

THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL INTIMACY:
REGULATING GENDERED AND
RACIAL VIOLENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the constructions of gender, intimacy, and race and the ways these issues are informed by history and the law. The idea of consent, while originally described in texts as a legal concept between citizens, transformed into a way to navigate intimate relationships in the private sphere. This muddled the ways women and men were understood to form relationships and the limits of those relationships. In the same ways that gender was arbitrated through legal language, race is often ensnared in the same processes and institutions. Tolerance has been offered as one approach, but instead of mitigating this violence, it has more firmly entrenched it into the democratic process. Hannah Arendt's description of the social frames an understanding of intimacy and narratives. Arendt's work critically creates a space for the category of the social, something found around but outside of the public and private. Instead of working to make the private seen as a sphere for political action, I will focus on the potential of the social as a method of political action. While Arendt has obvious racial bias, I will use her own response to anti-semitism to develop a different approach to Black politics that allow for identity-based responses. Lauren Berlant's *Intimate Publics* addresses the potential for coalition building in the social. Using the sorority system as a way of teasing out notions of femininity, discipline, sexual violence, and intimacy, I will describe the ways that a woman subject is produced and how this then works to shape our notions of race. Women's identities, particularly white women, are constructed through an association with race and sexuality, by unpacking this development, its possible to see how this is socially and institutionally enforced. Part of this enforcement will focus on the narratives of sexual violence. Rape is an issue that not only

confronts legal questions, but also the nature of a woman's ability to participate in democracy. Tying this together will be the importance of political theory. This serves to define the contemporary issues, solutions that have been offered and new potential approaches to intimate violence.

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INTRODUCTION AND ON THE TOLERATION OF RACE AND GENDER

All of my life I have been training to be a woman, not just any woman, but the best woman. It was in mind when I quit softball, I was about to be the age when people started calling girls lesbians if they kept playing. In my seventh grade English class I pretended to not know the answers to the questions, desperately trying to be one of the “cute” girls. The first time I bought a straightener for my hair with my own money, I inched closer to perfecting my femininity. My rejection of countless potential partners because of their race brought me even closer to an idealized womanhood, one that was clothed in whiteness so deeply that the two could not be unlinked or recognizable in distinction. This dissertation brings me, through those moments, the ways that my most intimate life was shaped by agreements, codes of behavior, violence, and whiteness. The theme throughout it all was the triviality of my lived experience while these experiences were simultaneously assigned arbitrary meanings. The dramatic moment when I called my grandmother to check me out of school because I had started my period was “typical girl behavior” while the overwhelming shame and mockery that happened every time a girl bled through her pants at school was signified and acknowledged as a moral failure. The vanity of a crush, the fleeting and fickle love of a woman, is the source of jokes in film and literature. Yet, the intense response to loving someone outside of your race, even if just a crush, is a defining moment, something that reveals something about your character. These constant experiences of a juxtaposed life blurred the lines of intimacy. My thoughts, desires, and emotions were unimportant, yet could somehow also indicate some intrinsic flaw. Learning to negotiate this delicate balance nearly drives you crazy, it certainly makes your neurotic.

To explore these personal experiences of gender construction and intimacy more deeply, the first Chapter will address the construction of gender and the way it is informed by law. Our understanding of consent is bound up in a practice of contract law. The idea of consent, while originally described in texts as a legal concept between citizens, transformed into a way to navigate intimate relationships in the private sphere. This muddied the ways women and men were understood to form relationships and the limits of those relationships. In the same ways that gender was arbitrated through legal language, race is often ensured in the same processes and institutions. These methods have not worked and leave the citizenry to develop a new politics. In this chapter, I will discuss the ways that tolerance was offered as an approach and has failed. Instead of mitigating this violence, it has more firmly entrenched it into the democratic process, leaving a search for something new while, at the same time, purporting a “success” in moving forward with regard to race and gender.

The second Chapter will build on our understanding of gender and race by holding it in conversation with the work of Hannah Arendt. I will expand Arendt’s description of the social as a way to bridge the first and third chapter in terms of developing the potential for intimacy and narratives. Arendt’s work critically creates a space for the category of the social, something found around but outside of the public and private. Instead of working to make the private seen as a sphere for political action, I will focus on the potential of the social as a method of political action. Next, I will include a discussion on Arendt’s controversial work “Reflections on Little Rock.” While Arendt has obvious racial bias, I will use her own response to anti-semitism to develop a different approach to Black politics that allow for identity-based responses.

The third Chapter explores Lauren Berlant’s *Intimate Publics* to address the potential for coalition building in the social. Using the sorority system as a way of teasing out notions of

femininity, discipline, sexual violence, and intimacy, I will describe the ways that a woman subject is produced and how this then works to shape our notions of race. Women's identities, particularly white women, are constructed through an association with race and sexuality, by unpacking this development, its possible to see how this is socially and institutionally enforced.

The fourth Chapter redefines our understanding and the narratives of sexual violence. Recent conversations around sexual harassment and sexual violence have appeared to shift public thinking and show support to women. I will interrogate the concept of progress further to point out that the normal experiences of violence in the day to day lives of women that go unnoticed or are trivialized, leading to an impossibility of actually being able to discuss moments of acute violence. This chapter questions the constructions of a woman's identity as it relates to sexual violence. I will discuss the ways that violence against women has become normalized and embedded within the democratic process. Rape is an issue that not only confronts legal questions, but also the nature of a woman's ability to participate in democracy. It is an act of violence that is uniquely gendered, and yet it is often relegated to the private sphere and outside of the space of political action. Using thinkers like Carole Pateman, I will explore the notion of consent in sexual violence and the ways it relates to contract theory. I will discuss the way that classical thinkers, like Rousseau, construct a woman's identity and the unique ways this is tied to education. Finally, I will use examples from my experience as a rape response advocate at the crisis center in Birmingham, Alabama to extrapolate these ideas out into social norms as well as legal and institutional processes. Through an exploration of the purpose of women in relation to men and politics, I hope to address the problem that without interrogation of these issues, the ability for women to participate in democracy does not exist.

Finally, the fifth Chapter will discuss the work that is required of political theorists. It is necessary to rethink the canon, how it is taught and constructed. Political theorists must do the difficult work to build a better description of those whose voices have been historically marginalized. This matters not only in the work we choose to assign and read, but also in the way that we think through the problems in the academy and world around us. In my first chapter, I discussed the social contract and building on that, I will explore the ways that foundational political thinkers theorized consent and citizenship as it relates to race and gender. A discussion on the ways that family structure and particularly patriarchal rule influenced these thinkers will point to the ways this is reproduced in modern society. This chapter will confront the experience of women as graduate students and within the profession. The academy seems to hold a promise that it is somehow better, more productive, and more equitable than the rest of society. It offers hope and liberation in a way that makes students choose graduate school over the cubicle, and often times even over the possibility of wealth. But what is actually being constructed in these institutions? For many women, it is merely a reproduction of the same type of violence seen in our every day; it just comes from people who claim to be striving towards common goals. We see it in our mentors, our colleagues, those outside of our departments, but it remains unnamed, sitting just below the surface until it bends us into submission or breaks us. This chapter will deconstruct the methods of subordination present within the academy and specifically within the discipline of political theory. Many of the examples are personal, and that is intentional. Part of the issue that remains within the discipline, is the notion that political theory cannot incorporate those narratives. This final chapter serves to define the contemporary issues, solutions that have been offered and new potential approaches to intimate violence.

Throughout the dissertation the importance of being believed, and of speaking and being heard, will be a constant refrain. Perhaps this is a resolution to my own experiences, and yet I find that when I talk about these moments, the majority of women I meet in political theory can relate. What does our collective silence mean? Audre Lorde tells us that “when we speak, we are afraid we will not be heard or not welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak” (“The Black Unicorn”). This work will name and deconstruct the literal and invisible barriers that enact violence on bodies. Even when spoken with shaky voices, our questions are valid and our ideas are important. Unpacking the current role of democracy has been something that is a meaningful project for me, and I hope for those who read it.

If we are to believe democracy to be the best form of government, how do we account for the problem of intimate and interpersonal violence? To understand these forms of violence, there must first be a description of these interpersonal and intimate relationships and the ways that gender and race are implicated, constructed, and identified through systems of domination and subordination. Political thinkers have long attempted to unpack a “founding moment” in which we understand the conception of man outside the current parameters of society and government. Many have attempted to describe and define the real “nature” of man (or human) kind but leave large aspects of human identity unexamined. Though many acknowledge its imperfections, there is hope that built into its very mechanisms exist apparatuses for correction of wrongdoings. Yet, this reliance on the democratic process often supports aspects of democracy's past that only worked to distinguish and dominate rather than create systems to combat and prevent subordination. It is through contract theory, reliant on systems of domination and subordination that we are brought to the problem of intimate and interpersonal violence.

The social contract is considered the foundation of democracy. Regardless of the arrival to a document, it is the social contract that serves as the precursor to our understanding of not only government, but the limits and possibilities of citizenship. This reliance on contractual understandings of relationships lends itself to creating systems of explicit and implicit subordination. Contracts in turn help to define the description of agreements between people and institutions and importantly the creation of intimate space. This question of sphere, space, and intimacy will be central to the understanding and potential of violence. Violence not only has permeated all aspects of democratic practice, it manifests in a variety of ways. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will focus on interpersonal and intimate violence. These forms of violence are manifested in the mundane, the ordinary, and as such find themselves outside the traditional critique of violence and democracy. The new description of violence includes the implications of race and gender within relationships.

What is it that we fear and how do we learn to fear it? Of course, we know of violence. We see it. We consume it. We do not flinch at the lifeless black bodies that are shown, displayed, on television. We learn to step lightly, as women, when correcting our fathers. We even learn from film and television that a strong woman will always be raped, saved from her rape, or surrounded by the possibility of it. When I was a child I remember hoping that a man would not climb through the basement window into the room where I slept. How did I know to fear my own assault? I also learned to lock the car doors in a “bad” neighborhood. I remember the first time (but not the last) that I sat in the passenger seat and made eye contact with someone, a black someone, as they heard the sound of judgment with the striking lock of the door. I took this in, these moments of violence both toward me and toward others and I learned that this was acceptable or expected. It had been agreed upon and was the way I was taught to

navigate the world. The rules of engagement were important. As a white woman, I was essential to upholding patriarchal values. Because of this, designing the spaces around me was essential to maintain a functioning democracy. These moments created my notions of intimacy and interpersonal as well as the propensity and expectations of violence in those spaces.

THE RACIAL CONTRACT

To understand the construction of intimate spaces as well as the permeation of violence in these spaces, we must first consider the description of agreements between people and institutions. It is precisely the framing of contracts and their perceived importance and necessary nature in the democratic process that permits systems of domination. Traditionally, we have relied on social contract theory as the foundation for relationships between citizens and sovereignty. People come together, realizing they need one another, either out of protection or to be more productive, and agree to certain terms to flourish under the new condition. These documents, whether written or understood, outline political obligations as well as questions of morality, that are contingent on an agreement between citizens to develop the concept of a political society and later the formation of a state. The acceptance of some limitations on natural freedoms is understood as necessary as well as a commitment to particular political and social obligations. Social contract theory was integral to the framers of the Constitution and the ways we think about democratic practices. Because contract theory not only entails political obligations, but also establishes moral responsibilities, it is important to the discussion that will follow surrounding intimate violence. This will also point to the failings of attempts to create legal consequences to this type of violence.

The negotiation of identity, protection, security, and even love is often underscored with the language of contracts and agreements. These ideas are intimately interwoven with our

conceptions of race and identity. Compacts and covenants are still made explicitly and implicitly in ways that serve to form groups and establish boundaries between individuals. Legally we have rules for behavior that give the state authority to intervene and punish on behalf of other individuals or the community as a whole. We learn, both from our families and great through public institutions like schools, what behavior is appropriate, even if not legally sanctioned. We develop legal and social contracts between each other constantly. As teachers, we present syllabi that represent agreements with our students. While these informal and formal contracts seem to present themselves as neutral in law or policy, the explicit and implicit exclusion of certain groups and individuals can be seen even in the most seemingly equitable documents. Charles Mills, in *The Racial Contract*, notes that racism is at the core of the social contract rather than racism existing as a symptom of flawed men (122). He argues that the social contract was a tacit and explicit agreement to reinforce and promote white supremacy. Because of this, any contract possible for women or people of color can only be considered as a subcontract. These groups were previously considered outside the contract and as such were not included in the protections or rights designated within it. The Dred Scott case is a notable example with Chief Justice Taney's opinion that "The enslaved African race were not intended to be included, and formed no part of the people who framed and adopted this declaration" (Dred Scott v. Sanford).

