton in the original image with a few changed details, Moon takes her past struggles and positions herself in an imagined position of power and influence. Moon uses her art to communicate her ideas concerning self-love and empowerment as well as revolutionary ideals about societal constructions of our reality.³² Although Moon's piece seems

to be more of a personal avenue for exploring and imaging a revolutionary future, the image of her persists, allowing others to see a Korean American woman in a position of empowerment where they can too imagine themselves in such a position.

In 2017, artist Kevin Beasley created a sculpture entitled, *Chair of the Ministers of Defense*, which was exhibited at the Hammer Museum.³³ Beasley's work is a play on Bernini's Baroque altarpiece in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. He replaces St. Peter's chair with Newton's and uses fiberglass, old clothes and head wraps from African communities to position black power in the white past. Beasley created this piece to provoke questions of power, in regard to the creation of this piece he states, "Here are two spaces that are presenting power in a similar way and engaging power from different viewpoints. What does it mean to replace Bernini's chair with the chair of Huey P. Newton? And to challenge this role of power and recognize this exchange as equal?"³⁴ By crafting his piece with these questions in mind, he sets up the audience to engage with multiple pasts and envision one where the Panther past is glorified as much as the past of the Catholic church and Saint Peter.



Figure 3: Kevin Beasley, *Chair of the Ministers of Defense*. Shown in *Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley, Installation view*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, January 21- April 23, 2017. Photo by Brian Forrest. Courtesy of the Hammer Museum, <http://hammer.ucla.edu>.

Another example of how the Panther past has manifested to represent power in the face of an oppressive past in hopes of illuminating a path to a revolutionary future lies within the creation of the “I am Queen Mary” statue on the island of St. Croix.³⁵ This monument memorializes Mary Thomas, a sugar plantation worker under Danish colonial rule, who led a labor revolt referred to as the Fireburn Revolt, demanding better working and living conditions and better wages. The monument is an exact play on Huey Newton’s image. It depicts Mary sitting in the same wicker chair, holding a sugar cane cutter and a torch. Even her feet are positioned in the same manner as Newton’s. There were two artists who constructed and designed this monument, Danish artist, Jeanette Ehlers and Virgin Island artist, La Vaughn Belle. The monument was erected in front of the Copenhagen West Indian warehouse which once held sugar and rum. La Vaughn Belle stated that the monument is a, “Bridge between two countries, it’s a hybrid of our bodies, nations and narratives.” The monument was unveiled during the centennial marker of Denmark’s sale of the Virgin Islands to the U.S. Belle also comments on how this past is positioned to comment on current relations: “The state extends beyond the centennial year and gets people to really question what is their relationship to this history.”³⁶ The construction of this monument positions the Black Power past to include a more global struggle for liberation. It recognizes the wicker chair as a position of power and as a model for Black identity that is, in this case, utilized to collectivize the struggle over Black subjugation, colonialism and liberation.

A close reading of the 2018 *Black Panther* film draws a strong corollary to the concepts discussed throughout this project. Although it is a film based in fantasy, its construction derived from the real world. The director, Oakland native Ryan Coogler, intended to address issues of identity and cultural representation surrounding the effects of slavery, colonialism, and the resulting diaspora within this film.³⁷ The film is about the coming of a Black superhero, *Black Panther*, and his new role as King of Wakanda. T’Challa has assumed the role of King after his father T’Chaka is murdered in an attack at the United Nations. T’Challa is conflicted on how and where to lead Wakanda. He wants to respect his father’s previous way of ruling which keeps the true Wakanda separated in secret from the rest of the world but he struggles with this path. He senses that there is something his father has kept secret from him and once the villain of the story, Killmonger, is introduced,

T'Challa begins the journey to find the truth.

Wakanda is a fictional country and kingdom in Africa. At the beginning of their civilization they discovered a mineral, Vibranium, which they learned from and allowed them to technologically advance far beyond any other civilization on Earth. They recognized the power of this mineral and were afraid of what would happen if the rest of the world found out about it. This idea of hiding their power from the rest of the world, holds a mirror to large institutions which have hidden powerful histories of oppressed people, like the archive of Black Panther history that this paper explores. The King isolated Wakanda using the vibranium's technology to mask and protect the kingdom from the outside world. For hundreds of years, Wakanda's true nature and abilities were kept secret. T'Challa struggles with this secret as he has begun to intervene in worldly conflicts as *Black Panther*. He begins to see the struggles the outside world is facing and how Wakanda and vibranium could help, however, his father's strong convictions and Wakanda's past of black separatism weighed heavily on him. It is only when Killmonger enters the picture that T'Challa really begins to question that past. He finds out that Killmonger is his cousin and that his uncle N'Jobu was stationed in Oakland as part of Wakanda surveillance. N'Jobu witnessed the atrocities of racial discrimination and crime in Oakland and became politically radicalized. He was planning to steal vibranium technology and weapons in order to fight racial discrimination worldwide. When T'Chaka found out about this and confronted his brother, N'Jobu answers:

I observed for as long as I could. Their leaders have been assassinated. Communities flooded with drugs and weapons. They are overly policed and incarcerated. All over the planet, our people suffer because they don't have the tools to fight back. With vibranium weapons, they can overthrow all countries and Wakanda can rule them all the right way.³⁸

After confronting his brother, N'Jobu pulls a gun on Zuri -one of T'Chaka's most trusted advisors and best friend- in order to save Zuri, T'Chaka kills his own brother. Upon leaving, T'Chaka and Zuri leave behind N'Jobu's son, Killmonger. To cover up the lie, they had to leave the child. Once T'Challa discovers this past, he truly begins to understand the power of the throne. He is able to imagine a revolutionary future and recognize the intense impact hiding the past and Wakanda's successes had on the rest of the world.

