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WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

Celebrating Student Writing Across the Curriculum

Prize Winners 2022–2023

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL EDITION

Introduction

Now in its 22nd year of publication, *Celebrating Student Writing Across the Curriculum* publishes undergraduate student writing from many disciplines. This magazine offers a space to celebrate student achievement in writing and to highlight exemplary written work from across William Paterson University.

On these pages, diversity in writing is celebrated. Some entries are thoroughly researched and deftly worded, others provide analytical exploration or make a compelling argument, and still others are imaginatively creative or superbly designed and arranged. Writing is often mistakenly assumed to be merely a skill that, once learned, can be applied formulaically for any situation. But effective writers, such as the ones featured here, know that continuous development of one's writing knowledge and practice is the way to becoming better at it. Today's employers report that a key attribute they seek in an employee is the ability to write clearly and effectively, which makes the writing our students engage in increasingly important. Nurtured by our faculty, the student writers featured within this issue have worked hard to understand and develop writing most suited to its occasion.

For this contest, William Paterson faculty nominate student writing from across a wide range of courses. Whether a written work is nominated for its creativity, insights, analysis, or well-crafted prose, each entry has first intrigued a faculty member and earned a nomination. After the submission deadline, a panel of judges from across the William Paterson faculty gathers to discuss and consider each entry, and the winners are selected for publication in *Celebrating Student Writing Across the Curriculum*.

This year's winners represent a wide range of majors: psychology, anthropology, literature, history, first year writing, and more. The excellent writing featured here represents upper division courses from various disciplines and lower division courses in general education, demonstrating that great writing comes from everywhere and anyone. Regardless of the course for which they were initially written, all of these student works provide us with insights into their topics and appreciation for the hard work and dedication of their writers.

Celebrating Student Writing would not be possible without the continued support of those who are integral to its success. Thank you to Associate Provost Sandra Hill for continued support of the Writing Across the Curriculum program, which publishes this magazine. Special thanks to Wartyna Davis, Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, whose vision and assistance in all initiatives of the Writing Across the Curriculum program are vital. And finally, thanks to the many faculty who support student writing every day in their classrooms and who nominate the best of what they see to this contest, and to the students who are willing to share their work – without your commitment we would be denied this wonderful opportunity to celebrate your writing.

Write on.

Chris Salerno
Professor of English
Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

For more information about the *Celebrating Student Writing* contest, refer to the back page of this magazine or visit: https://www.wpunj.edu/cohss/departments/english/wac/index.html

Table of Contents

*Note: Student entries are reprinted as submitted, with
original content that has been formatted to fit this
magazine.*

Maternal Mortality in African American Women

Aurora Gerbeshi

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to identify a health disparity and discuss the implications of this disparity and its impact on a selected vulnerable population.

Abstract

The focus of the paper is to emphasize the disproportionate maternal mortality rate of African American women in the United States by examining racial health disparities. This paper will examine multiple causes as to why African American women suffer from a higher rate of maternal mortality such as healthcare access, structural racism, implicit bias, and quality of care. Various solutions to these issues will be addressed and will involve the role of nurses. Implicit bias education to improve the quality of care to African Americans and legislation to improve maternity healthcare access among African Americans are the main solutions this paper will discuss, legislation will be examined at both the state and federal levels. Health disparity is defined as "a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage" (Healthy People 2030, n.d.). Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the "conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affects a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks" (Healthy People 2030, n.d.).

Keywords: "maternal mortality", "African American", "health disparity", and "social determinants of health", "implicit bias", "structural racism", "nurse".

Rationale

Maternal mortality is a huge health disparity present in African American women, with social determinants of health, structural racism, and implicit bias being major factors. Maternal mortality is "defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy" (Centers for Disease and Prevention Control [CDC], 2019). About "700 people die during pregnancy or in the year after" (Centers for Disease and Prevention Control [CDC], 2023), annually

in the United States. African American women "are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than White women" (CDC, 2023). This demonstrates not only the severity of the issue but the racial component as well, demonstrating the huge health disparity present in African American women regarding maternal mortality. Social determinants of health such as socioeconomic status, healthcare access, education, and environment put African American women at a larger risk for maternal mortality. Income inequality is connected to maternal mortality because of the associated delays in seeking care (Jeong et al., 2020). Low-income women living in rural areas may have difficulty obtaining transport which delays access to care (Jeong et al., 2020). Diverse pregnant women encounter barriers to well-women care, leading to a delay in obtaining necessary care, ending in maternal mortality and morbidity (Crear-Perry et al., 2021, p. 232). Not only is there a delay in care there is also a shortage of primary care providers which "puts diverse women at risk for the delay or omission of two essential activities during the perinatal period: seeking care at an early stage in pregnancy and building trust with providers" (Crear-Perry et al., 2021, p. 232). Due to the United States' (U.S.) oppressive history, past structural racism and institutional policies such as Jim Crow, the GI Bill, and redlining continue to "shape contemporary access to health-promoting resources and opportunities necessary for optimal Black maternal and infant health outcomes" (Crear-Perry et al., 2021, p. 231). The Healthy People 2030 (HP2030) objectives on maternal mortality include reducing maternal deaths (MICH-04) and reducing severe maternal complications identified during delivery hospitalizations (MICH-05).

Implications

Factors that contribute to maternal mortality include a "variation in quality healthcare, underlying chronic conditions, structural racism, and implicit bias" (CDC, 2023). More than half of maternal deaths and "near-death experiences were from preventable causes,

with cardiovascular disease being the leading cause, accounting for approximately 39% of the mortalities" (Rollins et al., 2022, p. 795). Structural racism creates barriers in housing, education, criminal justice, labor, and healthcare systems. Racial disparities impact one's social determinants of health and "prevent many people from racial and ethnic minority groups from having fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health" (CDC, 2023). Maternal mortality can have both short-term and long-term consequences on the mother's family, "leaving her relatives to grow up in a single-parent home or orphaned which leads to cyclical poverty"

(Lister et al., 2019, p. 3). Maternal deaths can lead to "psychological and economical burdens for the remaining family which affect her local community" and the "crisis of black maternal mortality and the persistent disparities threatens to widen the perception of racism between people of color and the medical community" (Lister et al., 2019, p. 3). There are also international implications "such that as global positions shift, our relatively high maternal mortality rate challenges the dogma that the United States as a country is the champion of human rights" (Lister et al., 2019, p. 3).

A 2015 study done in Ethiopia found that maternal mortality also has a significant impact on the mother's children and families. The study discovered that older children tend to take over the caregiver role to their younger siblings and the father becomes the sole provider for the family. Fathers also experience an increased role because they must take on more. Other studies also found that "young girls in the region, including orphans, are often forced to prioritize household labor and childcare over education, impacting future economic opportunities" (Molla et al., 2015, p. 7). While this study does not specifically only focus on African Americans, it demonstrates what could occur after the death of a mother and how it would affect the rest of the family.

Social Determinants of Health

Factors such as "neighborhood and physical environment, social support networks, and access to health care make up 60% of contributing factors for health outcomes" (Rollins et al., 2022, p. 795). Implicit bias also plays a huge role. Implicit bias among healthcare providers and a lack of respect towards African Americans by stating "those women never take care of themselves" or that they "abuse the Medicaid system" is seen as "acceptable by some clinicians" (Bingham et al., 2019, p. 4). Statements like these are disrespectful and the implicit bias present behind these statements can also influence how they provide care to women of color because this bias can "manifest itself in many subtle ways, such as discounting racial and ethnic patients' symptoms or failing to adequately listen when women complain of pain" (Bingham et al., 2019, p. 4).

Women who live in urban areas may live closer to healthcare facilities, or they might have better access to the transportation needed to reach those facilities. One study showed a "significant association between rural residence and severe maternal and neonatal morbidity. In particular, we found a significant 2-fold increase in the rates of life-threatening conditions such as eclampsia, obstetric embolism, and uterine dehiscence or rupture among women in rural areas" (Lisonkova et al., 2016, E460). Maternity care deserts are "defined as a county with no hospital offering obstetric care and no OB/GYN or certified nurse midwife providers" (Wallace, 2021, p. 1). African American women who reside in maternity care deserts and lack access to prenatal and maternity care have a higher risk of death "during pregnancy and up to 1 year postpartum due to any cause (pregnancy-associated mortality) and in particular death due to obstetric causes (pregnancy-related mortality)" when compared to women who have greater access (Wallace et al., 2021, p. 2). Maternity care deserts "disproportionately impact Black and Hispanic neighborhoods, leading to low quality or no obstetric care (Hung et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2019)" (Carvalho et al., 2022, p. 765).

There is also a lack of access to quality prenatal care which is crucial because "women who receive no prenatal care are 3 to 4 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related complications" (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 141). In 2018, "6% of women reported receiving prenatal care only in the third trimester or receiving no prenatal care," when looking at African Americans this number increases to 10% (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 141). African American women are also "less likely to be insured, experience greater financial barriers, and have less access to prenatal care" (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 141). Not only do they experience lower quality prenatal care, but a study done by Howell et al. also found that "women from racial and ethnic minority groups give birth in lower quality hospitals and in hospitals with higher rates of severe maternal morbidity," the study used a simulation model and also "found that if non-Hispanic Black women gave birth at the same hospitals as non-Hispanic White women, the non-Hispanic Black severe maternal morbidity rate would decrease by 47.7%, from 4.2% to 2.9%" (as cited in Chinn et al., 2021, p. 215).

Healthcare access can reduce "adverse health outcomes including maternal mortality" (Crear-Perry et al., 2021, p. 233). Having access to healthcare is crucial to seeking prenatal and preventative care, "Medicaid eligibility improved the health of women of childbearing age by increasing access to preventive care; reducing adverse health outcomes before, during, and after pregnancies; and reducing the incidence of maternal mortality" (Crear-Perry et al., 2021, p. 233). The United States (U.S.) health insurance market is a "tiered and sometimes racially segregated health care delivery structure to provide different quality of care to different patient populations," resulting in gaps in healthcare access "between racial and ethnic groups and devastating disparities like those seen in maternal

mortality" (Hardeman et al., 2020, p. 198). Structural racism along with other social determinants of health "increase the risk that Black women will be disproportionately affected by preventable issues, such as hypertension, obesity, diabetes, poor physical activity, unhealthy eating habits, and stress," which will, "in turn, contribute to the disparities in Black maternal morbidity and mortality" (Rollins et al., 2022, p. 795). Education also plays a factor in maternal mortality in African Americans. Education on nutrition and breastfeeding can prevent complications. Breastfeeding has multiple benefits for the health of the mother such as lowering the "risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and breast and ovarian cancers," however, "Black mothers disproportionately experience social barriers to breastfeeding, including insufficient education and a lack of social support from peers, family, and health care providers" (Rollins et al., 2022, p. 795). Women that are better informed on the signs and symptoms of complications are more likely to recognize and receive the necessary care needed when complications occur.

Role of Healthcare System & Healthcare Providers

Not only is lack of access to maternity services an issue, but implicit bias within the healthcare system also leads to worsening quality of care. Implicit bias and systematic racism in the healthcare system contribute to pregnancy complications that increase maternal mortality in African Americans (Njoku, 2023). Racial disparities exist "because implicit bias affects health care providers' perceptions and decisions, creating inequalities in access, patient-provider interactions, treatment decisions, and health outcomes" (Saluja & Bryant, 2021, p. 271). Often "care providers who exhibit higher implicit bias demonstrate higher verbal dominance in their communication styles and less interpersonal treatment" which causes patients of these providers to report "poorer satisfaction ratings and greater difficulty understanding or following recommendations, which can perpetuate biases held

by the provider" (Saluja & Bryant, 2021, p. 271). This implicit bias can create a lack of trust between African Americans and their healthcare providers which can lead to a delay in receiving necessary care, increasing the risk of maternal mortality. African American women often perceive dismissals of "legitimate concerns and symptoms such as preeclampsia and hypertension" which can "explain the existence of poor birth outcomes" (Saluja & Bryant, 2021, p. 271-272). The lack of nurse midwives and well-women nurses in low-income racially diverse communities also contributes to maternal mortality (Njoku, 2023). Maternal mortality can also be connected to a lack of patient education from nurses with "only about half of the participants" in a study "stated they received education on postpartum warning signs" (Adams & Young, 2022, p. 35). Nurses play a significant role in the coordination of care and when nurses fail to recognize deterioration or recognize the issue but "were unable to effectively communicate their concerns to ensure prompt bedside evaluation of physicians" this could lead to maternal mortality, contributing to the health disparity (Morton et al., 2019, p. 258).

Solutions to Maternal Mortality in African Americans

Some solutions revolving around maternal mortality among African Americans include removing "social and structural barriers so that women, especially underserved racial and ethnic minority women, may access and utilize reproductive health services as needed without clinician bias or other obstacles" (Sutton et al., 2021, p. 225). Implicit bias towards African Americans could be reduced through policies that aim to "reduce unconscious bias among providers and focuses on improving data collection during pre- and postnatal care," the bill would work in "conjunction with other state initiatives like the CMQCC to build shared understanding and bridge health inequities through clinician training" (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 143). Past legislation such as "Social Determinants for Moms

Act, Kira Johnson Act, Protecting Moms Who Served Act, Perinatal Workforce Act, Data to Save Moms Act, Moms MATTER Act, Justice for Incarcerated Moms Act, Tech to Save Moms Act, IMPACT to Save Moms Act" are viewed as "vital tools in reducing the role of racism and bias in maternal health and childbirth within the clinical walls" (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 143).

Hospital team training, simulations, and providing patient education on the early warning signs for medical complications of pregnancy are essential in reducing maternal mortality (Collier & Molina, 2019, p. 1). The maternal early warning triggers "facilitate communication between bedside nurses and clinicians through increased clinical surveillance and responsiveness to patients with abnormal vital signs who may require prompt evaluation and treatment to prevent morbidity" (Collier & Molina, 2019, p. 8-9). When nurses failed to recognize a patient deteriorating or fail to communicate the complication to the physician it leads to inadequate care so it is important to empower nurses to escalate concerns up the chain of command so proper care is delivered (Morton et al., 2019, p. 258).

Maternal levels of care should be regionalized "so that women with risk factors are supported when delivering at facilities with specialized care teams" (Collier & Molina, 2019, p. 1). This could be done by including "community caregivers like doulas and midwives on the health care team," this allows care to become higher in quality, and "the needs of the mother are more likely to be met because these caregivers provide cultural sensitivity along with earlier, continuous, and affordable care" and "while the doula and midwife serve different purposes in the community and have different educational backgrounds, both act as vital tools to either provide care beyond the hospital setting or a culturally sensitive approach to care within clinic walls" (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 142). Opening more maternity clinics in African American communities would also be beneficial and would require funding

and resources to build which could be obtained through legislation from the state or federal level.

Another solution would be to include multidisciplinary care for "women with high-risk comorbidities during preconception care, pregnancy, postpartum, and beyond" (Collier & Molina, 2019, p. 1). Quality discharge education by nurses is necessary to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity rates (Adam & Young, 2022). Increasing healthcare access involves increasing access to preventive care and providing more affordable healthcare (Crear-Perry et al., 2021, p. 233). Community-based care is an "effective method of providing more access to care and resources to mitigate maternal mortality" (Njoku, 2023, p. 8). All of these aforementioned solutions play a critical role in reducing maternal deaths in African American women.

Selected Solution

To reduce maternal mortality in African Americans it is essential to address structural racism and implicit bias within the healthcare system. Enacting legislation is an effective method to address structural racism. Past legislation such as the CARE Act "focuses on dismantling structural racism through training programs around implicit bias for clinicians" (Collier & Molina, 2019, p. 10). Nurses can come together and call representatives of their state to advocate for legislation that would reduce maternal mortality rates of African American women. Currently, Bill S495 in the NJ legislature requires "health care practitioners involved in labor, delivery, and postpartum care to complete a standardized maternal patient discharge education module, pursuant to which such health care practitioners will be educated in the complications of childbirth, and the warning signs of complications in women who have just given birth" (S.495, 2018-2019). The Maternal Mortality Review Committee "established by the bill would be tasked with annually reviewing and reporting on maternal death rates and the causes of maternal death in the State, and providing recommendations to improve maternal care

and reduce adverse maternal outcomes" (S.495, 2018-2019). Citizens who want to push for a bill to be passed can phone, write, or even visit their state legislators to show support for the bill. At the national and federal levels, there was a statement released by the White House that reported an increase in funding and investments to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity. The statement reported that$200 million will be invested to "implement implicit bias training for healthcare providers; create State pregnancy medical home programs; bolster Maternal Mortality Review Committees; expand the Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies (RMOMS) program; and help cities place early childhood development experts in pediatrician offices with a high percentage of Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program patients" (The White House, 2021).