The social contract was not only developed using racial ideology but also functioned to develop race as a category of exclusion. It separated "whites from nonwhites, where 'race,' 'white' and 'nonwhite' are to be understood as historically contingent and, therefore, not as natural or signifying at all but a set of power relations" (Mills 127). Many levels of oppression have existed, from geographical, to cultural and even religious, but each of these eventually collapses into a basic concept of white supremacy. The classic Western contract accomplished an

agreement that was made by different subsets of humans which worked to shift racial criteria, establishing the class of full persons. Humans who were nonwhite, then became sub-persons (Mills 11). This is rooted in John Locke's concept of labor and the creation of property rights that was not extended to "savages" and informed the understanding of colonial relations to indigenous cultures (Mills 67). Incorporating these primary discussions of race, and with a specific focus on the ways they inform Western thought, establishes a context for the relationship between whites and nonwhites and the descriptions of those relationships. Mills acknowledges that there are many forms of oppression, but notes that his focus is on racial oppression because "white racial identity has generally triumphed over all others" (137). As such, the idea that juridical equality could retroactively correct the consequences of white supremacy establishes the foundation for racial hierarchy and privilege. Within the context of modern democracy, the value of contracts to act as preemptive or retroactive corrections for racial violence has not only failed, but works to establish the limits intimacy and solidarity.

The social contract did not just rely on racial exclusion, it specified the description of the benefactor and solidified his privileges. The construction of the political and moral understanding of natural freedom and equality was granted to white men (Mills 16). This established white men as the center of democracy and firmly solidified those on the margins. The failure of whites to understand and identify the racial subcontract exposes the false construction of white knowledge and racial identity. A situation in which "whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves made" (Mills 18). If those who have most benefitted by a racial contract are unable to see its foundations and implications, how can someone who is not white convince those in power of their experience? Thinking of this in concrete terms, this has important implications for property and economic potential.

Historically, because nonwhites are not considered citizens or included in the provisions of the social contract, the protections and expectations it offers whites are not extended to nonwhites. This establishes the domination of whites over nonwhites in a way that becomes protected and encouraged through the democratic process. If a white person claims to have ownership of resources or even utilize violence against those who are not white, their actions are not classified as violations. Because this is not considered something that would violate the terms of the social contract, because the victims are not protected under it, the ability to use violence is not discouraged—instead it is rewarded. Without legal recourse, or even social discouragement, it is impossible for most whites to understand or see the humanity of nonwhites around them. The social and legal inability to recognize nonwhites as equal relies on a system of power and domination that necessitates subordination for whites to be successful. The belief that non white suffering would inform the morality of whites is simply not possible under the social contract. The reproduction of domination cultivates “patterns of affect and empathy that are only weakly, if at all, influenced by nonwhite suffering” (Mills 95). If it is impossible to view nonwhites as persons, then the social contract is strengthened by acts against them since they are outside the purview of its protection. While not all whites were signatories to the contract, all whites benefited from it. By “going along with things” whites accepted white supremacy and the privileges that came with it, and can be said “to have consented to Whiteness” (Mills 107). This makes acts of whiteness not simply social moments, outside of the political, but embedded within democratic action. If whiteness is bound up in the social contract, those who consent to it have also consented to the terms of white identity, even if they claim ignorance to that facet.

Beyond the built in racial implications of the social contract, there is a problem of assumed neutrality. The contract is lauded as equal and fair, blind to the bias of normal society, further

entrenching oppression as essential to the daily governance of our own relationships to other individuals and institutions. I have shown that negotiating relationships through contracts only works to increase systems of domination. By neutralizing previously explicit language, the contract becomes an insidious weapon that is difficult to challenge. Propagating its neutrality only furthers the domination and discrimination of previously marginalized groups. Consider the construction of neighborhoods. The neighborhood where I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama is the neighborhood my dad's family moved to when his school was forced to integrate. It was a middle-class neighborhood that promised good families moderately priced houses with good schools. In the early 2000s, school systems were being reorganized (i.e. shoring up the boundaries for re-segregation) and my family's home was not included in the 97% white school district. My parents decided to move into that white district rather than sending my sister to school with a "majority" (30%) black student population. The neighborhood we moved into had an agreed upon covenant. Neighborhoods are allowed to have covenants that the homeowners are bound to, but the construction of these rules is often not seen as relevant to the understanding of the covenant itself. We did not have a gate to our neighborhood, but we did not need one. The neighborhood covenant served to codify the racial composition and practice in our neighborhood. This covenant relied on the unexamined interpersonal relationships that were not seen as violent, but instead "preferential." Explicit racial covenants were outlawed under the 1968 Fair Housing Act but they were quickly and easily replicated through implicit covenants. These people were my parents' age, seemingly removed from the explicit racism of their parent's generation. One issue debated at the meetings by neighborhood members was chain link fences. Apparently not only are these an eye sore that decreases property values, they are also "ghetto." One advocate repeated this term many times during his defense of banning their use. During the

ensuing discussions, we did not address the use of the word, or even his known tendencies towards xenophobia or racism. It would have been uncouth and not pertinent to call the proposer a racist, even if we knew it to be true. Private thoughts and conversations were private, protected. The board would debate and finally, a refinement of the original proposal would make its way into a neutral neighborhood policy. Almost completely void of its racial beginnings, shined and polished until the intent was clear even if the language was seemingly neutral. Reimagining the potential of contracts, or even expanding who is included, does nothing to prevent or even address racism that is bound in its formation. Interrogating this type of covenant construction does not invalidate the contract, instead contextualizes it without removing the explicit and implicit racial components. Instead, the association adopts a universal neutral language. Conversations then follow in the same way, “It is not about black or white, anyone who looked *suspicious* should be reported to the police.” The nodding of heads signaled an agreement. Despite not having defined “suspicious,” it is presumed the contract has been included to also now include white people who do not belong, making it an equal opportunity justification of surveillance. The reshaping of the contract widened its protection, but also fortified its boundaries. Instead of acting as a liberating document, ensuring its residents are healthy, happy, safe, and able to engage freely, it has suspended the rules of reality by attempting to create a utopia - completely white or conditionally integrated.

The ability for neighborhoods to exercise this type of power is conferred from an engagement with democratic principles. If challenged, they can point to an equitable process where one presents a proposal; debate follows with everyone (who lives in the intentionally exclusive neighborhood) able to participate, a vote, and implementation. This reliance on democratic thinking and processes is important in legitimizing this type of policy. What does

this mean for democracy? Once rights are extended through additions to the Constitution, it is a legal intervention that is necessary. But, often these laws are implemented with no thought to the consequences of a newly defined social sphere. Following legal acts like the 14th Amendment or the Civil Rights Act of 1964, black citizens find themselves in a space where their bodies have not previously been recognized (Holland 32). While now they are seen as citizens, their bodies are accepted with limited rights and mobility due to the constraints of a legacy of historical discrimination as well as social norms. Both black and white citizens have a generational understanding of their position within society that has now been legally changed yet with no social intervention. There is a failure to address interpersonal spaces and relationships while opening access to more public spaces and moments of interaction. This allows for legal institutions and particularly the democratic system of the United States to correct itself and offer more neutral or equitable policies and laws while failing to intervene or address the social institutions. This strategy perpetuates a nominal notion of fairness and justice within the process while allowing for violence to remain outside the purview of intervention. Once these changes were made, the democratic system and its actors then implored the newly amended nonwhite citizens to assimilate, placing the responsibility of acceptance on those who were just socially and legally excluded.

Importantly, the social contract is reliant on a collective memory of the foundations of modern society. For the United States, there may exist an acknowledgment of Native Americans, but the “founding” of America is reliant on a concept of uninhabited space and a claim of ownership. Carole Pateman unpacks the concept of *terra nullius*, or the idea that there exists land that is owned by no one and as such may be claimed through occupation. This idea is essential to conceptualizing a state of nature that ignores and white washes the already existing

indigenous practices of society. This collective memory creates, in itself, a violent act and fails to acknowledge the theoretical and actual physical violence that took place to establish European sovereignty in the colonies. By forcing assimilation, it solidifies the terms of the contract even retrospectively. Thomas Jefferson urged white settlers and Native Americans to put aside differences and work together, to see one another as family and friends, no longer strangers (Holland 32). The differences that settlers must “tolerate” (a more full discussion to follow) are customs and practices that are foreign to their own. However, Native Americans must put aside genocide, relocation, and theft – acts that, had the victims been white, would require legal redress. Jefferson advocates for conditional inclusion of these bodies. Aside from the lack of legal standing, Jefferson’s request does not erase these bodies (important, because it can be construed as progressive), but instead reconstitutes them, forcing them to adapt to the new model. In doing so, he describes “a central means by which national citizenship itself was imagined and imaginable” (Holland 72). He moves towards a new collective “us” albeit with some still not having the same rights as others, to create a new expression of democracy. Jefferson, as well as other white citizens, is “graciously” moving towards a new citizenship, exercising benevolence by ignoring the past violence settlers committed against Native Americans. This model of moving forward, at the expense of those already wronged, creates an alternative past that actively works to reshape the present (Holland 10). This works to reinforce the norms of the contract because of its perceived ability to absolve democracy of previous failures. It is presented as an equalizer while making the conditions of assimilation required. The conditions of acceptance require the dismissal of previous grievances and injustice, even if the dominating group is not punished. This collective remembering and forgetting by the majority group absorbs dissent and re-centers whiteness. Rather than account for state or individual

violence, white people are “willing” to move on because of the social contract, despite not being the recipients of injustice. It is offered as a consensual reformation of the social contract, a renegotiation that wrongs have been righted and can no longer be acknowledged or used in defense or advocacy of rights.

By way of example, in the classroom, without fail, when slavery is mentioned, I will have a student say, “But I never owned slaves. You weren't a slave. Can't we all just move forward? I don't see color.” While there is tacit acknowledgment that slavery is wrong by the attempt to distance oneself from involvement, there is failure to acknowledge the bearing slavery has on current economic, social, and legal standings not only in the United States but in the classroom. While these white students are probably right in their assumptions that their family did not own slaves, they do not acknowledge the ways they are benefactors of the institution of slavery. Slavery prevented the accumulation of general wealth, the ability to participate as a citizen, as well as solidifying legal and social practices of oppression. The failure to acknowledge this is seen in the buildings on campus. The building where our class meets was named after a violent university president who publicly whipped slaves in the courtyard. There are monuments around our campus that honor Confederate soldiers and the legacy of the Confederacy. The doors where our governor once stood to prevent black students from enrolling is not far from where I teach. It is not enough to simply point to the legal and economic barriers that result in inequality, but also the social condition that dictates the interpersonal relationships of black students to the larger student body and university. Aside from the generational trauma that those memories and occurrences instill, there is the fact that our university had to famously be forcefully integrated. Further, this statement repositions the speaker as the one willing to compromise and even the

assumption of disagreement homogenizes black identity into agitators. There is a pressure to accept his offer or risk becoming further vilified in an unequally seated power dynamic.

It is these types of power dynamics that show the social contract was one of domination. If framed in this way, it is possible to incorporate the complexity of layers that consider sexual, racial and economic implications for the contract. In fact, it describes the conditions of class, gender and race as “artificial, not natural,” changing the terms of the contract (*In Contract and Domination* 99). This contract is both tasked with creating a corrective justice while also constructing the current model of injustice. Mills hopes to convince other Rawlsians of the need of reparations instead of constantly revisiting the initial contract conditions. While Mills is right that a contract of domination points to the creation of categories and identities rather than a natural essence, I am critical of the hope that something can be restored through the contractual process. Pateman importantly asks what are the possibilities for the contract if the practice of it and its existence in everyday life is the result of a flawed document? The function of race in American society cannot be separated from the social contract and the terms of domination and subordination.

GENDERING CONTRACTS

Concerning gender within the social contract, it should be noted that it requires a different apparatus than race. While the construction of gender falls under a common system of domination, it is not one that functions the same for both gender and race. Mills notes that other classes of people, including women have been oppressed in common, but it is not a common oppression (137). The operation of gender through contracts poses a different problem. Nonwhite peoples can be forced out of communities, away from interactions of white people. Women are a unique problem because they are necessary extensions of men. Not only are their

reproductive values important (and often seen as a necessary duty), but they are also signs of the value of men. Their bodies, then, must be regulated differently. What then does this mean in terms of the social contract? Pateman argues that constructions of the description of the social contract should be read literally while other scholars have explained the sexism and racism in the contract as a consequence of the time period. Rather than working toward a restructuring of the social contract, it must instead be understood that the contract is inherently unequal. The problem of the contract has “a central modern mechanism for the reproduction of sexual and racial hierarchies” (Pateman, *Sexual Contract* 7). When members enter into a contract to experience its rights and freedoms, it limits each interaction to a series of narrowly defined agreements, with limits and difficulties in altering these agreements. While it is thought that this will encourage compromise, instead it only reinforces the existing power inequalities. “....To see individuals as packages of alienable property and to insist that ‘contract’ is the metaphor for a free society is a very narrow view of humans and what they can create” (Pateman, *Sexual Contract* 15). Our over-reliance on contractual understanding of citizenship limits the abilities of citizens to experience a different type of equality and freedom. If our agreements about dignity, humanity and freedom, are constantly negotiated through a system of contracts, it constricts method with little room for deviance or pliability. This reproduction of inequality through agreement to certain behaviors and freedoms allows liberalism to organize in a way to seemingly perpetuate freedom, but instead minimize the contributions of different actors.

