

# TABOO

Volume 19, Number 1, Winter 2020

**Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education**  
Volume 19, Number 1, Winter 2020

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## Introduction

*Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner*  
*David Lee Carlson*  
*Andromeda Hightower*  
*Timothy Wells*

*Taboo* Readers,

A new year is upon us and 2020 is also the start of the second decade of this century. We continue to find ourselves in a quite complex social and political landscape. Like when *Game of Thrones* says *Winter Is Coming*, this editorial introduction is being written and contextualized as *Impeachment Is Coming*. All things equal, and given the conservative majority of the Senate, the Impeachment trial of Donald J. Trump may be over before this issue of *Taboo* is published. Our editorship started with talking stock of the Trump moment and it has been well over three years since the 2016 election and the world has become even more uncertain, even more based in lies and fractured communities globally. And, for our journal it is in this context that we take a moment to take inventory of where we have been and where we are going, recommitting to be multi-truth tellers in complex and *Taboo* ways.

This particular issue has been a long time coming, and the authors of the eight manuscripts are owed a debt of gratitude for their patience. Co-Editor Varner moved institutions to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* is now housed at the Gayle A. Zeiter Literacy Center. We are excited about the journal's new home at UMLV and the exciting directions we can now grow within this context. Co-Editors Varner and Carlson remain committed to a journal that pushes boundaries, seeks to say the unsayable, and generally pushes the academic community around any number of socio-cultural intersections. As the journal begins with this first issue at UNLV we welcome Andromeda Hightower of UNLV as Co-Editorial Assistant along with Timothy Wells from Arizona State University. Over the first six months of 2020 *Taboo* will be announcing an aggressive publication agenda that combines Regular Issues, Standing Issues, Co-Editor in Chief Special Topic Issues, as well as Special Issues proposed by outside scholars and/or by invitation. This agenda will help our readership and potential authorship

see the direction in multiple year cycles and we are eager to share our editorial commitments.

This issue is comprised of eight articles that are all over the map: from a look at disability access, to issues of race, sexuality, literacy, and beyond. This issue is, as always is the case with regular issues, a complex kaleidoscope of interest and intrigue with plenty to keep readers interests. As is often the case we are providing the titles and abstracts of the pieces in this issue in our introduction to help you make choices about how you read this issue. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us as editors (kenneth.varner@unlv.edu) and (dlcarlson2@gmail.com) with any ideas, suggestions, and feedback.

### In This Issue

1. ***Inaccessibility Simulator - Demo Mode*** - Michaela Stone. This piece provides a text-based simulation of the experience of making sense of inaccessible online mathematics instructional content through the use of a screen reader. As such, it is most authentically experienced without explanation of content or conventions. It should be uncomfortable to read. It should be impossible to fully understand. It should require, but not support, significant effort to access the entirety of its content. An optional, explanatory postscript is included for readers who desire clarification.

2. ***Dark Bird: The Raven Society and White Nationalists*** – Jacob Bennett. In this piece Bennett asks, is there a connection between White supremacy and university merit-based honorary societies? In this provocation, Bennett describes his experience in one such honors society at a university that has graduated numerous White supremacists. Bennett contends the history of the school creates a reality in which “merit-based” admissions to any school organization perpetuates White supremacy. In the society he joined, it was his goal to have members reflect on this argument by writing and reading a parody of Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Raven*. Mere months after my reading, White supremacists descended onto my university’s town and murdered a White activist while injuring dozens of others. Even after these events, deans at the graduate school he attended seemed unmoved to change the structures of the program to move toward equity. In this article, he asks why.

3. ***Finding Lionel: Reconciling Multiple Identities as Black, Gay, and Gifted in Dear White People*** – Christopher Sewell. Sewell asks what does it mean to be a Black male looking to reconcile their intellectual, sexual, and racial identities? bell hooks (2004) notes that Black masculinity is inherently tied to notions of power; Black males, socialized to be dominant, find this power and dominance in tension with conceptions of power in society at large. Uber masculine depictions of manhood become the basis for the baseline Black male. Concurrently, scholarly conversation depicts Black males from a deficit perspective. Justin Simien’s *Dear White People* tackles the lives of Black students at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) as

they deal with a racial incident on campus. Using Means and Mitchell's theory of Quadruple Consciousness and Whiting's Scholar Identity Model, this paper argues that Lionel's positionality as a student writer at Winchester forces him to not only embrace his Black identity but grapple with the implications of being labeled and/or identifying as Queer. This paper will explore the complex negotiations that Black, Queer males face at top Predominately White Institutions and begin to think about how we might support students as they negotiate the multiple identities that they embody.

**4. *Dislodging Patriarchal and Academic Boundaries: Dialoguing on Trauma through Text, Email, and Facebook Messenger*** – Monica Taylor and Emily Klein. In this piece two feminist teacher educators who are professional colleagues and friends, use personal correspondence outside of the academy to help explain how they bridge and navigate their authentic whole selves as teacher educators. These dialogic narratives break from traditional academic texts and their focus on logic and objectivity as they are written from intimate voices and include deep emotions, detailed descriptions of personal anecdotes, and imagery and references to art, music, literature and our general interactions of reading the world. Through examples from their personal daily correspondence during the Kavanaugh hearings, they explore the following questions: How can we push the boundaries of academic writing to write for our authentic selves? What are the spaces where we can do this? How do we bring in our real-world experiences of sexism, misogyny, and rage into our academic writing as teacher educators?

**5. *Cupcakes, White Rage, and the Epistemology of Antiracism*** – Benjamin Blaisdell. This article reveals how white rage and antiracism—often in the form of disdain for Black joy—surfaced at Pride Elementary, a racially integrated school in the urban center of a small city in the southeastern United States. Based on a 5-year ethnographic study, it analyzes the perceived threat some white teachers and parents felt by the mere presence of Black students, teachers, and administrators. It highlights the insights of the Black principal, whose experiences most clearly illustrate how school-based racism is rooted not only in white supremacy but also antiracism, thus supporting Dumas' assertion that school-based research on race must better address antiracism.

**6. *Youth of Color Living and Learning in the Age of Racial Paranoia: What Social Justice Educators Need to Know*** - Pierre Orleus, Curry Malott, and Andre Habana. Fearing the other has been entrenched in the minds of many Americans. With Donald J. Trump becoming president of the U.S., overt racism is being re-inserted into mainstream politics. Trump's victory has ushered in an era beset by racial paranoia—fear socially constructed about black and brown bodies, learned at home, in schools, and from the mainstream media, and expressed in unjust and, at times, violent manners. Indeed, racial paranoia has caused racially prejudiced

individuals or groups to behave and act in violent ways against people of color. This essay draws from critical race theory and present day political events involving the Donald Trump government to explore racial paranoia and its multilayered effects on people of color, particularly youth of color. This essay underscores plausible parallels between racial paranoia and the attitude, behavior, and actions of people holding white supremacist ideology and their violence against people of all colors, particularly youth of color. This essay provides suggestions that might serve educators who are working with historically disenfranchised youth of color, including immigrant youth of color.

**7. *A Conceptual Framework: Racial Ideology and Teaching Practice*** - Kelly E. Demers. The purpose of this article is to describe how a qualitative researcher constructed a conceptual framework. This framework arose from a two-case, critically-oriented study. It provided the researcher with an analytic tool for interpreting how the ideological assumptions of two White elementary teachers shaped their constructions of race and what these constructions meant in terms of each participant's teaching practice. Included in this piece is a summary of the study from which the framework emerged, as well as a description of theoretical and conceptual work that served as its structural foundation. Following is a detailed description each dimension of the framework, and an example of how these dimensions helped answer the research questions driving the study for one of the two cases. The article concludes with a discussion of next steps for the continued development of this framework.

**8. *Who's Out? Who's In?: (Re)presentation of LGB+ Individuals in Picturebook Biographies*** – S. Adam Crawley. Though the metaphor of windows, mirrors, and maps this article draws attention to depictions in picture books of individuals who identified—or might now be considered because of their romantic, physical, and/or otherwise intimate relationships—as LGB+. However, some picture book biographies limit information about the person's non-heterosexual orientation more so than others. Therefore, this article examines contemporary picture book biographies to explore the representations of individuals' sexual orientation and the implications for young readers. The piece begins with a discussion extant research about LGB(TQ)+ children's literature and asserts the need for biography-focused study. Then the piece outlines methodology and findings, specifically addressing the following questions: (1) What picture books biographies about LGB+ individuals have been published? (2) How do the books reflect the person's sexual orientation? and (3) What are the implications of such representations?

We hope you enjoy the articles in this issue as much as we enjoyed putting the issue together.

In Solidarity,  
—Kenny, David, Andromeda, and Timothy



# Inaccessibility Simulator

Demo Mode

*Michaela Stone*

## Abstract

This article is a text-based simulation of the experience of making sense of inaccessible online mathematics instructional content through the use of a screen reader. As such, it is most authentically experienced without explanation of content or conventions. It should be uncomfortable to read. It should be impossible to fully understand. It should require, but not support, significant effort to access the entirety of its content. An optional, explanatory postscript is included for readers who desire clarification.

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## 8

## Inaccessibility Simulator

let's learn some math

first pay dollar eighty six      sixty five for course access

now pay dollar eight hundred ninety five for j a w s screen reader software

if you do not have dollar eight hundred ninety five for j a w s screen reader software you can have it for free but you have to restart your entire computer every three pages to use it

install j a w s screen reader software and follow all accessibility setting instructions so that your homework questions will be left quote accessible right quote

begin your left quote accessible right quote homework

navigation region



next question button

question two november fourth eighty three is displayed

tab

main region

frame read only

question content area top left question content area top right question content area bottom enter your answer in the answer box

help on using the player previous question next question

tab

toolbar read only

tab

question content area top left

the target in the figure area shown to the right contains four squares if a dart thrown at random hits the target find the probability that it will land in a green region

a target contains four squares with the same center the side lengths for the squares are as follows colon three inches nine inches twelve inches fifteen inches the colors associated with regions on the target are as follows colon inside the smallest square green semicolon between the second smallest square and the smallest square blue semicolon between the second largest square and the second smallest square green semicolon between the largest square and the second largest square blue

the probability that a dart will land in a green region of the square target is edit period

left paren type an integer or a simplified fraction right paren enter your answer in the answer box

try to navigate to the answer box using your keyboard

enter your ans left parent type an in the target in the figure shown to the right contains four squares in a green region a target contains four squares with th tab

question content area bottom



tab

enter

type in text

enter

next question button

ask your roommate to use your mouse to click on the start of the problem so that you do not have to listen to all of the navigation information again

the table shows the outcome of car accidents in a certain state for a recent year by whether or not the driver wore a seat belt

table with four columns and four rows

wore seat belt no seat belt total driver survived four hundred and nineteen comma six hundred and eighty nine one hundred and sixty nine comma one hundred and sixty eight five hundred and eighty eight comma eight hundred and fifty seven driver died five hundred and twenty six nineteen seventy eight two thousand five hundred and four total four hundred and twenty comma two hundred and fifteen one hundred and seventy one comma one hundred and forty six five hundred and ninety one comma three hundred and sixty one

table end

find the probability of wearing a seat belt given that the driver survived a car accident

the probability as a decimal is edit period

left paren round to three decimal places as needed right paren the probability as a fraction is edit period

left paren type an integer or a simplified fraction right paren enter your answer in each of the answer boxes

help on using the player button

previous question button

next question button

unlabeled one button unavailable

if you did not understand that you can go back and read the problem again

don't get frustrated yet there are still twenty three more left quote accessible right quote questions to go

This is the part where I ask you if you're uncomfortable yet. Then I explain what's going on and in a moment of clarity you breathe a sigh of relief. No one could possibly expect you to learn anything from an inconsistently-formatted, virtually unnavigable cluster of unpunctuated, monospaced text. But I'm not going to spoon-feed you, because I told you it's "accessible", so it must be accessible. And if it isn't maybe you can get your roommate, or your mom, or some tutor who charges \$50 an hour to help you understand. Only 23 more "accessible" questions to go...this week. Next week's "accessible" homework is way easier, so there will be twice as many "accessible" problems to solve. That's enough coddling for now.

navigate to explanation of what the ████ is happening here

explanation content area top left

i'm going to help but i can't make it too easy that would be a disservice to the students with visual impairment who don't get an easy explanation for why their left quote accessible right quote homework isn't actually accessible

explanation content area top right

the first rule of understanding mymathlab through a screen reader is that nothing is ever consistent sometimes a period will be read out loud as left quote period right quote sometimes the screen reader will just pause for a little bit before starting the next sentence commas work the same way but the pause isn't quite as long ellipses which mean something very specific in a mathematical context might be read as left quote dot dot dot right quote or the reader might pause for longer than a period i'm guessing that you can figure out how quotation marks might work on your own by now just know that sometimes they're read out loud and sometimes there is just a pause before the quoted text brace yourself dot dot dot here comes a citation left paren bohman 2014 right paren navigating the screen works just like it does on every other website except when it doesn't some problems have lots of empty areas or hidden buttons that you have to navigate through to get to content sometimes you get stuck in an answer box and can't navigate your way out of it without someone who can use a mouse to help you graphics and tables might be decipherable but they probably aren't go ahead try to draw the image described in the first example problem if you get frustrated with that you can try to make the table from the second example problem here's a hint for the table colon you know how you sometimes put a comma between the thousands place and the hundreds place in a big number to make it easier to read well if the problem isn't formatted correctly the screen reader thinks that four hundred and nineteen thousand six hundred and eighty nine is four hundred and nineteen comma six hundred and eighty nine instead you know now that i think about it maybe the first rule of understanding mymathlab through a screen reader is that you can't understand mymathlab through a screen reader

facetious comment content area bottom left

five punctuation marks down a bunch more punctuation marks to go before we can start talking about mathematical equations just wait until we get to calculus image of winky face emoji

guilt trip content area bottom right

### INACCESSIBILITY SIMULATOR

You are currently using Inaccessibility Simulator in demo mode. Since you did not pay for Inaccessibility Simulator Pro, you have been limited to four pages of uninterrupted content. If you were using the free version of JAWS you would have been asked to restart your computer at this point. To ensure that Inaccessibility Simulator provides the most realistic simulation possible, please close all programs and restart your computer. Proceeding to the next page without restarting is inauthentic and would make me think somewhat less of you as a person.

More information and the option to purchase Inaccessibility Simulator Pro at our steeply discounted rate of \$894 is available on our nonexistent website.

OK

i bet you're thinking i can't possibly keep this up have you figured out how to make the audio files play so that you can compare the words you're reading to the ones you hear question if you're not using the right pdf viewer you might not even know the audio is there or maybe you're ready to give up on the whole thing because it's not worth the effort to try to understand did i mention that students with visual impairment who need to p a mymathlab course in order to get a college degree don't get to quit trying to understand question surely if they can do this for an entire semester left paren or two if they fail the first time right paren then you can tough this out for a few more pages

next section button

navigate to motivation for you to care and act

motivation content area top

please select the description that most closely matches your current role if more than one description matches your current role you'll have to figure out how to find the appropriate information if this was a mymathlab question pearson would tell you that essentially they do their best to the extent feasible to make selected questions and problems left quote accessible right quote but just between the two of us i think they couldn't be bothered to format the question correctly and they can only sleep at night by telling themselves that the vast majority of the people who read this won't need to choose more than one option

group start multiple choice

radio button not checked a i am an educator at a university that uses pearson's mylab products for online instruction and slash or assessment radio button not checked b i am an administrator at a university that uses pearson's mylab products for online instruction and slash or assessment radio button not checked c i am an educator or administrator at a university that does not use pearson's mylab products for online instruction and slash or assessment radio button not checked d i am a university student who is visually impaired radio button not checked e i am not an hole

click to select your answer then click check answer

check answer

educator at university pearson content area bottom right

wow dot dot dot we have so much in common i too am an educator at a university that uses mylab products since we're both in the same boat i feel like i can be completely open with you here there are a lot of upsides to mylab products no need to collect stacks of homework tests grade themselves my students can do all of the practice problems they want from the comfort of their dorm rooms and i don't have to so much as run off a single photo copy once i've handed out my syllabus every semester odds are you've never had a student with visual impairment in your cl es me either it's pretty rare and if you ever end up with a student with visual impairment in your cl no big deal i'm sure that in this day and age your department wouldn't choose to adopt online courseware that wasn't accessible it's so much of a no dash brainer that i bet you never thought it was worth reading what pearson has to say about the accessibility of their mylab products maybe though

just maybe you might want to take a quick peek at pearson's website just to double dash check that none of your department's decision makers missed something important while the pearson sales reps were plying them with all of the finest food and beverage that can be purchased within the boundaries of your state's ethics codes go ahead do a google search for left quote mylab accessibility right quote and look at the accessibility information and frequently asked questions pages i'll wait here while you give them a once over dot dot dot you're back exclaim notice anything question now i'm no expert in semantics but left quote working toward right quote left paren pearson education inc two thousand nineteen a right paren achieving standards and actually meeting those standards are two different things when you get to the frequently asked questions page left paren pearson education inc two thousand nineteen b right paren thing's get even more ominous words and phrases like left quote essentially right quote and left quote to the extent possible right quote sure seem to leave a lot of wiggle room for interpretation now there are a lot of other words on those pages so i might have missed something but i'm pretty sure i didn't see a single unambiguous claim that that mylab products meet reasonable practical or legal standards for accessibility you're probably thinking a couple of things right now one that's pretty ■■■ing shady on the part of pearson and two how did nobody at your university notice that pearson doesn't ever claim that their products are accessible question and i agree dot dot dot pearson is pretty ■■■ing shady i have a hard time believing that a company with as much at stake as pearson accidentally forgot to say they sold accessible products somewhere on their website as for the attention to detail of the decision makers at your university i want to believe that it was an honest mistake variants of the word accessible show up on those two pages dozens of times and pearson is definitely being as vague as they possibly can in their claims so we'll say it was oversight because it feels pretty icky to think that someone would intentionally ignore something that's so important hopefully by now we're on the same page regarding this being a problem but i still haven't told you why you should care you should care because even if it hasn't happened yet one day there will be a student with a visual impairment in your cl■■■ or on your campus or at another school that uses mylab courseware and if you knowing what you now know don't do something to deal with this situation that student is going to spend hours completing homework ■■■ignments that their peers finished in minutes they're going to fail tests because the problems were impossible to understand they're going to have to pay to retake a course they should have been successful in they might even drop out not because they can't handle the material but because it was easier to ignore the problem than to provide equitable access to an education in the field of study that you love seems like a pretty good reason to care to me and since you've been such a good sport about this i'll offer a little left quote unethical right quote life pro tip from one underpaid instructor to another colon call up your school's pearson rep from time to time to complain about something dot dot dot anything really loading times are too long a problem doesn't work like it should as long as you sound reasonably annoyed there's a pretty good chance they'll send you some kind of a gift card for a local restaurant to make up for the inconvenience they've caused you keep those in your desk for days when you forget to pack lunch or need an impromptu birthday present for someone in the department normally i wouldn't take advantage of something like that but i'm ok with occasionally ■■■ing over a company

whose entire business model relies on willfully disregarding the rights of an oppressed class of students

administrator at university pearson content area left

so you're an administrator cool cool i'm not an administrator myself dot dot dot yet so outside of what I learned grading papers for a grad class in ed leadership and what i read in the journal of higher ed i can't begin to understand the pressures you must face in your position if things are anything like i imagine then you're dealing with decreasing funding enrollment fluctuations pressure to modernize infrastructure and trying to keep everyone above and below you happy enough to keep things running smoothly from day to day maybe you have some say in whether or not your department adopts a product like pearson's mylab courseware maybe that's not what you do but you know someone who does navigate to the instructor at university pearson content area and read what i said there i think it's a pretty strong argument for why you should care about accessibility of the courseware you or your colleagues are adopting but i get that you have to come at this from a different angle as icky as it might make you feel at some point there is a financial bottom line you've read the research that shows adopting courseware like mylab results in average cost per student reduction of twenty percent left paren kozakowski two thousand nineteen p 160 right paren heck i even heard about this one school one time that saved seventy five percent left paren Williams nineteen ninety seven right paren but you know that mylab isn't accessible you know that pearson doesn't even claim it is since i've already made the ethical plea with the teachers let me make the legal one with you do a quick google search for left quote a d a louisiana tech right quote not too pretty is it question they're out over twenty grand just for the settlement not to mention legal costs costs to replace mylab courseware in their classes and the damage to their reputation for adopting inaccessible software and then unsuccessfully trying to plug the buck when a student complained left paren united states department of justice twenty thirteen right paren depending on what school you work for twenty grand give or take might be a drop in the bucket compared to the cost of restructuring courses that rely on mylab products i can understand the temptation to turn a blind eye to a problem that may not yet be an issue on your campus if that's the case i would encourage you to do another google search this time for left quote a d a higher education court cases right quote fifty schools got sued in december of last year alone left paren mckenzie twenty eighteen right paren whatever your motivation is for doing so keep sweeping accessibility under the rug and it is only a matter of time before your university is the one in the headlines or you do the right thing and talk to the right people and set the right wheels in motion so that it's your name at the top of the press release about your university's proactive initiative on equitable access to higher education

educator slash administrator at university no pearson content area top left

hi there and kudos to you for being at an institution that either ignored or set itself free from pearson's siren song hopefully your institution has done its due diligence in vetting the accessibility claims of whatever courseware it has adopted it couldn't hurt for you to check though read through the sections for teachers and administrators at pearson dash tainted schools i hope that within them you will find the motivation



**INACCESSIBILITY SIMULATOR**

You are currently using Inaccessibility Simulator in demo mode. Since you did not pay for Inaccessibility Simulator Pro, you have been limited to three pages of uninterrupted content. If you were using the free version of JAWS you would be asked to restart your computer at this point. To ensure that Inaccessibility Simulator provides the most realistic simulation possible, please close all programs and restart your computer. Proceeding to the next page without restarting is inauthentic and would make me think somewhat less of you as a person.

Proceeding to the next page after having skipped the last restart would be doubly inauthentic and would make me think dramatically less of you as a person.

needed to keep equity in educational access at the forefront of any efforts to adopt courseware for online or hybrid models of teaching if you are just beginning to consider online courseware you are in the perfect position to do things right from the beginning no need for lawsuits no need to rebuild courses from the ground up when a complaint arises because it won't arise if you are intentional about accessibility from day one

university student with visual impairment content area right

My sincerest apologies. Here I am trying to make a case for accessibility in education, and my method of choice is to create what might be one of the least accessible documents you've ever had the misfortune of running through a screen reader. Even if you're not using a screen reader, this abomination is going to be a chore to suffer through, no matter what accommodations you are or are not using. I suppose you're probably the last person on earth who needs to be told why they should care about accessibility in online courses. Hopefully whichever school you're attending is doing everything they should to make sure that you don't have to deal with the issues I have been evangelizing about. I have a sneaking suspicion, though, that things could be better. At this point, some people would be tempted to tell you to make sure you are advocating for yourself. Instead, I'm going to encourage you to take care of yourself. Your classmates are not expected to go to any great lengths to make sure they can do their homework every night. They don't have to fill out forms, jump through hoops, and still have to hope that nobody drops the ball so that they can take their exams. It's not fair to ask that you do any of those things either. However, if you are inclined towards activism, the great news is that there is a growing group of researchers interested in leveling the playing field with you. If that sounds like something of which you want to be a part, a great first step is going to Google Scholar and searching for the issue you are interested in along with the words "disability studies" or "emancipatory research". Within the articles, you'll find names and contact information for people who would very likely welcome your collaboration. You are an expert in accessibility and your contribution to accessibility research would be invaluable.

not an  hole content area top right

thanks for not being an  hole if you read through the previous sections i hope you'll find plenty of justification for caring about equity in education whether or not you work in a school you might not feel like you are in a position to effect change but you absolutely are see the final question for suggestions on how you can support equity and accessibility keep being awesome exclaim

navigate to final question

final question content area top

what else can i do question please select any options that you would like to pursue and at least one that makes you uncomfortable

group start multiple choice

check box not checked a talk about equity and accessibility with your family and friends check box not checked b do a google search for left quote be my eyes right quote and install the app check box not

checked c    inform yourself    check box not checked d    advocate for equity

click to select your answers then click check answer

talk with friends and family content area top left

good choice exclaim    the more people talk about it the less likely they are to ignore inequity when they see it

install be my eyes content area top right

great option exclaim    it is a way you can connect with and help someone who needs visual assistance    encourage your friends to do the same maybe you'll be connected to someone who needs assistance working around inaccessibility in mymathlab

inform yourself content area bottom left

nice thinking exclaim    i could give you a list of articles and papers to read    i could point you in the direction of news stories and court cases that are important    i could tell you to pay attention to specific legislators whose voting records you should follow    at the end of the day though    that's my list and reflects my thinking    i want you to come up with your own    the internet is a big place so you could start there maybe even sit down with a librarian and see what they have to offer    the one thing i want you to keep at the top of your mind while you are reading and researching is whose voice you are hearing    it's easier to survey teachers of students who are visually impaired than it is to survey students who are visually impaired, but who do you think knows more about the experiences of students who are visually impaired    if those aren't dominant voices    then you aren't getting the whole story

advocate for equity content area bottom right

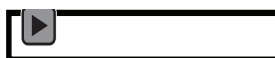
i love that initiative exclaim    speak up when you are aware of inequity write angry letters to politicians who ignore accessibility    write supportive letters to politicians who don't ignore it    heck    you could even tweet about it    you've got this exclaim

navigate to extra credit

extra credit content area bottom

just in case you think i have been exaggerating with my textual simulation of mymathlab's inaccessibility    i have embedded fully dash functional audio for you to hear    all audio was recorded on a computer running j a w s software with j a w s and mymathlab configured according to pearson's published specifications    below are three extra credit files    you should also try to play the two audio files at the beginning of the document if you haven't done so yet    in order to listen to them you will likely need to adjust settings on your computer and install additional software no instruction on how to best accomplish this will be offered

extra credit problem 1    extra credit problem 2    extra credit problem 3



### Postscript

This article is a text-based representation of the experience that students who rely on screen readers have with content that should be, but is not, accessible. Spacing is used in lieu of most punctuation to indicate the length of pauses in the reading of the content on the screen. Other punctuation is replaced by the spoken name of the symbol, again consistent with the way the material is read by the screen reader. There is no capitalization or typographic emphasis. Profanity is intentionally, algorithmically, and excessively censored. Anything that seems like a convention will probably be applied irregularly throughout the paper. The font is intentionally uncomfortably small, dense, and monospaced. Graphics that appear to be interactive are intended to be static. The text alternates between transcription of actual screen reader output of mathematics problems designated as accessible by Pearson and dialogue with readers. Audio files have been embedded in the PDF, however they require the installation of Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Flash in order to appear within the document and to function properly.

All of this is intended to frustrate the reader. Any clarity that you have received by reading this postscript is clarity that is not afforded to students who rely on screen readers to access content in MyMathLab.

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## Dark Bird

### The Raven Society and White Nationalism

*Jacob Bennett*

#### Abstract

Is there a connection between White supremacy and university merit-based honorary societies? In this provocation, I describe my experience in one such honors society at a university that has graduated numerous White supremacists. I contend the history of the school creates a reality in which “merit-based” admissions to any school organization perpetuates White supremacy. In the society I joined, it was my goal to have members reflect on this argument by writing and reading a parody of Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Raven*. Mere months after my reading, White supremacists descended onto my university’s town and murdered a White activist while injuring dozens of others. Even after these events, deans at the graduate school I attended seemed unmoved to change the structures of the program to move toward equity. In this article, I ask why.

#### Introduction

In the winter of 2016, I received a cryptic note to meet at a chapel on my university’s campus at 7:30pm. It told me to knock three times on the door, and wait. It was signed, “Evermore.” Upon arrival, I noticed a group of other students milling about outside. Not being one to jump into things blindly, I decided to take a seat on a bench outside the chapel with a clear vantage point of the front door. One by one, the group began to leave, but another student sheepishly walked to the chapel door and knocked three times. As they stood waiting for a reply, I could

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not help but chuckle at what I felt was extreme pomp and circumstance. A cryptic note, knock three times, evermore. What was I doing?

After waiting with no reply, the student moved from the door and took up a spot close to where I was sitting to also look on at others hoping for entry. One by one, three knocks, no reply. Once the group reached around ten individuals, two people called out to gather outside a residential door close to the university lawn. The door was plexiglass, and behind it was a replica of the quarters from a past resident who enrolled for one term at the university: Edgar Allan Poe. The two leaders pushed back the plexiglass door and invited us all to step inside. Under the light of two soft candles, they welcomed us to the initiation of the Raven Society.

In this provocation, I will use the Raven Society to exemplify the ways White supremacy perpetuates on a university campus. I will show how “merit-based” societies normalize Whiteness through their established admission policies, and connect this sort of normalization to a White supremacist rally held the same town where the Raven Society was established. To fully realize reasons for some community members’ reactions I observed after this rally, the particular history of the university must be understood. I end by recommending ways to work toward structural change within institutions of higher learning to impede the perpetuation of White supremacy.

### Merit, Monotony, and Missed Opportunity

#### *Merit and Monotony*

The Raven Society was established in 1904 by a student named William McCulley James who believed there was a need for a “merit-based society” within the university. Written in the society’s original constitution, the organization was established to, “bring together the best men in the various departments of the University for mutual acquaintance and for cooperation in their efforts to protect the honor and dignity of the University” (History of the Raven Society, 2018). During our initiation, we all agreed to honor the mission of the society and represent the university and academic achievement with faith and honor.

While not a secret society, the initiation process felt extremely *sub rosa*. After the initial ceremony surrounded by replicas of Poe’s personal belongings, we were shuffled into the rare collections library on campus to be greeted by alumni and other “Ravens” with cheers, heavy hors d’oerves and cocktails. I was excited, and happy to be a part of something that seemed so selective. I found some familiar faces from my teacher education graduate program and began to enjoy a beverage or two as we exchanged stories about our experiences with the cryptic note and ceremony. As I looked around at the society’s members and new inductees, I noticed one thing in particular about most of us: we all seemed to be White. While I cannot be certain being that I did not ask anyone how they identified racially, phenotype alone told me we all shared in a light complexion.

As the induction ceremony began to wane, I could not help but be struck by the overwhelming Whiteness I perceived. This was an academic honor society, meant to bring together “the best” from various departments throughout the university (of which there are 53) and there were no more than a handful of people of color in attendance. I began to wonder how I was selected. Was this based on “merit,” or something else? After some questioning, I found that students were nominated by their peers who were already in the society.

Each semester, Ravens from departments across the university gather to discuss the merits of all those nominated, and vote on a final set of inductees. Becoming familiar with this process made it easier to understand why I perceived the society to be so White. Looking to the previous quote provided on the society’s website, it was designed to bring together the “best men” from around the university. A little history places the overwhelming Whiteness in context.

The first female undergraduates were not admitted to the university until 1970. The first African American male, Gregory Swanson, was not admitted to a graduate program at the university until 1950. He was barred from living on campus, attending any school dances or joining social clubs, and withdrew from the university after his first year (Kreth & Bond, 2017). It is unclear when the first female of color was admitted. Alice Carlotta Jackson became the first African American female to apply to the school in 1935, although her application was denied (Strayhorn, 2006). With such a racial and gender-stratified history, the “merit system” of admission into the society through peer nomination seems to be the reason for my observations of its current state of racial homogeneity. I sought to highlight this reality in one of the first tasks new Ravens must complete.

#### *Missed Opportunity*

After paying society dues (another stratifying requirement), new admits are required to write a “parody” of Poe’s (1845) *The Raven*. A group of Raven Society board members are said to review each submission, and then vote on finalists to read their parodies aloud at the Raven Banquet, a black-tie event at the end of each school year. In an email to all new members, the society president explained the following in relation to the parody:

At the banquet, the writer of the best parody (as determined by crowd response) will receive a cash prize of \$500. . . remember your audience; comedic parodies tend to do well. Please note that the parody is a requirement of membership. (Personal Email, 11/18/16, emphasis in original)

I sat down at my computer and decided that rather than going the “comedic” route, this was my chance to have my fellow Ravens reflect on Whiteness. I took directly from Poe’s (1845) poem in terms of length and iambic pentameter, and typed the following written from the perspective of the raven:

I've been asked to share my experience, the way I saw it that night,  
 This is not written in jest, not meant to lessen my plight.  
 As the cliché goes, there are two sides to every tale,  
 But consider how it might have been different, if I were not dark, but pale.

On that evening I implored, to find a place for my soul to shout,  
 I drifted along the wind, in hopes of an ally with some clout.  
 You see often my life was one of anguish, with no one an ear to lend,  
 So on that cold and bleak December night, I pushed passed loneliness and sought out a friend.

In the past I was shunned, people sneered me in disgust,  
 They hoped I left them be, often questioned my trust.  
 They saw me as a messenger, one coming to lead them away,  
 They never let me explain myself, never let me show them my way.

My brothers they've shot down, as they flew from above,  
 Superstition gets the better, and they choose fear over love.  
 Are we an omen, a sign of worry and despair?  
 I hoped someone would listen, allow me to speak through crisp clean air.

So that night I went out, looking for that ally or friend,  
 I felt I needed someone odd, who could empathize with a hand to lend.  
 And there I saw it, on that crisp clear winter night,  
 A door slightly ajar, a man, a bottle, and a soft orange light.

I wrapped once on the door, as to not burst in uninvited,  
 My own experience has shown, how that can leave a person feeling slighted.  
 He called out, "Sir or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore,  
 But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came tapping on my cellar door."  
 Hazah! Thought I, a man wise to my plight!  
 The smell of liqueur seemed inviting, as it wafted through the crisp air of night.  
 Look down! I began to say, and you'll see the visitor you expect,  
 But before I could speak I noticed, his eyes sank in disrespect.

"Prophet" he shrilled, "thing of evil, if bird or devil,"  
 In his voice I heard his fear, his apprehension on a drastic level.  
 "Here we are again," is the thought I had in my mind,  
 My appearance created an outcome, association with death as shrine.

Why must this be, this creation of effect?  
 It seems he is just like all others, quick to judge, but not reflect.  
 For my brothers hunted from the sky found this to be the truth,  
 Each assailant was quick to judge, with or without the burden of proof.

An unfortunate amount of years this has been my family's plight,  
 We've never been able to choose our label, but labeled based on what's deemed  
 "right." As if the race began equal, and my choices are the same,  
 Doves, swans, snowy owls, I don't ever hear them complain.

I wonder if I were them, and came wrapping on this man's door,  
 Would he have had this same reaction, full of fear, abhor.

Would he have opened with a smile, ready to listen and chat,  
 "Come in," he might have said, rather than screaming devil, treating me as a rat.  
 So I sat, I stood still and watched his distress,  
 He saw my shadow, and I could sense his duress.  
 This is my life as a Raven, with my darkness creating no light,  
 I wish he would stop and think about my experience, never a jovial invite.

"Nevermore!" I shouted, with gusto and force,  
 "Nevermore!" I shouted, with a tinge of remorse.  
 "Nevermore!" is all I could think to say,  
 How would you feel if this was your life, each hour, each day?

I shouldn't have to pine to be that dove, that snowy owl or gull,  
 My darkness should be my asset, my strength not my fall.  
 So now I question, should I surround myself with others who look and see like me,  
 Or should I continue to search for that ally, one who might not judge, and let me be me.

It is a two-way street, I do admit to that,  
 Even though I expect respect, I as well have to give that back.  
 But I came to that cellar door with just that in mind,  
 And the outcome was the same, a quick judgment, so let's rewind.

My life may be different from yours, I hope that you can agree,  
 But the solution is not to pretend, my color you can't see.  
 My color is my strength, it provides me wisdom of experience,  
 All I ask is you realize, how yours controls pomp and circumstance.

So we should all shout, from the rafters and the hills,  
 Nevermore! Nevermore! We have to be conscious of our ills.

And that's why I sat, on the pallid bust above that man's door,  
 Looking down upon him, my shadow stretched across the floor.

I was waiting for him to act, to stop shouting and become calm,  
 And here still I wait, hoping for my solace before long.

I hoped those who read my poem would be emotionally moved by its painful truth regarding the normalization of Whiteness. I also hoped they might begin to consider our role as members of an honors society in the perpetuation of White supremacy on our campus.

To my surprise, my poem was selected to be read as one of the finalists at the annual banquet, which took place in a large gymnasium across the street from the University Alumni Hall. The event was touted as the largest in society history in terms of attendance. Prior to dinner, Ravens new and old were invited to an open-bar happy hour. Dinner was set to begin with the parody competition taking place during the latter portion of the event.

As the dinner ended, the society president arose in her formal attire to invite the parody finalists forward to read. The first finalists took the advice of the president and read their humorous compositions full of raunchy and sexual innuendos. It

seemed she was right in her recommendation in that the crowd was raucous in their response to each. As I stepped up to the mic, I realized after about two minutes that I lost the mostly inebriated crowd. The banquet chair stepped to me and said, “talk softer,” and I shouted, “hell no I’m gonna yell this shit!” As I read the entirety of the poem, I could hear people beginning to boo.

It seems the acoustics in the gymnasium created a very loud echo effect, and my words were all but impossible to discern. As I stepped down, I felt humiliated. I was sitting in the back of the cavernous room, and had to walk through a crowd of seemingly frustrated White faces. Suffice it to say, I did not win the \$500 prize. The next day, I was frustrated with the whole experience. Why did the president allow me to read my poem knowing that the venue was not the best for such a piece requiring critical reflection? I felt I missed my opportunity to have my fellow Ravens reflect on the ways Whiteness perpetuated supremacy both in our honors society and larger United States. I realized then that the piece was meant for a smaller group of intimate readers. I drafted an email to the president:

Wanted to thank you for having me as a finalist in the parody competition. Sorry I didn’t get a chance to speak with you in person. I enjoyed the banquet—but was really disappointed in my delivery of the parody—I wish my fellow Ravens could have actually understood what I was saying! I truly think it has an extremely poignant message for our current times. Maybe they’ll have a chance to read it in the future somehow. (Personal Email, 4/28/2017)

To which the president replied,

Thanks, yes, it is always a bit tough to deliver to a boisterous crowd, and the sound system was not ideal. We will likely be posting the parodies from finalists, I will keep you updated. Thanks very much for reading—the Council really appreciated your parody and its meaning! (Personal Email, 4/28/2017)

This was our last communication. The parodies were never publicly or privately displayed for Raven Society members.