Interventions for implicit bias include the "improvement of cultural humility programming for healthcare providers", mindfulness interventions, and mandatory maternal morbidity and mortality (MMM) reviews. Cultural humility can "emphasize that providers should aim to connect with patients instead of assuming expertise on the patient's race, culture, or ethnicity and how those relate to the patient's health" (Saluja & Bryant, 2021, p. 272). Awareness of implicit bias should be incorporated within medical and nursing school and residency training programs "in training the next generation of health care providers to treat patients and families with respect and provide high-quality care to an increasingly diverse patient population" (Saluja & Bryant, 2021, p. 272). An example of an institution that implements implicit bias training is the University of Texas Dell Medical School which requires "all second-year medical students must participate in training on unconscious biases, beginning with a conversation about conscious and unconscious bias and ending with an online test to help students pinpoint their own implicit biases and facilitate class discussion on strategies to address them

in practice" (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 142). Implicit bias training "does not necessarily eliminate bias" however "research has shown that it is an important step toward better understanding, communication, and relationship building between patients and providers" (Reddy et al., 2021, p. 142). Another method is implementing mindfulness interventions which is effective in reducing implicit bias through education on "how to apply several bias-reduction strategies to everyday practice" such as "stereotype replacement, in which individuals were trained to recognize stereotypes being perpetuated in society and within themselves and how to replace them with non-stereotypic responses" (Saluja & Bryant, 2021, p. 272). Mandatory maternal morbidity and mortality (MMM) reviews can be implemented in hospital systems to "identify areas of substandard care that need improvement" by "conducting a systematic, multidisciplinary review of all cases of maternal death and severe morbidity and establishing a mechanism to disseminate knowledge gained from those reviews became standard practice, then hundreds of lives could be saved" (Saluja & Bryant, 2021, p. 272).

Conclusion

In conclusion, African Americans are disproportionately affected by maternal mortality due to a multitude of factors. Social determinants of health such as poor socioeconomic status, lack of healthcare access, inadequate education on the signs of maternal mortality, and environment such as lack of transportation to healthcare facilities play a major part in maternal mortality in African American women. There are many possible solutions to reducing maternal mortality in African Americans such as increasing healthcare access through regionalizing maternity care, increasing access to resources, and hospital training on quality discharge education. However one of the biggest solutions was addressing structural racism and implicit bias in the healthcare system to reduce maternal mortality rates in African

American women. Continual implementation and advocation of legislation at both the state and federal levels are crucial in enacting change that will break down structural racism and reduce maternal mortality rates in the African American population.

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The Evolution of The Simpsons as Social Commentary

Camryn Gurecki

Course: Critical Writing
Professor: Christopher Weaver
Student: Camryn Gurecki
Essay: *The Evolution of The Simpsons as Social Commentary*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to propose a critical essay on a topic of their choosing.

For as long as "The Simpsons" has been around, it's been changing with the times. A show doesn't last for thirty years without being relevant, after all. Through the characters, the show expresses the dominant point of view, or the cultural practices carried out by the majority, and pokes fun at it. While the jokes may be seen as offensive to some, "The Simpsons" is not meant to attack anyone; rather, it takes the leading stereotypes found in society and parodies them. Three important topics that are dealt with are homosexuality, gender, and race, all of which have evolved in the discussion of major social issues. "The Simpsons" is an effective social commentary because it brings attention to harmful stereotypes in popular culture through its humor.

In the beginning of "The Simpsons," the only gay representation in the show was Smithers, Mr. Burns' assistant, whose only notable trait seems to be his infatuation with his boss. "Homer's Phobia" serves as an apology to Smithers and the gay community, as a more dynamic homosexual character is introduced. The episode centers around the family's new friend, John, who they meet at a unique antique store. In this scene (https://youtu.be/bNpMmSF9fTU), you can see that Homer has taken a liking to John, who compliments his record collection and talks about the "camp value" before asking him to dance. The next morning, Homer and Marge are in the kitchen, where Marge is trying to allude to the fact that John is a homosexual; when it finally clicks, Homer is outraged. Not only because now the family "can never say only straight people have been in this house," but because John did not clearly express his sexuality to Homer. "I like my beer cold, my TV loud, and my homosexuals flaming," he complains. Later, Homer starts to become concerned that John's sexual preferences will rub off

For as long as "The Simpsons" has been around, it's been changing with the times. A show doesn't last for thirty years without being relevant, after all. Through the characters, the show expresses the dominant point of view, or the cultural practices carried out by the majority, and pokes fun at it. While the jokes may be seen as offensive to some, "The Simpsons" is not meant to attack anyone; rather, it takes the leading stereotypes found in society and parodies them. Three important topics that are dealt with are homosexuality, gender, and race, all of which have evolved in the discussion of major social issues. "The Simpsons" is an effective social commentary because it brings attention to harmful stereotypes in popular culture through its humor.

In the beginning of "The Simpsons," the only gay representation in the show was Smithers, Mr. Burns' assistant, whose only notable trait seems to be his infatuation with his boss. "Homer's Phobia" serves as an apology to Smithers and the gay community, as a more dynamic homosexual character is introduced. The episode centers around the family's new friend, John, who they meet at a unique antique store. In this scene (https://youtu.be/bNpMmSF9fTU), you can see that Homer has taken a liking to John, who compliments his record collection and talks about the "camp value" before asking him to dance. The next morning, Homer and Marge are in the kitchen, where Marge is trying to allude to the fact that John is a homosexual; when it finally clicks, Homer is outraged. Not only because now the family "can never say only straight people have been in this house," but because John did not clearly express his sexuality to Homer. "I like my beer cold, my TV loud, and my homosexuals flaming," he complains. Later, Homer starts to become concerned that John's sexual preferences will rub off on his son Bart; the worry is shown when a pink and a chocolate cupcake are placed on the table, and Bart reaches for the pink one, which causes a distressed reaction from his father.

Homer's condemnation of John for his sexuality is comical due to his exaggerations — "Oh, my God! I danced with a gay!" – but the episode holds more value than just the jokes. Homer must go through a journey of accepting John for who he is, one that can resonate with viewers, both in 1997 and today, who struggle with homophobia. Another episode that tackles homosexuality is "Three Gays of the Condo," which admittedly is not as progressive. While there is more representation of the gay community, it's not as worthwhile as the inclusion of John's character because the episode only shows varying stereotypes. There are no meaningful interactions between Homer and the gay characters that he moves in with after a fight with Marge. Only superficial encounters exist between them, like when one of the gay men in the apartment kisses Homer. In a much later season, the show tackles homosexuality again, this time in an episode that is more valuable to the LGBTQ+ community. "Livin' La Pura Vida" follows the Simpson family and other families from Springfield going on vacation. Among the guests are Marge's sister, Patty, and her girlfriend, who Homer gets along with almost instantly (https:// youtu.be/qywc6uJHwl4?t=185). What makes this episode stand out among the two other episodes of homosexuality is that a same-sex relationship is not the focus of the episode; Patty and her girlfriend are just characters, and viewers feel that this is a more accurate representation of people in the LGBTQ+ community; it shows that their sexuality is not the only factor that makes them who they are. It is clear based on the timeline of gay history in "The Simpsons" that the show's attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community have evolved.

I watched an episode from Season 30 in which the Simpson kids' favorite show, "Itchy and Scratchy," is remade with an all-female cast. Bart is outraged when this happens, whereas his sister Lisa is thrilled. This episode captures modern feminism, I think; it is a very enlightened episode that makes fun of woke culture.

It's satirical. One scene I remember off the top of my head is one where a character complains that a female mouse playing the role of Itchy would not have the strength to hold an axe to cut the cat's, Scratchy, head off. What appears to be a joke could serve as a comment on the belief that women are not as strong as men physically. The episode addresses the gender wars that plague our society. Bart, in this case, represents the dominant point of view: a man who feels his masculinity is threatened by the opposite sex's independence and growing power. As the episode goes on, however, Bart becomes a fan of the show; he stumbles upon Lisa watching the rewritten show in her room and ends up laughing harder than she does.

His reaction portrays an open-mindedness that, it can be argued, many are starting to adopt these days. In the past, "The Simpsons" has stood up for feminism, too; it's not just in recent episodes that girl power is being broadcast. The first season of the show includes the episode "Homer's Night Out," where Bart's secret camera footage shows his father at a strip club for a co-worker's bachelor party (https://youtu.be/aQ4orQL21sY). The episode is surprisingly progressive, especially for one that aired in the 1990's. At the time, America was caught in a lull between feminism and the backlash that comes with it. The image of groupies from 1980's rock bands was still prominent in pop culture's minds, while at the same time, women were fighting for equal pay and rights. In this episode, Homer captures the rising argument that stripping does not take away a woman's power by imploring the people of Springfield to see the scantily clothed women as mothers and daughters, as people with more to offer the world than an appealing body. Sex work was seen as a disgraceful profession, and still is today by some, yet Homer challenged it by asking viewers to contemplate who the women on the poles really are and what drives them to perform. When watching this episode thirty years later, Homer's progressive spirit can be aligned with the sense of

empowerment women feel as strippers or models in the sex work industry. As time passes, "The Simpsons" is there to tackle important societal issues in a unique way that only their show can do.

"The Simpsons" has been accused of being racist by fans for years, and it's only recently that the creators decided to make some changes. The documentary The Problem with Apu by Indian American comic Hari Kondabulu expresses anger over the stereotypes he believes are pushed through the character, as Apu is defined by his job at the local convenience store, the Kwik-E-Mart, and his large family. In "22 Short Films About Springfield," Apu is invited to a party by his cousin, Sanjay.

Apu decides he can spare five minutes to let loose, so he sets up a sign in the store that tells any customers he will be right back. What follows is a rushed sequence of Apu chugging a beer and having a brief intimate encounter with a woman in the pool house – who he notices is not wearing a wedding ring, so she is "only arranged to be married". The scene ends with Apu and Sanjay parting with the words, "Same time next year, yeah?" In another episode, "Eight Misbehavin'," Apu and his wife Manjula struggle to start a family; when they finally have a child, it is revealed that Manjula gave birth to eight babies.

Kondabulu's next major criticism is the use of a white actor to voice Apu, creating a mockery of the Indian accent. Unfortunately, this type of blackface plagues many animated shows in Hollywood. In 2017, the white actor, Hank Azaria, stepped down from voicing Apu, and the character has since been cut from the show. For twenty-nine years, white actors voiced multicultural characters on "The Simpsons" and it is just now that they are being called out for it. Indian culture is not the only race negatively represented on "The Simpsons", as nearly every multicultural character is voiced by a white actor. In the episode "Simpson Tall Tales," Dr. Hibbert, originally voiced by Harry Shearer, sings the famous song of slave struggles, "Old Man River".

A Caucasian actor could not possibly understand the struggles of slavery. In the episode "When Flanders Failed," Akira, an Asian character voiced by Hank Azaria, owns a karate studio, (https://youtu.be/T9enGLMVqnQ?t=75) while running a sushi restaurant in other episodes. These are two stereotypical careers for people of Asian culture, and they are the main part of Akira's personality. In no way is this argument defending the racial stereotypes of "The Simpsons," but it is acknowledging that there have been changes made to the ethnic characters on the show. Kevin Michael Richardson now plays Dr. Hibbert. Apu's character was removed all together. Akira has not been seen since season nine. The show is making progress in the wake of movements like Black Lives Matter and George Floyd's death; it is evolving to our culture today.

For an animated sitcom, "The Simpsons" is surprisingly progressive. It uses jokes to highlight the struggles of minority groups, and as those struggles move to the forefront of the social conversation, the satire is remodeled to better reflect the modern day. The stereotypes, though crude at times, are significant because they are the ones that exist in real life. When you watch many episodes of the show, you will see that it is practically built on stereotypes, and while they are addressed in a comedic fashion, they make valid points about the ways society needs to, or has, changed. In recent years, though, the show seems to have made strides toward correcting their errors. The gay community is better represented. Feminism has been mentioned before and is brought up again in the face of gender wars; when it was in an earlier episode, it reflected the historical events at the time. The misrepresentation of certain races has been solved with the removal or replacement of the actors who played the characters. The social commentary of "The Simpsons" has truly changed TV, from a source of pure entertainment to a way to bring importance to what's happening in the world while still being fun.

The Lack of Immigration is Causing a Shortage in Restaurant Industry

Kimverly Romero

Course: U.S. Labor History
Professor: David Koistinen
Student: Kimverly Romero
Essay: *The Lack of Immigration is Causing a Shortage in Restaurant Industry*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to write a civic-engagement research paper by focusing on a problem in present-day society that is causing difficulty for a particular group of working people.

As noted by Lucas and Krietzberg, "restaurants and diners alike are [currently] feeling the pinch from the industry's labor shortage" (2022). In fact, many recent news media stories illustrate and describe the hardships faced by restaurant owners, whom in the best-case scenario are "opening later and closing earlier, while ... [in the worst-case scenario] are shutting their dining rooms altogether" (Dean). Four factors which have led to a shortage of labor in the restaurant industry have been low wages and physically taxing working conditions, political policies, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Two factors that have led to the shortage of laborers in the restaurant industry have been low wages and physically taxing working conditions. For example, in May of 2021, the average hourly wage for a restaurant cook was $12.25. Meanwhile, the average hourly wage for a construction worker was $21.22 and $17.28 for a data entry role laborer (Patton). In addition to the low hourly wages for laborers in the restaurant industry, as noted by Patton, "roles can be taxing, with staff on their feet, working in hot kitchens and dealing directly with the public" (2023). Consequently, many restaurant laborers have sought employment in alternative industries, claiming to be too "stressed and tired ... [and] desperate for predictable hours and no night shifts" (Patton). In fact, in 2022, the restaurant industry had a quit rate of about 6%, which was about double the rate for all other jobs (Patton).

Two other factors that have led to a shortage of laborers in the restaurant industry have been the Covid -19 pandemic and political policies which had reduced the number of laborers in the restaurant industry. In fact, as noted by Patton, "three years after Covid hit

the US, the $900 billion US foodservice industry still can't recruit enough employees ... [and as described] in a recent survey, more than 60% of establishments ... [state that] they're understaffed" (2023). One of the reasons highlighted by Ivanova for the laborer shortage is that "immigration to the U.S. is plummeting" (2023). As described by Ivanova, "in the middle of the last decade, the U.S. was adding about 1 million immigrants a year [,] but those numbers ... slowed down during the Trump administration [and] hit a brick wall when COVID-19 erupted in 2020" (2023). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most international travel stopped and most immigration processing was halted. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic caused delays in the immigration system of the United States which has caused millions to be on the waitlist for visas and green cards (Ivanova 2023). Consequently, as noted by Ivanova, "the U.S. workforce today has 2 million fewer immigrants than it would have if immigrants had continued at pre-pandemic levels" (2023).

The effects of labor shortage in the restaurant industry have not only affected restaurant owners and restaurant laborers themselves, it has also had a negative effect on the experience of customers. Even when restaurants have tables that are visibly open, customers, as described by Lucas and Krietzberg, are being placed on thirty-minute waitlists which actually last about an hour and are then waiting an additional forty-five minutes for their food to arrive (2022). Consequently, the labor shortage in the restaurant industry is being reflected in the restaurant reviews left by customers. As noted by Lucas and Krietzberg, "in the first quarter of 2022, customers mentioned short staffing three times more often in their Yelp reviews than in the year-ago period ... [and] mentions of long waits rose 23%" (2022).