Much of the context of the social contract hinges on an understanding (and often an assumption) of consent. It is necessary to create an historical account of the concept of consent as well as the implications of its use. Locke describes consent as inferred from understandings of current citizens of the contracts made by their predecessors. Participating in that society, for

Locke, implies consent even when there exists “no expressions of it at all” (*Two Treatises of Government* II, §119). This consent by participation has become a common defense when someone airs a grievance. It can be seen in the rhetoric against protests during Jim Crow. “What did people expect would happen when black students forcibly integrated schools?” The assumption is that these students already consented and understood the rules of participation in society— those established by white people often against black citizens. The implication is that consent, even when it is not in one’s best interest, can be inferred simply by existing under its alleged territory. This is an explicit example, one in which it is easy to undo the idea that someone could consent to be treated as second-class. What becomes more difficult is situations that are not considered in the purview of legal intervention. Consider the 2013 desegregation of historically-white sororities at the University of Alabama. During the time leading up to the change, many students (and overly-involved parents and alumni) questioned the intentions and motivations of the black women attempting to join these organizations. “Why would they want to go somewhere they weren’t wanted?” “They have their own sororities, would they want us [white people] in theirs??” Here, the problem becomes more complicated. Public education was state organized and mandated, so legal intervention was plausible. Because the social is seemingly outside of the political realm, or outside of the necessity of state intervention, citizens infer consent simply by existence or even through the assertion oneself into a place that is historically forbidden. I will develop this problem more, specifically the understanding of private, public, political and social in Chapter 3. But, as far as pertaining to the conversation surrounding contract theory, the notion of implied consent, and the construction of consent is important as it lends itself to the problem and likelihood of violence.

The marriage contract is one of the first times that a woman's consent was considered and interrogated as important within the context of democracy. Implied consent relies on the idea that individuals are "naturally free and equal" (Pateman, "Women and Consent" 151). Consenting to be ruled over (or subordinated in the case of Jim Crow laws), then, would raise a fundamental conflict in response to the possessed freedom of citizens. If explicit consent is then required through a voluntary commitment to an authority, or sovereign, then could one commit to being subordinated whether through Jim Crow laws, marriage contracts or even in social situations (like a sorority)? Locke acknowledges women's ability to enter into marriage contracts. Yet, even within this agreement, the woman, under the authority of a free man, enters into the contract with another free man. Locke finds this agreement possible because he uncouples political power and paternal power. He fails to account for the ways that paternal power structures political power. Outside of paternal protection, the woman would have no rights and in fact would require another man to protect, support, or marry her. It is not simply that she would lose social standing, but her actual ability to survive would be vitally threatened if she did not submit to paternal power. Locke's failure to see these two powers as intertwined undermines his notion of consent. In doing so, the "conjugal right" becomes hidden, further solidifying women's position within the domestic sphere (Pateman, *Sexual Contract* 91).

Reliance on contractual notions of consent between citizens frees liberal democracies and societies from standard questions surrounding the rights, movements, and abilities of citizens. Even if it could be suggested that women did have political power to enter into a marriage contract, it is always presented as a defense of women's consent, rather than her non-consent. This = shifts from the liberal notion of consent between citizens to consent existing as a way to negotiate a relationship that includes intimacy in the public and private spheres. Pateman notes

that “unless refusal of consent or withdrawal of consent are real possibilities, we can no longer speak of ‘consent’ in any genuine sense” (“Women and Consent” 150). The ability to resist must be present to argue that a woman chose the marriage contract. Furthermore, by failing to explore, or even identify moments of non-consent, it invalidates the possibility of affirmative consent. Women “have been presented as always consenting, and their explicit non-consent has been treated as irrelevant or has been reinterpreted as ‘consent’” (Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* 150). Important to note is the reinterpretation of consent. The ability to “clarify” a woman’s position, opinion, or her legal affirmation of participation is something that will be addressed more fully in Chapter 4. It is important to note that women’s ability to consent, even without legal standing, has been historically seen through defense of the marriage contract. Yet, I have just shown that women would have to agree to subordination which would negate a contract between two equals. Further complicating the idea of ability to enter the contract is the lack of examples, discussion, or even possibility of non-consent. While women have always resisted, the refusal of the marriage contract was one in which a woman knew that a workhouse or poverty was her only option. Choosing subordination or indentured service is hardly a choice when your counterpart chooses whether to marry you, someone else, or no one at all, none of which significantly impact his future or ability to live. The greatest threat of being unmarried to a man would be the potential inability to have a family — and in that family, someone else to rule over.

PATRIARCHAL AND PATERNAL POWER

The discussion of family, and its structure, has often been included in the understanding of how power is exercised and derived. Yet, the family and domestic sphere are not considered part of the public sphere, making them private and as such not seen as a space for political action (I

will develop this idea further in Chapter 2). The foundation of the family for our understanding of relationships also informs our description of consent. Thomas Hobbes describes the family as a relationship of master (father) and servants (everyone else) through conquest (56). Pateman points out this approach is not just consistent with the gendered assumptions of the time, but instead consistent with a particular type of community construction. His acquisition of a family is representative of power accumulation that consolidates power with men who are then able to enter a social contract. Their engagement with society is contingent on the power they possess. A man's ability to accumulate power would then be contingent on his ability to marry, something I will develop further in a discussion of Rousseau's *Emile and Sophie*. This power is what gives men the capability to engage with the social contract, which would negate the ability of women to enter it because there is no ability for them to accumulate power. This is the only comparable aspect of the negative that would occur if a man could not marry — he could not enter into a compact that is only available to those with political and paternal power. This notion informs the previous discussion on women's ability to freely enter into the marriage contract. If a wife is necessary to establish paternal political power, there must be a negotiation to accommodate her into the domestic sphere without offering her complete autonomy. Her subordination is required in order for her husband to fully exercise his political potential.

Locke noted that a wife's subordination was "a foundation in nature." In fact, the acceptance of the role of her husband was implied through her "consent" to the marriage contract. Yet, as Pateman asks, "Why should a free and equal female individual enter a contract that *always* places her in subjection and subordination to a male individual?" ("Women and Consent" 153). If women are born free in nature then their position as always unequal in the marriage contract must be explained. Explicitly, the marriage contract removed women's rights

to their own bodies, how then would they be able to have command of their position within political society? Locke does state that an individual is the “guardian of his own consent.” Yet, aside from the marriage contract, noted to be flawed, women were not seen as possessing “the attributes and capacities necessary to enter into contracts, the most important of which is ownership of property in the person; only men, that is to say, are ‘individuals’” (Pateman, *Sexual Contract* 5). If the marriage contract was the only way for a woman to exercise political consent, it follows that contracts are ways to solidify subordination rather than to expand freedoms. Furthermore, if the only way that women were capable of consenting was through romantic legal arrangements, that were unequal in their distribution of power, it codified and defended a space where women were more susceptible to violence. They have been given an appearance of agency, and as such have become responsible for what happens within the bounds of that relationship. They consented to the marriage, after all, they knew what they signed up for. If women were to attempt to use this as a legal argument to expand their rights, it would enshrine the violence to advance their autonomy. The marriage contract worked not as an agreement between two equals, but as an attempt to serve as an equalizer between two parties. If a woman claimed her ability to participate could be shown through her political power to consent to marriage, she guarantees the subordination of herself and other women through the only space of political action that is recognized.

TRAINING EMILE AND SOPHIE

To better illustrate consent, gender, and contracts, I will now turn to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s discussion of gender, sexuality, education and the political through *Emile and Sophie*. As the social contract and marriage contract define the notions of consent, subordination and domination, a woman’s role and relationship to men is to serve as a tool for a better

modeling of a space without women. Women's positions as actors, responsive objects, yet limited, offer training that can happen in the home to better prepare men for the public space. This training does not extend to the point where women could shape political action within the public sphere. While their role is argued to be vitally important, it is only within the private bounds of home. Not only does the work of Rousseau reflect the sentiments of the time, it also illustrates a similar problem within contemporary society. Rousseau's description of Emile, and his relationship to the political, requires an understanding of Sophie and her function and contribution. Women's bodies and abilities were often only discussed as they pertained to the domestic sphere, creating a false conception of binaries will become apparent. If women were relegated within the domestic sphere and then critiqued for having this position, it does not account for the complex ways that women were constantly brought into and participated in the public and political spheres. Of course, explicitly and implicitly, women were legally and socially barred from political action; yet, even if their bodies were present, the conception of gender, power, and their identities were constantly present and used as a tool and description of democratic policy.

First, the way that Rousseau describes and defines the relationship of men and women through gendered constructions as well as the interpretation of desire and sexuality informs the conception of both Emile and Sophie. The implications of a woman's desires and ability to express them is central to negotiating romantic and marital relationships with women. As such, this defines the ability to engage in political action and resistance, in all facets of her existence. In previous discussions of the marriage contract, a woman's body may not be explicitly seen as property, but her autonomy is complicated at best. If ownership is not explicit, what are the implications for her actual, physical body within the marriage contract? Rousseau describes men

as “natural” sexual aggressors while saying women are “destined to resist.” His assertion is essential to grounding the rules of engagement between the two actors and, in doing so, establishes a natural essence to the existence of sexual pressure and violence. The ability for political participation is inextricably linked to consent; yet the ability of women to understand their sexual desire is something that must be moderated by men. He says, “Why do you consult their words when it is not their mouths that speak? ...The lips always say “No,” and rightly so; but the tone is not always the same, and that cannot lie.” Rousseau does acknowledge the potential and existence of women’s sexuality, but complicates its expression by re-centering men as the arbitrator of it. The “tone” of her “no” sounds different if she actually wishes to engage, and when, to a man, would her tone not imply her desire? If she does not desire him, he would have to acknowledge his own undesirability which would work to subordinate him. Beyond the cloudiness of her ability to consent, Rousseau further describes women’s sexuality as being bounded because of ideas of chastity and virtue. As such, her desires must be interpreted and forcibly released as part of a man’s duty and for a woman’s own good. He says, “Must her modesty condemn her to misery? Does she not require a means of indicating her inclinations without open expression?” The attempt is being made that she must, due to her station and gender, have a way to communicate her desire without explicit communication. Rather than attempting to change the construction of her environment that would require her subordination, he reshapes communication such that it is a reprieve if a man can “know” her well enough to interpret her internal feelings. Rousseau has created a complex web of social behaviors that constructs women’s very ability to consent to be bound in a reliance on refusal. It is the man who must interpret the woman’s consent, making her claims to consent ineffectual.

If a woman's sexuality is reliant on the decoding of a man, it removes the possibility of consent from the marriage contract. While women certainly were not devoid of agency, to hang their ability to consent on a marriage contract rooted in domination and subordination undermines the legitimacy of that contract. It is important to note that Rousseau has not only removed the ability of affirmative consent in relationships between men and women, he has also stripped her of non-consent. When a man's intuition is not enough, Rousseau goes on to advocate for actual violence in sexual encounters. "To win this silent consent is to make use of all the violence permitted in love. To read it in the eyes, to see it in the ways in spite of the mouth's denial." What then is the purpose of the encounter? "If he then completes his happiness, he is not brutal, he is decent." Ultimately, it is the completion of *his* happiness — sexual gratification — that is the arbitrator of justice in his relationship to this woman. A discussion of her happiness is only tied to the completion of his own. It is because he has not allowed her commitment to chastity to deny something that he knows she desires. "He does not insult chasteness; he respects it; he serves it. He leaves it the honor of still defending what would have perhaps been abandoned." It seems that the man has saved the woman from "abandoning" her natural desire towards sex in favor of adhering to standard of chastity. It is actually something he is offering to her. He is both the arbitrator of her "goodness" while unlocking her own pleasure for her. He is able to police her body to the extent that he can remind her of her "natural" desires when she seems to not indulge them.

Next, I will examine the role of Emile's education as it is related to gender. For Rousseau, Emile represents the potential of society. His quest to develop a good citizen is reliant on education that shapes his intellectual and moral capacities. It is through the process of civilization that citizens become capable of engaging in productive discourse, and in doing so

that we actualize into political beings. Analyzing his construction of the ideal education contributes to the construction of gender simultaneously. The education includes each stage of life, including sexuality. Rousseau notes that the best “social institutions are those that that best know how to denature man, to take his absolute existence from him in order to give him a relative one and transport the I into the common unity” (40). His hope is to create a natural man who can contribute as a citizen within society. Rousseau relied heavily on gendered identities. Women were adamantly encouraged to nurse their children and it was important for men to become hardened to the elements (46). These performances of gender are important sources of analysis, but this inquiry will focus on the role and purpose of women’s relationships with men and society, specifically Sophie. For Rousseau, women should be “passive and weak” and “made specifically to please man” (358). And while Rousseau does make a claim that men should please women, similar to traditional wedding vows, he fails to acknowledge that a subordinated partner could not make demands, even for love. Since the position of power is defaulted to the man, he would have to choose to love or honor her, something he can always remove. It is important for men and women to stay in their intended spheres of labor and political action which works to reinforce feminine and masculine identities associated with gender. By clearly defining these spheres and roles, it is a model for how women and men (husbands and wives) can live and work together despite not being equal. As is often seen in the justification of gender roles, there is an attempt to nuance the positions of men and women so that women are falsely seen as becoming more equal. Emile is expected to develop strength while Sophie develops her beauty and reputation (365, 377). Men are to be developed to speak, to contribute to a common society while women are to be seen. Men’s craft of speaking is a skill, something that is necessary to engage as a political actor. A good orator has perfected a

skillful art. It does not fully capture the entire of this disparity to simply say that women are objects to be admired like a beautiful piece of furniture. They must also provide something for men to be valuable. She must offer him something that a non-responsive object could not; for Rousseau, she offers interaction that benefits the development of men.