### Lack of Reflection, Abundance of Nazis

#### *August 2016*

Less than four months after the emails above were sent, White nationalists, Nazis, and other White supremacists descended onto the town where my graduate university is located and murdered Heather Hyer. Questions about Whiteness became centerpiece throughout the university and local community. Many White people at the university whom I heard speak after the events claimed the violence did not represent our town. To them, these were “outside agitators.” Hearing these reactions, I felt emboldened to circulate my poem. I sent it to my professional colleagues, friends, and neighbors. All felt it was a powerful piece, however, I knew that with them I was “preaching to the choir.” These people were just as upset about

the lack of awareness toward White supremacy as I was. No, I needed to reach a larger audience.

I sent the piece to a local newspaper and the university’s campus newspaper, both with the following email introduction the week after Heather Hyer was murdered:

Hello—I am interested in trying to have a piece published with the [your paper]: a parody of Poe’s “The Raven” poem I wrote last year for the Raven Society. My piece is written from the perspective of the raven—and I think is very poignant with the events going on this past weekend. I’ve attached it here just in case you would like to review it—if this is not the proper way to go about it—I apologize. Please let me know the next steps necessary if that is the case. (Personal Email, 8/17/2017)

I never received a response from the local newspaper, however, a member of the university’s paper replied:

I read your poem and I have to compliment you, it was extraordinarily well written. Unfortunately, it does not fit the stylistic standards for the Opinion section at [our paper]. That being said, I strongly encourage you to submit the poem elsewhere, because I think it definitely deserves to be shared with a wide audience. I will also ask around to see if there isn’t a better section for this poem to be published. Thank you for reaching out, we appreciate the time, effort and courage it takes to put yourself out there and submit a piece of work. (Personal Email, 8/17/2017)

I replied with a question about any ideas of where else I might try to send the piece as the only outlets I could think of were poetry journals, which I perceived to have a limited readership. I never heard back about that, or the offer to “ask around” internally to see if there was another section where the poem might be published. I perceived the silence of the first editor and the reply of the second to be further evidence that people in the town did not truly want to confront how Whiteness permeated.

While many of the White people I interacted with seemed to think the events of August 11th and 12th were organized by “outside agitators,” many people of color I spoke with disagreed. During the same meetings I heard White individuals cry foul that “our town” was not a place of White supremacy, people of color explained the town and university had always been one of two worlds: White and Black. Understanding the man who established the university sheds light on the ways these worlds had been parallel realities since the school’s inception.

#### *Suspicious of a Founding Father*

It must be understood that the university where the Raven Society was established has a history steeped in White supremacy. Such a history makes the homogeneity of “honors societies” such as the Ravens even more problematic. The university was established by a man who believed Black people inferior to Whites. He wrote,

. . . for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it, [264] therefore, as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a



distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. (Jefferson, 1787, p. 166)

He continued, “This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people” (p. 166).

The school’s campus was, and still to me is, fraught with racial tension. As I now leave to pursue other professional opportunities, I hope those in the Raven Society, larger university, and local community begin to engage with the pain Cheryl Matias argues is necessary to truly understand the ways Whiteness defines our U.S. society. Matias (2016) explores the ways White individuals often re-center the pain of White supremacy pressed on people of color back on themselves by reacting to conversations about race, racism and oppression through actions such as crying or becoming defensive. She calls this process White emotionality. I believe my poem could provide a path toward discussion of racialized oppression and possible mitigation of White emotionality.

I am not implying that possible reflection experienced after hearing or reading my poem could mitigate the argumentative tones taken by many of the White people I heard speak after the events of August 11th and 12th. But, reading it might provide some sort of support in understanding the ways Whiteness defines normality. Merely reading and discussing a poem, however, falls far short of the sort of change necessary to move the university and community toward equity.

### Structural Change

After the White supremacist rallies, I was invited to sit on a committee as one of around a dozen “student leaders” to speak with the dean of my graduate school and discuss ways to create a “more inclusive environment” on campus (aka “grounds”). Over and over, I heard White administrators discuss their hopes of providing supports for all students so everyone felt “comfortable” coming to campus and being part of a larger community. In response, my fellow graduate students and I mentioned the need for more than mere discussions or places for comfort, but structural changes to support students on what can be a painful path toward criticality. We made this recommendation specifically based on those made by scholars in the field of higher education.

### Hiring

Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) place the need for the hiring of more faculty of color in the national context by explaining, “hiring and retaining faculty of color are influenced by the legal landscape, notably national debates on affirmative action and its application” (p. 145). We hoped the events of August 11th and 12th would provide the justification needed to prove the value of undergoing these changes, even if perceptions from outsiders might be negative. In our first push

toward structural change, we recommended changes in hiring practices specifically related to the hiring of more faculty of color and critical scholars. We urged the dean to consider potential faculty whose research and teaching are centered on the different iterations of oppression in the United States. We also recommended changes in student admissions policies and programmatic curriculum reform.

### Admissions and Curriculum

Antonio (2000) explains the recruitment of more faculty of color can contribute to better recruitment of students of color as well. We recommended changes in admissions to increase historically marginalized students in our classes. Also, rather than an emphasis on tests scores or family legacy at the school, we recommended changes to admission policy questions with the goal of understanding how potential students perceived concepts such as racism, marginalization and oppression. When students were admitted, we recommended providing more chances to engage in critical reflection through the co-development of sequential curricula. Specifically, we recommended changes in curriculum to support students in the development of criticality through sequentially-designed courses meant to spur not only discussion but provide strategies and skills for social action.

To each of our recommendations, the dean of the school of education replied that the logistical complexity of our school did not allow for such changes. He explained we offered many undergraduate “major” tracks, each with numerous prerequisite courses that would be almost impossible to align. He also explained the school offered over twenty graduate degrees, each having their own path toward graduation, again creating a complexity that did not allow for curriculum sequencing. And bluntly, the dean explained he would not tell professors what they needed to teach. Rather than go the structural-change route, the meetings adjourned with an agreement to begin a “movie night” during which a “multicultural” or other sort of film would be shown to students and faculty. The goal would be for everyone to come together as a “community” and hold discussions to address issues brought up during the film.

Leaving these meetings, I felt saddened, maddened, and overall extremely frustrated with the lack of true initiative toward change, even after Nazis paraded down the streets no more than one mile from where our student leader meetings were held. I did not know at the time, but prior to our meeting with the dean Sean Harper was invited to speak with the faculty and staff of the larger university. I learned that the dean who described the problems-of-complexity above was in attendance of his talk.

Dr. Harper has published numerous works regarding campus climate related to racialized oppression. He is often hired by university administrators to analyze and engage faculty, staff and students on reflections of ways Whiteness perpetuates their campus. Overall, his works have been cited over 10,000 times according to

the Google Scholar database. To put it mildly, he is a leading voice in the field of higher education when it comes to engaging members of college campuses in discussions and actions to end White supremacy.

The following was discussed by Harper (2017) when he attended our school's campus after the White supremacist rallies. At the beginning of his lecture, he explained his work shows that too little is taught and learned about race on college campuses across the country. He called out faculty and staff at our particular university, describing the fact that students often enter our college campus with racist views that are never "engaged, contested, or revised." He continued by explaining that these students go on to assume positions of authority after graduation, and based on this, called out faculty and staff for their complicity in perpetuating White supremacy.

What was also powerful about Harper's (2017) talk was how he defined White supremacy. While many White members of the community I interacted with seemed to believe White supremacy was synonymous with the "outside agitators" they believed created a false image of our town, Harper explained not only Nazis should be considered supremacists. He explained,

I asked if they were bothered by the white supremacy evidenced in the university's employment trends: people of color are mostly in custodial, grounds keeping and food service roles there, while the overwhelming majority of deans, faculty members and senior-level administrators are white. That is white supremacy, too, I tried to make them understand. (Harper, 8/21/2017)

He then concluded by recommending four strategies to stop White supremacy on our campus: (1) confront historical and present-day racism, (2) not graduate racists, (3) not allow alumni to be sustainers of racial inequity in our society, and (4) encourage White faculty members and administrators to play a major role in fighting White supremacy. To begin all of these changes, Harper (2017) recommended university members design a "high-accountability process of racializing its curriculum" by providing "race-focused out-of-class learning experiences for students and engage in departmental and campus-wide conversations about race" (Harper, 8/21/2017).

The recommendations made by Harper (2017) were not too dissimilar to those I made alongside my fellow graduate students. Even so, the deans at our school remained unmoved. What will it take for the sort of structural changes necessary to increase equity on the school's campus to be enacted?

### Conclusion

The Raven Society is a microcosm of the larger university and community dynamic. "Merit-based" honors programs within the school and community seem often to be equated with racial and gendered homogeneity. Based on my observations during my four-years as a graduate student, the school and surrounding community are racially and economically segregated both socially and academically. Merely looking into

a classroom at the local high school and observing the races in attendance is often enough to determine if the course being taught is "remedial" or "advanced."

After my poem was accepted and then rejected by society members, I did my best to continue fighting against White supremacy in the society through the admissions process. Understanding admissions were not so much "merit-based" but based on social-connections, I recommended the admission of students of color from my graduate program and those I knew to hold critical perspectives about structural racism. These members were admitted, and have since recommended and admitted students with similar interests/backgrounds each semester. My hope is this pattern continues into the future, and is also adopted by members who are affiliated with the 52 other departments at the university. While I no longer pay dues to the Society, I still receive emails about their events and requests to make donations.

People in the town of Charlottesville have a lot to go through in order to become what many people within it think it is: inviting to all. The newly elected mayor Nikuyah Walker ran on the campaign slogan, "End the Illusion." To do so, much more is needed in terms of members of the university and local community going through personal pain to understand how White supremacy permeates. Those who belong to the majority White racial group have to move past discussions of race and oppression and toward an understanding of the links between structural oppression, Whiteness and social action. The true nature of this town and the university within it must be understood. It is a place that seems to have always been considered a "comfortable" place to live and work for those who are White, but an altogether different reality for those who are not.

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## Finding Lionel

### Reconciling Multiple Identities as Black, Gay,, and Gifted in *Dear White People*

Christopher Sewell

#### Abstract

What does it mean to be a Black male looking to reconcile their intellectual, sexual, and racial identities? bell hooks (2004) notes that Black masculinity is inherently tied to notions of power; Black males, socialized to be dominant, find this power and dominance in tension with conceptions of power in society at large. Uber masculine depictions of manhood become the basis for the baseline Black male. Concurrently, scholarly conversation depicts Black males from a deficit perspective (Goings, 2016; Harper, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Justin Simien's *Dear White People* (2017) tackles the lives of Black students at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) as they deal with a racial incident on campus. Using Means and Mitchell's (2014) theory of Quadruple Consciousness and Whiting's (2006) Scholar Identity Model, this article argues that Lionel's positionality as a student writer at Winchester forces him to not only embrace his Black identity but grapple with the implications of being labeled and/or identifying as Queer. This article will explore the complex negotiations that Black, Queer males face at top Predominately White Institutions and begin to think about how we might support students as they negotiate the multiple identities that they embody.

**Keywords:** *Dear White People*, Black gifted, Queer Studies, Quadruple Consciousness, Scholar Identity Model, Black Male Representations

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## Introduction

What does it mean to be a Black male looking to reconcile their intellectual, sexual, and racial identities? bell hooks (2004) notes that Black masculinity is inherently tied to notions of power; Black males, socialized to be dominant, find this power and dominance in tension with conceptions of power in society at large. Uber masculine depictions of manhood then become the basis for the baseline Black male. Concurrently, scholarly conversation depicts Black males from a deficit perspective (Goings, 2016; Harper, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Both of these perspectives begin to paint Black men as a monolithic group. The imagery in the news and television profoundly shapes this narrative. In particular, the news and media have perpetuated a narrative about Black masculinity, which is defined by normalized cisgender heterosexual norms.

Justin Simien's 2017 *Dear White People*, a television show on Netflix, picks up from the 2014 movie that tackles the lives of Black students at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) after a Blackface party occurs in one of the social dorms on campus. Breaking the story of the party on campus is Lionel, a young, Black boy who is growing not only into his racial identity but also coming to terms with being gay and an intellectual in the Black community. Lionel's character in *Dear White People* allows examination of the portrayal of the Black Queer nerd critically while thinking about its broader implications for viewers (specifically students who identify with Lionel) and educators who work with students who are negotiating multiple identities finding their place in conversation work done on Black gay males at PWIs.

In his work *Channeling Blackness: Studies on Television and Race in America*, Hunt (2005) discusses the impact of television in impacting the views around the Black being:

But, for better or worse, popular television also functions as a central forum in our society. It serves as special space for the mediated encounters that distinguish the lived experiences of today from those of old, as a place for us to vicariously sample our fondest desires or our most dreaded fears, as comfort zone from which we can identify with our heroes (particular episodic programs) or affirm our differences from undesirable Others. (p. 1)

Popular television (and other social media forms) have therefore become a place where Americans begin to navigate their relationship to others and gain insight into their representations in the media. Specific to Black masculinity, Hunt (2005) discusses the continued "commodification of an exoticized and dangerous Black masculinity" (p. 6) which only supports the monolithic Black maleness.

A 2013 study by Nielsen noted that "Black viewers tend to mostly watch programs that provide diversity in casts or characters who are reflective of the Black lifestyle and culture – although not always reflective of how typical Blacks act" and that Black people tend to watch "watch 37% more television

than any other group” (Nielsen, 2013, p. 15). Since Black male depiction then sits in this space of hypermasculinity, what then happens to those who fall outside of this construction of masculinity? How do Black Americans engage with those who negotiate multiple identities beyond race? While we have seen images of the Black male collegian in television and film in the past (*Drumline*, *Higher Learning*, *School Daze*, *The Quad*, *A Different World*), where do we see a picture of the nonheterosexual Black male negotiating and navigating a world that calls into question their multiple identities for mass consumption? In this work, I will specifically engage with five critical scenes from the *Dear White People* (Netflix) to see:

- (1) How the depiction of Lionel matches the literature on multiple identities for Black Gay collegians on a PWI?
- (2) What negotiations Lionel makes in *Dear White People* to find a place on his campus?

### Review of the Literature

#### ***Black Men at Predominately White Institutions***

Black men in college face many challenges and stereotypes that mark their journey towards achieving a college degree. These challenges, inclusive of being incapable of achieving, disengaged in learning, and the inability to persist despite challenges (Brown, 2006; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008a; Mitchell & Means, 2014). Black male collegians at predominantly white institutions (PWI) face an uphill battle to find their place on university campuses. Part of this begins in their transition to college and issues like the lack of Black faculty members for support and mentoring (Sedlacek, 1999), the ability of their families to provide support in their transitions to college (Rice, Cunningham, & Young, 1997; Kenny & Perez, 1996), and the mismatch between their previous environments and their institution of higher education (Harper, 2009). Without supportive relationships and the ability to build a robust schema, Black male psychological well-being at PWIs can easily begin at a deficit. Feelings of belonging and acceptance find themselves at the center, then, of issues of persistence towards attaining their Baccalaureate degree (Harper, 2009).

The monolithic definition of Black manhood and masculinity compounds on the aforementioned experiences to burden queer Black men. Scholars continue to work towards looking at the intra-gender diversity among Black men highlighting how they have successfully mastered the changing academic and social realities (Harper, 2009). Strayhorn (2008a, 2008b) posits that for Black male students to thrive at PWIs, there is a needs to positive interactions with peers from different racial and ethnic groups. Unfortunately, he denotes that this is in constant tension with the messages and stereotypes that they encoun-

ter on a daily basis (being an athlete, being a recipient of affirmative action programming, being from urban, low-income households). Harper (2009) discusses that there are “overlooked populations of Black males on college campuses—they are academic achievers and student leaders who thrive inside and outside the classroom” (p. 708-709). Even when they do thrive in the face of racism and racial microaggressions, they have to encounter questions of their ‘Blackness’ and perceptions that they are “acting White” (Harper, 2006; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

### *Black Gay Male Identity and Experiences in College*

Black Queer men in higher education settings engage in a complex set of identity negotiations. Not only do they have to contend with the negative imagery and experiences of their heterosexual counterparts, but also t issues regarding their sexual orientation within a sometimes homophobic Black community (Strayhorn, Blakewood, & Devita, 2008). Black Queer males then must work to create spaces and places within their school and broader Black communities, negotiating between their sexual and racial identities—with many of them choosing to prioritize their racial identity (Christian, 2005).

Black Queer males must battle “institutional homophobia, or the dismissal of the legitimacy of gay students, faculty, and staff” which can take a toll on their academic and physical well being (Patton, 2011, p. 77). Research suggests that Black Queer men may deal with the psychological implications of not being able to be their full selves in academic spaces; this can look like feelings of loneliness, lower self-esteem, exhaustion from trying to remain closeted, and alienation from their schooling experiences (Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, & Soto, 2002; Goode-Cross & Good, 2008, 2009; Patton, 2011). Specifically at PWIs, White heteronormative spaces exacerbate this issue; Black Queer men feel a “particular sense of “otherness” due to their multiple-minority statuses” (Goode-Cross & Good, 2009).

Relationship building can also cause angst for Black Queer males. This includes the question of whether coming out to their peer groups is essential (Wall & Washington, 1991) and whether joining gay groups on campus as a valuable or relatable experience as a result of their lack of cultural competence, relevance or engagement. (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004). Sexual orientation then serves as a hurdle in building bonds or finding commonalities among their peers and with their professors (Goode-Cross & Good, 2008). Even when there may be small communities of other Black Queer men, some also fear being outed, and there is some stigma attached to the visibility of some of these bonds (Mitchell & Means, 2014; Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Patton, 2011).

One particular and relevant relationship observed is between Queer and heterosexual Black males on these campuses. Strayhorn and Tillman (2013)

note that several of the males in their study chose to “mask,” to fit in with other Black men; participants who adopted “social identities and preferences that transgress hegemonic masculine roles and expectations limited what some Black gay male undergraduates had in common with their same-race, heterosexual male peers and made them “more different than similar” (pp. 98-99). Harper’s (2004) writing on masculinity of Black males on college campuses notes that the Queer men in his samples experienced no ridicule and found support from the other men on their campuses largely due to “their previous track records of service, leadership, and contributions to the African American communities at their university” (p. 101). Ultimately, for many Black Queer men, learning to not only challenge hegemonic constructions of masculinity but also actively contribute to the communities around them sat at the center of their interactions and relationships with other Black males.

### *Theoretical Frameworks*

For this particular work, I consider two frameworks to understand how the experiences for Black, Queer,<sup>1</sup> and gifted men begin to understand their place, space, and personhood. I employ Whiting’s Scholar Identity Model. For Whiting (2006) having a scholar identity means that “culturally diverse males view themselves as academicians, as studious, as competent and capable, and as intelligent or talented in school settings.” He posits that with a “sustained focus on developing a scholarly identity, hopefully, more African American males will find a sense of belonging in school settings, and value education and all that learning has to offer” (Whiting, 2006). His model centers around nine central ideas: masculinity, racial identity, academic self-confidence, self-awareness, need for achievement over a need for affiliation, internal locus of control, willing to make sacrifices, future orientation, and self-efficacy; all of which draw from the amalgamation of work done in several other disciplines. For Whiting, this model is holistic, not merely thinking about the student and their participation but the roles of outside forces on a student’s achievement.

Critical to understanding Whiting’s work are notions around racial identity development. Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, and Worrell’s (2001) work on racial identity development articulates that Black people progress through five stages of development as they experience race: (1) Pre-Encounter, (2) Encounter, (3) Immersion-Emersion, (4) Internalization, and (5) Internalization-Commitment. As Gifted Black males experience negativity on their academic journeys, Whiting (2006) states that many begin to “question their academic potential and disidentify with their cultural backgrounds and academic achievement” (p. 226). For those who can make sense of the complexities of these negative experiences, they may articulate an understanding of their Blackness and use it to drive their future academic success.

Secondly, I employ Mitchell and Means' (2014) Quadruple Consciousness theory as a way to specifically think about the connections between racial and sexual identity. Helping to ground their work is W. E. B. DuBois' (1903) double consciousness and Cass' (1979, 1984) sexual identity formation theory. They posit that DuBois helps to frame around the important idea that "African American men often negotiate their racial identities to fit-in in spaces where Whiteness is seen as normative" and that Black people have negotiated the two-sides of their being (Mitchell & Means, 2014). Cass' work then serves as a way to specifically add color to the idea of switching between multiple identities, in this case, that of sexual identity. Cass' theory helps to explore the idea that the environment and interactions with individuals form sexual orientation identity. Her model articulates six stages of identity development: "(1) identity confusion—an unexamined belief in being heterosexual and an awareness of gay feelings; (2) identity comparison—considering the possibility of being gay; (3) identity tolerance—initiating a gay community of peers; (4) identity acceptance—when contact with other gays increases; (5) identity pride—rejection of heterosexual beliefs and values; and (6) identity synthesis—when a person's sexual identity becomes congruent with other identities" (Cass, 1979).

Situated and derived with the PWI in mind, Mitchell and Means (2014) note that Black gay and bisexual men often must tackle complex decisions that sit at the intersection of their sexual and racial identities. Therefore, for the authors, Black gay and bisexual men often vacillate between four dominant states of consciousness as they seek acceptance and do not want to be stereotyped, harmed, "outed," or ostracized: (I) White and heterosexual, (II) White and non-heterosexual, (III) Black and heterosexual, and (IV) Black and non-heterosexual. As Black gay and bisexual men begin to find spaces for themselves at PWIs, they negotiate these four categories represent the negotiations that Black Queer males make, in this specific case at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), as they come to terms with both their sexual and racial identities.

### ***Methodology***

I employ content analysis for this study, which Patton (2002) defines as, "Any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (p. 453). I apply this method to specific scenes and dialogue, which I consider as text, extracted from multiple episodes of the first season of *Dear White People*. Content analysis allowed me to "...examine meanings, themes, and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016, p. 1) to elucidate to piece together how he begins to see himself as a Black Queer and gifted male at Winchester University. More specifically, I used Qualitative



Document Analysis, as described by Altheide (2011), to examine both the dialogue and the subtle interactions and reactions with and around Lionel. Altheide (2011) argues that documents “are studied to understand culture—or the process and the array of objects, symbols, and meanings that make up social reality shared by members of society” (p. 2). For this work, the first season one of *Dear White People* served as the document used to understand the experiences of being Black, gay, and gifted.

I employed a data collection protocol that focused on three specific themes: (1) interactions between Lionel and other Black characters that specifically made mention of his relationship to Blackness and/or the Black community both inside and outside of Winchester, (2) any discussions of Lionel’s contributions as a writer to *The Winchester Independent*, and (3) any mention or discussion of Lionel’s perceived or actual sexuality. During this first time watching the season, I used the protocol to identify specific scenes to serve as units of analysis. Any scenes that highlighted any of these themes and interactions I watched two more times. During this revisiting of the work, I captured and analyzed the discursive interactions between Lionel and other characters, took notes on these interactions, and began to map out any changes that Lionel experienced over the arc of the first season. Through this analysis, I came to look at five specific scenes/moments between Lionel and other characters to understand how Lionel came to terms with being Black, Gay, and gifted in those moments.

### Analyzing Lionel: Five Critical Moments

#### *Nerd on Arrival, Black Not So Much*

In the second episode of season one, we begin to see a more in-depth look into the character Lionel. While we see a Black boy, the narrator instructs us that “Lionel Higgins was not always a revolutionary, do not let the Afro fool you” (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017). After which, we see Lionel entering a White barbershop and the White barbers looking perplexed at his hair followed by an important moment in the Black barbershop. As he is walking in, Lionel overhears a Black barber stating, “whoever sent that nigga to my chair is foul as fuck, you know I don’t cut fags,” followed quickly by another barber, who seemingly is free, telling him, “Nah nigga waiting for somebody” (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017). At this moment, the narrator notes that for Lionel, his hair, has been on site of negotiation of his self-identity: “In fact, Lionel has made multiple failed attempts to tame his hair while at Winchester” (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017). This experience in trying to find a space for cutting his hair (a visual cue for his Blackness) becomes a reminder of his over relation to other Black males specifically. Through this experience, we see notions of [fictive] kinship at play (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). While he should be able relate to other Black men due to their hair and experiences in

White America, he has no real relationship with a barber or barbershop, a space that is at the center of many Black male experiences as it is seen as “stable sites of resistance to racial and political oppression” (Baker, Stevenson, Talley, Jemmott & Jemmott, 2018). Without a feeling of a shared relationship, Lionel is left feeling alone and unkempt, symbolic of his relationship with his Black identity.

After his engagement in the barbershop, the narrator lets viewers know that “it’s not that Lionel is afraid of Black people, just those that remind him of the kids from high school” (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017). At that moment, a flashback occurs where Lionel, dressed as Geordi La Forge from *Star Trek*, begins to go back and forth with a group of Black high school classmates at a dance. After explaining who he is supposed to be, Lionel’s classmates begin to note that he “looks like a gay figure skater” and other quips about how his costume makes him look gay. While not specifically related to his speech patterns, there is an inherent distinction made by his peers in high school—Lionel is not “Black enough.” Fordham and Ogbu (1986)’s acting White comes into play as his peers have “certain forms of behavior and certain activities or events, symbols, and meanings as not appropriate for them because those behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings are characteristic of white Americans” (p. 181). In this specific case, it is not simply a distancing from a White identity but one that is gay. While Lionel tries to respond to their taunts, there seemingly is nothing that he can do to make them believe that his costume is representative of a Blackness that they see as valuable and relatable, again rendering Lionel as someone alone and without connection.

As the shot comes back to the present, we see Lionel in Armstrong Parker, the Black dorm on campus, looking at the invitation for Dear Black People party. While he did not have a strong relationship to his Blackness or Black people, the narrator notes that “despite his lifelong timidity, his discovery of Pastiche’s Dear Black People party lit a fire under Lionel’s ass that burned straight through to the coccyx” (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017). While he may not have these connections, Lionel does understand and see himself as a Black male. It is in this moment as Blackness is under assault at Winchester University, that Lionel begins the encounter and immersion stages of his racial development (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). Something about this incident made Lionel see that he could no longer live in Armstrong Parker and simply exist; people who looked like him were the target of racialized incidents. As the camera zoomed in, we see Lionel gasp, note that something was wrong, walk over to some of the Black students in the dining hall as he leads the charge to the party to break it up and destroy the speakers. This action would thrust him into a community that he lacked connection to before.

*Validation (or Not) from Other Black Men*

Upon returning from the party, we see Lionel feverishly typing an article for the school newspaper, *The Winchester Independent*. His roommate Troy, an overtly masculine, popular, son of the dean, walks into their shared space and notes “you did that shit, man” (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017). This brief exchange sits in direct contrast to the conversations that Lionel had with his Black high school classmates; it is affirming and validating of not only his intellectual prowess but also his ability to mobilize around a Black issue at this Ivy League institution. It is in this moment and the subsequent scene that Lionel’s fire catapults him into the center of the Black community.

The next morning, Lionel walks into the dining hall as many people read his article. Three Black male students, known to be “down for the cause,” walk by him and say “we got the next Ta-Nehisi Coates” and “welcome to the revolution.” These comments lead to Lionel saying thank you and smiling, a clear understanding that he is finally moving to a community that he failed to find a space in before. Troy then walks in and invites Lionel to a table of Black men who represent a different dynamic, one that presents not only the issue of class but also toxic masculinity that lingers in the Black Winchester community. As these men quip back and forth, the camera pans to a third group of Black men, who appear to be Queer, who look over at Lionel as he sits awkwardly with Troy and his friends. Troy breaks the conversation turning it to reflect on Lionel’s experience the night before:

**Troy:** Yo, no one on this entire campus has the balls to do what you did, Lionel. And this article, lord the pussy you about to get my man.

**Troy friend 1:** And this we can agree. Nothing pulls pussy around here like prose well penned.

**Troy friend 2:** And that’s the gayest mention of the pussy I’ve ever heard.

**Troy Friend 1:** Blow me.

**Troy Friend 2:** You wish, fag.

**Troy:** You gonna be knee deep as we do something about all that. (Points to Lionel’s Afro). You know I cut hair. (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017)

Through this exchange, we see the various ways in which Lionel has to engage with the multiple facets of his identity through the relationship with these three groups of Black men. Since he is not out as gay at this point in the series, Lionel must not only pass as a straight male but as this revolutionary who is fired up about leading a cause for Black students at Winchester. It is in this moment of “passing” that Lionel shows his understanding of his “inherent complexities... of his social identities” (Strayhorn & Tillman, 2013). Caught between different groups, Lionel’s visible discomfort in the situation is not simply about

the language that his peers are using but with the speculation about how he is to find spaces in the Black and Queer communities on campus. While his high school experience places him within the white and heterosexual categorization as presented in Means and Mitchell (2014), the experiences with Pastiche and this subsequent conversation over lunch forces him to begin to think about how he begins to not only see his racial identity but where his own sexual desires lie and how he will choose to put those identities on display.

### *Encountering His Queerness*

Immediately after the scene in the dining hall, we see Lionel on his bed, at first trying to not listen to Troy having intercourse in the room next door. He slowly pulls his headphones off to listen and begins to pleasure himself. The shot changes to show us Troy in the act, seeming looking at Lionel, until Lionel quickly snaps out of it. Despite being aware of his Queer desires, Lionel chooses to stay behind the wall—close enough to hear and see his desire but not allowing his desire to shine through. Similarly to his movement in his racial identity, Lionel moves from identity confusion to identity comparison (Cass, 1979, 1984). His self-pleasuring moves to a place where he actively desires men and can see himself with someone. But, unlike the space that Armstrong-Parker provides for him to examine his blackness, he lacks a known and visible queer community with which he can begin to explore his own desires and find kinship. Unexpectedly, shortly after that experience, Lionel has to confront his Queerness while fighting for the ability to speak on behalf of the Black students at Winchester. In a staff meeting with the *Winchester Independent* staff, the editor, Silvio, reads a portion of his work to humiliate Lionel by noting his work as not being hard news. In a private exchange after the meeting, the conversation continues bringing forth the question of intersectionality that Silvio believes should exist in his work:

**Lionel:** You asked me to cover race relations at Armstrong-Parker. This what they are.

**Silvio:** At Armstrong-Parker, not for Armstrong-Parker. This paper is for everyone at Winchester not just your friends, okay?

**Lionel** (mumbling): ... friends is optimistic.

**Silvio:** Where are the intersections?

**Lionel** (quizzically): Intersections?

**Silvio:** You're not just a Black man. You're a gay Black man. Homophobic incidents at AP are as common as they are among the Pastiche staff. Where is the conflict of these entities represented?

**Lionel:** I'm sorry... gay?

**Silvio:** Oh. I am sorry, are you straight?

**Lionel:** I really don't subscribe to those kinds of labels?

**Silvio:** Labels keep people in Florida from drinking Windex. Personally, I'm a Mexican-Italian gay vers top otter pup.

**Lionel:** Individually, I know what those words mean.

**Silvio:** Let me guess you are in your straight roommate, phase?

**Lionel:** ... no.

**Silvio:** How can you hope to arrive at a truth, when you can't find your own. Trust me, find your label... (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017)

As seen in this exchange, Silvio pushes Lionel not only to begin to think about how his writing about Armstrong-Parker is personal and political, involving the multiple identities which he occupies. While being pushed by Silvio to think more deeply about the spaces that he occupies and the ways in which his intersecting identities exist, this exchange still does not help him in finding a space for himself within a queer community. Silvio suggests that he begins to search for this truth by going to a party held by the theatre kids. While he follows Silvio's advice, his experience there only serves as a place where he fetishized as a Black man and not seen for all of the ways in which he exists. While these new interactions have not pushed him into the Black, non-heterosexual space in the larger campus, Lionel begins to see how he might use the allyship that is forming with both Troy and Silvio not only will aid in his ability to thrive in the newspaper but also in the larger Black community at Winchester. Much like the gay participant in Harper's (2004) work, he was growing in his "previous track records of service, leadership, and contributions to the African American communities at their universities" (p. 101).

### *Shaving Off But Speaking Out*

Later on in the episode, after Lionel listens to another one of Troy's sexual encounters, he knocks on their shared bathroom door to take Troy up on his offer to cut his hair. As Lionel sits on the chair, Troy asks him what "setting" he wants his hair. Lionel, having not successfully navigated this water, says that he does not know. As they come to a decision, Troy asks Lionel if the chic from the theatre party was hot. As the camera looks at Lionel's back, he sighs, and his coming out begins,

**Lionel:** Troy...I'm gay. I don't know why that is so hard for me to say. I've always known.

**Troy** (walking back from his room shirtless): What you say, my man?

**Lionel:** Just I'm into guys.

**Troy:** Oh.. cool.

**Lionel:** Yea, vaginas are like art in a museum. Beautiful to look at but don't touch.

**Troy:** Yea, agree to disagree. Now, I gotta get these edges super crispy because you motherfuckers are picky as shit.

**Lionel:** I'm not like that.

**Troy:** Nah, you're an original, man. Anyone can see that. (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev, & Simien, 2017)

Simultaneously, Lionel gets a message from Silvio after a scoop that Lionel leaked comes out on the radio. This conversation is the first time that Lionel chooses to take on a label. He shaves off his hair, a symbol that stands for his inability to connect with those around him while embracing his gayness and his place in the Black community. As the love song plays and the haircut happens, we also see Lionel freely engaging in masturbation—a literal and figurative release that his haircut by Troy allows him not to engage sheepishly but with his clothes strewn about his room recalling their closeness. While Cass (1979, 1984) talks about identity acceptance as a time when those developing increase their contact with other homosexuals, Lionel's masturbatory moment is the contact that he needed with himself to begin to accept who he is as a Queer male while simultaneously embracing the Blackness he gains through his new found [platonic] relationship with Troy. This moment with helps give Lionel the sense of belonging that he has longed for since high school.

### *Embracing Black Nerdiness and Engaging Queerness*

As Lionel continues to reconcile his racial, sexual, and intellectual identities, it is the finale that serves as a point where they finally converge. After engaging in more critical research as a reporter for the *Winchester Independent*, Lionel finds out that the family that founded the paper is funding and supporting a measure to integrate Armstrong-Parker, seemingly as a result of the racial tensions that persist post-Pastiche Dear Black People party. Usually timid and quiet, Lionel sits back as people ask questions in the room. The moderator notes that they have time for one last question and chooses Lionel as she buys into the perception that he cannot speak for himself or others beyond some of the writing that he has done.

When he begins talking, Lionel starts timidly. He asks the college president, "How much money are we all to you?" He avoids being interrupted by the moderator, Coco, to begin noting the facts that support the notion that the administration of the university is actively working against the experience of the students of color. He calls out the Hancocks, the founders of the paper, and how the institution is taking a 10 million dollar donation and allowing

them to wield power. As he continues to run about the room avoiding Coco, he blasts an article to the entire campus that speaks to the integration of Armstrong-Parker. Even as Coco takes the mic from him which worked to amplify his voice, Lionel continues his message to the student body. We then see screenshots of Lionel's newspaper article come to the screen. Through his deep research and growing acceptance of his Black identity, Lionel is able to not only be self-confident but also willing to sacrifice his place at the newspaper to expose the injustices that exist in the Winchester community, two key tenets of Whiting's (2006) scholar identity model. As Lionel's racial identity and understandings have grown, he is not focused on simply gaining a space at the newspaper or be affiliated with the Black community, his internalized Blackness comes forward in his commitment towards truth and justice for students of color at Winchester.

As melee ensues around him, Silvio approaches him angrily. The conversation that happens between them situates the moment where Lionel begins to practice the intersections of his identity and gaining agency in displaying them:

**Silvio:** What part about the Hancocks are off limits possessed you to put the story about the motherfucking Hancocks.

**Lionel:** Silvio, can you shut up?

**Silvio:** What did you say?

**Lionel:** I said Silvio "can you shut the fuck up?" (shots of the students' reactions to the release of information)

**Silvio:** Listen, I just...

**Lionel:** No, you listen. This is important to me. And if you want me on the Independent, these are the types of stories I am going to write. And if you don't like it, you can just go fuck... (Silvio grabs Lionel's face and kisses him) (Bowser, Allain, Lebedev & Simien, 2017)

In this brief moment, Lionel cannot only advocate for writing about race issues but also uses his prose to gain the attention while being comfortable engaging in his first Queer moment on the show. Through the growing relationship with the Black males on campus, specifically Troy, Lionel finds his voice and place within a community. The season ends with Lionel bringing Silvio to Armstrong-Parker to see Black community life as they watch a parody of *Scandal* called *Defamation*. This decision to bring Silvio into this space brings him into a place where he begins to realize the space of Black, non-heterosexual as proposed by Mitchell and Means (2014). Lionel sees how he can begin being his whole self as a Black Queer man at an Ivy League Institution. By merging what was once distinct identities that he fumbled to see their intersections, Lionel has reached identity synthesis as proposed by Cass (1979, 1984); he sees how his Black, queer, and intellectual identities are not at war but work together to build a stronger version of himself.