In addition to affecting the experience of customers, the shortage of labor in the restaurant industry is causing both local independent restaurants and large chain restaurants to alter their service hours by opening later and closing earlier (Dean 2021). Furthermore, in order to additionally mitigate the shortage of laborers, some restaurants have closed their dining rooms and switched to takeout-only, while other restaurants have prioritized their dine-in customers and stopped take-out (Dean 2021). Unfortunately, some restaurants have found themselves forced to close temporarily due to being short-staffed, as was the case of Joey's Chicken Shack in Pennsylvania which had to randomly close for a day due to a lack of workers. Other restaurants such as the Cheniere Shack in Louisiana have been forced to implement a combination of changes to mitigate the lack of laborers, which include closing on two days of the week and closing earlier (Dean 2021).

Unfortunately, many restaurant operators expect the labor shortage to continue in 2023 (Gagnon 2022). However, restaurant owners can implement additional changes to help further mitigate the shortage of laborers in the restaurant industry. One suggestion offered by Gagnon for restaurant owners is becoming more creative with employment recruitment. Gagnon suggests utilizing social media to promote employment opportunities and utilizing staffing agencies within the local community. Furthermore, Gagnon suggests offering employees referral bonuses "as an incentive to have current employees bring in more staff" (2022). A second suggestion offered by Gagnon is perking up employee benefits which can most easily be done by converting part-time employees to full-time employees, which offers full-time employee benefit packages, such as health insurance and retirement savings plans (2022). A third suggestion offered by Gagnon for restaurant owners is being more flexible in scheduling and pay. Allowing workers to freely and flexibly pick their shifts, rather than committing long-term, and utilizing payroll systems that allow employees to be paid quickly is not only enticing for workers, it helps cover the necessary

shifts needed to operate restaurants (Gagnon 2022).

The suggestions offered by Gagnon can help restaurant owners mitigate with the shortage of restaurant laborers. However, as noted by Yurkevich, "immigrants are vital to the US economy and fill thousands of US jobs – jobs many Americans don't want to do" (2022). Unfortunately, we are now missing many of the immigrants who were regularly immigrating to the United States before the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, by the end of 2021 "there were close to 2 million fewer working-age immigrants in the United States than there would have been if pre-pandemic immigration continued unchanged" (Yurkevich 2022). Legislation enacted during the pandemic, such as Title 42, exacerbated the shortage of labor by keeping migrants and asylum seekers out of the country under the pretense of preventing the spread of Covid-19 (Yurkevich 2022). Fortunately, new legislation known as the Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act is currently being evaluated which would help create a new visa program for workers. As noted by Sean Kennedy, EVP of Public Affairs at the National Restaurant Association, "immigration reform is an economic necessity for the restaurant industry … [and] would be a win-win for employers in desperate need of employees and individuals seeking new opportunity" (Yurkevich 2022).

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Wildfire For Anger

Telayah Bardoo

Course: Healing and Health
Professor: Lilian Luisa Milanes
Student: Telayah Bardoo
Essay: *Wildfire For Anger*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to use data they collected in their ethnographic research and develop an "unessay" on the topic.

This is not just any anger,

It is like a wildfire,

It consumes everything in its path.

Anger is usually soul sucking,

Just not this kind.

This kind feeds the soul.

It is never enough,

It is always hungry for more.

Who cares who gets hurt in the process,

You just need to keep feeding the fire.

It is like an adrenaline rush,

Very exciting and addictive.

Anything can cause it,

Once started the end is nowhere in sight.

It just feeds and feeds.

But like all wildfires

It is scary

Burning and destroying everything

When it is over

There is nothing but pain and disaster left behind. And your soul

Your soul is tired.

Impact of Academic Self-Efficacy, Grit, and Stress on Academic Performance

Kimberly Villatoro

Course: Psychology: Experimental II: Research Methods
Professor: Natalie A. (Obrecht) Lindemann, Ph.D
Student: Kimberly Villatoro
Essay: *Impact of Academic Self-Efficacy, Grit, and Stress on Academic Performance*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to read peer reviewed journal articles, design their own study, collect and analyze data, and write a research paper summarizing their findings.

Stress has been known to negatively impact psychological well-being and students' ability to perform well in school. Saleem and Akram (2018) found that students dealing with high amounts of stress had lower psychological well-being and lower academic success. However, previous research has shown that students who have higher amounts of academic self-efficacy achieved academic success, despite facing stress along the way. Travis, Kaszycki, Geden, and Bunde (2020) found that academic self-efficacy served as a strong predictor of grade point average (GPA), having a positive impact on GPA. Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) also found that students with more academic self-efficacy reported feeling less stress and had higher GPAs too. They even suggested that academic self-efficacy could have a greater influence on academic performance than stress. Grit, defined as the ability to persevere under challenging conditions Duckworth (2009), is another factor that could predict academic performance. Hodge, Wright, and Bennett (2018) found that grit was a strong predictor of students' engagement and productivity, both of which are linked to academic performance. The purpose of the present study was to determine if the previous relationships between stress and academic performance and academic self-efficacy and academic performance would be replicated, as well as to determine if there was a relationship between grit and academic performance. The hypothesis was that high ratings of academic self-efficacy and of grit would be positively correlated with GPA and that stress would be negatively correlated with GPA.

Method

Participants

The study sample consisted of 86 college students; students were invited to take an online survey on Qualtrics.

Materials

Participants completed a survey to assess their academic self-efficacy, academic stress, grit, and GPA. The survey consisted of questions from Travis, Kaszycki, Geden, and Bunde's (2020) academic self-efficacy scale and Duckworth and Guinn's (2009) Short Grit Scale. Participants were also asked about their GPA and the amount of stress they felt concerning their schoolwork.

Procedure

To measure academic self-efficacy, participants were asked to rate, "How confident are you in your ability to manage your schoolwork?" on a scale from 1, not confident at all, to 5, extremely confident. To assess academic stress, participants were asked to rate, "How stressed do you feel about your academic performance and grades?" on a scale from 1, not stressed at all, to 5, extremely stressed. To measure grit, participants were asked to rate how much they felt a statement applied to them, "Setbacks do not discourage me. I do not give up easily" on a scale from 1, not at all like me to 5, very much like me. Participants were also asked which range their GPA fell into: (Below 2.00, 2.00-2.50, 2.51-3.00, 3.01-3.50, 3.51-4.00).

Design

I used a correlation test to analyze the relationships between each of the performance factors (academic self-efficacy, grit, and stress) and academic performance (GPA).

Results

Stress was reported as M=3.30 with SD=1.228 on a 1 to 5 scale, academic self-efficacy was reported as M=3.22 with SD=1.067, grit was reported as M=3.21 with SD=1.053, and GPA was reported as M=3.88 with SD=1.132, indicating an average GPA of 3.0. I predicted that stress would have a negative effect on GPA, i.e. that students dealing with high levels of stress would report lower GPAs. The results of a correlation test showed that there was no correlation between stress and GPA. I also predicted that GPAs would be higher if students reported higher academic self-efficacy. A correlation test showed there was a significant effect of academic self-efficacy on GPA (r(84) =.528, p<.001).
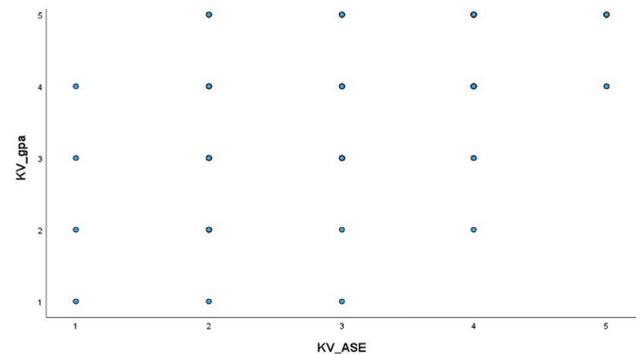

Figure 1. Scatter plot showing the relationship between academic self-efficacy and GPA.

Additionally, I predicted that GPAs would be higher if students reported higher amounts of grit. A correlation test also showed that there was also a marginally significant effect of grit on GPA (r(84)=.179, p=.10).
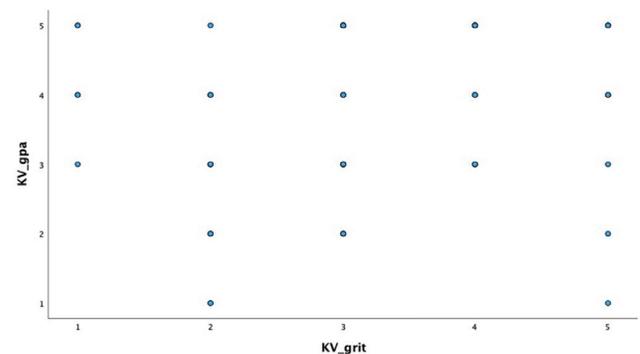

Figure 2. Scatter plot showing the relationship between grit and GPA.

Discussion

This study aimed to determine if there were correlations between academic self-efficacy and GPA, grit and GPA, and if stress had a negative impact on GPA. The results of two correlational tests found academic self-efficacy was positively correlated with GPA and there was a marginally significant correlation between grit and GPA, supporting what the previous researchers found (Travis et al., 2020; Zajacova et al., 2005, Hodge et al., 2018). These findings suggest that academic self-efficacy and grit are important characteristics for students to have in order to achieve academic success. However, another correlation test showed that there was no relationship between stress and GPA, contradicting what previous researchers (Saleem & Akram, 2018) have found. While this finding is encouraging, as it could indicate students are not as overwhelmed with high amounts of stress that could negatively impact their academic performance and grades, it may not be entirely representative of the population. Saleem and Akram (2018) had a larger, stratified random sample of 350 college students from four colleges, two private and two government.

Limitations

A limitation of the present study is the small sample size. A larger sample size would be optimal in attempting to apply these findings to a larger population of college students. The previous studies (Travis et al., 2020; Zajacova et al., 2005, Hodge et al., 2018; Saleem & Akram, 2018) had larger, diverse sample size of over 100 participants. A second limitation of the study is that the statement used to measure grit was not specific enough, since it does not clearly define exactly what kind of setbacks and in what setting they could be perceived as being discouraging.

Future Directions

Travis et al. (2020) separated stress into two categories, challenge stressors and hindrance stressors. Challenge stressors are manageable and could positively impact performance, but a hindrance stressor is not manageable and could negatively impact performance. This is a distinction that a future researcher should make to be able to fully investigate the relationship between stress and academic performance.

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Civic Engagement Paper

Emily Spellman

Course: U.S. Labor History
Professor: David Koistinen
Student: Emily Spellman
Essay: *Civic Engagement Paper*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to write a civic-engagement research paper by focusing on a problem in present-day society that is causing difficulty for a particular group of working people.

For the civic engagement paper, I have researched a present-day problem that affects a community of working people that is very special to my major and me. My major is Elementary Education, and I will be certified in K-6, which means I am very enthusiastic about becoming a teacher. Although I grew up in a nice suburban school district, many NJ students grow up in urban cities, like Paterson. Cities like Paterson may not be the greatest places to teach, because there is barely any funding and a state-wide teacher shortage to boot. I wonder why so many people want to quit teaching. Are some students so troublesome, or are teachers quitting because they wind up having to spend their own money on classroom supplies? Are teachers fed up with not getting enough funds from the district, or not enough teacher aids in the classroom? It breaks my heart when I hear people tell me that they have quit teaching, because of these reasons. We as a society need to get more people

interested in teaching, especially an interest in urban schools. They are severely underfunded, and teachers are constantly using their income to make sure their students have a better school and educational environment. I believe educating young minds can be a beautiful and heart-warming experience, and as a future teacher, I want to be there to help my students.

For the past decade, there have always been teachers who have quit or retired at a gradual level at the end of each school year. But ever since the pandemic of 2020, and the start of online learning, no teacher wants to teach from their home, where they have to control up to 25 students on a Zoom chat. Teaching is a beautiful, yet tough career, having to control an alarming amount of students, when you can only handle maybe three. Teaching is tough for everyone but is much harder in an urban setting. School districts in New Jersey like Paterson and Newark have always been terribly understaffed for decades, up until the last

three years. In an article titled, What We Expected, from Northjersey.com, the author mentions the fact that it is now 2023, and there are still around 200 teaching vacancies in the Paterson School District. The reasons for this alarming teacher shortage are that many teachers are retiring early since the pandemic, or have been sick with Covid-19. There are also fewer college students selecting Education as their major of choice. The reason for no one wanting to teach will all come down to lack of funds, horrid pay, classroom behavior, and teacher burnout. These things come in a full circle of why teachers want to retire and quit. Although teachers and students are getting back into a normal school setting ever since the lockdown, the alienation of having to stay at home and work from a Zoom call is what accelerated the pressures of retirement. In an article from Northjersey.com, August 2022, just before the start of the 2022-2023 school year, the author writes, "With classes scheduled to start in two weeks, the city school district has 122 vacant teaching positions, part of a nationwide staffing shortage. The number of open teaching jobs in Paterson has increased by more than 50%compared with last year"(What We Expected, Malinconico). In June of 2022, there were 240 vacancies, and within the summer 72 more teachers were hired. The unfortunate thing with all of this is that many of the teaching vacancies are in Special Education and English as a second language classrooms.

The Paterson Public Schools District has over 50 schools and almost 26,000 students. Like many urban cities in New Jersey, Paterson is a diverse school district. It contains "100%minority enrollment and 46.2% of students economically disadvantaged"(usnews.com). With that being taken into account, not many students have the best home life or have enough money to buy the school supplies that they need. A lot of times, teachers and the classroom setting are safe places for these kids. How do you think the students feel when on most days they have a substitute teacher instead

of a person in a full-time teaching position? These kids need security, they need a routine, and structure, and they will not get that when they do not have a full-time teacher in a classroom setting. This only gets worse for special needs students, who need at least two teachers in the classroom to be sufficient. Because of the teacher shortage in Paterson, many students also do not attend school, are afraid of not having a full-time teacher, or not having the supplies to bring to class. Many teachers spend their own money on classroom supplies.

I remember my cousin, a Paterson teacher, telling me that she spends a couple of hundred dollars on school supplies and drawstring bags for the beginning of the school year. She even drove to some students' houses, because they did not want to come to school. In the recent years since the pandemic, Paterson Public Schools have had to assign Chromebooks to students, many of whom do not have laptops or other large devices at home. The Chromebook comes with a charger and its own wifi connection, my cousin told me, so that students could hook onto Zoom or do homework at their house. I feel as though my cousin is a good definition of a determined teacher, who truly wants to see her students grow and be good people. In a New York Times article, from 2018, it reads, " 94% of public school teachers in the United States reported paying for supplies without reimbursement in the school year"(Chokshi, nytimes.com). The article also entails, "It made little difference whether they taught in cities, suburbs or rural areas, or whether or not their students were poor — virtually every public school teacher said they had used their own money for their classrooms"(Chokshi, nytimes.com). I like this statement because it is very true. You can be a teacher in a rich suburb school district or an underfunded urban district. The point is, every teacher has used their own money to support their students during the school year. Sure, maybe some teachers don't mind, but in the long run, this is cutting out a teachers yearly salary.

Teachers do not make much money, especially as a beginner. The fact that we have to use our income is distressing. Where are the district funds? Why can't the Board of Education help teachers out? In 2021, the State Education Department turned down Paterson school's request for$28 million in aid. These funds would be " 'Stabilization Aid,' a one-time infusion of funding the school district hoped to use to eliminate overcrowding in as many as eight hundred classes" (State Education,Malinconico) The teacher union was outraged, and the Superintendent of Paterson schools, Eileen Shafer, replied in a letter to the state, "These reductions have put an additional strain on teachers and their instruction, as well as building administrators to absorb more responsibilities including but not limited to discipline, responding to families, professional development, and maintaining a safe and healthy environment,"(State Education,Malinconico). I do not understand how the state could turn down a request for financial aid! Especially Paterson, a well-known underprivileged urban district. Knowing now that the state will not send funds to schools in need, no wonder why teachers are not making enough, and want to quit.

I thought the state would want to help schools in need and help the students who are getting an education to succeed. Teachers do not ask for much, just better pay, and a better classroom experience. As a future teacher, I hope my students know that I will always show up for them, hoping they will be in class for me. We need teachers! Students need to learn in a healthy school environment. How are parents supposed to cope, knowing that their children are not getting the right education that they need to achieve their goals? In a Time.com article, Shaye Brown, a Paterson special needs teacher, and mom to a nine-year-old son, who is in a specialized class for Autism, knows what it is like to have no help in the district. Although she is a great teacher, she is a mom first. She says in the article that, "Her 9-year-old son, who is in a specialized class

for students with autism, would not have a full-time teacher because of an acute shortage of teachers at Paterson Public Schools in New Jersey"(Reilly, time. com). Moving to a parent's standpoint, I would be worried as a parent hearing that my child with Autism would not have a full-time teacher. I actually do know what that feels like. I have a brother with Autism, and I would be outraged if I found out his school would not be supplying him with the teacher or aid he needed. Whether a child has special needs or not, we need to be there to support our students all the same.