While Book V is when the reader is first introduced to a physical Sophie, the tutor has already worked to cultivate the understanding of the concept of Sophie. Not only has he created an understanding for her identity, he has also taught Emile of her necessity. Rousseau asks, “But what will a man raised uniquely for himself become for others?” An object, like Sophie, is then required to develop the complete man. She becomes a necessary tool that follows a pattern just like the introduction of religion, or beginning of a trade. Rousseau is, of course, describing a development of Emile from man to citizen -- his relationship to society. But, this relationship to other citizens (men) must be facilitated by the use of the woman’s presence and body. She is presented as completing him, something important, but only to function as an extension of his development. This is an important distinction, particularly later in Chapter 3, when we consider the contemporary implications and ways that this training continues to be replicated, particularly in education.

When we are introduced to Sophie, it is clear her intended purpose is to become Emile’s wife. It is clear that her presence is intended to develop aspects of Emile that, without her, he would be lacking. Here it can easily be confused that somehow, without her, he is incomplete. It is often conveyed that Emile is not whole without a partner, an attempt to gain a more agentic version of Sophie. Yet, it is the training of Sophie for the purpose of Emile that makes her well suited for him, not that she, independent of him, is a worthwhile partner. Her completeness is contingent on what she offers Emile. His “success” will be in his own development in relation to

Sophie, not in becoming a partner for her. Sophie will complete Emile at the expense of herself. Her presence is to make him more whole. She must learn to regulate her speech and behavior to be more pleasing. As his wife, her sexuality, her body, cannot be separated from the development of Emile. Her ability to reproduce and satisfy his sexuality does not develop independently of the other aspects of her identity. It is explicitly linked, importantly learning that her development for Emile is her body in its entirety. While Rousseau is putting limitations on both Emile and Sophie through their educational development, Emile's limitations are to develop Emile. Sophie's limitations are also to develop... Emile. Penny Weiss describes this scheme as leaving Sophie with a divided soul. She says Rousseau "justifies intolerance toward a woman's assertion of a demanding 'I,' yet fails to cultivate her sense of community to a point where this 'I' is not a source of conflict for her" ("Gendered Community: Rousseau, Sex and Politics" 104). Through her training, Sophie's version of herself becomes only in relation to Emile. To think of herself without Emile is improper, so she learns not to demand on behalf of herself. Rousseau aims to eventually train women as men, not towards the goal of equality, but so that they are less influential over men. Yet, Mary Wollstonecraft notes that this goal points to a problem in Rousseau's conception of gender and expectations. She responds to Rousseau by saying, "'Educate women like men,' says Rousseau... 'and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us.' This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but power over themselves" (*A Vindication on the Rights of Women*).

Wollstonecraft points out, as do most feminist scholars, that the subordination of men, a reversal of the current condition, is not the aim. Instead of seeking power over one another, the purpose is to become masters of ourselves, of our own corporeal beings. Weiss argues that there is a false reliance on individual wholeness rather than community wholeness. Rousseau is claiming that

Emile's education does shape the community, the whole; but, in reality, he creates inequality at the expense of Sophie (110). She, and her representation of all women, is only a vessel with which to create a common that is occupied by men.

The very conception of Sophie is first as a representation. Emile learns of her through his tutor, a name and an image that he knows before he meets her. She is a concept of something else he must learn, an object of study to possess and desire. Sophie must learn to govern herself in relation to others. She measures her success at these tasks through public opinion; it acts as her regulator. While Rousseau attempts to make her the judge of the opinions of her by others, it only forms a false sense of control. Their opinion, after all, is still worth being weighed. He says, "She becomes the judge of her judges' she decides when she ought to submit herself to them and when she ought to take exception to them" (383). This public self still works to be governed by those around her in a way that Emile's public self is not. When there exists contradiction between her opinion of herself and the opinions of others, ultimately she may act to decide which is best (383). This nuanced way of granting Sophie an agentic moment still ignores the purpose of her existence in the first place. She has only learned how to value her own opinion in regard to that of those around her. Sophie must inhabit both her public and private persona as she negotiates her physical presence in these spaces. It is not that she has learned a sense of independence, but instead mastered the art of her public self within the existing hierarchal and societal allowances for her person. Tracey Strong says, "Women are, for Rousseau, sources of natural illusion. They thus play the same role in relation to the polity that the 'noble lie' did in Plato" (135). Women remain loyal to men because they believe their role is valuable, and yet at the same time they remain separate.

SEXISM, RACISM, AND MISOGYNY

I have previously shown the contract to be rooted in terms of domination that works to not only create subordination but also to function as a tool to absorb dissent. The marriage contract highlighted the flawed ways it is used to prop up a false notion of a woman's ability to consent and, as such, presents her within a catch 22 – to validate her own oppression through a flawed notion of marital consent or to realize the bounds of her subordination. Women's position within society is complicated because of men's necessity of them. Because women are developed as an extension of men, this allows for a cultivation of intimate spaces whose conditions are likely to encourage domination and violence. I will return to the explicit use of sexual violence as a weapon of interpersonal and intimate violence in Chapter 4 but, for now, I will tease out some concepts and terms that are useful for understanding the nature and prevalence of this unique form of violence. Sexual violence is unique in that it is reproduced by both institutions and individuals in intimate ways. It also encourages a collective identity because of the universality of its prevalence. It is not necessary for every woman to experience sexual violence and the reminder of its existence is enough. Similarly, it is the collective experience of its mundane manifestation as well as the dismissal of the ordinary that contributes to the ability for the far reaching spectrums of violence. Sexual violence is often characterized as something committed by a lone actor against one victim. This categorization fails to account not only for the reality of the assailant being someone the victim knows, but also the repercussions of feeling victimized extend far beyond the woman who is assaulted. It becomes a collective experience to fear your rape, experience it, or hear stories of the many other women who have experienced or feared rape?. Despite the prevalence of sexual violence, the likelihood of a victim being believed is low, making this problem unique as being both collective and individualized.

The refusal, or inability, to believe survivors of sexual violence exacerbates the experience of intimate violence. It is not simply that society is sexist and that women are less likely to be believed in these moments of trauma. Instead, because of institutionalized and social patriarchal power, the inability to believe the mundane and everyday acts of violence then make it impossible to conceive of this type of intimate violence. When thinking of patriarchal power, I mean that it is an apparatus of power that is reinforced by sexism and misogyny. I will use Kate Manne's descriptions of sexism and misogyny to describe the problem. Sexism acts as the "justificatory branch of a patriarch order, which consists of ideology that has the overall function *rationalizing* and *justifying* patriarchal social relations" (Manne 79). Misogyny is understood to be "the 'law enforcement' branch of a patriarchal order, which has the overall function of *policing* and *enforcing* its governing norms and expectations" (Manne 78). Misogyny acts as a weapon while sexism relies on naturalizing differences between men and women. A faculty member asking me to clean up the break room rather than my male counterparts would be sexism, while him calling me a "bitch" would be misogyny. While both are linked to my identified gender, one is relying on (false) gender assumptions and behaviors while the other is a punitive correction or hatred simply for my existence. Manne's distinction is important to understand the ways that intimate violence is carried out. Sexism would be the expectation that women provide sex to their partner, which contributes to instances of intimate violence, but misogyny is carrying out the act of assault.

Sexual violence is a unique form of violence. When presented with cases of violence such as genocide or racism, well-meaning folks often say that those committing the violent acts simply need to see the humanity in their victims. My students often say that integration is what helps people become less racist, simply having access to people of different backgrounds creates

the potential for friendships and by extension a universalizing humanity. What I often see in my students, however, is that they may forge these bonds in high school, but in college, these relationships suffer. I will develop this more in Chapter 3, but the push to create a sense of humanity does not tamper violence, even identity-based violence. Furthermore, this points to something unique about sexual violence because of the inherent humanity in the act of rape. Kate Manne argues that mass rape in genocide occurs because women are humanized instead of the opposite. If the assault is reactive, then the subject is the source of the attackers' "resentment, righteous anger, jealousy, and so on" (Manne 165). Somehow, women have been capable of being dehumanized and humanized, becoming abhorrent and yet desirable beings. The attacks locate the humanity of the persons' identities. They are assaulted precisely because of who they are, even if it is a representation of something else.

Calls for a recognized humanity miss the mark when these marginalized groups are already seen and identified precisely because of the type of human they are. It is not that women, or people of color, are invisible to a dominant group, but instead that they must be subservient, "grateful" or feel that they "owe" the expressions and ability of their humanity to men or whites. The humanity of marginalized people is then seen in what they are able to offer members of a dominant group. This relates to the ways that women are seen as property, transferred from one man to another. Women have some value worth possessing, but it is only in their relation to men. Kate Manne describes retaliation against the woman's removal of, or failure to provide for, the man makes the man feel dehumanized, so then it might be his intention to do the same to her (173). Targets, or victims of assault, are simultaneously representations of all women while becoming distinct individuals in the moment of violence. It is not because women themselves are a non-descriptor group, but that the target of the abuse has somehow personified the

attributes of women. He still locates his rage in this woman, for a specific embodiment of her gender (or deviation from it).

Differing from intimate violence is interpersonal violence. One aspect of interpersonal violence is an attempt to dehumanize the perpetrator as a measure to distance him from representative of society. The person who commits violent acts, particularly when they are racially motivated, becomes an outlier. They are “pure evil” with no “humanity in their eyes.” They are described as animals, soulless, etc. All of this works to re-inscribe the impossibility of the assailant to be someone who is seen as fully human. When Dylan Roof, the church shooter in Charleston, South Carolina, was described, it was said that he looked “dead inside” which removed him from the discourse of normal citizens. This located him, instead, in the realm of fluke or fringe, not something that is a societal issue and does not require to be addressed as such. The inhumanity of perpetrators of racial violence works to solidify the reproduction of this violence. It is addressed as a problem of the individual not the state. Similarly, rapists are often dehumanized when talked about in both individual and broader terms. The warnings of sexual assault are about caricatures, men who lurk in dark alleys or pull you into their vans. The men are dirty, disgusting, the degenerates of society. When the act of sexual violence becomes individually identified, it becomes impossible for the accused to embody one of “those” kind of people— the people capable of this level of violence. In film, these people are portrayed as unclean, with bad teeth, greasy — obvious assailants. In the news, it is these attackers, the man in the homeless man in the park, the drug addict, whose photo is plastered across the news as an example of a rapist. So, we become presented with two options. In interpersonal and intimate violence, the assailant is either someone who is a deviant of society, or an easily identifiable person — the (physically) disgusting creep, marked with actual manifestations of his propensity.

It is not that each relationship between man and women, white and black, or other differently situated identities, must be and always are based on domination or violence, but that the structures that form these relationships are rooted in systems of domination in violence. This structuring does not guarantee violence and domination but instead normalizes it. The relationships that are not marked by domination and violence then become the outlier rather than the standard. It is built into the framework of our understanding of relationships so that moms teach daughters not to anger their husbands because sometimes they will act out. It is both a condemnation of the “nagging” potential of women as well as the understanding that men are prone to violence. It is seen in the same ways that black parents teach their children about interactions with white people. All of this is taught in the same ways we learn how to identify shapes and colors. It is not necessary that each man or member of the dominant race is able to subordinate each member of the other identity group, rather that the potential to dominate at least one or some members is enough to understand the workings of subordination. This is also the way that we begin to understand the workings of domination. In fact, those who are not subordinated through violence are subordinated in other ways. The black man who “cuts in line” can become the target for a string of racist expletives while the doting black woman who works in the office is “like family.” It was the juxtaposition, the domination and subordination of each individual that worked to mechanize violence and the yielding of it as part of the education. These are the ways we explicitly learn about race while often receiving a subtler education in gender.

While one actor often enacts intimate violence, it is also performed through a prescription of behaviors that may not have an individual actor. This makes it more difficult to identify the ways that communities are responsible for this violence. While it is important to identify

individual actors, that does not effectively end violence or remove its potential. Rather it simply serves to attempt to establish community norms of behavior that punish an individual, delegitimizing this as a group problem. Interpersonal and intimate violence acts as the regulator of gender and racial discrimination. It does not encompass the entirety of racism and sexism but, rather, is the apparatus by which it is enacted in our most individualized and group spaces. This exercise of power is enforced on specific groups and for the purposes of this project, we will focus on race and gender. It is the action of the prevailing systems of dominance that work through moments of individual and small group violence to dominate entire groups. The distinction is important that these acts, while usually targeting an individual, are representative of entire populations. It is not just that some men have problems with violence, or that some white people are racist; instead, it is that they work as executioners of a popular will over individual actors of subordinated groups.

TOLERANCE OR EQUALITY

The notion of tolerance and equality works to describe attempts at reconciliation for the problems described above. Within the context of interpersonal and intimate violence, does tolerance offer a solution? And what is the difference between desires for tolerance and those of equality? Wendy Brown's *Regulating Aversion* deconstructs the hierarchies of power that are implicit in the advocacy and use of tolerance within liberal democracies. She notes it not only works to depoliticize moments of social action, but also is underwritten with notions of violence. Similar to Mills' critique of the social contract, the construction of tolerance is rooted in a complex notion of supremacy — mostly white, Christian, and male supremacy. Brown develops the idea of tolerance from the concept, discussed previously of Locke, of describing individuals as rational actors who are autonomous and individuated. This individual then develops a concept

of tolerance for those whose identities are subsumed by a culture or religion — removing their ability to be autonomous or rational. Because of removal, it becomes the “right of the civilized against a barbaric opposition” to yield domination (Brown 204).