T'Challa recognizes that Killmonger is a monster of Wakanda's making.

Like the renditions of the chair, the recognition of Wakanda's past along with the past of black oppression worldwide, allowed for the imagining of a revolutionary future. In the end, T'Challa takes a stance on the ongoing struggle for liberation across the world. After announcing his position at a U.N. summit, T'Challa returns to Oakland with his sister and begins plans to open technology and resource centers within the community to share the wealth of Wakanda's knowledge and empower Black people all over the world.

Throughout the film, character dialogue and interaction consistently comment on current issues surrounding discrimination and colonization. For example, when Killmonger enters a museum in and attempt to steal an item on display which contains vibranium, an exchange between him and a museum curator comments on colonization's exploitation of indigenous cultures:

Curator: "These items aren't for sale."
Killmonger: "How do you think your ancestors got these? Did they pay a fair price, or did they take them, like they took everything else?"³⁹

Here Killmonger represents an attitude that is shared with many peoples of color and indigenous peoples whose cultures have been exploited and taken. Here Coolidge, like the Panther Party, directly addresses the consequences of slavery, colonization and the identity crisis of the diaspora. Killmonger's interaction at the museum points to the significance of the throne-like chair exhibited in the Oakland museum. The recognition of Black power and struggle by an institution is exactly what both fictional Killmonger and real-life victims of oppression desire and deserve.

In a variety of aspects, the film directly intertwines itself with the Panther past and memory. Its juxtaposed settings of Oakland and Wakanda are just the tip of it. Images of Black pride and power are all over this film from the strong female characters to the vibrant African costuming. The throne of Wakanda is also the same shape and structure as Newton's, and the villain directly quotes Panther rhetoric as he attempts to sit upon the throne.⁴⁰ T'Challa recognizes the power and responsibility the throne of Wakanda is imbued with. He also recognizes that the past can empower and liberate those under subjugation, because it is only when he discovers his own past that he can imagine a revolutionary future. When T'Challa and his sister

go to Oakland to start the community programs to empower Black communities, this can be read as a direct nod to the many community survival programs that the Black Panthers created. In addition, many have referred to this film as, "...a movie that doubles as a movement," which indicates the power of its message and the film's ability to empower people of color.⁴¹ From this reading, we can see how this film functions as both a prosthetic and imagined memory with which Black and other colonized peoples can picture themselves as a collective, whose rich past must be honored and understood and ultimately utilized as empowerment to envision a radically different and revolutionary future.

The renditions of the chair all serve to create a collective imaging of a revolutionary future. They create necessary pathways to learn a past that has been historically ignored. They provide power, recognition and representation where it is badly due. The Panther past provides marginalized groups with images of power with which they can utilize to position themselves in a seat of power from which they can successfully fight in their own contemporary struggle for liberation.

This project inserts itself in a larger scholarly and activist debate among the periodization and categorization of the civil rights movement. This paper urges a reconsideration of this categorization as it points to specific evidence which exposes the many ways in which the struggle for liberation continues to be fought and felt all over the world. The varying and multiplying renditions of the chair as well as the growing number of representations of the Black Power past allows us to recognize that the struggle for liberation and the effects of slavery and colonization are not left to the past, but live on in the present. This iconic image of Black Power encourages interaction and facilitates prosthetic memory ultimately expanding the repertoire, indicating that the spirit of the Black Panther past need not be past, but remains current.

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- 4 For example, see *The Black Panther: Black Community News Service* vol 1. no. 6, November 23, 1967, available at *The Freedom Archives*, https://search.freedomarchives.org/search.php?view_collection=90.
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- 24 The cover of this newspaper can be viewed online on *Post-What.com*, <http://post-what.com/1967/05/hueys-re-mix-1967-the-first-appearance/>.
- 25 Morgan describes and quotes Panther members directly when discussing their uniform. The Panthers wore a blue dress shirt because it was most commonly purchased as nice church clothes. The leather jackets were also considered fancier dress because they were expensive. The choice of clothing was important because it allowed for the Party to appeal to both youths and the older community by presenting themselves in a well put-together outfit. Morgan, "Huey Newton Enthroned."
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Meet the Authors

Christina Brown is a third-year graduate student in the American Studies department at California State University, Fullerton. She obtained her BA in English with an emphasis in creative writing and a minor in performing arts from California State University, Channel Islands. When she's not in class, she writes and performs poetry all over southern California with Fight Evil With Poetry and The Real Poets of OC. She plans to use her MA to pursue a career in teaching.