After researching many media pages, and finding fascinating facts about the teacher shortage in the Paterson Public Schools District, I conclude that so far in this society, there is no true solution to school funding and a teacher shortage, at least not a solution that I can help with. If the school district, or the state of New Jersey, or even the whole country, wants to get more teachers, they need to solve their government funding problem. Children are our future. They could be a teacher, a congressman, or maybe the next president. But our students will not achieve these goals if they are not given the supplies and teachers they need to succeed. The government needs to give better pay to teachers, or even just more money to each school. Schools should have to pay for supplies, books, and toys, not the teachers. We should not have to spend hundreds of dollars of our income on school-mandated classroom supplies. The state of New Jersey just has to do better in the long run. I believe as a future teacher, that I want to be there for my students, but I do deserve the daily classroom necessities from school funds. I do not want to be the next person who runs away from teaching; I want to be there for the kids and show up every day. All students deserve stability and a safe and happy classroom environment, with a full-time teacher. We can all do better, and make teaching a great occupation again.

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The Ivy Has Whispers for Those Who Listen

Melanie Steger

Course: Literature and Environment
Professor: Barbara Suess
Student: Melanie Steger
Essay: *The Ivy Has Whispers for Those Who Listen*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to create a "field journal" by selecting an object or animal in their environment, after which they were asked to draw the object as well as research information about it and reflect on their process.

Winter claws are slow to ease in this place where signs of snow cling. The churned ground bears its own sort of scrapes and scars left in half frozen mud, the dying veins of sunlight are watery and weak. April has only begun, just the seventh day of the month, yet already new growth peek as revitalized stalks bleed green trickles to wash away the brown of winter. All save for the flopping reddish-streaked leaves of the poison ivy plant.

Squatting, the plant shelters in the shadows cast by the far larger bare trees as the wind howls, burning the nostrils with its scent of those last seasonal fireplaces belonging to the houses beyond. The two tastes dance on the back of the tongue: ice and fire. And maybe that is why the poison ivy continues to shiver, the soft curves of its already battered three-leaf clusters unassuming as if to offset the rashes and blisters stroking them may bring (Boyd and Rucker). Those same leaves are ragged, blackened splotches digging into their edges, rotting them from the center out. Perhaps it has sprung too early, the sunlight it encounters unable to provide warmth; they are mid-spring growers, after all, and it would explain why it is missing several leaves (*Poison Ivy*).

I wonder if the small leaves knew how they are loathed if they would shrivel and die? It seems that their battle to survive is only rewarded by ire-fueled eyes. Ninety percent of the population is allergic to the oil urushiol that is produced in their sap ("Allergic"). Poisonous tears wept with each injury dealt, a secretion to dissuade the barest of touches, the self defense of plants is not so readily accepted by those who praise nature most when it demonstrates itself easily tamed. But this plant is wild and unafraid. Surrounded by a carpet of dead leaves, only this ivy dares grow so early.

I cannot bring myself to fault the plant who thrives best when mostly alone. Perhaps that is why nature graced my hand to be one of the few who has no

allergic reaction to the urushiol, I whose eyes leak and swell when I wander too close to delicate opened flower petals or dew drop shaped tree bulbs. The ivy and I, we sit as the sun starts to die, leaving behind rusty cuts to bleed into the darkening sky. We're situated close to where the black bear attacked a local scout master four spring's ago. I wonder if she's out here too, nature's lonely lumbering shadow. I wonder if the ivy can penetrate her coat. I wonder why I've never minded being alone in the woods.

A car engine revs, echoing up this slope, and the birds take disgruntled flight. I miss the bat with the crippled wing who would glide in irregular circles around the yard until one summer he could not be found. I speak of his flight to the patient ivy who makes as decent a conversationalist as my tabby cats back home. It is a habit, to my knowledge, meant to promote social connection in those who find it lacking. But perhaps the explanation should be expanded. I relish being alone here in the woods where I may be the last human on earth. And when the wind rustles the ivy leaves I listen and let it have its say too. Usually it is to the lake I direct my attention, trespassing on some summer house dock as rippling waves lap at the wooden boards and relay the news of the day.

What does the ivy tell me? Mostly that he is rather cold. Why is he now of masculine disposition? It's merely one of those sensations that needs not the justification of words. So, the ivy tells me about how young he is and how much growing he has to do. He's no trees close to wind up as summer stretches. I do not mention that to me this is a relief. In my youth I watched as hairy poison ivy vines thick as my arm choked the trees, squeezing tight as pythons around their limbs until they died in the winter. And I know that sometimes nature is cruel in this game of survival, but I'd be lying if I said I hadn't cried when each tree would collapse beneath its own weight to create a graveyard out of the forest touching my parents' lawn.

The night has deepened and I am unable to linger much longer with the slender ivy stems. I mention I'll return, which is mostly a lie. In a few weeks' time, the area will have relaid the poison ivy carpet and this plant will be lost amongst a sea of three-leaved growths of brilliant green. My mother is allergic and she'll not let me home if I tread close enough to collect the oils on my shoes or pants. The sap can remain potent for months on all manner of surfaces to irritate uncautious skin ("Allergic"). I suspect the ivy does not mind either way. I'm sure he's witnessed a fair few pass him by already without sparing a word or glance. Maybe he'll die out here when the temperature dips again to bring early morning frost. I hope that is not the case. In that sort of absent way we all develop affection for random stones and stars, I call the young poison ivy a friend.
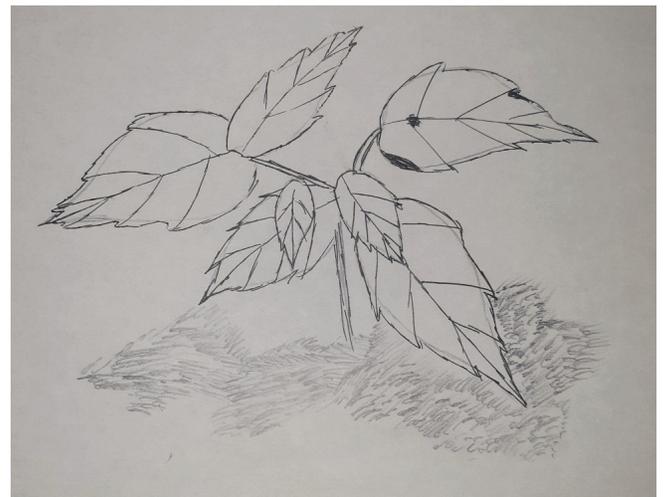
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My Hair and Me

Jennifer García

Course: Bilingual Children's Literature
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Student: Jennifer García
Essay: *My Hair and Me*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to develop, write, and edit their own piece of children's literature in Spanish.

Página 1:

Desde que las niñas pueden recordar, su cabello no ha sostenido un rizo.

Ha sido pajoso, ha sido loco, y, sin embargo, nunca vieron un rizo.

Pasaron horas debajo de las manos de su madre lavándose, alisando, haciendo rolos y alisándose. En el salón, su tratamiento era muy similar, lavar, alisar, hacerse rolos y tener lo liso. Para ellas eso estaba bien. Amaban su cabello liso. No podían verse a sí mismos sin él. Era una parte de ellas muy parecida a sus nombres. Era normal. Su madre tenía el pelo liso, su abuela tenía el pelo liso, sus primas tenían el pelo liso, todos a su alrededor tenían el pelo liso.

Página 2:

Sí, hubo días en los que se sintieron frustrados. Tener que sentarse en una silla de salón para obtener un cabello perfectamente liso rápidamente se volvió aburrido después de la cuarta hora. Tener que sentarse debajo de la secadora se calentó rápidamente después de veinte minutos. A veces se cambiaban los planes solo para asegurarse de que su cabello se mantuviera liso. No podían correr demasiado por temor a que su cabello se pusiera pajoso. Si lloviznaba, corrían hacia adentro evitando las miradas curiosas de sus primos que solo querían jugar. Los días en la piscina o el parque acuático se pasaron conscientes de las consecuencias para el día siguiente. Lavar, alisar, hacerse rolos y tener lo liso de nuevo.

Página 3:

Cuando las niñas crecieron y su madre confió en ellas de lavarse el pelo, la hermana menor, Yeya, descubrió algo curioso. ¡UN RIZO! Justo en su sien. Cruzó los ojos tratando de verlo mejor antes de que con un suspiro frustrado saltara de la bañera, limpiara el espejo y mirara ese hermoso y maravilloso rizo.

"¿Qué es esto?", preguntó Yeya. Sintió que el pánico aumentaba rápidamente dentro de ella. ¡Su madre le confió su cabello y de alguna manera logró arruinarlo!

"¡Rosie!", gritó, "¡Ven aquí!"

Su hermana mayor entró corriendo al baño.

"¿Qué? ¿Qué pasa?" Rosie preguntó frenéticamente.

Página 4:

"¿Qué es esto?", Preguntó Yeya, señalando el lugar junto a su sien.

Rosie entrecerró los ojos tratando de averiguar lo que se suponía que debía ver.

"¿Tu cabello?" Preguntó Rosie.

"No, eso no. Pero eso. PERO ESTO" entró en pánico Yeya.

Rosie comenzó a observar el rizo. Mirando con curiosidad la forma en que se retorcía y giraba, a diferencia de las otras hebras de cabello de Yeya. Sus ojos se lanzaron sobre la cabeza de su hermana buscando a otros.

"Es un rizo". Rosie susurró maravillada.

"¿Qué hago? Mami me va a matar", dijo Yeya.

"Está bien. Lave el acondicionador y lo resolveremos". Rosie sonrió tranquilizadora.

Página 5:

Después de ver que el rizo no fue causado por daños y parecía haber ocurrido naturalmente, las chicas sintieron curiosidad. ¿Su cabello puede hacer eso? ¿Fue solo el cabello de Yeya el que lo hizo? ¿O ambos? ¿Sería toda su cabeza capaz de hacer eso?

"Dejémoslo en paz por ahora. Tal vez fue un accidente", dijo Rosie. "Continúa tu rutina de cabello como de costumbre. Tal vez desaparezca".

Mientras Yeya enrollaba su cabello en los rolos, miró fijamente el rizo solitario. ¿Sería feliz si lo perdiera? Se imaginó a sí misma con una cabeza llena de rizos

con volumen. Solo el pensamiento la hizo sentir cálida por dentro. Con un movimiento de cabeza, tomó el hermoso y maravilloso rizo y rodó en el conjunto de rodillos perfecto.

Página 6:

Más tarde, debajo de la secadora, la idea de los rizos no abandonaría su mente. Quiero decir, pensó, solo ver algunos videos no hará daño.

Al abrir su teléfono, escribió "Rutina de cabello rizado". Y se sorprendió con la cantidad de resultados que obtuvo. Había tantas chicas diferentes con diferentes tipos de cabello rizado. ¿Por dónde debería empezar?

Página 7:

Al hacer clic en un video, se perdió en los productos diferentes y términos utilizados. Un video se convirtió en dos, se convirtió en tres, se convirtió en cuatro, hasta que finalmente pasó todo el tiempo debajo de la secadora viendo videos de personas peinando su cabello rizado. Por primera vez, mientras sacaba sus rolos, pensó para sí misma, ojalá pudiera hacer eso.

Página 8:

"¿Mami?", preguntó mientras su madre comenzaba a hacer su tubi.

"¿Si, mi hija, que paso?", preguntó su madre.

"¿Mami, alguna vez tuve el pelo rizado?", preguntó Yeya.

"Bueno, mi hija, sí lo tenía", respondió Mami

"Bueno, ¿cómo fue?"

"Era un pelo rizado, pero no fino ni grueso, un pelo con volumen, negro, era abundante, con una textura suave y manejable"

Yeya se detuvo por un momento para pensar antes de preguntar "¿Cómo era el cabello de Rosie?"

"Era un pelo largo, rizado, con una textura gruesa, poco manejable, muy abundante, difícil de desenredar." Su

madre se encogió de hombros antes de continuar peinándose.

Yeya luego se dio cuenta de ella, y su hermana tenía diferentes tipos de cabello rizado. Sabía que no podía preguntarle más a su madre todavía. Tendría que reunirse con su hermana más tarde para obtener más información.

Página 9:

Las niñas esperaron hasta que sus padres se durmieron profundamente y se escaparon al ático. Subieron las escaleras tratando de caminar de puntillas lo más silenciosamente posible con sus focos en la mano. Estaban en una misión para encontrar fotos viejas cuando eran pequeños para ver de qué estaba hablando su madre. Rompieron todo el ático para encontrar los álbumes de fotos, pero no pudieron encontrar nada. Cuando estaban a punto de rendirse, los ojos de Rosie se iluminaron.

"¡Los encontré!", exclamó.

"Yeya, mira", susurró Rosie

Pasó una foto y Yeya jadeó. Era una foto de las dos, abrazadas uno alrededor del otro, con las sonrisas más grandes en sus rostros. Rosie tenía el pelo largo y rizado, mientras que Yeya tenía una linda colita de rizos en su cabeza.

"¡Rosie! Mami tenía razón, tenemos el pelo rizado", dijo Yeya.

Mientras Rosie miraba fijamente la imagen, una idea apareció en su cabeza.

Página 10:

"Entonces, es simple. Bueno, no es simple, pero será simple una vez que lo hagamos". Rosie divagó

"Deberíamos cortarnos el pelo", terminó con una sonrisa en su rostro.

"Pero no es hora de mi recorte anual", dijo Yeya.

"No Yeya, deberíamos cortarnos el pelo para que

quede rizado".

Yeya comenzó a pensar para sí misma. *ESTA CHICA ESTÁ LOCA, QUIERE QUE ME CORTE TODO EL PELO.* Pensó en todas las posibilidades que podrían suceder y comenzó a entrar en pánico. Mientras Yeya entraba en pánico y caminaba de un lado a otro, Rosie había hecho una cita para obtener un Curly Cut en una peluquería rizada.

"Está bien, nuestra cita es mañana a las 2 de la tarde", dijo Rosie con orgullo.

Yeya se quedó sin palabras y solamente podía pensar en bueno se ve que nosotras nos vamos a cortar el pelo.

Página 11:

Era el día en que las chicas finalmente iban a cortarse el pelo y podían sentir los nervios creciendo dentro de ellas. Se les ocurrió un plan para decirles a sus padres que iban a estar fuera por un par de horas porque tenían que ir a hacer diligencias.

Rosie comenzó a manejar al salón y en el auto, estaba en silencio. Las chicas estaban nerviosas. ¿Realmente iban a hacer esto?

Cuando Rosie estacionó el auto, Yeya la miró y dijo: "Bueno, es hora".

Se desabrocharon los cinturones de seguridad y salieron lentamente del auto. No sabían en qué se estaban metiendo. Cuando abrieron la puerta, el dulce olor de los productos para el cabello golpeó su nariz. Estaban completamente asombrados por la pared dedicada solo a imágenes de mujeres con cabello rizado. No había un solo cabello liso a la vista.

"Hola, ¿tienen una cita con nosotros hoy?"

"Sí", tartamudeó Rosie.

"Puedes tener un asiento allí mismo. Julie y Marissa cuidarán de ti"

"Entonces, ¿qué esperas hacer hoy?", Preguntó Julie a Yeya.

¿Qué quería? Quería rizos, pero cuando se miró en el espejo no sabía si podía soltarse el pelo. Antes de que pudiera responder, Rosie habló: "Quiero rizos sin importar cuán cortos sean".

La cabeza de Yeya se acercó a su hermana. "¿No importa cuán corto sea?", se sorprendió.

"Quiero mi pelo largo, pero lo quiero rizada. Quiero cortarlo a un estado saludable, pero mantener algo de longitud". Yeya continuó. Por mucho que ella quisiera el pelo rizado. Ella no estaba lista para soltar su largo cabello entonces.