This concept of tolerance is important for this dissertation because it is precisely that tolerance that is situated as a benign concept — something that is beneficial and safe as an action of interpersonal engagement. To wield tolerance, one must first locate the intolerant as either a subject or characteristic of an individual or group. It can only be exercised from a position of power and thereby, domination. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will utilize the repercussions of tolerance at both the macro level of policy and institutions as well as at the micro level of interpersonal and intimate relationships. It is the fact that this practice of tolerance is embedded in institutions that allows for it to be executed by individuals. Tolerance becomes intertwined with sovereignty and can be used as an expression of democratic principle. As such, groups and identities are identified as homogenous which allows tolerance to function. Because the seemingly autonomous individual (the tolerator) is able to identify those to be tolerated shows a reliance on a perceived cohesive identity that can then be re-inscribed through tolerance. Through this lens, we are able to speak specifically about black identity and the ways in which it is “tolerated” through diversity initiatives whose supposed aims are to accomplish inclusion, regardless of identity. Tolerance encourages the avoidance of confrontation and, as such, the discussion of the structures that exist to allow for inequality. If one’s presence is tolerated, or even encouraged within the office structure, how could those being tolerated make claims of discrimination? Not only is their position tenuous, an allowance made for their presence, but also the company is obviously committed to “diversity” creating an impossibility of critique. “When heterosexuals are urged to tolerate homosexuals, when schoolchildren are

instructed to tolerate another's race or ethnicity, the powers producing these 'differences,' marking them as significant and organizing them as sites of inequality, exclusion, deviance or marginalization, are ideologically vanquished" (Brown 89-90).

Wendy Brown's discussion of tolerance and equality describe the conditions of violence. Brown's construction is important for understanding the ways that there are attempts at legal interventions that fail to account for the limits of tolerance within the social realm. Tolerance is often constructed as being reserved for religious discourse but when carefully examined also includes behaviors, customs, and even styles of dress that fall outside of "mainstream" cultural practices. It is for this reason that I am expanding its use to include the discourse on race and gender. Tolerance is seen to fortify the divide between civilized society and barbaric practices, something that harkens back to the language of the social contract. While Brown argues that tolerance works to create subjects (4), I argue the subject exists prior to the discourse of tolerance. Tolerance works to create a communal and socially accepted practice of discrimination. For the subject to be tolerated, it must first exist as abject. While tolerance may certainly create a wider description of those who fall within those bounds, casting some outside who may not have been previously included, it remains that the need for tolerance is demanded by the existence of the subject. Individuals and groups tolerate what is "beyond the pale of civilization" as Brown says. It is precisely because it is outside your notions of civilized that marks it appropriate to be tolerated. The limits of toleration would then create a distinct refusal of tolerance that works to justify domination. The parameters for domination are first seen through contracts. The attempt to confer equality as an act of tolerance seems to have widened the center, but actually has more deeply entrenched the margins, thereby establishing the dominance of intolerance. This is where actors from the center are able to establish an other that

is physically embodied (the immigrant, welfare queen, transgender, etc.). The traits of the individual can also be separated and applied to identify those in need of toleration. By identifying these traits, they literally locate these bodies outside of “civilized society.” The more the outside entity resists its label and attempts to define themselves as equal, the more the actors in the center feel confirmed in their original label. This is seen in the descriptions surrounding black individuals, bodies, and communities when describing “aggressiveness” of *their* protests, the “violence” of *their* “riots” are characterizations that support their original status of deviant, intolerable. Even something that is non-violent, such as Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem is addressed in terms that are linked to American-ness, making him an outsider, un-American and outside of the West, the symbol of civilization.

The discourse of tolerance also works to depoliticize histories of violence instead of incorporating these histories into our understanding of current inequality. The idea of universal tolerance extends only to those who have been identified as outside of the center. As Charles Mills says, “Whites have routinely talked in universalist terms even when it has been quite clear that the scope has really been limited to themselves.” (*Racial Contract* 110). Consider the earlier classroom example in which white students attempt to move forward from the historical implications of slavery as an attempt to enact tolerance. “My family didn’t own slaves, or you (black students) weren’t slaves so let’s just consider who we are now.” They make themselves benevolent actors, seemingly willing to “forgive” the black students for introducing arguments about race, even if the topic is presented in a discussion by a teacher or an article. While they may wrap their words in a pretense of attempting to make everyone equal, they are solidifying themselves as actors and arbitrators of democracy and the law. Simultaneously, their failures to account for the ways that we are even in these spaces (access to education, etc.) problematizes

the value of attempts at “unity.” They have positioned themselves as tolerant precisely because they are offering a *gracious* compromise— to forget the potential interjection of a historical accountability for race and move forward from this point. The white student’s ability to bargain and settle these disputes works to “signify a majoritarian response to an outlying or minority element in its midst.” As the student expands his statement, “None of *us*... or *we* probably...” a collective is formed that implies the other. His use of “us” and “we” constitutes whiteness such that as he speaks, he is building a community within the classroom obviously excluding the group that cannot be incorporated into the “we,” implying their otherness. He has now shifted from identifying a generational connection (“my family”) to establishing a current narrative of in groups. It is in a similar way that white students stumble around race, attempting to describe individuals or groups using explicit or subtle signifiers. It is easier to see in Alabama than in my current home, Virginia. In Virginia, there is a pause in the description if the speaker is white and the person they are describing is not. The speaker’s hesitation marks his determination of both the individual being described as well as his audience. He has already decided that race matters whether in a personal way or in the context. He must also decide if it matters as a tool in the context of memory and performance. In Alabama, white students will say explicitly, a “black woman,” a “black person” or even a “black neighborhood.” It is not just that the differences are more fortified, but rather the language of the New South offers a comfort in signifiers. The context of individuals and even geographical communities and locations is understood (often by everyone) to possess an intrinsic value, an essence. Tolerance also works to establish and maintain exceptional identities within minority groups. The successful subject that is tolerated can only survive and remain in the space they occupy by continuing to perform in the ways that are tolerated. If not, they risk reverting to a “true nature” that is outside of the realm of toleration.

As such, “tolerance is generally conferred by those who do not require it upon those who do; it arises within and codifies a normative order in which those who deviate from rather than conform to norms are eligible for tolerance” (Brown 415).

What does tolerance offer us as a model for democratic principles? First, a discourse on tolerance locates the work of interpersonal relationships (and, as such, violence) within the social sphere. It is not thought of as a responsibility of institutions, other than the legal ways in which it is required per anti-discriminatory laws, that fails to address the interpersonal violence this allows. Second, it establishes a distinction between equality and tolerance. Equality is demanded under the law, while tolerance is thought to regulate societal interactions. Finally, it creates a hierarchy of tolerators and those tolerated that is then supported and encouraged by institutions. Tolerance, then, has different implications concerning racial or gendered violence. Religious tolerance is a way to attempt to model a type of superiority — that individual (or group) has found themselves capable, both intellectually and morally, of tolerating another religious group. Tolerance is seen as a democratic value espoused by Christian voters and politicians alike, but threatens to break down quite easily when tolerance is no longer valued by the dominant group. Like many in Alabama, I grew up going to church almost as often as school. The consistency and immersion was important because I went to the public school instead of the private school that was run by my church. When I was in ninth grade, the youth group leaders began recommending a book called *Being Intolerant* which was a biblically-based argument against the cultural push to love and accept those who “went against God.” We were told that there was an attack on Christian values and as such I learned early on not only that tolerance was not a good idea, but something to actively resist. This also led to a necessary characterization of those who were against God. To uphold intolerance, it would be necessary to use barbaric terms, talk about

the cultural differences, and create a distinction in education and politics. It was not until later I realized how this was directly connected with the advancement or domination of Western thought. As Brown notes, “Tolerance acts as a token of white supremacy and a legitimating cloak for Western domination” (412). It is not enough to say that tolerance is a tool for religious domination, instead its use as a tool of white supremacy is legitimized *through* religion, extending to the communities (nonwhite) that are implicated as subjects to be tolerated. This becomes important in the discussion of race and gender because religion can be used as a weapon to legitimize and even encourage social, physical, and sexual violence.

Tolerance assumes that there is an innate resistance to difference and even goes so far as to locate it within dominant culture. Perhaps this can then explain the ways that some cultures have become dominant. The need for tolerance assumes that acts of discrimination or prejudice are the result of a personal bias, removing the political mechanisms that not only support prejudice but also perpetuate it. Because certain things are relegated to the social realm, rather than the public or political, actions can be labeled inappropriate but still fail to be seen as threatening the safety or existence of a peaceful state. For example, a random person yells a slur at someone on the street, there is no legal recourse, only a social response. Perhaps everyone on the street shames the attacker, the person that is the target says something back, or perhaps nothing is done. If a police officer is nearby, his intervention is only as preventative measure, but not as a legal response on behalf of the state to punish. Speech, even hate speech, is non-punishable unless it is a culmination of experiences that falls into a definition consistent with harassment or accompanied by violence, which then becomes assault. In the case of harassment, it is still not the word or slur that is the issue, but rather the collection of words and acts that lead to an intervention. With violence, the words only matter if they can be an addendum to the charges,

pointing to a person's motivation (in the case of a hate crime) rather than the slur standing on its face as an affront to a person's liberty. So, we have now made it possible and even protected for a man to continue to exercise his freedom of speech, with the only exception being if he violates another aspect of our physical movement. Because the act of regulating his behavior falls into the social sphere, it becomes incumbent upon those who experience his act of violence to address it, but because he already believes them to be incapable (by his very notion to use the slur) there exists no way to engage his behavior. The thought that somehow modern society has created individual actors that can regulate their prejudices releases the state from the position of "tolerance." This permits the state and its extensions to be described as "neutral" actors through the "objective" guide of law. The state can present itself as tolerant because of the law it has established, even when its populations socially may not behave as such.

Here is where there is a difference between the conversations concerning tolerance between races and tolerance of women. Within racial and religious groups, it is the entire group of people that are deemed worthy of toleration— the homogeneity of its essence is required to speak of conditions in this way. With women, some of their behaviors may be intolerable, but their positions and requests are always expressed in terms of equality. Women are not themselves tolerated, but their behavior may be. It creates a different type of subject if it is gender-based rather than racially-based. This gender accommodation is extended to heterosexual women, further supporting the notion that tolerance is used to uphold patriarchal notions. White heterosexual women are candidates for equality while lesbian women are candidates for tolerance (Brown 75). The ability of straight women to be absorbed in patriarchal customs and notions of equality is more readily done than it is for queer people, particularly women. As noted above in the linking of families and democracy, women's presence is necessary to

establish hegemonic notions of family. Women are necessary to create the economic conditions for men to prosper.

Wendy Brown notes that Western “superiority over which is said to require tolerance; the tolerating and tolerated are simultaneously radically distinguished from one another” (416). The very term “tolerance” shows subordination of a group by use of the term. Tolerance allows the tolerant actor to be pure, good and benevolent. The larger, dominant entity is then rewarded for tolerance with the understanding that its ability to tolerate is one sided. “A polity or culture certain of itself and its hegemony, one which does not feel vulnerable, can relax its borders and absorb otherness without fear” (Brown 417). The toleration of race would then allow for the absorption of the “good” aspects of it, the ability to capitalize and commodify what we like such as soul food and reggae, but limit the conditions of acceptance. Soul food is not fancy, its embodiment seen in black women serving it at a “hole in the wall.” We need to have the distinction of black, soulful food that is cheap, filling, for lunch. There still remain markers of white culture — with “fancy” restaurants to try. But everyone loves “Miss Lucy” and the cornbread she makes. She is tolerated in her extension of white benevolence. She is important as long as she stays in a geographical area that is appropriate; otherwise gentrification is utilized to “clean up the area.” This connects tolerance to economics both as a tool of economic policy as well as a threshold for the limits of tolerance. It is easier to be benevolent when you have the nice car, but once the economy collapses, the group or individual, once tolerated, becomes the scapegoat.

The attempt to depoliticize violence that occurs between individuals in intimate spaces disregards the work that has been done to deconstruct the binary of public and private. There is an attempt to assert that the public, the place where political action is recognized, can somehow

work to intervene in the private — what many view as the site of reproduction of gendered and racial domination and inequality. Susan Okin makes this claim in “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” She believes that this sexist culture (seen in the private sphere) can be undone by the liberal autonomy of Western democracy. While her argument attempts to challenge sexist notions, it merely reinforces a binary she is hoping to undo. She assumes that this is fundamentally a family, or social issue. Somehow there will be a correction made by a “neutral” outside actor through policy or the state. She asserts that while Western culture does have its own issues with sexism that there are the same legal guarantees for freedoms and opportunities for men and women (Okin 16-17). Her assumption is that the law is neutral, providing equality for women the same as men, and that culture is where these sexist practices should be addressed. For Okin, liberalism is apart from culture, providing something positive while struggling against the “barbaric” nature of culture and misogyny. Even if culture is the driver of this type of patriarchal behavior, she makes the same mistake as Rousseau, in understanding the contracts and promises of democracy could be constructed without the bias of this “cultural” existence.

