California Sociology Forum

Student Journal of Sociology

Volume 7

Fall 2024 - Spring 2025

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Special thanks to Victor Mojica, Communications Specialist with the College of NSS, for photographing the student board.

A Reflection of Our Times, Cover Image Description: An androgynous person, monochrome in depiction, hands gripping a hand mirror in front of them faced towards the viewer, white angel wings sprouting from their back spreading downwards, the words "We are LA" underneath them, and a set of trees on either side of them in the foreground. The androgynous angel is set in front of a sky view looking over a section of cityscape in Los Angeles County, buildings and foliage becoming increasingly faded from focus the further in the background they are.

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA SOCIOLOGY FORUM

THE HISTORY

The California Sociology Forum (CSF) was initially published in 2007-2008 by Professor Hyojoung Kim. It was re-launched in 2022-2023 by a group of faculty members in the Department of Sociology. CSF expresses its immense appreciation to all editors—both faculty and students—who have served on the editorial board through all its iterations.

THE MISSION

CSF is a student-run online journal that publishes scholarly and creative works of students enrolled in the Sociology program or taking Sociology classes at Cal State LA at both the undergraduate and graduate level. It is committed to cultivating student research, supporting intellectual exchange, and featuring diverse perspectives on various issues of our society and world. Students are strongly encouraged to submit not only original research papers, but creative works such as poems, cartoons, music, pictorial essays, personal essays, and fieldwork notes that use the sociological imagination, as well as sociologically relevant book and film reviews. As we continue to grow, we welcome new additions to our editorial board. Please feel free to reach out to us!

CONTACT US

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CSF 2024-2025 Editorial Board

Volume 7 was reviewed, promoted, edited, uploaded, and published by the following editorial board. Their innovations have continued the endeavors of CSF for sociological relevance. The pieces in the Reviews were mainly contributions from the Fall 2024 CSF cohort. New to this publication, the Alumni Advisory Board (AAB) was founded on August 13th, 2024, with an inaugural meeting over Zoom. The AAB consists of former CSF Student Board Members who have progressed in their academic journeys but are still passionate about volunteering to invest time in mentoring the new CSF cohorts each semester. We are grateful for their continued support!

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CALIFORNIA SOCIOLOGY FORUM
Student Journal

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to present our most recent publication, the seventh volume of the California Sociology Forum. The journal is student-led and features the works of many current Cal State LA students and alumni, with guidance from the Department of Sociology. One of the goals of Volume 7 was to showcase creative and meaningful works to a wider audience. The articles feature a variety of themes, including: experiences of integration at a commuter college; child physical abuse; homelessness; perceptions of disability; Marxism applied to Palestine; and Durkheim applied to K-pop fandoms. Our creative works and reviews take a sociological look at identity, gender socialization, agency, how cultural expectations shape transgender experiences, the meaning of interpersonal relationships, the symbolic role of animals as family, how different cultures interpret death and belonging, and beyond.

The 2024-2025 academic year has seen many significant events causing a range of emotions, starting with the change of U.S. presidential administration at the end of 2024. Then, 2025 started with wildfires sparking in Southern California and causing massive devastation due to environmental factors from global warming. The largest two fires in the Pacific Palisades and Altadena burned for 24 days, impacting the homes and communities of many Cal State LA students and staff. LA County already has a massive rate of unhoused individuals; the fires have all compounded the situation.

This turbulent year has included major increases in evictions, deportations, and raids aggressively targeting immigrants, regardless of legal status. As of Fall 2024–according to the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI) page on student demographics–Cal State LA officially has a student body made up of 75% 'Hispanic ethnicity/race,' which underscores the population dynamics of LA; however, this ethnicity is also one unfairly targeted by accusations of 'illegal immigration' to the U.S. The anxiety and uncertainty around immigration raids on educational institutions has been one factor in a noticeable shift

on campus toward less community camaraderie. Another factor is the Department of Education being dismantled and canceling funding, as well as trying to eliminate programs like DEI; all of this is pointing to a rise in misinformation and authoritarian rhetoric in the U.S. that is harmful to the very core of freedom of speech. Our students deserve to focus on their education without fear of being deported or having members of their families deported. From a sociological perspective, these policies are deeply rooted in systemic racial and economic inequalities and have a strong chance of negatively impacting long-term family structures and community cohesion. It's important for everyone in the U.S. to know their rights and unite with supportive community as we all navigate and persevere through these trying, scary, and chaotic times.

An encouraging community is very important as we persist in the unfolding present. CSF members came together to enjoy Korean barbecue in the spirit of family and community during this year's Taste of Korea event, generously supported by CSF founder Dr. Hyojoung Kim with Dr. Jongwook Woo and the Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies. This shared meal reminded us of the power of connection and care. In times of uncertainty and challenge, these moments of gathering allow us to affirm our identities, find a sense of belonging, uplift one another, and build solidarity.

In Community and Solidarity,
The CSF Editorial Board

Image Description: Some of the Department of Sociology's CSF 2024-2025 Student Editors, Alumni Advisors, and Faculty Board during the Taste of Korea outing.

About the Student Editors

Keila Bailey (She/Her) is a first-generation student, having received a BA in sociology while being on the honor roll for two semesters and is honored to now be working on her MA at CSULA. Keila has been working and interning in the service industry for four years, developing a passion for helping reentry organizations such as Ameri-Corps/California Justice Leaders, Project Rebound, and Words Uncaged while paying close attention to the benefits of therapy and healing. Additionally, she volunteers by providing free meals and clothing for the homeless population in her home community.

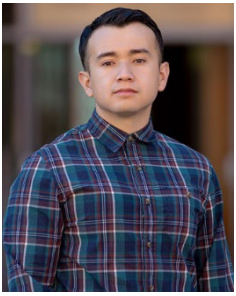
Taryn Bates (She/Her) is in the CSULA MA sociology program, previously achieving her BA in Sociology: Inequalities and Diversity from CSULA in May 2024. As a community-focused sociologist, Taryn is a member of organizations both on and off campus including the Abolition Study Action People's (ASAP) Collective, the Neurodivergent Collective, and BluesinLA Coalition's cultural competency consultant. Her research focuses on cross-cultural interactions within blues social partner dance. Taryn has thrived as part of CSF's student editorial board – first nominated as the Managing Copy Editor for Volume 5, then as a Publication Co-Managing Editor on Volume 6, and honored to now serve as the Student Managing Editor for Volume 7. She enjoys being a supportive resource to her fellow team members in the process of curating each edition.

Kayla Bellipanni (She/Her) is a second-year MA student in Anthropology at Cal State LA, focusing on bioarchaeology. Her thesis research examines pathological conditions in ancient human remains. Originally from Colorado, she earned her BA in Anthropology with a minor in Sociology from Metropolitan State University of Denver in 2021, where she was awarded the Charles W. Fisher Award for her exceptional academic achievement, scholarly contributions, and community engagement. Formerly the vice president of the Colorado Archaeological Society, she has garnered multiple awards for her conference presentations on archaeological research papers, for which she served as the primary author. Kayla remains active in both anthropological and sociological academic communities. She is grateful to CSF for the opportunity to keep her sociology skills sharp and looks forward to her forthcoming publication in the journal, a critical review of Brandy Schillace's *Death's Summer Coat*, which analyzes the sociology of death and grieving.

Tenille Blackburn (She/They) is a California State University, Northridge (CSUN) alum with a BA in Sociology, having transferred from Barstow Community College with an AA in Social Science. She continues her academic journey as a graduate student at Cal State LA, with an aim to receive her MA in Sociology in Spring 2025. Her ongoing thesis lies within her primary research interests of identity and labeling, also with a key focus on gender, sexuality, and individuals' level of interest in civic engagement. It is through her involvement with CSF and on its publication team that she is able to gain new perspectives, while having the opportunity to draw connections between her research interests and her personal enjoyment of listening to music.

Spider Canoy (She/Her/Ella) is a Blaxican graduate student in the Sociology Master's Program at California State University, Los Angeles. Having experienced and survived many hardships throughout her life, Spider is a passionate defender and fighter for underdogs by helping them find ways to speak up for themselves that lead them up and out of oppression. This includes her advocacy for survivors of domestic violence, human and sex trafficking, affordable housing, free healthcare, free education, honest journalism, and freedom of speech.

Lorena Escalante (She/Her/Ella) is a first-generation graduate student at California State University, Los Angeles. She is in the process of achieving her MA in Sociology with an estimated graduation date of Fall 2025. Lorena started her academic journey and passion for sociology at Mt. San Antonio College where she earned three AA's before transferring to California Polytechnic State University earning her BA in Sociology. Lorena's research interests include immigration/migration, race, ethnicity and identity, as well as romantic and familial relationships. She is currently researching the effects of deportation on romantic relationships for her thesis. It has been an honor and a great learning experience for Lorena to be a part of the CSF Publication Team.



Ian Joaquin Esparza (He/Him) is a 2nd year graduate student at California State University, Los Angeles studying sociology. He received his Bachelor of Arts at Californian Polytechnic Pomona in Sociology with an emphasis on Criminology. In association with his fields of studies, he believes that sociology provides an important and much needed role in interpreting issues in modern day society and its contemporary institutions. He is currently working on his master thesis that hopes to give insight on religion's influence on identity. Ian identifies as a Mexican American Catholic, which his cultural background holds much influence on his own research endeavors. While studying sociology, his emphasis includes theories of identity, sociology of religion, and key sociological concepts such as symbolic interactionism and structural functionalism. His hobbies include watching films, photography, and learning about history.

Hilda Gamero (She/Her) is a first-generation graduate student at California State University of Los Angeles with a BA in Sociology and a minor in Criminal Justice. She is now pursuing her Sociology MA. Hilda will be graduating in Spring 2026. Her research interests include criminology, race & ethnicity, and societal behavior changes. She is currently working on her thesis, which focuses on identifying behavioral changes within a crime neighborhood. She is part of the Alpha Kappa Delta and is pleased to be a part of the Public Relations Team at CSF, where she also practiced reviewing work while learning how to strengthen her writing.

Darinka Luciana Garcia (She/Her/Ella) is a first-generation graduate student at CSULA. She is currently pursuing her MA in sociology, a field that allows her to explore the complexities of social behavior and societal structures. With a strong academic focus, Darinka has maintained an impressive 4.0 GPA, showcasing her dedication and hard work throughout her studies. Darinka is engaged in her thesis while balancing her studies with a full-time job as a legal assistant, she demonstrates exceptional time management skills and a strong commitment to her professional development. Her experience in the legal field not only complements her academic background but also prepares her for her next goal: attending law school after graduation. Darinka's commitment to her field is further highlighted by her membership in Alpha Kappa Delta, the international sociology honor society, which reflects her dedication to academic excellence and her passion for sociology.

Jalene Garcia-Santamarina (She/Her) is a first-generation graduate student at California State University, Los Angeles. Jalene is estimated to complete her MA in the sociology program in Fall of 2025. Her research interest consists of the formerly incarcerated population and social stigma. She is currently working on her thesis on social workers' attitudes and experiences towards formerly incarcerated individuals in Los Angeles County. She is grateful for the opportunity she has been given to converse amongst like-minded individuals, grow as a writer, and learn the submission process to a journal by being a part of the CSF team. Jalene has had the privilege of being a part of the Publication Team.

Jackeline E. Gomez Diaz (She/Her) is a dedicated and ambitious individual who has successfully balanced her academic pursuits with her role as a full-time stay-at-home mom. A proud transfer student from Rio Hondo College, Jackeline is set to graduate with a BA in Sociology, with an emphasis in Law and Society. Her academic journey has not only deepened her understanding of societal structures and institutions but also instilled in her a commitment to creating meaningful change. Beyond her academic achievements, Jackeline has been an active and engaged member of her college community. As a proud representative of moms pursuing higher education, Jackeline hopes to inspire and empower others who may be facing similar challenges. She has had the opportunity to work with CSF, as part of the Original Content Team. She has really enjoyed working with so many talented individuals.

Maria Hernandez (She/Her/Ella) is in her senior year as an undergraduate at California State University, Los Angeles. She is first generation college student and will graduate in May 2025 with a BA in Sociology with an emphasis on Law and Society. Maria intends to continue her education by attending Law School and is passionate about becoming an advocate for those that are unable to stand up for themselves. Being a part of CSF has been a great honor and learning experience. In CSF, she held the role of team leader in the Publication team for Spring.

Angel Jaimes (He/Him) is a graduate student at Cal State LA, pursuing a Master's in Sociology on the thesis track. His research interests include transgender studies, queer theory, feminist methodologies, abolitionist feminisms, emotions, and labor. Angel's research project explores how transgender workers engage in emotional management and negotiate distinct forms of personal gender expression in relation to cisgender normative workplace role requirements in their service sector jobs. He has served as a teaching and graduate assistant and is a member of the Abolition Study Action People's (ASAP) Collective. During his time with CSF, Angel held the role of Original Content Team Lead and published a book review on *Gender Without Identity*, a contemporary theoretical and psychoanalytic work exploring the relationships between gender acquisitions and trauma.

Victoria López (She/Her) is a first-generation undergraduate senior at California State University, Los Angeles who will graduate *cum laude* in Spring 2025 with a BA, majoring in general sociology. She transferred from East Los Angeles Community College in 2023 with a Sociology for Transfer AA. Her research interests in sociology are law and society, social justice, and gender inequalities. She joined CSF as an opportunity at enhancing communication skills and to explore the diverse writing that reference sociology and current social issues. At Cal State LA, Victoria is a member of EOP and Project Rebound which empower her as a single mother of two while both working and studying full-time.

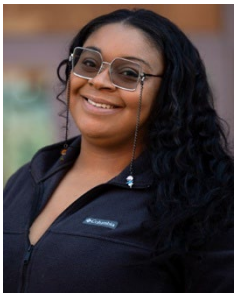
Sabrina Loya (She/Her) transferred into Sociology at Cal State LA from Fresno City College and is passionate about advocating for teens of color and victims of domestic violence. She joined CSF as an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals. Now a junior, she actively studies gender issues, focusing on gender socialization, societal expectations, and disparities in social, occupational, and educational domains. She also explores broader gender roles in contemporary society, analyzing how they shape individual experiences. With a strong commitment to social justice, Sabrina seeks career opportunities that allow her to support and empower marginalized communities through research, education, and direct intervention. Her dedication to making a meaningful impact drives her efforts to create lasting change for those in need.

Michael Madrilejo (He/Him) is a graduate student at California State University, Los Angeles, aiming to graduate in Fall 2025. His research focuses on the application of social skills training for young adults, emphasizing its necessity as a critical tool for personal and professional development. He currently serves as a Senior Program Specialist for API RISE and is a member of the CSF team. Michael is committed to serving and supporting his community through his work, advocating for meaningful social development initiatives.

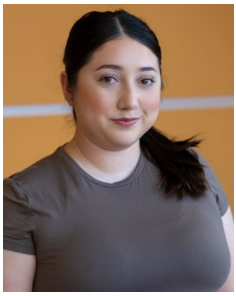
Stephanie Mayahua (She/Her) is a first-generation senior at Cal State LA, set to graduate *summa cum laude* with a BA in Sociology in Spring 2025. She was offered the opportunity to join the CSF and became an editor for the Student Journal. This role has allowed her to connect with other motivated students, learn important editing skills, and step outside of her comfort zone. She is grateful for the chance to develop her skills and build confidence through these experiences.

Annica Meija (She/Her) is an undergraduate senior transfer student at Cal State LA. Annica will be graduating in December of 2025 with a BA in Sociology. This is her first semester in CSF, where she has taken on the role of leader of the Original Content team. She is driven by a passion for education and community. Her main research interests include special education, mental health, and social welfare. Alongside earning her degree, Annica works as a paraprofessional at a high school.

Alicia Justice Melich (She/Her) is a Master's student in Anthropology at California State University, Los Angeles with a focus on Primatology and holds a BA in Biological Anthropology from California State University, Dominguez Hills. Her research centers on primate behavior with a particular interest in decolonizing approaches to the study of primates. She is committed to exploring the intersections of primatology with critical perspectives on the relationship between humans and non-human primates, seeking to challenge traditional frameworks in the field. Through her work, she aims to contribute to a more inclusive and ethically engaged approach to understanding primates in both academic and applied settings. As part of CSF, she reviewed research on human relationships with their pets. She also works as a writing tutor, where she engages with an anti-racist writing framework.



Ashliegh B. Norwood (She/Her) is a transfer student from San Jose City College, currently attending California State University, Los Angeles. She earned two AA's from SJCC in May 2024: an Associate in Arts in Liberal Arts: Social/Behavioral Sciences, and an Associate in Arts-Transfer in Sociology. As a Pathway to Law scholar, Ashliegh is focused on preparing for the LSAT in 2025 with the goal of attending law school. She is on track to graduate from CSULA in the summer of 2025. Her research interests include social justice and family legal studies.



Elibeth Ochoa Deleon (She/Her) is a first-year graduate student pursuing her masters in sociology at Cal State LA. As a first-generation college graduate, Elibeth is passionate about gender equality, with a particular focus on the disparities in women's sports. Her research is deeply committed to researching the structural and cultural barriers that hinder the advancement of female athletes. Elibeth's work explores policy implications, media representation, and institutional inequalities that contribute to the gender gap in sports participation, funding, and professional opportunities. Through academic inquiry and community engagement, she strives to promote equity in athletics and challenge systemic biases within the sports industry. Elibeth plans to contribute to both academic discourse and policy reform, with the goal of fostering a more inclusive and equitable sports environment for women and girls.

Shanya A. Olivares Perez (She/Her) is a Cal State LA second-year graduate student expecting to graduate with a Masters in Sociology in May of 2025. She also holds a BA in Anthropology with a minor in Sociology from Cal State Fullerton and a certification in Archaeology, focusing on pre-Hispanic communities in South America and Spain. Her research interests include education, with an emphasis on higher education, educational barriers, and first-generation student experiences. At Cal State LA, she is part of the International Sociology Honors Society, Alpha Kappa Delta, and the PR Lead for the California Sociology Forum.

Erik Ortiz (He/Him) is a first-generation undergraduate transfer student at Cal State LA. Erik is entering his senior year and expects to graduate with his BA in Political Science in Fall 2025. He has joined CSF as an opportunity to get more in connection with the sociological aspect of the university, explore connecting interests to his major, and learn more about publishing in journals. He is eager to apply his degree in the immigration field, with a passion for giving back to his community and uplifting other students who share similar experiences.

Celia Peña (She/Her) is a sociology undergraduate student at Cal State LA, having transferred from East LA College to pursue her passion for social justice. She brings nearly three years of case management experience working directly with vulnerable populations, including migrant, asylum-seeking, refugee, and LGBTQ+ communities. Celia's commitment and professional advocacy work are driven by a commitment to help communities targeted by systemic barriers and want to apply equity on both macro and micro levels. She is excited to join the CSF Editorial Board to deepen her skills in editing and writing, which will support her long-term goal of pursuing a PhD and continuing to uplift and empower the communities she serves.

Nicole R. Perez (She/Her) is a graduate student at California State University, Los Angeles currently pursuing her portfolio in the Department of Sociology. Her research highlights sexual behaviors and beliefs outside of committed relationships in young adulthood. She is part of the Alpha Kappa Delta Sociology Honor Society and is honored to work alongside students and faculty in the CSF Editorial Board. Nicole hopes to have her work published by the board in the near future.

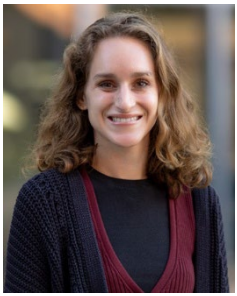
María Ramírez (She/Her/Ella) is a first-generation undergraduate student. She has completed her AA in Sociology from Mount San Antonio College. She will complete her BA in Spring of 2025 from Cal State LA. Maria is also set to pursue her education and gain her Masters in Sociology. Her research interests consist of social behavioral and mental health on children. Maria is proud of everything she has accomplished after only being the first in her family to graduate from a university.

Daniel Roman (He/Him) is an undergraduate student at Cal State LA, majoring in sociology. A member of Project Rebound, Daniel is dedicated to supporting formerly incarcerated individuals in their reentry journey. His research interests include reentry experiences, social inequality, and criminal justice reform. Daniel was recently nominated to join Cal State LA's chapter of The National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS). He is passionate about using his education to advocate for systemic change and help others access higher education and build a better quality of life.

Amaya Simental (She/Her/Ella) is a Sociology graduate student pursuing her MA at Cal State LA and planning to graduate in May of 2025. Her research interests are in criminology, recidivism, and reintegration. She is currently working on her portfolio project on the topic of primary systemic, economic, and social factors that contribute to recidivism among nonviolent male offenders. Amaya also had the opportunity to be part of the CSF editorial board, working alongside the Public Relations Team.

Desiree Denise Suarez (She/Her) is a first-generation undergrad student at Cal State LA. Desiree will graduate with her BA in Sociology in May 2025. Her research interests include issues related to class, race, gender, and economic disparities, and she investigates how culture shapes social behavior and identity. Desiree is a recent transfer student from ELAC. She has her AA in Sociology. She was able to learn from her CSF team and appreciates being able to work on the editorial board for CSF as part of the Original Content team.. She's thankful for being able to edit volume 7 sociology student journal and excited for the outcome.

Nathalie Velasco-Quiroz (She/Her) is a graduate student at CSULA in the Anthropology department that specializes in the Biological/Cultural aspect of Anthropology. She gained her BA in Anthropology with a Minor in Science, Technology and Medicine Studies at CSULA. Her research interests include Medical Anthropology, specifically in the frameworks of Intersectionality and Cultural Competence. She is interested in Japanese Media and its influences in Western culture, particularly in its impact on diverse communities bringing multicultural individuals together. She's involved in the Japanese Media Arts & Culture Club at CSULA as a member and an officer with the role of Public Representative and Social Media Manager. Her media review is on the human experience as expressed by a Japanese animation show and the lessons that can be learned from it.



Abigail Whitenack (She/Her) is a second-year MA student in the Anthropology Department at Cal State LA. Previously, she was a California Community College student and transferred to UC San Diego, where she earned her BA in Anthropology. She now works at UC San Diego in Graduate Admissions and enjoys helping prospective applicants at her home campus. Her research interests include human evolution, paleoanthropology, and the relationships between climate, population history, and cranial traits. She is grateful for the experience gained while participating in CSF as part of the publishing team.

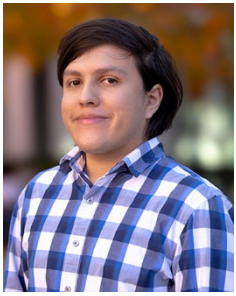
Ramona Vega (She/Her) transferred to California State University, Los Angeles in her junior year. She is currently pursuing her BA in Sociology Law and Society option and will graduate *cum laude* in May 2025. She is grateful to have obtained two simultaneous AAs in both Sociology and Social Justice, as well as a Pathways to Law School certificate while attending Chaffey College. While attending CSULA she has earned a place on the Dean's list in her 2021–2022 academic year, as well as a recipient of the Service to the Community awarded in her Spring 2023 semester for her work with the Learning Rights Center. She is eager to start the next chapter in her educational journey as she prepares herself in applying for Law school, this Fall with the hopes of starting in Spring 2026, and one day become an attorney of law.

About the Alumni Advisory Board

Darron Michael Cunanan (He/Him) is a lecturer at Cal State LA in the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies. He is also an alumnus of Cal State LA's sociology program. His research interests include pop culture, Asian American issues, and political sociology. On campus, he is a research assistant at Los Angeles Economic Equity Accelerator and Fellowship (LEEAF). At CSF, Darron is a part of the Alumni Advisory Board assisting current student editors. He truly believes in CSF's efforts in showcasing students' written work and appreciates the opportunity of working alongside the students and faculty of CSF who work hard to make it happen.

Sammy Garcia III (He/Him) is a Sociology, MA graduate student at Cal State LA. He obtained his BA in Sociology and Minor in CLS from Cal State LA in Spring 2023. Sammy's research interests revolve around music, culture, and storytelling. He is proud to have made two short films on the music of the Chicano and Farmworkers Movement, the latter of which is published on the Museum of Social Justice website for their current exhibit on the Farm Workers Movement. He was part of the editorial team for Spring Semester 2023, returned again in the Fall 2024, and is currently in a mentor capacity for the CSF Alumni Advisory Board (AAB) for the academic year 2024-2025.

Marie Rivera (She/Her/Ella) is a collaborator and co-author with faculty members in the Department of Sociology at CSULA, where she recently earned her MA. Her research interests consist of intersectionality, gender & sexuality studies, race & ethnicity, abolition, climate justice, and reproductive justice. As an advocate for perinatal mental health, Marie participated in a documentary and is actively involved in discussions on gender justice. She is passionate about abolition education, organizing with ASAP Collective. Marie acted as Graduate Managing Editor for CSF in the Spring 2023 and Publication Co-Managing Editor for Fall 2023-Spring 2024 and is grateful for the opportunity to continue working with the dedicated student editorial team as a part of the inaugural CSF Alumni Advisory Board.



Esai Santana (He/Him) is an alumnus at California State University, Los Angeles who transferred from East Los Angeles College with an AA: Sociology for Transfer and an AA General Studies: Social and Behavioral Sciences. Before graduating in Spring 2024 with a BA in Sociology, he joined CSF as an opportunity to connect more with his peers in Sociology, step out of his comfort zone, and take an interest in publishing a journal. His main research interests when it comes to sociology are topics that include inequalities, sexuality, and gender. He also has a passion for playing video games, enjoying the stories they tell through a player and sociological perspective.

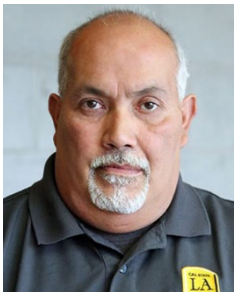
Lauren Whiting (She/They) received their Sociology MA at CSULA in Fall 2024. Their sociological areas of interest span from interactions with and perceptions of the justice system to the relationship between children and parents with disabilities. For her thesis, she quantitatively explores the influence of disabled parents' religiosity and the ability to rely on their children for support. Lauren's dedication to these topics offered them opportunities to tutor, present conferences, and receive various accolades throughout their academic journey. With a nature for supporting others, participating in CSF through the Alumni Advisory Board offers Lauren the joy of aiding fellow peers in the journey of sharing sociological passions with others.

Michael Young (He/Him) is currently working on his M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling at Cal State LA. He graduated *magna cum laude* in Spring 2024 with a BA in both Sociology and Psychology, while additionally participating in the Cal State LA Honors College. Michael has utilized his upper education path to explore his special interest regarding students with disabilities within the education system. His achievements include advocacy for students with disabilities within government support systems, presenting at multiple conferences, and being a co-investigator on a research study conducted as an undergraduate thesis under the Honors College which focuses on the experiences of accommodations students with disabilities receive while attending Cal State LA. Michael also serves as the Vice President of the Neurodivergent Collective, a CSI Club.

About the Faculty Editors

Luoman Bao is an Associate Professor in Sociology whose primary research interests include family dynamics, population aging and health, and quantitative methods. Her work has been published in various venues, including *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, and *Research on Aging*. She loves working with students in classrooms and on projects. She is passionate about facilitating students to grow and achieve their full potential.

Katie Dingeman is an Associate Professor in Sociology with research interests around migrant rights, reproductive justice, political ecology, and qualitative methods. She has published in a variety of venues, including *Social Problems*, *Feminist Criminology*, and the *Journal on Migration and Human Security*. She loves facilitating student-led projects and enjoys growing as a teacher, scholar, and advocate alongside her students.



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Proximity and Social Integration

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ABSTRACT
Research has linked integration to student persistence among college students. However, integration tends to be lower among commuter students, who make up a majority of college students. A separate body of research has linked schools to the formation of social ties. However, based on the role of proximity in shaping the likelihood of social tie formation, increased distance may decrease the formation of ties among students. Based on these findings, this study explores if physical proximity to campus influences integration into the campus community among college students. This study collected quantitative data about student participation, interaction, and proximity through a questionnaire distributed to students on a commuter campus. The findings did not support a correlation between proximity and integration. However, the data does show patterns related to these variables that may inform future research.

The focus of this study is to examine student integration into the campus community among commuter students. Integration refers to student involvement in the university's community, including academic and social activities (Ribera, Miller, and Dumford 2017). Both aspects are important for student success because they provide a sense of academic and social support, which can foster attachment to the campus community. As such, research has found that student integration influences the educational persistence of college students (Kirk and Lewis 2015; Ribera et al. 2017). Kirk and Lewis found that integration and a sense of community have a positive relationship with educational persistence. College students who feel more socially and academically integrated into their campus community are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to graduate. Therefore, integration is important in determining student retention and educational success.

Two factors that influence integration into the campus community are participation and interaction. Participation in campus events and ties to other members of the campus

community, such as peers and staff members, have been shown to support integration among students. As Ribera et al. (2017:549) explain, "[i]nvolving students early on in effective educational practices may help these students forge supportive academic and social relationships with members of the campus community and encourage positive intergroup dialogue among students from diverse backgrounds." Altogether, these factors are likely to create a feeling of social cohesion and belonging for students, leading to higher rates of persistence. However, students' integration varies based on several factors, including students' place of residency, on or off campus. Research has found that commuter students are less integrated into their educational institutions and feel a lower sense of attachment to the community (Kirk and Lewis 2013). Lower attachment can harm the educational success of commuter students and may lead to lower student retention at commuter campuses. This integration gap is significant because most college students live off campus and must commute to attend school (Kirk and Lewis 2013). Therefore, a substantial portion of students have a low retention rate, potentially leading to lower levels of educational success.

Although researchers have noted this lack of integration among commuter students, more research on the factors influencing this pattern is still needed. Research on commuter students and commuter campuses is more limited than research on non-commuter students and non-commuter campuses. Research has paid less attention to the issues that commuter students face and the factors that influence their educational experiences. Accordingly, this research aims to add to the current literature on commuter students and commuter campuses. This study examines the factors that shape commuter students' integration on commuter campuses. More specifically, it will explore if a student's proximity to campus influences their integration into the campus community. The dependent variable is integration into the campus community. Integration refers to participation in events and interactions with others on campus. Students are expected to build feelings of social support through interactions with other students in non-academic settings. Similarly, students are expected to build feelings of academic support through participation in academic activities and interaction with faculty.

Together, these measures are meant to gauge both academic and social involvement, which are key factors that determine feelings of integration.

The primary independent variable of interest is proximity to campus. Proximity refers to students' commute distance. Some other variables are also included as possible independent variables, such as commute time, commuter status, and mode of transportation. The hypothesis was that there would be a negative relationship between proximity and integration into the campus community. Therefore, interaction and participation are expected to decrease as commute distance increases. However, the study's findings do not support this hypothesis. The data analysis found that the relationship between proximity and integration was not statistically significant, which does not support a correlation between them. Despite these findings, the data revealed patterns about these variables. The data points toward a low level of integration among the respondents, most of whom were commuters. Furthermore, having to commute does appear to influence the amount of interaction among respondents based on participant responses but the extent of the influence is unknown based on the data within this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Proximity and Space

Hip, Corcoran, and Wickes (2014) explore the theory that physical proximity influences the likelihood of social cohesion and social tie formation by focusing on the impact of proximity, using the distance decay function as a theoretical basis. According to the distance decay hypothesis, "residents are most likely to form ties to those living near them, and this likelihood drops sharply when moving further away from the residence" (Hip et al. 2014:3). Based on this hypothesis, proximity is expected to influence social tie formation positively. Small and Adler (2019:115) examine the role of space in determining social ties and social integration through the relationship between social ties and proximity, explaining how physical proximity is widely studied as a variable that may influence social relations, noting that the "importance of propinquity to tie formation has been uncovered empirically many times." Findings also suggest the likelihood of forming social ties

is higher with closer physical proximity between people. These findings support the hypothesis of the distance decay function with empirical backing for the relationship between physical proximity and the likelihood of social tie formation. As the theory hypothesizes, closer proximity is correlated with the formation of social ties.

Research has also shown the importance of spaces that promote social tie formation, with Small and Adler (2019:118) writing, "studies have found that participation in establishments is associated with the characteristics of the ties formed." These studies have found that participation is linked to stronger ties formed because of homophily. Establishments that produce stronger ties include schools, indicating that schools are sites that will promote social tie formation. In a study focusing on neighborhood features and community ties, Hip et al. (2014) found support that proximity to establishments that promote or dissuade social tie formation also influences social ties. Since Hip et al. (2014) find that proximity to these establishments influences the likelihood of tie formation, the researchers expected that those who live farther away from campus are less likely to form social ties and, therefore, be less integrated into the campus community.

Integration

Ribera et al. (2017) explore the relationship between a sense of community and participation by analyzing quantitative survey data. The authors draw upon secondary data from first-year students attending forty-four different 4-year colleges. The study focused on participation and college characteristics as independent variables and feelings of belonging as the independent variable. Ribera et al. (2017:560) found that along "with one co-curricular activity (serving as a student leader), participating in a learning community and engaging in a service-learning project was found to be positively related to students' sense of peer belonging and institutional acceptance." Therefore, participation in activities on campus is associated with increased feelings of belonging. Similarly, Procentese, Gatti, and Falange (2019:258) used survey data to examine the same variables, finding that "individuals' participation is predicted by their emotional and affective bond to the community and

representations about the relationships and responsibility-taking within it, via this emotional bond." Unlike Ribera et al. (2017), Procentese et al. (2019) used participation as their independent variable and bond to the community as the dependent variable. Although the direction of this relationship remains unclear, the findings support a correlation between this set of variables. Based on these findings, Procentese et al. (2019) included participation and sense of belonging as measures of integration, although it focused more on participation.