### Discussion

As Harper (2009) suggests, it is critical for Black men to find safety in their academic settings, especially at PWIs. Seeing that Lionel did not have a safe environment in his high school as a Black Queer nerd, he was initially reticent to build relationships and see himself as Black. When thinking about Whiting (2006), Lionel only walks into his experience at Winchester with some semblance of academic self-confidence. His acceptance into the elite institution and his talents when it comes to writing are at the center of how he sees himself as he transitioned to life at Winchester. Through the vantage point of his hair, Simien grapples with Lionel as being phenotypically Black but not seeing himself as someone who is Black. Being in Armstrong-Parker immerses Lionel in a Black world that he had no choice but to engage. He now had the ability to begin to think about his racial identity in a space that was much safer than that of his high school and allowed for him to begin constructing his own sense of self as a Black male. Through this growing understanding of his place and space in the larger Black context at Winchester, Lionel understands the importance of speaking out against Pastiche and their parody of Black culture.

While this was the case, unlike Whiting (2006) who argues that Gifted Black men focus on a need to achieve rather than having a specific affiliation with particular groups in their schools, Lionel needed to align himself with particular people and groups for his self-discovery to happen. Armstrong-Parker and being part of the Black community felt weird for Lionel in the beginning, but as he gained his voice and began to unearth the myriad of racial issues at the center of Winchester's issues, Lionel learned that being aligned with Troy was critical to his story's development. Through this alignment, Lionel gains access not only to relevant information, but also the traditional and Black cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973; Carter, 2005) needed for him to thrive at this Predominantly White Institution. Strayhorn and Tillman (2013) and Harper (2009) see the building of these strategic relationships across the spectrum of masculinity as a means for survival on this campus and acknowledge how he can be a positive contributor to the change needed at Winchester. It is his ability to begin engaging in his development as Black male that would allow for Lionel to engage in questions around his sexuality.

Lionel seemingly is read as non-sexual by his peers and only Silvio questions his potential Queerness. His relationship with Silvio helps Lionel to grapple with the intersectionality of his identity while also feeling like he had a space in which he could speak on this freely. Goode-Cross and Good (2013) note this building of relationships between queer males can be hard and serve as a hurdle. Because Silvio is obvious in his sexuality and "labels," he cannot only model but also articulates ways in which Lionel can see a vision for himself at Winchester. Engaging in the process of "finding his truth," helps for Lionel to



see how he can be Black, Queer, and an intellectual at Winchester, something that he had not seen as necessary in his development.

It is this space that helps Lionel come out to Troy. Through these various experiences, Lionel continues to gain the necessary levels of consciousness needed for him to truly enact his whole self at Winchester. His *quadruple consciousness* as articulated by Mitchell & Means (2014) now has the ability to come to fruition. By seeing the need to build these bridges and find his truth, the intensely private relationship between the two men becomes critical to his development in this space. Seeing that his relationship with Black men in high school was tenuous, his relationship with Troy allows him to build a schema for a positive relationship with other Black men on campus. Troy not only provides the tools and access in the Black community that Lionel needed to become comfortable but also is the first place where he can flex his Black intellectualism through his writing. Troy, also, becomes the object of his initial desires, helping to push his questioning into a reality. Being aligned with Troy helps to minimize some of the anxiety and stress that he associated with coming out and coming to terms with his multiple identities. This strategic coming out protects him from being seen first as Black rather than gay while also working to ground him an experience that is white that often plagues Black men at Predominately White Institutions. These expanded social networks allow for Black, Queer gifted students to grapple, explore, and hopefully, learn to accept their multiplicity of their identities.

Ultimately, Lionel vacillates between the heterosexual and non-heterosexual categories as seen in Mitchell and Means (2014). While he enters college with a complicated relationship to other Black people (especially Black men) and finding his intellectual space and voice, his presence in Armstrong-Parker helps to ground him as both Black and gifted. He transitions into a more self-aware Black identity; his racial pride grows as a result of his acceptance by his peers at this PWI, much different than his experiences in high school. Confusion around his sexual identity fueled much of this wavering. Once he can gain the necessary vocabulary around intersectionality and see how Silvio works within and around those intersections, Lionel can see how and when he needs to negotiate his identities and their ability to gain him what he needs to be successful at Winchester University.

Lionel's character expands the definition of being a gifted Black male through this Queerness. Despite negative experiences with other Black males, Lionel uses his curiosity and his ability to communicate through prose to develop a stronger sense of Blackness. Unlike the work of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) who speak to notions of "acting white," Lionel has to navigate being Queer. His "otherness" is invisible to those in this space. His masculinity goes unquestioned because as Whiting (2009) posits that "Black and Hispanic males with a scholar identity do not equate being intelligent or studious or talented

with being ‘feminine’ or ‘unmanly’” (p. 56). While being at a Predominately White Institution can impact one’s ability to situate one’s racial and sexual identities, his placement in Armstrong Parker with other Black males, who while speaking in heteronormative ways, do not reject Lionel’s place the community helps him to gain in his racial pride and identity development.

While Mitchell and Means (2014) call for an examination of context, it is essential to think about how the racial climate for Black students at Winchester seemed to lessen Lionel’s choice about his Blackness. It became an imperative for survival to use race as a lens even though it was something that he was not comfortable with before coming to Winchester. It is imperative then to think about how these “choices” of being Black/Non-Black or heterosexual/non-heterosexual in these elite educational environments center around survival and thriving. Lionel has all of the conceptual understanding about his race and Queerness, and Winchester serves as the place that he has the language to verbalize his experiences and actively engage in the intersections of his identity. This intersectional exploration and understanding are paramount to the experience of Black Queer males who are high-achieving.

Finally, as we see Lionel coming to understand these intersections, it is important that as we put scholar identity in conversation with quadruple consciousness, it is important to see how these intersecting identities do not simply allow for one to neatly follow these developmental markers. As Lionel shows us, in order for his sexual awakening to emerge, he had to come to terms with who he was as a Black male and for him to find a purpose to allow for him to have the ability to grapple with his sexual identity. As we think about Black Queer males in elite predominately White institutions, we must explore how the developing conceptions around masculinity and their racialized bodies become critical points of examination and reflection as they move through their choice to be open with their sexual preference. Vacillating between Mitchell and Means’ (2014) stages of development is not simply then about being aware of where they are on a sexual spectrum and their consciousness of the Blackness; Lionel exemplifies that there are many more complicated facets of one’s identity that push people in and out of the colored closet.

### Implications

As Harper (2004) and Strayhorn and Tillman (2013) help us to see, continuing to operate under the assumption that all Black males are a homogenous group is dangerous. As we continue to support Black students in their transition to and through predominantly white institutions, we must engage with intersectionality and how students experiences differ as they negotiate, learn, and grapple with themselves in new environments. As schools begin to think not only about community building and inclusivity at predominantly white institutions, more

work needs to be done within communities of color to foster and celebrate intra-racial diversity and promise. One way this can be done is through staff and faculty examining which student voices are privileged within communities of color. They need to examine how they can work to ensure that students like Lionel are able to find their voice and lead in ways that are authentic to who they are and in the service of the larger community of the institution.

In addition to thinking about how higher education leaders and faculty can develop space and leadership among a more diverse set of Black students, more work needs to be done in thinking about how to support students to grapple with complex conversations around race within Black communities in these spaces. Part of Lionel's struggles in coming to terms with his Blackness and his Black queerness stemmed from a lack of discussion, beyond the students, that helped them to see how they can bring their full selves into Armstrong Parker. While his peers were important, having clear mentorship, space for crucial conversations about the ways in which decisions impact the communities as a whole, and simply acknowledging that Black identity is not monolithic should be at the center of how predominantly White institutions look towards shaping and guiding the Black social, cultural, and academic experiences of their students. This work should not be shouldered onto students as they are in transition and need the necessary supports in reimagining themselves anywhere along the continuum of Black identity (Sewell & Goings, 2019). While Lionel did not view this as a form of emotional labor, we must still think about how we put the responsibility on students to learn and teach the community when they already have lots on their minds and on their social and academic plates.

Often in educational research, there is a focus on empirical studies. As we move into an increasingly digital age where television and film have a more extensive reach, there is a critical need for engaging in analysis of popular culture representations of Black Queer male identity. These representations may cast/constrain the developmental trajectory of similarly situated individuals. As Hollywood works to be diverse, we have to be an advocate for positive and realistic depictions of Black, Queer gifted males who are searching to find comfort in themselves if they choose to thrive in predominantly white spaces. Lionel serves as a window into an experience that we have not seen in any prior television series that centered around Black student life in college. Centering the Black queer identity among the various other shades of Black identity helps people to realize a place for themselves in similar spaces and models for how they might go about choosing to exist in predominantly white intellectual spaces.

Finally, while Christian (2005) has begun to think about how Black Queer men negotiate and rank identities, more work can be done to think about the reason why and the specific circumstances that Black Queer men choose to rank their identities in the ways that they do, primarily related to conversations around their academic identity. There is a great need to think about how we

see Black Queer gifted men as also thinking about their academic selves as it comes into play when negotiating their relationships within Black spaces, especially if they are perceived to be “acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1987). When two identities could be engaged to promote safety and progress, what is the rationale and thought process that Black Queer gifted men More work needs to be done to think about how Black, Queer, gifted students negotiate and prioritize their identities.

### Considerations and Questions for Future Work on Black Queer Gifted Students

As more research continues about the intersections between one’s academic, racial and sexual identities, I would posit the following areas for consideration or probing:

**(1) Distinctions between sexuality and sexualization of Black boys:** We must begin to openly discuss sexuality when it comes to Black boys and to not equate that with sexualizing Black male bodies. Historical tropes of Sambo and the Buck that often come to the forefront of conversations around the Black male being sexualized also continue to perpetuate a heteronormative and heterosexual way of viewing Black males. Even when Black queer males and issues around their sexuality emerged as topics of conversation in the 1980s and 1990s, connections to HIV/AIDS and down low culture continued to not only hypersexualize the Black male body but also work towards further marginalizing and vilifying the Black queer presence. For Lionel, this is manifested in his struggle to see who is he and where he might fit in and find himself as a Black queer male at Winchester. As we work to move away from deficit thinking around the Black male experience, it is imperative that we work to normalize discussions around sexuality without having to talk about sex or sexualizing experiences for Black queer boys. While shows like POSE on FX complicate the notions around what it means to be Black and queer, we must continue to ask how we are incorporating this imagery and discussions around that into classrooms and spaces that celebrate the Black queer experiences. *What would it mean for educators to center discussions of sexuality away from sex? How might we begin to help Black queer students move from a deficit thinking about their sexual beings and see how it is something worth being explored? What does celebrating Black queer bodies look like in K-16 education that will lead to more positive exploration and communication as a person ages?*

**(2) Sexual Passing and Its Impact:** In discussions of passing in Black spaces, we often talk about passing in racial terms. Lionel’s story, and the story of many other Black queer men, is around passing sexually as heterosexual. The choice to pass as a heterosexual male could be one of safety for queer people

but also is tied to notions of acceptance and having the ability to move forward in one's pursuits without having barriers to access. Passing for Lionel enables him to be privy to conversations that help to not only boost his own social clout but better the community as a whole. With that being said, while Lionel comes out in the story to his peers, his sexuality is often a non-factor in conversations, rendering a sort of erasure of part of his persona. His ability to pass as a cisgender and straight male due to his gender performance allows him to have access to spaces but also makes him question how he should go about reconciling his multiple identities. Lionel's situation then speaks to a silent passing, a passing placed on him not an active choice to blend into the community. *How might we begin to think about the ways in which institutions and communities force the need to pass on the Black queer body, not due to institutional homophobia but due to a lack of empowerment? What might it mean if Black queer males sexuality was not rendered invisible but seen and spoken.*

**(3) Leadership by Black queer males on college campuses:** While much of the literature mentioned earlier in this describe the angst and discomfort that Black queer males experience on their college campuses, it is imperative that we also talk about the ways in which Black queer males take on leadership roles and construct narratives for larger consumption on college campuses around the country. For Lionel, he is the one who not only breaks up the party with Pastiche but also breaks the story of the experiences of Black students on the Winchester campus. Lionel is quickly thrust in a leadership role and serves as an important interlocutor in the quest for equity and inclusion on campus. While Harper's (2004) speaks to how this service to campuses by Black queer males is often something that provides safety, in the case of Lionel, if it weren't for his role on the *Winchester Independent*, would his story have been shared and celebrated as widely. This celebration of the intellectual, cultural and social impact of the Black queer male on college campuses cannot continue to be written solely by those from within the community. Lionel's leadership, and similar leadership by Black queer males on college campuses, helped to not only change his own situation but that of entire communities. *What are ways in which Black communities not only rely on Black queer labor but can also shine a light on the ways in which queer people's unique experiences situate them to understand and mitigate multiple perspectives on college campuses? How can we ensure that we don't erase the stories and experiences of Black queer males on college campuses? How can we not only ensure that stories of Black queer males are told but that they have a say in how those stories are told and controlled in perpetuity?*

### Note

<sup>1</sup> In this work, I will use Queer and Gay interchangeably based on the literature and Lionel's own self-description.

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## Dislodging Patriarchal and Academic Boundaries

### Dialoguing on Trauma Through Text

*Monica Taylor & Emily J. Klein*

#### Abstract

In this article, we, two feminist teacher educators who are professional colleagues and friends, use our personal correspondence outside of the academy to help explain how we bridge and navigate our authentic whole selves as teacher educators. These dialogic narratives break from traditional academic texts and their focus on logic and objectivity as they are written from intimate voices and include deep emotions, detailed descriptions of personal anecdotes, and imagery and references to art, music, literature and our general interactions of reading the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Through examples from our personal daily correspondence (text, messenger, Facebook, and email) during the Kavanaugh hearings, we explore the following questions: How can we push the boundaries of academic writing to write for our authentic selves? What are the spaces where we can do this? How do we bring in our real-world experiences of sexism, misogyny, and rage into our academic writing as teacher educators?

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### Introduction

Maybe stories are just data with a soul. (Brown, TED Talk, 2011)

#### *Facebook Messenger (10/19/2018)*

**Emily:** *I just got this narrative from L (a student teacher) about a pregnant student. It's so powerful—and we emailed about supporting girls and how we need to do this more than ever. It's eerie the timing.*

**Monica:** *Truly.*

**Emily:** *I'll share it with you. I want to write about how we support teachers opening feminist spaces.*

**Monica:** *Yes and for preservice teachers too. We need to create hope.*

**Emily:** *I like that too.*

**Monica:** *And to do the work we have to look back . . . And our own histories.*

**Emily:** *Yes it's what brought us to the work!*

**Monica:** *Yup. And I want something about trauma too. Like supporting kids through trauma.*

**Emily:** *Yes!! Because we need to acknowledge how our own trauma is reignited as we deal with students.*

**Monica:** *Yes.*

**Emily:** *And there's some stuff I just read about how teachers take on trauma.*

**Monica:** *Yes. My own trauma helped me to be super good in crisis too as an urban teacher.*

**Emily:** *Me too!!!*

**Monica:** *. . . So many crazy fights I broke up. And also calling child services.*

In this article, we, two feminist teacher educators who are professional colleagues and friends, use our personal correspondence outside of the academy to help explain how we bridge and navigate our authentic whole selves as teacher educators. What began in the early days of the Kavanaugh hearings as two friends with shared language and work trying to make sense of both what we saw happening and our strong, embodied reactions to it, slowly evolved as we began to see spaces for how these conversations might influence our practice, specifically in the formation of what we call “empathetic pedagogy.”

These dialogic narratives break from traditional academic texts and their focus on logic and objectivity, as they are written from intimate voices and include deep emotions, detailed descriptions of personal anecdotes, imagery, and references to art, music, literature and our general reading the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Through examples from our personal daily correspondence (text, messenger, Facebook, and email) during the Kavanaugh hearings, we explore the following questions: How can we push the boundaries of academic writing to write for our authentic selves? What are the spaces where we can do this? How do we bring in real-world experiences of sexism, misogyny, and rage to our academic writing and work as teacher educators? We conclude with some insights into the implications of this collaborative writing for teacher educators committed to disrupting the patriarchy and as Ahmed (2017) writes, “living a feminist life.”

### Blurring the Personal and Professional in a Feminist Friendship

Our friendship may have begun at the university fourteen years ago when we collaboratively designed a teacher leadership program, but it certainly has not remained there. In our work together, we established a friendship, grounded in a shared professional passion, but far beyond traditional work dynamics. Looking back, we now realize that the basis of our success as collaborators in teaching, scholarship, and service centers around three important tenets. First, we actively listen to one another and acknowledge the other’s experience, often by saying “I hear you.”

#### *Facebook Post (7/7/19)*

**Emily:** *You can see Sam [her son] took his final loss REALLY hard. But proud of him for being 39th in the nation for y10 and an all around really amazing year in fencing. Something really switched on for him and it’s so exciting to see him find such joy in this sport. Grateful to his coach who knows just how to support him.*

**Monica:** *Awww but how incredible is that—39th in the nation is amazing!*

**Emily:** *It is! And he fenced so well but his final bout was sooo close—10/9.*

**Monica:** *Ugh—so hard to witness our kids in pain but so important for them to learn how to tolerate loss.*

**Monica:** *But I get it!*

**Emily:** *Super hard but important.*

We do not judge or critique one another. We simply confirm that the other person is not alone in how she is feeling. Gay (2014) describes this principle: “If a friend sends a crazy email needing reassurance about love, life, family, or work, respond accordingly and in a timely manner even if it is just to say, ‘GIRL, I hear you’” (p. 50). Academia is marked by notably few instances of “I hear you”—noted as it is for the ways people are isolated from each other through hierarchical and competitive structures. The nature of tenure and promotion, a focus on individual accomplishment and publications (in many fields), leave little space for sharing what is vulnerable and insecure. There is no room for emotions—or even con-

nections—as the institutional structures and norms push us to stay focused and produce, produce, and produce.

The second principle in our feminist friendship is that we place our personal friendship above our academic achievements and pressures and that means that tending to the relationship is an important part of our everyday lives. We find time to go to the movies, to talk about non-academic work and our out of work lives. We go dancing, see theater together, and share book ideas and lots of meals, we celebrate our children's milestones and inquire about their lives. We remain curious about who the other is outside of work, even as our shared work and passion for what we do is something that continues to pull us together.

Third, we believe in the feminist ethic of care (Ahmed, 2014; Lorde, 1988) and see self-care not as “self-indulgence” but “self-preservation” as “an act of political warfare” (Lorde, 1988, p. 130). For us self-care involves tending to our well-being, our mental, physical, and emotional health. We actively seek to reduce anxiety and stress and live a more balanced and manageable life. We understand that in order to be emotionally and intellectually supportive of our students, we need to come from a grounded and centered position. Self-care manifests in the ways we care for ourselves, each other, our colleagues, and our students. It becomes a kind of resistance within a structure that does actively support doing what nurtures us, so that we might also fight back against those structures. Actively caring for ourselves and others disrupts the structures in the academy which perpetuate individualism and division and focus on constant production (Mounts, Bond, Mansfield, Loyd, Hyndman, Walton-Roberts, Basu, Whitson, Hawkins, Hamilton, & Curran, 2015).

Through our feminist friendship, we have developed an epistemology which helps us to navigate our personal lives and our professional lives at the university. Our feminist epistemology of friendship involves constructing knowledge collaboratively; we both generate ideas individually that are later woven together and we build new concepts jointly. Drawing from women's ways of knowing and feminist pedagogy, we make meaning through caring, connection, cooperation, and collaboration (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Maher & Tetreault, 1994). We recognize that to do this we have to be open to a variety of ways of knowing that at times can be “contradictory, partial, and irreducible” (Ellsworth, 1994, p. 320). In taking up a feminist paradigm of friendship, and valuing our personal relationship interwoven with our professional relationship, we are able to work to destabilize the patriarchal framework of the academy which continually positions us as gendered subjects in hierarchical power structures (Gore, 1993; Ropers-Huilman, 2001). Like Lather (2006) and St. Pierre (2000), we hope to disrupt and destabilize norms, shake things up, and potentially invent new possibilities for our lives as feminist academics.

Our feminist friendship acts as the context for our dialogue. We reject the notion that academic writing is the primary mode for academics to think about and develop ideas. We have found that the informal back and forth, weaving of personal, professional, and artistic ideas and images have been some of the most

powerful sources of inspiration for what we do. Technology and social media have provided a new space for us to feed off the ideas of the other, and our narratives weave between personal and professional subjects seamlessly.

In the following examples, we explore how our personal writing helped connect us to our work in ways that were insightful and emergent. It has supported our growth as teacher educators and the theoretical naming of work we call “empathetic pedagogy,” by which we mean empathy as a way of knowing, learning, and teaching. Each section includes the unfolding events from the Kavanaugh hearing as they were largely reported in the mainstream media, followed by excerpts of our shared writing and sense making through Facebook messenger, text, and email. We end with an extended reflection on how this writing and responses from the other were significant in shaping our thinking and actions and, eventually, our work. Each of us used our empathetic writing to the other to explore how the hearings raised deep issues of trauma and shame, and how those might connect to our work as feminist teacher educators.

### ***Kavanaugh, Dr. Blasey Ford, and the Hearings***

On July 9, 2018, President Trump nominated Brett Kavanaugh for Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States to succeed retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy. At the time, he was a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. From September 4-7, 2018, The Senate Judiciary Committee questioned Judge Kavanaugh and heard witness testimonies concerning his nomination to the Supreme Court. A few days later, as the committee was getting closer to a vote on sending the nomination to the full Senate for approval, Christine Blasey Ford came forward and courageously brought to light that Judge Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her 36 years prior, while they were both in high school in 1982. On September 16th, Blasey Ford’s recounting of the sexual assault was made public in *The Washington Post*.

A professor at Palo Alto University, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford explained to *The Washington Post* that she decided to come forward because she felt her “civic responsibility” began “outweighing [her] anguish and terror about retaliation.” She shared that during a house party in the summer of 1982, when she was 15 and Kavanaugh was 17, Kavanaugh and one of his friends, Mark Judge, pushed her into a bedroom, pinned her down, groped her, and tried to take off her clothes while drunk. She said that when she attempted to scream, Kavanaugh put his hand over her mouth. She remembered that she thought he might kill her and stated, “he was trying to attack me and remove my clothing.” Kavanaugh’s friend then jumped on top of them and knocked them to the ground, enabling Ford to escape. Ford had not told anyone about the incident until 2012, when she was working with a couple’s therapist with her husband. Parts of the therapist’s notes confirm that Ford described being attacked by boys from an elite private school, although she did not

mention them by name. Kavanaugh's immediate response was: "I categorically and unequivocally deny this allegation. I did not do this back in high school or at any time." The Senate Judiciary Committee postponed its vote and invited both Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford to appear at the public hearing ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/california-professor-writer-of-confidential-brett-kavanaugh-letter-speaks-out-about-her-allegation-of-sexual-assault/2018/09/16/46982194-b846-11e8-94eb-3bd52dfe917b\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.bfa992a09f67](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/california-professor-writer-of-confidential-brett-kavanaugh-letter-speaks-out-about-her-allegation-of-sexual-assault/2018/09/16/46982194-b846-11e8-94eb-3bd52dfe917b_story.html?utm_term=.bfa992a09f67)).

### **Facebook Messenger (9/18)**

**Monica:** *My gosh Em—this could have been my high school experience. I went to a co-ed private school in Texas that was a lot like Georgetown Prep. There were lots of parties like the one Blasey Ford described, drunken nights at someone's home with the parents away. The guys were all football players in the popular crowd and they certainly ruled the school. I often wonder how it is that I escaped this circumstance. It may have been because I had a serious boyfriend for most of the time who wasn't in that crowd—but just writing this now makes me upset. Why was my safety in the hands of a man?*

*The truth is I feel like high school and college were all about entering the danger zone with men, in their rooms, in my room, in the park, walking on the street, getting into my car at night, and never knowing if I would actually have control. But men rarely feel this way—they have no idea what it feels like to always be on the lookout for danger. We feel unsafe all of the time.*

**Emily:** *It's intense to think how little oversight there was overall and how many of my friends are nodding their heads right now. We all have a story and we all remember the anxiety so well of having to always be on your guard. Even now I feel it—that I have to make sure I'm always alert and aware. Does it ever go away?*

**Monica:** *But come to think of it, even being with my boyfriend, didn't always feel totally safe. There was always a lot of drinking involved. I remember one night we were at his friend's house and his parents were away—they were always away—and it was just the three of us. We had been drinking—but I remember wondering why I felt so drunk since I had only had one drink. I always wondered if something was put in my drink to make me pass out.*

*I always felt like I was being manipulated by my boyfriend too. He wasn't physically abusive but he was controlling and demanding. I dated him for three years and it was only after we broke up and I had time to tell my mother in more detail about the relationship, that I realized he had many of the characteristics of my abusive biological father.*

**Emily:** *Ugh Mon that's really scary. It's bringing up so much for me about issues of safety and vulnerability—thinking back to my own sexual abuse in high school, how totally unprotected I felt from the adults, but also how much I didn't feel I could even reach out to my peers. We had no language for talking about what happened to us.*

**Monica:** *Why do we always have to feel so incredibly vulnerable? I always tell*

*my students how uncomfortable I feel after my summer doctoral class that gets out at night. I never feel safe parking below our building and walking to my car at night. It is dark back there and I feel nervous about being attacked. Why do we have to feel this way? Why can we never feel safe? Here I am a full professor, who has worked hard to be in this position, and yet I am physically unsafe on my own campus at night. Why is that permissible? And when I have said that to male colleagues, they offer to walk me to my car any time—but why do I have to rely on men for my own safety?*

**Emily:** *Yes and, of course, it's the men who make us unsafe. I was one of the "lucky" ones—in that I got to see my abuser go to jail eventually—even if it wasn't for what he did to me. I think about the level of validation I have gotten from that and how very very few women get it.*

**Monica:** *You know I never talk about it but the more I think about this and the terror I have about being unsafe the more I realize that this fear is deeply lodged in my body and I have been carrying it around feeling like at any moment I could be unsafe or unprotected. I think this is because from the time I was little until about 6, I would watch my father rage at my mother. And there were so many injuries that she felt compelled to cover them up. There was her broken ankle from his kicking her that she told people was from tripping and falling. There was the perforated ear drum that she had because of a smack to the head. She was never able to put her head in the water when swimming because of that one. When my brother was only two years old, my father got tired of his crying and slammed him against the wall and broke his shoulder. We told people that he fell off the bed and even my brother thinks that is what happened to him. On their honeymoon, he was high on valium and driving and they had a horrible car accident. My mother's leg was broken and even more scary was that she had to have a tracheotomy because she couldn't breathe. And those were only the injuries I can remember. I was constantly in fear of who would show up each evening—had he been drinking, was he on downers, uppers, was he loving and kind and cuddly, asking me to lay with him on the floor and watch Alfred Hitchcock or would he be mean and jealous and scary? Just writing this to you makes me feel so sick to my stomach. My heart is racing and I catch myself holding my breath. I remember being that vulnerable little girl, hiding behind the couch or the armchair terrified that one day he would go too far. I became my mother's care-giver too—caring for her in the aftermath—it was almost as if a double layer of fear resides in me, for my mother and then for myself.*

*Thankfully she mustered up the courage to leave him but the truth is that she often doubted her decision and what would become of her life. The trauma and fear stayed with her always even years later when she had re-married my stepfather. She continually worried about keeping him happy—that fear was always in her body and it is in my body too.*

**Emily:** *Oh honey it's just so intense and so much. I think about the level of trauma and how deeply ingrained it is. I think the violence and abuse—and watching this as a child is something that we don't talk enough about at all.*

*Kavanaugh and Other Accusations*

In the interim before the hearing, two other women, Deborah Ramirez and Julie Swetnick, accused Kavanaugh of separate past instances of sexual assault. Deborah Ramirez shared with Ronan Farrow and Jane Mayer of *The New Yorker*, that Kavanaugh waved his penis in front of her face while she was inebriated at a dormitory party during the 1983-1984 academic school year at Yale (<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/senate-democrats-investigate-a-new-allegation-of-sexual-misconduct-from-the-supreme-court-nominee-brett-kavanaughs-college-years-deborah-ramirez>). Kavanaugh's response was:

This alleged event from 35 years ago did not happen. The people who knew me then know that this did not happen, and have said so. This is a smear, plain and simple. I look forward to testifying on Thursday about the truth, and defending my good name — and the reputation for character and integrity I have spent a lifetime building — against these last-minute allegations. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/need-know-allegations-made-new-yorker-article-judge-brett-kavanaugh/>)

Prior to the hearing, Kavanaugh submitted his 1982 calendar as a way to dispute Ford's timeline (<https://www.axios.com/read-brett-kavanaugh-summer-1982-calendar-b9997863-0edb-4ddc-89f7-d17f328617b9.html>). Later that day, Julie Swetnick, through her attorney, released a sworn declaration that Kavanaugh targeted girls for sexual assault. She recounted that Kavanaugh and his friends would spike drinks with drugs to make girls more vulnerable to sexual assault. She also said Kavanaugh was present when she was gang raped at a party. She said: "They would line up outside rooms at many of these parties waiting for their 'turn' with a girl inside the room" (<https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/26/michael-avenatti-identifies-kavanaugh-accuser-as-julie-swetnick.html>). Kavanaugh denied the allegations.

*Facebook Messenger (9/25/19)*

**Emily:** *I remember going to the police station up near Barnard my sophomore year, after my friend called me to say she and another girl were trying to press charges against our dance coach. Did I have a story as well? Would I be willing to file a police report? We were still within the statute of limitations and they were finding more and more girls who had been abused. I walked myself over, alone, and gave a statement. I took a copy of it home and was told they would send it to the district attorney in Virginia where charges were being filed. I didn't find out until almost 25 years later that it never arrived.*

**Monica:** *Wait. . . I don't think I realized this Emily. That's completely insane. Did you give testimony later? That was such a horrible misstep. What happened next?*

**Emily:** *My friend just assumed I wasn't ready. Even though I was later able to give written testimony at his parole hearings, I was wrecked thinking about how much courage it had taken at 19 to go to the police. And what happened? I have*

*no idea. I think all the time about the disbelief of women and their stories and how not believing changes our lives, and affects the justice system. Tiny little things like this add up to decades of injustice.*

**Monica:** *How many women and especially young women muster up the courage to go the police only to have their testimony lost, to be treated disrespectfully, or worst of all to have their testimony received with disbelief? I feel like as women our stories, our truths are never accepted, no matter how violent or ugly. I think the hearings have really set me over the edge in terms of what I will or won't put up with and even so I feel shame when I tell stories about my own experiences.*

Interspersed with our direct comments about the hearing emerged thinking about women and women's anger and how we connected that to our work. We began to see our work as teacher educators in light of the anger and discrimination at work in the hearings, informed by the literature we were reading (in the case below Traister's 2018 book *Good and Mad* which Emily had started reading).

**Monica:** *Oh and my crown fell out again.*

**Emily:** *Omg Mon . . . That feels insanely symbolic somehow.*

**Monica:** *It's like always the final straw for me—the embodied reminder of the torture.*

**Emily:** *I know. . . So are you going to go back to your awful dentist guy? Ugh. It's so hard.*

**Monica:** *I have to. No one will work on this. It sucks. I am fucking bound to him. I cannot escape him and he continues to terrorize me.*

**Emily:** *I know. . . It sucks. I was just reading this part of Traister about the men we are bound to because we need them for something—and how complex that is. I was thinking about so many versions of this in my life!*

**Monica:** *Omg, I need to keep reading to get to that chapter.*

**Emily:** *She writes:*

*We love them. We also often need them: to be our colleagues and family members and boyfriends and buddies, to help us raise our kids, to bring home paychecks on which we subsist. Because they have so much more professional and economic power, men are very often our bosses, our mentors. . . Because white men have had such disproportionate political power, it is often they on whom women—feminists, left activists—rely on a larger scale: as representatives, advocates, party leaders; to challenge them is to potentially imperil a whole political party, and with it crucial protections, advocacy, an ideological agenda itself. Of course it is precisely this reality—once again, this dependence—that has permitted powerful men to mistreat and discriminate against those with less power. It is also what has often kept women paralyzed—by fear, risk, love, loyalty—and reluctant to push back angrily against their own ill treatment, or in response to the ill treatment of other women. The*



*potential for damage to relationships on which women depend is real: consequences may be both emotional and material. Women's challenge to male authority of power abuse can send a family into a disarray, end a marriage, provoke a firing . . . It is so much more peaceful to not get mad, to not even think about the gross injustices that pepper our daily interactions with me. . ."* (Traister, 2018, pp. 144-145)

**Monica:** *Word!*

**Emily:** *I just am thinking so much about how women make up teaching—they are so conservative—so bought into the power systems. So reliant on men in many ways. And so what does teacher ed look like that tries to push back on this for women?*

**Monica:** *Yup and how schools are structured with male admins.*

**Emily:** *Yes!*

**Monica:** *And teacher education programs perpetuate the patriarchal structure.*

**Emily:** *It really does and I feel like she has a useful lens for thinking about this.*

**Monica:** *Even if women are in positions of power . . .*

**Emily:** *Also how our anger becomes revolutionary, and challenges the structures—it's important for students to see and know us as angry.*

**Monica:** *Like creativity and anything other than the machine is seen as disruptive.*

**Emily:** *It is disruptive—it doesn't reassert the traditional norms and power structures. Feelings, the body, all that stuff—not okay. It's why it's so impossible to move to constructivist teaching and learning.*

**Monica:** *Yes!*

### ***Text (9/20/18)***

As we continued to hear more and more details about Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford, Emily began to think about sharing her story through her social media networks. Although for years she has been honest about her abuse with friends and partners and speaking at *Take Back the Night* in college, it had been many years since she spoke publicly about what happened to her. She was aware her feed was filled with professional colleagues and former students, as well as parents of her son's friends, and even her husband's former boss. She worried about the fallout for others and turned to Monica to think through the implications and possibilities.

**Emily:** *Ok so I'm thinking about sharing publicly for the first time about my dance coach and the sexual abuse. On Facebook. I'm really scared.*

**Monica:** *I cannot even imagine how terrifying this could be for you but I also understand why you are considering doing it. Blasey Ford is a role model to us all. Her courage is encouraging others to do the same.*

**Emily:** *I just keep thinking that if she can do this in front of the entire world, certainly I can make a step forward as well. It feels important, but I'm not sure why. Maybe because I'm an academic in as safe a position professionally and personally as I can be in. If it's terrifying to me, imagine what it is for others? I feel like people will take me seriously, that people who know me will believe me and that might open spaces to believe other women.*

**Monica:** *Yes indeed. You have a platform, a position of authority, some sort of power from which you can speak and others or at least some people will listen.*

**Emily:** *I mean in our work we talk about social justice all the time. Isn't this part of my responsibility—giving voice, telling my story, when there are so many women who can't? Ugh. I dunno. I worry about the fallout—like parents of Sam's friends who know me.*

**Monica:** *But your bravery is also important for Sam—to see what it looks like for women to speak truth to power. We talk about that all the time but you sharing your own story is really walking the talk.*

After a lot of debrief and support from Monica, on September 21, 2018, Emily would finally share the following post on Facebook (September 21, 2008).

*I understand it is very hard to understand the experience of a teen who has been sexually abused or assaulted. I can barely understand it myself—let me say that I too was 15. It was 3 years until I told someone, 5 years before I went to the police. Even then I only did because other women I loved came to me and asked me if I too had gone through what they went through—had nobody else come forward I don't think I ever would have sought legal recourse. Even then when I went to the police I would find out years later my statement never made it to the Virginia DA (although I have a copy of it). The DA would eventually decide not to prosecute because the testimony of at least five girls was not enough. Later this man would go to jail for years. I was "lucky" and it only took maybe 20 girls. . . We told adults. Nobody believed us. Or none of the right people. And let me say in the years I didn't speak of this it was a struggle to breathe, to get up every day, to keep from drowning in shame and terror. I was afraid to write about it in my journal. The fact that I have spoken of it so much is a testament to the power of the women and men who supported me- themselves children. You can't imagine the psychological and emotional damage of a statement like the President's today. Edited to say: Most people wouldn't know it but I actually don't share a lot of very real stuff on fb. But I think it's time. When the most powerful person in the nation says that it "can't be that bad" if people don't come forward then it is incumbent upon us all to push back against this insanely inaccurate and harmful narrative. #ibelievechristine #dearchristine #whyididntreport*

### ***Kavanaugh, Dr. Blasey Ford, and the Hearings***

On September 27, Both Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford testified before the Committee. Blasey Ford was first to give testimony. Blasey Ford presented as calm,

professional, and composed. Asked what is the strongest memory she has of the incident, she said “Indelible, in the hippocampus is the laughter. The uproarious laughter between the two [Kavanaugh and Judge] . . . and they’re having fun at my expense.” Asked what she has not forgotten about the night of the incident, Blasey Ford responded, “The stairwell, the living room, the bedroom . . . the bed on the right side of the room. The bathroom in close proximity, the laughter — the nefarious laughter. And the multiple attempts to escape and the final ability to do so.” Ford also described the lasting impact of the attack, especially how he held his hand over her mouth: “Brett’s assault on me drastically altered my life” (<https://www.cbsnews.com/live-news/brett-kavanaugh-hearing-confirmation-today-christine-blasey-ford-sexual-assault-allegations-live/>).

Five hours later, Kavanaugh gave testimony. Angry, emotional, and red faced, he began: “My family and my name have been totally and permanently destroyed.” Kavanaugh said in his opening remarks. “This confirmation process has become a national disgrace . . . you have replaced advice and consent with search and destroy” (<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/09/brett-kavanaugh-opening-statement-christine-blasey-ford.html>). When asked what number he considers as “too many beers,” Kavanaugh said the figure is whatever “the chart” defines as too many. He repeatedly stated he had never drunk to the point of “blacking out” while in high school.