POLITICAL ACTION IN THE SOCIAL

INTRODUCTION

While many scholars have noted that Hannah Arendt was dismissive of the social sphere, this chapter will explain the social's potential for political action. First, I will describe the conception of the social that allows for individuals to gather and engage in political work. An example of this space will be the European salons and their ability to intentionally and strategically create political discourse and action. Next, I will develop the discussion of identity, and identity-based responses, in an effort to rethink the way that Arendt's work would respond to the Civil Rights Movement. Arendt's writing on these issues has been justifiably critiqued, but if there is a consideration of how she responded to anti-Semitism and questions surrounding Jewish identity, it illuminates the possibility of a different interpretation and potential for anti-racist coalitions and responses. All of these issues are bound within our complicated understanding of intimacy. The intimacy that existed in the private seemingly spilled over into the public, informing the social. Intimacy, just as other behaviors that were previously private, were now regulated and as such, developed our understanding of appropriate responses to intimate and interpersonal violence as well as our understanding of whether these instances of violence are social or political problems.

PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOCIAL

Arendt's conception of modernity happens through the development of the social out of the public and private which leads to a bureaucratic form of government and social life. For Arendt, the conception of the social arises out of a sense of loneliness and erosion of community.

There is a distinct loss because of the homogenous nature of the social that precludes the ability for plurality and freedom. The expansion of the private is particularly important because of the way that conduct replaces political action. The myriad of behaviors now become expected and regulated, based on a familial understanding of interaction. Because of the extension of the private, Arendt sees the potential loss of public space as something that removes the potential for political action. This was both something that caused distress because while not necessarily a space “for men” per se, it had been thought of as a masculine space. Now those in the private sphere (a “feminized” space) were entering the public sphere, what would this mean for the ability to move freely as men? Would things change? Would a different accountability exist? This is the question Arendt answers. When considering the bounds of intimacy, questions of inclusion and exclusion, belonging, and access all inform the way we consider actions as “political.”

Part of the critique leveraged against Arendt concerns the gendering of the public and private. Arendt does ascribe gender, but it is to the categories of animal laborans (feminine) and homo faber (masculine), while political action is not gendered in the same ways. The social, while not necessarily gendered, is connected to labor so is often ascribed as feminine. To identify the social as itself gendered wrongly infers something from Arendt’s work. It instead is a complex space of both public and private convergence while also located outside of each sphere. The expansion of the private into the public, which Arendt ultimately sees as limiting the potential for political action, is often considered a domestic, or feminine space. Yet, when examining Arendt’s characterization of the public and political action will point to a misidentification. Arendt says that “life,” “mortality,” “worldliness,” “plurality,” and the “earth,” are conditions of human existence” (*Human Condition* 11) and that that the human

capacity for beginning something anew is marked by natality (*Human Condition* 9). The production, or birth (a historically feminine concept), of politics becomes essential to action. The subordination of the private sphere is thought of because of it is only consumed with the life process, being born, existing, dying and the maintenance that sustains those things. Yet, it is the political, the space of action that requires a birth or ideas and action, a sustained model of political production that intimately mirrors the seemingly unimportant domestic sphere. Here I will suggest a shift from thinking of the binary of private and public as gendered, and instead, expand the potential of rebirth as possibility in the social.

Part of the problem with scholars' critiques of Arendt is the failure to acknowledge the possibility of locating action outside of the body while it is also simultaneously bound within it. For example, there is a binary that is created the Arendt's work either creates a definition of political action that is separate from the body or that the body can never be separated from political action. It is here, this space between this binary, that we have developed the problems with intimate and interpersonal. If the body is the constant source of action, it would be easy to identify acts of violence and in particular sexual violence, as being located in the body. If they are outside the body, and this is why many feminist theorists do not prefer this understanding, then sexual violence is a personal, private action, not something occurring in the public realm. But, if we shift this into a multifaceted problem, one that allows for it to be both an individual act as well as a group or political act, the potential to address the systematic nature and identifying it as an individualized act becomes possible.

THE SOCIAL

Arendt often spoke of the social as a negative space, something that takes over and stops the ability for political action. Arendt's description of the social is important to understanding

the construction and behavior of intimate spaces. Arendt herself was dismissive of feminism, but her work speaks to several questions within feminist theory in spite for her distaste of mass movements as seen most specifically in her critique of the Civil Rights Movement. As Bonnie Honig notes, Arendt “believed strongly that feminism’s concerns with gender identity, sexuality, and the body were politically inappropriate” which leads to her dismissal of the social because she has misidentified its potential (1). The complicated sphere of the social also allows for resistance and political work. Arendt sees the social as comprised of life processes, homogeneity of opinion or interest, and regulation of behavior and conduct. Arendt’s description of the social is developed has three aspects: the growth and expansion of a capitalist market economy, mass society, and the social dimension that underscores the quality of life and civil society. Often, it is characterized as the embodiment of the private extending into the public, overtaking it. But, it is an entirely separate sphere that is informed, but separate from, the public and private. Arendt says that the social is not an extension of the private, it is “neither private nor public,” but a “hybrid realm” (*Human Condition* 28, 35). Society does not, however, imply that there is an overwhelming expansion of the private into the public, as Arendt notes, the social threatens and destroys the private, as it would do to the public. For Arendt, the social falls outside of private and public.

The creation of the social realm results from the capitalist and liberal culture’s advancement and expansion, necessitating a space to develop the merger of economics and behaviors. The social can work to envelope many of the characteristics of the private and public realms. This is the space where socialization happens and in doing so, homogenizes cultural norms. The social is traditionally held as a space of acquiescence and retreat from a political participation. The creation and conception of the social must be described through its relation to

the expansion of economic terms, and with that, the neoliberal state. For Greeks, economics was private but in modern society, it became public and thus found itself in the social. The “mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance” (Arendt, *Human Condition* 46). While household duties, even those including economic responsibilities, were previously seen as private, the dependence on economies outside of the household makes this engagement, and thus the vulnerability of the private, subject to the public, the social. It is because the economy has become complex including labor, exchanges, currency, and the networks of production that create the idea of a market yet the sovereignty of control is not found in a finite actor or system. Much like the notion of law and justice (even intimacy) the markets structure the social such that it is operated seemingly without regulators, participation is necessary to exist and yet there is no uniformity that allows for transparency. The “invisible hand” appears to guide economics, and yet it is regulated and controlled in a way that protects the illusion of phantom sovereignty.

Society then becomes a regulator, its identity shaped by the authoritarian understandings of the father in the family (or biological). “Society constitutes the public organization of the life process itself (*Human Condition* 46). It follows that the ideal “‘social conditions,’ are those under which it is possible to lose one’s identity” (*Human Condition* 214). The family is seen to have a homogenous opinion and society demands that members act as one giant family (*Human Condition* 28). The decline of family arrangements led to the family to be absorbed by the social, “no-man rule” (*Human Condition* 39) that leads to a bureaucratic government ruled in the same manner. Arendt thought that the homogeneity of thought that the ability for political action, unfettered collective response and discussion, could not happen. Yet, the existence of the salons highlights the ways that society adapted to these concerns and developed a response to political

action. In the same way that intimacy was perceived to be private, it becomes expansive as it comes under the purview of the public. Biologic processes and the intimacy that often accompanies domesticity would then come under the oversight of politics -- relying on its processes to recenter or refocus the outpouring. It was not just that suddenly the behaviors became visible and were regulated, but even their ability to be known or seen necessitated regulation. Standards of appropriateness were established and almost simultaneously, a desire to subvert that regulation arose. One such attempt was salons. Arendt held that the social was negotiated through the “opinion of polite society in the salon” (*Human Condition* 39). This component shifts the understanding of a society from purely economic terms into something that includes behaviors that often work to support economic markets. Society works to stabilize behaviors, create a conception of normalizing expectations, to make its members behave, “to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement” (*Human Condition* 40).

Nonmaterial culture involves things that carefully construct the complicated “web of relationships.” This includes institutions, norms, social practices that comprise a civilization. The description and development of civilization are not natural, but instead is carefully crafted through performance, repetition, and value systems decided through and by individuals that create society. Arendt thought that we did not acknowledge the systems and behaviors that worked to create society. According to Arendt, one person alone cannot dismantle this system and as such, she saw the collective political ability as the mechanism to intervene and change the construction. The potential for collective action could both intentionally and spontaneously happen through the salons. Arendt’s work, *Rahel Varnhagen*, is integral to the understanding of Arendt’s personal shift that could illuminate the potential for political action in the social. This book is published in 1959, during the time Arendt has chosen to leave the academy. She makes

an intentional decision to invest more in urgent work to save lives, specifically of Jewish people. Arendt's actions can be seen as aligning with countless women and people of color who have experienced a similar shift that complicated their craft and personal aspirations. She illuminates something that I saw in my own life, the requirement to engage the personal as a political project. This is perhaps why her work on the social is attractive and functional as a consideration as a liberatory space. For Arendt, and myself, these intervening times proved to be consciousness-raising moments that demanded a response. It is from this that Arendt offers an option, best expressed by her own urgency surrounding her career and personal decisions, to make a choice. The choice could be action or apathy, but to be clear, both are a choice, a political act. Arendt wrote that "she had been primarily occupied with academic pursuits. Given that perspective, the year 1933 made a lasting impression on me." In 1933 the first concentration camps were established, and the imprisonment of those who were "deviant" (Jewish, gay, political dissenters) were imprisoned.

Those captured by Nazis "was such a shock to me that ever after I felt responsible... I no longer felt that [I] could be simply an observer" (Young-Bruehl 107). She was forced to grapple with the ways she had been surrounded by anti-semitic ideology in the institutions where she worked, and the company, coworkers, and friends that she kept. Her shift from institutional focus to the social does not undermine her work, but rather shows the nuance of it. The shifting nature of regimes, politics, and society, demand a complex, multi-layered assessment. It was suddenly important what happened in interpersonal and intimate spaces because it served as a vehicle to segregate, assign guilt, and ultimately death. "The problem, the personal problem was not what our enemies might be doing, but what our friends were doing" (Young-Bruehl 29). For Arendt, it was particularly troubling those who chose to collaborate with Nazis, even before it

became illegal to refuse. It created an emptiness all around her (Young-Bruehl 108). The social became a strategy for identification, a political vetting for authenticity and legitimacy. And yet, those who were not targeted, become passive actors, shaped by the institutions around them, instead of identifying the way they are complicit in creating the moments of crisis that develop a flawed response. The resolutions to these problems fail to create an affective political apparatus to engage the issue. There is a constant chasing, a retroactive dealing with inequality, injustice, and oppression that fails to prevent the next catastrophe.

She had not been blind to the rise and danger of Nazism, she knew “that the Nazis were our enemies--God knows we did not need Hitler’s seizing of power to demonstrate that! It was clear to everyone who was not a little crazy for at least four years prior to 1933.” It was, instead, precisely because of her identity, that she “looked Jewish”, created a problem that she had yet to encounter. It was when “general political realities transformed themselves into personal destiny as soon as you set foot out of the house” (Young-Bruehl 108). Although Arendt did not equate anti-semitism to racist policies against Black Americans, those policies demanded a political response precisely because they were rooted in identity. Centering the awareness of identity acknowledges the political potential and consequences of the social. Her ability to freely engage and move around in the world had suddenly been limited. As she had spent her time before, theorizing and writing on issues of authoritarianism, it was something quite different to be condemned, hunted, and punished as part of a social project that seemed to promise an ability to identify simply by one’s perceived identity. I will develop this concept of identity-based response later in the chapter, but it is important for developing an understanding of collective action.

Rahel Varnhagen develops the potential of salons as sites of resistance and the development of intimacy. While Rahel lived 100 years prior to Arendt's published book, it is both within the context of Rahel's experiences as well as the characterizations made by Arendt that we are able to examine the salon as a problematic space that can also offer nuances surrounding intimacy and resistance. As noted, the potential of the social to create homogenous society in which free thought and unfettered political engagement are nonexistent, the salons offered an opportunity for strategic coalitions. The space created a cultural gathering place where people could appear to one another, spread ideas, socialize, acknowledged and recognized by others. While it was certainly their wealth that allowed the creation and coordination of these spaces, there were people from a variety of different classes, backgrounds as well as different genders. It was a time when the sharing of ideas and development of knowledge could work to begin to remove the barriers of the everyday. This also worked to establish an intimacy that valued the spirit and purpose of the community, electing to participate with particular norms and rules.

The salon, I argue is congruent with Arendt's conception of the space of appearance. For Arendt, this space is the polis, the place "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly... wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action" (*Human Condition* 198-9). This is the public sphere of action. It is not a physical location, but instead, it is the collection of people where they are able to act and speak together, living together for this purpose. Because it is created through intentional action, it is a tenuous space. It is unique in that "it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men — as in the case of great catastrophes when the

body politic of a people is destroyed — but with the disappearance of arrest of the activities themselves” (*Human Condition* 199). The salon specifically is able to meet and dissipate this understanding. The locations were less important, instead, it was about the members who joined, intentional for the spreading and discussing of ideas. Each time those in the salon met, it was a recreation of the understanding of the previous group while also engaging the new members, with certain rules of engagement. Arendt’s space of appearance requires a constant recreation through citizens’ discourse on public matters. It may be short-lived through efforts like resolution or have more sustained efforts through the work of changing policy. Arendt is outlining the promise and potential of strategic coalitions. The salons were often thought of as trivial, yet offered a coming together of intimacy, kinship and discussion of art, politics, and current events.