"Bueno, está bien entonces. ¿Están lista?", preguntó Julie.

Rosie y Yeya se miraron por última vez con su cabello lacio y supieron que era el momento. Marissa tomó a Rosie y la sentó en su silla mientras Yeya se sentaba con Julie. Todo lo que podían escuchar era el corte de las tijeras. Todo lo que vieron fue que su cabello cayera al suelo. Después del corte, se lavaron el cabello y comenzaron a peinarlo. Yeya se preguntó si se parecía a alguno de los videos de YouTube que había visto. No estaban frente al espejo, por lo que no podían ver lo que estaba pasando.

Después de que terminaron de peinar, ambos se colocaron debajo de la secadora.

"Esto se siente tan extraño sin rolos", dijo Rosie.

"Lo sé", respondió Yeya.

Escucharon el sonido de la secadora y no podían esperar para salir de la secadora. Salieron lentamente, se sentaron en la silla y se miraron el uno al otro.

"¡Oh, Dios mío!", dijeron ambos al mismo tiempo.

No podían creer lo que veían. Estaban congelados a la hermosa vista del cabello rizado.

"Ahora, chicas, su cabello necesita mucho trabajo. Este es tu cabello rizado". Julie dijo con una sonrisa en su rostro.

Las niñas no podían esperar para ir a casa y mostrárselo a sus padres.

A medida que se meten en el camino de entrada, la ola de nervios comienza a regresar. No sabían cómo reaccionarían sus padres. Rosie miró a Yeya con una mirada tranquilizadora y estaban listos para entrar a la casa. Giraron la perilla de la puerta tan lentamente como pudieron para asegurarse de que nadie los escuchara entrar.

Cuando entraron, vieron a su padre sentado en la mesa de la cocina con la cabeza abajo escribiendo en la computadora y a su madre de espaldas, concentrada en cortar verduras. Escucharon a las niñas entrar y su padre levantó la cabeza y su madre se dio la vuelta. No podían creer lo que veían. Sus rostros estaban congelados y no podían moverse. Rosie y Yeya pensaron para sí mismas. Oh no, ¿qué hicimos?

Su madre se acerca a sus hijas, y levanta la mano para ver más de cerca sus rizos. Mientras que ella se acercaba a sus hijas, notaron que la lágrima caía por la cara de su madre.

"Mis bebes, ay dios mio, ustedes son hermosas", dijo su madre.

Las chicas estaban en completamente sorprendida, pensaron que estaban soñando. Allí papá se acercó y les dio un abrazo con una gran sonrisa. Rosie y Yeya sintieron que se les quitaba un peso de encima. Se sentían hermosas.

A medida que pasaron los años, las niñas aprendieron a manejar su cabello. Les encantó cómo ambos tenían diferentes cabellos rizados. Su madre fue la más solidaria que jamás haya tenido. Ella ayudaba a las

chicas con diferentes ideas de máscaras para el cabello para mantener su cabello saludable. Se les ocurrió una nueva rutina para los sábados. Lavar, mascarilla para el cabello, productos rizados y difundir. Se dieron cuenta de que el cabello liso no era para ellas y les encantaba abrazar sus rizos. Nosotras amamos nuestro pajón.

Page 1:

Ever since the girls can remember their hair has not held a curl.

It's been poofy, it's been wild, and yet they never saw a curl.

They spent hours underneath the hands of their mother getting their hair washed, treated, put in a roller set, and straightened. At the salon, their treatment was much the same, wash, treated, roller set, and straightened. To them that was fine. They loved their straight hair. They couldn't see themselves without it. It was a part of them much like their names. It was normal. Their mother had straight hair, their grandmother had straight hair, their cousins had straight hair, everyone around them had straight hair.

Page 2:

Yes, there were days where they were frustrated. Having to sit in a salon chair to get perfectly straight hair quickly got boring after the fourth hour. Having to sit underneath the hooded dryer quickly got hot after twenty minutes. Sometimes plans were changed just to make sure their hair stayed straight. They couldn't run too much for fear of their hair getting poofy. If it drizzled, they ran inside avoiding the curious gazes of their cousins who just wanted to play. Days at the pool or waterpark were spent mindful of the consequences for the next day. Wash, treatment, roller set, and straightened all over again.

Page 3:

When the girls got older and their mother trusted them with washing their own hair the youngest sister, Yeya, discovered a curious thing. A CURL! Right at her temple. She crossed her eyes trying to see it better before with a frustrated sigh she jumped out of the shower, cleaned off the mirror, and stared at that beautiful, wonderful, curl.

"What is this?" asked Yeya. She felt the panic quickly rise within her. Her mother trusted her with her hair and she somehow managed to ruin it!

"Rosie!" she yelled, "Come here!"

Her older sister came running into the bathroom.

"What? What's wrong?" Rosie asked frantically.

Page 4:

 "What is this?" asked Yeya, pointing at the spot by her temple.

Rosie squinted trying to figure out what she was supposed to be seeing. "Your hair?" Rosie asked.

"No, not that. But that. BUT THIS" panicked Yeya.

Rosie started to observe the curl. Looking curiously at the way it twisted and turned, unlike Yeya's other strands of hair. Her eyes darted over her sister's head looking for others.

"It's a curl." Rosie whispered in wonder.

"What do I do? Mami is going to kill me." said Yeya.

"It's okay. Wash out the conditioner and we'll figure this out." Rosie smiled reassuringly.

Page 5:

After seeing that the curl wasn't caused by damage and seemed to have occurred naturally the girls became curious. Their hair can do that? Was it just Yeya's hair that did it? Or both of them? Would their whole head be able to do that?

"Let's leave it alone for now. Maybe it was an accident," Rosie said. "Continue your hair routine like normal. Maybe it will go away".

As Yeya rolled her hair into the roller set, she stared at the one lonely curl. Would she be happy if she lost it? She pictured herself with a full head of bouncy curls. Just the thought made her feel warm inside. With a shake of her head, she took the beautiful, wonderful curl and rolled into the perfect roller set.

Page 6:

Later, under the hooded dryer the thought of curls wouldn't leave her mind. *I mean,* she thought, *just watching a few videos won't hurt.*

Opening her phone, she typed in "Curly hair routine". And was shocked with the amount of results that she got. There were so many different girls with different types of curly hair. Where should she even begin?

Page 7:

Clicking on a video she became lost in the various products and terms used. One video turned into two, turned into three, turned into four, until finally she had spent the entire time under the dryer just watching videos of people styling their curly hair. For the first time, as she took out her rollers, she thought to herself, *I wish I could do that.*

Page 8:

"Mami?" she asked as her mother began to do her tubi.

"Si, mi hija, que paso?" asked her mother.

"Mami, I was wondering did I ever have curly hair?" asked yeya

"Bueno, mi hija, yes you did" replied Mami

"Well, what was it like?"

"Era un pelo rizado pero no fino ni grueso, un pelo largo, negro, era abundante, con una textura suave y manejable"

Yeya stopped for a moment to think before asking "How was Rosie's hair?"

"Era un pelo largo, rizado, con una textura gruesa, poco manejable, muy abundante, difícil de desenredar." Her mother shrugged before continuing to do her hair.

Yeya then realized her, and her sister had different types of curly hair. She knew she couldn't ask her mother more just yet. She would need to meet up with her sister later to get more information.

Page 9:

The girls waited until their parents were fast asleep and snuck up to the attic. They creeped up the stairs trying to tiptoe as quietly as possible with their flashlights in their hand. They were on a mission to find old pictures when they were little to see what their mother was talking about. They tore up the whole attic to find the picture albums but couldn't find anything. As they were about to give up, Rosie's eyes lit up.

"I found them!" she exclaimed.

"Yeya, look" Rosie whispered

She passed over a photo and Yeya gasped. It was a picture of the two of them, arms wrapped around each other, with the biggest smiles on their faces. Rosie had long curly hair, while Yeya had a cute little poof ball on the top of her head.

"Rosie! Mami was right, we have curly hair," Yeya said.

As Rosie stared at the picture an idea popped into her head.

Page 10:

"So, it's simple. Well not simple, but it will be simple once we get it done." Rosie rambled "We should get our hair cut," She finished with a smile on her face.

"But it's not time for my yearly trim." said Yeya

"No Yeya, we should cut our hair to make it curly."

Yeya began to think to herself. *THIS GIRL IS CRAZY SHE WANTS ME TO CUT OFF ALL MY HAIR.* She thought about all the possibilities that could happen and started to panic. As Yeya was panicking and pacing back and forth Rosie had made an appointment to get a Curly Cut at a curly hair salon.

"Okay, our appointment is tomorrow at 2 o'clock in the afternoon," Rosie said proudly.

Yeya was speechless and she could think about is well looks like we are getting are hair cut

Page 11:

It was the day the girls were finally going to cut their hair and they could feel the nerves growing within them. They came up with a plan to tell their parents that they were going to be out for a couple of hours because they had go run errands.

Rosie began to drive towards the salon and in the car, it was dead silent. The girls were nervous. Were they really going to do this?

As Rosie parked the car, Yeya looked at her and said "Well, it's time"

They unbuckled their seatbelts and slowly walked out of the car. They didn't know what they were walking into. As they opened the door, the sweet smell of hair products hit their nose. They were in complete awe over the wall dedicated to just pictures of women with curly hair. There was not one straight hair in sight.

"Hi, do you girls have an appointment with us today?"

"Yes" Rosie stuttered.

"You can have a seat right there. Julie and Marissa will

take care of you"

Page 12:

"So, what are you hoping to do today?" asked Julie to Yeya

What did she want? She wanted curls, but as she looked at herself in the mirror she didn't know if she could let her hair go. Before she could respond Rosie spoke up, "I want curls no matter how short"

Yeya's head snapped towards her sister. "No matter how short?" she was surprised.

"I want my length, but I want curly. I want to cut it to a healthy state but keep some length." Yeya continued. As much as she wanted curly hair. She was not ready to let go of her long hair then.

"Well okay then. You girls ready?" asked Julie.

Rosie and Yeya looked at each other one last time with their straight hair and knew it was time. Marissa took Rosie and sat her in her chair while Yeya sat with Julie. All they could hear was the scissors snipping. All they saw was their hair fall to the ground. After the cut, they washed their hair, and they began to style it. Yeya wondered if it looked like any of the YouTube videos she had seen. They weren't facing the mirror so they couldn't see what was going on.

After they were done styling, they were both placed under the dryer.

"This feels so weird without rollers," said Rosie.

"I know," replied Yeya.

They heard the ding of the dryer go off and they couldn't wait to get out the dryer. They slowly step out, sat back at the chair and stare at each other.

"Oh my God!" they both said at the same time.

They couldn't believe their eyes. They were frozen to the beautiful sight of curly hair.

"Now, girls, your hair needs a lot of work. This is your curly hair." Julie said with a smile on her face.

The girls couldn't wait to go home and show their parents.

Page 13:

As they're pulling into the driveway the wave of nerves starts to come back. They didn't know how their parents would react. Rosie looked at Yeya with a reassuring look and they were ready to go inside the house. They turned the knob of the door as slowly as they could to make sure no one hears them come in.

As they walked in, they saw their dad sitting at the kitchen table with his head down typing into the computer and their mother with her back turned, focused on cutting up vegetables. They heard the girls walk in and their dad lifted his head and their mom turned around. They couldn't believe their eyes. Their faces were frozen, and they couldn't move. Rosie and Yeya thought to themselves. Oh no, what did we do?

Their mother gets closer to her daughters, and she puts her hand up to get a closer look at their curls. As she was standing closer to her daughter, they noticed the teardrop falling down their mother's face.

"Mis bebes, ay dios mio, you girls are beautiful." said their mother.

The girls were in complete shock, they thought they were dreaming. There dad came over and gave them a hug with a huge smile. Rosie and Yeya felt a weight lifted off their shoulders. They felt beautiful.

Page 14:

As the years went on the girls learned how to manage their hair. They loved how they both had different curly hair. Their mother was the most supportive she's ever been. She would help the girls come up with different hair masks to keep their hair healthy. They came up with a new routine for Saturdays. Wash, hair mask, curly products, and diffuse. They realized that straight hair wasn't for them and loved to embrace their curls. Nosotras amamos nuestra pajon.

Referencia

Pajoso- Cabello esponjoso

Alisando- Un tratamiento para lisar el pelo

Rolos- Rulos

Liso- Pelo lacio

Tubi (Doobie)- Pelo envuelto con una redecilla para mantener el pelo liso

Focos – Linterna

Colita- Un moño

Untitled"

Princess P Ghartey

Course: Healing and Health
Professor: Lilian Luisa Milanes
Student: Princess P Ghartey
Essay: *Untitled"*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to use data they collected in their ethnographic research and develop an "unessay" on the topic.

Your mind cannot seem to recover, it remains cluttered no matter what you do you can't seem to discover how you allowed it to get this bad.

Many ask what's wrong and it's easy to just say I'm sad but the real deal is that I'm mad, angry, disappointed and unsatisfied.

I've wanted to go to bed and not wake up, yet every time I utter the words I'm stuck. Living in selflessness I'm so tired of it, for once I need to live in selfishness.

The emptiness, the void, pain, and agony. Far from dramatic and beyond what my mom considers my "antics."

I need help, I am not okay, I am always tired, emotionally wired, living a life undesired. There isn't any excitement. College appears to be a requirement, and I simply just can't do it, time never seems to seize.

God please!

Then there goes that light, that little ounce of hope, the desire to just find a way to cope. Where I feel like life is worth living again, it's like a burning candle running out of wax.

Yet those realize with their real eyes that the value of life lies in the eyes of the beholder.

You are in control and do all you must do to be consoled. Just know the Ferris wheel never stops turning.

Find your light, your hope, your candle, this isn't the end for you, here's your que!

Working Women In U.S. Labor History: Silence Is Not An Option

Deniiyah Bennett

Course: U.S. Labor History
Professor: David Koistinen
Student: Deniiyah Bennett
Essay: *Working Women In U.S. Labor History: Silence Is Not An Option*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to write a civic-engagement research paper by focusing on a problem in present-day society that is causing difficulty for a particular group of working people.

Similar to many different countries and their cultures, the US has a long history of sexist patriarchy that seeped its way into different aspects of its citizens' lives. Women, in particular, experience the oppression surrounding American culture. The societal archaic views about housewives are quite known and even today women struggle with rewriting the image pre-painted for them in society. The image of an "American housewife" had been to sit and look pretty, take care of the house and kids, to be obedient, respectful, and loyal—regardless of the extent that one's husband abided by the vows sworn. It was the men who went to work good jobs, women were either at home or if they really needed the income, they worked jobs tailored to the motherly image—sewing, small cooking, etc. Before women began obtaining jobs outside of small businesses, they faced the difficulties of living in a patriarchal society, where they were viewed as inferior. However, when women were finally introduced to the labor force, they experienced hardships in the work environment as well as the challenges of sexism in various ways.

One challenge women faced was the discrimination of unions when they (unions) first gained popularity. Craft unions were strict in who their members were; only industrial unions were willing to include women during the late 1800s. Howlett described an example of an industrial union organization, the Knights of Labor, as a "union that attempted to unite all American workers" including but not limited to skilled, unskilled laborers, semiskilled workers, women, etc. (Howlett 1). The craft unions not being interested in any who were not white maleskilled workers set the other American workers at a disadvantage; women were included in this group

that was excluded from craft unions. They had to go out their way to find unions that were interested in protecting their workplace rights. This discrimination limited where they could get labor rights protections. For instance, if they were in an area with more craft unions, they may have been less likely to find a suitable union that would welcome them as a member. This was not the only discrimination women faced in the work setting; their jobs were based on the socially constructed gender roles set for them.

Before making their appearance in major companies, women either had no job or low-wage jobs that were tailored to the "lady-skills" society expected of them. This was seen by women in the stories, A Working Class Woman on "Making Do" in 1930s and The Despair of the Jobless, who seem to be able to find low-paying jobs that are tailored around "ideal housewife duties." For example, Mrs. Dimiceli was able to find a job assisting a dressmaker, and the anonymous working-class woman was able to find a job at a grocery store, making sandwiches (Depression readings–Dimeicelis and A Working Class Woman on Making Do). The account of Sadie Frowne was another example, as she worked for very low pay making shirts in a sweatshop (Interview with Sadie Frowne, 1902). Tailor work (sewing, knitting, etc.) and cooking are both tasks expected of a motherly housewife in old American society. These are the jobs women of that time had which exemplified their confined role programmed into society—whether in the house or at work, their tasks were the same, and they were trained for these specific skills only. The challenge presented to women was the restriction from doing any task outside of what was expected by a society that sees them as the inferior sex. They were prevented from reaching their full potential. On top of that, the work environments, before and after they made their way to bigger jobs, were sexist and uncomfortable.