Factors Influencing Integration

Persistence theory understands "'integration' and 'patterns of interaction' as two key components that distinguish students who persist with their education from those who do not" (Kirk and Lewis 2015:49). Kirk and Lewis (2015) examined how a student's integration into their educational institution is influential on student persistence through how different variables influence integration at a commuter campus. The study uses a mixed method design, with a questionnaire portion and a focus group study. The findings indicate that students who are more integrated are more likely to continue their education than those who are less integrated. However, commuter status influences how integrated students are. Kirk and Lewis (2015:54) find that students "who lived on campus reported higher [collegiate sense of community] CSOC than those living off-campus." This finding indicates that commuter students were less likely to feel integrated into their campus communities. Based on this finding, it is expected that there will be a low level of integration and sense of community from commuter students.

Kirk and Lewis (2015) also examined the role of other identities in influencing integration, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and marital status; however, the study found that only sexual orientation is a predictor of integration. These variables provide insight into factors influencing integration among all students, including those who commute. One finding explains lower integration and a sense of community among commuting students. Based on qualitative data from a case study, Kirk and Lewis (2015:56) found time to be an influence, and these "time gaps were more pronounced among commuting students who

acknowledged limitations with transportation and scheduling." This finding points to extra time constraints faced by students who do not live on campus compared to those who do. Constraints include the time spent commuting, which can be longer based on commute distance or method of transportation.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

The main research question is: does proximity influence integration into the campus community among commuter students? Two different bodies of research have influenced the research question: research on space and college students' sense of community. The focus on proximity is based on literature that examines how space influences the formation of social ties. This study will expand the distance decay hypothesis to examine proximity to campus. The distance decay function examines the role of geographical proximity in shaping the formation of social ties. According to the hypothesis, the closer the proximity between a person and a space, the more likely they are to form social ties within that space. The study aims to examine if proximity will influence the social ties formed on campus and student integration by applying the distance decay hypothesis to distance from campus. Based on the distance decay hypothesis, it is expected that students who live closer to campus will be more likely to form social ties on campus and therefore, will be more integrated within the campus community. The study measures proximity as the distance between where students live and their campus based on commute distance in miles, including commute time as a separate measure of proximity. The findings of Ribera et al. (2017) and Procentese et al. (2019) informed the conceptualization of integration into the campus community. Both studies found a relationship between social ties to the campus community and participation. Furthermore, Ribera et al. (2017) noted that participation and interaction shaped social tie formation between students, strengthening the feeling of community. As a result, the study included participation and interaction as a measure of student integration.

H0: proximity to campus will not impact integration into the campus community. H1: proximity will have a negative relationship with integration. H2: proximity will have a negative

relationship to interaction with students. H3: proximity will have a negative relationship to interaction with staff members. H4: proximity will have a negative relationship to participation in events on campus. The null hypothesis, H0, predicts no correlation between proximity and integration is expected. Based on the literature on proximity, physical proximity is expected to influence social tie formation, therefore as students are farther from campus, they will be less integrated. Since the study operationalized integration as interaction with others and participation in campus events, H1 will be analyzed through proximity's correlation with the measures of integration.

An alternative hypothesis is that only commuter status will affect student integration. It is possible that there will be no difference in integration based on proximity to campus between commuter students. The difference may only be between commuter students and non-commuter students. It is also possible that a separate variable, such as responsibilities outside of school, influences this relationship. As Kirk and Lewis (2015:49) note, "[m]ost commuter students are faced with additional responsibilities beyond just being a student." Responsibilities such as work can lead to less free time for students, decreasing the time that they spend on campus. As a result, these students would be less likely to interact with others or participate in events on campus. Accordingly, they would also be less integrated into the campus community due to their lack of social ties with peers and staff members.

METHODS

Data

This project emerged from a secondary analysis of survey data collected from a target population of students enrolled at commuter campuses. The sampling frame for the original data collection was students at California State University-Los Angeles, since the university is a commuter campus serving the greater metropolitan Los Angeles area; of note, the university also has a large female population. The sampling process focused on recruiting students enrolled in required undergraduate courses within the College of Natural and Social Sciences (NSS). The sample was recruited through non-probability sampling. The

recruitment process involved emailing professors and asking them to share the recruitment flyer with their students. Initially, the recruitment process focused on contacting professors who were teaching seminar courses with high numbers of students. However, this later started to involve professors teaching courses with multiple open sections. Those who agreed shared the recruitment flyer by posting it on Canvas or distributing a printed copy in class. Emailing professors began on October 12, 2023, and ended on October 22, 2023. Out of 37 professors who were emailed, 5 replied and agreed to share the recruitment flyer with their class. Overall, professors' responsiveness was low, making it difficult to gather participants for the questionnaire. The questionnaire was open to from October 12, 2023, to October 31, 2023. Altogether, the sampling process took 20 days to complete. The response rate was also low among students, with most students from these courses not taking the questionnaire. As a result, the final sample included 37 students, much lower than the targeted sample of 100 respondents. Of the 37 responses, only 30 were valid. The sample was drawn from classes in different schools within the College of NSS. Most of the respondents were commuter students; 4 lived on campus, and 30 did not live on campus, which was expected due to the demographics of the university. 25 respondents were female, 9 were male, 3 were non-binary; the larger proportion of female respondents was expected due to the school's demographics. The sample included 10 freshmen, 18 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 3 seniors; characteristics which were also expected since the sample was drawn from lower division courses with higher enrollment.

Methods

The data from this study is quantitative data collected through responses to a questionnaire. At the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents were presented with an informed consent form, ensuring that participants freely gave consent. The survey also asked participants if they were over the age of 18. Those who answered "no" were not shown any of the following questions from the questionnaire. The following questions were ordered based on the topic. The topics were interaction and ties to other students, participation in campus activities, interaction and

ties to staff and faculty members, and demographic questions. The questionnaire consisted of 31 questions, including 30 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. The open-ended question allowed respondents to type in their commute time in minutes. The closed-ended questions consisted of Likert scale items, multiple-choice items, select-all-that-apply items, and slider items with set parameters.

Questions collecting information about integration, the dependent variable, gathered data related to interaction and participation on campus. First, participants were asked about interaction with other students. Frequency of interaction was on a scale ranging from "every day" to "never." Students' likeliness to seek or offer support to other students was on a scale ranging from "extremely likely" to "extremely unlikely." Participants were also asked about interaction with staff members, with students' likeliness to seek academic or personal support from staff being on a scale ranging from "extremely likely" to "extremely unlikely." Participants were asked how often they participated in events on campus, including club events, office hours, departmental events, and campus-wide events. Participation is a discrete variable using a slider to indicate the number of times students participated in each event in a semester.

There were also questions within the questionnaire that measure the independent variable, proximity. The study measures proximity to campus as distance to campus in miles. Commute time was measured in minutes. Respondents were also asked if proximity influences their behavior. Perceived influence of proximity is split into two dichotomous variables, asking participants to choose "Yes" or "No" to indicate if proximity influenced participation or interaction on campus.

After the data collection period, the data was transferred to SPSS and cleaned. The variable values for the slider questions and select-all-that-apply questions had to be manually inserted in SPSS. The variable measures were also adjusted for each item when needed. After cleaning the data, data analysis for this project began. Secondary data analysis was conducted through cross-tabulations and chi-square tests. Data analysis focused on examining the correlation between independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS

The data analysis consisted of chi-square tests and cross-tabulations of the data collected. The chi-square tests aimed to measure the relationship between proximity and the study's measures of integration. Chi-square tests whether there is a significant association between two categorical variables, such as nominal or ordinal. Unlike regression, chi-square testing does not model the relationship between a dependent and independent variable. A total of three chi-square tests were conducted. These tests focused on proximity and interaction with peers, proximity and interaction with staff, and proximity and participation. The chi-square tests include Pearson chi-square, likelihood ratio, and linear-by-linear association. Within these tests, a significance of <.05 is considered statistically significant and rejects the null hypothesis. Conversely, a significance of >.05 is statistically insignificant and does not reject the null hypothesis.

The first analysis examined the relationship between proximity and interaction with peers. The cross-tabulation was run on items that measured proximity and the frequency of respondents spending time with their classmates in their free time. The results of the analysis on the 30 valid cases are included in Table 1 and Table 2 (see Appendix). The chi-square value was 64.750 with a p-value of .173, indicating that the relationship between the variables is not statistically significant. The likelihood ratio value was 44.206 with a p-value of .851. Finally, the linear-by-linear association value was .096, with a p-value of .757. None of these tests found a significant relationship between the variables and the analysis supports the null hypothesis that there would be no relationship between proximity and interaction with peers on campus.

The second analysis examined the correlation between proximity and interaction with staff members. Another cross-tabulation was run on the items measuring proximity and the likelihood that respondents would seek support from staff about academic concerns. Table 2 and Table 3 show the results of the analysis. There were 30 valid cases in this analysis. The chi-square value was 41.510, with a p-value of .579. The likelihood ratio value was 42.770, with a p-value of .524. Finally, the linear-by-linear association value was 2.066, with a p-value of .151. Again,

none of the tests found a significant relationship between the variables, reinforcing the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between proximity and interaction with staff members on campus.

For the final analysis, the data was examined through another cross-tabulation. This analysis focused on proximity and participation in events on campus. The cross-tabulation was run on data collected about proximity and those who indicated participating in no campus activities. Table 5 and Table 6 show the results of this analysis. There were 30 valid cases included in the analysis. The chi-square was 9.225 with a p-value of .601. The likelihood ratio value was 12.052, with a p-value of .360. The linear-by-linear association value was 1.023, with a significance of .312. None of these values were statistically significant, meaning the null hypothesis could not be rejected since there was no relationship between proximity and participation in events on campus.

Based on these three analyses, a null relationship exists between proximity and integration into the campus community. Analysis found that none of the measures of integration were correlated with proximity. However, an examination of the responses shows some patterns. The data indicates that respondents consider their commute to influence the amount of time they spend interacting with others and participating in events on campus. 24 of the respondents answered that proximity influences how often they interact with other students. Furthermore, the data shows that many of the respondents have low levels of integration into their campus community, with 22 respondents answering that they did not participate in any activities on campus. 7 respondents indicated that they participated in office hours. Finally, 17 respondents answered that they never spent time with their classmates during their free time.

Several limitations impacted the representativeness of this study. Due to the sampling method the study employed the research findings may have limited generalizability to California State University students. Since the study used non-probability sampling to recruit the sample, it is less representative of the students than a sample recruited through probability sampling. The sampling frame also focused on general requirement courses,

which first and second-year students tend to take. Kirk and Lewis (2015) found that the number of years students have attended their school influenced their integration. Therefore, it is likely that there are differences in integration among first and second-year students compared to students who have attended the school longer.

Another limitation is that the study only drew its sample from one campus. The demographics of California State University Los Angeles may have influenced the findings, since the university primarily serves students of color, with a large Hispanic population, which is not representative of all commuter campuses. Students of different ethno-racial backgrounds may face different circumstances that influence their integration in school, resulting in the collection of different responses. A more diverse sample of students could help determine if differences in integration exist between various ethno-racial groups. The small sample size also greatly limits the validity and representativeness of the sample and the resulting data. However, bootstrapping the data could strengthen the statistical analysis, which I failed to account for while analyzing the data. Bootstrapping samples from the existing data to estimate the properties of a larger sample to provide a more accurate statistic for small samples. Due to these issues, there is limited representation for the study's target population, commuter students.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the correlation between proximity and commuter student integration into the campus community. To answer the research question, there is no correlation between proximity and integration into the campus community among commuter students. The data analysis showed no correlation between the study's measures of integration and proximity. However, the data did show an overall lack of integration among respondents. Most respondents answered that they did not participate in any of the activities that were listed in the questionnaire. Furthermore, many also said that they did not interact with other students in their free time at all. Overall, there was support for low levels of participation and interaction among the respondents, which researchers should examine in the future.

It is possible that other variables may influence the correlation between integration and commuting. As Kirk and Lewis (2015) find, time may be an influence that lowers the integration of commuter students. The combination of time spent on class work, commute time, and other responsibilities reduces the amount of time that commuter students spend on campus. Spending less time on campus makes it less likely for them to engage in behaviors that promote integration and a sense of community. Another explanation is a lack of interest in integration among commuter students. Kirk and Lewis (2015) also note that some commuter students may not be interested in fostering an attachment to their educational institution, choosing to spend little time participating in events or interacting with others on campus.

This study contributes to the limited existing literature on integration among commuter students. The research explores the relationship between integration and commuter status by examining if there were differences in integration due to commute distance. This focus on proximity also adds to the research on the influence of space on the formation of social ties. Based on this research, the study applied the distance decay function to a student's proximity to campus, but the results did not support the hypothesized relationship. Although proximity was not correlated, future research can contribute to the understanding of the relationship between commuting and student integration on campus. Based on the data, many respondents answered that their commute time influenced the amount of time they spent interacting with others. Although this study could not add to the understanding of this relationship, future research should explore the impact of commuting on students.

Furthermore, despite the research findings, it would be worth revisiting this question with a better sampling method. Future studies on this topic should use more representative sampling methods, such as random sampling. Acquiring a larger sample should also be a priority for future research. The low number of responses that were collected limited the findings of this study. In the cross-tabulations, many of the cells were empty due to the low sample size. Researchers may find a different relationship among these variables with a larger and more representative sample. Overall, it was difficult to examine patterns

of behavior with the low number of responses, lowering the validity of the study's findings. Using a different sampling method may have resulted in a larger response rate. The sampling frame used was narrow, involving only students enrolled in lower-division classes. A broader sampling frame that includes the whole student body may have improved the response rate. Furthermore, including other college campuses in the sampling frame could have also improved the sample size and representativeness of the sample by including a larger and more diverse student body from which to collect responses.

In conclusion, the relationship between commuter status and integration on campus still needs further examination. The focus on commuter students is significant because much research on college students tends to focus on non-commuter students, despite commuters being a large portion of the student population. A better understanding of integration can lead to a better understanding of student retention and success among commuter students. The more that is known about integration, the better that educational institutions can meet the needs of commuter students. As the commuter population increases, it is important that these students do not fall behind based on their place of residence or any responsibilities that reduce the time they spend on campus.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Cross-tabulation for Peer Interaction and Proximity

How far do you live from campus? - Distance in miles * In your free time, how often do you spend time with classmates? Crosstabulation

Count

		In your free time, how often do you spend time with classmates?						
		Daily	Multiple times a week	Once a week	Once a month	Occasionally	Never	Total
How far do you live from campus? - Distance in miles	3.00	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	4.00	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
	5.00	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	6.00	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	7.00	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	8.00	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
	10.00	1	1	0	0	0	3	5
	11.00	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
	12.00	0	0	0	0	3	1	4
	13.00	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	15.00	0	0	1	0	1	2	4
	20.00	0	1	0	0	1	2	4
Total		2	3	3	1	7	14	30

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests for Peer Interaction and Proximity

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	64.750[a]	55	.173
Likelihood Ratio	44.206	55	.851
Linear-by-Linear Association	.096	1	.757
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 72 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Table 2: Cross-tabulation for Interaction with Staff and Proximity

How far do you live from campus? - Distance in miles * How likely are you to seek support from staff about academic concerns? Crosstabulation

Count

		How likely are you to seek support from staff about academic concerns?					
		Extremely likely	Somewhat likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Extremely unlikely	Total
How far do you live from campus? - Distance in miles	3.00	0	0	0	1	0	1
	4.00	0	1	0	1	0	2
	5.00	0	1	0	0	0	1
	6.00	0	0	1	1	0	2
	7.00	0	1	0	0	0	1
	8.00	0	0	2	0	0	2
	10.00	1	2	0	2	0	5
	11.00	2	0	0	0	1	3
	12.00	1	1	1	0	1	4
	13.00	0	1	0	0	0	1
	15.00	1	2	1	0	0	4
	20.00	1	1	2	0	0	4
Total		6	10	7	5	2	30

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests for Interaction with Staff and Proximity

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	41.510[a]	44	.579
Likelihood Ratio	42.770	44	.524
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.066	1	.151
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 60 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

Table 4: Cross-tabulation for Participation in Activities and Proximity

How far do you live from campus? - Distance in miles * Select each of the following activities that you participate in. None Crosstabulation

Count

		Select each of the following activities that you participate in. None		
		None not selected	None selected	Total
How far do you live from campus? - Distance in miles	3.00	0	1	1
	4.00	1	1	2
	5.00	1	0	1
	6.00	1	1	2
	7.00	0	1	1
	8.00	0	2	2
	10.00	2	3	5
	11.00	2	1	3
	12.00	1	3	4
	13.00	0	1	1
	15.00	2	2	4
	20.00	0	4	4
Total		10	20	30

Table 5: Chi-Square Test for Participation in Activities and Proximity

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.225[a]	11	.601
Likelihood Ratio	12.053	11	.360
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.023	1	.312
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 24 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .33.

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Featured Award-Winning Paper: We are proud to recognize "Proximity and Social Integration" by Carla Ocampo as the Award-Winning Paper of the Golden Eagle Sociology Student Paper Competition in Spring 2024. This paper was selected by the Student Affairs Committee of the Department of Sociology as it stood out as the strongest among a pool of excellent submissions. Congratulations to Carla for this well-deserved recognition!

The Long-Term Effects of Child Physical Abuse

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the lasting effects of childhood physical abuse (or CPA), with a specific focus on its role in perpetuating chronic pain, intergenerational cycles of abuse, and mental health deterioration. CPA continues to be a significant societal issue, with long-term repercussions extending beyond the immediate physical harm experienced by victims. Victims of CPA are more likely to develop medical issues in adulthood, including chronic pain and neurological changes that exacerbate mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. Additionally, CPA can contribute to heightened emotional sensitivity and disruption of emotional regulation, which can increase the likelihood of victims perpetuating abusive behaviors in adulthood. While education and therapeutic interventions are shown to mitigate some adverse effects of CPA, challenges in accessibility remain. Through an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating literature review and personal reflections, this paper highlights the interconnected physical, emotional, and societal consequences of CPA. By fostering awareness and improving intervention strategies, this paper advocates for continued discourse and systemic change in addressing the needs of victims.

Childhood physical abuse (or CPA) has undergone extensive reform through various legislative measures over time; however, it is still a prevalent social issue. CPA tends to be defined as the non-accidental physical injury of a child by a parent/caregiver, the injuries sustained can include bruises, fractures, cuts, burns, welts and other physical injuries (Valle and Lutzker 2006). CPA can cause long-term harm to victims in a variety of ways that does not exclude physical harm. Some might say that CPA only affects children in regard to short-term physical health but there are other non-physical effects of such abuse. These seemingly 'invisible' effects do not disappear like bruises but stay present in the body and mind for many years. This abuse has long-lasting, diverse, negative effects. By long-lasting, I refer to the notion that the

effects of CPA can have enduring consequences for the victims throughout their lives and the next generations. This paper presents a literature review of existing research on CPA and its long-term implications, along with personal reflections on my own experiences with this issue. These insights aim to encourage further discussions on the topic. I will explore some of the facets that child physical abuse affects, focusing on three principal areas: the manifestation of chronic and gendered pain in adulthood, the perpetration of violence, and mental health issues. Through this examination, I aim to address the difficulties faced by victims of CPA as they transition into adulthood, while also considering the broader societal implications of these challenges. This paper will not specifically address the lack of support available to victims; however, it will discuss studies explaining the impacts of CPA and how resources used helped victims to a certain degree. It is important to note that this paper does not suggest that the methods reviewed will resolve all issues caused by CPA.

CHRONIC AND GENDERED PAIN IN ADULTHOOD

CPA is associated with an elevated likelihood of reporting chronic pain. A study conducted on adults suffering from chronic pain revealed that individuals who experienced physical abuse during childhood are 45% more likely to endure chronic pain in adulthood (Bussières et al. 2023). Furthermore, chronic pain is associated with substantial economic implications. Medical expenses and lost productivity associated with chronic pain exceed those of heart disease and cancer combined. This shows CPA can have negative financial implications for individuals who developed chronic pain into adulthood. They can be burdened with increased medical expenses associated with their conditions. Additionally, chronic pain can cause other financial stressors such as finding or holding a job. Chronic pain can include calling out more or needing extra accommodations at work. This could result in those adults getting unjustly fired, having financial instability would leave them unable to fight these actions in court. This is particularly significant for individuals who are in a lower tax bracket or possess lower levels of education, as they may have limited access to employment opportunities that are not labor intensive.

Continuing to focus on the realities of pain in adulthood, I will examine how women experience sexual pain because of CPA. Women who have experienced CPA are 1.5 times more likely to experience pain during sexual intercourse. Researchers (Talmon, Uysal, and Gross 2021) found that physical abuse significantly predicted increases in pain during sex for women but not for men, this information was gathered by researchers over a ten-year longitudinal study. The study, which comprised 410 women and 397 men, revealed that there were no significant associations for men who experienced CPA. However, the study also showed that physical neglect was identified as a significant predictor of increased pain among men. Additionally, the experience of pain during sexual intercourse can adversely affect these women's relationships. Consequently, they may require additional therapeutic interventions, such as counseling or physical therapy, depending on the severity of the pain. It is important to keep in mind these services can be costly, further adding marital strain. Troubles during intimacy can cause other marital problems; it can lead to numerous unfair outcomes like infidelity or marital abuse. The physical abuse received in childhood can have a profound domino effect on the individual throughout their life and their interpersonal relationships. This study demonstrated that childhood abuse can cause varying experiences for both men and women, while furthermore perpetuating violence across generations.

CONTINUING OR BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ABUSE

Experiencing CPA increases the chances of abusing your own children. Researchers (Voorthuis et al. 2014) conducted a study involving 337 female college students that revolved around their childhood trauma and temperament. Both emotional neglect and physical abuse significantly predicted the likelihood of increased child abuse potential by 1.5 times; however, this association was observed exclusively among individuals exhibiting high levels of temperamental orienting sensitivity. What this means is that those with heightened sensitivity are more vulnerable to the negative effects of their childhood abuse making them also more likely to experience negative effects like pain during sex (Talmon et al. 2021) which was mentioned previously. Not only that but

according to the systematic review and meta-analysis of researchers (Zhang et al. 2020), for females there is significant association between adverse childhood experiences and the subsequent development of ADHD. Drawing on my personal experiences as a woman with ADHD and a background of CPA, it has been noted by myself and others around me that I have higher sensitivity compared to others. Managing these intensified emotions is an ongoing learning process for others and myself. In circumstances where individuals have experienced trauma during childhood and may be at risk of perpetuating this cycle, therapy can be an effective intervention. Such therapeutic efforts aim not only to address childhood trauma, but also to enhance emotional well-being, and manage any associated mental health challenges that individuals may encounter because of their early experiences. Understanding this highlights the interconnectedness of CPA and its enduring impact on future generations. Therapeutic interventions may serve as a significant support mechanism for children who have experienced abuse.

Psychotherapeutic experiences following CPA may reduce the likelihood of violence in adulthood. Researchers (Maxwell et al. 2016) found that receiving psychotherapy resulted in a reduction of approximately 30% in the likelihood of perpetrating physical violence during adulthood. This information indicates that we have the capacity to help reduce and ultimately prevent violence. The CPA can adversely affect others and perpetuate the cycle of abuse through generations (Voorthuis et al. 2014). Furthermore, this abuse is not solely physical; it can also manifest in emotional and psychological forms, as noted by Maxwell et al. (2016). However, through the incorporation of therapy or counseling, society can effectuate a change in these statistics. As someone who regularly participated in talk therapy, I have experienced significant positive changes in my ability to manage my heighted sensitivity. It is essential to acknowledge that therapy can be a fundamental component of healing to improve our society. Mental health professionals are essential in supporting individuals as they navigate the healing process and work towards personal growth goals. It can be beneficial to discuss the potential opportunity to enhance the implementation and accessibility of

mental health services for CPA victims. This type of initiative could prevent harm to themselves and others.

MENTAL HEALTH REPERCUSSIONS

Physical abuse is associated with a higher risk of suicidal ideation. Researchers (Yıldız, Orak and Aydoğdu 2023) found that those who experience physical abuse as a child were 2.5 times more likely to have suicidal thoughts into adulthood. The research conducted by Yıldız et al. (2023) also indicated that experiencing CPA is linked to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and feelings of powerlessness, which in turn contributed to an increase in suicidal thoughts and ideation. Self-harm may result in hospitalization, resulting in debt that jeopardizes the survivor's economic stability and that of their families. If a victim ultimately commits suicide, their family will also face financial and emotional burdens, potentially requiring government assistance and impacting taxpayers. Having experienced CPA, I faced challenges such as mild depression and anxiety, which is consistent with the findings of Yıldız et al. (2023). Additionally, I dealt with self-harming behaviors and suicidal thoughts; however, therapy helped reduce these thoughts and actions. Referring again to the work of Maxwell et al. (2016), it is evident that therapy can be instrumental not only in mitigating harm to others but also in alleviating self-inflicted distress. It is essential for society to continue advocating for mental health and to convey to individuals that they are not alone in their struggles. Additionally, mental health professionals who understand these CPA and mental health correlations can better support CPA victims in addressing their internal challenges.

Children who were physically abused before the age of 5 were more likely to score in the clinical range for internalizing disorders. Researchers (Lansford et al. 2021) also found that those who were physically abused as children reported lower levels of physical health and their chances of meeting the clinical range for internalized disorders was 2.10 times higher. To provide additional information, the study's internalizing disorders included depression, anxiety, and somatic complaints. Internalized disorders can lead to chronic mental health issues, adversely affecting an individual's ability to establish healthy

relationships, maintain employment, and uphold an overall quality of life. Additionally, somatic complaints may result in frequent medical visits, contributing to increased healthcare costs. This observation aligns with the findings of researchers Bussières et al. (2023), who noted that chronic pain is associated with higher healthcare utilization and more frequent hospital visits. Frequent hospital visits can significantly diminish an individual's quality of life and place considerable strain on healthcare resources, ultimately affecting both the healthcare system and the economic well-being of patients. Addressing this issue effectively begins with preventing child abuse from occurring in the first place. It is important to consider how childhood experiences of abuse can shape an individual's perception of the world and influence societal norms. Ultimately, prioritizing the mental well-being of children can increase the development of a healthy self-image.

Those who experienced CPA reported significantly lower self-rated health scores in adulthood. Wang and Zhao (2022) found that the pursuit and continuation of higher education can alleviate the negative effects of CPA and other related traumatic events by 25%. It is important to note, however, that this does not eliminate completely the adverse negative impacts associated with CPA. This concept may prove advantageous for survivors of CPA who are contemplating the pursuit of further education. Additionally, it would enable them to take an active role in shaping their own futures, progressively acquiring knowledge and fostering personal healing. Higher education can instill a sense of accomplishment and expand access to higher-paying employment opportunities. Through these job prospects, individuals who may have previously faced barriers due to their childhood circumstances or lower socioeconomic status can ascend the socio-economic ladder. This provides a compelling rationale for making higher education more accessible and even tuition-free. Moreover, education fosters critical thinking skills and diminishes the likelihood of repeating historical errors. This is especially pertinent in disrupting the cycle of abuse that individuals who have suffered CPA may feel compelled to perpetuate, as evidenced by Voorthuis et al. (2014). Ultimately, attaining a higher education can enable individuals to transform their lives and enhance their cognitive abilities.

Physical abuse can be linked to functional reorganizations in various brain regions which have implications for mental health. Cai et al. (2023) determined that individuals who endured CPA exhibited a 1.8 times increased risk of developing mental health disorders in adulthood, attributable to stress-related functional reconfigurations in multiple regions of the brain. To clarify, the mental health disorders referred to in this study are depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in adulthood. The study also uncovered that CPA was associated with alterations in brain functional connectivity, particularly in regions pertinent to emotional regulation and stress response. These modifications in brain connectivity were correlated with an elevated risk of developing disorders, such as depression and anxiety. It is important for CPA victims to understand that any health issues they may be experiencing are not their fault, nor should they be dismissed as mere laziness. This statement is particularly relevant given the prevalent stigma surrounding mental health in certain cultures. Based on personal experience within Mexican culture, there often exists a mentality that advocates for simply overcoming challenges and continuing to work, rather than seeking help through therapy or other medical resources. Recognizing the influence that CPA has on mental well-being, society could continue to foster empathy and understanding to enhance mental health awareness and resource utilization.

CPA globally impacts the control of emotion regulation. Researchers (Cheng and Langevin 2023) found that CPA can hinder a victim's ability to identify, label and express emotions but especially fear. Victims tend to struggle understanding others and managing their own emotions which can complicate relationship building and distort their world views, which can lead to unhealthy dynamics. This ties back to the research Maxwell et al. (2016) explained that CPA can make victims engage in abuse themselves as adults. This cycle of violence affects not just the survivors but also those around them, as it increases the likelihood of unhealthy relationships and therapeutic needs for future generations. Consequently, addressing these emotional issues requires resource allocation for such support. Ultimately, understanding this issue is vital for personal development and prevention of further abuse. Violence can have a continuous effect among individuals. While

survivors may face difficulties in recognizing and articulating their emotions, it is evident that this is not a concern that only impacts victims but those around them.

CONCLUSION

Overall, CPA has enduring effects that impact victims, manifesting in various ways and to varying degrees. Notably, CPA increases the likelihood of having chronic pain in adulthood, and it can also impose significant financial burdens (Bussières et al. 2023). Not only that but for adult women CPA has been associated with an increase in pain during intercourse, further underscoring its long-lasting physical implications (Talmon et al. 2021). Beyond physical and personal pain, research showed that individuals with a history of experiencing CPA were more prone to inflicting violence on their own children if they exhibited high levels of temperamental sensitivity (Voorthuis et al. 2014). On the bright side psychotherapeutic intervention can mitigate the risk of violent behavior in adults who experienced CPA, reducing the likelihood of continuing abusive behaviors to their own children (Maxwell et al. 2016).

The mental health impact of CPA is equally profound. It was shown that there is an association between CPA and increased self-harming behaviors (Yıldız et al. 2023). Additionally, CPA before the age of five increases the risk of developing internalized disorders later in life (Lansford et al. 2021). Mental health outcomes can also be influenced by CPA as it alters brain structures, victims of CPA report lower self-rated health scores (Wang and Zhao 2022). Furthermore, CPA reorganized the brain causing neurological changes that increase the likelihood of developing mental health disorders and impaired fear recognition (Cai et al. 2023). In summary, CPA has long-lasting consequences that impact victims physically, mentally, and emotionally. This highlights the intricate interconnectedness between personal experiences during childhood and adulthood outcomes.

In summary, CPA has lasting impacts on individuals all throughout adulthood, affecting their physical, mental, emotional, and social health. A common misconception mentioned was that CPA solely impacted a victim's physical health, with pain diminishing as injuries heal. However, the long-term effects are

significantly more profound, some being: influencing the perception of health, mental health issues, and the normalization of abusive behavior. This normalization can perpetuate a cycle of intergenerational abuse, replicating similar behaviors victims might have experienced. While there are many challenges to face for those who are victims of CPA, there are also many opportunities to grow and heal from the abuse. Psychotherapeutic interventions and support systems have demonstrated potential in interrupting the intergenerational cycle of abuse. Additionally, mental health services can aid in reducing the strength of mental disorders as a by-product also reducing self-harming, suicidal behaviors and idealizations. It is essential for society to prioritize the well-being of children by cultivating environments revolving around care, respect, and protection. By addressing the ongoing CPA issues and providing accessible resources for the victims, pathways can be created towards a future devoid of abuse.

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Homelessness: How Did We Come to Recognize It as Such a Problem and the Possible Ways to Solve It

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores how homelessness in the United States has developed into a significant social issue. It examines key causes such as economic instability, lack of affordable housing, and systemic inequality. Additionally, vulnerable populations such as people of color, LGBTQ+ youth, and individuals from low-income communities who are disproportionately impacted due to intersecting forms of discrimination are also discussed. Using a conflict theory framework, this paper explores how systemic inequalities and corporate interests contribute to the exploitation of the working class, deepening poverty and fueling homelessness. It also discusses the harsh conditions faced by unhoused individuals and assesses potential solutions, all of which will come with high financial costs, reaching billions of dollars annually. Through a focus on both systemic factors and individual experiences of homelessness, my paper emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies to reduce homelessness and its long-term societal impact.

Homelessness is one of the most pressing humanitarian and sociological crises in modern society, shaped by systemic economic inequality, inadequate government intervention, and structural barriers such as the high cost of living and insufficient mental health resources. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (de Sousa et al. 2023), California accounts for nearly 30% of the nation's homeless population, with Los Angeles having the highest number of unsheltered individuals in the country. From a sociological perspective, the conflict theory framework highlights how economic disparities and power imbalances contribute to the persistence of homelessness, as those in lower socioeconomic classes struggle to access stable housing while wealthier individuals benefit from policies that prioritize real estate development over affordable housing (Nickerson

2023). Despite national inaction on the crisis, California has implemented some of the most ambitious policy efforts to address homelessness. Recent initiatives such as Governor Gavin Newsom's (2022) $15.3 billion Homekey and Project Roomkey programs, which convert vacant spaces into temporary and long-term housing, and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, City of Los Angeles's (2024) Inside Safe initiative, aimed at rapidly moving unhoused individuals into shelters, demonstrate a localized commitment to reducing homelessness. However, while these policies have made progress, the programs still have room for improvement as the crisis persists due to ongoing structural challenges, requiring a coordinated federal, state, and local response. This paper will explore the root causes of homelessness, societal neglect of the issue, and how it relates to conflict theory along with comprehensive strategies needed to create long-term solutions at both the state and national levels.

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Before solving homelessness, it must first be understood how it occurs. Homelessness can happen for several reasons including the loss of a loved one, accumulating debt, mental illness, socioeconomic status, natural disasters, and being kicked out of their home as in the case of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ+) youth. Synovec (2020:233) reports, "Individuals experiencing homelessness also manage significant personal factors, such as chronic health conditions, histories of trauma, and limited economic and social support . . . may also have long and familiar histories of living in poverty and housing instability." Another reason is mental health issues, as individuals with persistent mental illness are more likely to experience repeated and longer periods of homelessness compared to those who are not experiencing extensive mental health issues, with the homeless population having a greater prevalence of mental health problems when compared with the general public (Piat et al. 2014). In fact, a study conducted from 2021 until 2022 (Statista Research Department 2023) found that 66% of homeless adults in California suffer from some sort of mental health condition with anxiety and depression being at the top. Homelessness can occur after foster care with an estimated 22% of all children who age-

out of foster care will become homeless within a year (Administration for Children and Families 2024) due to the individual not having the proper resources or support to transition out of the foster care system. In addition to foster care youth, LGBTQ+ youth are also at a disadvantage when it comes to being homeless when compared with their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts.