In Arendt’s description of the common, power is located in citizens joining together for a political goal. It is not based on strength, power, instead, is found in the collective body. Arendt offers a deviation from normal contract theorists in the way we are to understand the common action of citizens. This collective space cannot be compelled or coerced, instead, it is a group created and founded in consent and discursive practices. Power is “not an unchangeable, measurable and reliable entity like force or strength” (*Human Condition* 200). These practices are conversation and debate without the hindrance of the threat of physicality or coercion. It is contingent on the citizens participating which Arendt says is intentional with “because human power corresponds to the condition of plurality to begin with” (*Human Condition* 201). This space is conditional and contingent in order for it to exist and be political. While salons were not traditionally seen as coming together for political goal, the act of gathering was essential. It acted to preserve identities while challenging ideas. Salons were seen as more feminine spaces, and by

extension, this categorization extended to the social. Perhaps the social is the realm of women. Not because the social itself is gendered, but the labor to structure and organize it is historically feminine. The planning to organize the party, wedding, dinner, or gala normally does fall on a woman's list of responsibilities. But the work is the complex ways the relationships are woven — fortified and repaired in these moments — through the masterful orchestration of women. Because of their necessity to improve their male partner, as extensions and representations of those men, it is here we see women as creating the allowances for sociality, but also liberatory acts. Women create the complicated ways that we engage with one another and develop our political conversations. This includes choosing the actual people invited, to how they should sit, the time it should happen, the menu, the conversation. Women are the ones steering the structure of the event and to ignore this as an intentional and political fails to grapple with the ways that women are often complicit in the acts of their partners but can utilize these spaces for political action.

The space of appearance requires collective actors for political action. Its very legitimacy is bound up in the necessity of the people who comprise it and their ability to have unfettered discourse. Arendt uses this space to define power outside of physical ability and to acknowledge its positive abilities. Following this exercise of discourse, power is maintained through the commitments that occur within this space, the mutual agreements that are made. Arendt does not see power as being maintained by traditional methods like economic or military intervention and maintenance, instead, it is through the process of meeting together, the work of the discourse that is more likely to result in a fair outcome. This power is directly linked to the space of appearance, without it, power would not exist. She notes that power “springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse” (*Human Condition* 200). Arendt

notes that this type of power is not something that can be possessed by individuals or accumulated to build more power, instead, its existence requires public access and political discourse. “Power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence” (*Human Condition* 200). This comes from the citizens, not the sovereign or the state.

The salon was able to offer an intimacy that other gatherings, or appearances in the public, did not. Arendt often did not characterize salons as serious, but there still exists the rules of equality among members — something that was desired by Arendt (and necessary) in order for the public to function towards political work. These had the potential to act as coalitions that can become a space of disclosure. They are not simply centered on a common identity, but a shared experience of political fact. They are places where social construction and performance of identity exist, but exist within a spectrum of resistance. These identities are not assumed, but instead are the subject of discourse. Solidarity does not form because of identities that existed prior to political moments, but the identities that are created by ‘understanding and judging everything in terms of its position in the world’ and particularly that position at a particular moment (Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* 7-8).

Salons also offered the ability for storytelling, something that was valued as a social project. Disch argues that the concept of “storytelling” in Arendt’s work offers a more radical understanding of her work. Storytelling offered a unique moment of insight and compromise to develop different answers to political problems. “Storytellers initiate political reconciliation. Their work is to tell stories that accord permanence to fleeting actions, crafting them into events whose meaning can be opened to public disputation. This reconciliation is neither retrospective nor passive, but the quintessential realization of natality, the conditions that makes way for new

beginnings” (Disch 73). Storytelling works to contextualize events as well as concretely link social moments to political thought. Storytelling roots an event as part of political discourse, something to be challenged, and thought about critically, but available as a source of truth. For Arendt, this would create a nuanced way to address the political sphere. Instead of a reliance on what traditionally has been utilized, Arendt sees a tremendous value in rethinking traditional approaches. Disch quotes Arendt in explaining “traditional concepts that are no longer adequate to the phenomena they purport to explain. She calls [such metaphorical] banisters ‘categories and formulas that are deeply ingrained in our mind but for whose plausibility resides in their intellectual consistency rather than in their adequacy to actual events.’ They are, in other words, abstractions that are imposed on events by force of habit” (144). Disch argues that Arendt’s concept of “action” has been interpreted through a lens of constructed categories. Because of the creation of binary categories like male and female, public and private, Arendt’s actual work is misinterpreted. Yet, the cost of participation in some salons was often high, particularly for those of Jewish descent. Many salons demanded a denial or even outright rejection of Jewish identity. There was a denial of the familial connection, the refusal to marry those who had been set up as partners, part of which was to continue a Jewish identity as well as the existence of an explicit removal of faith—conversion to Christianity.

While Arendt contends that political action only happens in the public sphere, using her description of the space of appearance works to rethink other areas of existence. Arendt’s description of the space of appearance is idealistic, free from constraint, where dialogue is used to persuade and convince, free from coercion or violence. Even within the most forward-thinking societies, the existence of limitations is never fully gone. In this way, even Arendt’s public sphere is constrained, yet the ability for political action does and must still exist. If it

cannot, then there is no ability for actors or citizens to engage in political action. We would merely be extensions of the state without the ability to create moments of resistance or action. Yet, Arendt does not believe this to be true. We are not simply mindless bodies reproducing hierarchies and systems of power, instead, we hold the only legitimate ability to create and produce power. While her conceptions of who is able may be limited, her model can be applied to bodies she had either ignored or believed incapable of political action.

ON IDENTITY

This piece on identity is important for understanding the possibilities for the social in creating collectives of resistance. The following discussion will also illuminate the ways that black Americans should be included in the discussion of responding and refuting the political categories they were placed in both by social norms and political and legal actions. Arendt offers a way of thinking about coalition building that considers identity when constructed as a political fact rather than a call to community and political action. It is the way she begins to think of responding to anti-Semitism as a Jew, precisely because that has been established as a political fact. The use of identity is necessary by bureaucratic governments to establish a homogeneity of society. It is required to identify those who do not belong to establish the ideal. Identity is “a constitutive feature of oppressive regimes to represent specific differences as essential properties of putatively deviant groups. Once articulated, such differences became political facts that are undeniable but not irrefutable within the terms of that regimes” (Disch 286). By acknowledging identity as political fact, it then becomes possible to refute the homogeneity of that identity. Arendt’s resistance to discrimination is not a concept of abstract rights, but by taking and challenging the “identity that is under attack” (Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* 18). On identifying as a Jew, “I was only acknowledging a political fact through which my being a member of his

group outweighed all other questions personal identity or rather had decided them in favor of anonymity, of namelessness” (Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* 18). Her position could be “neither simply refused nor voluntarily taken up.” (Disch 293). In Arendt’s case there was a legal status assigned to her identity, and internment followed.

The constructions of identity are complicated, noting that to make the claim one is discriminated against, it is often necessary to claim an identity that is often socially constructed. But, “when [identity] comes ‘under attack’ it becomes a political fact, undeniable in a specific historical situation but also refutable in terms of the situation” (Honig 287). Thinking of identity in this way offers a space for resistance and collective action. While a response can be identity-based by saying I am a woman or person of color, is not so that these identities or individuals should be treated differently, instead, it is important to contextualize the ways that an event impacts or implicates us. Disch says, “this is the task of articulating solidarity: constructing the ‘facts’ of a contingent situation in a way that makes possible a coordinated response by a plurality of actors who — apart from that contingency — may have more differences than affinities.” For Arendt, the commonality between is what offers a way to bond people that “varies with each group of people” (*Human Condition* 182). This collective creates the common ground through common purpose that “fulfills the doubt function of binding men together and separating them in an articulate way” (Arendt, “A Reply [To Eric Voeglin’s review of *Origins of Totalitarianism*]” 15).

The concept of “truth” as it relates to identity becomes complicated in Arendt’s description precisely because it is ignored as a political reality. “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing” she writes about speaking in moments of political crisis that the “light [of the public realm] is extinguished by ‘credibility gaps’ and ‘invisible government’ by speech that

does not disclose what is but sweeps it under the carpet, by exhortations, moral and otherwise, that undo the pretexting of upholding old truths, degraded all truth to meaningless triviality” (Arendt viii). Speaking to issues of political importance that fail to account for the horrors of the Nazi regime create darkness, a binary where light is attempted to be snuffed out. She writes of Lessing that truth affects politics only when ‘humanized by discourse,’ in “an arena in which there are many voices and where the announcement of what each ‘deems truth’ both links and separates men, establishing in fact those distances between men which together compromise the world” (Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* 31). Demanding a common morality did not create a new positive politics, instead, it was imperative to develop ‘vigilant partisanship,’ by “taking sides for the world’s sake, understanding and judging everything in terms of its position in the world at any given time” (Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* 7-8). While still stemming from identity politics, instead of claims made from the source of the identity, she has shifted them into political facts that can instead drive the commonality.

The intentionality of identity becomes more important. While it has been established through political fact, it becomes possible, through these coalitions to intentionally redraw the conceptions of identity and reactions to it. While it often is “innocent” when identity-based discrimination occurs, this way of thinking of responses to identity shows the inaccuracy of that assumption as well as forces a conversation that centers the political fact of identity instead of ignoring it. Political facts of discrimination demand a response that includes, or centers on, identity. Attempting to appeal to a position of humanity fails to account for the political nature of the conflict or discrimination. Arendt points out that one must first acknowledge the fact that the relationship is criminal because of the actors, in her case a German and a Jew, and in the pre-civil rights era, black and white, also by extension the state and the minority actor, which works

to legitimize these moments of interpersonal and state-sanctioned violence. It is only through this acknowledgment that we can begin to refute the limitations and legality of the relationship.

“Fact depends entirely on the power of man who can fabricate it” (Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* 350). If racist and anti-semitic theories were proven true, to say that appeals to political or legal recourse could no longer work, there could only then be an examination of moral claims. A moral claim is not enough. She says, “Would any such doctrine, however convincingly proved, be worth the sacrifice of so much as a single friendship between two men?” (*Men in Dark Times*). It is not that a loss would exist because of the humanity expressed between them, but rather because they share a space that allows for the engagement and discussion of events. This engagement affirms “those distances between men which together comprise the world” (Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* 31). Thus, the loss would establish more than just a personal one, but a worldly one. Arendt notes that the withdrawal of the individual from the world presents “an almost demonstrable loss to the world.”

Arendt is attempting to utilize a “plurality of perspectives” that then are used to elevate the public sphere into something more intellectual. Arendt is making the claim that it is important to occupy the space one does not usually find oneself in. She says, “This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is [not] a question... of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else... but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not” (Disch 158). For Arendt, it is not an attempt at “understanding” someone else’s perspective but understanding one’s placement from another’s perspective. She is not imagining it is possible to fully know another’s experience, but rather to understand her own identity in relation to her attempts to think through other’s identities. Disch is framing

Arendt as the conscious pariah. For Arendt, the assimilationist will accept the other because of an underlying expectation that the subject is “like us” (Disch 161). For the separatist, there is no claim to impartiality like is seen in the assimilationist, but rather a commitment and expectation of a similar, understood perspective that is required for group membership. Disch creates a new reading of Arendt that offers a complexity with her understanding of the public and private spheres. It is through this analysis that Arendt’s work could be useful for conversations about race and gender, despite her limiting commentary in other writing.

SPACE OF APPEARANCE

It is because salons offer the ability for a space of appearance that they engage in a political project. Arendt is attempting to rethink power as not only a positive exercise of citizenship, but its use is contingent on a free and engaged citizenship. Because institutions and governments derive their own power from citizens, thinking of power in these terms offers a liberatory space of agency for citizens. It forces institutions to yield their legitimacy from their citizens, encouraging these spaces of appearance for citizens. “It is the people’s support that lends power to the institutions of a country, and this support is but the continuation of the consent that brought the laws into existence to be begin with” (Arendt, *On Power* 41). Also, this protection is not necessary according to Arendt. Since power is derived from that space, whenever citizens create a political discourse, they are creating their own power, regardless if there are attempts to withhold it from them. States may attempt to institutionalize power to preserve it, but without the active participation of citizens, this is not possible. This can take two manifestations. One, we can consider that the oppressive actions of the state are, in fact, preserved only by certain citizens being able to participate in the political sphere while others are not permitted. This would lend itself to certain types of power creation that are oppressive, even while not being

coerced into the space of political action. Citizens participating in the space of appearance would constitute Arendt's description of power. While it is not the hopeful use, the use of coercion or violence would be to limit who accesses the space, but not utilized within because the creation of a homogenous group has already removed the need for it to exist within the group.