Nick Catt is an American Studies graduate student in his final year of study. He completed his undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton, where he received a BA in American Studies. He is specifically interested in cultures of drug use and addiction, especially how certain conditions of American life affect both the consumption of mind-altering substances and addiction rates. More generally, Nick has focuses in institutions and ideals, gender and sexuality, and race and ethnicity. After graduating, Nick's goal is to teach at the community college level.

Sarita Espinosa double majored in American Studies and Human Resource Management and she loves the American Studies department more than anything else in the world.

Laura Fauvor is a second-year American Studies graduate student. She received her BA in History and American Studies at California State University, Long Beach and her AA in Liberal Arts and Behavior Sciences at De Anza College. Her research interests from critical, anti-capitalist and decolonizing lenses include, public memory, institutions and ideals, digital culture and technology. Part of her academic career goals includes fostering community among students and faculty. She currently fosters community as the Publicity Chair for the American Studies Student Association and as the Co-Editor in Chief of *The American Papers*.

Emilia Gazzoni Gaskell is in her Junior year as an American Studies major. She was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina and immigrated to the U.S. with her parents at the age of 3. Her experience as a DREAMER helped shape how she sees the world and the problems that face Millennials in the future. She became a U.S. Citizen in June 2018 and enjoys being politically active. She and her husband live in Fullerton and are raising two feminist Bengal cats named Alfie and Moses.

Maite Gracian completed her undergraduate studies at Cal State Fullerton in 2019, where she received a bachelor's degree in American Studies. Her research interests include popular culture, Chicano/a Studies, human communications, and cultural anthropological studies. She plans on continuing her study of the humanities to better understand and implement cultural competence within different fields of work.

Curtis Evan Hendrickson is a second-year American Studies graduate student with specific focuses in education and pedagogy, institutions and ideals, consumption and leisure, and monsters and horror. He previously completed his undergraduate work at UC Berkeley with a BA in History in 2012 and completed his Social Studies Teaching Credential at UC Irvine in 2013. Curtis previously taught high school ESL social studies in Cedar Park, Texas and currently teaches World History and United States History at Sierra Vista Middle School in Irvine, California.

Jessica Hernandez graduated Magna Cum Laude from Cal State Fullerton in spring of 2019, receiving her Bachelor's degree in American Studies and Sociology with an emphasis on Social Inequalities. She credits American Studies for instilling her with a critical mind, as well as enabling her creativity to flourish, by allowing her to learn and write about subjects ranging from Benjamin Franklin and Victorian womanhood to Tupperware and housecats. In her spare time, she enjoys listening to show tunes and watching history documentaries.

Patricia Leyva-Stickles is a third-year undergraduate student double-majoring in American Studies and Human Services. She enjoys exploring identity development within marginalized communities through her academic and work career. At CSUF, she has worked at the LGBT Queer Resource Center and Asian Pacific American Resource Center where she has developed programming that focuses on the experiences of queer people of color. She hopes to continue this work in graduate school.

Meet the Authors (continued)

Aisha Monks-Husain is a second year American Studies graduate student. She completed her undergraduate work at Chapman University, where she received a BFA degree in Creative Writing with a minor in English Literature. Her research interests revolve around literature and culture, space and place, creative nonfiction, race and ethnicity, and communities. She plans to continue this work in an MFA and/or PhD program.

Samantha Montalvo is a senior in American Studies at California State University, Fullerton. Her research interests focus on political culture in American Society and its implications. She is a first-generation, Mexican-American student who aspires to uplift her family and community. She is passionate about social justice and empowering marginalized communities.

Giulia Oprea is a second-year American Studies graduate student. They completed their undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton, getting their BA in American Studies. They also received their AA in Political Science, which primed their critical approach to American culture. Giulia's work is concerned with different types of power, mainly focusing on state power and social control. They hope to pursue this avenue of research in a PhD program and develop critical theory on the matter. They're currently the coordinator for the Social Justice and Equity commission on campus.

Brandon Ruiz is a senior pursuing a BA in American Studies with a minor in Chicano Studies. He is a first generation college student. He currently goes to school full time and is on track to graduate Spring 2020. When he is not in school, Brandon enjoys reading, hiking, or watching movies with his friends and family.

Kira Sherman is a junior at Cal State Fullerton currently studying technical theater with an emphasis in stage management. She graduated with El Camino College in 2018 with honors and was awarded for academic achievement in her major in 2017. Her interest in American Studies steams from years of listening to mostly hilarious but sometimes heartbreaking family stories about her ancestors in America. For example: Her family name of “Sherman” is supposed to have come from an Irish immigrant who fled to America after killing a man with his shillelagh, or how her great grandfather supposedly hitchhiked through Chicago with the infamous Al Capone. But most importantly, she remembers hearing about the several years her grandmother spent on a small religious commune in northern California. Stories have always interested Kira deeply and she is so honored to be sharing this one with all of you.

Valery Zavala completed her undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton in 2019, where she received a BA degree in Linguistics. With an interest in culture and language, she plans to become an EFL teacher abroad.



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