LGBTQ+ YOUTH

When it comes to youth homeless populations, LGBTQ+ identifying individuals have a higher chance of becoming homeless. Of the estimated 1.6 million youth aged 15 to 24 who experience homelessness each year, approximately 40% identify as LGBTQ+, even though they make up only about 7% of the total youth population (Lesley University n.d.). This is because "LGBTQI+ youth are at greater risk of homelessness because they are affected both by the factors which precipitate homelessness among the young population in general and by additional challenges related to sexuality and/ or gender identity which can directly or indirectly result in homelessness" (Quilty and Norris 2022:2). Many LGBTQ+ youth are left homeless because of disagreements with their parents or legal guardian for coming out or fear regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity. The National Coalition for the Homeless mention that in a survey administered by the Williams Institute at UCLA, 68% of LGBTQ+ youth were homeless due to a history of family rejection, 65% because of mental health issues, and 54% because they had a history of family abuse. From an online survey conducted by The Trevor Project (2021) with 34,759 LGBTQ+ youth respondents, 34% live in the South, 25% live in the West and in the Midwest, and 16% living in the Northeast. While there is no precise number of LGBTQ+ youth in the South, they might have a harder time accessing safe spaces with most states that have anti-LGBTQ laws and no protection laws for LGBTQ+ individuals, are predominantly in the southern region of the United States. There are also more LGBTQ+ youth of color in the South, with 48%, when compared to other regions. In addition to anti-LGBTQ laws, about 46% of LGBTQ+ youth in the South reported that they lived in a *somewhat or very unaccepting*

community and had lower rates of access to LGBTQ+ affirming spaces in those areas including homes, schools, workplaces, and community events (Trevor Project 2021). When LGBTQ+ youth are disowned, publicly ostracized, have no access to support system, or safe spaces, it could then lead to poor mental health as well as attempted suicide. In the 2019 Southern LGBTQ Health Survey, it was found that 69% of LGBTQ+ adults, aged 18 to 24, had fair or poor mental health (Harless, et al., 2019). The Trevor Project (2021) found that LGBTQ+ youth in the South had 9% greater odds of suicide attempts in contrast to other regions with 16% of LGBTQ+ youth attempting suicide in the South when compared to 14% divided between the other regions. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ youth in *somewhat or very unaccepting* communities had a 20% suicide attempt rate with those in 'somewhat or very accepting' communities have a 13% suicide attempt rate. There are also no federal regulations in relation to LGBTQ+ youth services as Lesley University (n.d.) declares:

> There are currently no federal programs specifically designed to meet the needs of gay and transgender homeless youth. This means that, in many cases, LGBT youth are left without the resources and assistance provided to other homeless populations. Human services professionals should have a clear understanding of the unique needs, risk factors, and challenges facing LGBT homeless youth in order to design and deliver the best possible services.

Homelessness is a huge social issue and can ruin a person's life and deteriorate their mental health as it disproportionately affects LGBTQ+ youth, especially youth of color and those from low-income communities. Furthermore, homeless individuals do not have the best living conditions as they are, for the most part, on the streets and are subject to substance abuse, crime, and sometimes harassment by the public.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Just as how someone becomes homeless, each individual's living conditions will vary. The definition for homelessness, as defined by the federal government is "An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, such as those

living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or places not meant for habitation" (SAMHSA 2018). Using this definition, a lot more people are considered homeless than just those who are unfortunate enough to be on the street, including those who are staying with family and sleeping on the floor or anywhere else that is not designed to be a sleeping area. Another example of living and being homeless is "couch surfing" (Huerta and Gutierrez-Vera 2020:30) where someone might stay with different people at different times to have a place to stay and not overstay their welcome at any one location.

In the streets of Los Angeles, it's very common to see homeless people setting up tents as a main way of staying sheltered, especially in extreme weather such as rain or excessive heat. These tents will be set up in various places such as riverbeds, on the side of a highway, on the sidewalk, in parks, and more. If they do not have a tent, then they are most likely wrapped up in a blanket, or otherwise, somewhere on the sidewalk or sleeping at covered bus stops. This is also a reason why many bus stops will have armrests in between seats to prevent the homeless from sleeping there, which has come under fire from activists for its unwelcoming environment which is known as architectural discrimination or hostile architecture. In addition, some transients will use a shopping cart to move the things they have collected such as bottles and cans to recycle for money and personal items.

And because the homeless population usually is not sheltered indoors, a study (Montgomery et al. 2016:765) was conducted and found that homeless people report poorer health compared with those who are not homeless:

> People living in unsheltered situations–staying at a primary nighttime residence not intended for habitation (e.g., streets, parks, cars, abandoned buildings)–often report poorer health and more symptoms of physical illness than their sheltered counterparts. Unsheltered people frequently have a serious mental illness, cognitive disorders, substance use disorders, co-occurring mental health and substance use conditions, and chronic health conditions.

This connects to how substance abuse plagues the homeless population. Research (Johnson and Fendrich 2007:212) has shown

that those "comparing homeless and non-homeless individuals have also documented substantially higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse among the homeless . . . In Los Angeles, age, race/ethnicity, and gender-adjusted estimates indicated that homeless people were more than twice as likely than non-homeless people to have both lifetime and 6-month DSM . . . substance use disorders." The use of drugs could be used as a way to deal with stress, to cope with the pressures of being homeless, or even help them forget and take them to a 'better place.'

TROUBLE GETTING A JOB AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In addition to a person experiencing homelessness' living conditions, it does not improve their situation when other people do not look their way or acknowledge them, only to look at them in disgust and treat the individual as less than human. Sarver (2023) notes that the most common question that crosses people's minds in regard to homelessness is, "Why don't you just go get a job?" But getting a job is not as easy as it may seem. A lot of homeless individuals are unable to get a job because applicants need to be able to provide or maintain a Social Security number, an ID, a phone, their own professional work clothes, reliable transportation, good hygiene, and a home address or at least a PO box which costs money; most of these things are unobtainable or missing for many homeless individuals. Sarver (2023) additionally states, "There's a shortage of good, quality jobs that meet workers' needs and support their well-being, including their economic security. This shortage is the result of multiple factors, including decades of offshoring, wage stagnation, lack of benefits, and increasingly aggressive anti-union activity." Even individuals and families with homes found it hard to get or even keep a job during the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic came like a bullet train, with the U.S. not well equipped or prepared to deal with it especially as former President Trump and his administration failed to take serious action. As a result, an estimated 103 million American citizens got sick, about 6 million were hospitalized, and almost 2 million people died. People lost their family, their friends, any kind of social interaction, as well as their jobs. According to a

study completed by CEW (2021), a cumulative 23 million jobs were lost. This loss of jobs had indirectly contributed to the growing homeless population. The pandemic also affected the homeless population as they are more vulnerable to sickness, as aforementioned, and were not given any personal protective equipment, especially the ones living on the street at the time. However, since the coronavirus was spread through the air, the homeless living in shelters tested positive for the virus compared with those living on the streets. According to Yoon et al. (2021), out of 2,875 homeless people tested in Atlanta, Georgia, only 46 total tested positive, with 36 being sheltered and only 3 being unsheltered along with 7 positive cases for the staff.

COST OF LIVING AND HOUSING COSTS

In today's economy, the homeless population continues to grow not only due to an individual's mental and physical health, substance abuse, or being displaced, but also because the federal minimum wage has been stagnant since 2009, and housing costs are on the rise all across the country. Sarver (2023) states, "It's now more evident than ever that homelessness is the result of failed policies that have perpetuated inequitable access to quality education, health care, and economic opportunity and that communities with rapidly increasing housing costs have faced the brunt of the homelessness crisis." This is because, federally, the minimum wage is $7.25 and, according to Rent Cafe (n.d.), the average monthly rent in the United States is $1,713 with the average square foot being 899. The lowest rent in the United States is in Oklahoma with an average of $989 for an average of 856 square feet, which is not sustainable enough for those making only $7.25 per hour. The highest rent in the country being in Massachusetts at an average of $2,714 with an average of 888 square feet, which is not sustainable enough for those only making $15 per hour. The average rent in California is $2,531 along an average square foot of 851 with a minimum wage of $16. High rent costs and low wages force people to live with one or maybe two more people to cover the cost of rent only, not including the utilities, groceries, and other monthly bills such as insurance, a phone bill, car payments, and so forth. The rising cost of living has become so noticeable that it has permeated pop culture,

particularly among Generation Z, who often use humor as a coping mechanism. This is exemplified by internet memes containing exaggerated statements such as, "It costs me $20 to breathe," which, while humorous, it reflects a deep concern and frustration with economic challenges. However, it is a sad reality that no one in the U.S. government is trying to have its citizens make a comfortable and livable wage. And because people fall behind on rent and get evicted, it only pushes them further to being homeless as an individual cannot pay the excessively high rent along with several late fees. And once evicted, it will show up on their credit report and make it even more difficult to get into a different apartment. Unless rent is controlled and capped, more people will eventually become homeless in the United States.

The rent prices in the country at this current moment are quite egregious and most blue-collar Americans cannot afford to live on their own. As mentioned before, many individuals within the homeless population suffer from certain disabilities, whether it be mental or physical. Burns et al. (2021:1719) explain, "Skyrocketing housing prices have been contributing to a major public health problem in America for years . . . Persons with disabilities are at heightened risk for not only feeling the economic impact of the [COVID-19] pandemic but also for having poor health and safety outcomes resulting from the associated affordable housing challenges." Not only are housing costs expensive for the average American but, those living with a disability statistically have it harder as it is just an added obstacle for them to deal with. Burns et al. go on to say that the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment is roughly 131% of monthly income for a person living with a disability and although affordable living options exist for people with disabilities, they typically involve lengthy waitlists. This issue is linked to the persistently high cost of housing, a challenge that can be traced back to the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and its long-term impact on the housing market.

In 2007, the Great Recession started and peaked in 2008 when the U.S. Gross Domestic Product fell 4.3%, the unemployment rate doubled to over 10%, the price of a home fell about 30%, and the S&P 500 was down 57% from its usual highs (Duggan 2023). Burns et al. (2021:1720) note:

> Since the Great Recession of 2008, homeownership rates have fallen drastically resulting in spikes in foreclosures and short sales. As a result, more people have been renting homes leading to significant increases in rental costs for individuals and families . . . the COVID-19 pandemic has had a swift and substantial economic impact, further contributing to the crisis. Housing costs are increasing significantly in many cities as the demand for housing is high.

The United States is not the only country in the world facing a housing crisis, take Australia for example. Worldwide concerns about housing affordability were further validated in mid-2007 with the release of Australian census data revealing that over 1.2 million households were experiencing housing stress, commonly defined as spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Additionally, from 1960 to 2006, real house prices grew at an average annual rate of 2.7%, outpacing the 1.9% annual increase in real household incomes (Yates 2008). In other words, housing prices increased more than the household income, which has also happened here in the United States.

PROFIT OVER PEOPLE

The famous phrase, "The poor get poorer, and the rich get richer," directly relates to the sociological concept of conflict theory, where the rich are prioritizing profit over the middle class's struggles. This signifies the continuing uphill battle that many Americans face, especially noticeable at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, when millions were laid off and stuck in their living spaces with little to no income. Although there were about three stimulus payments made that were passed by Congress, those were still not sustainable enough for the people who were suffering. Notably, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed in 2020 because of the devastating pandemic that it caused for working families, individuals, and small businesses, has been seen to cater to big companies and wealthier individuals who may not have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Gross (2020) describes how the CARES Act gave $174 billion in temporary tax breaks to wealthy individuals and larger companies when it was intended to

help small businesses. And while the CARES Act was marketed toward the working class and small businesses, it was manipulated by Congress to help large, wealthy companies, as well as powerful families like the Trumps, by allowing them to report losses on their tax returns and not lose money business-wise. Gross (2020) interviewed New York Times's investigative reporter Jesse Drucker, who states:

> one of the provisions that they put in the CARES Act is a provision that allows business owners to use losses from their businesses . . . to offset the tax bills . . . And the reason that's potentially particularly beneficial . . . is the concept of losses on your tax return is very complicated . . . And the result is that people like Jared Kushner and Donald Trump - to the degree that we have had some insight into their taxes over the last few years, we have seen that they have reported big losses on their tax returns.

These companies and individuals, who were getting these tax breaks, did not need to show proof that they were suffering because of the pandemic, especially at a time when families and individuals were losing their homes and jobs. This is a huge factor as to why the homeless are still homeless and why individuals become homeless. Many corporations in the United States actively pursue tax breaks and deductions as strategies to reduce costs and maximize profits, often in ways that disproportionately affect working-class consumers

MISUSE OF FEDERAL FUNDING

But also, it is a question of, why does the United States government does not provide any federal funding to states to combat homelessness. It is because they have the wrong numbers as well as not using the funds in a helpful, effective way and mis-proportioning the funds focusing on other areas. For example (National Priorities Project 2023), in the 2023 fiscal year, $1.14 trillion, or 62%, was approved to go towards defense which includes the military, law enforcement, prisons, and other things of that nature while housing and community, the second highest, only got $133 billion, or 7%. It is a disturbing amount of money the U.S. government spends on militarization when a lot of the funds could be spent on other areas that need the most help while

also continuing to have the title of the biggest military power in the world. The federal budget is a direct contributor to the reason why community resources and programs along with homelessness do not get the attention needed, either on a state or national level.

COUNTING THE HOMELESS POPULATION

For homelessness, the neglect and funding problem also comes from how the population is counted. When it comes to population counts in the United States, the Census Bureau collects information from households every ten years but at first, it did not get the population of those who were unhoused. The bureau started to count the homeless population in 1970 when they went around to

> hotels and motels in an evening called Transient Night and then sent enumerators to short-term homeless shelters. In 1980, Census enumerators went to areas with high transient populations and encampments, in an effort named Mission Night. Local governments then began providing the Census Bureau with the address of homeless encampments in 1990. From that information provided by local governments, the Census Bureau found that between 29 and 72 percent of the homeless population had not previously been counted. (Huerta and Gutierrez-Vera 2020:28)

This just shows that it is not clear how many American citizens were homeless before the 1970 count and even how much it grew within those 20 years between the 1970 and 1990 census.

In recent years, California counties have developed strategies to count the homeless population and report them to HUD, including mandating local governments to submit a count of their homeless population every two years through a "point-in-time count" (Huerta and Gutierrez-Vera 2020:29). Huerta and Gutierrez-Vera (2020:29-30) also state, "HUD defines 'point-in-time count(s)' as a count of all individuals experiencing homelessness, whether they are sheltered or unsheltered, on a single night of the year. Although a 'point-in-time count' typically indicates a visual street count, the methodology for a point-in-time count is left to the city's discretion." Now, the problem with "point-in-time counts" is that they do not account for constantly

moving transients or, as aforementioned, those who are staying with a relative or friend and is "couch surfing" (Huerta and Gutierrez-Vera 2020:30) on a single night of the year. Adler (2021) describes, "At least 580,000 people experienced homelessness on a given day in January 2020 . . . but many homelessness advocates argue that these numbers fail to account for the true scope of the homelessness crisis in the U.S." Not getting an accurate count of the total homeless population is detrimental because government agencies and local communities rely on federal data to determine funding, services, and policy decisions. Accurate data collection is essential because without a true representation of children, youth, and families in federal records, they risk being overlooked, leading to insufficient support and ultimately contributing to ongoing homelessness (SchoolHouse Connection 2024). The funding given now is a big part of the reason why the homeless problem has not been solved because it is not even enough to make a dent or make real change.

THE SOLUTIONS AND COST TO END HOMELESSNESS

One of the main problems present when it comes to solving homelessness is the cost, but if homelessness needs to be solved, then it is evident that more affordable housing is needed by building more homes so that demand goes down. Advocates must stay persistent when it comes to building more homes with dedicated leaders and a whole rework of the current government structure to make change happen. As previously mentioned, some of the projects that were started to help combat homelessness in California and the City of Los Angeles to get people off the street are Governor Gavin Newsom's Project Roomkey, Homekey, Mayor Karen Bass, Los Angeles's (2024) Inside Safe initiative, and Housing California's, a nonprofit organization, Roadmap Home 2030 plan.

Governor Newsom launched Project Roomkey in 2020 in order to help homeless individuals get off the street during the COVID-19 pandemic by securing hotel and motel rooms across the state. After a study was conducted in March 2020 (California Governor's Office of Emergency Services 2021), it found that people experiencing homelessness and who were infected by the virus were two to four times more likely to require critical care

and two to three times more likely to die from the virus compared to those who are not experiencing homelessness. According to the report (Fuchs et al. 2021), the project helped over 42,000 people, significantly reduced the number of people going to hospitals, and provided over 20% of those in the program with permanent housing. Piggybacking off the success of Project Roomkey is Homekey, a statewide initiative which expands the original plan of Roomkey to include more vacant spaces including office buildings and apartment buildings for more permanent housing while also focusing on at-risk populations such as youth and Native Americans. As for its lasting impact, Espinoza (2024) from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has said, "To date, the innovate program has funded 250 projects that will include 15,319 homes, serving more than 167,164 Californians over the projects' lifetimes." Next, is Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass's Inside Safe initiative which was launched in December 2022 with the purpose of bringing people inside from tents and encampments, to prevent those encampments from returning, and provide permanent housing.

Two years later, Inside Safe has provided 23,000 people with temporary housing, with permanent housing move-ins nearly doubling, program application wait times dropping 75%, and–according to the 2024 Point-In-Time counts–a 10% decrease in street homelessness (Mayor Karen Bass, City of Los Angeles 2024). Housing California's (2024) initiative Roadmap Home 2030 lists goals such as:

> Create affordable homes [around 1.2 million homes for low-income Californians], protect low-income renters [to protect around 1 million low-income renter households from losing their homes, including more than 300,000 who face eviction each year], and ensure racial equality [to close the racial equity gap in housing and homelessness created by years of racist housing policies that have harmed Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other people of color.]

Housing California continues with homelessness solutions including interventions to prevent someone from experiencing homelessness and supportive housing that is designed to help those who have experienced homelessness with services such as

case management and to help with substance abuse, mental health, and medical treatment. Other solutions mentioned were rental subsidies to help low-income renters pay their rent, in addition to eviction prevention. These ideas are a good step in the right direction for policy changes to be implemented, not only in California but the entire country. The solution to homelessness must be aggressive and decisive. But how much would it cost to make a change and potentially end homelessness?

Addressing homelessness and trying to solve the problem is not easy. However, continued investment, raising the minimum wage, and capping rent prices can effectively and potentially stop the cause. Compared with the rest of the country, California has been on the frontlines and taking the initiative when it comes to minimum wage increases as well as housing support for individuals and families. California has also done well with investing money into housing solutions (State of California Department of Finance 2023) as the state has invested more than $17 billion to aid local governments in addressing homelessness since 2019, but it is not enough to stop the problem as there is a more costly solution that will span over the next decade. Tat (2022) reports, "The state could end homelessness in California by 2035 if it invested $8.1 billion annually in each of the next 12 years - $6.9 billion more than its current average annual investment." This amount according to the Needs Assessment would effectively make homelessness non-recurring in Los Angeles, but also California as a whole. As for the rest of the United States:

> According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, it would cost $20 billion to end homelessness in the United States. That is a big number, yes, but let's put it into perspective: Americans spend $19 billion a year on unplugged appliances, Americans spend more than $35 billion a year on gym memberships, The U.S. government spent around $718 billion on its military in 2019 alone. (Adler 2021)

Per the examples provided by Adler, according to the HUD, solving homelessness is within reach, but why is action never taken? It is not all about ending the current homeless problem now, but it is also to end it for good and that means attacking the

root cause. The minimum wage should be adjusted to align with the cost of living in different regions as a means to address economic disparities. This is a concept known as location-based wage structuring. This wage structure could help alleviate some of the costs of living in dense metropolitan areas where the job market tends to be more competitive. Luna (n.d.) explains further, "This means that you pay employees differently based on their location. In some cases, this refers to additional compensation given to employees to account for higher costs of labor or cost of living in the areas where they reside and work." For example, a location-based wage structure could result in higher minimum wages in areas with elevated costs, such as $27 per hour in California, compared to $16 per hour in states with lower living costs, like North Dakota. Additionally, implementing rent caps should be put in place for low-income renters to improve housing affordability. These caps could be based on an individual's income and financial capacity or set in relation to the median income of a given area. Given regional differences in housing markets, rent regulations would likely vary between high-cost locations like Beverly Hills and more affordable areas such as Bakersfield. No matter what, something must happen fast.

CONCLUSION

Homelessness in the United States is a deeply rooted issue shaped by systemic economic disparities, policy shortcomings, and a lack of coordinated governmental response. As discussed, the persistence of this crisis can be understood through the lens of conflict theory, which highlights how economic structures and political influence have prioritized corporate interests over social welfare. While homelessness has existed for decades due to various structural factors including unaffordable housing, job insecurity, and insufficient mental health services, recent efforts made in California demonstrate that targeted policy interventions can make a difference. However, sustainable solutions require a continued commitment from federal, state, and local governments to ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness receive the support they need. Ultimately, addressing homelessness is not just a matter of economic policy but a moral imperative to uphold the fundamental dignity and rights of all individuals in society.

Nothing will change if we continue to disregard human life and this trend of capitalistic greed.

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Unhoused African Americans and LGBTQIA+ Youth: Disproportionately Overrepresented Groups in the Unhoused Population

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ABSTRACT

Over 75,000 individuals in Los Angeles County are unhoused, representing a crucial issue that needs to be addressed. In addition to stemming from a complex array of historical and societal factors, the unhoused population is further burdened by racial and identity-based inequities, with African Americans and LGBTQIA+ youth representing two disproportionally overrepresented groups in the unhoused population. Thus, more work must be conducted to uncover the systemic injustices that perpetuate homelessness and advocate for more equitable solutions. This analysis explores the historical antecedents leading up to the current housing crisis before drawing from evidence-based studies to frame a set of policy choices and recommendations to address the disproportionate number of homeless African American and LGBTQIA+ youth populations in Los Angeles. I discuss current approaches to resolving the homelessness problem before introducing and advocating for Housing First, an evidence-based approach that seeks to empower unhoused individuals by prioritizing housing from the beginning. Critically, I address specific challenges faced by unhoused African Americans and LGBTQIA+ youth, providing a framework for implementation and recommendations to address such disparities in housing more adequately. As with necessities like food, clothing, and fundamental rights to speech and freedom, housing is a human right.

Los Angeles boasts one of the world's most dynamic and productive economies, yet it is simultaneously called the nation's

epicenter of homelessness. Where the sleek angles of sports cars are just as common as the mismatched tarps of homeless encampments, it is no wonder that Los Angeles is ranked seventh in income inequality out of the largest 150 metro regions (PolicyLink 2023). With over 45,000 homeless people in the City of Los Angeles and an additional 30,000 in the greater county, homelessness has become an increasingly critical issue in LA and beyond (LAHSA 2023). People experiencing homelessness–or alternate term, the unhoused–experience increased exposure to communicable diseases, violence, malnutrition, and harmful weather exposure, and they have, on average, a 12-year shorter life expectancy when compared to the general US population (NHCHC 2019). While 26.7% of the Los Angeles unhoused population are sheltered adults and youth, unsheltered youth make up 3.0% of the unhoused population, and unsheltered adults make up a staggering 70.3% of the unhoused population. Furthermore, characterization of significant portions within the unhoused population (LAHSA 2024) include: 29,823 chronically homeless; 2,991 veterans; and 2,406 transition-aged youth–who are particularly vulnerable due to their ineligibility for youth services.

According to USICH's (n.d.) report using data trends to dismantle myths believed about homelessness, 40-60% of unhoused individuals have jobs–despite the common conception that unhoused people are unemployed–but struggle to find housing because it is unaffordable. Economic reasons like job loss contribute significantly, and many shelters are limited to people who are sober, straight, and have no disability or criminal record. Additionally, while unhoused people are commonly perceived as dangerous and violent, they are more likely to be victims of violent crime. Finally, while a common stereotype is that most unhoused people have substance use and/or mental health disorders, the majority don't; instead, the large majority of people with substance abuse and mental health illnesses are *not* homeless.

Despite making up only 5-8% of the overall US youth population, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (or LGBTQIA+) youth make up 40% of the youth population experiencing homelessness (Robinson 2018). Additionally, homelessness is experienced disproportionately by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (or BIPOC), as more than

40% of the homeless population is composed of African Americans, though they comprise only 13% of the general population (NAEH 2023). In Los Angeles, African Americans make up 31.7% of the homeless population despite making up only 7.6% of the general LA county population (LAHSA 2023). LGBTQIA+ youth and African Americans face unique challenges due to their marginalized identities, and it is crucial to understand the underlying causes of their homelessness to uncover the systemic injustices that perpetuate homelessness and advocate for more equitable solutions.

Given these stark disparities, this paper examines homelessness among two of the most disproportionately affected groups: African Americans of all ages and LGBTQIA+ youth. While homelessness affects individuals across various demographics, these groups face unique systemic challenges that warrant specific attention. African Americans experience homelessness at significantly higher rates than their proportion of the general population, primarily due to historical and structural factors such as discriminatory housing policies and economic disparities. Similarly, LGBTQIA+ youth make up an outsized portion of unhoused young people, often as a result of identity-based discrimination and family rejection. Understanding these differences is essential to developing tailored policy solutions that address their specific vulnerabilities and break the cycle of homelessness.

HISTORICAL CORRELATIONS - THE ORIGIN OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

It is important to acknowledge the historical antecedents of modern housing programs to understand the homeless issue. This necessitates a discussion of public housing, which the government initially constructed in the early 1900s to address the living conditions of America's poorest families during World War I (Goetz 2013). These projects provided affordable and decent housing for the neediest. Still, they soon followed a recognizable pattern of racialization, mismanagement, and subsequent demolition following the increasingly dominant neoliberal perspective. The post-World War I period, which began in the 1930s, saw improved economic conditions as liberal democratic

philosophy defined the character of American politics and government. Starting with President Roosevelt's New Deal programs from 1933 to 1938, Keynesian economics was born, which supported 'big government' solutions and redistributive programs (Goetz 2013; Marr 2015). The federal government favored demand-side policies to bring the country back into stability, encouraging infrastructure development and jobs by building housing, instituting food programs, and enhancing social security.

As economic conditions improved, the racial character of public housing changed from primarily white to Black. White public housing residents were presented with more opportunities in the private sector than their Black counterparts, resulting in an outflow of whites and an increase in Black occupancy (Goetz 2013). At the same time, funding for public housing decreased as the shift to the neoliberal ideology occurred. Public housing quickly became marginalized and stigmatized, further cementing its demise. The civil rights movement, beginning in the late 1950s-1960s, brought in new legislation like the Fair Housing Act, which President Johnson signed as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (HUD n.d.a). However, a shift to more neoliberal views soon began. The neoliberal approach fosters financial deregulation and labor market flexibility at the expense of social welfare programs (Goetz 2013). This has contributed to rising levels of unstable employment, inequality, and poverty, now defining characteristics of major metropolitan areas in the United States. Importantly, housing for the nation's most disadvantaged became a major crisis as a shift to the private market was prioritized.

In the 1970s, the expansion of the public housing stock ended with the Nixon administration. With the passage of the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act, the Section 8 housing program began to take effect. Rather than provide families with hard units–as in public housing–the government began to compensate them with housing vouchers for use in the local private housing market (Marr 2015). However, these vouchers were not effective at addressing the housing need, as prospective buyers with vouchers were highly likely to encounter discrimination and various barriers to obtaining housing (TBF 2020). Displaced families from the demolition of public housing

were often limited to relocating to high-poverty and racially segregated neighborhoods (Marr 2015).

According to Roschelle (2019), the decline of public housing and the rise of neoliberal policy were in line with the discriminatory perspectives on social welfare at the time. In the 1980s and 1990s, Black and Latina mothers on social welfare were often vilified as 'lazy' and welfare-dependent. In 1996, President Clinton passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act to eliminate welfare dependency by enforcing a lifetime limit of 5 years on welfare receipt. Such policies further entrenched racism and discrimination in American social assistance, a characteristic that still affects housing programs today.

Marr (2015) notes the relationship between structural (causal) and cultural (adaptative) factors indicates the link between current housing programs and the history of public housing decline. Multiple social levels shape the process of exiting homelessness. Unhoused individuals attempt multifaceted efforts, but the housing constraints system and low-wage jobs currently characterize our economy and tie them to an endless cycle. The various structural factors that affect the unhoused population include the labor market, housing market, and welfare system. Instead of defining homelessness as embracing an identity or culture, ethnographic researchers should focus on how resources (economic, social, emotional, etc.) can be obtained. Thus, local and national governments should promote employment at a living wage, affordable housing, and adequate welfare support.

CURRENT APPROACHES TO RESOLVING THE HOMELESS PROBLEM

The dominant approach to managing homelessness in the United States is the *linear continuum of care*, emphasizing a step-by-step staircase model. The linear approach is structured so that low demand/low service provisions are available at the first level, and transitional housing and permanent housing are offered only after consistent demonstration of housing readiness or 'worthiness' (Padgett, Henwood, and Tsemberis 2016).

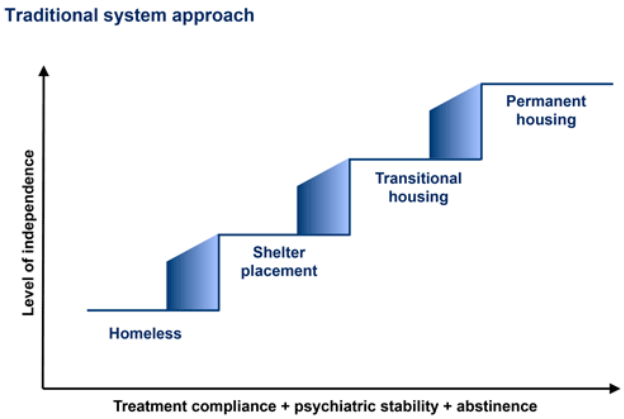

Figure 1: The treatment first approach is based on the linear continuum of care and step-by-step staircase model (Padgett et al. 2016).

This reinforces the conception that homeless people with serious mental illness and co-occurring substance abuse are the authors of their destinies. This approach reinforces a means-tested policy by having the individual demonstrate they deserve access to housing. Because of how this approach is structured, individuals do not always proceed through it orderly, and far too many 'fall off the staircase.' Despite its so-called moral attractiveness, the linear approach–otherwise known as treatment first–is often a "cruel and costly circle of futility" (Padgett et al. 2016). Navigating this social services system can be incredibly difficult, as participation in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (or CalWORKs; a public assistance program for families in California) requires complex requirements. In addition to maintaining adherence to income limits and reporting changes in household composition and criminal justice status, parents are tasked with providing proof of immunization requirements and other legal documentation. For many homeless families, these documents can be easily lost or stolen, resulting in an inability to qualify for assistance. The number of program participation requirements can be so unreasonable that even caseworkers are confused by the system (Roschelle 2019). These are directly tied to a capitalist society's neoliberal approach to basic human needs. Many treatment-first social services are also faith-based, encouraging many families to feign religious enthusiasm. For

example, one transitional housing facility required residents to attend lectures on topics like "The Myth of Evolution" or "How Jesus Can Lead You out of Temptation and Homelessness." As one woman frustratingly put it, "'I'm not homeless because of temptation; I'm homeless because I'm poor. But I don't have a choice; I have to pretend to believe their bullshit'" (Roschelle 2019). These barriers illustrate how traditional approaches fail to address the root cause of homelessness, particularly for historically marginalized groups. Instead of treating housing as a privilege contingent on compliance with social service requirements, we must shift toward recognizing it as an unconditional right. A theoretical foundation for this shift can be found in philosopher John Rawls's theory of justice, which argues for fairness and equity in social structures.

THE ETHICAL CASE FOR HOUSING AS A RIGHT

Rawlsian theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding justice and fairness in society. In the context of homelessness and the recognition of housing as a fundamental right, several key concepts within Rawlsian theory become particularly relevant and provide a deeper understanding of its implications. First, Rawls argues that individuals have diverse conceptions of what constitutes a good life, shaped by their values, beliefs, and interests. Acknowledging housing as a right means respecting individuals' agency and autonomy in pursuing their vision of a good life, which may involve stability, security, and a sense of belonging that housing can provide (Talisse 2001). Rawls also encourages using the *original position*, a hypothetical scenario in which individuals come together to establish principles of justice from behind a *veil of ignorance*. In this exercise, individuals lack knowledge–are *veiled in ignorance*–about their specific attributes, such as wealth, talents, or social status. Applied to homelessness, the *original position* calls for policies that prioritize housing as a right, as individuals in the *original position* would not know whether they might experience homelessness. Therefore, they would strive to create a just society where everyone can access secure housing, ensuring fairness and impartiality (Talisse 2001). This philosophy is justly apt, especially in consideration of disproportionately marginalized

groups in homelessness, like African Americans and LGBTQIA+ youth. Housing should be provided unconditionally as a prerequisite for stability and well-being rather than a reward earned.

HOUSING FIRST - EMPOWERING THE HOMELESS BY INCLUDING THEM IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

It is a fundamental human right to have basic food, clothing, and healthcare needs met. While many of these are handled with direct services, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or SNAP; a modern version of the Food Stamp Program), the fundamental right to shelter needs to be more adequately addressed in the U.S. Consistent with the neoliberal model, many welfare programs in the U.S. are means-tested and restricted to needs-based assistance. This contrasts with the more rights-based assistance programs in Europe. Interestingly, it follows that definitions of homelessness in European countries are characteristic of more accommodating housing programs (Padgett et al. 2016).