We were struck by how Kavanaugh’s rage, which seemed both terrifying and ridiculous to us, somehow failed to discredit his statements. Instead it seemed to garner him support. We were struck by the number of times we have been told professionally to be “calmer” and “less emotional” or “less hysterical.” We were continually reminded that showing emotion is a weakness. But, of course, for Kavanaugh it is a compelling force to encourage empathy. We were reminded by Brene Brown “Empathy fuels connection. Sympathy drives disconnection” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>). We looked at Blasey Ford and felt empathy, but we were aware that many see her and experience disconnection—a “not me.” We wondered about how to engender empathy rather than sympathy, particularly in our work with future teachers.

### ***Facebook Post (9/27/2018)***

As the fallout from the testimony intensified with growing male support for Kavanaugh, Emily wrote a second Facebook post about her own experience:

*When I was 19 and two women called me to say they were bringing charges against my dance coach and did I have anything to add, I immediately went home to tell my father about my abuse and that I was going to go to the police even though it was 4 years later. I will never forget what he said: “It’s a bump in the road and if you stop you will never start again. I don’t support you going to the police and I think you should forget it.” Nobody knows better than a man what men think about women coming forward. Listening to these men falling all over themselves telling*

*this smug man how sorry they are for him reminds me of the men who failed me.*

**Monica:** *Your post stuck with me all night. Rereading it this morning I also think about the fear that caused your father to react that way. Not excusing him in any but was just thinking about all of the men yesterday and beyond allowing fear to stop them from protecting their loved ones or confronting an abuser. Women seem much more capable of being vulnerable in the face of fear and using their anger to protect and to fight for what is right.*

**Emily:** *Yes I think that's right 100%. It's interesting how much more compassion I have now as a parent too than I did then—the strong need for your kid's life to be “great”—how that can overwhelm what they tell you even. I think my dad REALLY needed my life to be great (which it is and it was—just complex). And I think if I had told him at the time he would have gone down and killed him. Part of this reaction was that to him by then it seemed “too late.”*

**Monica:** *Totally—like you fail somehow at parenting if their lives are not perfect. And the visceral reaction of just closing the door to an idea—and how as young as 19 you knew to take matters in your own hands- the resilience and strength is really incredible. The temporality is also so complex.*

**Emily:** *It's SO complex. I think for him also and his own trauma in life—when things were bad you just doubled down on making your life good. That was his revenge and it had worked for him. And you know now I can admit that in some ways maybe he was right. In some ways, I did put it behind me and move on and kept going and I didn't get “stuck.” So it's so complex to me now.*

**Monica:** *Absolutely—he was using his own survival/coping mechanisms—some of which you took up—but you need additional—I totally can relate in terms of my mom's reactions to my father's abuse- sweeping it under the rug was easier for her—but I always wondered at what cost to her body?*

**Emily:** *I think that's right. I think the cost to my body has been profound.*

On September 28, the nomination was forwarded to the full Senate on an 11–10 vote. Then, on October 6, following an additional FBI investigation into the allegations, the Senate voted 50–48 to confirm Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court.

## Commentary

As we wrote over those several weeks, we wondered how our dialogic interactions could speak back to the patriarchy and legitimize emotions as a way of knowing. How could our own personal experiences as women inform our work as teacher educators? What could academic writing look like if it broke away from the traditions of the dominance of the mind and included emotions and subjectivity? How could bringing our whole selves into our writing help us to leverage our personal experiences as part of our curriculum and scholarship as teacher educators?

*Triggering Trauma*

For both of us, the early revelations by Dr. Blasey Ford triggered deep and painful memories that seemed highly aligned to the stories from the media. Our writing began to serve as a way both to journal and document, but also to provide empathy for the other, and be curious about the other's experiences as well as our own. It was a safe space for dialogue as we felt constantly barraged on social media by insensitive commentary about violence and abuse, often from people we knew and cared about. This experience of sharing, curiosity, and empathy for and from the other, seemed primary to us as we thought about how we might also engage in ways to bring our experiences to our work as teacher educators. What would it mean to bring our whole selves into the classroom? Would it be appropriate for us to share our own experiences of violence and abuse with our students? For years we had been discussing how our student teachers might face their students' trauma in the classroom, but we had read very little about what it might look like for us as trauma survivors to help support preservice teachers in navigating student trauma. Suddenly we found ourselves confronted with this as we worked with our student teachers this past fall, thinking about how our own trauma influenced our interactions with our students and how they, as student teachers, might have the same struggles. What triggered them? How did their reactions sometimes arise instinctually based on unexamined trauma? How could our own traumatic experiences provide an entree for thinking about how to support students? How do they limit us if they remain unexamined?

For example, when Emily went to observe two talented male physical education teachers and noticed that they called only on the boys in the class, her reaction was strong and angry—almost visceral. Worried that she might be overly sensitive to their actions, she texted with Monica to think through how to raise the issues. Hearing an empathetic response and making connections to how Kavanaugh was raising issues about how women are treated in society, she was able to find an appropriate angle when she debriefed with them. The narratives around the hearings pushed us to think about how the patriarchy continually dictates how women—and especially young women—are encountered in public spaces like schools. Examining our personal responses and dialoguing privately increased our confidence in calling out these societal practices with our students.

*Pervasiveness of Abuse and Complicity*

We were struck by the degree to which everyone we know seems to have such a story. Later Solnit (2019) would write, "But in so many cases rapists have help in the moment and forever after, and the help is often so powerful, broad, and deep—well, that's why we call it rape culture, and that's why changing it means changing the whole culture. Sometimes it's the family, community, church, campus looking the other way; sometimes it's the criminal justice system." (<https://lithub.com>)

com/in-patriarchy-no-one-can-hear-you-scream-rebecca-solnit-on-jeffrey-epstein-and-the-silencing-machine/?fbclid=IwAR2b6N2KqQ9aSPyHfH5JDzMd8sTf-nmJs2JAUZWJQjJx3CZVZd3Buyq8Y0WQ). We are deeply aware both of: (a) How these systems perpetuated our own abuse and abuse of women we know; and (b) That we are part of a system both at a university and in schools that, is one of those cultures, that is powerful and broad and deep in its protection of rape and abuse. What is our responsibility as feminist teacher educators in disrupting these systems?

As we continued our dialogue, often through multiple media (messenger, text, email), we began to consider how our own work and positions in teacher education at the university contribute to a society that privileges certain ways of being and knowing that are highly hierarchical, disembodied, and rational. We reflected on how we have been complicit in perpetuating oppressive systems that purposely disconnect the body from the mind. We thought about the many instances when we have suppressed our anger, sadness, fear, and frustration in meetings, examining university and credentialing policies, and in interactions with our colleagues, students, and even school and community partners. We realized that our success in the academy is in part because we have taken up the constant demand for immediate production, rather than a slower more thoughtful kind of scholarship and pedagogy. We have actively sought to develop different, slower research and writing habits that disrupt these traditional ways of being in the academy. We also wondered about the physical and emotional toil that this continual clampdown has taken on our bodies and our minds.

### *Moving from the Private to the Public*

For both of us, after years of private grappling with a history of violence and abuse, we felt we wanted to move beyond the private to a more public space of sharing and reflection, no matter how scary it felt. Although we had mulled over our narratives over and over again, some of the details have never been shared publicly. Having the support of one another helped us to find courage to speak out, giving voice to our experiences, a kind of initial step in social justice, activism work. This process of going public alongside one another also began to influence the ways in which we engage with our students as well as what we are willing to share with them. Our dialogic empathy to one another encouraged us to think through the best ways to share some of our stories with our students.

Finding ways to go “public” about our own experiences of abuse and trauma required ongoing dialogue and support that we were able to offer each other. The private writing was where we both thought through the consequences we might encounter personally, professionally, and emotionally in sharing our stories. The public sharing became a key piece for our emerging thinking about how these experiences influenced our work. We were struck by how empowering it was to both provide and receive empathy, how that empathy helped us to go deeper in understanding of others and ourselves. If we could understand the experience of another’s trauma, could we not, in fact, better understand ourselves?

*Empathy as a Way of Knowing*

I understand—I've been there.  
That's happened to me too.  
It's OK, you're normal.  
I understand what that's like. (Brown, 2007)

As we mulled over instances of childhood shame, we began to talk about how shame has permeated our professional lives; we have reflected on the many ways we experience shame and shame ourselves in academic work. We realize that we are particularly vulnerable to shame because as Brown (2012) writes, “Shame derives its power from being unspeakable. That’s why it loves perfectionists—it’s so easy to keep us quiet” (p. 58). Most recently Emily caught herself apologizing to a colleague for “only” submitting a single proposal for a national conference (despite over 17 years of multiple conference presentations there and now being a full professor). We have both experienced self-shaming for taking personal time, setting boundaries, and saying no. But as Brown (2012) reminds us, “empathy is the antidote to shame” (p. 74). Our friendship, developed as a means to counter traditional academic isolation, has allowed us to navigate our own shame through empathy. She (2012) writes, “If we cultivate enough awareness about shame to name it and speak to it, we’ve basically cut it off at its knees. . . . If we speak shame, it begins to wither” (p. 58). For example, we both work hard to validate the other’s needs and boundaries - pushing the other to shut off email during a vacation, not do ANY WORK AT ALL, knowing that the granting of permission for a trusted outsider/insider can often help with the experience of shame. Our experiences of professional and personal empathy (where each are not necessarily separate from the other), helped us to reflect, learn, and then act.

*Embodied Empathetic Pedagogy*

These insights have encouraged us to collaboratively design empathetic teaching practices, over the last few years, and especially in response to the Trump administration, that focus on the body and in particular our emotions as a way of knowing in the classroom. We have begun to incorporate embodied activities in our preservice teacher education courses to help our students to access their emotions and use them as a vehicle to understand their students and build authentic relationships with them, and create a learning environment that is both inclusive and safe, as well as a place for risk-taking. For example, during fall 2016, Monica noted that several of her male student teachers were struggling with the emotional challenges of teaching. They described their surprise at being so overwhelmed with their feelings of sadness, anger, and frustration and their worry about how to manage their emotions. Recognizing that they needed some way to explore these feelings, Monica modified a “Theatre of the Oppressed” activity which asked them to work in pairs having one person as pilot who described in detail how they felt

in their bodies during an emotional incident in the classroom and the other person as actor who created a mirrored image of what they heard. Seeing a mirror of their feelings provided a way to gain some new insights and also think through how those feelings could be used. Several of the student teachers shared examples of feeling angry and Monica talked about the purposes of anger, of mainly to defend something that is important to you, and so they talked about how to use anger in a productive way rather than explode or blow up. In general, inviting students to focus on their feelings seem to offer them a new way of knowing. In their culminating reflections, one student said that he felt like he had “gotten more in touch with feelings” while another student said that “it’s important not to repress your feelings.” They also commented about how the activity made them think of their own students’ emotional experiences. Finally, one student reflected:

I could not remember names, grade levels, or classroom teachers of many students. I was, however, able to recall my feelings towards them. Although I could not remember the exact interaction I had with a student in class, each interaction left an impression on me. When I saw a student in the hallway, in class, or on lunch duty, I felt in my body if that student was shy, friendly, antagonistic, good humored, etc.

We knew that both honoring our bodies, using our feelings as a way to make meaning, had been profound for us in finding voice and action; why, then, would we not find deliberate ways to use that kind of knowing to support our students’ growth and reflection?

### Conclusion

To illustrate how our past and present personal lives impact our teaching, this piece describes our visceral, embodied reactions precipitated by the historic testimony by Dr. Blasey Ford during the Kavanaugh hearings. Our dialogic space enabled us to surface years of experiences of sexual trauma, physical abuse, and microaggressions. Over the course of the hearings and the media debate, we explored our own experiences of trauma, writing to one another throughout the day and over the course of weeks, using a variety of mediums, sometimes in fragments, thinking out loud about all the ways we have become ourselves in relation to these traumas. Although we had both spoken of these incidents before in our private lives, it was within this safe, dialogic, informal context that we both began to feel empowered to be more publicly outspoken about our emotional selves in personal and professional contexts. Interwoven with our memories of rage, shame, sadness, and frustration, we examined how these experiences were shaped by our relationships with our family, and specifically our parents. We shared our experiences of being daughters, of having lost our mothers and fathers, of our anger but growing understanding of how their own limitations influenced their ability to help us through trauma.

Although initially this dialogue emerged organically as a survival mechanism to withstand the political climate, we soon began to realize that empathetically



writing to one another consistently in these immediate and informal ways provided us with a means to craft what Zembylas (2007) calls “trauma stories” which have the potential to “create a social and political space in which victims can reconstruct memory and may heal or perpetuate their pain” (p. 209). Sharing our stories to one another in these immediate and informal contexts, no matter how different the stories were, helped us to construct an empathetic space where we experienced “emotional resonance” (Zembylas, 2007, p. 216) and no longer felt alone. It was in these exchanges that we began to nurture the strength to consider how telling our own traumatic experiences could help our preservice teachers to examine their own narratives of trauma, abuse, and microaggressions.

Our personal curiosity, empathy, exploration and grappling with trauma, and public sharing about our experiences were also interwoven with reflections about how this might influence our work as teacher educators. None of this happened linearly, but emerged throughout our dialogue and struggle to give voice to our experiences. Our personal correspondence is a space for us to reveal our authentic selves, be vulnerable, and where we can theorize about the work we are doing in a feminist way—emerging from the lived experience. Throughout the past year we have grown in our conviction that our best work is that which speaks to the deeply held beliefs and passions that inspire us, and we have recently begun work to create an institute that will help further our work in teaching, the arts, and social justice. What began as dialogue, emerging from friendship, has become a means to break the boundaries of traditional academic work, the roots of new ways of being in our careers and selves. We are “living a feminist life” (Ahmed, 2017).

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## Cupcakes, White Rage, and the Epistemology of Antiracism

Benjamin Blaisdell

### Abstract

This article reveals how white rage and antiracism—often in the form of disdain for Black joy—surfaced at Pride Elementary, a racially integrated school in the urban center of a small city in the southeastern United States. Based on a 5-year ethnographic study, it analyzes the perceived threat some white teachers and parents felt by the mere presence of Black students, teachers, and administrators. It highlights the insights of the Black principal, whose experiences most clearly illustrate how school-based racism is rooted not only in white supremacy but also antiracism, thus supporting Dumas' (2016) assertion that school-based research on race must better address antiracism.

### Introduction

In *White Rage* (2017), Anderson explains how white America has continuously used a “formidable array of policy assaults and legal contortions” (p. 4) to limit and dismantle the rights and successes that Black people have achieved. Anderson explains, “The trigger for white rage, inevitably, is Black advancement” (p. 3). In other words, white rage is rooted in antiracism. Antiracism is “an embodied lived experience of social suffering and resistance. . . in which the Black is a despised thing-in-itself (but not person for herself or himself) in opposition to all that is pure, human(e), and White” (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 416-7). Therefore, I identify white rage as an emotional response by white people that is triggered when “the Black,”

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to use Dumas' framing of the term, is displayed, performed, or presented positively.<sup>1</sup> When Black people engage in freedom of movement, voice, or expression, it can disrupt white people's sense of blackness as something to be despised. From this disruption, white people experience feelings of disgust (Matias, 2016) and react by lashing out against blackness. This reaction of white rage may be individual but is also legitimated, carried out, and reinforced by institutional structures.

In this article, I illustrate how white rage and antiblackness surfaced at Pride Elementary, a school in a small southeastern U.S. city, where I have conducted a 5-year collaborative research project utilizing critical race theory (CRT). CRT is a scholarly tradition and framework that employs several key tenets—e.g., racial realism (Bell 1992; 2008), centering the perspectives of people of color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005), and counterstory and revisionist narrative (Cook & Dixson, 2013)—to examine how racism is a foundational, embedded cultural system in U.S. society and institutions like schools (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). I specifically highlight the insights from my work with the principal, Sandra, a Black woman. As part of a larger project at the school (Blaisdell, 2017, 2018a, 2018b), Sandra and I engaged collaboratively in CRT's analysis of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993; Vaught & Castagno, 2008) and the racialization of space (Calmore, 1995; Mills, 1997; Blaisdell, 2016a). These constructs helped us uncover and challenge how white supremacy surfaced in daily school practice. White supremacy is a cultural system in which, in both explicit and implicit ways, notions of superiority and inferiority are daily reproduced and employed so as to afford white people special rights and resources while simultaneously restricting rights and resources from of people of color (Allen, 2004; Ansley, 1997; Leonardo, 2004).

One benefit of focusing on white supremacy is that it has helped faculty of color and their more racially literate white colleagues feel more positive about working at the school, in part because they developed collective counternarratives to center the voices of faculty of color and to resist discourses and practices that functioned to maintain white superiority (see Blaisdell, 2018a, 2018b). However, as I have reexamined my work with Sandra, it has become apparent that an analysis of white supremacy alone is not sufficient to explain racism and white rage at Pride. Dumas (2016) argues, “a theorization of antiblackness allows one to more precisely identify and respond to racism in education discourse” (12). I similarly argue that an increased analysis of antiblackness is essential to more effectively engage in racial equity work at schools like Pride.

In the next sections, I use racial spaces analysis to explain the how white rage is rooted not only in white supremacy but also antiblackness. I offer up the concept of the epistemology of antiblackness, a framework we as whites<sup>2</sup> use to justify the hyper-surveillance and hyper-punishment (Annamma, 2017) of people of color, and in cases like Pride, of Black people in particular. I then use Sandra's insights to show how this epistemology functioned at Pride and also how antiblackness became institutionalized by the school and district, in essence empowering white rage. I

end by discussing the implications of engaging in an analysis of antiracism for school leaders and researchers who are attempting to address racism in schools. In those implications, I focus on the need for making space for Black joy, which Bettina Love (2019) describes as, “a celebration of taking back your identity as a person of color and signaling to the world that your darkness is what makes you strong and beautiful” (p. 120).

### White Supremacy in Racial Spaces

Racial spaces are those in which white supremacy secures white people’s property rights, including the right to whiteness itself as a form of property (Harris, 1993; Blaisdell, 2016a). U.S. public schools become racial spaces via a variety of curricular, instructional, disciplinary, and social practices (Richards, 2017; Lewis, 2003; Lleras & Rangel, 2009; Skiba et al., 2011; Tyson, 2011). These practices invest more valuable curricular and instructional resources in white students and divest them from students of color. However, the racial aspect of these practices becomes hidden because they are normalized via the white spatial imaginary, which is way of viewing the world that “idealizes ‘pure’ and homogenous spaces, controlled environments, and predictable patterns of design and behavior” (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 39). These idealized spaces are based in white notions of superiority, but the white racial imaginary also denies those underlying white supremacist roots. In other words, the white spatial imaginary de-races space, promoting discourses of whiteness that rely on colorblindness to frame any racial disparity as an individual rather than structural issue (Allen, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2014). In fact, school-based practices that perpetuate racial disparity become normalized to such an extent that to imagine or enact access to curriculum and instruction in any other way is perceived of as impossible and to even violate the underlying norms of school space, norms which establish current spatial practices as sacrosanct (Lefebvre, 1991).

Focusing on the role of white supremacy in the daily reproduction of schools as racial spaces helps to examine how spatial relations are not a given but rather that space is produced (Rodriguez, 2013). This analysis can be used to uncover and then disrupt the specific discourses and practices that are complicit in the racial, spatial production process. For example, at Pride we used whiteness as property to examine how teachers allowed white students to resist teachers’ enforcement of classroom rules and how teachers gave white students more voice in the classroom (even in interactive, racially desegregated group work) and greater access to curriculum and tasks involving higher-order thinking. A focus on white supremacy also helped us counteract the white discourse that some white teachers used to disrupt our efforts to reform these practices.<sup>3</sup> Living up to the research goals of CRT, our analysis helped us critically examine and intervene in the manifestations of white supremacy in education (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

An analysis of white supremacy alone, however, is not sufficient to tell the story

of racism as schools like *Pride* because whiteness is only one part of the construction of racialized space. White supremacy by itself does not explain how white people can be threatened by the mere presence of blackness. White supremacy alone does not answer questions about why a white teacher would want to punish a Black child for showing happiness, reprimand a Black teacher for interacting positively with Black children, or criticize a Black principal for showing friendliness to a Black teacher, all examples from *Pride*. To answer those kinds of questions, an analysis of antiblackness is needed.

### White Rage and the Disdain for Blackness

powell (2000) explains, “Whiteness not only has a relationship to Blackness; this relationship is both hierarchical and oppositional” (430). That is to say, whiteness does not exist without the concept of blackness (Yancy, 2017), and therefore notions of white supremacy do not exist without the disdain for blackness. The disdain for blackness is inherently connected to slavery. Sexton (2010) explains that slavery in the U.S. subjugated Black people not just to the rule of their slave owners but to the entire country’s population. The legacy of connecting Black people to slavery persists in the white racial imaginary and has set up a racial contract in the U.S. where to be Black is to be inherently linked the status of slave and, thus, sub-person status (Mills, 1997). Under the racial contract, as the slave is ontologically not fully a person, by default Black people—who are eternally linked to slave status—are not afforded full person status. Blackness, therefore, becomes a marker of the antithesis to personhood and citizenship. As Dumas explains, “Antiblackness marks an irreconcilability between the Black and any sense of social or cultural regard” (Dumas, 2016, p. 13).

In terms of how ontological antiblackness relates to racialized space, in the white spatial imaginary blackness is the antithesis to idealized social space (Lipsitz, 2011). These spaces must be protected from Black bodies, which are perceived of as inherently criminal and thus hyper-marked (Yancy, 2017). At the same time, the oppressive nature of racialized spaces is hidden. They are constructed via processes that on the surface establish order and ease of daily operations but are actually impositions of power (Soja, 2010), and in racialized school spaces the power of white supremacy governs the laws of interaction, movement, voice, and expression (Blaisdell, 2016a). “Yet, because whiteness rarely speaks its name or admits to its advantages, it requires construction of a devalued and even demonized blackness to be credible and legitimate” (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 37). In other words, because white supremacy does not exist without antiblackness, racialized space is inherently governed as much by antiblackness. Furthermore, just as spatial discourses about order and organization hide the underlying white supremacy of spatial construction, so too they hide the underlying antiblackness that governs racialized space.

The mere presence of blackness in racialized space is a potential threat to the perceived sanctity and purity of that space. Whites may react to the violation

of that purity with disgust. Whites feel disgust and shame when our complicity in white supremacy is brought to light (Thandeka, 1999; Levine-Rasky, 2000). Blackness reminds us of that complicity. Whites feel disgust, however, not only because of our complicity in white supremacy but also because our ontological disdain for blackness. Under the racial contract, for whiteness to exist, blackness needs to exist. Specifically, for whiteness to exist as a positive, blackness needs to exist as a negative (powell, 2000; Yancy 2017). As Black bodies are already marked as criminal, Black people do not even have to do anything to be seen with disgust; the mere presence of blackness is enough of a threat. “Disgust is then radicalized and organizes social and bodily space, creating powerful boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (e.g., Whites and non-Whites); thus, disgust comes to signify the danger of proximity with *them* (non-Whites), because *they* threaten to violate *our* space and *our* purity” (Matias, 2016, p. 27). It is this disgust that can cause us to respond with white rage, an emotional response where we seek to return blackness to its sub-person status.

### An Epistemology of Antiblackness

To deal with the disgust that stems from the reality we have created, whites often employ an epistemology of ignorance (Mills, 1997) with which we seek to deny systemic racism despite all of the facts that show the salience of race. We use this epistemology of ignorance to sustain social structures that specifically benefit us as white people while simultaneously maintaining a positive feeling about our white identity. However, we as whites sustain and employ an epistemology that not only dysconsciously upholds our own white superiority but that also actively disdains Black sub-person status/inferiority.

In other words, we as whites maintain what I call an epistemology of anti-blackness, a way of pursuing knowledge in which we seek justification for viewing blackness as negative. When blackness is exhibited in a positive way—e.g., Black people freely enjoying a barbecue (Levin, 2018), waiting for a friend in a café (Miller, 2018), or taking a nap in a student lounge (Wootson, 2018)—white people can perceive a threat to what we believe is the inherent positivity of our whiteness. In terms of supremacy, these examples show how Black people existing freely in racialized space can be perceived of as a threat to our white status property—they are taking advantage of a right perceived to be reserved for white people. However, it is not just our notion of white supremacy being threatened. It is also our epistemology of antiblackness. Because whiteness frames blackness as ontologically negative, when blackness is exhibited in a positive way, our white rage is triggered. There is no actual material threat to our whiteness in Black people cooking outdoors, sitting in a public place, or taking a nap. However, because we believe blackness is something that is inherently a problem (Yancy, 2017), its positive expression causes us to feel disgust. This disgust triggers white rage, or the open disdain for Black success, freedom, or joy. Black joy, in particular, is a target of white rage

because Black expression exists performatively as the antithesis of whiteness (Johnson, 2015). It is the free expression of people of color thriving in spite of the of messages of inferiority sent by white society (Love, 2019). When this expression of joy occurs in racialized space, white people can find it particularly disruptive. We then employ white rage and engage the epistemology of antiblackness—which allows us to “distort” the Black body as inferior, criminal, and dangerous (Yancy, 2017, p. 59)—to justify that rage.

### Antiblackness in School Policy, Practice, and Discourse

Executing antiblackness via white rage is not just a matter of individual white people disdain blackness. It is a matter of an epistemological and ontological disdain which carries with it the power of our social structure. In fact, those individual instances of antiblackness are powerful because they have institutional reinforcement. That is no more true than in the U.S. education system. “One exemplary site through which anti-black racism organizes policies, outcomes and social relationships is the U.S. public education system, including its culture of discipline and punishment” (Wun, 2016, p. 738). Schools hyper-surveil students of color—anticipating them to be a problem and to misbehave before they actually do anything—and then hyper-punish them—enacting more frequent and stricter punishments for the same behaviors white students exhibit (Annamma, 2017). In fact, because Black bodies are seen as inherently criminal, Black students do not even have to do anything wrong to be hyper-surveilled: “...the Black body is condemned before it even acts; it has always already committed a crime” (Yancy, 2017; p. xxxv).

Analyzing antiblackness helps us better understand educational policies and practices like the disproportionate disciplining of students of color—which especially impacts Black students (Skiba et al., 2011)—because it can help us focus how those policies and practices are structured into the institution of education over time. Disproportionate discipline is often seen as the result of implicit bias. While analyzing implicit bias can be useful, it does not account for how that bias is constructed over time via racial and racist discourses, discourses that themselves continue to construct blackness as negative (Brown, 2018; Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Sung & Allen-Handy, 2019). In other words, the focus on implicit bias does not necessarily account for the for the structural antiblackness that governs school spaces.

...deeply and inextricably embedded within racialized policy discourses is not merely a general and generalizable concern about disproportionality or inequality, but also, fundamentally and quite specifically, a concern with the bodies of Black people, the signification of (their) blackness, and the threat posed by the Black to the educational well-being of other students. (Dumas, 2016, p. 12)

The presence of Black people in white school spaces are seen as a threat simply for being Black. Dumas (2016) goes on to explain, “it is important for educators



to acknowledge that antiracism infects educators' work in schools, and serves as a form of (everyday) violence against Black children and their families" (p. 17). So, just as white supremacy is reified through daily, taken-for-granted school practices, so too is antiracism. Furthermore, antiracism operates as a form of violence not only against Black students but Black teachers and administrators as well (e.g., see Kohli, 2018).

This is not to say that Black people are the only targets of racism in U.S. society or schools. It means, rather, that we cannot fully understand the comprehensive, systemic nature of racism without attending to antiracism. "Black existence does not represent the total reality of the racial formation—it is not the beginning and end of the story—but it does relate to the totality; it indicates the (repressed) truth of the political and economic system" (Sexton, 2010, p. 48). Wun (2016) furthers this point: "Although anti-black racism does not account for all of the systems, studies around the state of racism cannot fully comprehend the depth and entirety of the United States without centering the relevance of anti-black racism to the world and racial formations" (p. 740).

At *Pride*, an analysis of white supremacy helped us name the whiteness of practices and discourses that upheld white racial space, but by itself it did not prepare us for how teachers and parents acted on the epistemology of antiracism or for the institutional support that epistemology would receive. Dumas and Ross (2016) argue that blackness, and thus antiracism—constructions linked to but also different from whiteness and white supremacy—must be theorized as they are important to fully understanding the key tenets of CRT, including whiteness as property. While this is not a theoretical piece, I examine how a more specific analysis of antiracism can better prepare researchers and educators to understand and respond to the racialization of school space and the power of white rage.

### Setting: "The Black School"

I have worked with *Pride Elementary* since the Fall of 2013. *Pride* is a school of about 500 students in the urban center of a small city in the southeastern United States. Despite white people being the largest group of both students (45%) and faculty (60%), *Pride* was sometimes referred to by personnel and families in the district as "the Black school." There were a few reasons this label was used. First, *Pride* was located in the traditionally Black neighborhood of the city. The school was named after that neighborhood and students participated in an annual project learning about the neighborhood's history. Second, the percentage of teachers of color was about 40%, the largest number being Black. Though still less than the number of white teachers, this was much higher than at any other school in the district, and by year three of the study both the principal and assistant principal were also Black. Third, the school's equity work, which I describe more in the next section, deliberately focused on foregrounding the voices of teachers of color.

## Methods

As stated earlier, this piece draws on a larger ethnographic study at Pride, where I worked with not only the principal, Sandra, but also several grade level teams, individual teachers, and the school's race committee—a group of 8-15 teachers and administrators (depending on the year) who led the school's racial equity efforts. In that study, I utilized a collaborative form of research and professional development called equity coaching (Blaisdell, 2017, 2018a, 2018b). Equity coaching draws on a dialogic performance (Conquergood, 1985) approach of co-analysis and intervention that specifically uses concepts from CRT—e.g., whiteness as property, racial realism, racialization of space—to foster critical race praxis. Critical race praxis involves translating CRT into specific “operational ideas and language for anti-subordination practice” (Yamamoto, 1997, p. 597). I worked most intensively with Sandra and the race committee. As a group, we met at least monthly, specifically using CRT to discuss, analyze, and develop responses to the daily manifestations of white supremacy.

In this article, I focus on my ongoing work with Sandra. Sandra became principal of the school at the beginning of the third year of the study and had served as an administrator, lead teacher, classroom teacher, and intervention specialist in the district since 2003. In that time, she earned a reputation, both in the district and broader region, as a racial equity advocate and an expert on culturally relevant pedagogy for students of color. At Pride, she worked very closely with the race committee to lead the school's racial equity efforts, especially with regard equity coaching.

I focus on my work with Sandra for several reasons. One, her critical insights on race moved and directed the project at least as much as mine did. As equity coaching is dialogical, researchers and participants can shift in and out of the coaching role, and Sandra often served as an equity coach to me and other faculty members. Two, as a Black woman, she had an epistemological awareness that helped her catch instances of complicity in racism I missed as a white man.<sup>4</sup> Three, the examples she shared most directly illustrate the existence and functioning of antiblackness at Pride.

Between group and individual interviews, meetings, and phone conversations, I have met with Sandra over 40 times totaling more than 100 hours. I audio recorded almost all our face-to-face meetings and took fieldnotes at the others and during our phone conversations. I then transcribed all audio recordings and fieldnotes to make further research notes. To analyze the data, I used critical race ethnography (CRE), which:

...follows the lead indicated by proponents of CRT to take the words of people of colour seriously and, instead of stopping there, to allow these voices to inform how we approach our examination of the material conditions that are basic to and inextricably a part of lived experience. In other words, a critical race ethnography seeks to engage the multiple ontological categories that give meaning to lived experience. (Duncan 2005, p. 106)

As I reviewed all of Sandra's accounts of race, racism, and whiteness, I focused on

those recurring stories that revealed a cohesive narrative about her lived experiences at Pride. I also cross-checked those accounts against the similar stories I recorded from both the race committee and individual teachers of color. Furthermore, while I was the primary person conducting the analysis of the field and research notes, Sandra and I together discussed the recurrent types of stories that arose from the data. It was from these ongoing analytical conversations where I developed the focus on antiracism for this article. In the first few years of our work, we both believed that white supremacy was the primary impediment to racial equity at the school, so much of our analysis centered on the racialization of space and whiteness as property. As we progressed in our conversations over the last couple of years, we realized there were instances of racism that our focus on white supremacy could not fully explain, and we started to more frequently discuss the concept of antiracism.

In the sections that follow, I share several key examples of white rage from my conversations with Sandra. “One strategy for achieving the objectives of CRE is to present ethnographic data in ways that reveal the ‘values and practices that normalize racism in society’ (Duncan, 2002, p. 131)” (Woodson, 2019, p. 29). To show how racism was normalized at Pride, I show how white supremacy existed in each example but specifically highlight the role that antiracism played, especially as it pertains to the disdain for Black joy. My objective is to illustrate that an analysis of antiracism gives a fuller picture of how school space becomes racialized. My intent is not to claim that Black students and faculty were the only people to face racism at Pride or to claim that other systems of oppression like settler colonialism or sexism should not also be analyzed. Rather my intent is to extend Sexton’s (2010) argument that, while it is not the only story of racism, an understanding of antiracism is necessary to understanding the permanence of racism in U.S. society broadly and the racialization of school space specifically. Also, my intent is not to implicate all of Pride’s white teachers or parents in intentional antiracism. There was a small but vocal minority of white people who exhibited white rage, but as I will explain, their efforts were undergirded by a broader epistemology of antiracism and by institutional power, especially at the district level.

### Antiracism at Pride Elementary

As I share Sandra’s accounts of white rage, I illustrate how an analysis of antiracism gives a fuller picture of how racism manifested itself in daily practice, and how this racism became institutionalized by the school and district. I start with the example that involves Sandra giving a teacher a cupcake, as this story particularly highlights the theme of the disdain for blackness some white teachers and parents expressed towards not only Sandra but also other Black faculty and students.

#### *The Cupcake*

One of the most flagrant examples of antiracism that Sandra related to me

occurred in the third year of the project (Sandra's first as principal) and it involved a cupcake. Sandra:

There was a [white] teacher last year, when I was named as the next principal, who came and said that I favored this other teacher, Ms. Elliot, because Ms. Elliot was African American. So, she made the comment again this year that I favor the teachers of color. This particular time was because I gave Ms. Elliot a cupcake.

I asked her, "Have you ever considered me giving it to Ms. Elliot could be anything other than because she is Black?"

She said, "No, because you gave Kara [another Black teacher] one, too."

I said, "Well, you don't know that I gave Jennifer a cupcake and Kelly a cupcake. They're not Black."

Another time, I said to her, "Well, I noticed you thought that I favored this particular Black teacher. Tell me more about what made you think I favored them." And her response was, "You smile at them in the hall."

Everyone who knew Sandra knew she liked food. She loved having food at meetings, she loved to see and ask about what people were eating, and she loved to share. It would not be uncommon to see her sharing snacks with anyone who happened to be in the front office at the time, and she offered me food on several occasions. So, her having cupcakes and sharing them with teachers would not be out of the ordinary. Without interviewing her directly, it is hard to fully know what the white teacher in this example was thinking and what her motivations were in pointing out Sandra's sharing of a cupcake. Regardless, she felt the entitlement and need to express her views about Sandra. In terms of white supremacy, perhaps this teacher felt her own sense of superiority was threatened as she did not stand out as special. White people will defend white status property of whiteness when that status comes under threat (Harris, 1993). In the cupcake example, however, that perceived threat only comes because of the presence of blackness, and particularly of Black comradery and joy. She witnessed Black people getting along and having fun—they were smiling at each other—and responded with white rage, i.e., the emotional need to curtail blackness expressed as positive.

There were other examples of white teachers saying that Sandra favored Black teachers. Sandra talked about this in terms of racial microaggressions Black school personnel have to face. Sandra:

I said to the previous principal [a white woman], "Why aren't people saying that you favor the white staff? These are the kind of things that people of color have to deal with on a regular basis that white people don't have to experience."

Sandra pointed out that these comments were problematic, in part, because they did not recognize the close relationships she had with white faculty members. Sandra:

Mandy and I talk all the time. And Katie and I are very close. She is up in the office every day asking my advice or just talking about whatever.

Sandra was not the only faculty member of color who expressed experiencing these

kinds of microaggressions. Several Black teachers mentioned that white teachers questioned them on why they spent more time with other Black faculty. Those kinds of comments racialized the behaviors of Black faculty while simultaneously de-racializing the behaviors of white teachers. As Sandra explained, “the Black faculty aren’t saying that the white teachers are only friends with each other.” This rhetorical move by white teachers was part of a daily production of racial space that is rooted in antiracism. Whiteness as property afforded white teachers the freedom to associate with each other without question of their racial intent and denied Black teachers the same right. Antiracism, however, was the trigger for white teachers’ need to intervene. When Black faculty associated with each other, they were asserting the same rights as white faculty, thus disrupting the perceived purity of racialized space. Some white teachers responded to this disruption with disdain (e.g., complaining about it to each other) and even rage (e.g., complaining to the principal and even the district in attempts to curtail the behavior).

### *A More Visible Divide*

Discussing the cupcake example and similar stories of white disdain for blackness helped us discuss other ways that antiracism existed more broadly at Pride. Sandra:

We have a critical mass of Black faculty, something a lot of white folks aren’t used to. I don’t know if “opposition” is the word I’m looking for, but there’s this divide. It feels like a more visible divide because there are more Black people in this building than most white people are accustomed to working with. If there are only three Black people in a building, you don’t really feel that same divide.