When women finally made their way to the labor force—entering major companies and working

jobs not related to housework—they experienced oppressive sexism and harassment in their workplace. It's seen in many cases that women were treated as lesser employees—compared to men—, by male coworkers and employers. Judith Anne mentions that during her clerical work, women were addressed as "girls", which was a disrespectful denouncing of their maturity. Women were also paid lower wages than men and excluded from working men's jobs (Life in the Secretarial Proletariat, early 1960s). These instances were indications that women's associates (coworkers and employers) did not find them capable of fulfilling higher-paid duties; they were treated as though men were better workers and were not given the chance to display the same skills because of segregation. In addition, Cobble explains that secretaries were not acknowledged for their work ethic, but portrayed as "office wives." Once more the employers diminished their contribution to the company by disregarding their accomplishments. The construction of the female secretary position was based on aspects unrelated to their legitimate work and solely put in place to please male associates—factors like their appearance.

This male-superiority mindset that infested the workplace may have contributed to the harassment women experienced, as they were not seen as deserving of mutual respect. Sadie Frowne mentions in her interview that her male coworkers would harass her by "touch[ing her] fair" and making fun of her. This went on until her boss declared no one shall bother her after she threatened to quit (Interview with Sadie Frowne, 1902). Sadie's male coworkers did not care for her feelings because of their lack of respect towards women; they only ended their inappropriate behavior when their (male) supervisor ordered them to do so, further implying that their actions are based on the workplace power dynamic. Based on Sadie's account— and the representation ofwomen in other work environments—it can be inferred that harassment incidents like this occurred often to women workers

since basically all jobs saw them as inferior.

This harassment could have occurred spontaneously—like in Sadie's case—or the sexualization of women on the job unconsciously encouraged such behavior, which was a challenge the women of the mid-1900s—and sometimes today—often faced in the work environment. During this era, flight attendants encountered strict appearance rules, revealing uniforms, and airline ads that hypersexualized them (Cobble). The airlines wanted to attract more customers; however, their methods attracted the wrong attention—attention that could result in dangerous situations for these women. For example, passengers could board planes with the misperception that these stewardesses fulfill sexual pleasures. Then customers may have sought out promiscuous acts from the workers because of their depiction in the ads, which could lead to the harassment of the female workers. Essentially, the airlines produced a false and empty promise to these customers at the expense of the flight attendants' safety.

These oppressive attributes surrounding their work all have a purpose rooted in male pleasure. Judith Anne explains the strict rules that led to uncomfortable work environments because of boring routines and social tension. She describes the environment as oppressive because the stagnant atmosphere forced them to surround their own entertainment around men and romance (Life in the Secretarial Proletariat, early 1960s). Her take on this was reasonable because forcing their focus onto romanticizing male coworkers was a way of leaving these women out for male entertainment. The other challenges discussed were also examples of this issue. One was the sexualized airline ads put in place to please male viewers—attracting them as pleasure. Judith Anne explains the strict rules that led to uncomfortable work environments because of boring routines and social tension. She describes the environment as oppressive because the stagnant atmosphere forced

them to surround their own entertainment around men and romance (Life in the Secretarial Proletariat, early 1960s). Her take on this was reasonable because forcing their focus onto romanticizing male coworkers was a way of leaving these women out for male entertainment. The other challenges discussed were also examples of this issue. One was the sexualized airline ads put in place to please male viewers—attracting them as customers; another was the image of being a housewife as amusement for male bosses, as it allowed them to have wives at home and work. The men objectified their female counterparts assources of entertainment in their work lives. Each of the issues women faced resulted from employers appealing to the male gaze, not taking into account the feelings of these women.

On top of this issue, for a while, these workers did not have a suitable source of protection against these violations, including unions meant to preserve all workplace rights and improve conditions. When these women brought the problem to their bosses or union leaders for help, those higher-ups—who were all men—did not understand the female workers' concerns; when they did understand, they did not find it serious enough to take action (Cobble 459). Their lack of assistance added another challenge to these working women's plates: not only were they facing an issue revolving around their gender, but they could not find people who cared enough to help solve the problem at hand and protect their rights. Thus, the women took matters into their own hands; their solution to not having the people available to help them fight was to combat the challenge themselves.

During the 1960-70s, the feminist movement worked to combat sexist discrimination and gain equality between men and women. Female activists successfully fought for more rights in the workplace and spread the reconstruction of their image. Cobble disclosed that female activism (within female-dominated jobs) made effective changes to oppressive

and discriminatory norms in the work environment. Women formed activist groups, such as the Stewardesses For Women's Rights (SFWR), to protest against their work conditions and discrimination. As a result, they succeeded in many areas, including receiving "raises, promotions, and enhanced job control" (Cobble 465). Female activists took a stand for their workplace rights through the actions of the various activist groups they formed; some of those groups gained union assistance in their cause, however, these female workers were at the forefront of their battle. As a result, they were able to obtain improvements to their work lives in ways that no man was willing to acknowledge because of their profound misogyny.

The working-class women during the late 1800s to mid-/late 1900s faced challenges of oppression and sexism in the workplace. They encountered numerous accounts of discrimination, socially and economically, as well as sexualization, objectification, and harassment. They then had to overcome the lack of support—from supervisors and unions—to fight these obstacles by forming feminist groups, which functioned as the primary force protesting and advocating for their rights. These issues they faced surrounded the patriarchal view in the US society that men are superior and the archaic misogynistic mindset of women being a source of entertainment for their male counterparts. On top of their expected duties as proper wives and mothers at home, these working women were forced into similar restrictive roles in their workplace. Their active feminism succeeded in fighting against those norms and gaining the rights they fought hard for. The activism of these female workers paved a path closer to equality between sexes in the US, which remains a battle for American women today.

Can There Ever Be Representation To Satisfy Everyone?"

Laiba Khurshid

Course: Literature of the Harlem Renaissance
Professor: Rosa Soto
Student: Laiba Khurshid
Essay: *Can There Ever Be Representation To Satisfy Everyone?"*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to write an analysis of an issue or theme stemming from Harlem Renaissance literature.

Both during the 1920s, when the Harlem Renaissance was in full-swing, and today, there is question of what the best kind of racial representation there is. Those like W.E.B. Dubois, one of the lead figures of the Harlem Renaissance and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.), used literature as instructional and aspirational for blacks to follow to become a part of his "Talented Tenth". On the other hand, writers like Claude McKay and Langston Hughes, embraced common black culture and pitied the black person that thought to distance themselves from their culture. With a community as diverse as the black community—in during a specific period, such as the 1920s and 30s Harlem Renaissance—there can never be one "good" sort of representation to satisfy everybody.

Representation in media has often been used as a way to realistically show the everyday lives of those that they are depicting. As such, they can often be down-to-Earth and even gritty. Claude McKay wrote representation in this way through his many short stories, poems, and novels, including his novel *Home to Harlem* (1928). In the chapter "Spring in Harlem" the character Billy tells protagonist Jake that Harlem is too dangerous to go around unarmed anymore and explains why in the following:

> Why, jest the other night I witnessed a nasty stroke. You know that spade prof that's always there on the Avenue handing out the big stuff

about [n]s and their rights and the wul' and bolschism... He was passing by the pool-room with a bunch o'books when a bad [n] jest lunges out and socks him bif! in the jaw. The poah frightened prof. started picking up his books without a word said, so I ups and asks the boxer what was the meaning o' that pass. He laughed and asked me ef I really wanted to know, and before he could squint I landed him one in the eye and pulled mah gun on him. I tell you, boh, Harlem is lousy with crazy-bad [n]s, as tough as Hell's Kitchen, and I always travel with mah gun ready. (McKay, 382)

This says a lot about what Harlem could be like at the time for those trying to live there. Specifically, what blacks had to do to keep them safe, as their safety was not—and continues to not to be—guaranteed. Bill feels the need to stay armed because he knows things can be dangerous and he only has himself to rely on in those times. Another instance of showing what life could be like occurred in an earlier chapter called "Snowstorm in Pittsburgh". The character Ray is going through an emotional journey as he confront his isolation as not only a black man in America, but an immigrant as shown in the following: "Ray fixed his eyes on the offensive bug-bitten bulk of the chef. These men claimed kinship with him. They were black like him. Man and nature had put them in the same race. He ought to love them and feel them (if they felt anything). He ought to if he had a shred of social morality in him. They were all chain-ganged together and he was counted as one link. Yet he loathed every soul in the great barrack-room, except Jake. Race... Why should he have and love a race?" (McKay, 376 – 377) Part of Ray's turmoil could have been inspired from McKay's real-life experiences as a Jamaican immigrant, showing just how real it could be. Later, to deal with his stress, Ray ends up taking drugs (either cocaine or opium; it is unclear which) and having an overdose. Those shows how many people fall into drug habits to cope with the situations that they are in, painting

a more sympathetic portrayal of addicts. *Home to Harlem* had a mixed reception due to some critics pushing back on it, thinking it lewd, degenerate, or otherwise immoral for its depictions of violence, drug-use, sexuality, etc., yet McKay never stopped writing this. For him, he wrote nothing but the truth of how many blacks actually lived and would not be silenced in doing so.

Another writer of the Harlem Renaissance who spoke of the experiences of the everyday black person was Langston Hughes. In his short story collection *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), Hughes wrote 14 different stories exploring the relationship between white and black people. For example in the stories "Slave on the Block" and "The Blues I'm Playing", the white characters use art as a way to commodify black people—either by painting themselves as "progressive" by forcing their black servants into becoming muses despite the black person's own comfort or by sponsoring black artists but controlling what they can make by omitting more traditionally black art—and only at the end of the story when the black characters are freed from these white people can they achieve any sort of peace or happiness. This was a reality for many artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Jazz and other forms of black art was popularized and even somewhat mainstream and, as a result, white people began to flood and, in some places, completely replace black people in the clubs and bars that they made in the first place. Hughes also write the very dark reality of many black people with both stories "Home" and "Father and Son" ending in the death of black men due to an angry mob. In "Home", the protagonist Roy is lynched for having a conversation with a white woman which the townsfolk saw as inappropriate and accused Roy of attempting rape when he took his gloves off to shake her hand. The protagonist of "Father and Son", Bert, does not fare any better, as after being chased by a white mob all day for the murder of his white father, he kills himself so he does not have to undergo the

torture of being lynched. The mob, upset at not being able to lynch anyone, lynches the Bert's brother Willie who is innocent of any wrongdoing but is blamed for being complacent as shown in the newspaper article at the end of the story: "DOUBLE LYNCHING IN GEORGIA. A large mob late this afternoon wrecked vengeance on the second of two [N] field hands, the murderers of Colonel Thomas Norwood, wealthy planter found dead at Big House Plantation. Bert Lewis was lynched last night, and his brother, Willie Lewis, today." (Hughes, 618) Hughes, like McKay, depicts the everyday lives and harsh realities of being black. He also celebrates black culture through depictions of jazz like in "The Blues I'm Playing" and vernacular through the dialogue of nearly every black character he writes. Not only that, but Hughes critiques black artists that shy away from these aspects of the culture and finds it to be anti-black. In an essay by Hughes called "The [N] Artist and the Racial Mountain", he remarks that "One of the most promising of the young [N] poets said to me once, 'I want to be a poet—not a [N] poet,' meaning, I believe, 'I want to write like a white poet'; meaning subconsciously, 'I would like to be a white poet'; meaning behind that, 'I would like to be white.' And I was sorry for the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. And I doubted then that, with his desire to run away spiritually from his race, this boy would ever be a great poet. But this is the mountain standing in the way of any true [N] art in America—this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pure racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little [N] and as much American as possible." (Hughes, 91) In this way, Hughes finds both the rich culture and the everyday hardships and pains of being black as essential experiences and necessary to write as a black artist. For a black artist to not do so is denying a part of themselves and a form of internalized anti-blackness and they cannot achieve true brilliance in literature without embracing that aspect of themselves.

Not every figure of the Harlem Renaissance would agree with these takes, however. As mentioned earlier, there were many that pushed back against McKay's work due to thinking that it was degrading. These people were also against Hughes' work, as well, and likely did not agree with his statement in "The [N] Artist and the Racial Mountain". W.E.B. Dubois, for example, would likely condemn the young black poet for not wanting to associate himself with blackness, but would argue that his lack of embracing aspects of common black culture such as lack of use of vernacular and want to write like higher class white people would not be a bad thing. Dubois was a strong believer that formal education was the key for black people's freedom and self-actualization. Things like jazz and black vernacular, he thought, were instruments of self-oppression that not only stopped blacks from, achieving their potential but supported negative stereotypes that whites held of blacks. In an article published in the Australasian Journal of American Studies called "Jazz and the New [N]: Harlem's Intellectuals Wrestle with the Art of the Age" (2002), author Alwyn Williams talks about the lack of jazz and Afrocentric art in the N.A.A.C.P.'s magazine, *The Crisis*, which Dubois was the head of, and writes: "*The Crisis* under W.E.B. Du Bois demonstrated no similar inconsistency. Jazz did not rate a mention in *The Crisis* in the 1920s, and the magazine tended to pay much less attention to the arts in general than *The Opportunity*. It published plenty of poetry and fiction among political and social features, but it rarely wandered into the realms of music and the visual arts. When it did, it tended to be even more dedicated to European tradition than its rival. Despite Du Bois's reputation as a champion of the spiritual, *The Crisis* consistently preferred to discuss black classical musicians such as George Polgren Bridgetower, a 'violinist and [m] friend of Beethoven.' [...] The concern was to demonstrate the presence of blacks in the creation of Europe's high art, thereby encouraging race pride and the desire to emulate these achievements."

(Williams, 7 – 8) This supports the assertion that Dubois was not a fan of Hughes' idea of black excellence being achieved through fulfilling aspects of culture. Those who followed Hughes' way of thinking likely thought of Dubois as being more similar to Mrs. Ellsworth in "The Blues I'm Playing" than anybody else, since she, too, tried to stifle that story's protagonist Ocecela from playing jazz and interacting with "lowly" black people and encouraged her to frequent European society and play the classics. Dubois likely was a part of the crowd that decried *Home to Harlem* for being dirty and crude, and thus, would think it negative representation. Good representation was more aspirational. Showing them what they could be, that they could measure up to the same standards of art that white people could. This would be very encouraging for blacks that were pursuing art similar to the classics in terms of music, literature, and visual arts, though not for those wanting to depict everyday black lives. Thus, two sides of a conflict can be seen and understood. Hughes and McKay, for their realistic down-to-Earth representation, and Dubois, for wanting more aspirational and affluent depictions of blacks instead.

There is another side to the idea of representation. One that is also against more realistic portrayals and thus favors Dubois, though is not quite the same as him. This has to do with the negative aspects of excessive realism. Though the term "black pain" is a modern one referring to contemporary depictions of black people in Hollywood, the concept can apply to the works of the Harlem Renaissance as well. Many might have become tired of works by Hughes and McKay because of their use of political and triggering topics such as drug abuse, discrimination, poverty, and lynching. These things can be tiring to constantly read and watch about, and so many might have taken issue with things like *Home to Harlem* and the stories in *The Ways of White Folks* not because of any moral objection, but because a person cannot constantly read these works without becoming depressed with their state in the world. A Caribbean immigrant might relate to Ray's struggles in *Home to Harlem*, but they might also be tired of feeling isolated and want to read a book where the black community all comes together and is cohesive and happy. And blacks, especially black men, knew how dangerous it was to live at a time where lynching was common—why would they want to be reminded that even in their fiction when reading short stories? It is not out of the realm of possibility that there were those in Harlem who desired escapism in their media, not unlike how today people watch shows like Netflix's Bridgeton—a show with a cast in every color can be in the aristocracy—and why not long ago people enjoyed sitcoms like *The Cosby Show* (1984 – 1992)—where the affluent black Huxtables could live comfortably in contemporary society, showing that not every person was suffering. These people were definitely not the biggest fans of Hughes and McKay. Though they might not have been a part of Dubois' Talented Tenth, it is possible they found the image of it more comforting. Like the Huxtables, the Talented Tenth are aspirational in intelligence and wealth and lead the black community with strength of mind. There really is no middle ground between these different ways of thinking. One view believes denying reality and pushing aside black culture would be a form of self-hatred, the so-called "Racial Mountain" as Hughes puts it to be conquered before becoming a truly great black artist. Another believes in aspiration and breaking whites' stereotypes of blacks through becoming their contemporaries and abandoning "degrading" aspects of culture like jazz and vernacular. And yet another desires escapism through representation if nothing else. It is easy to see that no compromise can be made and, thus, it is realized that with a community as diverse with as many opinions on such an issue as representation as the black community, there is no ONE right answer. For what is positive representation to some is negative to others and negative to some positive to others. Therefore,

the only conclusion that can be made is that there is no such this as good representation— only what is good for some people.