The Housing First evolved as a consumer choice program philosophy stemming from the patient and human rights movement of 1970. It incorporates community-based, mobile support services based on the Assertive Community Treatment model and also has a basis in the harm-reduction model originating from the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Padgett et al. 2016). Currently, the general model of Housing First approach is based on the not-for-profit Pathways to Housing model which emphasizes permanent scatter-site housing. This initially came from consumer advocates who argued that people with psychiatric disabilities should have the same ‘normalized’ housing as those with other disabilities. The main goal is to prevent institutionalization that undermines social integration and independent living (Padgett et al. 2016). The organizational aim of the Housing First approach is to employ staff with lived experience in homelessness who have training in psychiatric rehabilitation, trauma-informed care, and harm reduction. Additionally, a strong focus is on reducing power differentials and blurred boundaries between staff and program participants (Padgett et al. 2016). The Housing First approach offers standard

housing, tenancy rights, privacy, freedom separate from program demands, off-site rather than on-site services, and affordable rent contracts. *By directly providing permanent housing*, consumers can focus on utilizing their services. They experience ontological security, which arises from stability in one's living environment. This leads to engagement, retention, and a closer experience of having a true 'home' (Padgett et al. 2016). These characteristics are all meant to provide residents with security and comfort that motivates them to keep their housing.

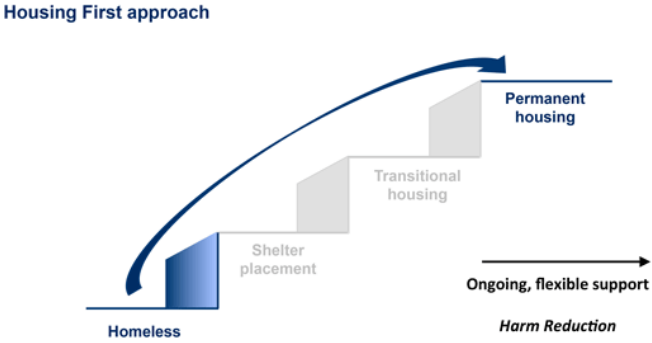

Figure 2: The Housing First approach places individuals directly into permanent housing, from "streets to homes" (Padgett et al. 2016).

Evidence-Based

The Housing First model is widely recognized as an effective and cost-efficient approach to addressing unhoused populations. The earliest evaluations of the Housing First model began in the early 2000s in New York City. A 2000 study demonstrated that after five years, 88% of Housing First participants remained housed, compared to 47% of participants in the control group (Padgett et al. 2016). Additionally, a 2004 study comparing retention rates of participants in the Housing First model and the Treatment First model demonstrated that Housing First participants spent almost no time experiencing homelessness after two years, which was considerably more successful than the Treatment First group, which, on average, spent about 25% of their time in homelessness (NAEH 2023). Another study from 2004 that utilized a random assignment experimental approach demonstrated that the Housing First model eliminated barriers to services and was more successful in reducing homelessness than programs that were

contingent on sobriety and treatment progress, resulting in 79% of Housing First participants stably housed by the end of six months, compared to 27% in the Treatment First group (NAEH 2023).

More recently, a 2021 study found an 88% decrease in homelessness and a 41% increase in housing stability with the Housing First model. In 2015, Housing First demonstrably increased outpatient service utilization and outreach to and engagement with clients inadequately served by the public mental health system. Recent studies also indicate that Housing First may reduce the usage of alcohol, stimulants, and opiates (NAEH 2023).

Evidence also suggests that the Housing First model is cost-effective. In 2007, Project 50 was launched in Skid Row to assess the efficacy of the Housing First approach (Krisiloff and Boyce n.d.). Over ten days, 471 unhoused individuals were counted, and 350 were surveyed. The top 50 most vulnerable were selected based on a vulnerability index, with an average number of years homeless of 9.58. 76% and 90% of the participants were identified with mental health and substance abuse issues, respectively. Then, an engagement team was employed to establish and maintain rapport with the individuals engaging in services. Integrated health, mental health, and substance abuse services were provided in offices on-site, within the participant's place of residence, or anywhere necessary, in accordance with the Housing First model. After four years, Project 50 boasted an 80% retention rate. Perhaps most impressively, the cost analysis revealed total cost offsets of $3.284 million (108% of the money spent by the program) returned to LA County, which corresponded with a surplus of $4,774 generated per occupied unit (Krisiloff and Boyce n.d.).

CHALLENGES FACED BY UNHOUSED AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LGBTQIA+ YOUTH

African Americans and LGBTQIA+ youth, as mentioned, represent two disproportionately represented groups experiencing homelessness despite making up a small portion of the overall population. From October 2021 to November 2022, the UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative (BHHI 2024) conducted the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing

Homelessness with significant focus on understanding the experience of Black unhoused individuals. In California, Black individuals make up 26% of the unhoused population despite making up only 7% of the state's overall population. Incarceration was reported by 43% of unhoused Black Californians, compared to 31% of whites and 37% of other races. Interestingly, 51% of unhoused Black Californians are age 50 and older, indicating an insufficient social safety net and lack of lifetime wealth to retire. Black Californians also experienced meager incomes before homelessness, as leaseholders' median monthly costs were $675, more than half of the median monthly household income. During homelessness, Black Californians reported inadequate access to mental health services, as only 35% of those who reported at least one mental health system in the prior month received either counseling or medication. Perhaps most strikingly, 51% of Black unhoused Californians reported that discrimination impeded their housing search, and 59% noted the length of waitlists for housing support, compared to 48% of white Californians and 49% of other races.

LGBTQIA+ youth face similar yet unique challenges, as individuals who deviate from the norm are usually pathologized and labeled. Homosexuality and gender non-conformity have had a long history of pathologization, with homosexuality being classified as a 'mental disorder' until 1973 (Abramovich 2016). As a result of this, various stereotypes, stigma, and homophobic and transphobic microaggressions still exist today. It should be no surprise that one of the most prevalent causes of homelessness among queer and trans youth is identity-based family conflict; as mentioned previously, a disproportionately large number of unhoused youths identify as LGBTQIA+ (Abramovich 2016). Youth experience homelessness for a variety of reasons, including escaping from abusive homes, emancipating from the foster care system, or being raised by unhoused parents (My Friends Place, n.d.). It has been estimated that each year, 100,000 children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, with homeless and runaway youth being the most vulnerable population (My Friends Place, n.d.). Abramovich (2016) analyzes a study from 2016 in Toronto, Canada, which reported that LGBTQIA+ youth experience institutional erasure and invisibility in attempting to

receive housing support services. As the sheltered system is gendered, erasure begins as early as the first formal intake upon entrance to a shelter, where youth are asked questions that require them to identify as male or female. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ cultural competency training is not made mandatory for staff working in shelters, which may mean an inadequate ability to handle situations of homophobia or transphobia. A combination of these factors may lead LGBTQIA+ youth to avoid the shelter system. Youth lacking specialized health care services may resort to unmonitored street suppliers for transition-related treatment. This, of course, can result in severe health complications.

Given these structural barriers, traditional housing support systems often fail to meet the needs of African Americans and LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness. For African Americans, systemic discrimination in housing and employment limits access to stable housing, while LGBTQIA+ youth frequently face exclusion from family support and shelter systems due to identity-based bias. These realities underscore the need for an approach that removes preconditions for housing and prioritizes immediate stability. The Housing First model offers a particularly effective solution by providing secure housing without requiring individuals first to demonstrate sobriety, employment, or compliance with other restrictive conditions. By addressing housing as a fundamental right rather than a conditional benefit, Housing First is uniquely positioned to break cycles of homelessness and mitigate the barriers these disproportionately affected groups face.

Another two-year study in Toronto, Canada, published in 2016, demonstrated that the Housing First model can be effective for ethnic minority groups (Stergiopoulos et al. 2016). A randomized controlled trial was conducted for 237 adults from ethnic minority groups experiencing mental illness and homelessness. To address this specific population, anti-racism and anti-oppression practices were implemented alongside rent supplements and intensive case management. The main principles of the ethnic minority service approach included language use, education, alliance building, and social justice activism. Immediate access to permanent housing in preferred neighborhoods was provided following the Housing First model.

For African Americans, this scattered-site housing approach was likely effective because it prevented re-segregation into high-poverty areas, which historically mirrored failed public housing models. Additionally, staff were focused on countering racism, discrimination, and power inequities. After 24 months, Housing First participants remained stable for a more significant proportion than the control group (75% vs. 41%). This evidence suggests that the Housing First model should effectively address African American unhoused individuals.

While the Housing First approach has demonstrably sound evidence for adult unhoused individuals, research on unhoused youth is sparse and even more so for youth identifying as LGBTQIA+. Rather than emphasize a scattered-site housing model for LGBTQIA+ youth, they may benefit more from interconnectedness and community with similarly identifying peers. Fostering acceptance and community should be the main focus of housing programs seeking to address LGBTQIA+ youth, as these are themes that are most critically needed by individuals who have already experienced significant social exclusion. Legal guardianship is also a concern when serving homeless youth, as it challenges self-empowerment, autonomy, and choice.

BARRIERS AND POLICY SOLUTIONS FOR HOUSING FIRST

Challenges to Implementation

In 2016, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 1380, which required all housing programs to adopt the Housing First model (CDH n.d.). Housing First has demonstrated remarkable success in reducing homelessness, yet the crisis persists. This raises an essential question: <u>If Housing First works, why hasn't it solved homelessness?</u> While the model is effective, its implementation has been hindered by structural, political, and economic barriers limiting its reach. These challenges include insufficient funding, landlord discrimination, and a lack of tailored approaches for different populations. Addressing these obstacles requires a multifaceted strategy that combines policy reform, tenant protections, and shifts in public perception.

Housing First programs often rely on federal assistance programs like the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program to

provide rental subsidies that make housing affordable for low-income individuals and families, . Section 8 subsidizes rent so tenants only pay 30% of their income, while the federal government covers the rest (HUD n.d.b). Approximately 60,000 families in Los Angeles use Section 8 vouchers, making it a critical tool for securing housing for people transitioning out of homelessness (LA Times 2025). However, even though Section 8 is widely implemented, it still faces serious limitations that impact Housing First's effectiveness. Despite Section 8 vouchers guaranteeing rent payments, many landlords refuse to accept tenants who use them due to stigma against low-income renters and misconceptions that they are riskier (AMA Consulting Group 2022). Some landlords impose additional screening criteria, such as requiring higher credit scores or rental history, which effectively excludes many voucher holders. Without stronger legal protection, Section 8 vouchers are often not the ticket out of homelessness that they were meant to be.

Since landlord participation in Section 8 housing is necessary, an amendment to California's Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) in 2020 has made it illegal for landlords to reject tenants solely because they use a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher to help them afford their rent (Fair Housing Foundation 2020). However, landlord discrimination against Section 8 tenants still occurs. Starting in 2023, the nonprofit Housing Rights Initiative (HRI) investigated with undercover investigators who posed as prospective tenants with Section 8 vouchers; over a year, hundreds of brokers and landlords were contacted. HRI found explicit discrimination against voucher holders 44% of the time in San Francisco, 53% in Oakland, 58% in San Jose, and 70% in Los Angeles (Inner City Law Center 2024). Many states still allow landlords to refuse Section 8 vouchers, significantly limiting housing options for low-income renters, including those in Housing First programs. As of January 2025, only 23 states have legislation prohibiting source-of-income discrimination (SOID), including protections for Section 8 voucher holders (PRRAC 2025). However, even in states with SOID laws, the extent of protection varies. Some states explicitly exclude housing vouchers from their SOID protections, while others have weak enforcement mechanisms, allowing discrimination to persist. Wisconsin's

SOID law does not cover housing vouchers, and Maine and Minnesota's SOID laws are weakened by court interpretation (PRRAC 2025). Recent developments have heightened concerns about the future of Section 8 housing programs. In early March 2025, the Los Angeles Housing Authority stopped processing new and ongoing applications for Section 8 vouchers, likely due to recent funding cuts at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the Trump administration. This suspension threatens access to stable housing for thousands of low-income residents and unhoused individuals who rely on federal assistance. As federal funding becomes increasingly uncertain, it is more critical than ever to advocate for stronger tenant protections, increased investment in affordable housing, and policies that ensure the long-term sustainability of housing assistance programs.

Policy Recommendations & Successes

To maximize the effectiveness of Housing First, systemic reforms must address barriers to implementation, including discrimination against voucher holders, insufficient affordable housing, and the need for specialized housing models for marginalized groups. Expanding access to housing and reducing structural inequities will require stronger legal protections, increased financial incentives, and shifts in public perception. State and local governments must increase funding for both scattered-site and community-based housing options. Expanding the affordable housing supply, mainly through mixed-income developments that prevent high-poverty concentrations, would enable Housing First to operate at the necessary scale for lasting impact. Legislative action is also needed at both federal and state levels to safeguard Section 8's role in Housing First programs. Strengthening penalties for non-compliant landlords, expanding financial incentives such as tax breaks or guaranteed rent payments, and enforcing anti-discrimination laws are critical. Additionally, many landlords remain unaware that Section 8 guarantees rent payments, making it a stable and reliable income source. Public education campaigns and direct outreach can address misconceptions while streamlining participation requirements to encourage greater landlord involvement. States with SOID

protections must also enhance enforcement mechanisms to hold landlords accountable. Governments should implement stronger oversight, offer incentives such as property insurance discounts, and ensure reimbursement for potential damages to reduce landlord hesitancy. By addressing these barriers, Housing First programs can better secure stable housing for participants, breaking cycles of chronic homelessness and ensuring that federally funded housing assistance is used as intended. California's Project Homekey exemplifies this approach by converting existing hotels and motels into permanent supportive housing, rapidly increasing housing availability, and bypassing private landlord discrimination. As of August 2024, Project Homekey had funded nearly 16,000 housing units, with 172,000 households projected to be served over the life of the project (CDH 2024).

Recognizing the racial disparities in homelessness, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Commission established the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness in 2018 to examine the causes of Black overrepresentation in homelessness, identify opportunities to increase racial equity and craft more effective policy recommendations addressing Black unhoused individuals (LAHSA 2018). More recently, Governor Gavin Newsom (2024) signed two bills into law, AB 2835 and AB 3057, to create additional shelter and more housing units. By removing the sunset date on tenancy rules, AB 2835 will allow service providers to place unhoused individuals more easily into privately owned hotels and motels for more than 30 days. Additionally, AB 3057 will streamline the process for local governments to construct Junior Accessory Dwelling Units for more affordable housing options. While these efforts represent progress, more investment is needed to expand Housing First at a scale that meaningfully reduces homelessness.

Abramovich (2016) recommends that to better support LGBTQIA+ unhoused youth, the government should support the development of housing options that are tailored to LGBTQIA+ youth and encourage programs that foster an intersectional approach. In addition to providing staff with LGBTQIA+ cultural competency training, this approach should encompass

recreational needs, mentorship opportunities, health considerations, and cultural connections. Standards that are LGBTQIA compatible, such as gender-inclusive washrooms and shelter intake processes, should also be enforced. Perhaps most critically, government programs should invest in more research and programs that specifically address LGBTQIA+ unhoused youth. This is particularly important, as LGBTQIA+ individuals tend to be undercounted. Nationally, HUD launched an initiative in June 2023 as part of the Biden administration (USICH 2023) to prevent homelessness among LGBTQIA+ youth and aims to provide regular training for LGBTQIA+ youth care providers and release a toolkit for best practices on supporting LGBTQIA+ youth, among other goals.

Solving homelessness is not just about policy—it's also about changing the narrative. Public misconceptions—such as the belief that unhoused individuals are "unwilling to work" or "choose homelessness"—create political resistance to Housing First programs. In California, organizations like Yes in My Backyard (California YIMBY n.d.) have directed significant efforts towards advocating for pro-housing policies and fostering public support for housing initiatives. Since 2017, YIMBY has led the passage of 18 bills into law, including AB 68 that expands Accessory Dwelling Units and SB 330 for accelerating housing construction, limiting fees, and protecting tenants, which have collectively enabled the potential development of millions of new housing units. By engaging communities and policymakers, California YIMBY (n.d.) dispels myths about housing developments and emphasizes reducing homelessness' economic and social benefits. Expanding similar advocacy efforts could further reduce stigma and build political will for long-term investments in affordable and supportive housing.

CONCLUSION

Although this paper is not a primary research source, it draws on evidence-based studies to frame a set of policy choices and recommendations to address the disproportionate number of homeless African Americans and LGBTQIA+ youth in Los Angeles. While Housing First has proven to be a highly effective model, its full potential remains unrealized due to systemic

barriers, funding shortages, and policy limitations. Addressing these challenges requires more than program expansion—it demands legislative action, landlord accountability, and a fundamental shift in how society perceives homelessness. By adapting Housing First to meet diverse needs, increasing investment in permanent supportive housing, and combating housing discrimination, policymakers can ensure that safe, stable housing is accessible to all—particularly the most marginalized populations. Despite recent advancements in policy toward addressing Black and LGBQIA+ unhoused populations, continued research, funding, and programs are necessary to ensure a more equitable future. Only through sustained commitment and structural reform can Housing First evolve from a promising solution into a fully realized pathway out of homelessness.

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Theodoric Manley, PhD, served as the instructor for the Honors College course HNRS 3200 – *Humanities Approaches to Race, Ethnicity, and Complex Problems* at California State University, Los Angeles. His contributions to this manuscript were advisory in nature, providing invaluable mentorship, structural feedback, and editorial guidance throughout the writing process.

The Denial of Self and Belonging: Exploring Disability Identity and Society Using Classical Sociological Theory

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ABSTRACT
Researchers of disability studies define *disability identity* as intertwining disability with a sense of connection to the disability community. However, with continued social and spatial barriers, people with disabilities may not always form a *disability identity*, resulting in issues that may span throughout the lifespan, ranging from ostracization, a decline in psychological wellness, and difficulties collectively pushing back against stigma. As contemporary academia and society expand their documentation of the challenging experiences people with disabilities undergo regarding identity formation and community belonging, it poses a unique opportunity to explore the nature of disability during modern social analysis. Therefore, outlining Harriet Martineau's work as a deaf female social analyst presents space to examine George Herbert Mead's hope for a "universal society" critically through the insights of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and W.E.B. Du Bois to address how to create a society that is equitable and diverse.

From a social analytical perspective, people's humanity lies in the ability to engage in creative labor, create identity, and develop a sense of belonging to a community (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). However, what are the outcomes for people who struggle to experience these developments? In the contemporary era, academia and society have expanded their documentation of the challenging experiences people with disabilities undergo regarding identity formation and community belonging. For instance, Muller (2021) found that as primary and secondary educational spaces failed to normalize disability in the teaching pedagogy (reflecting a disinterest in disability within the social epistemology), children with disabilities did not have adults with disabilities to model after or learn language relevant to their lived experiences. Expectedly, Muller's (2021) participants expressed shared experiences of schools encouraging them to deny their

disabled identity and not create a community with other students with disabilities, suggesting the lack of *disability identity*. Conceptually, researchers understand *disability identity* as "a sense of self that includes one's disability and feelings of connection to, or solidarity with, the disability community" (Dunn and Burcaw 2013:148). Significantly, the problem of people with disabilities not forming a *disability identity* can translate into more severe issues throughout their lifespan, ranging from a decline in psychological wellness to difficulties collectively pushing back against stigma (Muller 2021). Considering the current state of concern, it raises the need to explore its social analytical beginnings in the era of modernity.

Markedly, Harriet Martineau, a deaf social analyst, explored the difficulties she and other deaf people encountered in developing identity and belonging in her work, *Letters to the Deaf* from 1834. In this writing, she explicates some of the realities regarding the ablest behaviors of society during her lifetime, which often forced herself and other people with disabilities into social isolation and a deteriorating sense of belonging (Bohrer 2003; Naples and Valdez 2020). For instance, she outlined how the adverse reactions she and other deaf people endured when they communicated and utilized assistive technology led to a "willful" social exodus to avoid social faux pas and stigmatization (Naples and Valdez 2020). Once pushed to the outskirts of society, Martineau notes, deaf people also experience a dehumanizing form of interdependence through practices of paternalism (Bohrer 2003). Unfortunately, regardless of her contributions to making sense of the social world in modernity, social analysts of Martineau's time regularly questioned the reliability and validity of her work, citing that people with disabilities and women could not interact with the social world proactively (Bohrer 2003). They further libeled her character through the outward belief that her rejection of femininity and domesticity led to her neurosis of health (i.e., invalidism) (Bohrer 2003). One outcome of this scrutiny is that her works experience infrequent epistemological discourse compared to other modern social analysts in the contemporary world (Bohrer 2003).

With context about disability and social analysis in the modern and contemporary worlds, it creates a more prominent

concern regarding the stagnant action to address the concerns of people with disabilities, implying and reinforcing their ostracization from identity and community building. As such, their plight leads to questions about the nature of the strained relationship between identity and belonging when holding a marginalized identity and how inquisitively thinking about other modern social analysts such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and W.E.B. Du Bois presents concerns about George Herbert Mead's hope for a "universal society."

To begin, Mead used symbolic interactionalist methodological approaches to showcase the intrinsically dialectic relationship between the self and society. For instance, he highlighted how the self is created through language to convey how people view themselves as the subject and object when using perceptions others create. Additionally, Mead conceptualized the "play stage" and the "game stage" to explain the development of the self (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). He believed that as children age, they shift from internalizing the attitudes of discrete, disconnected others to simultaneously internalizing the attitudes of multiple others. From the "game stage," Mead coined the term "generalized other" to describe the phenomenon where societies develop general attitudes all ascribe to as people assume their roles and the roles of others (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). However, in applying these concepts to people with disabilities, unique problems arise where they cannot healthily achieve these social developments due to perceived inferiority, which Du Bois notes with "the veil" and "the double-consciousness."

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903) explored his conceptualizations of "the veil" (experiences of subjective and objective estrangement) and "double-consciousness" (a separation of self) that Black Americans experienced as a byproduct of colonization, slavery, and segregation in the United States. Though Du Bois created these concepts to discuss race relations, they are universal in design and can apply to various experiences of oppression (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). For instance, by focusing on Du Bois's research question of how those who are "the problem" navigate society, the social analysis of individuals with disabilities reveals their forced separation between their disability and humanity. With the knowledge that

they cannot be disabled and human simultaneously, people with disabilities recognize how they are perceived by the able-bodied world and respond accordingly, as Martineau previously showed. In turn, they experience an increased risk of experiencing estrangement from society and creating a distorted sense of self. Therefore, Du Bois presents a fascinating concern for Mead's theoretical orientation regarding the development of the self. If those who are "the problem" grow up experiencing the use of language and modeling that emphasizes their inferiority and need to interact with the world accordingly, they grow up to become adults who internalize the attitudes of a generalized other who does not value their marginalized identity, increasing the risk of a negative sense of self.

Notably, this micro-level concern culminates into concerns about Mead's macro-level utopian hope, which he called the "universal society." Mead believed that for a "universal society" to exist, people needed to engage in universal discourse, the ability to take on the attitudes of the abstract, distant other, to understand the rippling effect of personal behavior (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). From a speculatory approach, this raises the question of whether the distant other is symbolically (not physically) distant, as the "generalized other's" collective sentiments can normalize the dehumanization of those who do not meet social expectations, as shown by Gilman and Martineau.

First, Gilman explored women's experiences with disability (i.e., post-partum depression) within the context of patriarchal rest cures that intensified symptoms, rather than alleviated, in her semiautobiographical work, *The Yellow Wallpaper* in 1892. Despite never addressing disability issues overtly, her work touches on how the experience of disability can be intensified by oppression, specifically the intentional practice of denying a person their communicative autonomy due to their marginalized identity (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). Likewise, Martineau noted how she and other deaf people often experienced physician inadequacy due to the latter's reservations about communicating the state of their disability and treatment solutions (Naples and Valdez 2020). Second, another point of interest from Gilman is her 1898 work *Women and Economics*, where her use of the corset metaphor underlines how the patriarchy "chokes"

women into conformity until they internalize their oppression while also fearing liberation (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). As Gilman notes this metaphor extends beyond gender inequality, it quickly finds applicability in Martineau's observations on the creation, internalization, and acceptance of oppressive attitudes towards deafness stemming from popular scientific fields of the time, such as phrenology (Bohrer 2003). Third, though Gilman's exploration of disability ends with *The Yellow Wallpaper*, she and Martineau both highlight the effects of denied power due to oppression.

From Gilman's perspective, women are perceived by their gender first and their humanity second (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). For instance, in *Women and Economics*, Gilman famously analogizes women to domesticated horses as the gendered division of labor forced women into the economic dependency of men due to the former's domestic labor generating no compensation. Adding to this, Martineau expands the thought process by exploring how deaf people are also forced to exist within the confines of domesticity but are denied gendered expectations as a reflection of their believed biopsychological and intellectual limitations (Bohrer 2003). Notably, Martineau offers substance to Gilman's understanding of Social Darwinism as the latter attempts to redefine who is the fittest to survive based on biological distinctions to generate social equity, while the former highlights the impact of focusing on biological distinctions on the lived experiences of people with disabilities. To Gilman, gender denied people their humanity. To Martineau, disability denied people their gender and humanity.

Considering the insights of Gilman and Martineau, here lies a unique concern for Mead's vision of society; he did not account for marginalized identities forgotten through intentional practices of minimizing language. Instead, he focused on the notion that despite people experiencing a natural inclination to engage in self-protective and self-preservationist behaviors, they would realize that engaging in pro-social activities (e.g., cooperation) would allow them to maximize their desires (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). Additionally, he believed that as society organizes to reach universality, intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts will arise and find resolution through reconstructions and

modifications made through communication. Further, his expectations for conflict resolution do not account for power dynamics, which creates the invisibilization of language to describe the experiences of marginalized individuals and can prevent successful communication. Although Mead held an optimistic perspective of conflict as a symbolic interactionalist, he did not explore the nature of resolving power imbalances (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). Therefore, a final exploration of Du Bois's theoretical orientation offers space to explore the work needed to create Mead's "universal society."

Du Bois argued in his essay *The Souls of White Folks* from 1910 that the inability to move past conflict stems from the privileged not realizing their privileged consciousness (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). Moreover, he presented the issue that regardless of historically marginalized people's attempts to claim their humanity, conscious and unconscious processes of dehumanization will ensure the preservation of their lower value, ensuring the privileged can continue their practices of exploitation and profit. Using this perspective, Du Bois presents a critical concern for Mead's conceptualization of a "universal society," especially in the context of disability. Specifically, Mead was a white, non-disabled man alive during the early stages of Reconstruction U.S. (Edles and Appelrouth 2021), which raises a positionality question about whether his conceptualization of a "universal society" prioritizes assimilating people into the white, Western world or offers dignity, equity, and inclusivity for diversity. Despite the inability to answer these questions, Du Bois's analysis suggests that developing a "universal society" must be intentionally critical. As social analysis is a byproduct of the human survival skill to predict the behaviors of an environment (Lemert 2021), Du Bois presents one more note about the talents of those experiencing marginalization and its use to build a better society.

Interestingly, Du Bois believed experiences of oppression allow people to develop the "gift of clairvoyance," the ability to recognize the actual operations of society (Edles and Appelrouth 2021). Markedly, this gift is highlighted in the writings of Martineau (Naples and Valdez 2020) as she details how people with disabilities describe the turbulence experienced in

developing a sense of self and belonging to society at a nuance other social analysis did not fully address at the time. Alongside this clairvoyance, Du Bois advocated for the privileged to become aware of their consciousness and its impact on historically marginalized individuals and communities. Principally, achieving these ends requires a willingness to intentionally incorporate people of marginalized identities by increasing the value of their "gift of clairvoyance" to ensure people reevaluate the nature of power dynamics to move towards self-actualization, community advancement, and the merging of previously separated identities.

For contemporary examples of attempts to shift epistemological power imbalances throughout the life course, there is a growing demand for special education to update their teaching pedagogy to become more pro-disability and foster students' disability identities (Muller 2021). Scholars highlight the importance of institutions of higher education providing queer and disabled students with online and in-person venues to improve their community building and student development experiences as they become adults (Miller 2017). Tangibly, strikes led by the 2022 University of California graduate students strove to address obstacles disabled graduate students experienced in their media and bargaining stances (Salanga 2022). Additionally, disabled parents from Ohio made national news as they challenged state laws allowing the use of disability for family courts to remove a child (Staver 2022). Their activism reached fruition in 2023 as Ohio passed SB 202, which not only ended the use of parental disability as the sole determinant to limit or deny parental/custodial rights but emphasized the right for parents to access supportive services deemed reasonable and necessary (Szilagy 2023).

Finally, in comparing cultural differences from Martineau's deaf experience during the age of modernity to the contemporary world, Padden and Humphries (1988) highlight the distinguishment between "lowercase deaf" and "uppercase Deaf." Specifically, "lowercase deaf" refers to the inability to hear due to an audiological condition, while "uppercase Deaf" refers to the deaf people who use sign language as their shared, inherited language and share a culture that generates their sentiments about themselves and relationships with society at large. This relates to

current deaf culture, where deaf individuals experience more opportunities to generate their Deaf identity by attending Schools for the Deaf, attending Deaf-friendly universities (e.g., Gallaudet University and California State University, Northridge), and associating with resource and community-building agencies (e.g., Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness).

So, while Mead's theoretical expectation for a "universal society" has not yet come to fruition, work to normalize universal discourse through classical influences from Martineau, Du Bois, and Gilman generates hope for people with disabilities (and people of other marginalized identities) to participate in society authentically. Moreover, the evaluation of classical ontology emphasizes the importance of contemporary developments about identity and society. For instance, Patricia Hill Collins's (1986:118) *Black Feminist Thought* argues that the theoretical understandings of society hold more depth and complexity when they originate from individuals whose standpoint exists at the intersections of oppression, who she calls the "outsiders within." For "outsiders within," their status allows them to analyze society from a lens that often goes disregarded by those who do not hold the same standpoint, and to trust the validity of their personal and cultural epistemologies to analyze and solve social problems. Unsurprisingly, the themes within Collins's work paradigmatically align with the works from modern sociology as she intertwines their scholarship and her positionality to further the value of epistemological heterogeneity in sociological thought and equitable societal formation.

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Marx and the Question of Palestine

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ABSTRACT
May 15th is recognized by Palestinians around the world as *Nakba* Day (*Nakba* meaning 'catastrophe' in Arabic), marking the anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel on the same date in 1948, and the escalation of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Within 2 years (1947-1949), 15,000 Palestinians were killed, 40% of the Palestinian population became refugees, and Zionist forces had taken over 78% of historic Palestine. In 2025, 77 years later, we are witnessing the mass genocide of the Palestinian people and the destruction of Palestinian land by the Zionist state and their allies–-the United States being one of the most prominent. In this paper, the history and current state of the Palestinian genocide and the pro-Palestinian movement will interact with Karl Marx's theories on superstructure and infrastructure, class struggle, and class consciousness. Positioning Zionists as the oppressive, ruling class and Palestinians as the oppressed will explain the influence of class struggle and economic infrastructure on the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and the pro-Palestinian movement that has followed.

HISTORY OF PALESTINE

In the 1600s, poet and colonist, George Sandys spoke of Palestine as "a land that flowed of milk and honey . . . adorned with beautiful mountains and luxurious valleys; the rocks producing excellent waters; no part empty of delight or profit" (Said 1980:11). Said (1980) also notes that the native Palestinian population was composed of people who all spoke Arabic and were mainly Sunni Muslims, with a smaller sum of the population being Christians, Druzes, and Shiite Muslim. Native Palestinians were the prideful caretakers of their land and were responsible for the construction of the major cities in Palestine–Nablus, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Acre, Jaffa, Jericho, Ramallah, Hebron, and Haifa. Palestinian intellectuals and professionals organized social, economic, and cultural life around the issues of independence and anti-colonialism, which gave rise to a distinctly Palestinian and

pervasive form of resilience (Giacaman 2020; Said 1980). A Palestinian identity was created in opposition to the Ottoman Empire, British rule, and Jewish colonization. Despite the presence of native Palestinians and their efforts to maintain their land, outsiders viewed Palestine as empty land and deemed Palestinians as invisible (Embrick and Williams 2023).

World War I marked the beginning stages of serious Zionist planning for the colonization of Palestine (Amar-Dahl 2017; Said 1980). Zionism emerged because of the rise of antisemitism in Europe, to resolve the Jewish people's statelessness, and to preserve the collective existence of the Jewish people (Amar-Dahl 2017). This marked a shift in focus from religion toward nationalism amongst Zionists. Leaders of Zionist organizations (Tahhan 2018) believed it to be "the principle that Palestine should be reconstructed as the National Home for the Jewish People," (Said 1980:13) and through intensive Zionist lobbying, led British authorities to declare that the Jewish people were capable of giving Palestine "a place in the modern family of nations" (Said 1980:13). Other locations, such as South America and East Africa, were considered potential homes for the Jewish people; however, Palestine was selected because of Jewish connection to the Holy Land.

In November 1917, Arthur Balfour issued the Balfour Declaration which declared its aim to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine and was included in the terms of the British Mandate for Palestine after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, (Tahhan 2018). The initiation of the mandate expedited European Jews' immigration to Palestine. From 1914 to 1927, the Jewish population increased from 11% to 28% (Said 1980). The mandate made an apathetic attempt to protect the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish population in Palestine but refused to even acknowledge the native Palestinian population as anything other than non-Jewish (Said 1980; Tahhan 2018). Many speculate what influenced the Balfour Declaration (Tahhan 2018), and scholars debate that it was either to solve the Jewish problem, maintain British influence in the region, appease Zionist lobbying, and/or garner Jewish support in the war. The Balfour Declaration resulted in violent clashes between Jewish immigrants and native Palestinians and is cited as the precursor for the *Nakba* (or

'catastrophe'). The Arab Revolt, which lasted from 1936 to 1939, destroyed more than 2,000 Palestinian homes, the placement of 9,000 Palestinians in concentration camps, and the deportation of 200 Palestinian nationalist leaders (Chomsky and Pappé 2015; Tahhan 2018).