On several occasions, Sandra talked about the “undercurrent” at Pride as being distinctly different from schools where she had worked previously. In part, Sandra attributed the more apparent divide between white faculty and Black faculty at Pride simply to the increased presence of Black faculty. However, she also pointed out that white teachers did not just feel a divide because of the increased visibility of teachers of color but also because Black teachers were more vocal, which some white teachers framed as problematic. Sandra:

Now it’s not just the one Black teacher on the grade level that is expressing themselves. Before it didn’t feel like a problem because there was maybe just the one. And the one generally doesn’t speak up enough or push back enough to cause discomfort.

Sandra and I talked about how white teachers responded to that perceived problem in de-racialized terms. They had talked about how “teachers are feeling uncomfortable” or “a lot of us feel this way” or “we feel attacked” without naming that it was the specifically white teachers who felt uneasy in their communication with Black faculty. In doing so, those white teachers were normalizing their perspectives on

the faculty climate, thus normalizing whiteness itself. Those teachers therefore also positioned blackness as a problem without using overtly racial language, tapping into a key characteristic of racialized space—advocating for white interests without seeming to implicate race (Lipsitz, 2011; Yancy, 2017).

An analysis of these comments as a form of white supremacy can illuminate how white teachers' white status property (Harris, 1993) might have been threatened by the increased vocality of Black teachers, that perhaps their own white voices did not maintain special status. The context of *Pride*, however, helps show that the status property of whiteness only becomes visible with the presence of blackness. White teachers made these complaints even in the first two years of the study when the principal was white (Sandra, who had been assistant principal, became principal the third year) and even though white teachers were the majority (60% of the faculty). There was nothing preventing white teachers from expressing their own views in meetings. Rather, it was the mere expression of Black viewpoints that immediately resonated as negative to these white teachers. By examining these comments via antiblackness, we can reframe them as expressions of disgust with the visible and vocal presence of blackness, a disgust caused by the disruption of *Pride* being seen as a racialized space that should function to uphold white notions of superiority (even if not overtly named as such). These white teachers responded to that disruption via the epistemology of antiblackness, searching for a reason for their disgust, failing to acknowledge the role of race in how they themselves felt, and then locating the problem in the Black without claiming to.

### *Kings of the Roost*

White teachers did not only use the epistemology of antiblackness to respond to the Black principal or teachers. They also used it to respond to expressions of joy from Black students. For instance, Sandra relayed the following discussion with a white teacher about two Black students. Sandra:

Yesterday, a teacher told me, "These two students just get to do whatever they want, like there are the kings of the roost."

I said, "Really? You honestly think these kids just get to do whatever they want to? Tell me what makes you think that."

She said, "Every morning, they walk in their class, they come back out, and they go downstairs and get breakfast."

I said, "To me, that doesn't sound like king of the roost. That sounds like kids who've recognized that there's a little loophole here. They think, 'I don't really want to be in class yet anyway, so let me figure out something else to do.'"

This morning, I was still thinking about it, so I asked the teacher to tell me more. I kept asking her until she finally said she wanted one of the students suspended, which was what I thought she wanted anyway.

Wun (2016) notes that one of the main ways that antiblackness occurs in schools is through the punishment of Black students. The white teacher in this example not

only wanted to punish the students; she also wanted one of the students—a Black boy—to be suspended. In my time at Pride, I saw a lot of students take advantage of loopholes in school rules. It was not uncommon to see students—both white students and students of color—walking in the halls with a bathroom or hall pass but then also taking a little extra time to talk to their friends or take the long route back to class. Most of the time, teachers would redirect the students back to their classrooms without any other intervention. At the same time, discipline data showed that students of color—and especially Black students—were referred to the office significantly more often for behaviors such as being out of class.

In terms of white supremacy, the above teacher's comments can be read as engaging in institutional whiteness as property that denied Black students the right to use and enjoy the privileges of whiteness, such as the freedom to bend rules a bit. Her desire for suspension, however, is more accurately read as a deeper disdain for blackness. The teacher was not just troubled by the Black student bending a school rule. She was troubled because, in her view, he was enjoying his freedom—to her, he was acting like he was “king of the roost”—and that expression of freedom triggered her white rage. The discipline data revealed that Pride had a broader issue of giving Black students less freedom, not more. Despite this evidence, this teacher drew on the epistemology of antiracism to not only try and further limit this boy's freedom but to also push him out of school space completely.

### *The Kids in the Walk Zone*

It was not only white teachers who wanted to disproportionately punish blackness. White parents expressed a similar desire. Sandra:

The perception of the white families is Black students have no consequences, that they just get to do what they want to. Each time [a white parent has complained to me], it has been about an interaction between Black student and a white student. My brain keeps trying to figure out “What is it you think should happen to these students, and what would that even look like?”

On several occasions Sandra talked to me about how white parents clearly wanted Black students punished, often meaning they wanted those students removed from the classroom. During this time, the school and district were also trying to move away from more punitive forms of addressing behavior disputes and to establish restorative practices, approaches that seek to prevent or repair harm to student-to-teacher or student-to-student relationships rather than to punish students for misbehavior (Lustick, 2017; McCluskey et al., 2008). These practices usually involved using restorative circles, where all parties involved in an incident meet and come to consensus on how to move forward (Kline, 2016). While restorative practice was becoming more common in the district and the district lauded progress in this area, white parents at “the Black school” were not always fully on board. Sandra:

In one instance with another parent, I suggested a restorative circle, and he wasn't interested in the circle...being part of the process.

This parent—whose white child had an altercation with a Black child—refused restorative practice as it did not satisfy his underlying need to for the Black child to be punished. Employing restorative practice over punishment would not match his conception of what idealized school space should be. In the white spatial imaginary, blackness needs to exist as negative; therefore, Black students need to be punished. While this example is only of one parent, it highlights an underlying discomfort that some white parents had for the visible presence of Black students and faculty in the school, a discomfort they expressed to the principal and to district level administration.

White parents did not always need an incident between students to happen for their white rage to be triggered. Some white parents complained to district administrators because of examples like above but others complained more generally about the preferential treatment they thought Sandra showed Black students. Sandra:

The assistant superintendent said that... parents had expressed that I only care about “the kids in the walk zone.”

The term “the kids in the walk zone”—which was used by both white parents and teachers—was a de-raced way to refer to Black students. Pride was located in the traditionally Black neighborhood of the city. By referring to space—the walk zone, i.e., the area close enough for kids to walk to school—these parents could clearly indicate race without doing so overtly, thus letting them claim their intentions were not racial. Again, there was no evidence that Sandra or the school favored Black students. They were still referred to the office substantially more than white students and were underrepresented in programs like gifted education. White students' advantaged position was never in jeopardy. The most common forms of evidence given by white parents were comments about how much Sandra talked to Black families and how friendly she was to them. Again, the mere presence of Black joy seemed to trigger white rage and for some white parents to seek institutional support for their epistemology of antiblackness.

### *There's a Lot of Diversity Here*

White parents' disdain Black joy was also expressed via other forms of de-racing discourse, such as appealing to the rights of “all students.” Sandra:

So, there was a white parent who had called. She kind of complained about the school not being for all students.

I said, “Well give me an example,” because that's my thing when people are saying this. Where's the example?

She wasn't able to at that time. Then she comments, “There's a lot of diversity here.”

So, I find out that she's upset because there are these two student groups that



she feels like her son can't be a part of. They're both Black people who are leading those groups, and they are attracting a lot of students of color... But they are not affinity groups. Anyone can join.

Then I hear the issue gets to the PTA, because some parents are concerned that these two groups received PTA money, like \$300.

That two Black faculty were leading clubs—one a dance and music troupe and one a club for boys to learn about etiquette—and that a large number of students of color participated in them was viewed as a problem by some white parents. Perhaps these parents again believed that there was no inherent privilege for the status property of whiteness. As Sandra pointed out, white students were allowed to be in the clubs, so there was no actual material threat to whiteness. Instead, the fact that Black people and other people of color were enjoying freedom of expression in school space triggered white parents' epistemology of antiracism. Even without a material threat to their children, these parents had to find a problem with the expression of Black freedom and joy. So, they invoked the language of the white spatial imaginary, expressing racial views without trying to overtly name race.

The language about the rights of "all students" was echoed by other white parents and teachers throughout my time with Pride. As a clear form of white discourse (Hyten & Warren, 2003), it was often used as a way to deflect faculty trainings and guided conversations we designed to address white supremacy. However, in the case above and similar instances, the phrase was an expression of disdain for the expression of blackness as positive within racialized space.

### *The Institutional Power of Antiracism*

It would be easy to interpret the above examples as exceptions, as only the intentional racism of a few resistant white people. As I mentioned earlier, however, these examples highlighted a broader and deeper antiracism at Pride, one buoyed by both the epistemology of antiracism at the school and institutional weight at the district level. For instance, the more visible divide that Sandra mentioned was often used by even more racially literate white faculty to unwittingly engage in the epistemology of antiracism. These white teachers often worked on racial equity efforts and tried to advance analyses that exposed white supremacy, but when they heard complaints from their white colleagues, they switched their discourse. For instance, one racially literate white teacher expressed to Sandra and me that "Teachers are feeling criticized." Another said that it was the equity work that was creating "a divide among the faculty." Sandra's analysis of these comments exposes how they are rooted in both whiteness and antiracism. Sandra:

What I said to the one teacher was, "What does 'criticize' look like?" Just because someone doesn't agree with you? Because that has been my experience. The minute that someone shares a different opinion, you become upset as if you have a right to your opinion, but the other person doesn't have a right to theirs.

Sandra was pointing out that Black faculty did not have the white property status that afforded them the right to express their own opinions without rebuke, thus upholding a system of white supremacy. Her comments also showed that these white teachers were engaging in the discourse of the white spatial imaginary. Even though they were using the passive voice or generalized “teachers,” they were clearly implicating Black faculty. The fact that more racially literate white teachers immediately thought their white colleagues were right and supported rooting the problem in expressions of blackness shows the systemic power the epistemology of antiblackness had at Pride.

This epistemology also affected how district administration responded to complaints from white parents and teachers. On several occasions, Sandra shared examples of district personnel meeting with her to tell her what “parents” were saying. They too used the de-raced language—e.g., “some parents have been complaining”—even though in each instance the parent was white. At times, the district administrators, to their credit, would intervene in the parents’ language and back up Sandra’s actions and leadership. At other times, however, they used the complaints to try and convince Sandra—at times subtly and other times not so subtly—that she needed to change a behavior or practice or the way she spoke with white parents. When doing so, these administrators often used the same language of the white spatial imaginary that the parents used, e.g., “We need to make sure we are representing all students.”

At other times, the district response carried more severe consequences. The biggest example of this was when another Black administrator at Pride, Bradley, was moved to another school. This occurred after a few white parents and teachers complained that “white students were not being represented at Pride.” At first, the district’s explanations for the move echoed white parents’ critiques that they needed to “increase representation for all students” and ensure that “all students’ needs are being met,” implying that Black leaders could not represent white students’ interests or needs. Over time, the district tried to obscure its racial reasoning. The language eventually shifted to, “We want to spread your skills around” and “You two are too similar.” For those who knew them, Sandra and Bradley were not similar at all. Sandra was a middle-aged woman while Bradley was a younger man. Sandra was a veteran administrator while Bradley was in his first year. Sandra was a commanding presence and Bradley much more reserved. Also, while Bradley had a certain degree of racial literacy, he did not yet have the extensive experience as an equity leader as Sandra, who was known in the community for her leadership on antiracism. There was of course one thing similar about Sandra and Bradley; they were both Black.

In the Bradley decision and the other cases where the district communicated to Sandra, the numbers of parents and teacher complaining was actually quite small. The power of their white discourse, however, swayed district administrators—even administrators of color—to intervene in how Blackness was expressed at Pride and to support white racial interests.

### Conclusions

With the above examples, I attempt to provide further empirical evidence for why increased analysis of antiblackness is needed in schools like Pride. Dumas (2016) argues, “any incisive analyses of racial(ized) discourse and policy processes in education must grapple with cultural disregard for and disgust with blackness” (p. 12). Because of the ongoing psychic and psychological (not to mention physical) harm that antiblackness has on Black people and other people of color (Yancy, 2017), I believe this need is urgent. I mentioned earlier how the analytical language on white supremacy helped us understand and intervene in some of the discourse and practices used at Pride. As Sandra’s accounts show, however, our focus on white supremacy did not help us sufficiently respond to the attempts to control Sandra as a Black leader or to the cultural disregard that some white people showed toward blackness. The categorical language that comes from the literature on white supremacy did not adequately prepare us for the underlying disdain for Black leadership, freedom, and joy.

### Implications: Creating Space for Black Joy

An analysis of antiblackness would help refocus critical and engaged scholarship on race at schools like Pride, starting with the kind of the questions being asked. Those we did ask were rooted in racial spatial analysis of whiteness. Some of the driving questions of our work were: “What makes Pride a racial space, one where white students have increased resources, mobility, and voice?” and “How are we sustaining white supremacy in daily practice?” While these were effective on some ways, they did not help us uncover the underlying disdain for blackness that justified school discourse and practices. A focus only on whiteness did not help us answer the simple question, “How is disdain shown for blackness?” To move to a racial spatial analysis that includes an examination of antiblackness, potential questions moving forward might be: “How is antiblackness embedded in policy and practice?” “How are we sustaining a hidden curriculum of antiblackness?” and “How is the school a space that silences Black joy?”

To answer these kinds of questions, I suggest several possible areas for further research in teaching, teacher education, and educational leadership. One is research that develops analytical language on the types of antiblack discourse. Research has codified white discourse in many ways (e.g. Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Hytten & Warren, 2003; Leonardo, 2002), and those categories are useful in working with school personnel on identifying and addressing how white discourse contributes to racial inequity. Similar work in antiblack discourse would help school personnel develop more fluency in analyses of antiblackness. Two is research that extends into K-12 contexts the existing work in higher education on how white emotionality contributes to the perpetuation of white supremacy and the disgust for blackness (e.g. Cabrera, 2014; Matias, 2016; Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2016). Three—as

critical race research has uncovered specific ways to disrupt the control white supremacy and discourses have in K-12 schools (Blaisdell, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Howard, 2018a, 2018b)—is further CRT research on effective ways to disrupt antiblackness and antiblack discourses in schools.

Towards that end, I also offer two recommendations that could help both researchers and school personnel conduct critical race praxes that address the disdain for blackness. First, critical and collaborative analyses of race in schools must name antiblackness. Dumas (2016) states, “Teachers, administrators, and district leaders should create opportunities to engage in honest and very specific conversations about Black bodies, blackness, and Black historical memories in and of the school and local community” (17). At *Pride*, we were able to create a school where we engaged in honest conversations to name whiteness—i.e., where we named when teacher speech and actions adhered to white supremacy. Similarly, school-based critical inquiry into racism must openly and consistently name the specific ways that speech, actions, and policies exhibit antiblackness.

Second, critical inquiry into racism in schools must be used to purposefully create space for Black joy. Johnson (2015) defines Black joy as “the black love, laughter, hugs, and smiles that for a moment offer us glimpses of radical democracy, freedom, and utopia” (p. 181). He explains that, for Black people, Black joy “allows us the space to stretch our imaginations beyond what we previously thought possible and allows us to theorize a world in which white supremacy does not dictate our everyday lives” (p. 180). White school personnel and researchers like myself can make a commitment to embrace and honor Black joy, which means “loving seeing dark people win, thrive, honor their history, and be fully human” (Love, 2019, p. 120). For whites, honoring Black joy involves stepping aside, silencing ourselves, and even making sure that people of color have things (resources, money, positions) that we do not. Furthermore, to make space for Black joy in racialized space, we will have to develop dispositions that are “un-sutured” (Yancy, 2017, p. 14) from the white spatial imaginary and epistemology of antiblackness. For that to happen, the leadership of racially literate faculty of color will be especially important because their perspectives and racial knowledge are informed by “intersubjectively shared experiences” (Yancy, 2017, p. 24) that give them more accurate vantage points from which to analyze racism, whiteness, and antiblackness. School personnel can engage in collaborative professional development and research methodologies and projects that purposefully support Black faculty and other faculty of color in leading racial equity efforts. Researchers can support these efforts by working with schools to develop context-based analyses rooted in Black joy and then use those analyses to implement specific plans of action to better ensure that administrators, teachers, and students of color can fully express themselves without the disciplinary hand of whiteness getting in the way.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I follow Dumas' (2016) lead in capitalizing Black when referring to Black people, institutions, and culture and in using blackness, antiblackness, white, and whiteness in lower-case form. Quotations use capitalization according to the source material.

<sup>2</sup> As much as possible, I try to use the first person to discuss white people. I maintain the third person when quoting or paraphrasing.

<sup>3</sup> I report on these findings in other publications (Blaisdell, 2018a, 2018b).

<sup>4</sup> I talk about the cautions and commitments necessary for white researchers engaging in CRT research with teachers and administrators of color in other pieces (Blaisdell, 2016b, 2018a).

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## Youth of Color Living and Learning in the Age of Racial Paranoia

### What Social Justice Educators Need to Know

*Pierre W. Orelus, Curry Malott, & Andrew Habana Hafner*

#### Abstract

Fearing the other has been entrenched in the minds of many Americans. With Donald J. Trump becoming president of the U.S., overt racism is being reinserted into mainstream politics. Trump's victory has ushered in an era beset by racial paranoia—fear socially constructed about Black and Brown bodies, learned at home, in schools, and from the mainstream media, and expressed in unjust and, at times, violent manners. Indeed, racial paranoia has caused racially prejudiced individuals or groups to behave and act in violent ways against people of color. This essay draws from critical race theory and present day political events involving the Donald Trump government to explore racial paranoia and its multilayered effects on people of color, particularly youth of color. This article underscores plausible parallels between racial paranoia and the attitude, behavior, and actions of people holding White supremacist ideology and their violence against people of all colors, particularly youth of color. This article provides suggestions that might serve educators who are working with historically disenfranchised youth of color, including immigrant youth of color.

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## Introduction

Under the Trump regime, people of color, especially youth, are increasingly targeted for demonization and violence. However, thousands upon thousands of working people of all backgrounds have been flooding U.S. streets protesting every racist injustice from police murdering Black and Brown people with impunity to the nightmarish accounts of migrant children held in concentration camps. Rather than confront the legacy of U.S. foreign and economic policy that has driven countless Central Americans to flee poverty and violence and seek asylum in the U.S., Trump has used fear-mongering to characterize them as ‘invaders’ and an ‘infestation’ of ‘murderers, rapists, and bad hombres’ (Capps et al., 2019). Similarly, the August 2019 remarks of Trump to enjoin four freshman Democratic Congresswomen of color “to go back to the country they came from” is the blatant pinnacle of resurgent anti-immigrant, xenophobic and racist rhetoric (Quilantan & Cohen, 2019).

White supremacy as a concept and context has been made explicit in President Trump’s language and behavior that has deformed the social taboos of blatant racism and xenophobia. As educators, we are forced to face the historical truths of White supremacist ideology stoking fear of ‘others,’ and engage in dialogue, healing, and action toward greater justice. The current culture war on the sociopolitical context indicates the need for a new anti-racist education, and implicates the key spaces of schools and education as sites of struggle in battling for a multicultural future free of all forms of bigotry.

A growing number of Whites in the United States self-identifying as racially blind claim to have broken from the United States’ long history of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). However, young people from all backgrounds, challenging this color-blind discourse ideology, are taking concrete action against all forms of bigotry, including capitalist ideology that blames the poor for their poverty and xenophobic tendencies that aim to dehumanize the LGBTQ community. Indeed, more and more young people, of all backgrounds, are realizing that claiming to be colorblind, classblind, or genderblind as an individual does nothing to confront systemic racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. While it is challenging to overcome the internalization of racial biases and bigotry that stem from a society with centuries of systemic racism and White supremacy, the youth are forging a way forward through social media and more traditional forms of organizing and activism.

Specifically, swelling numbers of youth are joining various organizations, including socialist organizations, to take up the important work of building a mass movement by fighting against racism, environmental degradation, LGBTQ oppression, gun violence, and so on (Malott, 2019a). These youth are leading the charge against the racism that has left many Americans seeing and fearing people of color as *the other*. It is becoming more and more apparent to the broadest masses of youth and workers that the myth of a post-racial America has been starkly contested since

Donald Trump became the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. President. In the current social and political climate, the fear to accept and engage *the other* has become more widespread, resurfacing publicly in social discourse and public policy.

Still, the movement against such tendencies is growing by the day despite the persistent diversion attempts and disingenuous resistance of the Democratic Party (Malott, 2019a; Puryear, 2013). This is yet another taboo insight taken up here. That is, neither branch of the capitalist-class political establishment would ever break from the bankers of corporate interests they are beholden to and take up the true causes of the people (Puryear, 2013). This is the tension of the times: the racist hold outs and new recruits on one side, and a growing movement of the many for a bigotry-free socialist future on the other with the Democratic Party ridiculously attempting to suppress it through co-optation (Puryear, 2013).

Youth of all backgrounds have seen through the faux resistance of the Democrats—the same Democratic Party that challenged the Republicans for not being tough enough on crime in the 1980s (Puryear, 2013). Systemic racism continues to have an increasingly oppressive impact on youth of color whose growing demographics predict a ‘majority minority’ country in the next three decades or sooner (Nieto & Bode, 2018). The youth-led activism related to the mass detention of asylum-seeking refugees, family separation policies, Muslim bans, and a never-ending narrative of police brutality and shootings is therefore completely understandable. As such, following the youth, this article asserts that recognizing and wrestling with the demonization and criminalization of youth of color, and cultural and institutional transformation, is a stance for racial justice in education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Taylor, Gilborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2015). Specifically, this article draws from critical race theory and current socio-political and educational issues to explore multilayered forms of racial inequities, including racial paranoia, manifested in behavior and actions of prejudiced individuals and groups, in order to uncover the inner contradictions in an American school and society that continue to struggle to fulfill their promised dream of racial equity. That is, a school system and society where youth and adults of color and poor Whites are given equal opportunities and adequate support to fulfill their potentials (Chang, 1985; Reed, 2013).

## Rethinking Racial and Class Formation in the Age of Fear

### *An Intersectional Historical Approach*

Building on the work of Chang (1985), Reed (1985) notes that “‘race’—which includes ‘racism,’ as one is unthinkable without the other—is a historically specific ideology that emerged, took shape, and has evolved as a constitutive element within a definite set of social relations anchored to a particular system of production” (p. 49). That there is not only a fundamental difference between an object and the historically-mediated idea of it, but that the creation and development of those ideas or racializations have been a central ideological component of modes of

production, to both slavery and capitalism (see Malott, 2019b). Racial formation, in other words, is fundamentally linked to class formation (Chang, 1985; Reed, 2013). Reed (2013) outlines a number of examples making this point. In the Nineteenth Century, for example, “railroad operators and other importers of Chinese labor imagined that Chinese workers’ distinctive racial characteristics” (p. 50) made them more conducive to laying train tracks than White workers. Similarly, in the 1920s Polish immigrants were selected to be steel workers “not for any natural aptitude or affinity” but because of popularized racial categorizations, of which there were dozens (Reed, 2013, p. 51).

Race, in other words, does not consist of a series of properties that exist in bodies, but are racialized or racist ideas designed to take the place of the thing itself (i.e., people) (Malott, 2019b). As such, the ideology of race is designed to maintain oppressive and exploitative economic relationships (Chang, 1985; Reed, 2013). As the balance of forces between labor and capital shift, thereby shifting capital’s ideological needs, racial categories also tend to shift. Since the tremendous struggle of the Civil Rights movement not only was overt individual racism severely stigmatized and consequently reduced, but also overt racial laws, such as separate but equal, were overturned because such forms of racialization were causing too much instability and therefore became too costly (Reed, 2013).

Reed (2013) therefore concludes that the power of race as a marker of essential difference has been degraded. In its place the capitalist class political establishment, especially the Democratic, liberal wing, has found that an anti-racist discourse, separated from its connections to capitalism, even as racial disparities and prejudices persist, has been a more effective form of social control and method for fostering consent to capitalism. Making this point, Reed (2013) notes that “versions of racial... equality are now... incorporated into the normative... structure of ‘left’ neoliberalism” (p. 53). In practice, the mantra of equality exists “exclusively within the terms of given patterns of capitalist class relations” (Reed, 2013, p. 53). In other words, it is okay if the one percent controls ninety percent of the wealth as long as there is proportional representation within the one percent (Reed, 2013). This is the unpursuable rhetoric of equality informing the mainstream branch of the Democratic Party.

Trump’s overt racism and calls for racist violence therefore upset the liberal establishment. However, their objection is not necessarily about racism, but the crude form in which Trump displays it. It is one of the elements of the deepening civil war waging within the capitalist class. In other words, it is not polite to publically call Mexican immigrants rapists and murderers. The liberal Democratic approach is to quietly serve the interests of their corporate donors by funding the militarization of the border. Publicly, the Democrats do not question the underlying premise of the need to protect the border (even though the rate of Mexican and South American immigration into the U.S has been declining or reversing for roughly 15 years), but the methods employed.

Indeed, since Trump’s presidency, fearing youth of color of different ethnicities,

cultures, languages, accents, religions, sexual and gender identifications has been encouraged in the streets, schools, the media, and other social institutions, even though such trends have been evolving in North America for centuries. However, it is within the strategic interests of the Democratic Party to deny any responsibility and blame it all on Trump since his racism, sexism, and overall bigotry is so overt and grotesque. Nevertheless, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual Hate Crime Report indicated a 17% increase in overall hate crimes, with 59.6% motivated by race/ethnicity/ancestry, 20.6% motivated by religion, and 15.8% motivated by sexual orientation (FBI, 2017).

The resurgent hate crimes and violence in schools and on college campuses has become a national trend, including in our own institutions where hate-fueled behavior has erupted in residence halls, academic buildings, outdoor spaces, and in social media. At the same time, after the so-called alt-right (i.e., new fascist) rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August of 2017, where anti-fascist activist Heather Heyer was murdered by a White terrorist, youth-led movements have consistently shut down every attempt the racists have made to stage public rallies. For example, a year after Charlottesville a second "unite the right" rally was held in Washington, DC, where the racists were outnumbered by anti-racists by more than 1,000 to 1. The mainstream narrative that serves the interests of capital is that Trump has been so successful in making racism popular again that there is no hope for progressive social change. Again, the taboo conclusion is that despite the rise in White supremacist extremism under Trump, White terrorism is marginal and does not represent the mood of the broadest masses of workers, especially White workers. Consequently, the re-popularization of socialism and progressive politics in the U.S, especially among the youth, offers good reason to be hopeful of not just moderate reforms but revolutionary change.

However, revolutionary change will not come by itself automatically. Nothing is guaranteed or predetermined. With the bigots being emboldened by Donald Trump promoting White nationalism, overt racism is being reinserted into mainstream politics and policies, which have to continue to be confronted and pushed back, and educators must step up and do their part. For example, the [il]legal "Muslim bans" on visa and green card holders from countries like Yemen, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Libya, and Syria have been proclaimed with an Islamophobic rhetoric and must be rejected. Such bans have intensified discrimination in many ways such as preventing residents in these countries from entering or re-entering the United States for a 90-day period. While the whole world reacted and the country protested this unfair and appalling executive decision, these travel bans have been challenged and appealed in various U.S. courts, ultimately reaching the U.S. Supreme Court that upheld the travel ban in a 5-4 decision in June 2018. This executive order is a sign of totalitarianism, further glimpsed in the administration's proposal to open the U.S. Constitution to deny birthright citizenship to youth of color born in the United States to parents who are undocumented immigrants. Following Obama's

record-setting deportations of immigrants, under Trump's former Attorney General, Jeff Session—who has since fallen out of favor and was forced to step down—the administration has taken draconian decisions to further massive deportation of immigrants, including youth of color who came here as children, denying them the human rights to stay with their families in the U.S.s (Shear & Nixon, 2017).

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration's ineffectual Secretary of Education, Ms. Betsy DeVos, is pursuing a privatization agenda of school choice that will transform public schools into charter schools to enable for-profit educational companies to turn public education into big business. This includes ethical conflicts with her own family and self-interest with student-debt companies that maximize their profits in a trend of exploding student loan debt that is making higher education unattainable for many Americans. Instead of allocating adequate resources to public schools in dire need, American taxpayers' dollars have been allocated to the Pentagon and the U.S. military (Giroux, 2017). Sufficient resources have yet to be devoted to public schools and the health care system in order to alleviate agonizing living conditions of the vulnerable, namely poor youth of color and poor Whites. In response to this attack on education, which has been a bi-partisan issue for decades, teachers embarked on a wave of teacher strikes that began in West Virginia in 2018 (Malott, 2019a).

It continues to feel as if we are living in a police state, where legal anarchy reigns. Even though President Trump believes in water boarding, which he claims to be a good strategy to gain information from and about terrorists, and even though his government believes in spying on citizens and piling up Black and Brown people in prison for corporate profits in the name of restoring law and order (Giroux, 2017), the era of mass incarceration in the U.S. really took off between 1975 and 1985 and has been a bipartisan issue the entire time (Puryear, 2013).

Fortunately, more and more working people, including youth of color, across the U.S. have been protesting against the Trump administration's wrong doings. However, not only have Trump's racist discourse and policies been widely rejected by a great diversity of Americans but also more and more Americans are also beginning to see through the elite hypocrisy and cynicism of the Democratic Party as well. Pointing out the racism and elitism of both the Democrats and the Republicans is certainly also taboo. Jackson (2008) described the brand of racism Trump promotes, which has been promoted by both wings of the capitalist class political establishment especially vigorously throughout the era of mass incarceration (Puryear, 2013), as fostering *racial paranoia*—the sociological residue of our racist past that shapes the confusions of our current futures.

### Racial Paranoia

Jackson (2008) discussed racial paranoia as a sociological phenomenon of the post-civil rights era in which “racial distrust” persists despite changes in societal and institutional structures that have legally prohibited racial discrimination. The

evolution of racism has made its workings harder to explicitly see in our social, public and governmental structures. Yet, persistent inequality and ubiquitous personal experience with dismissiveness, discrimination and deadly force upon people of color prove the perpetuation of racism in America.

The point isn't that race is less important than it was before. It's just...more paradoxical. We continue to commit to its social significance on many levels, but we seem to disavow that commitment at one and the same time. Race is real, but it isn't. It has value, but it doesn't. It explains social difference, but it couldn't possibly. This kind of racial doublethink drives us all crazy, makes us so suspicious of one another, and fans the flames of racial paranoia. Nothing is innocent, and one bumps into conspirators everywhere. (Jackson, 2008, p. 11)

Jackson asserts that Whites and all peoples of color in the racial spectrum experience racial paranoia, although from different historical contexts and lived experiences. At the same time, people have agency, and more and more youth see through the thin veneer of race baiting and are rejecting the old trappings of racial paranoia. Nevertheless, racial paranoia is an everyday phenomenon of the U.S. social fabric; and as such, the "instances of distrust are important because racial paranoia translates fear into social action" (Jackson, 2008, p. 16). Distrust of the other gives traction to racism and racial discrimination, operationalizing oppressions inherent in our institutional architecture.

We argue that racial paranoia is a socially constructed fear about Black and Brown people, and we take particular interest in how systemic racism leading to racial distrust has, in turn, contributed to the way capitalism has historically needed to marginalize and dehumanize youth of color in American society. We further contend that this internalized and irrational fear has been learned at home, reinforced in schools and the mainstream media and expressed in various ways. Finally, we state that racism has caused racially prejudiced individuals or groups to think, behave, and act in discriminatory and, at times, violent ways against youth of color.

In using the idea of racial paranoia, we consider Reed's (2013) challenge that "formulations that invoke metaphors of disease or original sin reify racism by disconnecting it from the discrete historical circumstances and social structures on which it is embedded, and treating it as an autonomous force" (p. 53). Indeed, while racial paranoia seems to be present, we do not want to make the mistake of arguing or implying that White supremacy is the result of a biological deficiency or genetic abnormality in individuals, but rather, is connected to the forever-developing reproduction of class formation (Reed, 2013).

So why use the phrase *racial paranoia* informing this article? Racial paranoia is used in the context of this article to underscore behavior and actions of especially White people holding deep racial prejudice against people of color, particularly youth of color. Specifically, in using this phrase, the goal here is to highlight the anxious and racist attitudes of White individuals toward youth of color. As will be explored throughout the essay, racial paranoia is linked to racist actions taken

by White individuals, as reinforced by social institutions that still reflect a White supremacist design. Racially prejudiced individuals tend to display anxiety and even paranoia when surrounded by or are forced to interact with people of color. We do not suggest a direct comparison of racist individuals with individuals who struggle with anxiety. Rather, we claim that internalized racism makes certain individuals, including well-intended teachers and administrators, react and behave in ways that suggest that they might have experienced racial anxiety and paranoia in presence of people of color. We further argue that showing erratic behavior toward people of color because one is supposedly feeling “unsafe” in their presence is a manifestation of racial paranoia rooted in internalized racism and White supremacist ideology.

Racial paranoia reflects the insidious nature of structural racism in our cultural knowledge and public institutions, especially through schools, colleges and universities that teach and reproduce this knowledge. It also reflects contradictions in our national character espousing freedom and equality, yet bigots continue to operate from oppressive ideologies of division and exploitation. In order to draw further conceptual parallels between racial paranoia and violent racist actions by racially prejudiced people, the following section draws from a well-publicized racially motivated murder case, the Trayvon Martin’s murder case.

### Context

Trayvon Martin was walking through the neighborhood where Mr. Zimmerman lived when the latter decided to follow him and eventually shot him. According to what was recorded in the conversation between Trayvon and his girlfriend, Mr. Zimmerman followed and eventually confronted Trayvon. After a few minutes of exchange of words and physical encounter between the two, Zimmerman shot Trayvon. The Sanford police tried to cover up this murder for about a month, which led to the resignation of Sanford’s police chief, Bill Lee. Martin’s murder generated many protests across the U.S. and beyond, and called into question major institutions of the U.S. legal system, and the Sanford police in particular. Zimmerman was accused of Trayvon’s murder but was acquitted in July 2013. As soon as the verdict was announced, many protesters took the street to oppose the decision of the jury who acquitted Zimmerman. His acquittal is still a source of outcries in many communities, particularly in communities of color in the U.S. and abroad. Years later, people around the U.S. continue to talk about this murder, which, critics have argued has planted the seed for the Black Lives Matter movement. We argue that the murder of Trayvon is an example of racial paranoia in that Mr. Zimmerman murdered Trayvon as a result of fear of the *other* stemming from a White supremacist ideology that he apparently has espoused.

In critically reflecting on and analyzing the Trayvon Martin murder case, one must therefore ask the following questions: (1) Had Trayvon been a White boy of middle class background, would Mr. Zimmerman have been suspicious of him, let

alone follow him, provoke him, get into a fight with him, and finally shoot him with impunity?; and (2) would the decision of the jury have been different? The lack of substantive evidence to justify the acquittal of Zimmerman seems to indicate that the American justice system works mostly for people from affluent backgrounds.

Even though the focus of this article cannot address all the ideological and political underpinnings informing the case outcomes for Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman, this case effectively illustrates racist beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors rooted in institutionalized oppression. This is evident in the ways and the degree to which Zimmerman's action reflects a White supremacist mindset that misleads him, for example, to believe he could 'stand his ground' and murder Trayvon with impunity. Zimmerman was not born violent or racist. He became so through socialization. The sources of his racist mindset are multiple; he might have learned it from home, schools, family, friends, the mainstream media, or religious communities. Because of the distorted image about Blacks promoted in the media and beyond, Mr. Zimmerman might have felt paranoid about the presence of Trayvon, a young dark-skinned African American male. In his Blackness, Trayvon became instantly visible, and was suspected as a possible thief or troublemaker invading the safety of Mr. Zimmerman's neighborhood, and threatening the security of his worldview. Mr. Zimmerman succumbed to racial stereotypes and felt so threatened by the mere presence of Trayvon in his neighborhood that he decided to chase him down and shoot him.

In light of the analysis of this murder case, it is worth emphasizing that the inhumane portrait of young Black and Brown men in the media, in schools, and in the public arena has led to people's internalization of their dehumanization. To put it simple, because of the indoctrination of White supremacist ideology, Zimmerman did not seem to consider Trayvon a human being. In his mind, perhaps Trayvon was like an animal which could be killed without regard; yet even our pet animals get human consideration. We argue that irrespective of where Zimmerman's ideology originates, his attitude toward Blacks, and certainly his decision to kill Trayvon in particular, are unjustifiable.

The murder of young Black and Brown males and females by racially prejudiced people may differ depending on the context but the outcome is the same. For example, the murder of Trayvon Martin took place in a different context from that of Tamir Rice, the 12-year old African American boy who was shot dead at point blank range in 2014 by a White police officer while he was playing in a public park with a fake plastic gun, which the police claimed was mistaken for a real gun. Likewise, Trayvon's case differs from that of Renisha McBride, the 19-year old African American teenage girl who was shot by a White man in 2013 while seeking help after being involved in a car accident. Finally, Trayvon's murder case might have occurred differently than that of Mike Brown, the innocent 19-year old African American who was shot in 2014 by a White police officer and left dead for hours on the concrete before an ambulance came and took him to the hospital nearby.



They were all youth of color murdered by racially paranoid and racist individuals, acting upon White supremacist ideology that allows for apparent dehumanization of others. From countless cases of White police officers and civilians murdering young Black and Brown men and women, we conclude that their actions must have been influenced by internalized racial paranoia and stereotypes of the other.

Racial paranoia is circulatory and pervasive. For example, White police officers internalizing racial stereotypes and stigmas about Black or Brown people have used excessive force against and murdered them. Besides police officers, civilians of color have participated in the murder of other people of color they have feared. For example, Mr. Zimmerman, whose mother is a woman of color from Peru and his father a White American, and who lives in a predominantly White neighborhood, routinely called the police to report on Black people, particularly Black men, walking “suspiciously” in his neighborhood.