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The Origin and Brief History of Sweatshops

Azaniah Jones

Course: U.S. Labor History
Professor: David Koistinen
Student: Azaniah Jones
Essay: *The Origin and Brief History of Sweatshops*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to write a civic-engagement research paper by focusing on a problem in present-day society that is causing difficulty for a particular group of working people.

The concept of sweatshops has been around for centuries dating back to the 19th century. The term "sweatshop" was primarily used in the tailoring industry but was applied to other industries requiring labor as well that had similar working conditions. The term "sweater" also came into use, which was used to describe an employer who underpaid workers but overworked them as well. Since the 19th century, the definition of sweatshops has evolved but has not changed very much from its original meaning. The 1993 Webster's Third New International Dictionary describes sweatshops as "A usually small manufacturing establishment employing workers under unfair and unsanitary conditions" while the 1988 U.S. General Accounting Office describes it as "A business that regularly violates both safety or health and wage or child labor laws" (Smithsonian). Sweatshops were so common during previous centuries due to employers wanting to have ready-made garments that they could sell for very cheap prices. This demand eventually was extended to the production of slave clothes as well as military uniforms during the civil war. Although the labor, and textile, industry have come a long way since the 1800s, sweatshops are still present today that continue to violate human rights laws.

Why in the U.S.?

When most people think of sweatshops today, the first thing that comes to mind are factories overseas that often employ children for the labor that produces garments that are shipped to the U.S. at very low cost. Contrary to popular belief, there are still sweatshops that currently operate in the U.S., many of which are concentrated in New York City and Los Angeles. Despite the unethical and outdated nature of sweatshops, there are still used today so that companies and corporations can make the largest profit possible by limiting the cost of manufacturing certain goods. Companies also use "Made in the U.S"

on garments to make buyers more inclined to purchase something made on our own soil despite being made in sweatshops. These corporations have an easier time getting away with such unethical behavior due to exploiting vulnerable populations such as immigrants who are desperately in need of work, many of whom speak minimal English and are not educated on their own human rights. "Out of the 45000 people who work in Los Angeles' garment industry, the country's largest, over 70 percent are immigrants, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Labor investigated 77 garment companies in the city and found that 85 percent of the time, they cheated their workers" (Davis). Some of these sweatshops are utilized by very popular clothing retailers that we buy and wear every day. Some of the brands that outsource manufacturing to sweatshops here in the U.S. include, but are not limited to, Forever21, TJMaxx, Burlington, Nordstrom, Beall's, Macy's, Dillard's, and Ross (KRISTI ELLIS). There are also several brands outside of the clothing industry that utilize sweatshops for production including companies in the tech industry.

Conditions

The primary issue with sweatshops is their violations of labor laws and wage requirements. Sweatshop workers are often paid significantly under the minimum wage requirements for the U.S. According to the Los Angeles Times, "Some garment workers can earn $1.58 per hour". The practice that is partially responsible for such low wages is the piece-rate wage system that pays workers based on the number of garments they produce. This practice has been outlawed in California in 2022 and furthermore, it has been reported by the Labor Department that "80% of SoCal clothing makers violate federal laws [as well]" and continue to find ways to avoid taking accountability (Castleman). In addition to the extremely low wages, many sweatshops have been found to have very poor working environments. Workers are often faced with working in places with poor ventilation, extreme heat, and in some cases verbal or physical abuse.

Accountability and Taking Action

Given the problematic behavior of sweatshops, agencies as well as the government has taken action to hold these corporations accountable that rely on the labor of sweatshop workers. This has been difficult at times due to corporations using loopholes such as failing to report payroll records or forging them altogether. It is also difficult to hold companies accountable because "Under federal law, the brands can't be penalized for wage theft in any factories if they can credibly claim they didn't know the workers were paid illegally low wages" (Christian Bryant). Retailers also quite frequently turn a blind eye to these conditions and choose to act as if they do not exist. However, legal actions have been put in place to rectify the unfair treatment of laborers which include recovering back wages to workers and implementing laws to prevent such activity from persisting. In 2022, investigators in Southern California recovered $800000 in back wages and liquidated damages (amount owed to a party to compensate them for damages) to be given to workers who were victims of the sweatshop system. Due to the difficult nature of holding companies accountable, it is imperative that the consumers of garments take action to end sweatshops. Action that can be taken by consumers include demanding that retailers ensure that products being sold were not produced in sweatshops, demanding better conditions for workers producing garments, buying union-made clothing, thrifting clothing instead of buying from big-name brands, buying fair-trade items, educating others about the impacts of sweatshops, and asking companies about the conditions in which their garments are being produced. If consumers begin refusing to buy products that were produced in sweatshops, industries will begin to lose money and will have no choice but to change these practices if they wish to make any profits.

Consumers often fail to realize how much power they have when it comes to markets and production. Without consumers, corporations have no way of making money from their products. Labor activists have also taken it upon themselves to protest the use of sweatshops and have pushed the implementation of 'sweat-free contracts' to ensure that raise standards for factory labor (Chin).

Conclusion

Even though sweatshops play quite a prominent role in the US economy and production of goods, they do not treat workers fairly and should be eliminated. The government has taken steps to implement legislation, however, this is not enough to make the changes that consumers want to see. Consumers must take it upon themselves to be mindful of where they are purchasing goods and make sure that they are not giving their money to corporations that do not follow labor laws or human rights requirements.

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Rebellious Memory

Taryn Woodley

Course: Childhood and Social Justice
Professor: Maria Kromidas
Student: Taryn Woodley
Essay: *Rebellious Memory*

Assignment

For this assignment, students were asked to analyze a childhood memory using the tools of childhood studies while also using that memory to consider debates and discourses of children, childhood, and social justice.

When I was in the 5th grade, there was a school dance called "canteen night." The dance was only for 5th and 6th graders as they were the oldest grades in the school. In my school district, elementary school lasted until 6th grade and middle school started in 7th. I was extremely excited for this dance. I watched a lot of TV as a child and in the teen shows, school dances were always portrayed as romantic and magical. I always had huge expectations and I thought it was going to be like prom (and that maybe someone would magically fall in love with me, we would slow dance together, and I would finally get a boyfriend.) Needless to say, I was looking forward to this dance for years.

I don't remember what I did to deserve this (probably because I was so upset,) but it was something "bad" enough for my mom to forbid me from going to the dance. I remember pleading with her and begging her to let me go, but the final answer was no. I remember filling up with rage and frustration. Things being fair really matters to me, and it especially mattered to me when I was a kid. I couldn't believe she would take away something so important to me for any reason, but I distinctly remember thinking the reason she did it wasn't a good enough reason at all. I had a dress that I had previously worn, but I did not like the way the sleeves were made so I cut them off along with the mesh covering the top part of the dress and made it strapless. I was so proud of myself and beyond excited to debut my new dress to the world. My mom knew that, she saw me altering the dress and I told her that I was going to wear it to the dance. I couldn't understand how she saw how excited I was and all the planning I put into it, just to take it away the night before.

When we finished talking, I slammed my room door behind her and broke down in tears. I have only been that angry a few times in my life. In an act of rage, I destroyed my room. I threw shoes at the wall, ripped toys off of the shelves, etc. Although at the end of the day, that didn't really do much because I had to clean

it up myself. I even recall putting a small dent in the wall with my shoe because I had thrown it so hard. I was lucky my room was upstairs and hers was downstairs or else I would have gotten in even more trouble if she heard me.

If I could have found a way to get to the dance on my own, best believe I would have. I was rarely rebellious, but this dance was so important to me that I would have done almost anything for a chance to go. However, being a child and very afraid of my mother at that time my hands were tied. As a kid growing up in the suburbs, being driven by a parent was the only way I could get there. I couldn't ask a friend's parent to pick me up because they would have had to go through my mom. I felt completely powerless because virtually, I was. It is standard for parents to drive their kids to school in the morning where I grew up, whereas in urban cities its more common for students to take the bus, public transportation, or walk through the city to get to school. In comparison to the kids of Augursville in *City Kids: Transforming Racial Baggage* (Kromidas 2016), there is a sense of independence that comes with living in the city that most of the kids at my school (including myself) cannot relate to. Because I grew up in that type of suburban environment, I believe the concept of a "school dance" was inflated to me. My school experience looked like the ones you see on TV— football-loving, everyone having their own "clique," and majority white with the exception of a token Black student - that student being me.

I believe this memory shaped me in a way that tainted my trust in my mother's ability to understand me. I don't think I learned a lesson from that form of discipline because I don't even remember what I did to deserve that treatment, only that it hurt me tremendously. As a kid, all I knew in that moment was that it was unfair. I was aware that she could have punished me in another way later on (which I also requested) as opposed to taking away the thing she knew was most important to me in that moment.

Although I love my mom dearly and she's made it clear over the years that I can come to her with any problem I have, my trust in her ability to understand said problems was diminished. This has probably been the experience of many other people whose parents took something away from them that they did not know mattered to them so much at the time, thinking they would forget about it because they were a child.

Thinking with Toni Cade Bambara's short story *Gorilla, My Love*, I can see myself in the main protagonist Hazel. Hazel frequently questioned the world around her and eventually, identified the problems she had with it. She realized what we have been discussing in class all semester, that children are too often overlooked and disrespected. And she needed to do something about it. Bambara writes in Hazel's voice, "Grownups figure they can treat you just anyhow. Which burns me up" (Bambara 1972, 20). She is moving closer and closer to her breaking point throughout the story. I relate to Hazel in that moment. I was sure what I had done didn't deserve anywhere near the punishment that I received, and I saw that as an injustice. In contrast to Hazel, I wasn't bold enough to stand up to my mother face to face. I dealt with it alone in my own way (through a silent tantrum) so that I didn't further get in trouble.

Children are seen as "other" in society because of their emotions and age; and because of those qualities, they are seen as insignificant. We often think children are unintelligent and have little to offer because their delivery and thought process is different from adults. When in reality, there are many things we can learn from them that we choose not to see by pushing them aside and dismissing what they say. For example, if a child around the age of 5 or 6 is talking to their mother about a game they and their friend made up and played after school, a tired mother may brush it off as nonsense because the game doesn't make sense to them and only half-listen. A child around that age may pick up on the fact that their mom isn't giving them her

full attention and, in the future, be less inclined to share things that are important to them with the world because they feel that it will be seen as insignificant.

One of the biggest myths about children is that because they are young, they will forget uncomfortable and potentially traumatic events from their childhood. My memory shows otherwise because I and so many others can remember an event that somewhat traumatized them, caused by their parents that stuck with them through life. I will never forget not being able to attend canteen night because I felt that my mother had betrayed me and that is not something that a child takes lightly. She probably thought that I would forget about it shortly after because I was still young. However, being young didn't make my feelings any less valid or even change my opinion of it after all these years.

Children's liberation would put false notions like this to an end. Being more mindful as parents and adults to what we are exposing our children to and how we handle every situation, no matter how frustrating. Many people into their adult years feel the need to fight against issues they developed during childhood. Children's liberation would mean less trauma and hardships in people because of their childhoods and an overall happier more understanding society.

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Rapunzel's Tangled Hair: Disney's Half-hearted Attempt at Remedying Years of Sexism

Arifa Hussain

Course: **Experiences in Literature**
Professor: **Jason Myers**
Student: **Arifa Hussain**
Essay: ***Rapunzel's Tangled Hair: Disney's Half-hearted Attempt at Remedying Years of Sexism***

Assignment

The assignment for which Arifa Hussain's essay responds asked students to write a thesis-driven paper that compared and contrasted an early published version of a fairy tale/fable of their choosing (e.g., from authors such as Perrault, Grimm, Jacobs, etc.) with that of a more recent iteration. The goal of this comparison and contrast analysis was to determine whether the contemporary version of the tale maintains, challenges, or subverts the moral(s), motifs, or messaging of the earlier publication.

Arifa decided to take the goal of the assignment one step further by not only noting Disney's attempt to revise "Rapunzel" by The Brothers Grimm in order to, at least ostensibly, put forward a more progressive representation of gender relations, but also to argue that the studio ultimately failed to achieve this aim.

Two tales of a heroic male, a somewhat powerful female, and many typical gender stereotypes, the Brothers Grimm's "Rapunzel" and Disney's *Tangled* could not be more similar. Yet, the general audience might argue that the latter version is almost a completely different story. Grimm's 1857 version of "Rapunzel" shares the story of an unborn baby who was traded for some rampion, locked in a tower, and later married a prince. Disney's 2010 version is the tale of a lost princess with magical hair, kidnapped as a baby and locked in a tower because of it, who later marries a thief. It's true that on the surface, the stories sound entirely incompatible, but the underlying details still remain the same. The original tale of Rapunzel is that of a traditional princess fairytale. Some aspects of the tale deviate from the norm, but the standard tropes of the evil witch, the knight-in-shining-armor, and, of course, the happily-ever-after, are clearly still present. Thus, although Disney's *Tangled* is seen as a more progressive adaptation of the original tale, and can be interpreted as a response to claims of gender discrimination on the studio's end, it is not as empowering as the viewers and directors themselves are seemingly convinced that it is.

It would be wrong, as well as impossible, to argue that Disney did not at least try to alleviate some of the more prominent gender issues in the Grimms' earlier version of "Rapunzel." In the original tale, Rapunzel's biological father agrees to give up his unborn child after getting caught stealing rampion and encountering a sorceress who makes him an offer: "...I will allow you to take as much rapunzel as you want. But under one condition: You must give me the child that your wife will bring into the world." Through this encounter, it is clear that Rapunzel is being objectified, even as an infant, as her value is equated to that of a vegetable. Not only does this suggest that men can simply trade women and treat them as they please, but Rapunzel is also exchanged for a mere vegetable that her mother was simply craving. Thus, when offered their materialistic wants, this couple was willing to give away the child that they had wished so badly for and reduced her worth to a common commodity. It raises the question: if Rapunzel had been born a boy, would her parents still have been so quick to give her up? Conversely, it is clear that Rapunzel in Disney's *Tangled* knows her worth. When Flynn Rider first entered Rapunzel's secluded tower, she tied him up, beat him with a frying pan, and exclaimed, "I know why you're here, and I'm not afraid of you... So what do you want with my hair? To cut it? Sell it?" (24:45- 27:16). Rapunzel is fully aware that her magical hair is something that money cannot buy. Unlike in the original, where she is just traded for some rampion against her free will and knowledge, Rapunzel actually possesses power and agency in *Tangled*. In Disney's version, Rapunzel's hair offers her real strength that she can wield, even allowing her to hold Flynn, a fully-grown man, captive to a chair with it during their initial encounter. In this later text, Rapunzel decides how to use her hair, when to use it, who is allowed to use its abilities, and possibly who she would sell it to (not that she is likely to do that), which is also evidenced by the fact that Dame Gothel's character is revised to be "Mother Gothel" in *Tangled*, as Gothel

persuades Rapunzel to *choose* to use her power to aid her ailing mother, as opposed to being directly forced. Therefore, Rapunzel's cautious and hostile reaction to Flynn's trespassing in her home can be read as another attempt at trying to resolve a huge problem in the Grimm's version of the tale.