By November 1947, the British government turned over control of Palestine to the United Nations, ending its colonial project, due to the violence of Zionist armed forces. The United Nations adopted Resolution 181 which recommended a two-state solution for Palestine. Before the adoption of the resolution, Jews made up less than one-third of the population in Palestine and owned about 6% of Palestinian land (Said 1980). The United Nations and Resolution 181 granted Zionists 55% of Palestinian land, depriving Palestinians of key agricultural lands, seaports from Haifa to Jaffa, and major cities (Chomsky and Pappé 2015; Said 1980). This resolution was a confirmation of the political and economic power of Zionism. Despite being granted 55% of Palestinian land, Zionist leaders recognized that the creation of a monoethnic, monocultural Jewish state would not be achieved by purchasing land and homes but by force (Chomsky and Pappé 2015). An idea that garnered fervent support amongst Israeli leaders. Therefore, the plans for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine were finalized on 10 March 1948, and on that same evening, Israeli military troops prepared for the systematic expulsion of Palestinians from large portions of the country (Chomsky and Pappé 2015). The order provided detailed instructions on how to utilize large-scale intimidation tactics, bombardment of villages, and explosives to remove Palestinians from their land and prevent them from returning (Said 2015; Chomsky and Pappé 2015). 15 May 1948 marked the official end of the British Mandate and the beginning of the Israeli state. Annually, May 15th is recognized amongst Palestinians as a National Day of Remembrance for the loss of their homeland; for Israelis, this day commemorates their independence. Within 6 months, 750,000 Palestinians had been uprooted, 531 villages had been destroyed, and 11 neighborhoods were forcefully uninhabited (Chomsky and Pappé 2015).

In 1948, a Jewish homeland was achieved via violent attacks on Palestinian political leadership, financial supporters, means of sustenance (wells, mills, land, etc.), and vital means of

production (Chomsky and Pappé 2015). Regardless of their victory, the Zionist project continues. The *Naksa* (or 'the set-back' in Arabic), commonly referred to as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War or Six-Day War, increased Israeli control of Palestine from 55% to 85%. Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) gained control of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip and displaced 430,000 Palestinians. About 50% of those people who had been previously displaced by the "*Nakba*" were displaced again. Under Israeli occupation, Palestinians became either refugees by relinquishing their right to return to historic Palestine or Palestinian Citizens of Israel (Farsakh 2016).

PALESTINE TODAY

In the 77 years since the *Naksa* and *Nakba*, Israel has controlled every aspect of Palestinian life, from where they can travel, to what they learn in school, to what services they can access, and to where they live. Life in occupied territories is characterized by its de jure discrimination, heavy surveillance, violent military, and constant threat of imprisonment or execution (Embrick and Williams 2023). Tensions between IOF and Palestinian resistors have persisted from 1947 to today, with thousands of bombs dropped and tens of thousands of lives lost in between. On October 7th, 2023, Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups broke through a barrier around the Gaza Strip in response to decades of Israeli oppression. 1,139 people were killed and 250 were taken as hostages. Israel retaliated by exclaiming that they would eradicate Hamas, and since the October 7th attack, IOF have killed over 42,000 Palestinians and buried thousands under the rubble. An Amnesty International USA investigation (2024) has concluded that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

Since October 2023, all efforts towards an Israeli-Hamas ceasefire have failed repeatedly. 2.2 million Gazans have been displaced, some of whom are being displaced for a second or third time. The IOF have destroyed Gaza's infrastructure (housing, schools, healthcare facilities, water and sanitation services, and the electricity grid). The United Nations Population Fund states that the genocide has worsened Gaza's already severe poverty and that its socio-economic outlook is dire. Additionally, all economic

sectors have ceased production and sales, restricting access to humanitarian relief. The Amnesty International USA (2024:1) report finds that Israel is aware of the "irreparable damage it is inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza," regardless of their claims that their actions to eliminate Hamas are justified.

MARX, PALESTINE, AND THE PRO-PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT

Existing literature (Aronson 1980; Embrick 2023; Englert and Bhattacharyya 2024) focuses on the ethnic/racial, historical, theological, resource struggles, and/or geopolitical dimensions of Zionist's ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The theological argument states that Jerusalem has been the spiritual, religious, and national center of the Jewish people for thousands of years (Englert and Bhattacharyya 2024). Jews were exiled from the Kingdom of Judah, but it remains an important aspect of Jewish life. Historical arguments state that the Jewish rule of Israel dates back to 1000 BCE and claims that Jerusalem was vital in shaping Jewish history, traditions, and cultural identity. The ethnic/racial perspective argues that Zionists use anti-Arab, anti-Muslim sentiments to garner the support of the West. Edward Said (1980) explains that Zionism is in complete correspondence with Western ideas about society and man. European Jews were expected to create "a civilization of sweetness and light out of the black Islamic sea" (Said 1980:25). This paper seeks to explain how capitalism and Israel's interest in wealth accumulation have influenced the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and the current genocide. Karl Marx's theories on infrastructure and class consciousness will provide an alternative perspective on the history and current state of Palestine.

Infrastructure and Superstructure

Karl Marx's law of development of human history states that people must fulfill their basic needs before they can pursue politics, science, art, religion, and beyond; therefore, those who have access to a surplus of capital and control the means of production determine prominent societal norms and culture (Adams and Sydie 2001). Palestinians' relationship to production, (in)access to wealth, and social structure are largely shaped by

historical, political, and economic contexts, specifically the impact of colonialism, occupation, displacement, and resistance. Before 1948 and the establishment of the state of Israel, 60% of the Palestinian population worked in agriculture (Said 1980). Land ownership and agricultural output were central to production, livelihood, and identity. Palestine was a feudal society, whose folklore, societal structure, cuisine, habits, customs, dialect, and culture were influenced by their connection to the land and were uniquely Palestinian (Said 1980).

After the *Nakba*, the shift toward alienated labor and the Israeli government's push for the privatization of Palestinian land transformed Palestine from a feudal, agricultural society to a capitalistic society with the Israeli bourgeois at the helm. The systematic destruction of Palestinian homes, villages, universities, cultural landmarks, religious institutions, and so forth, left tens of thousands of Palestinians displaced, jobless, and under Israeli occupation. The Israeli government had the power to seize the land of entire Palestinian villages and transfer ownership to the State of Israel (Falah 2004). Only a few Palestinians were fortunate enough to find jobs, afford housing, and reintegrate into the economy (Englert and Bhattacharyya 2024). This provided the Israeli government with a surplus of Palestinian labor. Employment opportunities for Palestinians consisted of construction or other labor-intensive jobs in Israeli-controlled areas; therefore, alienating Palestinians from the means of production, themselves, and their communities. Palestinians were forced to participate in the Israeli economy without reaping any of the financial benefits. Israel has ensured that Israeli Jews occupy the highest positions on the economic scale and that Indigenous Palestinians are excluded to maintain total control of Palestine (Embrick and Williams 2023; Marx and Engels 1978).

From a Marxist lens, Israel's ability to successfully carry-out and "justify" the continual expropriation of Palestine is due to their control of the means of production, alienation of labor, access to a surplus of labor, and "ownership" of private property. Now that the Israeli Occupation Forces have claimed Palestinian land as their own, the Israeli capitalist class attempts to eliminate Palestinian norms, traditions, society, practices, and more to replace them with Israeli culture. A primary target being

education. Said (1980) explains that education for Palestinians deteriorated drastically under Israeli occupation due to a lack of teachers, inferior schools, use of Hebrew language over Arabic, and a stark change in the curriculum. The Israeli government's education policies emphasize Palestinian decline, corruption, and violence, while simultaneously presenting Jewish history in the best possible light (Said 1980). An attack on Palestinian education is an attack on the promotion and preservation of Palestinian culture. However, the Palestinian people are at the mercy of the Israeli government. Their complete control over the economy places Palestinians in a vulnerable position where they are reliant on the State of Israel for survival. The Israel government, in turn, uses their power to ensure the subordination of Palestinians and their culture, while promoting Zionist ideology. Without the need for justification, Israeli Zionists have been able to carry out an ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. Their accumulation of wealth in combination with the continual cultural extermination has produced a state that does not need to rationalize their actions.

Class Consciousness and Resistance

Marx's concept of class consciousness refers to the recognition of one's social position concerning larger economic systems, power dynamics, and inequality (Marx and Engels 1978). Amongst the working class, class consciousness allows for the realization of their exploitation and alienation for the benefit of the capitalist class. Working-class folks' humanity is discounted in pursuit of the accumulation of wealth. The proletariat and capitalist class are two sides of the same coin; the wealthy are compelled to preserve their wealth, while the proletariats seek to abolish it. Collective action, birthed from social awareness, seeks to eradicate exploitation and oppression (Marx and Engels 1978).

Class consciousness among Palestinians is shaped by the socio-political and economic conditions of Palestine. Class intersects with Palestinian national identity, geography, and external pressures to shape their class awareness and struggle (Englert and Bhattacharyya 2024). The Israeli occupation has created a heightened awareness of economic inequality and class struggle amongst Palestinians through their alienation from production (Embrick and Williams 2023; Englert and

Bhattacharyya 2024). Regardless of their alienation, class consciousness and a strong sense of identity remain powerful forces that are deeply ingrained in Palestinian culture. Said (1980) explains that Palestinians, since the Ottoman Empire, have consciously and consistently positioned themselves in collective opposition to colonial forces. He continues by stating that the idea of resistance gets content and muscle from Palestine (Said 1980). The preservation of Palestinian culture via poetry, literature, art, music, food, and so forth serves as a form of ideological resistance. Palestinian cultural and ideological resistance aims to transform material conditions.

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement employs non-violent punitive measures to put economic pressure on Israel to recognize Palestine's right to self-determination. Palestinian political parties, unions, associations, coalitions, and organizations have come together to represent the interests of Palestinian refugees, Palestinians under occupation, and Palestinian citizens of Israel. There is a recognition of shared struggles and the importance of solidarity across class and national lines. Given that all efforts to convince or force Israel to comply with humanitarian law and end its occupation of the people of Palestine have failed, representatives of the oppressed class are encouraging boycotts and divestment against Israel. They are calling upon international civil society to pressure their respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel.

The BDS movement is targeting the economic base that plays a vital role in funding and maintaining systems of oppression (Desai 2021). They have called for an escalation in boycott and divestment efforts, within the last year, in response to Israel's escalation of violence against Palestinians. Their social media campaigns have worked to educate people around the world about the Palestinian genocide and encourage them to participate in the BDS movement, making them allies in the Palestinian struggle. Academic associations and student unions in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and beyond have turned to their colleges and universities asking them to divest from Israeli businesses. The BDS movement is a clear example of class

consciousness because it recognizes Israel's economic exploitation, its promotion of solidarity among oppressed groups (Palestinians and allies), and its efforts to dismantle systems of power (Desai 2021). BDS aligns with the principles of class struggle and demonstrates how economic resistance can serve as a tool for broader liberation.

CONCLUSION

An overview of the history of Palestine was included to provide context for its connection to Marx's theories on infrastructure and superstructure, class consciousness, and class struggle. Palestine was positioned as the oppressed, working class, and Israel was posited as the oppressive, ruling class. Israel's complete control of Palestinian land and means of production led to their complete control of Israeli-Palestinian society and culture, which promotes the oppression and dehumanization of Palestinians. Despite the efforts of the IOF and their Zionist allies, Palestinians continue to demonstrate unwavering resilience and faith that their land will be there once again.

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K-pop Fandoms Through Durkheim's Lens

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ABSTRACT
Applying Emile Durkheim's ideas to modern-day K-pop fandoms provides insight into how classical sociological theories can still be found today. This theoretical framework explores how fandom culture, specifically through the lens of K-pop, showcases ideas from classic sociological theories. Emile Durkheim's ideas of solidarity, integration, rituals, and anomie connect to the concepts found in K-pop fandoms. Organic solidarity is shown through the interdependence of different roles within a K-pop fandom to keep it alive, while mechanical solidarity is demonstrated through multiple factors, like internalizing idols' values or creating black oceans, to further strengthen the well-being of the fandom and idols. K-pop fans utilize rituals, like fan chants or watching online entertainment programs, in order to foster this integration within their fandom. The connection K-pop fans have fostered turns into a solution to anomie, leading them further away from alienation. Further research can provide a more in-depth analysis of how other classical theories can apply to newer fans of K-pop or other fandoms.

Imagine fans all over the world, from Los Angeles to Seoul, tuning into the latest music video release from their favorite K-pop group even though it might be 2 AM where they are located. K-pop has found its way to the top of Western Pop Culture, scoring numerous records on music charts and selling out multiple stadiums for their concerts. The success of K-pop can be linked to various factors, especially the fans. Fandom culture is not a new concept when it comes to popular culture, but K-pop fandoms, in particular, give a unique take on how these fandoms operate. These fandoms are seen as mini-societies because they have similar functions in how a society operates.

Studying society and how it operates can be best explained by the theories of Emile Durkheim. As one of the first French sociologists, Durkheim's ideology was heavily influenced by French society during the mid to late 1800s. Considered the

grandfather of sociology, Durkheim influenced many in the field (Coser 1977). Durkheim focused on different aspects of society, specifically how individuals are incorporated into society, as well as anomie and functionalism. Emile Durkheim's ideas of solidarity, integration, rituals, and anomie connect to the concepts found in K-pop fandoms. Researching these fandoms provides insight into how the fans of K-pop groups highlight classical theories in sociology.

SOLIDARITY

Durkheim saw how individuals interacted in societies through two lenses: organic and mechanical solidarity. Organic solidarity is when the social integration of a society develops out of interdependence, while mechanical solidarity is the opposite, where social cohesion develops from collective values and uniformity (Coser 1977). To delve further into each concept, organic solidarity highlights how modern-day society works as we depend on specific roles people take on to keep society running. Mechanical solidarity explains primitive societies where individuals are more alike, leading to a decrease in the division of labor. Both ideas of solidarity can be found in K-pop fandoms.

In fandoms, fans utilize different ways to show their admiration as they fall into the forms of participatory culture (Jenkins 2013). Fans adopt roles like fan editing or fan organizers who organize fan events in their local cities. In K-pop fandoms, there are roles Western fandoms do not have. Within K-pop, there are various roles a fan can take on, especially becoming a translator. Due to content from K-pop idols and groups being in Korean, bilingual fans have taken on the role of being a translator for their fandom. These roles create interdependence within the fandom as some fans might depend on the translator fans to convert the idol's content into one with English subtitles. Translators, also known as fansubbers in the K-pop fandom, have significantly impacted the spread of Korean content by minimizing the language barriers and allowing participation from fans beyond Korea (Aisyah and Yun Jin 2017). The opposite also holds true as Western K-pop fans translate English content into Korean for Korean fans, alluding to the interdependence aspect.

To further visualize this idea, Bangtan Translations has garnered over 1 million followers on both X, formerly known as Twitter, and YouTube (BANGTANSUBS 2013). Their website has teams of translators and subbers, all contributing to translating BTS content with the intent of no profit (BANGTANSUBS 2013). English-speaking fans utilize their services to keep up with BTS and its content. Their translations provide needed context or emotion for the message BTS is trying to communicate, which cannot be fully captured by auto-translating services like Google Translate. The roles these fans take on stimulate and continue the functions of the Western K-pop fandoms. To connect this back to Durkheim, the interdependence on fansubbers emulates how K-pop fandoms represent organic solidarity. Organic solidarity depends on mutual reliance on each other in a society, which connects with the interdependence on fansubbers for Western K-pop fandoms. Fans of K-pop fandoms cannot consume or engage with content without these fansubbers because of that language barrier.

Mechanical solidarity can also be found in K-pop fandoms because they are formed through fan loyalty and shared interest in a specific K-pop group. The emotional investment and action K-pop fans feel for their idols showcase this bond that varies in each fandom. For example, the bond differs between ARMYs (the name given to BTS fans) and BTS compared to Blinks (the name given to Blackpink fans) and Blackpink (King-O'Riain 2020). This resembles the ideas of mechanical solidarity because these fans share a strong commitment to the community's well-being and collective values. Fans in a specific fandom, such as the ARMY, are all alike because of their collective love for BTS. For mechanical solidarity to operate, individuals in a society are alike and hold similar values regarding their society, alluding to the ideas of ARMY and BTS. The collective values of ARMY come from the members feeling like BTS takes a place in their lives as role models, therefore connecting to experiences by internalizing the promoted values (Cheriyah and Hadi 2022). The social cohesion within the BTS fandom depends on ARMYs' devotion to BTS and their success and well-being, resembling Durkheim's ideas of mechanical solidarity. Durkheim's ideas of solidarity are seen through K-pop fandoms, explaining how

fandoms represent how societies can operate. The underlying mechanisms of how K-pop fandoms operate also rely on the interactions between fans to integrate fans into the specific fandom.

INTEGRATION & RITUALS

Durkheim's ideas of integration are seen throughout K-pop fandoms as newer fans interact with seasoned fans from a specific fandom. An element of integration refers to the interactions between group members (Coser 1977). An example of integration is participation in rituals because it allows members to bind together while engaging in common activities (Coser 1977). Durkheim's idea of rituals and its connection with integration can be applied to K-pop fans. Within each fandom, the fans will engage in common activities that bond them even more with the fandom and idols they idolize.

This idea can be applied to the fandom of the K-pop boy group Seventeen. Seventeen has created an online entertainment program that releases episodes weekly on YouTube called "Going Seventeen." Carats (the name given to Seventeen fans) engages with the program every week, highlighting how this online entertainment program increases artist loyalty (Limic and Limb 2023). This weekly routine that Carats engages with represents how common activities can improve the integration of a member in that group. "Going Seventeen" has attracted fans and non-fans to watch the weekly program, resulting in the program consistently being on the "trending" section on YouTube. Carats and Cubics (fans of only Going Seventeen) all engage in the same ritual every week in order to bring them closer to being active fans of Seventeen (Limic and Limb 2023). This ritual of watching "Going Seventeen" fosters this integration of making newer fans become full-time Carats because of their constant exposure to Seventeen through the program and having the same routine as many other Carats. When newer fans engage with the program, it gives them the feeling of community because they have the same routine as full-time Carats.

Another ritual that K-pop fans engage in is fan chants. Fan chants refer to a scripted adlib version of the songs K-pop fans sing along to while the idol or group performs a certain song. Fan

chants are usually planned so fans can say the key lyrics or members' names for future performances. As the fans engage with this ritual at the idols' performances, it enhances their fan experiences and the bonds they have with their idol. An example of an iconic fan chant fostering this fan bond and energy would be during the 2024 Coachella ATEEZ performance. They performed a song called "Guerrilla," which contained a fan chant during the outro of the song. All the members sang the lyrics "***The guerrillas***" while the fans screamed the response lyrics, "***Break the wall***." The fans during this song did the fan chant at such a high volume that it was heard from other stages during that time (Koreaboo 2024). The energy from the fan chant did not go unrecognized, showcasing how Atiny (the name given to Ateez fans) reinforced their fan bond with Ateez while also gaining new fans in the process.

A final example of rituals performed by K-pop fans within their fandoms would be the use of lightsticks. With each generation of K-pop, fans have shown different ways to show support for their favorite idol group. The first generation of K-pop, which consisted of the 1990s idol groups, did not have lightsticks but other items fans utilized, like colored raincoats or balloons with their flashlight (Anderson 2019). In recent years, fans have used lightsticks to show the idol they are supporting them in the crowd of other fans. Lightsticks are light-up wands catered to a particular K-pop idol or group that fans wave around during live performances or concerts. The trend of utilizing colored balloons or lightsticks stemmed from how each fandom was assigned specific colors distinguishable from other fandoms (Anderson 2019). This can be shown through how Seventeen's official colors are rose quartz and serenity compared to Twice's, another well-known K-pop girl group, colors apricot and neon magenta (KProfiles 2017).

Lightsticks have become a well-known ritual in K-pop fandoms because of how fans have utilized them for specific events. "Lightstick oceans" are used by fans to show the idols that the fans are showing support for them (Anderson 2019). During live performance shows like SBS Inkigayo or Dream Concert, multiple idol groups perform; therefore, fans use the lightsticks to display the idol group they are supporting. As fans participate in

this lightstick ritual, they feel a sense of solidarity with the idol as they show support in the crowd. This ritual also creates a sense of unity in the fandom as they all use the lightstick similarly and distinguish themselves from other fandoms.

The idea of these rituals can also be tied to mechanical solidarity as these fans use these rituals to collectively promote the betterment of their community. The fans performing these rituals consistently engage with their idol group to fully distinguish themselves from different fandoms. Fans will use their rituals to further strengthen their loyalty to the idol group. Lightsticks have intensified fans' loyalty to a certain group by engaging with black oceans.

"Black oceans" are when K-pop fans purposefully turn off their lightstick to engage in the act of boycotting the idol group performing, leaving the entire audience in the dark (Anderson 2019). These black oceans happen when K-pop fans dispute over things like record sales or popularity. Black oceans have happened to many well-known artists today, like Girl Generation and BTS. The event that coined the term black ocean was when Girl's Generation, also known as SNSD, received an entire stadium of fans turning off their lightstick during their 10-minute performance. Prior to this event, Girl's Generation was receiving hate from fans of boy idol groups because they were consistently pictured next to male idols for photoshoots or advertisements. While already gaining an enormous amount of anti-fans, during the 2008 Dream Concert, Elfs (the name given to Super Junior fans) and SONEs (the name given to Girl's Generation fans) engaged in a physical altercation, resulting in multiple anti-fans of Girl's Generation to shut off their lightsticks during their performance (BeBoss TV 2020). This act of fans engaging in fan wars and collectively doing an action against a particular group emulates Durkheim's ideas of mechanical solidarity.

Referring back to mechanical solidarity, fans engaging in fan wars through acts like black oceans shows how fans strengthen their loyalty to a group. Utilizing the rituals, like the black ocean, has fans engage in activities that bond fans together over a common "enemy," in this case, a rival K-pop group or idol. This increases the fans' bond with the group and with other members of the fandom. Fans utilizing black oceans creates a space for fans

to share a strong commitment to the fandom's wellbeing. When considering rituals and solidarity, K-pop and integrating into specific fandoms is seen as a modern-day solution to anomie.

ANOMIE

Anomie refers to the condition that occurs in the social structure that disrupts that society's previous norms and values (Coser 1977). Members of a society that has experienced anomie are left without moral direction in their lives, leading to a sense of loneliness and disconnection (Coser 1977). Through technological advances and harsh labor markets, people now face what Durkheim explained in the 19th century. Modern society has increased feelings of disconnection and loneliness as it becomes more visible in people's everyday lives. Anomie presents itself in the rise of mental health crises or the alienation from physical society through the means of digital spaces. K-pop and its fandoms can be seen as a unique solution to these feelings of alienation or loneliness. Fans use K-pop to combat the struggles of everyday life while simultaneously giving them a purpose and goal. K-pop fandoms hold space for the fans to engage with each other and form a sense of belonging and bonding.

According to Mohd Jenol and Ahmad Pazil (2020), the meaning of being a K-pop fan transcends the average fan experience. Fans use K-pop as a form of escapism because of how it allows their fans to escape "unwanted social realities" (Mohd Jenol and Ahmad Pazil 2020). By engaging in fan activities, like the rituals mentioned above, fans create a space where they can connect and belong. Due to the sheer amount of content put out by the idols, escapism is an easy practice fans do in order to steer away from anomie.

Even though digital spaces have created a sense of alienation because of the lack of physical contact with others, they can also be seen as a mode in which fans escape anomie. Fans utilize online forums and content from their idol groups to feel a sense of connection. The content that comes with K-pop and its specific idol groups allows fans to familiarize themselves with the idols (Yoon and Alexandra 2024). Fans have claimed that K-pop and its fandoms differ from Western celebrities because you feel a connection with the idol through the amount of content they

consume and the personalities the idols show in their content (Yoon and Alexandra 2024). K-pop idols give their fandoms a different way of approaching the celebrity-fan relationship.

The relationship between fan and idol is shown to be considered a parasocial relationship. This parasocial relationship has had negative connotations when it comes to the relationship between celebrity and fan, but in regard to K-pop fandoms, it can be used for good. The participants in Mohd Jenol and Ahmad Pazil's (2020) study showed how fans found motivation from the words of their idols through speeches or songs to work towards a better life and goal. The parasocial relationship held between the idol and the fan encourages the fan to look up to the idol as a role model (Mohd Jenol and Ahmad Pazil 2020). Parasocial relationships have been found to help fans find motivation and stability in their lives due to their idols (Mohd Jenol and Ahmad Pazil 2020). Parasocial relationships give fans a purpose for living and stabilization of their hectic everyday lives. The fans combat anomie by engaging in these parasocial relationships, further helping them with feelings of alienation or disconnection.

Digital spaces also allow fans to connect with others worldwide. Online social media platforms like X or Instagram provide fans with a way to communicate with those not residing in their area. Fans form connections and interpersonal bonds that create a mini-community among themselves (Malik and Haidar 2020). Fans also use these spaces to validate their existence as fans within their fandom (Abd-Rahim 2019). Digital spaces like social media platforms give fans a space to share their common interests with people who share the same interests, combating feelings of alienation.

To reflect on my personal life, I have made many connections through being a fan of K-pop. The fandoms I was in allowed me to gain close relationships with people worldwide. Being in a certain fandom led me to go to concerts or join online fan forums, giving me a space to communicate with fans in the same fandom. I met one of my closest friends, whom I cherish dearly, on X. We have known each other for over 5 years, and without her being in the same fandom, I would have never connected with her. This relationship made me reflect on how anomie was at an all-time high during the pandemic. To combat

anomie, I was able to connect with friends through these online forums or social media. These digital spaces gave us a sense of connection when the pandemic isolated us in our homes. During times like the pandemic, anomie can overwhelm members of a society; therefore, K-pop and being in its different fandoms helped me find a sense of belonging. My life changed in a very sudden way, and the connections I had with my online friends helped stabilize me.

Reflecting on Durkheim's ideas, being a part of K-pop fandoms can help resist anomie. As fans engage with their fandom through rituals or parasocial relationships, they continue to give themselves a way to escape the disconnection they feel in their everyday lives. Fans of K-pop are given connection and purpose through their idols or groups they look up to. Durkheim delves into how anomie can be used as an index for the types of suicide that may happen in a society (Coser 1977). Being part of K-pop fandoms can give fans a purpose in their lives; therefore, further research can apply this as a modern solution to anomie and rates of suicide.

To conclude, Durkheim's ideas of solidarity, rituals, and anomie can be applied to K-pop fandoms and how they operate. Organic solidarity can be found in how the interdependence on translators of Korean content keeps the fandoms who do not speak Korean alive. This connects with how organic societies rely on mutual dependence, while mechanical solidarity operates in the opposite form. Mechanical solidarity in K-pop fandoms is shown through how fans engage in certain acts, like internalizing idols' values or black oceans, to further strengthen the commitment to the well-being of the fandom and idols. Rituals, like using lightsticks or fan chants, are also used to increase the connection of being a part of the fandom. This sense of connection gives fans a solution to anomie. Being a part of a K-pop fandom gives fans a purpose and allows fans to steer away from alienation. Applying Durkheim's ideas to modern-day K-pop fandoms provides insight into how classical sociological theories can still be found today. Further research can provide a more in-depth analysis of how these can apply to newer fans of K-pop or other fandoms such as Swifties (the name given to Taylor Swift fans).

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Cover Image: Further Discussion on *A Reflection of Our Time*

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A Reflection of Our Time is a demonstration of resistance, identity, and social justice. The pursuit of sociology is to examine organizations, institutions, and systemic structures. Still, individual sociologists often have their own perspectives and reflections on the objectives. Our observations of society today have evoked our empathy, and it would be a disservice to deny ourselves and others that empathy; this empathy is what makes our community.

The creation of the cover art *A Reflection of Our Time* started out as a collaboration between those who care deeply about our journal and our greater community by gathering a collection of images from around LA County that reflect current events. However, we find ourselves in increasingly turbulent times. As events unfolded during the Spring 2025 semester, our board had to make a hard decision to omit some of the images originally considered. Our decision did not come from wanting to silence voices. Instead, our decision stemmed from apprehension. As students, activists, and journalists we have to be realistic about the impact our decisions have on others. The last thing any of us wanted was for there to inadvertently be negative consequences due to the unpredictable and constant changes in our nation.

We must use the voices we still have while we are still able to use them. The responsibility for positive change falls on these voices–on us. We owe it to those who have had their voices stripped from them. All over the world, Indigenous peoples are denied their land, their homes, their dignity. It does not stop there. After they are stripped from everything, Indigenous communities are pushed into silence, erased from the free exchange of public discourse and media. Historically speaking, the silencing of any marginalized group of people is followed by their erasure from the narrative and then, their death.

That is what brings us to *A Reflection of Our Time.* An image of a cityscape in LA County makes up the background. An androgynous figure with angel wings presents itself to the viewer,

textured in faded black and white. Solemnly, the figure looks at you and holds up a mirror. They prompt you to reflect on yourself *and* your role in society. This is a step away from the usual vibrancy on CSF's past covers. Fading represents how it feels to be in a student journal at this current moment. We see the people in our community, we hear their voices. We are losing our own voices as journalists in these turbulent times. We have to be more mindful of the way certain topics have been turned into political targets. Still, this journal serves to persist. Our hope is that the vibrancy in our community–its voice and its life–will return to the cover one day.

Ultimately, the cover is a strategic message against institutional-silencing. Our journal, the community, and the cultures and society that surround us are still strong and still worth preserving. Indigenous voices, immigrant voices, and incarcerated voices all deserve to be represented and protected. People in our community are more than headlines, images, a protest; what connects us all is the action we take for each other, and the words we use to spark this action.

But how does this pertain to us? Why should our faculty, our students, our readers participate in the action of caring? Why should you care? Right now, college students, activists, journalists, are met with hostility and punishment when they speak out about this erasure and oppression. Our community was built on diversity. It was shaped at the hands of diverse people. But now, our community is in crisis. Students who have dedicated their hearts to this campus are seeing its life leave. Our journal serves to preserve this life in any capacity that we can. We cannot do that if we stand back in silence. Sociologists are not just observers; we can spark action. Courses and books that teach us about our own roots and identities are being cut from our schools and libraries. Objective documentation itself is under attack as we publish this journal. The difference a year has made to the production of our journal is shocking. In real time we are watching a nationwide coordinated attack on fact, knowledge, and truth.

We must ask ourselves, what happened when the people before us gave into the silence? Do we still have a choice? Is our tender wording and apprehension a sign that it is already too late? We must think about our place in society and how our roles as

sociologists evolve when the intricacies of society present themselves in a time like now. Our community is textured with the voices of immigrants, the incarcerated, the oppressed. In a nation that is founded on the principle of freedom, especially freedom of speech, what sense can we make of not having it at all?

Image Description: A brick wall with two rainbow-colored wings spread upwards with the words CAL STATE LA in black with gold outline centered above the words WE ARE LA in blue with white outline.

Roles and Impressions within Romantic Relationships and Heartbreak

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EXPLANATION OF SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE

This collection of four poems explores the breakdown of romantic relationships that leads to heartbreak through the use of metaphorical and allegorical comparison, particularly through imagery found in fairytales or mythical and mystical lore. Sociology has a keen interest in the dynamics of social relationships, which includes how individuals collectively navigate romantic connections. Such relationship interactions have become key sociological topics, with several sociological theories offering insight into ways of understanding interpersonal communication and conscious or subconscious negotiations that occur. According to role theory, social interactions are greatly informed by established norms and presumed or assumed roles. Under exchange theory, relationships can be viewed as continually weighing pros and cons or as gauging trade-offs of costs and benefits, including comparing alternative options when deciding to continue a relationship. Impression formation often comes into play for one's overall perception of others and impression management is the act of someone trying to endear or ingratiate oneself with others when attempting to maintain or even strengthen a relationship bond. Role strain occurs when an individual within a relationship feels like they are unable to uphold that which is expected of them. Romantic relationships tend to be even more heightened than average interpersonal relationships due to heightened feelings and emotions. Symbolic interactionism can emerge as romantic partners try to make gestures of love towards one another, but such symbolism does not guarantee relational compatibility.