Ideologically dividing people of color among themselves through institutionalized fear, racial stereotypes, and stigmas has been a strategy used by those in control in society to maintain power. The creation and worldwide circulation of stereotypes, stigmas, fear, and paranoia about people of color has caused many people to behave in irrational ways resulting in discriminatory behaviors against others. These images are ideologically created and circulated by White dominant groups in order to maintain a status quo that has been responsible for the racial, educational, and socio-economic ghettoization of Black and Brown people (Kozol, 2012). The murder cases of Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Renisha McBride, and Mike Brown are exemplary ways in which White supremacist ideology has led individuals to commit egregious and cruel actions against youth of color. Racial violence against historically marginalized people is a manifestation of racial paranoia rooted in the internalization of fear through White supremacist ideology.

Spreading fear and racial stereotypes about people of color, particularly Black youth, through the media has been part of the White nationalist racist project. In recent and current history of this country, projecting fear about the physical appearance, behavior, and actions of young Black men and women and other racially marginalized groups has been part of the strategy of, for example, Trump’s so-called alt-right (i.e., neo-fascist) wing of the capitalist-class political establishment (Alexander, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Malott, 2018). Such strategy has led to both invisibility and visibility of people of color, particularly youth of color. Depending on the nature of the convergent interests, such as the Democratic branch of the capitalist establishment, the symbolic representation of certain people of color in the media can be done through a positive light, like in the case of former president Barack Obama, who was supported by both White liberal and conservative political pundits (Orelus, 2015).

A critical race lens on this example is telling, as even former Vice President Joe Biden, then a Democratic Senator, was widely criticized for labeling then presidential candidate Barack Obama “the clean and smart African American,” which

he argued was taken out of context. Biden has a long history of supporting racist legislation opposing desegregation and supporting the crime bills responsible for mass incarceration (Puryear, 2013). Self-serving convergent interests are often the driving motor and underlying factors influencing certain representations of individuals and groups of color in the media (Bell, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013).

Historically marginalized groups, particularly Black and Brown people, have been represented in negative ways in the mainstream media, movies and popular culture, often leading to fear and stereotypes inculcated in the minds of people, particularly Whites. Fear circulated and promoted in such media about Black and Brown bodies has also caused people of color to fear other people of color (David, 2013; David & Derthick, 2014). Specifically, racially marginalized groups have internalized fear of other racially marginalized groups, and they experience and act on such fear when they see other people of color moving into their neighborhood, or simply walking through. Internalized racism impacts all people, although not in the same ways.

### **Racial Paranoia in Fearing Youth of Color**

Racial paranoia comes to the surface through the fear of Blackness, or Black fear, which might sound like a cliché to those embodied in the “right” skin. However, analyzed through a critical race theory lens, Black fear reveals White racial paranoia often leading to racial discrimination against Blacks primarily and people of color in general, racial segregation and economic ghettoization shaping many communities in the U.S. and beyond (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Kozol, 2012). Indeed, Black fear brings to the fore racial inequality ravaging American society. What is more, Black fear suggests how deeply paranoid and fearful Whites can be about the presence of Black people, including Black boys and girls. Because of learned racial paranoia, inculcated in their minds, many people have experienced and expressed fear living in the same neighborhood as Black or Brown people. They consequently tend to *flee* as soon as some Black and Brown people start moving in—a White flight that maintains societal segregation. The value of houses located in such neighborhood usually decreases, for in the imagination of the general public, White people symbolize safety and capital, whereas Black or Brown bodies represent danger and poverty as reflected in the well-documented history of housing and financial policies of red lining (Natalie, 2017; Rothstein, 2018).

In specific terms, through different mediums and mechanisms, Black and Brown people have been portrayed as dangerous and uncivilized. Consequently, neighborhoods inhabited by people of color are usually seen and judged based on these racial stigmas and stereotypes. In addition, as a result of Black fear leading to the gradual decrease of the value of houses predominantly occupied by people of color, many Black and Brown families have lost equity value on their houses, and the ability to borrow, which is a principal resource for improving life circumstances

(Turner, Popkin, & Rawlings, 2008). As less federal and state funding goes to their neighborhoods, there is also a resulting decreasing quality of school systems and social services there. Moreover, because of a lack of resources and genuine interests invested in the future of these neighborhoods, they gradually become impoverished, deteriorated, and economically devalued (Rothstein, 2018). In short, Black fear, a manifested form of racial paranoia entrenched in a White capitalist and supremacist strategy aimed to divide, dominate and control, has affected people of color psychologically, educationally and socio-economically.

Racist individuals are paranoid and anxious when they see a large, or a relatively large, number of people of color invading what they perceive to be “their place.” They feel anxious and paranoid because of the racial myths rooted in stereotypes learned about people of color, particularly Blacks, at various points throughout their life span. Seeing a group of Blacks moving in their neighborhood triggers their paranoia, causes them discomfort, and might even make them feel unsafe. Racist individuals tend to feel apprehensive and uncomfortable when surrounded by people of color whose presence might cause them fear and paranoia.

Paranoid, racist individuals often assume that Black people are angry individuals ready to hurt White people, even though this is not the case. Therefore, they (the Blacks) must be feared, avoided, or eliminated. Escobar (2012) commented on evidence of diagnostic bias of psychosis for Blacks by White psychiatrists as possibly based on the notion that the person is “strange, undesirable, bizarre, aggressive, and dangerous” (p. 847). Many police officers, especially racially prejudiced police officers, seem to have suffered some form of racial hallucination as a result of learned White supremacist ideology. In other words, these officers might have been influenced by racial hallucination, as they have routinely racially profiled and brutalized Blacks and other racially marginalized groups.

Because of racial hallucination and paranoia caused by their deep-seated learned racial stereotypes and prejudice, these officers might have feared Black and Brown people. Moreover, their racial hallucination and paranoia might have caused them to unfairly stop and search them acting on the assumption they might carry drugs or guns with them. Countless brutality and murder cases of people of color by police officers in major cities in the U.S., such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami, are prime examples. Recall the video of Tamir Rice’s death showing police officers pulling their cruiser up immediately in front of him, jumping to dismount and fire fatal shots in seconds, without hesitation or warning, as if hallucinating imminent danger, rather than a young boy playing innocently in a park gazebo.

It is not only White adults who might have been victims of racial hallucination and paranoia due to the internalization of racial prejudice rooted in White supremacist ideology. Specifically, White children, who have been exposed to internalized racist and supremacist ideology growing up, might have, too, experienced psychological hallucinations, particularly those watching racially biased and stereotyped videos and Hollywood movies. Blacks and other marginalized groups are often portrayed

negatively in these videos and movies. If not portrayed as thieves, they are misrepresented as murderers who kill people, including innocent people, with impunity. They are also portrayed as violent thugs who in the end get killed. Their personality and character are often presented as erratic and violent. In short, people of color have been dehumanized in racially stereotyped videos and Hollywood movies.

We are reminded of Frantz Fanon's experience with a White boy in the street in Paris, France. Apparently, a White boy was with his mother, and suddenly got scared as he saw Fanon. Shivered, this White boy held to his mother tight asking her if Fanon was going to harm him. Pointing to Fanon, the White boy told his mother: "Look at the nigger!...Mama, a Negro!... Hell, he's getting mad...." (1967, p. 3). The mother responded saying, "Take no notice, sir, he does not know that you are as civilized as we..." (p. 113). Fanon narrated the experience in the following terms:

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that White winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little White boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up. (p. 113-114)

Fanon's experience with a seemingly innocent White boy illuminates the ways and the degree to which racial paranoia has caused hallucinations in the mind of White children about Black men. Racial paranoia deeply embedded in White supremacist ideology has caused many Whites to prejudge, stereotype, and stigmatize people of color, including immigrants of color, as the next section illuminates.

### **Fearing the Caravan: Racial Paranoia and Immigrant Youth of Color**

Issues concerning immigrants, including immigrant youth of color, have been part of educational and political debates in the U.S., and continue currently with national debates around "the caravan" of hundreds of Central American migrants who have journey north and tried to enter the U.S. Throughout history people have been defying geographical borders to move back and forth from one land to another, fleeing hardship and seeking opportunity. Immigrants cross borders immigrating to other countries for various reasons. Immigrants usually cross borders to enter lands where they hope to find a better life than the one they had in their country of origin, especially immigrant youth seeking education and hopes for a future (Hafner, 2013). While some cross borders to immigrate to another land because of poverty, others do so to avoid for family, political, or religious reasons. This is certainly the claims made by many who journey to the U.S. border to voluntarily seek asylum, including thousands of youth who now

have found themselves stuck in mass detention centers, separated from family and the hope of reunification.

Occupation and colonization of other countries are among the underlying factors leading to immigration and transnational migration of people across the globe. Specifically, insatiable economic and geo-political interests of Western powerful countries to expand their economic and political power have led to transnational border crossing and immigration (Chomsky, 2007, 2014). Western countries, such as the U.S. and France, have occupied, colonized, and neo-colonized less powerful countries, like Haiti, to expand their economic and political power (Chomsky, 2014; Zinn, 2003).

Being restrained from crossing borders to enter other lands is relatively a new phenomenon in world history. Chomsky (2007) observes, “People have been moving around the earth ever since they stood upright millions of years ago. National borders, and attempts to govern the flows of migration from above, are only a few hundred years old” (p. 188). He goes on to state,

Colonization sets the stage for later migration. This is why Juan Gonzalez called his book on Latinos in the United States *The Harvest of Empire*—because empires spawn migration. Colonization creates cultural ties. It brings people from the metropolis (the colonizing power) to the colony and places them in positions of power while destroying local institutions. (p. 123)

Similarly, in *Occupied America* (2011), Rodolfo Acuña explains the socioeconomic and political motives causing the Mexican-American war where the U.S. government forcibly seized many Mexican territories. Acuña goes on to put into historical context the socioeconomic and political factors that have pushed many Mexicans to cross the border separating Mexico and the U.S. to reenter the lands that once belonged to them.

Since this war, the presence of many Mexicans in the U.S. has drastically increased, despite daunting physical and topographical borders separating the two countries. Specifically, reconfigured colonial policies disguised through socio-economic neoliberal policies have led many people of color to immigrate to the west. For example, the neocolonial and neoliberal exploitation of Mexico through the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has led many Mexican farmers to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in search of a better life, but have been treated as second-class citizens despite their hard work and contributions. Because of structural fear of brown and black bodies, Mexicans have been treated as aliens, as the wretched of the earth (Fanon, 1965), while many have been picking strawberries and tomatoes for survival and the rich have been maximizing their profits.

Lately under the Trump administration, fear about immigrants has retaken center stage of American political debates on human right issues. Under President Barack Obama the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program began in 2012 and was designed to allow undocumented immigrant youth, predominantly youth of color with no criminal record, to avoid deportation and go to school or work

in the U.S. However, in 2017 President Trump rescinded the program, which now threatens deportation for many DACA applicants that have grown up as Americans, especially those who immigrated to the U.S. with their parents as young children. With the anti-immigrant political discourse of the American billionaire President Donald Trump, various and vacillating positions have been taken about this issue. Some positions seem to have been politically, racially, and religiously motivated, such as his racist rhetoric of ‘shithole countries’ full of ‘rapists,’ ‘thieves,’ and ‘animals.’ Yet other actions have been socio-economically driven, such as the granting of temporary H2-B worker visas for seasonal workers laboring in the Trump Mar-a-Lago golf resort where the President frequently spends his weekends.

Meanwhile, immigrant youth of color, particularly Mexicans and Muslims, have been represented in the media in a frantic manner. Racist and xenophobic messages circulated through the mass mainstream media about these immigrants and other immigrants of color might have created deep paranoia in the mind of many White nationalists who have labeled Mexicans and Muslims as rapists and terrorists, respectively, seemingly following the political rhetoric of the current President Trump. In fact, because of widespread *fear of the other* in the mainstream media and public sphere, immigrants of color, including youth of color crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, have been chased and murdered by White nationalists, including border patrol agents across the U.S. Many self-proclaimed “real patriots” have volunteered to patrol the border, so that so-called illegal aliens do not invade their land, shuffle drugs in, hurt their families, and destabilize their country. Recent public protests in the U.S. against Sharia law represent a surfacing public paranoia that extremist Muslim jihad is threatening Western values and civilization, a fear-mongering claim that President Trump has continued in his second and third years in office.

Influenced by the *fear of the other*, racist and xenophobic Americans have accused immigrants of color, particularly Mexican immigrants, of increasing the crime rate in the U.S. (Chomsky, 2014). Moreover, they have blamed immigrants of color for taking advantage of the health care and educational system. Undocumented immigrants, including immigrant youth of color protected under the DACA program, have been accused of illegally obtaining licenses, going to school for free, and sucking the resources of the country (Chomsky, 2007). The 2014 immigration crisis surrounding tens of thousands of mostly unaccompanied Central American youth fleeing gang violence and civil unrest was another example of racial paranoia as legal discourse around refugee status left many of these immigrant youth in detention and deportation proceedings, some reportedly with no legal representation. Finally, racial paranoia about immigrants of color increases through the mainstream media that proliferate the dominant discourses of fear. Pundits, like former Fox News Host Bill O’Reilly; former TV commentator Pat Buchanan; and right-wing radio host Rush Limbaugh, have promoted racial paranoia throughout the White mainstream media and beyond. They have spread racist, xenophobic, and hate

messages about immigrants of color, which deeply impacts immigrant youth of color in their schools and communities, where talk and treatment about these youth can adopt a dehumanizing manner. For these media pundits, immigrants of color, including the DREAMers protected by the DACA program, must be taken out of the country before they infest it with drugs and commit horrendous crimes.

### Conclusion

As analyzed throughout this article, racial paranoia is pervasive and influences the perception, attitude, behavior, and actions of people, particularly individual prejudiced Whites, about people of color, including youth of color. In addition, racial paranoia shapes many institutions, like schools and the mainstream media and impacts the lives of youth of color. It provides a means of understanding the workings of racist behaviors and ideologies as they operate in daily living in mostly very subtle, gradual ways that allow White supremacist ideologies to become normalized to people of all colors. Exploring racial paranoia in its inherent complexity and contradiction—both semantically and in application—is potent in this historical moment. We must point out racial paranoia's effects on the national psychology of our current identity. While people of all colors must confront how racism is internalized in their own surroundings, experiences and worldview, we must expect our democratic institutions to also transform through growing pains of changing societal values and culture. Racial paranoia has flourished in the two recent decades post-9/11 with expanding global wars on terror, gross inequities of global racism in the trends of police brutality and state violence, and neo-liberal renovations of democratic institutions shaped by money and influence. These trends in social and political contexts represent some of the racist tensions nagging our national history and culture and White supremacist ideology, which shapes the divides and divisions of our present. In the context of a resurgent right-wing, protectionist politics that continue to shape the Trump presidency, we the people must consider our own racial paranoia that may cloud our shared resistance to the ugly urges of discriminatory and authoritarian leadership. Understanding racial paranoia as an articulation of intersectional oppressions demands an intentional and honest rethinking of how our unrecognized immigrant history shapes our social institutions in ways that demonize communities of color, particularly youth of color, whose wide hues of beauty hold the future of our nation.

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## A Conceptual Framework Racial Ideology and Teaching Practice

Kelly E. Demers

### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe how a qualitative researcher constructed a conceptual framework. This framework arose from a two-case, critically-oriented study. It provided the researcher with an analytic tool for interpreting how the ideological assumptions of two White elementary teachers shaped their constructions of race and what these constructions meant in terms of each participant's teaching practice. Included in this piece is a summary of the study from which the framework emerged, as well as a description of theoretical and conceptual work that served as its structural foundation. Following is a detailed description of each dimension of the framework, and an example of how these dimensions helped answer the research questions driving the study for one of the two cases. The article concludes with a discussion of next steps for the continued development of this framework.

### Introduction

There is a great deal of confusion and uncertainty as to the differences between a theoretical and conceptual framework (Imenda, 2014; Green, 2014). As a result, these terms are often vaguely defined and frequently used interchangeably—sometimes within the same research report (e.g., Rathert et al, 2012). However, theoretical and conceptual frameworks each represent a different construct (Imenda, 2014). A theoretical framework, for example, represents “the application of a theory, or a set of concepts drawn from one and the same theory” (Imenda, p. 189) such as

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Piaget's cognitive theory of childhood development. Generally, this theory is determined before a research project begins and serves as a guide to researchers as they conduct their research projects. A conceptual framework, on the other hand, is composed from *all* aspects of a research project including the problem statement, the research question, epistemological and methodological choices, the literature review, interpretation of data (Maxwell, 2013), and the theoretical framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). The construction of a conceptual framework can occur prior to conducting a particular research project (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), it can represent an outcome of a particular study (Green, 2014), or it can occur through an iterative process where the final product is continuously examined and revised based upon research findings (Maxwell, 2013).

Given that a conceptual framework is built from so many different components and can be constructed at different points within the research process, many researchers often feel overwhelmed when attempting to create a framework for their own investigations. The article presented here illustrates such a process. It describes the construction and usage of a conceptual framework called the *racial geography of teaching*. This framework arose from a two-case study that I conducted, which was informed by a critical ethnographic methodology. It provided me with a lens for interpreting how the culturally embedded ideological assumptions of two White, urban elementary school teachers in the United States, working within two different urban school contexts, shaped their constructions of race and what these constructions meant in terms of each participant's individual teaching practice.

The K-12 student population in the U.S. continues to become more racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse at the same time the teaching force is becoming increasingly White, female, and culturally homogenous (Banks & Banks, 2013). This demographic difference represents a widening sociocultural gap between teachers and students. In order to explore this phenomenon, this investigation was rooted within a critical qualitative paradigm that was supported by a body of literature, drawn from the fields of education, sociology, and philosophy that addressed the role that ideologies and discourses play in shaping the racial ethos embedded within U.S. public schools and the culture at-large, as well as the racial attitudes, values, and beliefs White teachers hold about race and racism. By sharing the story of how these research components shaped the construction of the *racial geography of teaching*, I am offering other critically-oriented qualitative researchers with a methodological model that has the potential of helping them navigate the multiple steps that go into creating conceptual frameworks for their own investigations.

In order to fully understand the development of the *racial geography of teaching* framework, I will begin with a short literature review that clarifies what a conceptual framework is and what purposes it serves within a given study. This is followed by a brief summary of the study from which the framework emerged. Next, I offer an in-depth description of theoretical and conceptual work that served as the structural foundation for the conceptual framework. After this, a detailed description of the

framework is provided that includes a definition of each dimension, and an example of how this dimension helped answer the research questions driving the study for *one* of the two cases. The article will then conclude with a discussion of how I will continue to use the *racial geography of teaching* framework.

### Literature Review

In deductive quantitative research, researchers generally center their investigations on applying and testing a pre-existing theoretical perspective and framework (Imenda, 2014). Qualitative research, on the other hand, usually engages in a process of inductive reasoning that works to build and develop original theory (Merriam, 1998). Although qualitative research often does not work to test a specific theory, it is rooted in a “system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs [the] research” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 39). This “system” is referred to as the conceptual framework of a study. Unlike a theoretical framework, which focuses on a particular theory, the qualitative researcher builds a conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2013) from a “set of related concepts” (Imenda, p. 189). These concepts begin with the positionality of the researcher; the research problem driving a particular study; theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research located in a study’s literature review; methodological choices; and emergent themes from initial analysis of data (Maxwell, 2005; Ravitch & Riggan, 2016).

According to Imenda (2014), a conceptual framework serves four purposes:

Helps the researcher see clearly the main variables and concepts in a given study;

Provides the researcher with a general approach (methodology—research design, target population and research sample, data collection and analysis);

Guides the researcher in the collection, interpretation, and explanation of the data, where no dominant theoretical perspective exists; and

Guides future research—specifically where the conceptual framework integrates literature review and field data. (p. 193)

In short, the conceptual framework outlines “an argument” that explains “why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016, p. 5-6).

### Origins of the Racial Geography of Teaching Framework

The development of the *racial geography of teaching* framework emerged from an in-depth two-case critically-oriented qualitative study that investigated two questions:

How do the ideological stances of two White elementary school teachers inform their constructions of race?

How do these teachers' ideological stances and constructions of race influence teaching practice?

Like other critically oriented research projects that work to identify and transform structural forms of injustice (Madison, 2005), I designed this two-case study so that it would expose, critique, and challenge the ways that ideological factors consciously and unconsciously shaped the professional judgments and subsequent actions of two White teachers, particularly in regard to race, racism, and the meaning of Whiteness. Because of this a qualitative approach informed by critical ethnography (Madison, 2005) was the most appropriate because it provided me with an opportunity to explore the beliefs, values, and attitudes of White teachers within a culturally rich context.

The cases were comprised of two White urban schoolteachers, each serving a diverse group of students within two different school contexts. Case studies were selected as the unit of analysis for this investigation because they allowed me to explore the relationship between ideology and action in a complex, multivariate context that resulted in a deeply "rich and holistic account" (Merriam, 1998, p. 51).

For each participant, data collection took place over a six-month period. Data sources included semi-structured interviews, observations (participant classroom observations), and a collection of artifacts (lesson plans, curriculum materials, and school mission statements). A major assumption driving this investigation was the belief that all aspects of research—from data collection to analysis—should challenge and transform inequitable power structures. Such a transformation occurs through a dialogic, reflexive process between the researcher and the researched that embraces multiple voices and perspectives "at the same time [it places] them in a historical and ideological framework" (Quantz & O'Connor, 1988, p. 108). Thus, all aspects of data collection were viewed as a participatory process between the researcher and each participant. The data for each participant was analyzed through a method of qualitative analytic induction influenced by the work of Erickson (1986) and Bogdan and Bilken (1998). Two separate sets of themes, one for each participant, emerged from this first stage of analysis.

I developed the *racial geography of teaching* framework after the initial analysis of data. I began its construction by creating a list of the theoretical and conceptual ideas presented in the literature review along with the themes that emerged through the initial analysis. Using this list as a guide, I generated a conceptual map that outlined the connections found between and among these concepts and/or themes. Once completed, this map served as an analytic tool that enabled me to arrange the narrative of each participant so that I addressed the questions driving the study for each individual case.

As noted above, an important component of the *racial of geography of teaching* was located within the study's literature review. What follows is an in-depth description of theoretical and conceptual work that served as a foundation for the conceptual framework.

## Structure of the Racial Geography of Teaching

The *racial geography of teaching* framework was built from several separate components—the sociocultural context in which the study took place, the two research questions driving the study, the critical orientation of the research design, themes generated through initial analysis, as well as a rich body of literature that was directly linked to the research questions. All of these components were superimposed on to a foundational structure that was built from three different conceptual models. The first was Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) two-dimensional analytic framework, which she used in an ethnographic study that explored the *material* and *discursive* dimensions of race, racism, and the construction of Whiteness among 30 White women. This served as the skeletal outline of the *racial geography of teaching*. The outline was filled out by two other pre-existing ways of conceptually mapping race for White women—the *social geography of race* (Frankenberg, 1993), which also came from her work on White women, and *racial biography* (Rousmaniere, 2001).

### Ideology

An important theoretical aspect of the *racial geography of teaching* centers on scholarship that address the meaning and function of ideology within a particular social or cultural context. The term *ideology* is defined as a system of ideas (Galindo, 1999) that unconsciously shapes and limits beliefs and behaviors (Ott & Mack, 2010). Rooted within this definition is the idea that ideologies “function to create views of reality that appear as the most rational view, a view that is based on ‘common sense’ notions of how the social world ought to be” (Galindo, 1999, p. 105). These views are so deeply embedded within the psychological thinking of a society that their validity remains unquestioned and unchallenged. In other words, ideologies normalize certain aspects of society by making them appear to be natural phenomena when in reality such phenomena are anything but natural (Ott & Mack, p. 128). Ideologies also “privilege some interests over others” (Ott & Mack, p. 128). These interests emerge from the social group currently in power and are believed to be “more important or valid than those of the socially dominated group” (Ott & Mack, p. 128).

An example of the ways that a specific ideology can function within a society can be found within ideological interpretations of gender (Ott & Mack, 2010). For example, in societies where the dominant ideology associated with gender is rooted within a heterosexual, male-female binary, acceptable expressions of gender are *limited* to only two categories—male or female. Associated with each of these categories is a set of *normalized* behaviors and characteristics that are attributed to biology such as the idea that men are strong, brave, and self-reliant while women are dependent, nurturing, and need protection. This ideology also normalizes heterosexuality over other non-binary, gender-fluid identities. As a result, heterosexuals couples are often afforded a variety of *privileges* that LGBTQ+ individuals do not always have access to such as the right to adopt children or the right to marry without fear of protest.

### Material and Discursive Dimensions of Ideologies

Whether centering on politics, religion, race, or gender, embedded within all ideologies are *discursive* and *material* dimensions. The discursive dimension, which serves as a means of disseminating a particular ideological position, includes a range of discursive repertoires that are “fluid” and changeable over time. Each of these repertoires are comprised of a catalogue of practices, which are enacted through formal and informal talk as well as various texts such as websites, news media, comic books, novels, television programs, films, or advertising (Ott & Mack, 2010). These repertoires serve as a filter for the ways in which we view, understand, interpret, construct the material world that we live (Frankenberg, 1993). Material dimensions, on the other hand, are grounded within a physical and tangible realm made up of concrete experiences such as childhood experiences, the past and present “structuring of daily life” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 238), social practices, laws, institutional policies, and/or important local, national, and global historical events.

### Conceptually Mapping Race for White Women

To assist in charting the material and discursive dimensions of two White teachers, the *racial geography of teaching* also drew on two pre-existing ways of conceptually mapping race for White women. The first approach came from Frankenberg’s (1993) concept of the “social geography of race,” (p. 43) which she defines as follows:

*Geography* refers here to the physical landscape—the home, the street, the neighborhood, the school, parts of town visited or driven through rarely or regularly, places visited on vacation...The notion of *social* geography suggests that the physical landscape is peopled and that it is constituted and perceived by means of social rather than natural processes...*Racial* social geography, in short, refers to the racial and ethnic mapping of environments in physical and social terms and enables also the beginning of an understanding of the conceptual mappings of self and others operating in White women’s lives. (p. 43-44, italics in the original)

The second conceptual approach is “racial biography” (Rousmaniere, 2001). Racial biography is a biography that tells the story of an individual’s life in terms of the racial experiences they have or have *not* had in their life. An example of this can be found in an essay written by Kate Rousmaniere (2001), which presents a racial biography of educational activist Margaret Haley (1861-1939), a White teacher and founder of the Chicago Teachers’ Federation. In this piece, Rousmaniere explores Haley’s life and work in terms of the “silence” concerning racial issues. The inclusion of racial biography into the *racial geography of teaching* framework provided the researcher with a means of mapping out the racial experiences each participant engaged in within their childhood, teacher preparation, and current teaching practice.

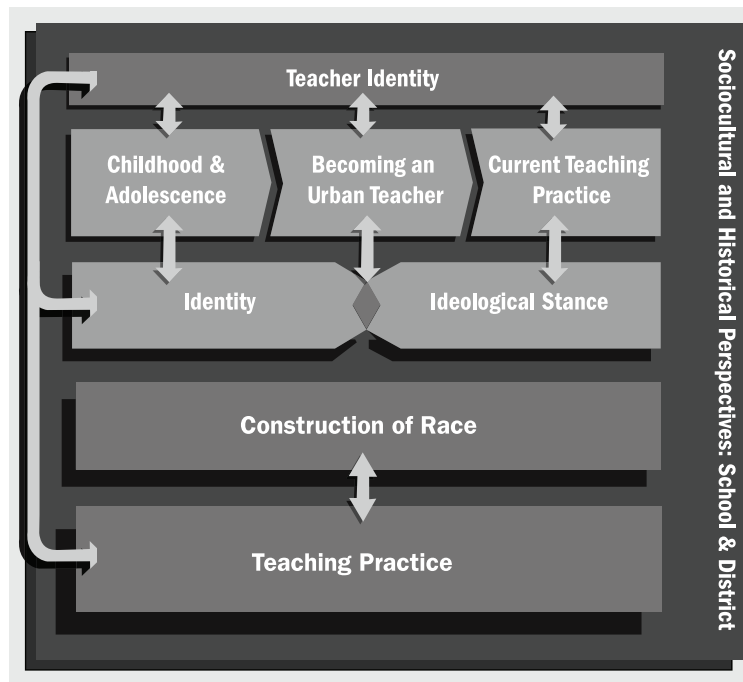
### Mapping the Racial Geography of Teaching

Building on the two conceptual approaches and the theoretical work outlined above, as well as the empirical work on the racial attitudes and beliefs of White pre- and in-service teachers and the two sets of themes that emerged through analysis of data, I developed the *racial geography of teaching* framework. The purpose of this framework was to provide an analytic tool that allowed me as the investigator to answer the two research questions driving the study for each case.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the material and discursive dimensions that constitute the *racial geography of teaching*. What follows is a description of this figure that includes a definition of each dimension, and after each description is an example of how this dimension—or set of dimensions—helped me answer the questions driving the study for *one* of the two cases.

**Figure 1**

The *Racial Geography of Teaching* figure first appeared in Demers, K. (2016), The racial geography of teaching: Helping White preservice teachers understand the impact of racial ideologies in the classroom, *Multicultural Education*, 24(1), 2-11, reproduced here with the permission of Caddo Gap Press.





### Material Dimensions: Life History and Sociohistorical Context

Included within the *racial geography of teaching* are two material dimensions. The first, which is represented as a series of three consecutive boxes labeled “childhood and adolescence,” “becoming an urban teacher,” and “current teaching practice,” is located towards the top of Figure 1, and focuses on the *life history* of each participant. Using Frankenberg’s (1993) “social geography of race,” the three *life history* stages were mapped so as to gain a conceptual understanding of the racial socialization participants experienced during a specific time and place. The second material dimension, which overlaps with the first, is represented on the right side of Figure 1. It focuses on the *sociohistorical context* of each participant’s school district and school community at-large. Here, the *social geography of race* was utilized to map out the meaning of race within the physical and social environment of each participant’s current professional context.

### Material Dimensions Role in Answering the Research Questions

At the time of the study, Megan DeAngelis<sup>1</sup> was 25 years old, unmarried and in her third year of teaching. She worked within the racially diverse urban school district of the North East City Public School (NECPS)—a district that, during the mid-1970s, was torn apart by a racial desegregation plan centered on forced bussing. Megan was assigned an integrated, fourth-grade classroom at the James Elementary School.

Megan’s answers to questions about her family (its structure, religious affiliation, political perspective, and racial and ethnic composition) and the community where she grew up and attended school mapped out a cultural and racial landscape that was populated by a close-knit, highly supportive family that included her mother, father, and two older brothers, as well as a large extended family with whom she spent a great deal of time. It also included a suburban neighborhood filled with children who, like her, came from White, Catholic, middle-class families. Thus, the racial geography of her childhood neighborhood was shaped by the overwhelming presence of Whiteness.

The racial homogeneity of Megan’s childhood was interrupted by the presence of a handful of urban African American students who were bussed from their urban neighborhoods to the suburban schools that Megan attended throughout her entire K-12 experience. While Megan may have been physically close to her urban African American peers in school, the racial structuring of her environment kept her physically *and* socially distant from them outside of school throughout her entire K-12 experience:

In high school and in elementary school, I mean, I was friendly with children who were African American...I mean, we never had play dates, but they were in my classes. You know, we worked together. When I played sports in high school,

there were African American children, you know, other kids on my teams...I had definitely experience with African Americans, but they just weren't part of my life. I was with them in school, but outside of school was...not at home. Not in my dance class, gymnastics—nothing outside of school.

These limited experiences with African American peers meant that Megan was only able to have what Carter (1997) refers to as “situational, interracial, social, or occupational interactions with People of Color” (p. 201). As a result, Megan made several assumptions about “urban” environments and the people who inhabited them:

I guess my assumptions of urban school failure were a result of the preconceived notions that were subconsciously instilled in me by my family. I attributed this failure to ineffective teachers, students who didn't care about school, parents who didn't care about their children's schooling, and the violence, which I thought occurred in school. I guess this all came from, again, my parents, and my experience in high school...At one time, I must have asked my parents why children from North East City had to come to come to school [in our town], and I am sure that these were the answers my parents gave me.

In mapping Megan's “social racial geography,” it was possible to begin to address aspects of the first question driving this investigation—*How does the ideological stance of this White teacher inform her construction of race?* It became clear that the racial isolation and limited situational experiences with African Americans allowed Megan to interpret her world through an ideological lens of White privilege that defined the schools in her community as “superior” to those where her urban African American peers resided. Not only did the White, suburban schools that Megan attended represent the norm of how schools ought to be, they were also “helping” urban students of color have a better chance in life. In addition to viewing her community as the potential “savior” of students of color, it also appears that Megan, who had no explicit memory of any racial discussions with her family, negotiated racial issues through a discourse of silence. Later, as a practicing teacher, this discursive approach and Megan's limited experience with African Americans made it difficult for her to fully grasp how the bussing crisis of the 1970s continued to shape the current racial landscape of the NECPS.

### Discursive Dimensions: Identity, Ideological Stance, and Teacher Identity

Located just below the three phases of *life history* are two discursive dimensions, *identity* and *ideological stance*, which are represented as two intersecting boxes. For this study, *identity* refers to the ways in which an individual defines herself. Such self-definitions have the potential of changing over time and are rooted within a variety of contexts (Rodgers & Scott, 2008) such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic, or disability statuses as well as perceived personal attributes such as being a hard-worker or having an open-mind. *Ideological stance* refers to the

ideological positions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that an individual uses to interact with and interpret the world around them. Like *identity*, one's *ideological stance* also has the potential of changing over time.

The reason that these two dimensions are overlapping is because ideologies have the power to construct an individual's identity through *interpellation* (Althusser, 2001). According to Althusser, interpellation happens through a process called "hailing," which "occurs when individuals recognize and respond to an encountered ideology and allow it to represent them" (Ott & Mack, p. 129). However, rather than see themselves as summoned towards a particular identity, individuals "understand themselves to be the source rather than the effect of that summons" (Britzman, 2003, p. 223). Although individuals have the choice to reject or accept this call, they are "always-already interpellated" or "summoned" into a specific role (Althusser, 2001, p. 119). Colorblind ideology, for example has the power to interpellate White individuals into a racialized landscape that defines them as "real" Americans whose cultural perspectives represent the *Gold Standard* of moral superiority, hard work, cultural expression, fiscal responsibility, and political acumen. In other words, "whiteness functions as the transcendental norm, as that which defines nonwhites as 'different' or 'deviant' while it, whiteness, remains the same" (Yancey, 2012, p. 164). In contrast, African American subjects are often hailed as immoral, violent, angry, lazy, or in need of help.

*Identity* and *ideological stance* have a reciprocal relationship with *teacher identity*, which is represented by a double-arrowed curved line located on the left side of the figure. For this study, teacher identity as defined as the way a teacher understands and defines herself within the professional context of schools. Like one's personal identity, *teacher identity* is influenced by the dominant ideologies and accompanying cultural myths embedded within a particular society regarding what it means to be a good teacher (Britzman, 2003). For example, many pre-service White teachers are "hailed" by an ideology that defines White teachers as the "saviors" of urban students of color. This ideological message is often conveyed through popular teacher films such as *Freedom Writers* or *The Ron Clark Story*, which tell the stories of White teachers who transform the educational lives of inner-city youth of color. Such media texts portray White teachers as selfless "saviors" and students of color as urban miscreants who need to be "saved." White preservice teachers who internalize this message often define as themselves as "good" people who are answering a call to serve.

### Identity, Ideological Stance, and Teacher Identity's Role in Answering Research Questions

Through analysis of the data, it became apparent that Megan's teacher identity was linked to her own personal identity as a former special education student who overcame academic struggles through parental support and hard work. In turn,

this identity was linked to an ideological stance rooted in a desire to “help” urban students and shaped by several assumptions. First, Megan believed that, like her, her students’ academic struggles could be overcome with hard work and “proper support.” Second, she held that all children could succeed and, as a result, “deserved” to be provided with an equal opportunity to learn. Third, rather than see her students as pathological or deficient, Megan viewed student problems as puzzles that had to be solved by the teacher. However, Megan’s personal and professional identities were interpellated through an ideological stance rooted in colorblindness, which made it difficult for her to acknowledge the importance of race in shaping the identities of her students:

I don’t really think about [the race of my students] unless I have to think about it. Like multicultural literature and trying to include that kind of stuff. . . I’m trying to think about curriculum, but I’m also thinking about who my students are and trying to cater to their needs culturally—but specifically racially I’m not—I don’t really think about it that much.

Megan also appeared unable to recognize how her own racial identity as a White woman may have provided her with social and economic privileges that were not always available to her students:

I’m White that’s who I am and there’s nothing I can do to change it. I don’t, I mean, everything that I have—like where I live, what I have—I don’t feel I got that because I was White. I feel like I got that because I worked my ass off and my parents worked their asses off. And granted I started at a completely different playing field [when compared to] some of my students in that I had a great home and I had supportive parents. But where I am right now—I’m here because I worked hard. I don’t think it’s because I’m—maybe it is because I’m White, but I don’t believe it’s because I’m White.

It is clear from this excerpt that Megan attributed her personal, academic, and professional success to her parents’ and her own hard work and personal merit—not to long-standing institutional and social policies that have consistently benefitted White people at the expense of people of color.

By identifying the *ideological stance*, *identity*, and *teacher identity* embedded within Megan’s *racial geography of teaching*, it was possible to learn more about the ways that her *ideological stance* informed her *construction of race*. For example, Megan’s resistance to acknowledging the role that race played in shaping her own personal and professional identities, as well as those of her students of color suggested that her *ideological stance* was rooted in colorblindness or color-evasion. Rather than viewing identity through a sociocultural lens of White privilege, she believed that her success resulted in hard work and individual merit. All of this suggests that a powerful component of Megan’s *construction of race* was rooted in not “seeing” race.