Grimms' "Rapunzel" and Disney's *Tangled* also treat their characters' inevitable marriages differently in their respective texts. After a few weeks of simply listening to Rapunzel's singing voice in the Grimms' version, the prince sneakily entered her tower and, "...began talking to her in a very friendly manner.... Rapunzel lost her fear, and when he asked her if she would take him as her husband..., she said yes and placed her hand into his." This paints an entirely naive and weak picture of women. Rapunzel most likely never knew that other people even existed in the world, how could she understand the idea of marriage? Not to mention that he asked her for her hand in marriage before they even spent any time together and got to know each other. Overall, Rapunzel immediately marrying the prince makes it seem like women are easy; he was a random man who invaded her immensely secluded home because he liked her voice. In simpler words, the prince sounds like a creep. Rapunzel's reaction to Flynn stumbling upon her tower in *Tangled* is completely different and much more realistic. For example, as soon as Flynn steps foot into her personal space, Rapunzel hits him with her frying pan numerous times, shoves him into a closet, and begins thinking of ways to use this situation to her advantage (19:32-21:15). It is a very ironic scene because not only does she use a stereotypically women's tool, a frying pan, to overpower a man, but Rapunzel also uses her brain and intellectual prowess to figure out how to manipulate this man into doing whatever she wants. Instead of swooning at the intruder and marrying him on the spot, Disney's Rapunzel completely throws off the power balance from the beginning of their relationship and demonstrates her strength and fortitude.

That said, Flynn and Rapunzel do end up getting married in *Tangled*. At the end of the movie, Flynn jokes, "...after years and years of asking and asking and asking... I finally said yes," to which he gets scolded by Rapunzel and admits, "All right, I asked her" (1:30:50-1:31:02). Rapunzel ends the movie on a good note, letting viewers know that the two did indeed live happily ever after. However, not only did it take years for Rapunzel to agree to marry Flynn, but they also had a much longer courtship than their Grimm counterparts, overcoming countless obstacles together on their quest and genuinely falling in love. Rapunzel knew she was in love with him *after* he helped her accomplish her dreams, meaning that a man supported a woman in reaching her goals and not the other way around. Unlike Grimms' version, *Tangled* portrays Rapunzel as a determined, smart, and strong woman who knows what she wants and will not settle for anything less. Thus, Disney disproves the idea that women are easy and sends a clear message to male viewers: women will not fall to their feet and marry you if you break into their house and speak to them "in a friendly manner."

In Grimms' "Rapunzel," the depiction of romance is rather one-sided, and the tale employs the "love-at-first-sight" trope. When the king's son was riding by one day, "...he heard a song so beautiful that he stopped to listen...the song had so touched his heart that he returned to the forest every day and listened to it." This man had no idea of Rapunzel's existence, and all it took for him to fall in love with her was the sound of her voice. There is a clear comparison between Rapunzel and Sirens in Greek mythology here, beautiful and dangerous creatures who are the epitome of the female form and tempt men with their sweet voices. Thus, Grimms' version of "Rapunzel" could be read to depict women as seductresses whose only purpose in life is to lure men in and destroy their lives. Furthermore, Grimms' "Rapunzel" emphasizes and maintains beauty standards because if the prince

climbed the tower after listening to her and discovered that the woman whose voice he heard was ugly, would he still want to marry her? To their credit, Disney does try to resolve this image of Rapunzel by changing the way Flynn and Rapunzel meet. In the film, Flynn just stumbles upon Rapunzel's tower. He does not hear her singing and long for her for days, it was a mere coincidence. This removes her Siren-like quality yet pushes the Disney agenda that fate brought the two together. By revising the tale's meet-cute, as well as the time it takes for the characters to fall in love, Disney tries to depict a much healthier relationship, where the female's role is not solely to fulfill the male gaze.

While it does seem like *Tangled* is one of Disney's most empowering films, and one could even suggest that it's feminist in its aims, there are so many underlying qualities that keep the film beholden to its sexist roots. First, the film begins with Flynn, the main *male* character, narrating the story. He jokes that the story about to be told was about his death, but let's viewers know that, "..this is a fun story, and the truth is, it isn't even mine. This is the story of a girl named Rapunzel" (0:57-1:05). If it's not your story, why tell it then? He also speaks about his story first, which makes it seem like his story is more important than hers, an already off-putting and not-so-feminist start to the movie. In other words, why does *he* have to tell *her* story? Why can't she freely speak about the story of her own life instead of relying on a man to do it for her? Why does he get to control the narrative, the lens into Rapunzel's life? At the end of the movie, it is revealed Rapunzel was next to Flynn the whole time, and all she chimed in to do was to scold Flynn for making it seem like she proposed to him and ended with, "and we're living happily ever after" in her own words (1:30:59-1:31:06). Therefore, the first thing Rapunzel actually contributes to her own story is to scold her husband, which is tasteless because it plays along with the typical marital stereotype which suggests that women are always nagging at men. Not only that, her mere seven seconds

of speaking time in the narrative probably hold the least amount of substance compared to everything Flynn has already told the audience before that. This is only one of the several ways Disney has failed to make this movie truly progressive because right at the ending, it's as if Rapunzel, once again, has no power in her life, except this time she's controlled by her husband, who does not let her speak for herself, as opposed to Mother Gothel. Thus, in the end, Rapunzel exchanges one controlling agent for another.

Furthermore, if you thought *Tangled* was your escape from the typical knight-in-shining-armor trope, you were wrong. Sure, Rapunzel was able to defend herself with a frying pan and show her cleverness by negotiating a deal to get out of the tower; however, she still needed a man to make things happen at the end of the day. Without Flynn, she would have never set foot outside of Mother Gothel's reign, and when she does, she even goes as far as singing, "For like the first time ever, I'm completely free.... That's when my life begins" (31:25-31:55). For years, she was a passive, obedient and perfect little girl, who never even thought about escaping her tower, overall painting a very weak picture of herself and women in general; but she paints an even worse picture by proving that she needed a man to kick-start her life. Without Flynn, Rapunzel would've never been able to explore the kingdom and gain the simplest of experiences. She finally got to run through the fresh grass and interact with people and share her dreams; essentially, Flynn gives Rapunzel a life. At the end of the movie, it is Flynn who cuts off Rapunzel's hair, aiding in Mother Gothel's demise and granting Rapunzel permanent freedom (1:24:17-1:25:15). The powerful image of Rapunzel cutting her own hair and signifying her liberty was nowhere to be found because of Flynn, who was the one Disney chose to show as smart enough to realize the connection between Rapunzel's hair and Mother Gothel's hold over her, ultimately overshadowing any intelligence Rapunzel showed throughout the movie. Thus, in the end, Flynn is the main reason that Rapunzel is reunited

with her long-lost family and ultimately lives the classic happily ever after. *Tangled's* Rapunzel is not the typical damsel-in-distress, but she did still need saving by a man, which, unfortunately, may still perpetuate the idea that all women need to be saved in the minds of young viewers, might also encourage young males potentially to develop detrimental hero complexes.

Beauty standards also work hand-in-hand with gender roles in this Tangled. In Grimms' story, Rapunzel asks the sorceress, "Frau Gothel, tell me why it is that you are more difficult to pull up than is the young prince, who will be arriving any moment now?" Men are usually heavier than women, but this question from Rapunzel suggests that the sorceress is on the heavier side. The sorceress's weight can also imply her role in Rapunzel's life. She is a heavy burden to Rapunzel, whereas having the prince in her life would be lighter and easier. Although in *Tangled*, the whole reason Mother Gothel kidnaps Rapunzel is because she is old and not particularly aging well. Rapunzel on the other hand, in both tales, is described as the most beautiful woman in the land, and she also fits typical Eurocentric beauty standards: pale, light doe-eyed, long blonde hair, slim, and petite. In both versions, Rapunzel is portrayed as innocent and good with an enchanting voice, almost as if she is an angel. Thus, Disney's *Tangled* still plants the seed that all beautiful women are beautiful people, and women who are not conventionally attractive might be evil. This equating of beauty with inherent goodness promotes vanity and may teach children to relate self-worth with physical appearance.

This relationship between beauty and inherent value is also seen in the film when Rapunzel enters a pub full of ruffians and thugs, who end up passionately singing about their aspirations in life and help Rapunzel escape to accomplish her dreams (38:36-43:03). As noted, Rapunzel in the film is still a stunning woman with an even more stunning voice. If she was overweight, would the men in the bar have paid as

much attention to her? If Rapunzel had crazy hair and cystic acne, would these men have stopped everything and listened to her as intently as they did? This is an example of *Tangled's* Rapunzel cashing in on what's called "pretty privilege," and this scene encourages the idea that one has to be conventionally beautiful in order for the world to notice them let alone to be kind. This message can be incredibly hindering to children, as it pushes the idea that beauty is everything in this world. It can be especially damaging to impressionable young female viewers, who may begin to fixate on their appearance in order to please men and develop unrealistic standards of beauty.

And finally, the real kicker is the intention behind the film. Before it was released, it became known that *Tangled* would be the last of Disney's fairytale and princess movies. Although it could be viewed as sad because many of us grew up with these films, and they provide many of us with a sense of nostalgia, a lot of people applauded Disney for this new approach and decision. No more princess movies was supposed to mean no more making women out to look dumb, docile, and dependent on men. It was a small step forward toward empowering women, but in an article called "Disney restyles 'Rapunzel' to appeal to boys" by Dawn C. Chmielewski and Claudia Eller of the Los Angeles Times, readers learn that this was all a marketing move in an attempt to capture the attention of younger, male audiences. Apparently, princess movies are not as profitable as they could be because they do not gain as much attention from young boys, and, therefore, Disney has decided not to produce them anymore. Knowing this, it is clear who the directors were mainly trying to appeal to in Tangled, as it is very different from your typical princess film. There is noticeably quite a few fighting scenes, lots of sarcasm, and an overall masculine tone throughout the movie. Thus, Disney's decision to stop making princess movies is not one to praise after all because they are not doing it for progressive reasons;

it's a feminist façade at best. Of course, Disney wanted viewers to believe that they made this decision with the goal of women's empowerment in mind, but all they were really thinking about was money and how to bring in a male-dominated audience.

For years, Disney has been accused of gender discrimination, and Tangled was their foot in the door toward finally defeating those claims. But with the still problematic representation of gender in *Tangled*, that door should have been slammed shut in their face and sealed. Indeed, as noted, Disney did their "best" (best?) to fix some of the issues regarding gender in Grimms' version of the "Rapunzel," but, as I've argued, their attempt fell short. Tangled is a great watch, but if you want to watch or show your child a true display of feminism and the power of women, look elsewhere. With Rapunzel not being able to speak for herself, the classic knight-in-shining-armor trope still readily apparent, the emphasis on perpetuating beauty standards, and the studio's desire to cater to male audiences, the film *Tangled* is itself a tangled and twisted travesty.

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Life Springs Ephemeral

Tyler Fishman

Course: Environmental Science Junior Seminar
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Student: Tyler Fishman
Essay: *Life Springs Ephemeral*

Assignment

With the help of alum, Christi Kline, this prose poem was extracted from Tyler Fishman's essay, "Biodiversity contained in Vernal Pools of High Mountain Reservation, Passaic County, New Jersey."

Life Springs Ephemeral

(An excerpt from Tyler Fishman's "Biodiversity contained in Vernal Pools of High Mountain Reservation, Passaic County, New Jersey")

They are nested in glacial depressions and valleys
beneath the deciduous hardwood forest cover
of Maple (Acer spp.), Beech (Fagus spp.),
Hornbeam (*Capinus spp.*), and Oak (*Querqus*).

Deposited leaves from previous years
of succession form a thick mat,
their decay, a thick mulm of soft, fine
detritus, that feeds microfauna.

Felled stumps and root flares from
water tolerant hardwoods, such
as red maple (*Acer rubrum*),
covered in a dense patina of moss,
forming pillows found within and on the margins.

Peat moss (*Sphagnum spp.*) and
amphibious *Hygroambystegium cf. tenax*,
Leptodictyium riparium, and *Scleropodium spp.*
are most abundant.

Grasses are present, with nutsedges (*Cyperus spp.*)
and tussock (*Carex spp.*) the dominants;
the most common forms large clumps,
some reaching one foot in diameter.

Facultative wetland plants
such as touch-me-not (*Impatiens capensis*)
and various species of nettle (*Urticaceae*)
are found growing on the mossy banks,
or on moss pillows present within or around.

Skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)
thrives in wet and stagnant water,
with dense colonies forming;
these large plants, some of the first
angiosperms to take advantage of the
ample light before the canopy fills in.

Shrubs such as spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and *Viburnum spp.*, witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), often grow near networks surveyed, with highbush blueberry, the most abundant and dominant, tending to form dense, wiry thickets.

The faunal community are most unique-- invertebrates include several arthropods, freshwater copepods (*Cyclopidae*), water flea (*Daphnia cf. magna*), water mites (*Hydrachnidia*), and mosquito larvae (*Cuclidae*).

These micro-invertebrates are present and active in freezing water. Warm season invertebrates' composition includes insects, with the larvae of dragonflies and damselflies (*Odonata*) often present and fulfilling a predator niche.

Diving beetles (*Dysticidae*) fulfill a similar niche. Perhaps the most interesting invertebrate is the fingernail clam, (*Sphaerium cf. occidentale*), a bivalve mollusk, whose local distribution is limited.

These clams are about 2 cm in maximum diameter, and may sit exposed on leaf litter or buried in mulm-rich sediment. A host of vertebrates, notably amphibians, are dependent on the unique environment to carry out their lifecycle.

Late obligate season breeders, such as the marbled salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*), a species of mole salamander, are the most abundant of all amphibians, present in their larval form, during the October- April survey.

This species deposits a clutch of eggs under logs in late September and early October. The egg masses are guarded by the female; upon refilling with water, the female will

leave the eggs and they will begin to hatch. The marbled salamander larvae are predatory and dependent upon late season micro-invertebrates for food. Active under the ice, they grow to around an inch in length upon the time that other amphibians begin breeding.

Marbled salamanders will often prey upon the larvae of larger species when present, and species such as the spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) may fall prey. This suggests niche partitioning with other amblostomids.

The Spotted salamander migrates from underground burrows on rainy, early spring nights. Males will congregate and deposit spermatophores for female salamanders to absorb.

The female salamanders deposit a large clutch of eggs in a kidney shaped gelatinous mass; two egg mass morphs, with both clear and milky egg masses present, attached to twigs, or vegetation.

Wood frogs (*Lithobates sylvatica*) begin their explosive breeding in Late March and early April, their vocalizations emanating. Egg masses may be plentiful and are distinct from aforementioned amphibians, with hundreds of individual eggs present in each mass.

Spring peeper (*Pseudocaris crucifer*), a tree frog: The spring peeper is a facultative breeder; most notably, it is often heard calling several hundred yards away from vernal networks and calm water bodies in early spring.

By late summer, vernal basins will desiccate. Metamorphosed amphibian larvae will leave, dispersing into the forest.

Migratory songbirds (*Icteridae, Parulidae, Turdidae*) are dependent on vernal pools for a source of food and nesting, often preying on amphibian larvae and aquatic invertebrates within;

Wood ducks (*Aix spinosa*) are dependent on vernal pool networks as critical breeding habitat as their isolated nature forms nurseries for young;

Skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus,*) forms a large portion of the wood ducks' early season diet, and are often frayed and damaged from browsing.

The Parulid, (*Parkesia spp.*) (Water thrushes) are often associated, with these vernal pools, as well as the elusive solitary sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*) which frequents them--

Where, you may ask, where lies this fertile oasis of biodiversity?

Closer than you think.
The vernal pools of High Mountain are found right in our William Paterson University backyard. Their ephemeral nature offers a unique habitat that many different species evolved to exploit and depend upon for survival.

-The vernal pools in this study consisted of a large pool (playa) with one offset basin, with a south flowing ephemeral stream. The main vernal pool basin was located in a glacial depression, at an elevation approximately of 194 meters. This pool spans approximately 15 meters in diameter. This main Pool was observed from October 2022 to April 2023.

-The richness of biodiversity present within these pools, due to the prevalence of sensitive indicator species, such as aquatic invertebrates and abundant amphibians, make the vernal pool environment of High Mountain Reservation a barometer for ecological health and indicates a surprisingly robust ecosystem contained within urban sprawl and an understudied treasure trove of biodiversity.

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