A Fairytale, Ending

How far I've come, how far you're gone
Instead of queen, I was your pawn

What once upon a time you swore
Became a never-ending chore

You live happily, I live ever after
An unfair tale now ending in disaster

I slept through all the lies it seems
For this is nothing like my dreams

Between all the words you never wrote, and the ones I never read
We let too many things ride off and pass us by unsaid

Your noble steed has shrunk in size
There is no place for me at your side

Your siren voice did play its part
Alluring out my foolish heart

You fished me out to help me roam
But interest dissolved like sea foam

Which apple was coated with your spell?
How blindly for your charms I fell

To the eye your looks did please
But underneath there hid a beast

Your big blue eyes and winning grin
Distracting signs of the wolf within

The magic shoe slipped off my foot
You smashed it to pieces with nary a look

No wonder left in Neverland
You lost me when you forced my hand

I closed my eyes to kiss you hard
When I should have been on my guard

I closed my eyes to kiss your cheek
But should have known a frog was weak

Pinocchio Pawn

These puppet strings entangle me and confuse my every step
I try to gather what little strength is left in me,
but the struggle seems in vain
Every limb and my very heart are still controlled by you
Every movement, a memory of submitting to your masterful manipulation
I feel half alive but hardened to this world
I can't take a step without feeling
the remnants of your power tugging me back
I speak lies - even to myself- without realizing until I see a mirror
Then my growing nose shows my folly and downfall
I wish to be real but flesh and blood hurt, too
Which is worse?
The pain of being trapped or of breaking free?
You praised my looks and performance
but the compliments were just more ways of binding me to you
Did I play my part well, master?
Was I everything you whittled me down to be?
This wooden shell my prison and casket be
as I rot away, hidden from the world's eye
They see my painted-on expression of contentment
but that which controls me remains invisible to them
I need to sever the ties that hold me to you
I'm a Real Girl now

Holy Grail

A romantic gift asked for in innocence
Now sits untouched of true experience
Too many thoughts of use led to idealization
Cementing its spot on the shelf in realization
That when you give something worth
Sometimes perception overshadows its birth
Naive eyes open wide to what appears
Seeing something forever tainted by our fears

AFTERLIFE

When you ghosted me,
at first
I hoped to haunt
your ever-waking step
with hell fury
I'd slip

into
your dreams
your things
your very way of life
You'd think of me
with grand regret
seeing visions
that you can't reject
yet knowing
there would be no belief
or support from others
over what you were seeing
no relief
The tables would turn
from the beyond
the one spurned
now taunting you
No heavenly respite
from the raging storm
You could not love
so turned my heart to hate
The borderlines for favorites
split at the seams
to extremes
Fraying nerves and alliances

But I am not a specter
I never meant to be menacing
or unpleasant
or life draining
My own fears
forced meaning
from apparitions
projections too fantastical
for any living being
to embody

So, it is up to <u>you</u>
to remember
to forget
all your deeds
and dealings
Because
if I haunt you
I'd have to haunt me, too

Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality and Critical Race Theory

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Kimberlé Crenshaw is an American civil rights advocate, a professor at both the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law and Columbia School of Law, and a founding director of the African American Policy Forum. Crenshaw is best known for developing the concept of intersectionality, which examines how different forms of social inequalities intersect and overlap; for example, those experiencing hardships from intersections of race and gender. Most people are subjects of intersectionality, since it is in all aspects of life, but not enough people reflect on how it could be affecting social interactions; therefore, it is important to address and focus on intersectionality more often. Crenshaw has spent her career working to end discrimination against women of color and to promote the interest of marginalized communities. She is also the leading scholar of critical race theory (CRT), an approach to studying U.S. policies and institutions that originated in law schools, as a framework that is used to help people understand why racial inequalities exist in society and how they can be eradicated. The theory rests on the premise that racial bias (intentional or not) is baked into U.S. laws and institutions. Crenshaw has argued that "the black racialist account…portrays racial power…through its impact on African-American males" (Crenshaw et al. 1995:xxxi). This piece is intended to showcase why both Crenshaw and her work are still important today, how the work has impacted society, and how people are still practicing CRT and intersectionality, along with noting the circumstances these ideas are being applied to.

While both CRT and intersectionality analyze social power dynamics and oppression, they approach these issues from different perspectives. CRT focuses primarily on how race and racism are embedded in legal systems and societal structures while intersectionality expands this lens to consider how race intersects with other forms of identity such as gender, class, and sexuality to create unique, layered experiences of oppression. Although CRT

provides a critical understanding of systemic racism, intersectionality broadens this view by emphasizing that oppression cannot be understood in isolation but must account for the complexities of multiple, intersecting identities. Together, these frameworks offer a greater understanding of the ways in which power and privilege shape individuals' lives in society.

Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality

CRT has been around for about 50 years, but how did it come to be? CRT came out of the Frankfurt School's critical theory of belief that there are systems that exist both institutionally and systemically. Critical theory changes how we view society, and CRT emphasizes that it must be through a racial lens and not through an economic or legal lens. CRT is like a hybrid of critical legal studies and liberal civil rights movements (Crenshaw et al. 1995:xix). Within critical legal studies, laws were used to keep up the status quo of the power structures within society. CRT started to pop up within the writings of Marcuse and Spinoza, especially in the early 1990s. There was this idea that society must give preference based on the melanin content of people's skin, not on their actions or choices. Instead, since the U.S. is so unequal and inequitable, these founding writers and authors of the term CRT believed that this would be a true Marxist type of movement. CRT was then fostered and started in many different universities across the country. CRT has evolved into terms of wokeism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, which are all outgrowths of the postmodern deconstructionist viewpoint. Race has been so formally and fully structured into our society that CRT is practiced when people of color hear police sirens and place both hands on their steering wheel. It is practiced when children with darker melanin are given 'the talk' about how police treat people of color. These are the lived realities that people used to survive in this world that society still views as a post slave society. CRT is still important today because it was brought to understand the bitter legacy of racism and discrimination that is still continuing in our contemporary society. CRT is not racist whatsoever, it's a legal perspective that looks at the history of racism and power and how that impacts our laws, government, values, morality, standards, and our society at large. The problem isn't in the people, the problem is in the

institutions.

Intersectionality is the concept that all oppression is linked. This means that intersectionality acknowledges that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. It also means that society must consider everything and anything that can marginalize people. This includes, but is not strictly limited to, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc. This is so important because it centers around creating more equitable and socially-just outcomes for those with minority identities. The term intersectionality often gets used in ways that are not totally accurate to how Crenshaw actually meant it. People will say there are an intersectional feminist, which sounds good, but it is not always an accurate way to use the word. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework which looks at what happens when different systems of oppression intersect such as when someone is a woman, Black, and a person with a disability, and so on. That brings the question what happens at these intersections? It helps people gain a better understanding as to what is going on, but it is not actually describing the word. However, it is well-intentioned, and people are trying to be inclusive but if they are using that language, they have to learn what that language means. It's about power and oppression (Bhattacharyya and Berdahl 2023). White feminists truly believe that if women were in charge, things would be a whole lot different, but that is simply not true. The issue with feminism, or the issue with mainstream feminism is it tends to cater to white middle-class females. It has been found that white people really do not have any experience that focuses on “justice” problems (Piatelli 2009:162), along with almost no interactions working with Black people. Piatelli (2009) also found that white Americans–especially women–do not realize that they are privileged in this country. This brings up the focus on people saying they don’t see color. This is why Crenshaw works so hard and wants people to understand the hardships and disparities that Black people have to go through because they don't have a choice under racism. Some people believe only Black women can use the term intersectionality, however, pretty much anyone could use it and that is what creates their unique experiences.

Feminist theorist bell hooks (2000) expressed how she learned about the theories and ideas of feminism through a

feminism class. This is important because these are things that each individual, especially women, should experience to a certain extent. Whether people want to pursue education about these things or not, they can learn a lot about feminism, intersectionality, and basically the different types of roles and expectations that women face. It is definitely worth everyone's time to just back up and think about why this concept is important, why it should be defined, and why we should learn about it. Not everyone has access to college, or basic education in general, so it does make sense why not many people understand the exact concepts of the feminist theory. However, people have the ability to gain this knowledge through so many nonprofit organizations. Community organizations that have to do a lot with feminism can help people understand how to actually express themselves about how they feel about certain issues. Many of the feminist organizations promote themselves, in a way, through social media like X, Instagram, and Facebook. They have pages where they educate people about their organization, what it is about, and what is being done. Even aside from the organizations, there are entire accounts simply dedicated to the feminist theory. The feminist movement does not require people "to join organizations," but they could "work on behalf of feminism" (hooks 2000:116).

CRT and Intersectionality in Schools and the Workplace

Education is so powerful in the U.S., yet CRT is not talked about much through grade school. CRT was originally only "taught in law schools, not in public schools" (Henry 2023:1). However, in today's time, you don't have to be someone of higher education to think about CRT, although it is complex. The anti-CRT movement is built on white supremacy, with some people believing CRT is anti-white and un-America and creating a disinformation campaign around a theory they know nothing about. Though many parents are critical against the teaching of CRT, Christopher Rufo, a conservative against CRT, basically became the voice to make sure there would be no such thing as CRT in schools. Crenshaw was even in agreement "with Rufo that the political debate over CRT is a debate over the 'anti-racist' project" (Henry 2023:1). A few activists also believe that this project is "too ideological" (Piatelli 2009:225) because it does not talk about how privilege

and oppression go hand in hand. The world does not recognize that they are oppressing Black people. For example, in a public school system, the neighborhood that has the Black school gets less funding because it is lower income, and the white schools that are in the better neighborhoods get greater funding. That is one idea of systemic racism, and it is a CRT teaching that exists so that people can learn from it and try to change it. Schools need CRT because they need real history. Schools would not just stop teaching what happened during the American Revolution, the Civil War, World War I, or World War II because that is important for people to know what truly happened, so it is believed that the same should go for CRT. Crenshaw worked alongside Richard Delgado to make a CRT reading that could be available and easy to access for students who were in high school (Ladson-Billings 2021). Children learning about race will not change how they think; it will just give them a better understanding.

In Trump's first presidential term, he banned two different programs that were designed to teach racial sensitivity. In April 2022, a bill was passed to "regulate the discussion of race in public schools" (Salzman 20202:1071). This bill was passed in over 40 states and now 35 states have laws against CRT, and it pretty much goes hand in hand with banning LGBTIQ+ teachings. The state of Texas has the highest Black population, yet they still banned CRT; it's a conservative state, so all the information they get about CRT is only information that goes against CRT. Banning a theory brings up the issue as to why it is even being banned to begin with. It will only end up backfiring on them. If the country makes the laws very noticeable and strict, then it makes it easier for people to go against it. It is important to understand why this has even become a political issue and it is often wondered why these teachings are so threatening to some people. White people see it as a threat to their race, even if they don't really understand what they're going against. It is viewed as if they are triggered by the word 'race' and automatically think other. They don't want to acknowledge that the USA was founded on racism because they will inevitably have to question their privilege.

Intersectionality involves everyone in the conversation, and it allows the right amount of equity for those who may struggle more because of the intersectionality of their identity.

Knowing and understanding intersectionality is key to becoming anti-racist. This is because oppression comes in many forms. Some people may even use the term intersectional invisibility which is basically how women of color are invisible to society, and no one is seeing how they are at a disadvantage. The complexity of their intersectionality affects their experiences within the workplace; research shows how Black women are constantly "being subjected to" unfavorable stereotypes (Bhattacharyya and Berdahl 2023:1075). This often causes women to want to give things 110%, just so that they can prove everyone wrong. Even in a school setting, Black men and women were being used by their university to basically be the face of the diversity on behalf of the school (Bhattacharyya and Berdahl 2023). These men and women would eventually pull away from others because it is just a weird thing to experience overall.

Intersectionality is one of the things that can dismantle our system of capitalism. Without intersectionality we raise the full complexity of people's identities and experiences. While intersectionality benefits everyone, it is important to know that it comes from the experiences and scholarship of Black women. Though they all have "intersecting identities," that does not mean that they "all have the same lived experience" (Piatelli 2008:149). Every woman experiences something different.

CONCLUSION

Feminist theory comes from collaboration and building off of one another. It is important to recognize all who contribute to this conversation no matter their race, ethnicity, or status. Crenshaw focuses on civil rights, CRT, Black feminist legal theology, race, racism, and the law. Her work has been foundational in expanding CRT and examining the topic of intersectionality. Crenshaw's studies, writing, and activism have helped to identify key issues that the Black community faces daily. She was the one who was able to put a name to the concept when no one else could. Intersectionality talks about the double bind that happens simultaneously with racial and gender prejudice, causing them to overlap and connect. This overview should help people gain a more in depth understanding when it comes to racism and feminism.

Crenshaw's main idea for all the things she's known for is that people don't have to be an expert in intersectionality or CRT, but they can be a resource for people. Those who study CRT focus on understanding how racism happens every day in American life. They want to see social change, compared to liberalism's more cautious approach. When trying to teach something, the goal is not to try to press it onto others. The goal is to get others to at least understand it. CRT teachings should be taught as an elective so people can have the optional choice to take it, and it could even be upper division only. Again, it would not be seen as pushing it onto people but simply throwing it in as an option. Crenshaw's work challenges the way people think and pushes them to want to continue learning about these theories.

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Book Review: *Gender Without Identity* by Avgi Saketopoulou and Ann Pellegrini

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In their 2023 book *Gender Without Identity*, Avgi Saketopoulou and Ann Pellegrini critique traditional psychoanalytic models that treat gender as an innate, fixed aspect of the self and instead advocate for a psychoanalytic approach that examines how trauma can serve as a resource in the process of gendered self-theorization. The authors are both psychoanalysts with a private practice based in New York City and are faculty members at New York University. Their work is grounded in their clinical experience, and is also informed by trans of color critique, Black feminism, and queer theory, grounded in their extensive clinical experience with queer and trans individuals.

GENDER AS A PSYCHICALLY CRAFTED PROCESS

Saketopoulou and Pellegrini lay out an understanding of gender as a psychically crafted process, based on Laplanchean theory. They begin by laying out an understanding of the ego as having been constructed and solidified in attempts to 'translate' the enigmatic features of an attachment relationship. This is typically in relationships between child and caregiver, and in this relationship, the child's physical needs are fulfilled, thus communicating messages of care to the child. These messages are embedded with the sexual unconscious of the parent and inevitably affect all communication to the child, producing an enigmatic disturbance. Then, this enigmatic disturbance, or ambiguous obscurity, that has met the child's psyche, drives the child to interpret and digest these signals in a unique process that is compatible with the child's overall being. The child's translations draw from what Laplanche calls the "mythosymbolic"--the cultural codes which surround the child, including traumas relating to the parent (68), and ultimately, these translations "sediment as ego, and . . . when the codes pertain to gender, as gender identity" (57). It is not the case that the child

simply reproduces the codes in which they are surrounded. Rather, they are spun and mixed by the child, though not consciously, creating a "psychic world in their own personal idiom . . . and, from there on out, yields identitarian experience by becoming structured in the grammar of culture" (58). This foundation substantiates Saketopoulou and Pellegrini's claims of gender as a complex and personal process of psychic translation, shaped not only by the cultural codes and familial dynamics surrounding the child, but also by the child's particular, unconscious efforts to integrate and transform these influences into a cohesive sense of self.

In developing their theory, Saketopoulou and Pellegrini draw upon a clinical example involving a particularly effeminate 12-year-old child, referred to as Ory, to support their conceptual framework. Ory was introduced to Saketopoulou by his parents, who were under the impression that Saketopoulou could help him behave as a 'normal' boy, eliminating his feminine mannerisms and presentation. Through an exploration of Ory's mother Ilana's family history, the developmental dynamics between her and her son, and the possible intergenerational transmission, Saketopoulou argues that Ory's non-normative gender manifests as a form of translation of the enigmatic troubles passed down by his mother's history, ultimately serving a psychic purpose within their family system. Thus, follows that Ory is neither innately trans nor gay, but rather that his gender expression is something he has psychically forged for himself. They adamantly maintain that this is not to be understood as 'damage' caused by his mother. Rather, Ory's gender is a set of "translational codes" (64) that he has spun in his efforts to psychically translate and elaborate a gendered self.

Ory's translation efforts, since they do not align with the propositional statements put forth by an imposed masculinity, are met with rejection, surveillance, policing, shame, and are generally regarded as an issue requiring correction. This stands in contrast to children who translate in ways that are regarded as 'acceptable' or 'normal' by their social worlds. In those instances, children are allowed to "keep" their gender formulation (66). Saketopoulou and Pellegrini's detailed exploration of Ory's case illustrates that his gender, with particular reference to his

femininity, is a multifaceted, psychically crafted process shaped by familial dynamics and intergenerational influences, rather than a pathological response or an innate aspect of his being.

Saketopoulou and Pellegrini contend that gender is not a static identity and critique traditional perspectives on gender formation and authenticity. They argue that gender is something acquired, suggesting that trauma might serve as a resource in shaping its constitution. They reject the dominant understanding that "gender is immune to trauma, or that gender, in order to be healthy, is uncontaminated by early traumatic intrusions, by adult interventions, or by the emotional debris of intergenerational pressures" (29), drawing links between the ways in which trauma can inflict gender, without implying that this is the cause of a "distortion" in one's gender. They argue it is a human process to tend to experiences that are difficult, including those that are traumatizing, and as a result self-theorizations arise "that are not efforts to cope with or to survive trauma, but that, to the contrary, take up the energies roused by trauma to invent something new" (viii).

A child's gender, such as with Ory, can be understood as an unconsciously crafted articulation of their own processing of experiences, as their own spinning of experiences into gender. The authors explain that the particular avenues of translation taken up by a child are dependent on their own relational understanding of their contexts. Working from this point, they argue that gender is not something that can be discovered once at one's core, is neither right or wrong, but more in line with a fitting integration into the self that one may arrive at over and over again through their life course. This is a significant point in their theorizing because it then renders predicting a child's 'true' gender an impossibility. Thus, it follows that there is nothing about gender inherently that has any claim to authenticity other than one's subjective experience of it in that particular moment. It can only be described and claimed by the person to which it belongs.

Saketopoulou and Pellegrini also address the vision that this theorization may not solely be applicable to those with atypical gender expressions. All people, including cisgendered people, are subject to impositions from an "other" (26), and it is the processing of this imposition that solidifies a gendered facet

of ego. Ultimately, their argument extends beyond atypical gender expressions, positing that all individuals, regardless of their gender identity, are shaped by these intricate processes of psychic negotiation.

UTILIZATIONS IN THE CONSULTING ROOM

Saketopoulou and Pellegrini are critical of the binary in psychoanalytic theorizing that positions gender as either immutable, with roots in pursuits of ensuing protections against moral judgements and legal regulations, or as "acquired-and-therefore-possible-to-eliminate" (21). It is within this context where concerns arise that "the mere suggestion that psychic factors contribute to how one becomes trans, nonbinary, or genderqueer threatens to endanger the safety and rights of gender-diverse people. This is because such a suggestion is quickly constructed to authorize attempts to eliminate atypically gender experiences and identities" (21).

Saketopoulou and Pellegrini, in building their argument that one can unravel these relationships without necessitating attempts of elimination, cite the wide body of psychoanalytic literature that evidently shows psychoanalysts' explorations regarding the constitutions of cisgender experiences in which they work towards enhancing the patient's emotional life without aims of altering their gender. They detail how psychoanalysts, even those working towards eliminating transphobia in their consulting rooms, are limited in their approach, often not going beyond affirming their trans patients' gender. If they do approach the links between gender and trauma, it is around the traumatic experiences (violence, discrimination, policing, etc.) the patient may have accrued *as a result of* living in a queerphobic world, but the analysts will not explore further around the *becoming* of their gender. A simple validation of an individual's gender is not a substitute for efforts in uncovering deeper understandings of the patient's psychic gender process. Saketopoulou and Pellegrini see a necessity in implementing both practices, ultimately culminating into what they term "patient affirmation," affirming for the patient that they have the right to their own non-linear process (27).

They envision that the psychoanalytic practice has more to offer to their trans and queer patients, that "strives to uncover

the psychic complexities that are present in non-normative experiences of gender, not as a way to question its validity or to alter it, but to articulate its complexities and enable its flourishing. In attending to these nuances with their trans and queer patients, psychoanalysts may begin unraveling the relationships embedded in a patient's gender, so that their patient's gender may feel more integrated within themselves, something of their own creation in which they may inhabit as an "idiom of their own forging" (55). At the heart of their argument is a call to open up the psychoanalytic world in a way that does not simply accept a trans and queer identity, but that utilizes the breadth of tools at its disposal to tell and discover more complex stories about non-normative gender expression, ultimately, supporting their patients in understanding and embodying their own queer gender and sexual self-theorization.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Gender Without Identity is a profound piece that deepens developments in trans studies, breaks from reductive conceptions of transness, and does significant work in reframing normative cultural conceptualizations of gender. In fleshing out a psychoanalytic process that approaches gender as a process that is neither innate nor of an individual's choosing, they generate possibilities for full acceptance of any person's unique gender expressions as an embodiment of their own psychic process.

Saketopoulou and Pellegrini open up avenues to support non-normative gender expressions in order to ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of queer individuals. Though the field of sociology generally regards gender as a social institution, perpetuated in its longevity of social practices, it may still integrate the concept of gender as Saketopoulou and Pellegrini discuss it into sociological work. For example, working with the idea of gender as something not subject to being known 'correctly' or 'incorrectly,' sociologists may incorporate policies and create programs that are not based on a criterion one must prove themselves against, making resources increasingly more available to those who wish to explore them.

This may also have implications for those who "detransition" (or "retransition") (29), as embracing the idea of no

true origin of gender that one is "returning to" after having previously been "wrong about." Additional gender transitions no longer need serve as a signifier of "regret," but can instead be seen as a new iteration of gender embodiment. Moreover, their reconceptualization of trauma as "generative source material" (xxxiii) transcends narratives of pain and dysphoria as defining aspects of transness, and instead reveals the profound beauty and complexity in the unfolding of each individual's own gender becoming. This reframing has broader implications for the field of sociology, as it challenges reductive hegemonic views on gender, potentially signaling a driving force for a significant cultural shift. Their approach is both innovative and compelling, with the only shortcoming being a desire for further exploration of its implementation in the consulting room to further demonstrate applicability in patient life.

CONCLUSION

Gender Without Identity offers a profound reframing of queer gender expressions by reconceptualizing trauma as generative psychic material, ultimately contributing towards a vision for a world that delights in the pleasures of difference. This piece can speak to trans and queer individuals seeking nuanced ways of thinking about themselves and their relationship to their queerness. It may also have relevance for those invested in improving the material, physical, and psychological well-being of trans individuals, as analysts, friends, family, and more. Additionally, cisgendered people may benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of gender as Saketopoulou and Pellegrini position it—not as something innate or given, but as a complex internal process unique to each individual, including themselves.

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Book Review: *Holding it Together: How Women Became America's Safety Net* by Jessica Calarco

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How did women become America's safety net? What confounding systems and ideologies placed women in this role? In *Holding It Together: How Women Became America's Safety Net*, Jessica Calarco, a professor of sociology specializing in families, schools, and inequalities, explores how U.S. women are placed in the position of "holding it all together" in the wake of a failed social safety net. She argues that a combination of systemic ideologies and policies placed this burden on women and examines its toll on their well-being, relationships, and communities. Calarco contends that this illusion of a "DIY society" does not reflect the reality of women's lives. Rather, it masks the insecurities and strains within their families and communities. Society perpetuates the idea that the safety net is still intact by demanding that women fill this role. Many women are forced or pressured to be "the glue that holds it all together" (2024:12). Calarco highlights how the systems in place fail to acknowledge the emotional and physical toll that women experience by filling this role. This book stresses the need for a real safety net and reveals the truth behind the illusion that women should bear these burdens alone.

Calarco examines the roles American women play in maintaining the social safety net. The social safety net allows society and the economy to survive. In the U.S., women form the bonds for the barren safety net. Women were forced to fill in for the U.S. safety net as the nation choose profits over national childcare, healthcare and supporting families who need it. She argues that women are key to upholding the illusion of a "DIY society," a concept formed by the U.S. adoption of neoliberalism (2024: 12). After World War II, the United States shifted away from expanding its social safety net and instead broke down the net that was already in place. This shift marked the U.S. adoption of neoliberalism, reducing government support while allowing businesses and corporations to thrive. It was sold as a narrative that wealth would "trickle down" to the rest of society (2024: 10).

Pro-neoliberal propaganda fueled this narrative. Over time, politicians backed by corporate interests were elected and enacted policies that still dominate now. The "DIY society" suggests that individuals are expected to solve their problems, without relying on the government or employers for support. Individuals unable to navigate these challenges by themselves are often blamed or stigmatized. The illusion of this system rests solely on women. They are expected to bear the burden of being the social safety net. Turning a blind eye to the struggles and weight placed upon women by this system perpetuates the illusion that the DIY society works.

This book is structured into two distinct parts. Each part addresses how women came to carry the responsibility of maintaining America's social safety net and why it continues to persist. Calarco structures her points around interviews and follow-up interviews with women from Indiana from 2018-2022. While Indiana may not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the broader U.S. population, Calarco ensures that the women she interviewed represent a variety of political standpoints and social class backgrounds. She incorporates national surveys and data from varying historical, political, and economic sources to strengthen her arguments in each chapter. The different layers of evidence are thoughtfully intertwined, providing personal and data-based insights into how women were placed into this role. She also uses socially constructed myths, prevalent in American culture, to expose the other forces that have defined women's roles. Part one lays the foundation for understanding how women have been made to "hold it together," filling the void left by a broken social safety net. Part two addresses why this issue has not been effectively rectified. Her argument focuses on a persistent "lack of will to change," noting how adopted societal myths and conforming gender expectations prevent reform (2024: 190). The conclusion outlines steps for change, advocating for a "union of care" and establishing a formed and equitable social safety net (2024: 201).

The research and conclusions drawn by Calarco in *Holding It Together* are both eye-opening and deeply compelling. It does more than explore this issue alone; the multitude of content builds upon itself, culminating in a powerful call for change.

Calarco shows that women shouldn't continue to bear the burden of a failing safety net and uphold the illusion of the "DIY society." Women may not have had a say in how they came to occupy this role, but now they have the agency to change it. The interviews were conducted exclusively in Indiana, which may not fully reflect the racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of the broader U.S. population but this does not diminish the book's impact. The voices of the women interviewed offer invaluable insights into the wider issues affecting women across the U.S. The addition of various data types and the use of socially constructed myths strengthens the book's impact. A broader geographic range of interviews would have made the work even more representative, but the current body of work remains incredibly powerful. The strengths of this book lie in its ability to resonate on multiple levels, inspiring women to recognize their value and demand change that has been long ignored.

Holding It Together is not just a body of research; it is an effective call to action. This book is not just for those in academia; it was written for women and those who care to make a difference. Calarco's work is centered around interviews with women who find themselves burdened with upholding the safety net and perpetuating the illusion of the "DIY society." Human experience is interwoven with data that forces the reader to feel the impact of these issues on a personal level. It is demonstrated that myths are shaped by American policy and culture which further reinforces the roles of women. The book challenges readers to explore the consequences of a flawed system that continues to exploit and hinder women. If we continue to follow the constructed path the burden and struggles that women face will persist. However, if this system is collectively challenged and care is reimagined change is possible. The purpose of this piece is to reflect on the failures of the past and inspire a more equitable future for women and those who care.

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Book Review: Reconsidering Death: A Sociological Review of Brandi Schillace's *Death's Summer Coat*

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Brandi Schillace's *Death's Summer Coat: What the History of Death and Dying Teaches Us About Life and Living* is a unique perspective on the sociology of grieving, death, and dying. It is an interdisciplinary examination of death practices and how they have shifted, especially in the modern Western context. By blending anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history, Schillace explores societal changes that have distanced modern society from death, creating what she views as an unhealthy relationship with mortality. Her work utilizes the idea that Western society has developed a "death-denying" culture, hiding death from public view and ritualizing it in increasingly private and medicalized ways. Through a historical and cross-cultural lens, Schillace critiques this shift, arguing that understanding how death is handled can teach us to live more fully. Sociologically, Schillace's argument builds on classic ideas from scholars such as Philippe Ariès and Michel Foucault with topics like the medicalization of death, the secularization of death rituals, and the growing isolation surrounding the grieving process. This review evaluates Schillace's contributions to established sociological theories, considering her insights into contemporary Western death practices and assessing the book's collaborative approach and broader implications for sociology.

Death's Summer Coat is structured thematically, addressing various dimensions of death and dying through historical and cultural examples. She begins by outlining Western attitudes toward death from pre-modern to modern times, a shift famously attributed to sociologist Ariès ([1974] 1975). Death was a communal event in early societies, integrated into everyday life. Funerary rituals were public, and death was accepted as a part of life's cycle. However, as Schillace explains, with the rise of modernity and the medicalization of life, death has been removed from the home and placed in hospitals behind sterile walls.

The book uses cross-cultural comparisons to examine how non-Western societies approach death in more communal and ritualized ways. Schillace highlights practices such as those of the Toraja people of Indonesia, who keep their dead in their homes for extended periods and view death as a gradual process rather than an abrupt end. She contrasts this with Western practices, which often involve quick removal of the body, minimal public mourning, and an emphasis on efficiency rather than reflection or community support. Throughout, Schillace advocates reframing death in Western society, suggesting looking to outside cultures and historical practices for alternative approaches to dying, mourning, and grief. The final chapters discuss the recent "revival of death" (Walter 1994) in Western culture, evidenced by the rise of death cafes, death doulas, and other movements that aim to reintegrate death into everyday life.

Schillace's work, overall, provides a compelling sociological critique of contemporary Western death practices, echoing many of the arguments made by classic sociologists of death in their arguments that the modern West has progressively hidden death from public view- a phenomenon has been referred to as the "forbidden death." Schillace takes this further by exploring how the medicalization of death—where healthcare professionals primarily handle death—has stripped individuals of agency in their dying process. This shift can be seen as part of a larger societal trend toward medicalizing life. By situating death within hospitals and under the control of medical professionals, Western society distances individuals from their own mortality, in essence, turning death into a failure of medicine rather than a natural life event. In discussing the medicalization of death, Schillace uses Foucault's concept of biopolitics—the idea that modern institutions exert control over the life and death of individuals. Foucault argues that power over death has shifted from being an event that took place within the family or community to one controlled by state institutions and medical authorities. Schillace's analysis supports this, showing how medical advancements have enabled society to extend life but, in doing so, have also pathologized death itself.

While Schillace's critique of medicalization is sociologically grounded, her reliance on cross-cultural

comparisons occasionally oversimplifies the complexity of death practices. For instance, her discussion of the Toraja people lacks a deeper exploration of how these practices are embedded within the culture's specific social and religious frameworks. While Schillace's examples are illuminating, they could benefit from more sociological depth, such as analyzing how these practices are tied to broader social structures like kinship, religion, and power. Moreover, her argument for a "return of death" in Western society aligns with Walter's (1994) theory of the "revival of death," which suggests that after decades of avoidance, death is making a cultural comeback. Movements like death cafes- where people gather to discuss death- or the popularity of memoirs and literature about death are signs of this revival. Schillace notes that she views these as positive steps toward reintegrating death into everyday life and allowing people to confront mortality more openly. Sociologically, this reflects a shift from the privatization of grief and dying to a more public engagement with mortality. However, some critics argue that while these movements may represent a shift in discourse, they are still relatively niche and do not reflect broader societal change. Schillace's argument might have benefited from addressing these critiques more directly when considering whether these movements have the potential to fundamentally alter mainstream attitudes toward death.

Brandi Schillace's *Death's Summer Coat* offers a valuable sociological reflection on the ways in which death is managed, understood, and ritualized in contemporary Western society. Her critique of the medicalization of death and the privatization of grief resonates with long-standing sociological concerns about the alienation of individuals from communal, meaningful rituals surrounding death. By drawing on cross-cultural examples, she challenges Western readers to reconsider how death and mourning are approached, suggesting that more open practices might help to reduce the fear and isolation surrounding mortality. However, while her cross-cultural comparisons are interesting, they often need more sociological depth to fully appreciate the complexity of these practices in their own contexts. Furthermore, her optimism about the "return of death" in Western society may be somewhat overstated, as these movements remain largely subcultural. Nonetheless, Schillace's book contributes

meaningfully to the growing field of the sociology of death and dying, offering a thought-provoking reflection on what the history of death can teach us about living.

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Book Review: *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sánchez

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From a cultural standpoint, there are many roles that one is expected to portray based on their norms and social groups. Minorities and people of color often have difficulty when integrating into American society, facing cultural barriers and the struggle to find their own identity outside of cultural and societal norms. These struggles are often a heavier burden for second-generation immigrants (children born to two immigrant parents) due to the lack of mentorship from their parents on how social interactions work in a new culture. Often, children of immigrants must learn to rely on themselves to help their parents navigate a new country as well, becoming translators to their parents as a way to minimize language, cultural, and societal barriers. Due to the challenges of learning a new culture and trying to comprehend one's personal identity, second-generation immigrants often find themselves having a cultural identity crisis.

Author Erika L. Sánchez is the daughter of immigrants who, in the search for representation of Mexicans in media, decided to write her own story about the struggles of growing up Mexican in the United States. In addition to her bestseller, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter,* Sánchez wrote two more books on her view of the Mexican American, second-generation immigrant experience: *Lessons of Expulsion* (2017), a series of poems that discuss the difference across the Mexican/U.S. border, and *Crying in the Bathroom* (2022), which is a collection of essays portraying her personal thoughts, views, and experiences. In *Lessons of Expulsion,* Sánchez explores how every aspect of her life felt like there was a border dividing her life. She talks about this by highlighting a border in her countries, languages, and the living and the dead, through her collection of poems. While *Crying in the Bathroom* is a personal ode to her life and the experiences that have gotten her to become a bestselling novelist, primarily focusing on how she felt like a rebellious disappointment as she grew up with expectations from her

immigrant parents. In these stories, Sánchez continues to elaborate on the struggles of second-generation immigrants by providing her own stories.

In the novel *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, Julia Reyes is a Mexican teenager coping with the death of her older sister Olga, a "perfect Mexican daughter." Across the book, the story follows a Mexican teen struggling with her cultural identity as she observes her sister and family embracing traditional norms easily and rejecting her for not doing so. She is overcome with feelings of confusion and the challenge of her sense of self with pressing societal expectations. Through a sociological approach, we can see Sánchez express the second-generation experience through the looking-glass-self theory, which describes how people base their sense of self solely on how they believe others see them or expect them to be. Sánchez uses her personality, struggles, and opinions to formulate this protagonist, which authenticates the thoughts and makes the story a lot more relatable.

While this is a work of fiction brought to life using her personal experiences, Sánchez almost makes it feel like a collection of qualitative data, collecting stories and emotions regarding immigration, violence in Mexico, first-generation students, and motherhood, all with varying opinions and different experiences. Sánchez also goes on to talk about relationships, social perceptions of young Latin American women, and many religious aspects that tie into expectations and demands of this demographic. In the book, Julia learns that many immigrant mothers worry about raising children in an unfamiliar society, especially since they believe the new country will 'ruin' their children. One example of this is the conversation Julia's mother has with her before she leaves to college where, for the first time in their relationship, she warns Julia about sex due to her fear of Julia getting pregnant or contracting STIs. This is important because Julia seems to have a cultural disconnect from her mother and disagrees that sex is that big of a deal, a very common and large disagreement in American and Mexican cultures.