It is important to note that, although it appeared that Megan did not “see” race,

there were times when she *did* see it and it caused her to feel uneasy, particularly in regard to her professional identity. According to Megan, when she first began teaching in an urban school, she felt like she was doing a good thing by helping “underprivileged” children:

I think when I first started teaching I was there to like save—not save the world—but I felt as though I was doing this really good thing for, you know, underprivileged children and trying to help them.

However, during her first few years of her professional practice, she began to feel increasing discomfort with this position and, as noted in the excerpt above, was very concerned that parents not see her as someone who believed she could “save” urban students. For Megan, this tension, which, as will be discussed in more detail below, informed her construction of race, represented an inner struggle centered on how it might be possible for her to “help” her urban students achieve without taking on the role of “savior.”

### Discursive Dimensions:

#### Discursive Repertoires and The Construction of Race

Immediately below *identity* and *ideological stance* and connected by a set of double arrows is a set of two additional interconnected discursive dimensions: *discursive repertoires* and *construction of race*. According to Frankenberg (1993), “[d]iscursive repertoires may reinforce, contradict, conceal, explain, or ‘explain away’ the materiality or the history of a given situation” (p. 2). Although there are many different discursive practices associated with race (for a more detailed discussion of different ideologies, paradigms, and discourse see Frankenberg, 1993 and Omi & Winant, 2014), the example of Megan’s racial geography focuses on the discursive repertoire of colorblindness.

*Colorblindness*, which many scholars argue is the dominant contemporary racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993; Omi & Winant, 2014), supports a discursive repertoire rooted within the assumption that the problem of racism was “solved” through the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s. This means that “overt forms of discrimination are a thing of the past, and the United States is in the midst of a ‘post-racial’ society” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 257) where race holds little significance. Colorblind discourses structure the racial ethos of the United States in several ways. First, they limit the definition of racism to the overt actions of racist individuals like White supremacists or “misguided Black (sic) militants like Al Sharpton who overdramatize White racism and White apologists who have a pathological need to feel guilty” (Brown et al., 2003, p. 7). Colorblindness also works to normalize Whiteness as the neutral standard to which all other racial groups must aspire to in order to be successful. This has the effect of “erasing the cultural contributions, perspectives, and experiences of people from other racial groups”

(Bell, 2002, p. 239) at the same time it privileges White citizens by maintaining White power structures.

Discursive repertoires also “ha[ve] a material existence” (Althusser, 2001, p. 112) in that each “produce[es] material effects” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 49). We can see the material effect of colorblind ideology embedded within the construction of the K-12 public school curriculum, which claims cultural neutrality, but actually represents “a particular form of cultural reproduction which endorses, models, and transmits Eurocentric cultural values and ignores or denigrates other cultural heritages” (Gay, 1995, pp. 164-165). In other words, material and discursive dimensions have a dialectical relationship in that one is shaped and influenced by the other (Frankenberg, 1993). One purpose of the *racial geography of teaching* framework is to make sense of the complex relationship found between and among the material and discursive aspects of ideology, particularly in regard to the racial attitudes of White teachers.

The purpose of the *discursive repertoire* dimension, which is located to the right of the entire figure and connected to the *construction of race* with an arrow, is to provide a means of understanding the degree to which study participants perceived, comprehended, and appreciated the historical, social, and structural aspects of race, racism, and the construction of Whiteness. For example, if a teacher interprets her world through a discursive repertoire of Western colonialism, it is very likely that she believes that the Western canon should be the curricular focus of K-12 education. The material effect of this repertoire might be the underrepresentation or outright omission of the important contributions made African Americans, Asian Americans, or Hispanic Americans within this teacher’s classroom.

Accompanying *discursive repertoires*, is a second dimension referred to as the *construction of race*. This dimension is made up of conflicting discursive repertoires regarding race, racism, and Whiteness that each participant engaged in throughout her personal and professional life. Thus, the *construction of race*, which is directly influenced by specific discursive repertoires, is comprised of tensions between conflicting repertoires.

### Discursive Repertoires and the Construction of Race’s Role in Answering the Research Questions

In the case of Megan, she interpreted race through a series of *discursive repertoires* rooted in an attempt “not” to see race: colorblindness, silence, and color evasion (Frankenberg, 1993). This did not mean, as noted above, that Megan did not see race in a literal sense, but rather, when confronted with race, she appeared to work to resist, evade or avoid the topic all together. As a result, Megan’s *construction of race* was comprised of two sets of highly complex and contradictory tensions rooted in a struggle between acknowledging and not acknowledging race. The first of these discursive tensions was “seeing and not seeing race.” Instead of

“seeing” her students as having a racial identity, Megan often saw them through a special education lens in which she drew on her own experiences as a student who received special education services and her role as a special educator. However, at the same time she did not “see” her students’ race, she was acutely aware of the racial identification of her students’ parents:

I feel like I have to like kind of frontload my introduction to [parents of color] in that I really overdo it that I’m not this, ‘save-the-world-person’ and that I’m really here for [their] kids. I don’t care what color they are—I’m here to help them. Well, I do care—you know what I mean...but I’m not judging them... I’ve really tried to, you know, [make] phone calls and get parents in to meet them so that they know who I am. Because I do fear that a parent may accuse me of being racist, or of not treating his or her child fairly because of the color of his or her skin.

When Megan “saw” the racial difference between herself and her parents of color, she became self-conscious and attempted to evade any racial tension by “frontloading” her communication, so parents know that she isn’t “judging them.”

The second set of discursive tensions, “being silent or developing a voice about race,” was situated within the tension Megan experienced between her extended family’s attitudes and her own evolving views of race as a prospective and practicing teacher. For instance, from her pre-practicum experiences within an urban context and some of her university-based coursework, Megan began to construct a discourse around race that subscribed to the idea that all children, no matter what color, “deserved to be on an equal playing field.” However, Megan reported that some of her family did not share this same belief and often made racist and classist remarks:

If I were to tell a story about Marcus throwing a chair or something, I’m sure that—I know that there would be some comment. Not that he has a crazy life. Not that he has a disability or something like that. It would be because he’s a Black child that’s why he assaulted you or something to do with that. So, I don’t ever talk about my job in front of my mother’s side of the family... I don’t know why but it’s just the way they were brought up, I guess.

Rather than confront these family members, with whom she felt very close, Megan chose to remain silent.

Mapping out this portion of Megan’s racial geography confirmed that Megan negotiated almost all aspect of race through a colorblindness ideology. However, rather than allow her to be unaware of race, it appeared that, at times, colorblindness was employed as a protective buffer that kept racial issues at arm’s length and allowed Megan to avoid potentially challenging confrontations with parents of color and some members of her own family.

### Teaching Practice

The final dimension of Figure 1 is *teaching practice*, which is located at the very bottom of the figure and is connected to the *construction of race* by a double

arrow. Double arrows also connect teacher identity to the dimensions of *identity*, *ideological stance*, and *teacher identity*. All of the material and discursive dimensions that comprise the *racial geography of teaching* lead to this final dimension. Consequently, *teaching practice* is equally comprised of both the material and discursive. Its materiality is rooted within the fact that teaching practice takes place within a specific contextual space and time and results in a concrete outcome related to student learning. It is also discursive in that it is shaped by the development of each teacher's *identity* and *ideological stance* along with one's *construction of race*. *Teaching practice* is not only influenced by all of the other material and discursive dimensions; it also, in turn, influences and shapes several other dimensional aspects. In particular, the interactions and experiences that take place within teaching practice directly influence the discursive dimensions represented. This means that teaching practice has a direct influence on the types of discursive tensions found within the *construction of race*. It also influences *identity* and *ideological stance* and has the potential to change and alter *discursive repertoires*.

### Teaching Practice's Role in Answering the Research Question

In unpacking this final dimension, I was able to uncover two ways that Megan's *ideological stance and constructions of race influenced her teaching practice*. First, without realizing it, Megan would, on some occasions, not acknowledge important racial themes when it was clearly appropriate to do so. For example, during a participant observation session, I observed Megan reading aloud a book entitled *Flossie and the Fox* (McKissack & Isadora, 1986). This book tells the Southern African American story of an African American girl who outmaneuvers a felonious fox.

After a few moments of reading the text, it became clear that Megan was having difficulty reading the Southern African American dialect. At one point, she stops reading and asked the class, "Why am I having difficulty reading this?" She then tells the children that the reason she is having difficulty reading the text is because the book is written in a Southern dialect. She talks about how Mr. Martin, who is her student teacher, speaks differently from her because he is from the South and she is from the North.

Here, Megan told her students that the difficulty she had reading the text had to do with the fact that it was written in a Southern dialect, and since she is from the Northern part of the country, it was hard for her to read it out loud. However, what she did not acknowledge was that this dialect could also be described as African American. Given the fact that the illustrations depict a young African American girl, it was even more intriguing that Megan omitted this fact from her discussion with the students. It was also interesting that Megan neglected to acknowledge the fact that Mr. Martin was African American. It would appear then that, in this particular incident, Megan's colorblindness not only prevented her



from fully embracing the racial aspects of the text, but also from seeing herself or her student teacher as raced.

The second way that Megan's ideological stance and construction of race influenced her teaching occurred when she "saw" race, but made a conscious effort to suppress or mute the topic among her students:

Again, I think that there are ways that in like past classes [conversations about race were] doable, but with the group I have this year, I don't think that it's really possible... You know, I have this handful of kids that are just defiant... I wouldn't want [a conversation] to turn into something that it's not supposed to be... I wouldn't want children to feel uncomfortable or offended in anyway. For that sake, I try not to specifically talk about it... And I don't think that they're mature enough—some of them are mature enough to handle it in that type of setting—in that whole group setting—maybe in small groups, if I were to pull a few of them for lunch or out on the playground or something.

Mica Pollock (2004) refers to the suppression or muting of racial topics as *colormuteness*. She argues that, in terms of race, what is said is just as important as what is not said and that silence about a particular racial problem does not make it disappear. Instead, she argues:

Silence about [racial] patterns, of course, allows them to remain intact: Racial patterns do not go away simply because they are ignored. Indeed, once people have *noticed* racial patterns, they seem to become engraved on the brain. They become, most dangerously, acceptable—a taken-for-granted part of what school is about. (2001, p. 9)

The tensions that comprised Megan's construction of race not only caused her to avoid talking about the meaning of race and racism within her teaching practice, but also had the potential of maintaining racial patterns within her classroom and school community at-large. For example, while "frontloading" communication with parents of color *may* have insulated Megan from being identified as a racist, consciously avoiding the topic of race may have made it difficult for her to recognize when a legitimate racial issue affected one or all of her students. In the end Megan's ideological stance and construction of race made it difficult for her to challenge her own assumptions about race or understand how race shaped the experiences of her students of color. As a result, Megan was unable to gain a complete picture of herself or her students of color.

## Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this article, a theoretical framework represents a specific theoretical perspective and is usually determined before a research project begins. It provides a guide for the design and implementation of a particular investigation. In contrast, the construction of a conceptual framework, which can be developed before, during, or at the end of a study, is built from *all* aspects of a research project

including, but not limited to, the problem statement, research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, interpretation, and the final report of findings.

The purpose of the article presented here was to describe how I constructed a conceptual framework called the *racial geography of teaching*, as well as provide an example of how it was used to uncover the ways that the ideological assumptions for one of two White teachers shaped her construction of race, and what this construction meant in terms of her teaching practice. In mapping the *racial geography of teaching* for this one participant, it became clear that her construction of race was filtered through an ideological stance rooted in colorblindness and color-avoidance. As a result, she worked hard to avoid talking about the meaning of race and racism within her teaching practice.

The purpose of this article is not to suggest that the story of one White teacher's *racial geography of teaching* is generalizable to the entire population of White teachers working in the United States. Instead, I am arguing that, given the ever-widening demographic gap between a majority-White teaching force and an increasingly diverse K-12 student population, it is crucial that critically-oriented researchers develop new conceptual and theoretical frameworks that allow them to investigate this phenomenon more deeply. The *racial geography of teaching* provides one such framework—a framework that I will continue to build upon and use as a means of interpreting how the culturally embedded ideological assumptions of other White teachers shape their constructions of race and what these constructions mean in terms of each new participant's individual teaching practice. The investigation of more cases will not only increase the generalizability and external validity of what the framework uncovers (Merriam, 1998), but also, more importantly, build a new theory or set of theories that address the role that race plays in shaping the teaching practices of White teachers.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> Participant's name, the names of students, city of employment, location and name of school, and community of origin are indicated by pseudonyms.

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## Who's Out? Who's In? (Re)presentations of LGB+ Individuals in Picturebook Biographies

S. Adam Crawley

### Abstract

Through the metaphor of windows, mirrors, and maps this article draws attention to depictions in picturebooks of individuals who identified—or might now be considered because of their romantic, physical, and/or otherwise intimate relationships—as LGB+. However, some picturebook biographies limit information about the person's non-heterosexual orientation more so than others. Therefore, this article examines contemporary picturebook biographies to explore the representations of individuals' sexual orientation and the implications for young readers. The piece begins with a discussion of extant research about LGB(TQ)+ children's literature and asserts the need for biography-focused study. Then the piece outlines methodology and findings, specifically addressing the following questions: (1) What picturebook biographies about LGB+ individuals have been published? (2) How do the books reflect the person's sexual orientation? and (3) What are the implications of such representations?

### Introduction

As a child, I learned about numerous people by reading their biographies. I often lived vicariously through the individuals and the experiences in their representative texts. Though I read about people diverse in race, ethnicity, social class,

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gender, religion, and various other ways of being and who lived in various time periods and locations, the person's sexual orientation was always either depicted as heterosexual or not stated. Therefore, I assumed the individuals were heterosexual as it was what I was accustomed to seeing in books. What I would have given to read about people like me: people who identified or questioned their orientation as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or otherwise sexually queer (LGB+). Little did I know such individuals ever existed, let alone succeeded in their personal and/or professional lives. While I heard or read about the accomplishments of people like Josephine Baker, Gertrude Stein, and Andy Warhol, I was blind to their non-heterosexual, mainstream orientations. I attribute my blindedness to the limited information shared by my educators and the representations available to me in books, documentaries, and other media—and specifically the texts that formed my earliest foundational knowledge such as picturebook biographies.

Children's literature inclusive of LGB+ (and transgender, gender non-conforming, and other queer)<sup>1</sup> characters has steadily increased (Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012). These and other texts representative of diversity provide “windows and mirrors” (Bishop, 1990) for children to see reflections of themselves, have their or their loved ones' identities validated, and learn about others who are different than themselves. In addition to providing windows and mirrors, children's literature is sometimes a map for children, showing youth possibilities for their lives as well as the personal and professional journeys taken by others (Myers, 2014). The map metaphor is especially relevant considering biographies of individuals from marginalized populations. Readers can see how people overcame obstacles, navigated various contexts such as family and political structures, were an integral part of and contributed to society, and achieved prominence despite marginalization. Biographies show what individuals have accomplished in the past and help readers more concretely envision the potential for their futures as well as the possible steps necessary to get there.

Though the windows, mirrors, and maps metaphor has relevance to all biographies, in this article I draw attention to depictions in picturebooks<sup>2</sup> of individuals who identified—or might now be considered because of their romantic, physical, and/or otherwise intimate relationships—as LGB+. However, some picturebook biographies limit information about the person's non-heterosexual orientation more so than others. Therefore, I examine contemporary picturebook biographies to explore the representations of individuals' sexual orientation and the implications for young readers. Specifically: (1) What picturebook biographies about LGB+ individuals have been published? (2) How do the books reflect the person's sexual orientation? and (3) What are the implications of such representations? Before addressing these questions via the methodology and findings, I first discuss extant research about LGB(TQ)+ children's literature and assert the need for biography-focused study.

### The Need for LGB+ Inclusive Biographies and Related Research

It is well documented that children's literature is an important tool for creating more inclusive social and learning environments for all youth, and specifically for discussing and making visible LGB+ people and issues (Frantz Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Schall & Kauffmann, 2003). Such conversations are critical since widespread oppression based on actual or perceived sexual orientation continues to affect children and adolescents, resulting in lower academic success (Kosciw et al., 2018) or even death (e.g., Simon, 2009; The Trevor Project, 2019). Marginalization then continues into adulthood as evidenced by employment discrimination based on sexual orientation remaining legal in 32 U.S. states (National LGBTQ Task Force, 2014) and rights being repeatedly under attack by the current U.S. political administration such as discrimination for services (*Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, 2018), workplace discrimination (de la Garza, 2019), and other rights and protections (Gandara, Jackson, & Discont, 2017).

Although some people claim sexual orientation an inappropriate—if not taboo—topic for children, such arguments fail to account how sexual orientation is already present in the form of heteronormativity in countless children's texts via books, television, movies, and other forms of media (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Sapp, 2010). Heterosexual representations are pervasive in the texts available to young children via classroom libraries (Crisp et al., 2016). In addition, research indicates that children identify or begin to question their sexual orientation at an early age (Lopez, 2013) and converse with peers about sexual orientation based on images seen in various forms of media or heard within their networks of family and friends (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018). Thus, various sexual orientations are always already present in and central to children's lives regardless of how adults may want to deny or protect such knowledge.

Although the publication of LGB+ children's literature continues to increase, the majority of texts documented in scholarly literature and other resources is predominantly fiction. For example, in Naidoo's (2012) extensive annotated bibliography of extant LGB(TQ)+ children's literature, 184 fictional picturebooks and 39 fictional chapter books are listed compared to only 45 informational texts inclusive of picturebooks and lengthier texts. In Lester's (2014) content analysis of queer-themed children's books published in four Western countries across three decades and used in an undergraduate university course, only one of the 68 books was nonfiction. The American Library Association's annual Rainbow Book List includes only five nonfiction texts in the picturebook category since the list's 2008 inception, and fictional texts pervade the various middle grade and young adult categories as well (<https://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/rainbow-books-lists>). Similarly, the Mike Morgan and Larry Roman's Children's and Young Adult Literature Award—given by the American Library Association's Stonewall Book Award

Committee—is rife with fiction award and honor recipients. The predominance of fiction in LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature lists may correlate to possible limited publication of nonfiction texts. For example, of the 3,700 books they received in 2017, the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (2018) identified 136 books as having significant LGB(TQ)+ content and only 18 of those as nonfiction.

Fictional texts are also prevalent in empirical studies with youth and educators. For example, Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2018) described classroom scenarios where teachers in various settings used and facilitated conversations around LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature. Except for one media article, all of the children’s literature incorporated by the teachers or suggested by the authors was fictional. Similarly, many additional studies with youth entail primarily—if not solely—reading fictional texts (e.g., Frantz Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016; Hartman, 2018; Schall & Kauffmann, 2003; Skrlac Lo, 2016; Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008; Van Horn, 2015). Further, research with pre and/or in-service teachers reading and responding to LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature largely or exclusively involves reading fiction (e.g., Bouley, 2011; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010). The predominant inclusion of fiction in empirical studies and recommended lists may more widely impact educators’ future book selections for libraries, read alouds, and instruction as they gravitate toward such texts vetted by others.

Naidoo (2013) reported the need for increased study within the field of LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature, especially involving picturebooks, and asserted biographies of LGB(TQ)+ individuals written for children are particularly limited in number (Naidoo, 2012). The lack of LGB+ biographies written for youth is further evidenced in a recent study of books receiving the Orbis Pictus award or honor distinction between 1990 through 2017. In their analysis of the award granted to nonfiction texts, Crisp, Gardner, and Almeida (2017) found that of a 143 book corpus, only six of the books—all biographies—included focal subjects who were gay, bisexual, or had another queer sexual orientation. None of the books included focal subjects who were lesbian. Nor did any of the six books actually depict focal subjects’ gay, bi, or otherwise queer sexual orientations. In other words, the researchers’ understanding of the focal individuals’ sexual orientations was based on their extended knowledge and research rather than the texts themselves. Further, there is a lack of analysis of nonfiction—and biography specifically—beyond numerical counts or from pre-determined sets such as those receiving a particular award.

Biographies are worthy of study and have a range of affordances. For example, Haag and Albright (2009) claimed,

Biographies make the world come alive for children and are a significant genre in the classroom and in publishing. Reading about the lives of others engages children and helps them see connections to their own lives and to the past. (p. 11)

Research asserts such engagement may be particularly true for LGB+ youth. For



example, nearly a third of LGB(TQ)+ youth (ages 13 to 21) search for texts to “gain information about LGBTQ lives, people, culture, or history” (Paridis, 2016, p. 95). Kosciw and colleagues (2016) reinforced the importance of information access in relation to school climate: “LGBTQ students experienced a safer, more positive school environment when [...] they were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events” (p. 61). Related, LGB(TQ)+ people, history, and events are now mandated in K-12 curriculum in California and New Jersey (California Department of Education, 2018; Ly & Thompson, 2019) with bills for similar actions under governor review in other states such as Colorado and Illinois after having passed in each state’s legislature (Botts, 2019; Edmund, 2019). Biographies can serve a vital role in these curricular objectives across content areas, especially in place of or as a supplement to textbooks. The emphasis on nonfiction within the Common Core literacy standards encourages educators to include biographies among other informational texts in their classroom instruction and students’ reading (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Whether biography or another genre, educators can read and discuss picturebooks both with elementary-aged and adolescent readers (Vercelletto, 2018), and youth of all ages report reading and enjoying the picturebook format (Scholastic, 2019). Picturebooks may be many students’ first introduction to particular topics, including the significant people featured in biographies. However, research demonstrates biographies are less favored by youth compared to other genres or topics for self-selected reading (Clark & Foster, 2005; Scholastic, 2019). Thus, in some instances, picturebooks—along with other brief and/or visual forms of media such as film or news articles—may be the sole source of information for readers about some individuals, especially readers who have limited interest, access to information about, and/or exposure to particular individuals. In such instances, picturebook biographies carry tremendous responsibility for imparting information about the focal individual. Even for readers who do later read or otherwise learn about the focal individuals, the picturebooks’ depictions may form the foundational understandings on which readers build. Related, the illustrations throughout picturebooks coupled with written words create added meaning (Reynolds, 2011; Sipe, 1998), an affordance not shared by biographies consisting of words alone.

For readers of all ages, picturebook biographies depicting LGB+ individuals emphasize not only the existence of such people past and present, but also how those individuals made important contributions in their local and/or global communities. Due to the importance of LGB+ picturebook biographies along with the limited extant research and showcasing of them, I explore such texts representing LGB+ individuals’ lives and the messages they send.

### Queer Theory and the Reading of Texts and Individuals

I approach this study, read texts through, and situate my work within queer

theory. Three key tenets of queer theory are to disrupt heteronormativity (Sullivan, 2003), foreground the sexual (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), and make the “‘unthinkable’ thinkable” (Greteman, 2013, p. 258). Exploring the portrayal in biographies of individuals’ LGB+ orientation brings the sexual to the fore, an element that might initially be considered unthinkable both in picturebooks for young readers but also within the contexts of the individuals’ lives who are being represented therein. Similarly, queer theory can be used to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar (Fifield & Letts, 2014). In this project, I seek to “make strange” individuals whom people may think they are familiar, bringing to light or facilitating a reconsideration of the notable figures regarding their sexual orientation. By foregrounding LGB+ sexual orientation in the reading and knowledge construction about these individuals, I also promote making what might at first seem strange or unthinkable increasingly familiar and thinkable.

Much educational research using queer theory aims to disrupt heteronormative institutions, and such research frequently positions and critiques K-12 schools and higher education as heteronormative spaces. While I agree with those positionings and critiques, in this study I instead consider the field of children’s book publishing as a heteronormative institution that then informs and reinforces heteronormativity within schools. Research demonstrates the publishing industry is predominantly heterosexual (Lee & Low, 2016) which then becomes reflected in the texts produced, available to readers, and circulated in educational contexts. As I attest in this article, heterosexuality is not only most frequently represented in children’s literature but also used as a normative default even when depicting LGB+ individuals.

### *Reading Texts with a Queer Lens*

Plummer (2013) asserted using textual artifacts as items for analysis can be fruitful within queer theory, and queer theory in relation to reading practices has been widely discussed and modeled by scholars and theorists (e.g., Britzman, 1995; Butler, 1999; Doty, 1993; Foucault, 1978; Sedgwick, 1990). Recently, scholars have applied a queer lens to read and interpret a variety of children’s literature—including texts that are explicitly LGB+ inclusive (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018) and those that are seemingly “straight” (Crisp, Gardner, & Almeida, 2017; Hermann-Wilmarth & Souto-Manning, 2007; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013). Reading with a queer lens involves being attentive to portrayals and absences of sexual orientation, how representations reinforce particular stereotypes, and how depictions might be alternately read. Additionally helpful, Kubowitz (2012) described queer writing and reading strategies showing the agency of both text producers (e.g., authors) and readers. Queer writing strategies are techniques employed intentionally by authors (and arguably illustrators as well) to embed clues in their writing related to queer identities or themes. Among the various writing strategies are metaphors, clichés, or allusions to queer culture though Crisp (2018) cautions such techniques often rely

on LGB+ stereotypes and tropes. For example, the character Albus Dumbledore in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series being sensitive and having a fashion sense may be details the author used to convey his being gay, but these details are based on and reinforce stereotypes (Crisp, 2018). Even when authors and illustrators do not intentionally include LGB+ elements or nods, audiences can apply queer reading strategies. Similar to reading with a queer lens, a queer reading strategy involves foregrounding queerness, looking for elements that could be interpreted as non-heterosexual. Such reading may or may not rely on stereotypes. For example, while readers may infer Dumbledore was gay because of Rowling's stereotypical details, Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2013) described how readers might interpret the gazes, physical touches, and barrier challenges between two girls of different races within *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) relative to exclusion and marginalization based on sexual orientation. It is through queer reading approaches that I selected, categorized, and further analyzed the picturebook biographies I later detail in this article. However, it is not only texts that are read queerly, but also the represented individuals as well.

#### *Reading Individuals: Identity and Presentism*

Queer theory recognizes identities—both regarding sexual orientation and other ways of being—as fluid, multiple, and non-essentialist (Blackburn, 2014; Lovaas et al., 2006). I do not intend to infer static identity in my categorization of books and labeling of people's sexual orientations in this article. Rather, the descriptions of the historical figures throughout the analysis are about the depictions within the specific picturebooks, not the individuals themselves. Though beyond the scope of this article, additional analysis of these or other books—as well as the creation of new picturebook narratives—could increase representations of the fluidity exemplified within queerness and queer theory.

Further, and as I later detail in this article, each of the focal individuals within the picturebooks I selected were identified as LGB+ within scholarly and other expert resources (e.g., Bronski, 2011; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014; GLBTQ Archive, 2017; Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012; Pohlen, 2016; Prager, 2017; Sapp, 2010). It is imperative to assert that though others have identified the individuals as LGB+, the focal individuals may not have identified in the same ways and such relationships may have been interpreted differently during their lifetimes. For example, though it is documented Josephine Baker had emotional and physical relationships with women as well as men, she may not have described herself as or used the term “bisexual.” Susan B. Anthony's intimate friendships and cohabitation with women were sometimes coined “Boston Marriages” during the nineteenth century (Rapp, 2004). On the other hand, individuals such as Billie Jean King *have* identified as and used the term “lesbian” to describe themselves. Interpreting relationships from the past through contemporary lenses and terminology is a

form of presentism (Power, 2003). My analysis and discussion recognizes this aspect.

## Methodology

Methodology involves data sources, collection methods, and analytic processes to address research questions informed by and connected to the theoretical framework. To rehighlight, my research questions are: (1) What picturebook biographies about LGB+ individuals have been published? (2) How do the books reflect the person's sexual orientation? and (3) What are the implications of such representations? To answer these questions, I assembled a corpus of books as data sources based on select criteria followed by inquiry using critical content analysis.

### *Creating the Corpus*

Adding to the importance of picturebooks from earlier in this article, I selected picturebooks for this study because such texts often serve for youth as an introduction and basis of knowledge for a variety of concepts, including first glimpses of significant people in history as well as sexual orientation writ large. In conjunction with other media such as television, film, and print-based advertisements, picturebooks are often imbued with and send messages about relationships—often in ways that reinforce heterosexuality. Further, picturebooks may often be the main texts young children are initially exposed to in their homes, schools, and libraries. The picturebook format is ripe for use as a read-aloud and modeling reading texts using various lenses (e.g., feminist, queer) so that such approaches can be applied with greater independence or to lengthier texts as children's reading interest, stamina, and ability continue to increase (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018).

I used various criteria to search for and select books for this study. First, I defined picturebooks as those inclusive of both words and images (i.e., illustrations, photographs) in approximately equal ratio. In addition, I selected books conducive to a read-aloud or independent reading in a single session as opposed to books with lengthier narratives such as *George Washington Carver* (Bolden, 2008) which are more akin to illustrated books with higher word counts and images are more supplemental (Matulka, 2008). My initial selection of biographies about LGB+ individuals came from books described in children's literature scholarship (e.g., Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012; Sapp, 2010), followed by a search for texts representing those and other individuals named in LGB+ focused academic and history resources (e.g., Bronski, 2011; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014; GLBTQ Archive, 2017; Pohlen, 2016; Prager, 2017). For each individual, I searched for books via online resources including the Children's Literature Comprehensive Database, GoodReads.com, and Amazon.com. Search terms included the focal individuals' full names in isolation as well as in various combinations with "picturebook", "picture book", and "biography." Searches sometimes resulted in the recommendation of additional titles.

I selected books if they either provided a narrative of the person's whole life or moment from their adulthood. Rather than selecting biographies in which the individual's accomplishments were the *sole* focus, I chose books including at least one relationship with others such as a family member, friend, or significant other. By the book depicting a personal relationship, this aspect substantiated arguments about the inclusion or exclusion of other details related to sexual orientation. Further, I narrowed the corpus by publication date in two ways. The picturebook needed to be published after the individual's LGB+ orientation was publicly known. For example, I did not include *Sally Ride: Astronaut, Scientist, Teacher* (Nettleton, 2003) in the study because the book was published prior to her lesbian relationship being revealed by her partner following Ride's death (Rapp, 2012). Second, I only included books published since 2000. Though this criteria resulted in eliminating previously published picturebook biographies of some LGB+ people, it narrowed my search and analysis. I selected 2000 since the first picturebook biography clearly depicting an individual's LGB+ sexual orientation was published just two years later: *The Harvey Milk Story* (Krakow, 2002). Though beyond the scope of this study, selection and analysis of picturebook biographies published prior to the 21st century could further add to the findings in this article.

My search resulted in a corpus of 51 books listed in Appendix A. The list represents nearly two decades of publication, varied illustrative types (e.g., illustrations, photographs), award-winning and non-award winning texts, and stand-alone books in addition to series. In other words, the list contains the variety of texts that may exist within a school or classroom library. It is pertinent to note the corpus is evolving and thus not exhaustive. Though I searched widely, additional picturebook biographies may exist that meet my selection criteria and depict the LGB+ individuals I listed or others.

Since multiple picturebook biographies exist for the same person in some instances, the information in Appendix A is organized alphabetically by the LGB+ individual followed by demographic information, the text(s) depicting the individual, and the textual categorization based on my analysis.

### ***Critical Content Analysis***

I conducted a critical content analysis of the picturebook biographies. According to Short (2017), critical content analysis is *critical* because it "often includes questioning the concept of 'truth' and how it is presented, by whom, and for what purposes. Other questions also emerge around whose values, texts, and ideologies are privileged or considered normative" (p. 5). Critical content analysis is typically informed by a critical theoretical framework, including—but not limited to—feminist, critical race, postcolonial, or queer theories (Beach et al, 2009; Short, 2017). Further, Short (2017) described how content analysis:

reflects a heremenuetic, reader-response oriented research stance and so meaning is not in the text but in the reading event, which is translated between an analyst and a text (Rosenblatt, 1938). Texts thus have multiple meanings that are dependent on the analyst's intentions as a reader and the context of the study because the purpose for the reading influences the meanings that are constructed as research findings. (p. 4)

The intentional approach to reading in conjunction with the personal interpretation due to individual lived experience aligns with queer reading practices I earlier described.

For the analysis, I independently read each book multiple times and noted if and how the individual's LGB+ sexual orientation was depicted. While recursively building and reading the corpus, I noticed and developed three categories regarding if and how the individual's sexual orientation was represented: explicit, implicit, or excluded. In addition to the words in the narrative, I read and analyzed backmatter (e.g., author's notes, timelines, additional resources lists) and illustrations, especially since backmatter and illustrations may convey information not stated in the narrative alone. Critical content analysis of words and illustrations has been shown an effective approach by both multiple scholars analyzing a single text using varied theoretical stances (Beach et al., 2009) and individual scholars analyzing across multiple texts using a single theoretical frame (Crawley, 2017; Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2019). In addition, content analysis is an approach for investigating norms and meanings embedded in texts via both written and visual narratives (Lushchevska, 2015). The exploration of how certain aspects of identity are included or excluded through words and/or images in an effort to normalize is particularly significant to this study, and troubling the concept of normal is central to queer theory (Warner, 1999).

### Three Types of Representation

In the sections that follow, I discuss three categories of picturebook biographies I identified via analysis. The categories—explicit, implicit, and excluded—regard the texts' representation of LGB+ individuals' sexual orientation. Within each section, I share examples from specific picturebooks and discuss the implications of each type of representation for youth. In addition, I label each biography's categorization as explicit, implicit, or excluded in Appendix A.

#### ***Out and Proud: Explicit Representations***

By far the smallest of the three categories, five books from the corpus clearly portray LGB+ individuals' sexual orientation: *The Harvey Milk Story* (Krakow, 2002), *Sally Ride: The First American Woman in Space* (Baby Professor, 2017), *When You Look Out the Window: How Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Built a Community* (Pitman, 2017), *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* (Sanders, 2018), and *Sewing the Rainbow: A Story about Gilbert Baker* (Pitman, 2018). As

evidenced in the titles, two of the books depict Harvey Milk—a San Francisco city supervisor during the 1970s who was the first U.S. elected politician who was openly gay. *Sewing the Rainbow* portrays Gilbert Baker, a designer approached by Harvey Milk to create a new symbol for the LGB(TQ)+ community. Also taking place in San Francisco, *When You Look Out the Window* is a first person account of two female activists. *Sally Ride* is the only depiction of an LGB+ person not residing in northern California. In three of the books (*Harvey Milk Story*, *Pride*, and *When You Look Out the Window*), the person's sexual orientation is central to the book's narrative while the other two texts (*Sewing the Rainbow* and *Sally Ride*) include sexual orientation peripherally to other information. Regardless of how widely the person's sexual orientation is discussed across the book, each of these texts explicitly show youth that LGB+ individuals have existed in, navigated, and contributed to society.

While *Sally Ride* shares her LGB+ sexual orientation as an additional detail to her aeronautic work, the other four biographies exude a sense of LGB+ joy and pride. In *Pride*, *Sewing the Rainbow*, and *When You Look Out the Window*, the book's cover and illustrations are awash with rainbow flags. A particularly striking pagespread in *Pride* shows individuals diverse in age, ability, race, gender, gender performance, and occupation proudly facing the reader while wearing, carrying, or otherwise displaying the flag. Similarly, rainbow flags fill the community in *When You Look Out the Window*. Explicit LGB+ joy is not solely depicted via the rainbow flag. On the second pagespread of *Pride*, two men ride a two-seated bicycle with a sash reading "just married" trailing behind them (Sanders, 2018, n.p.). Multiple same-sex couples embrace and hold hands in city parks and streets across *When You Look Out the Window*. However, joy and pride is not only conveyed in public spaces but also more intimately. For example, while *The Harvey Milk Story* shows the politician riding atop a car in a parade on the book's cover, pages within the narrative show his warm embrace with a male partner along with the words: "Harvey did fall in love and settle down. But the right person was a handsome young man named Joe Campbell" (Krakow, 2002, n.p.). Representations of joy and pride show readers that LGB+ individuals can and have lived lives that are both professionally and personally fulfilling and that such emotions can be publically and privately displayed.

In addition to demonstrating positive experiences, the four books (apart from *Sally Ride*) also show how the focal individual experienced and navigated challenges due to their LGB+ sexual orientation and related work. In *Pride*, Harvey Milk speaks from a stage to a crowd mixed in support. While some onlookers hold signs reading "Straights for Gays" and "Gay Pride", other signs display "Gays Must Go" and "God Says No" (Sanders, 2018, n.p.). However, such resistance did not deter Milk, and as evidence in both *Pride* and *The Harvey Milk Story*, he advocated for various groups including African Americans, senior citizens, and people with disabilities in addition to LGB+ people. In *The Harvey Milk Story*, *When You Look Out the Window*, and *Sewing the Rainbow*, the individuals' personal challenges are

clearly depicted. Harvey Milk and Gilbert Baker are both described as lonely or feeling a sense of not fitting in with others during their childhoods. Having to keep their relationship a secret results in Harvey Milk and Joe Campbell's separation after six years, and Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin are confronted by others in their community as a same-sex couple. In the conclusion of *The Harvey Milk Story*, the politician's assassination by colleague Dan White is mentioned, along with a candlelight vigil and Gay Rights March in Washington D.C. in his memory. Though death is the ultimate retaliation against LGB+ individuals, the book includes an epilogue stating: Milk "showed the world that all people can have their hopes realized" (Krakow, 2002, n.p.). Therefore, these—and many other examples across the biographies—demonstrate to readers that LGB+ individuals encounter both private and public challenges but also navigated those to still experience joy and pride. Such representations are important for all youth to see. For youth who are straight or otherwise aligned with mainstream populations, the books show the past and still present marginalization of LGB+ individuals and may instill a sense of how dominant cultures can have a detrimental impact. For readers who are or question their LGB+ identity, the books show how they may not be alone in experiencing challenges and provide maps for how others navigated hardship.