The main strength of this story is author Sánchez' personal connection to the character, the implementation of her own hopes and dreams, as well as her personality, makes the

readers feel seen when reading the book. Sánchez expresses this consistently, often emphasizing the feeling of guilt, shame, ambition, and desperation that second-generation immigrants have from feeling misunderstood by their parents, their family, the culture they feel a need to fit into, and this new country they must learn to navigate on their own. This goes back to the looking-glass-self, which exemplifies this feeling. Julia experiences guilt, from feeling like she is a disappointment, because she bases her sense of self on her home environment and the expectations coming from that. There are a lot of references to the Mexican culture in her story as well, which allows for the reader to identify some names, sayings, and beliefs, which is another strength throughout the book. It can also be argued that the fictional aspect of the storyline would detach the author from the story and make the book relatable. However, Sánchez speaks about not having that 'perfect older sister' in her life or the same traumas that Julie has, which could make readers feel like it would be Julia Reyes that understands them and not Sánchez.

The book itself is easy to read, the story is captivating and, while it draws on many relatable and complex themes, it isn't overwhelming or overbearing. The author uses Julia Reyes as an example of the second-generation immigrant experience, primarily making the argument that this specific demographic feels overlooked and misunderstood, especially since they are stuck between two cultural identities and often made to feel that they must choose. In this, we also get an unbiased overview of the immigrant experience, since Sánchez also critiques second-generation immigrants for often overlooking that their parents don't have any experience with their lifestyle and have their own hardships as well. Looking at the authors goals, I believe first-generation students and second-generation immigrants would benefit a lot from a book like this, since it would allow them to find similarities with their own life. Additionally, researchers who study these cultural disparities would benefit from reading, since this book would provide a new perspective to the immigrant experience.

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Book Review: *Just Like Family: How Companion Animals Joined the Household* by Andrea Laurent-Simpson

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In the present day, more people are choosing to be childfree, or have children later in life, and marrying at older ages. The concept and definition of family are changing and reflecting these demographics. The nuclear heteronormative couple with two children is no longer the first image that comes to mind when a person thinks of the word *family*. Andrea Laurent-Simpson, a Research Assistant Professor and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Southern Methodist University, offers an insightful approach to the "multispecies" family in America in her book *Just Like Family: How Companion Animals Joined the Household*. Her educational background includes a PhD in Sociology from Texas Woman's University, and her research focus is based on family and fertility, non-human animal interaction, and identity theory. Laurent-Simpson's main purpose and goal of this book is to "explain why the presence of the multispecies family is an important domain of research, particularly for family scholars. . . and to demonstrate how the multispecies family has developed in the context of increasing diversification of familial structures within the United States" (2021:23). She offers a sociological lens of the development of this new family form by analyzing her original data. This data includes 35 in-depth interviews with people who own dogs, cats, or both, from different types of family structures in the US, including families with children and families without (by choice or by circumstance), veterinary visit observations, pet advertisement analysis, and the author's personal narratives.

The purpose of this review is to highlight sociological literature on non-human actors and their social importance and relevance in not only the discipline of sociology but also to highlight a post-humanistic and non-human-centered approach to the subject of non-human social actors. The introduction to her book is a simple yet impactful one; this book is about family, a "multispecies" family. In Chapter 1, she analyzes how different

historical macro-level devices have driven the multispecies family to appear. Laurent-Simpson also reviews the literature on the socio-historical impact of "postmodernity" and how it reflects in recognizing animals as sentient beings. She argues that we cannot fully understand the multispecies family as a new family type without looking at the influence of the Industrial Revolution and the changing family structure in the United States. Identity theory is used in Chapter 2 to observe how traditional family identities form within families without children. She also highlights the expectations of the role of the "parent" in American culture. She shows how her participants are parenting their pets as children, which results in the changing definition of family and who can take ownership of the said family label. In Chapter 3, she shows how childless and childfree participants talk about the role of "parent" to a non-human participant and how that role is affirmed by their loved ones and close family members. Chapter 4 is supported by a literature analysis examining the identities assigned to pets when human children are part of the home. She explores the emotional fulfillment and the identity formation that occurs from being a pet parent and how this role affects behaviors and lifestyle choices. In Chapter 5, Laurent-Simpson analyzes macro-level evidence in pet product ads to connect the multispecies family dynamic as being reproduced and cemented in mainstream American Culture. She highlights how the mass entity of advertisements has embraced the new multispecies family as a unique and distinct structure with different needs than the single-species family. She uses her analysis of advertisements that include pets as her evidence of this. Lastly, in her conclusion, she states there is a gap in the scholarly literature about the multispecies family and calls for scholars to look at the impact of multispecies relations on identity and family structure in the United States.

The exploration, thoughtfulness, and rich analysis of the multispecies family given by Laurent-Simpson provides a clear and relevant piece of literature supported by sociological theories, data, and personal anecdotes. The book achieves the author's goals of demonstrating the importance of researching the multispecies family without being pretentious or overly academic. Her writing is accessible to a multitude of readers. It provides an

abundance of qualitative data and theoretical sociological support from several authors to cement her own analysis. It is a relevant book to the changing of traditional family structure. Although impactful and meaningful, this book could benefit from a deeper look at the ethical repercussions of "pet ownership," the actual acquirement of the pet, and what the commodification of family pets implicates.

This book provides an opportunity for the sociological field to broaden the definition of family and look to include non-human participants in more research. It takes a nuanced approach to the reaction of capitalistic fatigue and offers a liminal reaction to liberating the traditional, white-dominated notions of family. This book is meant for anyone who has a pet, any animal lover, or any person who recognizes that a family takes many forms and knows there is no limit on love and what a family can look like. It is a validating, informative love letter to anyone who has ever loved an animal. This book provides a practical application to expand the definition of family to include nonhuman participants. In final thoughts, I found this book to be affirming to pet lovers, clear and informative, and provides an abundance of sociological evidence. This book can provide a foundation to more scholarly works about the multispecies family and the possibilities for growth are endless.

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Book Review: *Dillard's Promise* by Gilbert Leslie

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Crime, mystery, and generational justice, *Dillard's Promise* by Gilbert Leslie, has it all as a very intriguing read that leaves the reader hooked, wanting to find out more about how the story pans out, which I felt when reading this great work of literature. This story follows the traumatic experiences of a family through the turbulent Jim Crow South to the modernized era of Los Angeles. Houston Jenkins, the story's protagonist, is slowly exposed to his family's history through the death of the women who raised him. Houston is unsuspecting until her dying words lead to a sequence of events that unravels a series of unsolved murders that happened decades prior and across the country. These events bring justice and closure but not in the way one might expect. The author of this thrilling novel is Gilbert Leslie, a current student at California State University-Los Angeles. He previously graduated from California State University-Dominguez Hills, obtaining a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies while minoring in Labor Studies. *Dillard's Promise* is his first time authoring a book as well as being published. In addition to authoring this novel, Leslie was in the process of obtaining his Master of Arts in Political Science and will graduate in May 2025, with hopes to become a professor while concurrently having writing as a second career. Being a single parent at a young age, Leslie's priority was raising his daughter, working in the life insurance industry while pursuing his degrees. Throughout all of this, Leslie has always been passionate about writing as a way to explore how to bring the experiences of criminal and societal justice reform into believable life stories. His dedication to justice is very much showcased within this story.

Dillard's Promise is a very educational read that provides context on both the historical and criminal justice fields of study. The book focuses on the struggles and traumas of a minority family trying to achieve their hopes and goals in a system that works against them. Throughout the story, we jump through different periods of time that shows the hardships specific to that respective era of America. Simultaneously, Leslie also shows how

crime solving has evolved over the years and how with the advancement of forensic technology, crimes can be solved that have been abandoned over the decades. From a little piece of Houston's DNA from a traffic stop, the FBI were able to piece a murder suspect from a series of murders that occurred in the 1970s. I do believe that the overall theme of this story is that justice will always be given, even after death.

The sociological relevance that this book provides is easy to spot, while broader elements of criminal justice are also sprinkled in. Leslie does make it clear how each of the characters are influenced by their social spaces regardless of the time period, as well as how these societal factors affect these individuals. The characters undertake roles and responsibilities endeavor hardships that they face while also navigating the feeling of expectations that many of the characters hold over themselves. Members of the Jenkins family take on certain societal roles that they believe will raise them to a higher social status. In the 1960s-1970s portions, the characters join the military, not to serve the country, but to receive the benefits that enlisting provides, especially providing for the family. The book does graphically show the horrors of racial violence and displays how racist governments plague their communities with blind hatred toward those of a different race. Leslie shows are evil racism is and how dehumanizing it can become if it becomes too deeply rooted. The notable white family in this story is demolished because of the father's lustful racism. The son learns to despise his father's racism and strives to be the complete opposite from is hateful father, which leads the son on a path of self-perceived justice. Overall, the 1940s-1970s storyline shows just how horrible the Jim Crow South was to the Black population through the lens of the Jenkins family.

There are also of course the criminological elements of the story that show the scientific possibilities highlighting how powerful DNA can be in solving a decade-old murder mystery crime. As well as critiquing elements of law enforcement which the reader can compare two enforcement agencies to one another. The two agencies that are showcased are a local police department that is shown in the past, while decades later the FBI brings back a cold case left unsolved by this small local department. By showcasing two law enforcement agencies from past and present

perspectives, it helps the reader understand how law enforcement has evolved over time. A local department relied on the determination of investigators in the past while the FBI in the present day has access to state-of-the-art forensic technology.

The story of the Jenkins family over a half century's time frame is well written and organized in a way that satisfies story arcs that are happening at different periods of time. As Houston's story progresses, the 'flashback' portions provide much needed information or context for Houston's dilemma and the FBI's aggressive motives to solve the cold case. The periodic structure of the storytelling does not weaken the progress of the main storyline but compliments it. Revelations and connections are made in a rather satisfying way. Overall, it keeps you invested in each storyline and enables the reader to want to know what happens next.

The only thing that I must remark on is that certain sequences may be too intense for some readers. There are scenes explaining the graphic nature of the murders, which are described in a very detailed way. Additionally, the use of profanity or derogatory words may be too intense for some readers. I argue that these are needed to convey a larger picture of the narrative within this story as well as showcasing the societal problems that have plagued our society. The story shows how these problems evolved and taken form over the years, which have adapted to the times.

Dillard's Promise is a phenomenal read, it highlights the struggles and obstacles one faces in society and how they overcome these adversities. The novel is inspiring in the way that brings hope and relevance to the many issues individuals face in society. Justice is something that comes in forms one might not accept, while the perceived idea of justice stems from what institutions dictate justice to be. But this novel shows us justice is beyond the common definition conveyed by mainstream social institutions; it is not manufactured but a human ideal. In conclusion, I highly recommend this novel to any looking for a crime-based mystery, *Dillard's Promise* is such a great read!

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Film Review: *Blood Quantum* by Jeff Barnaby

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Jeff Barnaby's film titled *Blood Quantum* (2019) entices the viewer to explore sociological dimensions of race, ethnicity, power dynamics, colonialism, and oppression. Along with an academic perspective, the addition of zombies, gore, and character regression/growth creates a thrilling journey to watch and enjoy. The film takes place on the fictional Red Crow reserve of isolated Mi'kmaq in Canada. Traylor is a policeman on the reservation and begins to encounter animals that should be dead but come back to life. The first human encounter he experiences is when he must bail his son, Joseph, and his estranged son, Lysol, from a police station off the reservation. A man sharing the cell with them suddenly attacks and they have to subdue him, but he doesn't back down due to being a zombie. Soon after, things begin to get more intense on and off the reservation for those who are not Indigenous. The film then jumps six months later to where the journey fully begins, and it is explained that the Indigenous individuals are immune to the virus while white people are not.

MODES OF IDENTIFICATION

Presently, society relies highly on self-identification of race and ethnicity. If an individual seeks assistance from a social service institution, they could receive help by simply self-identifying. Native American tribes that are federally recognized have requirements such as the past, and some present, utilization of blood quantum. Blood quantum was a form of identification white settlers imposed on Indigenous populations in the 18th century to limit rights and land access. Through this form of identification white settlers were able to create boundaries for this population to limit every form of capital they had prior to settler arrival and for the future. Blood quantum is archaic and has ties to scientific racism (Snipp 2010) but in the film, it is exactly what determines someone's chances of living or being turned into a zombie. Due to Native blood being a key aspect of survival, a sense of superiority was boiling amongst some members of the tribe which

created a silent but deadly divide. This is noticeable when Joseph's pregnant girlfriend Charlie began bringing white survivors to the reservation. To Lysol and James (female native), Charlie bringing her people (white survivors) was a burden and pointless. Just as self-identification can lead to some individuals receiving services meant for specific ethnic minorities, some survivors lied about being bitten to receive shelter and protection which ultimately pushed Lysol over the edge.

GROUP POSITION THEORY

Blumer's (1958) theory of group position can be seen in four basic feelings: ". . . (1) a feeling of superiority, (2) a feeling that the subordinate race is intrinsically different and alien, (3) a feeling of proprietary claim to certain areas of privilege and advantage, and (4) a fear and suspicion that the subordinate race harbors designs on the prerogatives of the dominant race" (1958:4). This was seen throughout U.S history and present day. In *Blood Quantum,* the Indigenous populations group position changes due to their immunity. Racial boundaries are evident when it comes to Charlie due to her being pregnant with Joseph's child. Racial boundaries are social constructs that racial groups or others outside of the racial group create to form distinct lines between groups and individuals. Since society is constantly changing, racial boundaries are no different. Each racial and ethnic group has boundaries that can either include or exclude others, especially if they are multiracial. Types of racial boundaries include physical appearance and culture. If someone does not act the stereotypical way outsiders may not view them in the way they self-identify. This can work the other way around; the group may see an individual as not like them due to their lack of connection to their culture or physical appearance. This is not something new or random but has been a part of society as it was being built, colonized, and destroyed in a constant cycle. This was evident during the colonization of California, ". . . Indians resided at the very lowest levels of hierarchy of humankind. Not only were California Indians filthy, ugly, dark, and animal-like, but they were also 'uncivilized' in their mode of economic livelihood" (Almaguer2009:114). Native tribes were seen as uncivilized and heathens because their lifestyles didn't consist of needing more

than necessary and maintained different beliefs than their white counterparts.

This film explored a multitude of social processes that could be explored through many sociological perspectives. History tends to repeat itself, but the group positions can be switched in the process. Some lingering questions remain, such as how would things have been different if Traylor utilized exclusion of white survivors completely from their haven and would things have turned out differently if Lysol had been in charge. Writer/director Barnaby brought forth issues that echo from the past and are still relevant today. The way he artistically portrayed the consequences of the zombie virus shows a resemblance of the way the Europeans treated Indigenous populations when colonizing. This film makes your mind think about our history from a different perspective and connects it to current issues we face in society today. Colonialism took a toll on a whole population by trying to strip them of their power, language, resources, culture, and so much more. This film may not be for some viewers but is a film full of social phenomena worth taking a chance on.

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Film Review: *Under the Same Moon* by Patricia Riggen

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The storyline of the film *Under the Same Moon* (2008) demonstrates a Mexican mother and son who are separated by the U.S.-Mexico border. The film examines the challenges and risks of immigrants who face hardship when crossing these neighboring countries. Patricia Riggen is a Mexican film director born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, and has gained experience in journalism and writing for documentaries. Riggen obtained a degree in Communication Sciences, and her thesis work is titled "Female Directors," which allowed her to interview the top four female film directors at the time. Given that opportunity, Riggen had many job inquiries lined up but worked as a writer for her local newspaper and for a producer, which allowed her to collect research on the production industry. With that, she moved to New York City, where she received her master's degree in directing and screenwriting at Columbia University. Since English was not her first language, Riggen started writing short movies without dialogue. While attending Columbia University, she directed two short films and found herself interested in writing and producing films. This led to the directing of her major-recognized movie *Under the Same Moon*, which was acknowledged by many industries and granted even more opportunities. Directing the film *Under the Same Moon* allowed Riggen to portray the immigrant experience of a young woman who is working in Los Angeles illegally and is separated from her 9-year-old son, still living back home with her mother in a small Mexican village.

Under the Same Moon begins by illustrating a single mother, Rosario, who entered the United States illegally to secure work in Los Angeles, leaving behind her young son Carlitos in Mexico for his grandmother's care. With this separation, the son dearly misses her and wants her to return home; although she wants to see Carlitos and wants him to come to Los Angeles, she cannot make the arrangements for him to come to the States and live with her due to her immigration status. As time passes, 9-year-old Carlitos loses his grandmother and does not want to live with

his aunt and uncle because they want his mother's remittances. With that in mind, he decides to gather some money and seek help from a 'coyote' – a person who helps smuggle people across the border. Carlitos finds two Mexican American students who need cash to help take him to the United States, and it takes a turn when border officials impound the two students' vehicle. As Carlitos is stranded in the car, trying to make a run to seek help, he lands in the hands of drug addicts but is later rescued by a woman who helps immigrants. Seeking any new resources that will help him be reunited with his mom, Carlitos takes the opportunity to work with some men who pick crops. Carlitos realizes the work provided to him is hard work and can acknowledge the difficulties and risks of work in the field. As they are working, suddenly, the farm is raided by police, but Carlitos manages to escape with Enrique, a middle-aged man who is also working at the farm. As they search for new work, Carlitos manages to get jobs at a restaurant for two for the price of one deal which both Carlitos and Enrique will work but split the wages of a single worker. After some time, Enrique decides to accompany Carlitos searching for Rosario in Los Angeles, where the mother and son eventually reunite in a location Rosario would describe while she would call and stay in touch with Carlitos. As the film shows the timeline of the mother and son being separated, it also has a representation of immigrants who cross the border illegally in hopes of finding opportunities but deal with the hardship of fear over being caught.

This film demonstrates many social issues immigrants face when looking for employment opportunities. Social issues are a problem within society as they affect many individuals who are seeking a better lifestyle. *Under the Same Moon* shows experiences of discrimination, the lack of resources, deportation, family difficulties, poverty, and the purpose of social functioning. It illustrates how society has set aside people who do not have the same opportunities as someone who has to risk their lives to find a job for a proper lifestyle to afford their daily needs.

The story underlines the struggles that immigrants face from separation of family, exploitation of labor, and deportation. The film represents social issues of family separation through Rosario having to leave her son in order to work and to be able to provide for her son's future. During one of the scenes, after

Rosario calls Carlitos she states to one of her coworkers, “Es que yo le estoy haciendo más daño estando aquí, lejos de el. El no sabe por qué me fuí. Solamente sabe que lo dejé.” Which translates, “It’s just, I’m hurting him more, by being here away from him. He doesn’t know why I left. He only knows that I left him.” This stood out to me because Rosario chose to seek the opportunity of work to be able to provide a better lifestyle for Carlitos. The separation of family shows that many are willing to take the risk of finding better working opportunities to help better assist themselves and their loved ones.

Though released in 2008, *Under the Same Moon* still represents issues that are occurring today. The exploitation of labor and human trafficking is presented when immigrants are utilized as a trade to work under horrible working conditions. Immigrants who migrate to the United States seeking opportunities have barriers that can result in a conflict in having the ability to interact with a society who disagrees with them coming to the U.S. for work or education purposes. Migrant workers often are paid low wages and work in poor conditions while doing jobs that are more hands-on and do not require language fluency or book knowledge. The exploitation of labor in the film shows how immigrant workers work in unsafe conditions for long hours while only receiving low pay. In the film, young Carlitos works the farm alongside the others in hot sunny conditions cropping crops in order to make some money to be able to reunite with his mother. At one point while acknowledging the heat, Carlitos states, “Pero eso no fue nada. Cuando crucé la frontera eso fue lo más difícil. Pero, ¿qué importa? Vale la pena. Yo haría lo que fuera por mi mamá.” This translates to, “But this was nothing. When I crossed the border, that was the most difficult part. But what does it matter? It is worth it. I would do anything for my mom.” To me this quote shares how, despite working in poor conditions and almost getting caught by ICE when the farm is raided, Carlitos believes the most difficult part was crossing the border and now that he has succeeded, he would do anything to reunite with his mother. This highlights elements of family separation because if Carlitos was caught by ICE as a child alone traveling, it would have been a difficult spot for his mother who is in the state with no documentation.

Lastly, deportation is the risk many immigrants face if they are detained, especially as undocumented people who are in the states illegally; they will be removed from the country because they have no authority or legal right to be there. In the film, when Carlitos is working on the farm, it shows the risk of getting raided and having to flee the area without getting caught to continue working. Working in the U.S. without the proper documentation while avoiding any potential legal consequence always has the possible consequences of getting caught that could limit migrants' opportunities to improve their situations. With the current policies and laws that are being passed in the U.S., we can see the hardship and difficulties of getting caught and detained. Many individuals who are accused of migrating or coming to the states illegally have been detained for long periods of time before preparing to leave everything they have built in the U.S. and be transferred back to their homeland.

The film *Under the Same Moon* illustrates the hardship and treatment many immigrants receive when coming to the United States for opportunities. It portrays resilience, family, immigration, identity, and hope, which reflects the experiences of individuals who cross the borders to seek opportunities to move forward to help themselves and their loved ones. In the shoes of Rosario, we can see the difficulties of having to leave her child in order to be able to provide a better lifestyle and chance of making ends meet. It demonstrates the representation of resilience and finding the strength to move forward in finding working solutions to help one find the opportunities that will help them provide the essentials needs they lack. This film is essential to understanding the story behind an individual and real-life events that happen to those who migrate for opportunities to have a better future and a chance to succeed and help their family move forward, aside from the many challenges and barriers an individual may face. With that perspective, this film shows the importance of acknowledging and comprehending the struggles many immigrants face by risking their lives and leaving their families to achieve a better living.

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TV Show Review: Birth of a Rebellion – A Sociological Look at *Andor: A Star Wars Story*

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Very few television shows in modern times showcase the dynamics between an oppressive system and people affected by these forces of oppression. Even fewer show this social dynamic in a relatable, grounded way as it is shown in the show *Andor* (2022). The struggles of a young rebel movement bred from these oppressive forces of the galactic empire are displayed in a brutal yet relevant way that mirrors real-life rebel causes in our society and history. Many themes and social issues highlighted throughout the show's episodic arcs hold much truth and act as important social commentaries that spark dialogue about real oppressive factors in our own social institutions. In this review, I will focus on a few major sociological aspects that I feel are important to cover. The forces of colonialism at work, acts of cultural rebellion, critiquing the status quo, and mass incarceration are some of the key themes throughout *Andor* showcasing how individuals from various backgrounds are socialized due to the colonialistic nature of an oppressive regime. A highlight of the show is that it shows how individuals from different social statuses react to oppression and what steps they take to adapt or resist the societal norms laid by the forces of oppression. As much as the themes are important, the range of the diverse characters of *Andor* are the heart and soul of the show. Through their points of view, we as an audience are compelled to understand how people of different social statuses and backgrounds react to oppression and rebellion. The working-class struggle, what roles the privileged play in these struggles, hopeful revolutionaries, and those fighting for a cause that they struggle to support.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The show is created by American screenwriter Tony Gilroy. He is known for the spy thriller franchise under the *Bourne* Series. Gilroy also acted as a lead advocate during the recent writers' strike, due to the poor treatment and unfair pay to writers in

Hollywood, which caused a pause in most Hollywood productions. *Andor* was created for the streaming service Disney+ and serves as a prequel to the hit Star Wars Spin-off film *Rogue One,* which was released in 2016 and was heavily worked on by Tony Gilroy. *Andor* strives to create more character depth for Cassian Andor, who was a secondary protagonist in *Rogue One*, and other smaller characters featured in the film. This Star Wars show received positive critical reception and was nominated for numerous Emmys and Golden Globes. It is set to receive a second and final season in Spring 2025.

AN UNLIKELY HERO'S JOURNEY

Andor takes place within the larger Star Wars franchise, specifically the events in the show fit in between the movies *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) and *Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977). To understand the sociological themes of *Andor*, I must briefly summarize the state of the Star War Timeline. At the end of *Revenge of the Sith*, the Star Wars galaxy's fair Republic reformatted into a sinister Galactic empire. During this transition, the Empire conducted a genocide on the peacekeeping Jedi Knights. With their religion and culture being outlawed throughout the galaxy, the Jedi Order represents Peace and Justice, somewhat unconventional for super-powered law enforcement individuals. Without the Jedi, the new Galactic Empire could impose its will upon the people of the galaxy with little to no resistance. Fifteen years after the fall of the Jedi, the galaxy is at a tipping point. The sinister motives of the Galactic Empire are in full effect across the galaxy, with some individuals having had enough of living under this umbrella of oppression. *Andor* follows a rogue protagonist named Cassian Andor as he experiences firsthand the oppression nature of the Empire and the birth of a rebellion that he will eventually give his life for.

Star Wars broadly tells the tale of good vs. evil, and *Andor* further expands this general concept to a more mature audience. Often when watching one can forget that this is a show taking place in the Star Wars universe with its mature themes. The opening act shows Cassian visiting a brothel, where his motive is revealed to find his long-lost sister. After he leaves the brothel, he is stopped by two corporate security officers (or "corpos"). The

altercation ends with Cassian accidentally killing one of the corpos with him murdering the other. Cassian is forced to flee the scene and this altercation with the forces of oppression leads him toward a path of rebellion. As a wanted man, Cassian manipulates and uses his friends to survive a galaxy under the oppressive rule of an empire. Throughout the duration of the show, Cassian evolves from a common criminal and a con man to a revolutionary and leader. It goes to show that Cassian is not your typical hero, he is forced to act and survive circumstances that he does not really have control over.

COLONIALISM IN SPACE

The acts of colonialism are highlighted throughout the many arcs in the show's duration. The concept of "Colonialism refers to the direct political control of a society and its people by a foreign ruling state . . . The ruling state monopolizes political power and keeps the subordinated society and its people in a legally inferior position. But colonialism has had significant cultural, social, and economic correlates and ramifications" (Go 2007:1). These corporate security forces act as an extension of the Empire which displays a form of colonialism. The Empire employs this corporation's services to enforce their rule upon colony planets such as Cassian's home planet Ferrix. When we are first introduced to Ferrix we see how deeply rooted the community is grounded. It is a lively place until the empire takes over. Colonialism is showcased in multiple different scenarios, but it is displayed openly on the planet Ferrix, which serves as a hub-world where we see the Empire's colonialist nature slowly take over the planet. It starts off with the corporate security rule and ends with the planet becoming occupied by Imperial forces. Livelihoods are crushed, citizens imprisoned, and stormtroopers march the streets of Ferrix. A once independent working world now faces the consequences of becoming an Imperial colony. Additionally, we see the aftermath of colonial exploitation in Cassian's birth planet Kenria. Abandoned mining equipment with dialogue suggesting that the planet went through a disastrous environmental situation that led to the planet becoming hazardous.

CHARACTER MOTIVATIONS

As much as Cassian is the main protagonist, the supporting characters are as equally as important as Cassian's role in this Star Wars story. *Andor* shows a diverse range of characters that are differently affected by the oppressive nature of the Empire; some embrace it and many rebel against it. There are more characters than I can feature in this review, but I will explain two who play the most important roles in connection to the sociological nature of society under the Galactic Empire. Each is on a different end of the spectrum that represents how one is shaped and influenced in such a society.

First off is Syril Karn, an over-achieving, by-the-book corporate officer who leads the initial effort to hunt down Cassian. Syril believes that the system works, he represents those who fully trust the government and believes that those in power can do no wrong. But there is a side to him that is extreme, where he sees his superiors as lazy, and he takes matters into his own hands. Syril believes in the system and will do whatever it takes to uphold the system. A sort of blind devotion that drives Syril. He can be seen as a representation of younger members of alt-right movements. Even when the very system he supports punishes him and disregards him, Syril's blind devotion to the empire makes him a dangerous extremist, which leads to fascist tendencies. Syril is helping a system that does not even care about him and his belief that if he helps the empire in any way he can to gain favor might lead to his end.

Another important rebellious figure in *Andor* is Mon Mothma. She is an Imperial senator but secretly funds rebel movements. Mothma understands the power that comes with her privileges and seeks to use them for a cause that does not oppress. Mothma is a deep-cut Star Wars character who originally made her first appearance in *Return of the Jedi*. Diehard Star Wars fans will recognize her as the future leader of the rebel alliance. But at this point during the events of *Andor*, we find her at her most vulnerable. Mothma, due to her social status, struggles to understand the necessary steps to fight the empire. She has lived through a luxurious and comfortable life while becoming a prestigious senator, though she does acknowledge the injustices of the Empire. Mothma also faces her own oppression, due to the

culture of her home world, such as arranged marriages, which causes conflict in Mothma's life between her and her daughter. Mothma is in an unfulfilling arranged marriage that has caused her to become disillusioned over the practice and gives her a counter-cultural feeling toward it. But her daughter embraces it, following the traditional trap of cultural norms. Mothma is so caught up with her duties that it takes time away from her being a mother, and the relationship between the two is strained in a way similar to how families today can feel separated due to holding different ideals on social issues. One of the most important scenes with Mothma is during a meeting with a shady businessman where Mothma needs his services to adequately fund the rebellion, but the cost is high: an arranged marriage between her daughter and the businessman's son. Mothma knows that her daughter will wholeheartedly embrace this tradition, but it is something that Mothma does not want her daughter to go through, especially since these arranged marriages are implied to happen when these individuals are pre-teens to teenagers. However, Mothma realizes that she must do whatever it takes to fight the empire, even at the cost of her daughter's freedom; personal sacrifices must be made for the greater good, and rebellions always come at a cost. Also, it is important to note that the Empire's CIA equivalent is spying on Mothma and suspects her of rebellious motives. Mothma faces oppression on levels only accessible to her status, and she risks losing everything that makes her comfortable for a cause that goes against the very system that gives her comfortability.

Every character faces their own rebellion and becomes a rebel in their own way, though how they rebel can depend on their social status and experiences of socialization. Socialization "is the process through which we can learn not only cultural beliefs and social rules, but also the underlying structure or grammar that enables us to behave individually, organically, and seemingly spontaneously" (O'Brien 2017:135) and can be used to describe the dynamic between individuals and the institutions with which they are involved. From people with privileged upbringings funding causes through the safety of their status to the common criminal that finds it necessary to rebel for their own survival. The way a society operates enables certain individuals to act or react accordingly, whether it be to work their way up the system or work

to dismantle it. Cassian becomes a rebel due to necessity, Syril commits acts of rebellion to uphold the system he believes in, and Mothma rebels due to her acknowledgment that her privilege enables her to help those in need. Through the different perspectives of social classes shown in *Andor*, we see how people from different social backgrounds react to an oppressive system.

CONCLUSION

Andor doesn't shy away from the brutal social commentary that enables sociological dialogue. Often throughout the show, we see rather realistic depictions of oppressive forces at work. Through the many social issues and crises in our society, *Andor* acts as a piece of media that helps to showcase these acts of social injustice by incorporating an already well-known franchise to engage the audience in the story. There are many other sociological aspects within the show that may serve as an introduction to sociology for the general audience, as well as a form of mass media that may help the audience create correlations to aspects of our society. I highly recommend viewing this show to gain some modern representation of sociological knowledge!

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Anime TV Show Review: The Human Experience according to *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End / Sōsō no Furīren*

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In the fantasy and adventure anime show *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, the human experience shown through the eyes of the protagonist, an elf mage named Frieren, takes viewers on a journey of discovery, both of the self and of others. From a sociological perspective, some of the themes reflect the experiences of human life, such as social structure, collective memory and shared experiences, and aging and time. Throughout this review piece, some situations are not too descriptive to avoid spoilers for those interested in watching the anime. From Abe, Yamada, Suzuki, and Saitō's (2023) description on Crunchyroll, a major anime hosting site, here is the plot for *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* explores the following plot:

> After the party of heroes defeated the Demon King, they restored peace to the land and returned to lives of solitude. Generations pass, and the elven mage Frieren comes face to face with humanity's mortality. She takes on a new apprentice and promises to fulfill old friends' dying wishes. Can an elven mind make peace with the nature of life and death? Frieren embarks on her quest to find out.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

For this topic, the nature of relationships is displayed in the anime's world where different beings have varying life expectancies. The biggest example of this is the protagonist herself, Frieren, a long-lived elf who outlived her human friend with whom she shared an adventure. Frieren's long life has influenced how she perceives and values her relationships with others in a detached way that takes social relationships for granted. On the other hand, her human friends treasure the moments they share with their group, knowing that their time is limited compared to Frieren. Her emotional detachment due to her long life makes her unfamiliar with human social norms when it comes to relationships and mourning. When she is confronted with her

friend's mortality and grieves, she understands the neglect in her relationships with them and their significance to her social life.

Frieren also takes on the position of mentor to the new group formed for the journey, particularly to the two young humans, the mage Fern, who is also Frieren's apprentice, and the warrior Stark. The intergenerational interactions showcase the times of peace that the world is in after the accomplishments of Frieren's past group. While Frieren shows Fern the world of magic and mages, Fern's interactions with Frieren teach her emotions and human experiences. This dynamic helps in Frieren's character development as she learns more about human life and its value while both generations learn from each other.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND SHARED EXPERIENCES

Time plays an important role when it comes to the way that Frieren's group, especially how Himmel, the human Hero, is remembered during and after their adventure. Time aids Frieren in getting to know Himmel better through others, as she felt regret not doing so before their past journey ended. The time that passes is not only shown just through Frieren's perspective but also through many individuals who encountered the group and relayed to her what Himmel did for them and what it meant to them. As she and her new group hear the different experiences that others have had with Himmel, the shared stories give more insight into Himmel and his actions to help others. For Frieren, reliving these moments with a new outlook helps her discover the significance of those memories. While her original group's achievements restored peace, what people remembered the most was how Himmel the Hero helped them in small ways, which impacted them so much that the experiences stayed with them for years afterwards.