Unlike the other four books explicitly including the individual's LGB+ sexual orientation in the narrative, *Sewing the Rainbow* relegates such information to the "Reader Note" in the backmatter. As I repeatedly read the biography and noted its focus on the rainbow flag in words and images, I began to realize my categorization of the book as an explicit representation was based on my own familiarity of the rainbow flag as an LGB(TQ)+ symbol. However, nowhere in the narrative itself are the terms "LGBTQ", "gay", or related words used. Nor are any relationships with males other than friendship depicted in words or images. Instead, Baker's "colorful, sparkly, glittery" (Pitman, 2018, n.p.) gender nonconformity are the focus. Although his acquaintances Sylvester, Mama José and her Imperial Court, and "Harvey" are mentioned, their LGB(TQ)+ identities or associations are not revealed. Therefore, unless readers enter into the narrative with familiarity of the LGB(TQ)+ symbols or the specific individuals named, then this biography loses its potential as an explicit representation. Only in the backmatter is there explicit mention of Baker and the rainbow flag as part of the LGB(TQ)+ community. Even then, while Baker's extensive involvement with and contributions to LGB(TQ)+ organizations and efforts are described, his personal LGB+ sexual orientation is unclear. Thus, it's incumbent on readers to read the backmatter and make assumptions which may or may not be fully accurate. Because of the lack of clarity about Baker's own LGB+ sexual orientation, I hesitated categorizing the biography as an explicit representation. However, the use of inclusive pronouns supposedly used by Baker and noted in the backmatter—for example, "*We* need a new logo" when meeting with Harvey Milk and "It's natural to be whomever *we* are, and to love whomever *we* love" (Pitman, 2018, n.p., emphasis added)—led me to interpret Baker as LGB+ identified and



hence I categorized the book as an explicit representation. The construction of Gilbert Baker in *Sewing the Rainbow* shows how differentiating between explicit and non-explicit representations can involve a fine and subjective line.

Through the five explicit representations, readers see an astronaut and various activists who had LGB+ sexual orientations. These biographies have the greatest potential for helping children see that not only do LGB+ individuals exist, but also contribute to society in varied and meaningful ways. The books help children visualize that a person's sexual orientation may or may not be central to their work and can be catalysts for conversations about how people's identities may impact or inspire other aspects of their lives. Regardless of how connected a person's personal and professional lives appear, the books show how lives are multifaceted and that it's possible to be personally and professionally fulfilled—and even externally successful and renowned—as an LGB+ person. On the other hand, although five focal individuals are depicted across the texts, they are largely a homogenous group. All of the focal individuals are white, and all but Sally Ride lived in San Francisco. This homogeneity limits LGB+ representation, perhaps sending the message that to be LGB+ and thrive can only exist in certain ways and spaces. However, LGB+ people diverse in race and context have long existed and are focal subjects in other picturebook biographies, though their non-heterosexual orientation is less explicitly represented.

#### *Reading Between the Lines: Implicit Representations*

With only a few books more than the previous category, nine books from the larger corpus reference individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation but use coded language or illustrations requiring inference: *Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson* (Ehrlich, 2003); *Uncle Andy's: A Faabbbulous Visit with Andy Warhol* (Warhola, 2003); *Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude* (Winter, 2009); *Fabulous! A Portrait of Andy Warhol* (Christensen, 2011); *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* (Griffith, 2011); *The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdos* (Heiligman, 2013); *Happy Birthday, Alice Babbette* (Kulling, 2016); *Martina & Chrissie: The Greatest Rivalry in the History of Sports* (Bildner, 2017); and *What Do You Do with a Voice Like That? The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan* (Barton, 2018). As I earlier described, it is important to note my categorization of these books and identification of their queer allusions is informed by my own perspective (a gay, cisgender male), and a different reading and interpretation may be conducted by others based on their own experiences, identities, and/or insights (Kubowitz, 2012). Though I read and analyzed the entire corpus with a queer lens, implicit books are where such a reading strategy becomes increasingly evident and necessary. Further, noticing queer allusions in the texts is enhanced by having previous knowledge of the focal individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation and other information about their lives. Without such knowledge about the individuals, readers may miss the implicit details.

Similar to the explicit representations described above, some biographies in this implicit category more clearly depict information than others. The picturebook biographies of Gertrude Stein—*Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude* and *Happy Birthday, Alice Babette*—are two implicit examples with coded language and images that are more easily recognizable. In *Gertrude is Gertrude*, the term “companion” is used for Stein and Alice Toklas (Winter, 2009, n.p.). Throughout the book, it is evident the two women cohabit and are a couple: “and Gertrude and Alice are Gertrude and Alice” (n.p.). However, the narrative is constructed so the extent of their relationship is not clear. For example, the text emphasizes the two do not sleep together: “While Alice sleeps, Gertrude is writing [...] And in the morning while Gertrude sleeps, Alice is typing. Alice is typing Gertrude’s writing, whatever it is” (n.p.). This last sentence coupled with the statement from the previous page, “Alice makes sure that Gertrude is happy” (n.p.), shows their symbiotic relationship. However, further blurring of their partnership occurs near the end of the book when Gertrude is described as being “happy as a baby” compared to Alice being “happy as a mother” (n.p.). Thus, while the text reveals a relationship exists, it is left to the reader to discern whether the two women are friends, roommates, parent and child, romantic or physical partners, or another relation. *Happy Birthday, Alice Babette* increasingly constructs the women as “friends” (Kulling, 2016, n.p.). However, one particularly significant implicit detail exists early in the book. Stein and Toklas eat breakfast in the dining room lined with artwork. One portrait depicts Stein thus situating the artwork as personal and connected to the homeowners, and another piece is a woman standing nude. Although the latter artwork does not directly correlate to LGB+ orientation, it may catch the attention of readers looking for potential queer clues.

More implicit than the Gertrude Stein biographies are *What Do You Do with a Voice Like That?* and *Martina and Chrissie*. While both Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas appeared across the narrative in *Gertrude*, Barbara Jordan’s relationship with Nancy Earl surfaces in one illustration and the backmatter in *Voice Like That*. Though Jordan and Earl’s relationship spanned decades, readers are afforded a single illustration that can only be inferred as the couple. Jordan and a person who appears to be Earl during that time period based on photographs (i.e., White, female, short blonde hair) sit on a bench, their arms touching. However, they are separated by an armrest and seated in opposite directions. The matching narrative simply states, “Barbara would have loved spending more nights under actual stars, camping and singing with her friends, but the public wanted more of her and more from her” (Barton, 2018, n.p.). In the extensive timeline in the backmatter, Earl is named in two of the twenty-two segments: “On a camping trip with mutual friends [in 1968-69], Barbara meets psychologist Nancy Earl, who becomes her lifelong companion” and “Barbara and Nancy begin the process of buying property together and having a home built [in 1975]” (Barton, 2018, n.p.). While to some readers these two details may seem explicit, “companion”—as noted above in *Gertrude*—can be interpreted

in various ways and thus may not be read as a romantic, physical, or otherwise intimate partnership. Similarly, Jerome Pohlen's (2015) *Gay & Lesbian History for Kids: The Century Long Struggle for LGBT Rights* is listed on the final page as one of seven additional references. While the acronym LGBT is clearly evident in the title, it is unclear solely based on this listing if the book includes information about Jordan's own LGB+ sexual orientation, her work for LGB+ rights and individuals, or context more generally about the time period in which she lived and worked.

Increasingly implicit and relegated to the backmatter is Martina Navratilova's LGB+ sexual orientation. *Martina & Chrissie* primarily describes the platonic friendship and various tennis competitions of Navratilova and Chris Evert, but the backmatter includes more information about both women. The backmatter, however, does not explicitly state Navratilova's sexual orientation or having a same-sex companion though it does mention her as "a leading advocate for equality and gay rights" (Bildner, 2017, n.p.). Although this note informs readers of Navratilova's support for LGB+ people, it leaves readers to speculate her sexual orientation. In both *Voice Like That* and *Martina & Chrissie*, readers are required to refer to the backmatter – which they may not read unless strongly interested – for glimpses of implicit details relative to the focal individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation. Even then, the information must be sifted from an abundance of other details about the people's lives.

Four books use single terms, descriptors, or illustrations that might imply the individual's LGB+ sexual orientation. *Uncle Andy's: A Fabulous Visit with Andy Warhol*, *Fabulous! A Portrait of Andy Warhol*, and *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* all include "fabulous" in the title, an expressive word sometimes used stereotypically in the LGB(TQ)+ community (Urban Dictionary, 2017). In the backmatter of their biographies, Santos-Dumont is described as "flamboyant" (Griffith, 2011, n.p.) and Warhol is described as "stonewalling" interviewers (Christensen, 2011, n.p.). The author's selection of "stonewalling" rather than other alternatives may have been a strategic device by the author to allude to Warhol's sexual orientation and the Stonewall Riot, a pivotal moment in LGB(TQ)+ history that occurred in New York City in the 1960s and at the height of Warhol's career (Bronski, 2011). I acknowledge considering "stonewalling" a queer illusion may be a reach. However, this reading is again informed by my own queer reading, especially as someone who yearned for decades for any sign of queerness in texts. Similarly hungry readers may notice such details as well. In *Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson*, the conservationist has a "summer friend" in Dorothy Freeman (Ehrlich, 2003, n.p.). On the same page as the term, the pair are illustrated as distant, overlapping silhouettes in the woods, signaling to readers there may be something secret about their relationship. The illustration is undoubtedly intimate. In other books, Andy Warhol is depicted as a lonely and often sickly child taunted by his peers and family in *Fabulous* and avant-garde, mysterious, and having male sculptures in his attic in *Uncle Andy's*. In *Improbable Life*, Paul Erdos' description reads, "He wasn't the kind of person to cook or clean or drive

a car or have a wife and children” (Heiligman, 2013, n.p.). The phrase is paired with an illustration of the mathematician consumed in his work at a table in a café. Although Erdos identified as asexual during his life (Csicsery, 1993), his later depiction in the picturebook biography leaves readers to wonder what not being the “kind of person to [...] have a wife and children” might mean. The limited but existing implicit descriptors and illustrations cue readers to the individuals’ LGB+ sexual orientations, or at the very least a different and non-mainstream aspect to how they are perceived by others. Such allusions may be particularly noted by readers yearning for any reflections of queerness—however slight—in the texts they read. On the other hand, such interpretations—whether intended by the book creators or not—again rely heavily on tropes and stereotypes of LGB+ individuals that can be damaging and inaccurate (Crisp, 2018).

Implicit representations make it increasingly difficult to recognize LGB+ individuals exist and contribute to the world. Any statements that could be interpreted as examples of queerness may be easily dismissed or unrecognized. Except for *Gertrude*, the allusions are only available in minute sections of each book and frequently buried in the backmatter. Implicitness and limited information is a disservice to all readers, regardless of their sexual orientation, as it masks information about the focal individuals and reinforces messages that LGB+ sexual orientation is something to hide or be subtle. Citing the longstanding work of scholars who study LGB(TQ)+ texts and their importance, Crisp (2018) asserts,

While it is possible for readers to “queer” many characters in the texts they read (cf., Abate & Kidd, 2011), many literary scholars advocate that creators of children’s books be explicit about the sexual identity of queer-identified characters (Cart & Jenkins, 2006) [...] relying upon readers to queer relationships or successfully interpret subtextual clues intended to signal a character is gay places the brunt of the work on readers’ ability to recognize and interpret such codes (Crisp, Gardner, & Almedia, 2018). Furthermore, it becomes the responsibility of queer-identified readers and their allies to remain vigilant for hints of possible representations, while the experiences of all other readers remain safely “undisturbed” (Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Britzman, 1998). (Crisp, 2018, p. 358)

Implicit representations have long existed in various forms of media (e.g., television, film), and the premise was so that queer audiences could see others similar to themselves while mainstream viewers might remain unaware of the subtext (Benshoff & Griffin, 2006). Although used as a device to reveal queerness in a safer and perhaps less controversial way—and ripe for critical reading of words and illustrations—implicit material also runs the risk of not being understood or seen by those who may need to see such images the most. In other words, queer audiences devoid of queer representations may also be unfamiliar with or unaccustomed to subtextual clues of which they might otherwise be attentive. It is also easier for heterosexual readers to negate sexual orientation and relationships either intentionally or due to lack of knowledge, and this is especially problematic when considering the use of

children's literature by adults with younger readers. As evidenced in this section, some implicit representations are harder to discern than others as a result of heavily coded language and/or images. The final category of texts make recognizing prominent LGB+ individuals outright impossible.

### ***Kept in the Closet: Exclusion of Individuals' LGB+ Identity***

The largest category of the corpus are picturebook biographies that exclude referencing LGB+ sexual orientation. The 37 biographies are listed in Appendix A and include focal subjects such as Langston Hughes, Frida Kahlo, George Washington Carver, and Susan B. Anthony among others. In addition, Rachel Carson—earlier described with an implicit representation—also has excluded LGB+ representations: *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* (Lawlor, 2014) and *Spring after Spring: How Rachel Carson Inspired the Environmental Movement* (Sisson, 2018). In biographies with excluded LGB+ representations, no details reference the person's non-heterosexual orientation. Even with a close queer reading, any signs are absent. While some readers might wonder if book creators' omission of individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation is unintentional or based on not knowing such details, research shows how resources cited or recommended for further reading in biographies' backmatter often include these aspects about the person (Crisp, Gardner, & Almeida, 2017). Therefore, it could be argued book creators—authors, illustrators, publishers, and other stakeholders—consciously exclude LGB+ aspects of the person's life, presumably in an attempt to make the book and individual more acceptable for a wider audience and thus reinforcing default notions of focal individuals as heterosexual.

One aspect pervasive across many of the biographies in this category are the inclusion of heterosexual relationships. Though some of the texts depict heterosexuality via the focal individual's parents (e.g., the biographies of George Washington Carver, Langston Hughes, and Susan B. Anthony), other texts highlight the focal individual's own relationships with people of the opposite sex. This is particularly evident in the biographies of Eleanor Roosevelt, Frida Kahlo, Josephine Baker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Georgia O'Keeffe, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, and Billie Jean King. For example, in *My Itty-Bitty Bio: Eleanor Roosevelt* (Halby, 2016) six of the nine narrative pagespreads depict the human rights leader as coupled with her husband, Franklin, though nothing is stated or alluded to regarding her relationships with women. Similarly, *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* (Powell, 2014) details across the narrative the musician's three failed marriages to men. However, the 104-page picturebook provides no content about Baker's relationships with women though the text names someone who was in actuality one of her partners: Caroline Dudley. Beyond describing Dudley as "an elegant white lady" (Powell, 2014, n.p.) and as the person who first invited Baker to perform in Paris, no further information is provided about Dudley or Baker's other same-sex relationships.

Equally if not more concerning are the seven biographies of Frida Kahlo: *Frida* (Winter, 2002); *Frida Kahlo: The Artist Who Painted Herself* (Frith, 2003); *Me, Frida* (Novesky, 2010); *Viva Frida* (Morales, 2014); *Little People, Big Dreams: Frida Kahlo* (Sanchez Vegara, 2016); *Frida Kahlo and her Animalitos* (Brown, 2017); and *My Itty-Bitty Bio: Frida Kahlo* (Devera, 2018). Each of these biographies depict the artist's relationship with Diego Rivera. For example, in *Viva Frida*, one particular illustration shows Rivera kissing Kahlo on the cheek. Their faces and heterosexual relationship literally fill the page, emphasizing opposite sex attraction and love. In *Frida*, Kahlo's relationship with Rivera is not revealed until the backmatter. However, the biographer devotes an entire paragraph to discussing their relationship:

Kahlo's popularity, which has been increasing steadily over the years since her death on July 13, 1954, began to grow when she married the world-renowned Mexican muralist Diego Rivera in 1929. Their personalities were both so colorful, and their love for each other so intense, that their marriage remains one of the most famous of the twentieth century. (Winter, 2002, n.p.)

Although Winter further explains how this was not the sole reason for Kahlo's popularity, and that she was an important example of how to "thrive as a woman in an art world dominated by men" (n.p.), it is nonetheless significant how heterosexuality is revealed and revered. However, Kahlo was known for having relationships with women, her relationship with Rivera was tumultuous, and her art was sometimes symbolic of female attraction and sex (Wilton, 2002). None of these details are explicitly or implicitly represented in any of the six biographies. Thus, multiple picturebook biographies about the same person and sharing similar details reinforce default, heterosexual understandings and a single narrative of Kahlo. Scholars assert the danger of single story representations for any culture or topic (Adichie, 2009; Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). Interrogating how and why heterosexuality is depicted and perpetuated, especially in conjunction with the erasure of LGB+ representation, is a key tenet of queer theory and reading practices (Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Sullivan, 2003).

Another aspect of note relative to heterosexuality in various picturebook biographies in this category is the sexualization of the focal individuals. By sexualization, I mean the depiction of individuals as attracting sexual interest or being a product of sex. Such sexualization is particularly evident in illustrations of the four biographies *Frida Kahlo: The Artist Who Painted Herself* (Frith, 2003), *Bessie Smith and the Night Riders* (Stauffer, 2006), *Jazz Age Josephine* (Winter, 2012), and *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* (Powell, 2014). Both Bessie Smith and Josephine Baker are scantily clad as they perform for their audiences. For example, in *Josephine*, Baker's evocative, famous performance at Folies Bergère is described: "the black pearl climbed down a palm tree wearing a skirt of bananas and necklace of shells" (Powell, 2014, n.p.). Equating blackness with sexuality was

a primary allure of audiences to Baker's performances (Strong, 2006). In *Bessie Smith*, it's apparent her performance is largely for a male audience as her arm is outstretched to receive a kiss from one man while on the facing page another man offers her a rose. A different type of sexualization is depicted in *Frida Kahlo*. Kahlo is illustrated as a young child standing naked in the center of the page. She holds an umbilical cord stretching in two directions, enveloping her mother and father poised immediately behind her and framing portraits of her grandparents on opposite sides of the page. Kahlo's mother is shown in the same illustration wearing a white dress, presumably her wedding dress, with a naked infant and umbilical cord inside of her. The depictions across the four books—all about women of color—sexualize the focal individuals and not only further reinforce their heterosexual representations but also provide continued juxtaposition for those who argue about appropriateness in children's literature. In other words, those who would argue depictions of non-heterosexuality are inappropriate for youth while depictions of sexualization are appropriate so long as they serve the reinforcement of heterosexuality.

Last but not least, another aspect of biographies in this category are the inclusion of vague or miscellaneous details about the person's life. For example, in *Zoom In on Trailblazing Athletes: Billie Jean King* (Strand, 2016), the author writes the tennis athlete "has long worked for social change. She supported a law called Title IX. It gives female athletes in schools equal funding to males. She still works to help all people have equal rights" (n.p.). Though not inaccurate and King's efforts for gender equality are mentioned here, there is a direct exclusion of her LGB+ sexual orientation—further reinforced by mention in the backmatter timeline of her marriage and divorce to Larry King—and LGB(TQ)+ activism. Instead, the vague phrase "all people" is used. Beyond vague, *Tommie dePaola* (Woods, 2001) includes miscellaneous details. In a section titled "Tomie at Home", the biographer provides information about the age, style, and contents of dePaola's home:

Tomie lives in a farmhouse in New London, New Hampshire. He turned the 200-year-old barn into a three-story studio. He likes to have lots of space to work and display his collection of early American folk art. His house has three kitchens because Tomie loves to cook. He has six ovens, a grill room, four refrigerators, and three dishwashers! (n.p.)

This paragraph is paired with a photo of dePaola with his four dogs. Although some readers may find these details interesting about the children's book author and illustrator, the information does little to help readers actually connect with the focal individual. Rather, the photograph and paragraph depict dePaola as excessive, and some readers may even wonder why the biographer devoted an entire paragraph to such descriptions at the extent of other information. Knowing such specific details about the home demonstrates the biographer's intimate knowledge of dePaola, so she likely knew about his cohabitation with a male partner—whether as a roommate or other relationship. For example, the biographer noted *Oliver Button is a Sissy*

(dePaola, 1979) was based on his own childhood experiences with gender nonconformity, so it's likely she knew dePaola was gay as well. Therefore, it is evident that dePaola's LGB+ sexual orientation or even queer allusions to such information were intentionally omitted and miscellaneous, extraneous details included in their place. This type of representation shows the extent to which book creators will go to hide information they deem controversial, resulting in robbing youth of representations that could be crucial windows, mirrors, and maps.

In closing, representations excluding individuals' LGB+ sexual orientations are in contrast to the picturebook biographies—and countless other children's literature—that include heterosexuality and depict it as the unquestioned norm (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Sapp, 2010). Books in this category, as well as the explicit and implicit representations I earlier describe, all show the existence or impact of relationships in people's lives. People don't exist, and frequently don't succeed, in isolation. They have friendships or partnerships. They sometimes have children of their own. They have parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, or other family members. However, as this largest of the three categories of representation in picturebook biographies reveals, heterosexual relationships are frequently privileged and thus reinforce continued privileging of heterosexuality for readers. In addition, books that exclude individuals' LGB+ sexual orientations keep readers partly in the dark about people with whom they may otherwise be familiar and hide that individuals—whether familiar or new to the reader—are LGB+ and contribute to the world past and present. As a poster created for the National Coming Out Day attests—when it comes to people like Eleanor Roosevelt, Bessie Smith, and others—“Unfortunately, history has set the record a little too straight” (Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council, 1988). In the case of this study, picturebook biographies are frequently a culprit of such history construction.

### Discussion and Future Directions

At its base, I provide in this article a list of picturebook biographies of individuals who were or may now be considered LGB+ due to their romantic, physical, or otherwise intimate relationships. I then explore the biographies further, analyzing and categorizing the books based on how the individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation is depicted—whether explicit, implicit, or excluded—in the narrative and/or peritextual components within the book. It is vital all youth know LGB+ individuals have long existed and contributed to local and/or global communities. While explicit representations clearly share such information, implicit and excluded representations deny readers such information and may perpetuate notions that most, if not all, prominent individuals are heterosexual. Although explicit representations are important for youth who may identify or question their identity as LGB+ so they have mirrors and maps, the representations are equally—if not more—important for heterosexual readers to provide windows and counteract marginalization of



LGB+ people. The texts serve a vital role in making the lives of LGB+ individuals more visible.

As I particularly reflect on the implicit and excluded LGB+ representations within the picturebooks in this study, I consider how the biographies act as *(re)* presentations. Although it may be true that no text—be it a picturebook, lengthier book, documentary film, or other media—can completely convey the life of an individual and all its complexity, producers of texts (e.g., authors, illustrators, publishers, etc...) do consciously decide which aspects to share and to what extent. To intentionally conceal information about a person as a way to make the text and the person more palatable to a wider audience is to re-present them, to not show the person as they are or were but rather to present them in an alternate way. Such alternate depictions are incomplete or inaccurate. The majority of biographies in this study do not represent the focal individuals, they *(re)*present them. The *(re)* presentations thus mold people's understandings in inaccurate or incomplete ways. The actual effects of such *(re)*presentation on readers warrants further exploration as does inquiring into the decision making of those who *(re)*present individuals in texts such as authors, illustrators, and editors.

Returning to the explicit representations, such picturebook biographies not only can serve as maps for youth, they can also serve as guides for book producers for the creation of future texts. The biographies show such representations have been published and the potential in writing, illustration, and distribution. Countless LGB+ people have yet to be depicted in picturebook biographies. The focal individuals in the implicit and excluded representations within this article could be a start, followed by others past and present such as Greek leader Alexander the Great, World War II mathematician Alan Turing, author Virginia Woolf, civil rights leaders Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin, celebrity and activist Ellen DeGeneres, baseball player Glenn Burke, September 11th hero Mark Bingham, and sheriff and former Texas governor nominee Lupe Valdez. Youth deserve and need to see such stories. They shouldn't have to wait until later in life and lengthier texts – if ever – to learn LGB+ people have existed yet remain bombarded with heterosexual depictions from an early age and introductory texts.

In his political campaigns, Harvey Milk often stated, "My name is Harvey Milk, and I'm here to recruit you!" Opponents of LGB(TQ)+ rights such as Anita Bryant targeted this notion of recruitment in conservative, right-wing movements such as the "Save Our Children" campaign, fearing non-heterosexual people as predatory and trying to sway children to become LGB(TQ)+ (Bronski, 2011; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014). However, LGB(TQ)+ individuals' biographies and their use with young readers is not about recruitment, but rather about developing equity. One way to develop equity is to show LGB(TQ)+ people exist and have contributed to the world in meaningful ways—even in ways young readers, or readers of *all* ages, may know but not have realized fully. Recognizing the presence and contributions of LGB(TQ)+ individuals is important. Equally important is understanding the

individual and social constructions of said individuals in nonfiction, especially if the individuals are positioned as models and mentors for youth. When considering how individuals are represented through images and words in picturebook biographies, it is imperative to ask: Who's out, who's in, and what are the implications of their (re)presentations?

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I focus in this article on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other non-heterosexual orientations (LGB+). I use the plus sign to include non-heterosexual orientations, realizing some people don't identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and historically people may not have used such terms either. My emphasis on sexual orientation is to focus the study. I honor that the experiences and representations of transgender, gender non-conforming, and/or other gender queer individuals also warrant crucial attention.

<sup>2</sup> I use "picturebook" rather than "picture book" as the former describes texts in which images and words are symbiotic, relying on one another for meaning, whereas the latter term represents texts in which illustrations primarily mimic words on the page and provide little additional meaning or opportunity for interpretation (Reynolds, 2011, p. 57).

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## Appendix A

Focal individuals are listed alphabetically.

Biographies are listed chronologically by publication date for each focal individual.

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Susan B. Anthony	White	social activist	<i>First Biographies: Susan B. Anthony</i>	Rustad, Martha	Capstone Press, 2002	Excluded
			<i>Susan B. Anthony: Fighter for Freedom and Equality</i>	Slade, Suzanne Buckingham	Picture Window Books, 2007	Excluded
			<i>Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the Fight for Women's Suffrage</i>	Murphy, Claire Rudolf	Peachtree, 2011	Excluded
			<i>Heart on Fire: Susan B. Anthony Votes for President</i>	Malaspina, Ann	Albert Whitman & Company, 2012	Excluded
			<i>Susan B. Anthony</i>	Wallner, Alexandra	Holiday House, 2012	Excluded
			<i>Friends for Freedom: The Story of Susan B. Anthony &amp; Frederick Douglass</i>	Slade, Suzanne	Charlesbridge, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Susan B. Anthony: Pioneering Leader of the Women's Rights Movement</i>	Penn, Barbra	Rosen Education Service, 2015	Excluded
			<i>Two Friends: Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass</i>	Robbins, Dean	Orchard Books, 2016	Excluded
			<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: Susan B. Anthony</i>	Spiller, Sara	Cherry Lake, 2019	Excluded

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Gilbert Baker	White	artist, social activist	<i>Sewing the Rainbow: A Story about Gilbert Baker</i>	Pitman, Gayle E.	Magination Press, 2018	Explicit
Josephine Baker	Black	musician, dancer, and military spy, health worker, and performer	<i>Jazz Age Josephine</i>	Winter, Jonah	Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2012	Excluded
			<i>Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker</i>	Powell, Patricia Hruby	Chronicle, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Little People, Big Dreams: Josephine Baker</i>	Sanchez Vegara, Isabel	Lincoln Children's Books, 2018	Excluded
Rachel Carson	White	scientist, writer	<i>Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson</i>	Ehrlich, Amy	Harcourt, 2003	Implicit
			<i>Rachel Carson and Her Book that Changed the World</i>	Lawlor, Laurie	Holiday House, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Spring after Spring: How Rachel Carson Inspired the Environmental Movement</i>	Sisson, Stephanie Roth	Roaring Brook Press, 2018	Excluded
George Washington Carver	Black	scientist	<i>George Washington Carver: Teacher, Scientist, and Inventor</i>	Mortensen, Lori	Picture Window Books, 2007	Excluded
			<i>Famous African Americans: George Washington Carver, Scientist and Inventor</i>	McKissack, Patricia & McKissack, Fredrick	Enslow Elementary, 2013	Excluded
			<i>National Geographic Readers: George Washington Carver</i>	Jazyanka, Kitson	National Geographic Children's Books, 2016	Excluded
			<i>George Washington Carver: Botanist and Inventor</i>	Boone, Mary	Capstone Press, 2018	Excluded
			<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: George Washington Carver</i>	Marsico, Katie	Cherry Lake, 2019	Excluded

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Tommie dePaola	White	author, illustrator	<i>Children's Authors: Tommie dePaola</i>	Woods, Mae	Checkerboard Library, 2001	Excluded
			<i>First Biographies: Tomie dePaola</i>	Braun, Eric Mark	Capstone, 2005	Excluded
Ralph Waldo Emerson	White	writer	<i>A Home for Mr. Emerson</i>	Kerley, Barbara	Scholastic, 2014	Excluded
Paul Erdos	White	mathematician	<i>The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life</i>	Heiligman, Deborah	Roaring Brook Press, 2013	Implicit
Langston Hughes	Black	writer	<i>Visiting Langston</i>	Perdomo, Willie	Square Fish, 2002	Excluded
Barbara Jordan	Black	politician, professor	<i>What Do You Do With a Voice Like That?: The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan</i>	Barton, Chris	Beach Lane Books, 2018	Implicit
Frida Kahlo	Hispanic	visual artist	<i>Frida</i>	Winter, Jonah	Arthur A. Levine Books, 2002	Excluded
			<i>Frida Kahlo: The Artist who Painted Herself</i>	Frith, Margaret	Grosset & Dunlap-Penguin, 2003	Excluded
			<i>Me, Frida</i>	Novesky, Amy	Abrams, 2010	Excluded
			<i>Viva Frida</i>	Morales, Yuyi	Roaring Brook Press, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Little People, Big Dreams: Frida Kahlo</i>	Sanchez Vegara, Isabel	Frances Lincoln, 2016	Excluded
			<i>Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos</i>	Brown, Monica	NorthSouth Books, 2017	Excluded
			<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: Frida Kahlo</i>	Devera, Czeena	Cherry Lake, 2018	Excluded
Billie Jean King	White	athlete	<i>Zoom in on Trailblazing Athletes: Billie Jean King</i>	Strand, Jennifer	Abdo Zoom, 2016	Excluded

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin	White	social activists	<i>When You Look Out the Window: How Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Built a Community</i>	Pitman, Gayle E.	Magination Press, 2017	Explicit
Harvey Milk	White	business owner, politician	<i>The Harvey Milk Story</i>	Krakow, Kari	Bobbie Combs, 2002	Explicit
			<i>Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag</i>	Sanders, Rob	Random House Books for Young Readers, 2018	Explicit
Martina Navratilova	White	athlete	<i>Martina &amp; Chrissie: The Greatest Rivalry in the History of Sports</i>	Bildner, Phil	Candlewick, 2017	Implicit
Georgia O'Keefe	White	visual artist	<i>My Name is Georgia</i>	Winter, Jeanette	Silver Whistle, 1998	Excluded
			<i>Through Georgia's Eyes</i>	Rodriguez, Rachel Victoria	Henry Holt & Company, 2006	Excluded
Sally Ride	White	astronaut	<i>Sally Ride: The First American Woman in Space</i>	Baby Professor	Speedy Publishing, 2017	Explicit
Eleanor Roosevelt	White	social activist	<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: Eleanor Roosevelt</i>	Haldy, Emma E.	Cherry Lake, 2016	Excluded
Alberto Santos-Dumont	Brazilian	inventor, aviator	<i>The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont</i>	Griffith, Victoria	Abrams, 2011	Implicit
Maurice Sendak	White	author, illustrator	<i>First Biographies: Maurice Sendak</i>	Braun, Eric Mark	Capstone, 2005	Excluded
Bessie Smith	Black	musician	<i>Bessie Smith and the Night Riders</i>	Stauffer, Sue	G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2006	Excluded
Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas	White	writers	<i>Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude</i>	Winter, Jonah	Atheneum, 2009	Implicit
			<i>Happy Birthday, Alice Babette</i>	Kulling, Monica	Groundwood, 2016	Implicit

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Andy Warhol	White	visual artist	<i>Uncle Andy's: A Faabbbulous Visit with Andy Warhol</i>	Warhola, James	G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2003	Implicit
			<i>Fabulous! A Portrait of Andy Warhol</i>	Christensen, Bonnie	Henry Holt, 2011	Implicit
Babe Didrikson Zaharias	White	athlete	<i>Babe Didrikson Zaharias: All-Around Athlete</i>	Sutcliffe, Jane	Carolrhoda Books, 2000	Excluded

**Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education**  
Volume 19, Number 1, Winter 2020

**Vision and Scope**

*Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* is an academic forum for the transdisciplinary study of the dynamic and complex relationship between the various competing and complementary aspects of education broadly defined. *Taboo* is grounded on the notion of radical contextualization. To investigate the notion of radical contextualization, we encourage scholars to draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to contest current taken-for-granted approaches in education and in the academy. Some of these approaches include, Post-Structuralism, Feminist Studies, Actor-Network Theory, Queer Theory, New Materialism, Historical/Genealogical, Affect Theory, and Critical approaches to race, class, and gender studies. Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives we seek contributions willing to stake the unsaid and the previous and current unconsiderable and/or irreconcilable. We encourage work that seeks to wrap its lips around the complex, chaotic, and cutting edges of the sayable and knowable. We want to push readers and contributors to perform complex questioning of the very ideas that have become all too common-place within traditional academic journals. We specifically foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how intertextualities and intersectionalities operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places. The journal encourages papers from a wide range of contributors who work within these general areas. We also encourage research that pushes the methodological boundaries. *Taboo* seeks a dialogic series of interactions that push place, space, and time boundaries as well as invites a leaning in and pushing back approach. Not only do we seek content that engages these values, but we also favor unique, controversial, and continually complicated forms and modes of presentations. As its title suggests, *Taboo* seeks provocative and controversial submissions.

**Reviewer Questions and Criteria**

When submitting a piece for consideration, please know that reviewers will be asked the following questions about your manuscript:

*How does the manuscript take up a transdisciplinary study of the dynamic and complex relationship between the various competing and complementary aspects of education broadly defined?*

*How and to what extent does the manuscript address the notion of radical contextualization?*

*How does the manuscript investigate the notion of radical contextualization?*

*How do scholars draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to contest current taken-for-granted approaches in education and in the academy? (Some of these approaches include, Post-Structuralism, Feminist Studies, Actor-Network Theory, Queer Theory, New Materialism, Historical/Genealogical, Affect Theory, and Critical approaches to race, class, and gender studies).*

*Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives how does the manuscript stake the unsaid and the previous and current unconsiderable and/or irreconcilable?*

*How and to what extent does the work seeks to wrap its lips around the complex, chaotic, and cutting edges of the sayable and knowable?*

*How does the manuscript push readers and contributors to perform complex questioning of the very ideas that have become all too common-place within traditional academic journals?*

*How does the manuscript foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how intertextualities and intersectionalities operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places?*

*How does the manuscript foster research that pushes the methodological boundaries?*

*How and to what extent does the manuscript foster a dialogic series of interactions that push place, space, and time boundaries as well as invites a leaning in and pushing back approach?*

*To what extent is the content of the manuscript provocative and controversial?*

### **Types of Manuscripts**

**Articles:** *Taboo* accepts what might be called traditional academic articles. We also encourage scholars to write and produce research that exposes the limits of this form as well as compose research in modes that would not be considered in mainstream academic journals. We expect thoughtful, provocative, and well-researched articles, but we also encourage authors to play with form and content. There is no word limit. Articles will go through a double-blind peer-review process. Authors can expect to receive a decision in 3-4 months.

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Please adhere to the following criteria prior to submitting your manuscript:

1. Send a cover-letter with your manuscript and address the following items:
  - a. Author(s) Names, addresses, and Institution(s),
  - b. Title of your manuscript.

- c. Manuscript Type (Article, Rant, Book Review, Guest Edited Special Issue).
- d. Please address how your manuscript fits the scope of the journal.
- e. Please indicate that the research complies with the rules and regulations of the Institutional Review Board of your particular institutions (if applicable)
- f. Please indicate that the article is not under-review for another peer-review journal and will not be submitted for review during the peer-review process with *Taboo*.
- g. Please submit the names of three potential reviewers for your manuscript.
- h. Indicate the style of your article (i.e., APA, Chicago, Hybrid).

2. Word Count: *Taboo* has no word count requirement.

3. Style: Please know that *Taboo* publishes articles that adhere to the guidelines of the *American Psychological Association (sixth edition)*. We also remain open for author to play with academic style.

4. Please attach two copies of your article to the email in PDF format. One of these two copies must be prepared for the blind review process.

5. Contributors are asked to send manuscripts electronically to the Editor:  
Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner at [submissions@taboo-journal.com](mailto:submissions@taboo-journal.com)

**Review Process:** Issues are published twice a year (winter and summer). The deadline for the Spring issue is March 15 and the deadline for the Fall issue is August 15. *Taboo* prides itself on timely and useful feedback on all manuscripts. Reviewers are strongly encouraged to provide timely and nuanced feedback that leans into and pushes back against articles and to be a part of the dialogue that occurs within the journal.

**Acceptance:** Once your article is accepted in the journal, the author(s) will be asked to transfer copyright of the article to *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*. The transfer will ensure the widest possible dissemination of information. We have an acceptance rate of 15%.

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# Taboo

The Journal of Culture and Education

**Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education** is an academic forum featuring the study of teaching and pedagogy that focuses on the relationship between education and its sociocultural context. Grounded on the notion of “radical contextualization,” **Taboo** presents compelling and controversial pieces from a wide range of contributors.

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