AGING AND TIME

Although Frieren herself has appeared almost ageless throughout her journeys, the same cannot be said about her human friends. Dockery, a Senior Contribution Writer at Crunchyroll, (2024) notes that aging is accepted and embraced within the anime as it acknowledges how time can mean different things to different characters, which creates meaningfulness. The human characters

enjoy what is beautiful in the world, knowing that death is inevitable, and enjoy their lives while they can. In the first episode of the series, Frieren mentions wanting to see the meteor shower again with the original party but only when they bring peace to the kingdom. Frieren's human friends are surprised at her promise and agree to it, even though they know they will either be very old or have passed on. 50 years later, she returns to her companions and fulfills her promise to see the next meteor shower. While the time that passed may not have mattered much to Frieren, that was not the case for her human friends, which she inevitably realizes.

STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

As much as *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* is thought of highly, this show has its strengths and weaknesses. The strengths that have led to its success in the anime fandom are its narrative, journey to understand mortality, and its stunning animation and visuals. Further, the narrative is an interesting take on the aftermath of a group of heroes saving the world, differing from typical anime storytelling. The show's premise about understanding mortality gives viewers an opportunity to look at humanity through the perspective of Frieren, as she learns more about mortality. The art and visuals of this anime are beautiful as they illustrate different types of landscapes and characteristics of the area that change as the characters travel to many places.

The weaknesses of this show involve its pacing and a lack of worldbuilding. Although the show is an adventure and fantasy anime, its pacing can be considered slow as there are few action sequences. This is also because Frieren is retrospectively becoming more appreciative of her experiences with her former group. The lack of worldbuilding is based on the small amount of lore in the world of magic and social structures that are not explored in depth. Despite these weaknesses, they play a role in the development of the show by allowing viewers to reflect on mortality in Frieren's world while coming to a better understanding of humanity's experiences.

CONCLUSION

Through the anime *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, there is a reflection of human life and the human experience in cherishing

the lives that come across and memories that are made. The exploration of sociological themes adds to the viewing experience as it can relate to our own lives and invites viewers to go on their own journey of growth. Frieren also grows to understand human experiences throughout her new journey, from grieving with the pain of loss to her past and ongoing journey. I highly recommend watching this series as it expresses the different types of human experiences and the one we will all face in death. Dockery (2024) beautifully encapsulates this theme when writing, "In *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, your presence might leave the earth, but where you remain is in the margins. In the moments where you find enough peace to reminisce or to be able to evaluate yourself — that's where you find the past at its strongest." Perhaps what we can take away from *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* is cherishing moments in our lives that make life beautiful and worth living.

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Music Review: When Dreams Begin Again: A Reflection on New Order's 'Dreams Never End'

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It is essential before we begin this review to speak about New Order's origins. Joy Division's origins trace back to the post-punk era of late 1970s Manchester, England–a city immersed in industrial decline, unemployment, and social unrest. The band emerged as part of the punk rock movement but soon developed a distinct sound that fused punk's raw energy with a darker, more atmospheric and introspective musical style. Originally formed in 1976 under the name Warsaw by schoolmates Bernard Sumner and Peter Hook, Joy Division took shape when they recruited drummer Stephen Morris and lyricist/vocalist Ian Curtis, solidifying their lineup in 1977. The name "Joy Division" itself is steeped in controversy, as it referred to the sexual slavery units depicted in *The House of Dolls*, a novel about Nazi concentration camps, signaling the band's willingness to confront dark and taboo subjects in their work. The group quickly became known for their minimalist yet haunting sound, blending sparse guitar work, Hook's melodic basslines, Morris's robotic drumbeats, and Curtis's distinctive baritone voice. Under the guidance of their producer Martin Hannett, Joy Division's sound took on a more experimental and ambient tone, which was showcased in their seminal 1979 album *Unknown Pleasures*. Songs like "She's Lost Control" and "Disorder" combined cold, detached instrumentals with Curtis's deeply introspective and often bleak lyrics. His writing reflected themes of isolation, anxiety, and existential dread, resonating with a generation confronting the uncertainty and disillusionment of post-industrial Britain.

While the band's rise to prominence was swift, it was paralleled by the growing struggles of Curtis. Curtis suffered from severe epilepsy, a neurological disorder that caused frequent debilitating seizures. His condition worsened as the band's schedule intensified. He had been diagnosed in 1979, shortly after the release of *Unknown Pleasures*, and was prescribed various medications, which came with severe side effects, including mood

swings, depression, and memory loss. The disorder significantly impacted his ability to perform, as his seizures became more frequent and often coincided with live performances. Despite his efforts to manage his health, Curtis's condition grew worse over time, exacerbated by the pressures of fame, touring, and his complex personal life. His tumultuous mental state was further strained by the disintegration of his marriage to Deborah Curtis and his affair with Belgian journalist Annik Honoré. This personal conflict, combined with his deteriorating health, pushed Curtis into a deeper state of despair. Many of the songs on Joy Division's second album, *Closer* (1980), reflect this increasing sense of doom. On May 18, 1980, just before Joy Division was scheduled to embark on their first North American tour, Curtis took his own life at the age of 23, hanging himself in his home in Macclesfield. His death shocked the music world and cut short the burgeoning career of one of post-punk's most innovative bands. In the wake of Curtis's suicide, Joy Division's remaining members–Sumner, Hook, and Morris–were left reeling, grappling with the future of the band and the legacy they had begun to build.

After Curtis's death Joy Division disbanded, but like a phoenix rising from the ashes came New Order. Moving forward, they carried over with them something more than the weight of their music. They bore the legacy of Curtis, the memory of a lost friend taken far too early, and the weight of expectations from a world still in mourning. "Dreams Never End," the first track on their 1981 debut album *Movement*, acts as a turning point for the band and those who followed. It is a coming to terms with the past, a meditation on themes of loss and identity, the relentless pressures of modern existence, and more of an introduction to the New Order. At first listen, "Dreams Never End" seems like a continuation of Joy Division's brooding post-punk sound. The song begins with Hook's distinctive bassline, a driving force that propels the track forward with a rhythmic intensity reminiscent of Joy Division's best work. It's not hard to imagine this track fitting into the darker catalog of their previous band. As the song unfolds, subtle differences become evident. While it retains the same atmosphere, there's an underlying sense of hope and renewal that sets it apart.

Sumner's debut as the lead vocalist, a role he initially struggled to embrace, is marked by a voice that is more subdued and ethereal than Curtis's baritone. His delivery adds vulnerability and a dreamlike quality to the song, aligning with the lyrical ambiguity that invites multiple interpretations. Lyrically, "Dreams Never End" is abstract, allowing listeners to project their experiences and emotions onto the song. Lines such as "**A given end to your dreams**" and "**A fractured smile that soon dies**" can evoke themes of personal loss, existential searching, or broken relationships. The subjective nature of the lyrics–compounded by the fact that variations exist in different versions of the song–invites reflection on how we engage with art. Is one interpretation more valid than another? Or does the fluidity of the lyrics reflect the fluidity of meaning itself? In many ways, "Dreams Never End" mirrors the human experience: each listener can interpret the song based on personal life experiences, adding a layer of personal relevance that evolves over time. Beyond individual interpretation, "Dreams Never End" also carries sociological significance. By employing Durkheim's concept of anomie, Goffman's theory of self-presentation, and exploring the themes of agency and resilience, we can delve into the deeper meanings of the song. These sociological theories offer a structured framework for understanding both the band's internal struggles and the broader human condition.

SOCIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: ANOMIE, SELF-PRESENTATION, RESILIENCE, AND AGENCY

Erving Goffman was a Canadian-born sociologist, social psychologist, and writer, considered by some the most influential American sociologist of the twentieth century. His theory on Self-Presentation applies to this song 'Dreams Never End' and it shows how the theory is based on the idea that life is a performance, where people adopt different roles depending on the situation, maintaining a facade to shape how they are perceived. New Order's formation post-Joy Division required the band to adopt a new public identity, one that both honored Curtis's legacy while forging a new path for themselves. Goffman's theory can be applied to explore how New Order, especially Sumner, navigated this delicate balance.

According to Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), "the individual maintains a show before others that he himself does not believe, he can come to experience a special kind of alienation from self and a special kind of wariness of others." This concept of alienation directly connects to the emotional tension in New Order's "Dreams Never End," particularly in the lyrics "**A nervous bride for your eyes**" pointing to the act of concealing inner emotions while maintaining an outward facade. This resonates with Goffman's concept of self-presentation, showing how we craft our public identities, even while internally grappling with confusion or pain. Here, the metaphor of a bride evokes an image of someone expected to perform a certain role under societal scrutiny. Just as a bride is expected to appear joyful, composed, and radiant on her wedding day, the band was expected to maintain composure and grace as they moved forward after Curtis's death. However, the word "nervous" betrays the tension between their outward appearance and their inner emotional state. This reflects Goffman's theory of front-stage behavior, where individuals (in this case, the band) put on a performance to align with societal expectations, while backstage, they may be grappling with inner turmoil and uncertainty.

Goffman's concept of impression management (Nickerson 2022) emphasizes controlling how we appear to others, a process that undoubtedly occurred within New Order. They had to reinvent themselves not only for their audience but also for themselves, presenting a composed, coherent image that concealed the internal chaos and vulnerability they experienced as individuals. Sumner's understated vocal performance on "Dreams Never End" serves as a form of impression management. His vocals lack the gravitas of Curtis's delivery, signaling a quiet, almost reluctant step into a new role. This delicate balance between outward presentation and inner tension is reflected in how the lyrics themselves are delivered–subdued, ethereal, and almost hidden within the mix, mirroring the act of masking one's emotions behind a façade. This act of self-presentation is crucial to understanding New Order's early career. By continuing under a new name, they essentially managed how they were perceived by the public. They were not just Joy Division without Curtis; they

were a new entity, striving to balance respect for their past with the desire to move forward. This aligns with Goffman's idea of shifting between frontstage (public performance) and backstage (private emotions) personas, as New Order had to project an image of resilience while grappling privately with the grief of losing their bandmate.

ANOMIE & "DREAMS NEVER END"

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist and was the first academic sociologist. He formally established the academic discipline of Sociology along with Karl Marx and Max Weber, who are commonly cited as the principal architects of modern social science. According to Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society* ([1893] 1984), anomie is defined as a state of instability in an individual or society that results from a breakdown of values, standards, or a lack of purpose or ideals. This concept of anomie can be applied to New Order's "Dreams Never End," where feelings of disconnection, purposelessness, and instability resonate deeply within the lyrics. After Curtis's death, New Order–formerly Joy Division–was thrust into such a state. Curtis's passing left both the band and their audience grappling with emotional turmoil, uncertainty, and a fractured sense of identity. The band's transition from Joy Division to New Order represents a societal and emotional rupture, which we can frame within Durkheim's concept of anomie.

The line, "***A given end to your dreams***" from "Dreams Never End" poignantly reflects the emotional desolation experienced by the remaining band members after Curtis's death. It suggests a finality, a moment when the aspirations and dreams of the group as Joy Division were brought to a sudden halt. Durkheim's theory fits here because anomie is often marked by the end of established structures, just as the group experienced a disruption of their identity and purpose. As they transitioned to New Order, this disorientation mirrors the anomic breakdown Durkheim described, where the existing norms and paths disintegrate, leaving individuals (or bands) to reconstruct a new way forward. The lyrics "***A fractured smile that soon dies***" can be interpreted as the mask or facade of normalcy cracking under the weight of grief and loss, reinforcing the state of disconnection the

band members may have felt during this period. The fracture here signifies not just emotional loss but also a breakdown of social cohesion within the band, where each member must grapple with individual and collective uncertainty about the future. Durkheim's concept of anomie illuminates how these lyrics encapsulate a broader loss of societal norms, which, in this case, include the norms that previously structured the band's musical journey and identity.

RESILIENCE & AGENCY IN "DREAMS NEVER END"

Resilience is the ability to withstand and recover from adversity (Besley 2020). It's not just about surviving hardship but also about adapting and growing stronger from it. Pierre's concepts of habitus, field, and capital can help us understand resilience as a dynamic process rooted in the structures around us. In the context of New Order, resilience is evident in their ability to not only endure the loss of Curtis but also to transform that loss into artistic growth. The evolution from Joy Division's dark, post-punk sound to New Order's more hopeful and electronic-driven music reflects this resilience. The lyric "***No looking back now, we're pushing through***" perfectly encapsulates the band's resilience. It speaks to the forward momentum required to heal and rebuild, acknowledging the difficulty of the past while emphasizing the importance of perseverance. This line also reflects the agency that resilience requires. New Order's ability to act, make decisions, and redefine their sound despite the emotional devastation of Curtis's death demonstrates their resilience. They chose not to disband but to push through the pain, creating music that paid homage to their roots while moving into a new sonic direction.

In sociology, resilience isn't just about individuals returning to their former state; it's about adaptation and growth. This adaptation is evident in "Dreams Never End," where the song's post-punk foundation gradually gives way to New Order's more electronic sound, hinting at the future direction of the band. The use of synthesizers and a more polished production style in Movement suggests that the band was not just surviving but evolving. Their transformation mirrors the sociological process of resilience, where communities or groups must adapt to new realities in the face of trauma or disruption. The song's upbeat

tempo, driven by Hook's bassline and Morris's rhythmic drumming, conveys a sense of energy and movement–emphasizing that resilience is not passive but active, requiring effort and forward thinking.

Agency refers to the capacity of individuals to make choices and exert control over their actions within the constraints of social structures. Agency involves "the ability of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices" (Cole 2014). "***Now I know what those hands would do / No looking back now, we're pushing through***" represents a pivotal moment in the song, encapsulating the theme of agency and the conscious choice to confront rather than retreat from past experiences. The phrase "***Now I know what those hands would do***" suggests an awareness that comes from lived experience. The hands metaphorically represent actions taken in relationships, highlighting the consequences of past decisions. By acknowledging what these hands are capable of, the speaker recognizes the weight of their history–be it pain, love, or regret. The subsequent phrase, "***No looking back now, we're pushing through***," emphasizes a crucial decision to prioritize progress over nostalgia. The insistence on not looking back signifies a rejection of regret or the temptation to linger in the past. This refusal to dwell on previous experiences reflects a significant exercise of agency. The term "***pushing through***" evokes a sense of resilience and determination, indicating a willingness to confront challenges head-on. It's an empowering declaration that the speaker will not allow past hurts to dictate their present or future; instead, they are committed to navigating their emotions and circumstances actively.

This choice also aligns with the broader narrative of coping with loss and moving forward. In the aftermath of trauma or heartbreak, individuals often face a crossroads where they can choose to succumb to despair or actively seek healing and growth. The speaker's decision to push through can be interpreted as a metaphor for personal growth, resilience, and the continuous journey toward self-discovery. It resonates with the listener, reminding them that while the past may inform who we are, it does not have to define our path forward.

SUBJECTIVITY AND THE LISTENER'S ROLE

The subjective nature of "Dreams Never End" invites listeners to explore their own interpretations, rendering the experience deeply personal. The ambiguity inherent in the lyrics allows for a myriad of meanings to emerge, creating a rich tapestry of emotional responses. Lines like "***Hello, farewell to your love and soul***" evoke feelings of both connection and separation, reflecting the complexities of human relationships and the inevitability of change. This open-endedness resonates with listeners navigating their own experiences of loss, transformation, and self-discovery. Such fluidity in meaning underscores the idea that art is not static; it is shaped by the listener's context, emotional history, and lived experiences. According to the New Order Fandom page, "Dreams Never End" resonates with the themes of melancholy and introspection, capturing the existential struggles of the time. The lyrics' vagueness allows individuals to project their own narratives onto the song, forging a personal connection that can be both cathartic and affirming. The experience of listening to this track thus becomes a collaborative process where the listener's interpretation is as crucial as the artist's intention.

Moreover, this subjectivity aligns with Erving Goffman's concepts of self-presentation and the performance of identity. Just as individuals curate their public personas, listeners engage with music as a means of self-expression and reflection. The ability to reinterpret a song's meaning allows for the exploration of one's identity, emotions, and societal context. In this way, "Dreams Never End" serves as a canvas upon which listeners can project their feelings of loss, longing, and renewal. The significance of this interaction between music and the listener cannot be understated. The transformative power of songs like "Dreams Never End" lies in their capacity to evoke a sense of shared experience and understanding, allowing individuals to grapple with their own struggles within the larger narrative of social change. As listeners immerse themselves in the emotional landscape of the song, they find resonance in its themes, facilitating a deeper connection to both the music and their own lives. Ultimately, this interplay of subjectivity and interpretation underscores the profound impact of music as a vehicle for

personal and societal transformation, reinforcing its role as a powerful catalyst for change.

When a song like "Dreams Never End" finally reaches people, it is new for everybody. However, differently, the listeners carry their context, emotional history, and dreams into the experience, whereby the song changes. It gets personal, intimate, and reflective of the listener's life. Subjectivity gives this song a timeless quality. It is one of those songs that grow with you; at different stages in your life, you can always go back to them and find something new every time. We shape the song just as much as it shapes us as listeners, which is why it is your song when you listen. The lyrics, emotions, and interpretations-they all belong to you, sculpted by your journey alone.

CONCLUSION

Through the lenses of anomie, self-presentation, resilience, and agency, "Dreams Never End" transcends its surface as a song about personal or collective loss, evolving into a profound sociological narrative of struggle and transformation. The concept of anomie illustrates the breakdown of norms and identity following Curtis's tragic death, plunging the band into a state of disorientation that reflects the broader cultural malaise of post-punk England. This sense of instability echoes the societal shifts occurring at the time, highlighting how the loss of a guiding figure can disrupt both personal and collective identities. Self-presentation theory adds another layer of complexity to the song's meaning, capturing the delicate performance of identity as the band navigated public expectations. Through the nuanced lyrics and Sumner's emotive vocals, "Dreams Never End" serves as a subtle expression of vulnerability amidst the pressure to maintain a façade of composure and control. This interplay between authenticity and performance underscores the challenges artists face in revealing their true selves to the world, all while grappling with the expectations of their audience. Resilience emerges as a powerful theme within the song, emphasizing the band's capacity to rebuild, adapt, and evolve in the face of profound loss. The lyrics serve as both a farewell to the past and a pledge to move forward, encapsulating the spirit of perseverance that resonates with anyone who has experienced grief. This journey of recovery

is not just personal for New Order but also reflects a broader societal narrative, illustrating how art can inspire collective healing and transformation.

Incorporating the notion of agency, "Dreams Never End" invites listeners to reflect on their ability to take control of their narratives amidst chaos. The song emphasizes the idea that while we may be influenced by external forces–such as loss, societal expectations, and cultural shifts–we still possess the agency to redefine our paths and identities. It asserts that the act of creation, whether through music or personal expression, can be a powerful tool for reclaiming one's sense of self and purpose. "Dreams Never End" challenges us to confront our own illusions and fears. It compels us to acknowledge that while the struggle for identity and meaning is real, it is within our power to redefine and reclaim our narratives. This song not only reflects the band's journey but also encapsulates the universal experience of navigating loss, embracing resilience, and forging a path forward in an ever-changing world. Through its exploration of these sociological theories, "Dreams Never End" resonates with anyone grappling with the complexities of life, ultimately serving as a testament to the indomitable human spirit.

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Music Review: Analysis of Kendrick Lamar's 2016 Grammy Performance

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Scan to watch Kendrick Lamar's 2016 Grammy Performance

Kendrick Lamar's 2016 Grammy performance medley of his songs "The Blacker the Berry" and "Alright" – akin to a protest march and laden with powerful and moving imagery – is coming from a place of exhaustion. It speaks volumes regarding the plight of Black Americans and is a stark representation of the entrenched violence perpetrated against them by the United States government, allowing regular White folks to rape, murder, and pillage Black bodies without repercussions (Anderson 2016).

Using three key images from Lamar's performance in the order in which they are presented – incarceration, bonfire, and Compton/Africa – this analysis will provide historical context and background regarding the racialized policies to which each image refers. These are stories that are not often told, certainly not in a historically accurate way. Lamar's telling of these stories may be the first time certain audiences have seen these histories represented in a way that rings true for their own lived experience. The facts informing these images are often not represented accurately. I aim to reveal their deeper meaning: how the situation got that way and how the system continues to be misrepresented.

Image 1 Key Imagery from Kendrick Lamar's 2016 Grammy Performance

INCARCERATION

The powerful imagery of Kendrick Lamar on a chain gang, and his band in jail cells, will be explored first. Lamar uses the racial project of the prison system to expose the impact of incarceration

as it has led to inequalities, discrimination, and segregation. The imagery of Lamar surrounded by jail cells and a chain gang is powerful because it points to systemic racism that perpetuates the disproportionate number of Black people stuck in the industrial prison system (Smith 2012). Lamar is bringing to light that this is still happening 400 years later and that racial inequalities are what perpetuates this historical system. This imagery showcases how Black men, of all statuses, experience the brutality of the prison system, so when Lamar is breaking the chains, which is a significant and integral part of this performance.

Lamar's performance may be a call to action for Black Americans to stay 'woke' and stay vigilant (Zavattaro and Bearfield 2022). The rigid, intractable, and seemingly immovable social structure that rejects change must also be recognized for how it perpetuates white supremacy and resists movements like Black Lives Matter (Smedley and Smedley 2012). To create change there must be a call to action to write anti-racist policies and laws that protect the most vulnerable, and resist the misappropriation of Black culture, such as weaponizing the word woke (Zavattaro et al. 2022). Every individual has the opportunity to do something, such as lead, activate, march, protest and unite. This could look like organizing in your community to end gang violence and police violence (Zavattaro et al. 2022). It could look like starting a neighborhood clean-up program for teens. These strategies can change the trajectory of Black lives, neighborhoods, and outcomes shaping Black futures (Sojoyner 2013; Williams and Lewis 2024). Lamar understands the industrial prison system as the new slavery for Black people that perpetuates poverty while maintaining the status quo for the wealthy and white through "cheap labor" of "Black bodies" (Hammad 2019).

BONFIRE

Second, the bonfire image relates to 400 years of racial terror, slavery, and oppression of Black people alongside Indigenous tribes and other people of color - A.K.A. BIPOC (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Lamar is being didactic through his message that systemic and institutionalized racism perpetuates the plight of Black Americans. The fire, on the one hand, represents KKK terrorism against Black people: the cross burning, the lynchings, and the

ethnic cleansing of entire towns of BIPOC (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Lamar's performance tells us that racism is not dead simply because the majority of White people say they are not racist (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Additionally, the imagery of the fire is saying there will be more Civil unrest because poverty leads to violence. The fire represents the systems in place throughout American history, which have manifested through events like the Tulsa, Oklahoma massacre of 1921 and the Philadelphia bombing of 1985. White supremacy evolved to perpetuate these draconian systems into a new form of Jim Crow, which is color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Furthermore, the racism that plagues Black Americans spills over in the form of racial remittances (Zamora 2022), causing immigrants to have racial baggage full of stereotypes about Black people. Prejudice happens long before they have encountered a Black American. This system speaks volumes to the impact that colonialism has on people outside the U.S. (Zamora 2022). It is a strong possibility that racial baggage is the fuel that helped more than 60% of Hispanics make the decision to choose a racist, divisive, xenophobic, felon over a more than capable, highly educated, strong, effective Black woman for President. With that in mind, Black Americans must join Lamar's vigilant fight against the racial divisiveness that plagues this nation (Williams and Lewis 2024).

AFRICA/COMPTON

The final of the three analyzed images, Compton stamped in the middle of Africa, sheds light on the categorizing of Black people. Segregation, discrimination, and inequality happen in Compton and wherever Black people call home. Such categorizing leads to systemic racism and racial inequality for Black Americans. Compton stamped onto Africa signifies the unity necessary to dismantle systems like structural racism and police brutality. The image of Africa/Compton denounces the myth of scientifically proven biological differences that Black people are inferior to white (Smedley and Smedley 2012) by reminding the audience that we all come from the DNA of the same African woman. Finally, the West African dancers joined by the prisoners represent unity, ambition, and advancement of Black people that fueled the Great Migration and the Civil Rights Movement (Anderson

2016). Through this image of Compton in Africa, Lamar is imploring Black people to never forget that Africa is where they came from (hooks 2015).

LYRICAL CONTENT

At another point during the performance, Lamar identifies the United States government's discrimination, couched within the guise of biological determinism, to which Black people were subjected (Smedley et al. 2012). Specifically, the lyrics refer to the size of his nose and dark complexion. Lamar confronts Black Americans' racialization, as it testifies to color-blind racism's maintenance of the status quo. Indeed, white rage has led to 400 years of physical labor and mental anguish of the Black race (Anderson 2016). Lamar's performance reminds us of the countless lives and generations destroyed by Anglo-settler colonialism (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014).

CONCLUSION

Stereotypes created by White America have misrepresented Black people and such racialization has led to institutionalized and systemic racism, as held up by the racist laws and policies of the U.S. government. Lamar pushed the envelope with his 2016 Grammy performance, sending a didactic message by revealing the ethnocentrism that White America has used to beat down the Black race (Smedley and Smedley 2005). In doing so, Lamar exposes Black Americans' of-repressed sentiment: that the social structures supporting American terrorism have perpetuated a system of segregation and inequality. Racism has not ended because Jim Crow laws are no longer in force. Damage, previously caused by overt racism and racial terror, is perpetuated by covert racism and color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2003). The imagery was powerful and moving, and it confronted the categorization of Black people by White Americans, as it has led to discrimination, inequalities, and segregation of Black Americans (Williams and Lewis 2024).

Lamar never ceases to amaze his audience by faithfully delivering the no holds barred punches. His message warns the world that Black people are "***gon' be alright***," (Lamar 2015) which is completely in line with Lamar's character and morals.

Since 2016, Lamar has soared to new heights winning the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Music (Pulitzer 2018). Once again reigning victorious with his 2024 hit "Not Like Us" inspired by a controversial battle with Drake (Trust 2024), Lamar's "Not Like Us" music video captures his style of speaking truth to power and remembering where you come from (hooks 2015).

Lamar's performance reveals the color-blind racism that has taken the place of Jim Crow laws, thereby perpetuating the misrepresentation and stereotyping of Black people in the United States. Lamar's performance illustrates the hatred for Black people and demonstrates the historical racist policies that have led to the marginalization of Black people (Anderson 2016; Williams and Lewis 2024). Recall that Black people did not come to the Americas by choice but by force!

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Music Review: Cavetown's 'Guilty' Through a Sociological Lens

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As a moving piece with emotive lyrics and imaginative storytelling, "Guilty," by indie/alternative singer-songwriter Cavetown (2021), paints an image of loyalty and pain through the metaphor of a dog's relationship with their owner, given the album name *Man's Best Friend*. Beyond the metaphor, the lyrics of this song have a multitude of different interpretations, and as a result, it resonates with many on various levels while remaining sociologically sound. There are layers to this song as it covers a range of themes involving mental health, fear of isolation, identity management, and humans' need for connection in society.

Robin Skinner, the face and artist of Cavetown, writes about touching and anecdotal human experiences in his songs and uses them as a platform for self-reflection. Through his work, one may find that there's more to love and emotions in one's everyday life, and the complexity of emotions and identity are creatively expressed through his music. From start to finish, "Guilty" captures the struggles involved with identity, social disconnect, and relationships in a sociologically significant manner. The narrator introduces their predicament as no longer feeling connected to a person or situation but continuing as they are because they do not want to avoid isolation.

"***I don't think that this feels like love,***
but I don't wanna let go.
Maybe if I just do what you want,
then you'll leave me alone."

To preface: Skinner is a transgender artist who falls on the aromantic and asexual spectrum. An interpretation of this verse is that it may be a reference to aromanticism, although it may also apply to other orientations. In such a case, many individuals on these spectrums may feel like they need to live up to their partner's wants or needs to maintain relationships. While this can be done in a way that is comfortable and consensual, it may also induce

feelings of guilt or discomfort for those who may feel like they have to make a sacrifice for another. Beyond a lens of romantic or sexual orientation, this idea of putting others' needs before one's own, and the repressed feelings associated, may be a common experience in unhealthy relationships. The decision to remain in a connection where one isn't happy is related to the concept of *moral isolation*, or the fear of social isolation, by classical sociologist Fromm.

Fromm (1941) states that rules of society exist and are set for each individual before they are born, and they must learn to accept the conditions in which they live. This may be more challenging for individuals who find greater difficulty in navigating the conditions they live in due to their background, status, and identities (i.e., minorities and marginalized individuals). In Skinner's and the narrator's situation, maintaining relationships may be difficult while being on the aromantic-asexual spectrum or historically by having an identity that deviates from what is dominantly deemed 'normal' in society. However, the song narrator still strives to maintain a sense of connection in a relationship.

In order to survive in this world, Fromm (1941) describes moral and spiritual aloneness as being as intolerable as being physically alone. There is a psycho-sociological emphasis on relating to the outside world, being integrated and connected with others and ideas. Although the narrator is physically connected with someone, the mental and emotional connection may be lacking. Fromm (1956:8) touches more upon the topics of loneliness, guilt, anxiety, and other mental health difficulties as a result of social isolation or separation:

> Being separate means being cut off, without any capacity to use my human powers. Hence to be separate means to be helpless, unable to grasp the world – things and people – actively; it means that the world can invade me without my ability to react . . . Beyond that, it arouses shame and the feeling of guilt . . . The awareness of humans separate, without reunion by love – is the source of shame. It is at the same time the source of guilt and anxiety.

In a similar stance, attribution theories in the sociology of emotions describe how certain emotions are experienced not only

due to the nature of an event or situation, but to what an individual attributes an occurrence. It is theorized that an individual may experience feelings of guilt or regret when they perceive themself to be the cause of an undesirable situation, as pictured in this song, in which the narrator may attribute the state of the situation to their identity or mental health. Alternatively, individuals may experience feelings of anger when the cause is attributed to another person, while sadness is experienced when fate is believed to be the blame (Bericat 2015; Brody 1999). In this sense, the narrator may partly blame their partner for the nature of their relationship, potentially arousing feelings of resentment and disconnect in the lyric, "***maybe . . . you'll leave me alone***." The pre-chorus reinforces Fromm's theories of isolation and emotions:

"***It feels like you're taking me home,***
but every other day I see another bone.
I hate your guts, but I'll meet you same time,
same place tomorrow."

Goffman's dramaturgical is another essential theory that comes to light in the opening lyrics and is applicable to the overall theme of this song. As the world is one's stage, one's identity is managed differently: *frontstage* before others and *backstage* to themselves or when a person is alone. It involves the concept of *stigma*, or deeply 'discrediting' attributes on the basis of tribal identities (e.g., religion), physical disabilities or 'deformities' (e.g., deafness), and one's character (e.g., homosexuality and mental illness) (Clair 2018; Goffman 1963). Nonetheless, Skinner and the narrator are individuals with stigmatized identities who must endure impression management to be 'normal' in the *frontstage* of society and social interactions to avoid negative experiences. As described in "Guilty," the narrator strives to maintain a connection at the expense of oneself, one's identity, wants, and/or needs. The chorus follows in a way that directly speaks to Goffman's dramaturgical approach to identity management and the different stages one faces.

"***An archaeology excavation on my body,***
and I'm brushing so gently
They're tryna cover up the bones underneath

No matter what I do, I feel guilty."

The narrator appears to be trying to cover or manage a part of themselves to maintain relationships, connections, or their image. The "archaeology excavation" may also potentially speak to the unhealthy nature of the relationship described at the beginning of the song. The less ideal parts of themselves, their thoughts, or their feelings may become apparent as time goes on with this person, but they try to repress it all while aiming to maintain this relationship. Despite the narrator's efforts, their "guilt" or inner feelings still exist. This may also describe a relationship an individual has with oneself and other factors involving mental health or self-harm, and the guilt associated with self-harming behavior. The themes of this song may also be interpreted through the lens of depression and body dysphoria for gender and/or disordered eating. Such themes may be intentional, given Skinner's experience with transitioning and commonly discussing mental health in his work.

"***Crossing all my fingers and toes***
that I don't wake up again in a black hole
She said she would send me back home to the side
if I wanna die, miserable
Doctor, I'm not doing too well.
If this shit was a choice,
I wouldn't need your help.
I see the world through the eyes of a dog,
but I can't see yellow."

These lines represent one's desperation in not wanting to return to a mental state that feels heavy or dark. The narrator holds onto an unhealthy relationship or behavior to keep themselves from returning to this state. It may be interpreted that "***she would send me back home . . . if I wanna die, miserable***" may refer to the words of a mental health professional. The "***black hole***" overall represents a setback, which may also be seen in the dysphoric lens of the narrator's progress with identity and gender development. While mental health may have its issues on its own, a disconnect between one's true identity and how others perceive them may also contribute to feelings of stress, discomfort, depression, suicidal ideation and more.

"***Man's best friend's on first name terms with God***
I thought I could fake it but almost
I'm a scarecrow in someone else's garden."

In writing how one extends themselves to benefit another, Skinner comes full circle, repeating the chorus following this verse. Through the narrator, he continues to tell the story of an individual living for someone else. The narrator serves a purpose for another person. But these actions in themselves don't serve the narrator (such themes reminiscent of the first few lines of the song). This reinforces the idea of self-sacrifice for another's happiness; it continually emphasizes a fear of isolation. Yet, a scarecrow without a field or garden also serves no purpose, which may describe codependency in a relationship. As dogs are often referred to as 'man's best friend,' the writer may have written this line as the word is very similar to '*God*.' Though, it is possible that the narrator of this song would prefer to be bigger and something closer to innocent or holy, in contrast to the negative thoughts and feelings they experience throughout the song.

It is desirable to have confidence, take ownership of one's life, and think and feel in a healthy and positive way. However, the narrator emphasizes the idea that it's not as easy as it seems, nor is it something they can always pretend to be. Identity management may be a heavy weight to carry for stigmatized individuals or a difficult task to achieve on a daily basis. The narrator falls into a comfortable yet unsatisfactory predicament, whether that is dealing with depression, dysphoria or an unhealthy relationship.

Without a doubt, Skinner paints a clear, sociological picture through carefully thought-out lyricism. As discovered through this song and through the lyrics of many others, emotions and identity are both complex and interconnected. The conveyed messages in his works are profound and reflective, with much room for interpretation as they resonate with many individuals facing varying circumstances. There is much to be anticipated in the sociological, story-telling journey that is Cavetown and their discography.

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