Secondly, the space of appearance and creation of power could be utilized within spaces not traditionally recognized as capable of political action. It is here that we can see Arendt's conceptions of power and action present without strategic social movements and collectives. Governments and institutions may work to delegitimize movements like BLM, but ultimately they cannot remove the space of appearance. Similarly, during the Civil Rights Movement, when the marchers were beaten, killed, and jailed, it was attempts by institutions and specifically the state to remove political power. "All political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of people ceases to uphold them (Arendt, *On Violence* 41). Arendt, while disagreeing with the state's intervention, would still see the actions of the citizens in the march as a space of appearance. It is perhaps here where we can see this space as an agentic conception that denies power to institutions and gives even the most marginalized citizens a potential political response. Historically, critiques have focused on who is allowed into this space, noting that it was a space of privilege, granted to white, landowning men. Yet, this critique ignores the ability of citizens, even those relegated into private spheres or deemed as incapable of political participation, as being agentic actors able to create a space of appearance in the sphere they find themselves in. Furthermore, if the claim is made that the private sphere, or the domestic space of home, is a place of political action, then the space of appearance would be even more valued. If we were to acknowledge and create

objects of study from the actions in the private sphere, it would offer legitimacy to its potential as a political object. No longer would the critique surround access and marginalization as if the people within these spaces did not work to resist these constructions. Instead, it would give rise to the work that existed within these confined spaces and the political work that was happening.

When the issue is race-based, like discrimination, these coalitions offer a gathering that is understood to be one issue and the potential or even understood disbandment after the issue has been addressed. Because of the temporality, there can be a suspension of identity because identity is being acknowledged through the common issue. While it is identity that brought the ability for the space of appearance to exist, this space then functions to work on that sole issue. It is important, through participation and discourse, for that temporary gathering. This allows for an understanding of disbandment once that issue has been addressed. It is productive because the identity is accepted to participate, removing traditional barriers to inclusive efforts within coalitions. This does not mean that the complexity of other issues will not arise in the group, but that there is a common understanding for gathering that is not acknowledged outside of that space. While the salons were not a perfect example of this since most were seen as recurring meetings of socialization, the conversations and networking provided for coalition building within the meetings.

ARENDT ON RACE

Arendt's infamous "Reflections on Little Rock" has been criticized by many scholars for its anti-black rhetoric. Many use this writing to dismiss Arendt's ability to intervene in issues concerning race, particularly when dealing with African American issues and experiences. While her own prejudice informed her sentiments in "Reflections," if we apply her descriptions of power, coalitions, and resistance, we can reframe our understanding of the Civil Rights

Movement, and particularly integration, as creating a space of appearance for marginalized actors that would be in congruence with Arendt's description of the political. It is important to acknowledge the instances of racism present in "Reflections" as well as other important work by Arendt to understand and inform the way that she wrote of the (black) participants during the Civil Rights Movement. She fails to account for the ways that segregation was not naturally occurring, but instead intentional and written into laws. It was also enforced by behavior because of the potential for legal ramifications later. Similar to her dismay at people who would distance themselves from Jewish people prior to it becoming a legal practice, the social was informed by the political, and even potential political responses, to segregation.

She clearly sees a problem with the way that race is dealt with in the United States with particular critiques surrounding state sanctioned anti-miscegenation laws. She also sees value in resistance. She praises the SNCC (who were mostly white, college students) for using a democratic model in their attempts towards liberation. She wrote, "Everyone who wanted to speak was given a chance; everyone was heard...at no point were the students a mob" (*Arendt and Jasper Correspondence*, 640-641). While the white students were participatory in something that affects all citizens, Arendt does not highlight the importance of black students responding to discrimination against black people. She says, of Jewish discrimination, however, "If one is attacked as a Jew one must defend oneself as Jew. Not as German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the rights of Man..." "Belonging to Judaism had become my own problem, and my own problem was political. Purely political!" (Hannah Arendt, "Essays in Understanding" 11-12). The responses to issues that discriminate against Jewish peoples must be acknowledged through the specificity of the attack, the response must be through legal, political and interpersonal ways. Without this approach, the motivation and understanding of anti-

semitism are missed when responding to the “Jewish question.” Without the identity of the people targeted being centered, the problem is not fully responded to as well as moving the discussion from the political solely into the social. This would pathologize Jewish identity as something to acknowledge and engage socially rather than through political or economic terms.

Arendt’s description of the students engaging in SNCC does not account for the classism inherent in the ability to engage in this type of dissent. Students have access to leisure time, an area to gather, mentorship, and a relative expectation of protection, not afforded to community members. Similar to access to the salons, this space is not profitable, but is appreciated as offering a value that may or may not be measured in economic terms. Denying the importance of integrated education fails to grasp the ways this would inform the collegiate experience, and specifically groups like SNCC from forming. Arendt is quick to point out that the counter-violence used by protesters during the civil rights movement is not acceptable. She does not find value in this act of resistance nor does she see it as having the ability to intervene into the public and political realm. Yet, she defends the use of violence by Jewish people in *Origins of Totalitarianism* as well as white American Revolutionaries. Her failure to perceive civil rights protestors as “appropriate” violence is because she discredits anti-colonial violence. This is where her racism limits her ability to effectively engage with the problem of racial politics in the United States. Arendt critiques Fanon’s and Sartre’s descriptions of colonialism as violent and the colonized’s ability to organize to combat it (Gines 111). Simultaneously, Arendt does not see this as similar to the need for a Jewish Army, even saying “the need for Jews to fight Hitler with weapons in their hands” (Gines 111). Arendt views the violent uprisings in the Warsaw ghetto as important, yet cannot connect this with the uprisings of the colonized. Ultimately, the refusal to accept colonized people’s rebellions as necessary and liberatory works to “perpetuate

and even legitimize violence, racism, and colonialism in a way that allows the violence of the oppressors to go unchecked” (Gines 111). She sees violence as something productive when considered along other contexts. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt says that violence is a way “to leave the private realm and to make entry into the public realm possible.” In *On Revolution* violence is found outside the political realm, but she also sees it function “in the creation of the public realm.” In *The Jewish Writings*, Arendt sees self-defense implicit in “fighting for freedom and political rights” in the context of the creation of a “Jewish army” (93). Anne Norton’s work “Heart of Darkness: Africa and African Americans in the Writings of Hannah Arendt” makes the claim that Arendt’s racial politics are inescapable. Is it possible for Arendt to fully address imperialism, racism, and intolerance when she wrote explicitly in work like “Reflections on Little Rock” that African Americans were inferior? Arendt’s usage of *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad evaluates the perspectives of white imperialism without adequately addressing the perspective of those in the community he enters. Some critics have argued that Arendt also criticizes the “white” student movements, and canonical thinkers in the history of the United States, pointing to an idea that Arendt critiques any type of thought that consolidates into homogeneity. Yet, this type of critique (against whites) has often been leveraged in the academic sphere. The founding fathers’ work is seen as essential even with problematic assertions. There is not an immediate or even partial dismissiveness around their work, even with shortcomings. When Arendt engages the problems of African Americans, however, it is a moral stance and one that works to discredit black Americans in general, not just specific thinkers.

Arendt attempts to offer a distinction between social and political phenomena. The examples she provides offer perhaps the strongest indictment of her racism, class distinctions, and where she attempts to separate anti-semitism and anti-black racism as separate issues. She

disagrees with the United States forced integration of public schools, because she classifies schools and education as social institutions. Pointing to her failure in understanding class distinctions, Arendt claimed with the French Revolution that poverty did not belong in the question of politics. Disch points out that these are often used to support claims of Arendt's elitism and distance from ordinary people. And while Disch does concede that Arendt's discussion of the social and political is inconsistent, she also notes that to dismiss Arendt as elitist ignores seeing the perspective of Arendt herself. Perhaps, as Disch argues, it is Arendt's work that makes the social privilege visible, the belief that these things can be fundamentally separate (Disch 62). For Bonnie Honig, the belief that Arendt's work offers a philosophical problem to one solved is incorrect. Instead, she sees Arendt as a "never-ending project of political work, a perpetual practice of democratic augmentation and amendment" (Honig 161). In fact, she calls an attempt to solve this problem at a philosophical level "distinctly un-Arendtian in spirit and symptomatic of political theory's generally problematic tendency to displace politics" (Honig 161).

RACE PARVENU/PARIAH

To develop this concept of Arendt and black politics, I will now turn to her discussion of Parvenu and Pariah. In the previous chapter, I noted that attempts at tolerance have been attempts, and failed, to correct problems of intimate and interpersonal violence. Its location within a space that is seen as a social problem rather than political only solidifies the failures of tolerance and the way it re-inscribes racist and sexist norms. Arendt's description of parvenue and pariah show the development of an attempt to absorb difference without correcting racism and sexism. Arendt notes the importance of this identity-based response to anti-Semitism and as such provides us with a similar understanding of the ways that attempts of race have created an

ineffective solution as well. Her characterization shows quite aptly the limits of tolerance and the ways it is imparted through the self-monitoring of those disenfranchised. Tolerance in this way works to create the guidebook with which the bodies of those “in need” of tolerance act as the testing grounds for the limits of sociability. This “social grace” then translates into the ways that institutions negotiate difference. If we look specifically at Arendt’s description of Parvenu and Pariah and consider this in conversation with her discussion of race, it highlights the ways that attempts at tolerance and upward mobility of the exception have failed because of the lack of state intervention. While Arendt clearly has bias against African Americans, her work on Jewish identity offers insight into the context of racial bias. While not ignoring her, at times, racist writing, we can use her own work to support the claims and ideas of African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement.

In Arendt’s discussion of pariah, critics often discuss the concepts of pariah and parvenu presented as self excluding options rather than considering the possibility or more than two choices. The self-awareness that is possible through another option would create an actor who possesses agency while being conscious of the bounds other are operating within the structure of institutions and society. Historically, the options exist in two forms. The parvenue exists through assimilation and through the denial of pariah. They must learn “to be and yet not be Jews” (*Origins of Totalitarianism* 56). Secondly, the extreme to the parvenu, is the separatist, chauvinist who only finds value with other pariahs, dividing communities into us and them categories. Lisa Disch points out that pariah-hood offers a third alternative, a consciousness of one’s own existence as a pariah who works to stay centrist and avoid the trappings of false unity or exclusion, one who values collective. For Disch, it is important that when reading Arendt, to not just consider her academic and intellectual work, but also what her political risk. The

parvenu is required to be educated, work to deny his Jewish identity, and become the exception. He must exceed even the ranks of his non-Jewish peers. After all this work, he is still a Jew, an identity, just as race and gender, central to the individual. Arendt found this avenue of acceptance destructive and dehumanizing. The Parvenu exists as the exception, allowed into a space of exclusion while simultaneously being acknowledged for their identity of difference. It requires an erasure of identity in moments of resistance, while simultaneously requiring it to gain entrance as unique. The attempts to absorb those on the fringes, to restructure after moments of discrimination fall short when based on notions of tolerance and exceptions. While both the parvenu and pariah can be seen as contributing to discrimination by seemingly being complicit in their own domination, this understanding fails to acknowledge that the limits of occupying a space outside of these identities. When attempting to exist in society, the roles most tolerated and the least likely to be corrected must sometimes be chosen to survive.

Arendt's publication of *Rahel Varnhagen* is important to understand within the context of her life. She has been placed in an internment camp, escaped, and left academia. While she worked on this book prior to those experiences, her release of it must be contextualized within her own life experience. It was necessary to wrestle with the politics of what next? How do we move from the politically sanctioned murder, displacement, rape, and extermination of an entire group of people? What models do we have to survive and move on beyond that moment? Parvenu and pariah show us the prior courses and their failure. Parvenu requires "strenuous effort to love" (*Rahel Varnhagen* 199). To gain access, the parvenu must love what those in higher status love and hate what they hate, including their own identity. In a society of anti-semitism, as is the case in Arendt's *Rahel Varnhagen*, the parvenu must also become anti-semitic, attempting to remove the own characteristics of his identity from himself. The attempt

must be to be the exception, to present oneself as an individual and “penetrate society solely as individual” (*Rahel Varnhagen* 85). Becoming the exception relies on the existence of the pariah, the remaining of those who fulfill the opposite. The parvenu is an intimate, difficult look at the failings and trappings of attempted assimilation that requires a stripping down of pleasure by demanding a “sacrificing nature” (*Rahel Varnhagen* 210). She must love what those who despise her love, never accessing the reality of her own desires. The parvenu must “sacrifice every natural impulse, to conceal all truth, to misuse all love, not only to suppress his passions, but worse still, to convert it into means for social climbing” (*Rahel Varnhagen* 208). The understanding that your presence is tolerated is only reinforced by the attempts to remove any semblance of your own identity. It is impossible to not be a Jew, but one must get as close as possible. The incessant self-degrading behaviors not only affirm the superior possession of attempts at becoming what one cannot be but also reinforce the important self-rejection. This is the acknowledgment that even the person inhabiting that body hates it, affirming the justification of those who are anti-Semitic. Parvenus were not able to assimilate as Jews, but rather to be from nowhere and be no one. And yet “under no circumstance were they allowed simply to disappear among their neighbors” (Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* 65). The hyper-visibility and invisibility simultaneously are reflexive of Du Bois’ double consciousness. One must know oneself while simultaneously understanding the complex and different ways that others perceive you and your body. One must understand the ways you must make your body available, to be seen and studied, in hopes of acceptance. The engagement with disenfranchised bodies is done so on the dominant group’s terms. Jewish people began to be a source of entertainment. “Jews became people with whom one hope to while away some time with. The less one thought of them as equals, the more attractive and entertaining they became” (*Origins of Totalitarianism*

67). The source of joy and study that these bodies offered is because of an identity inscribed at (and even before) birth. “[Jews and homosexuals] believed their difference to be a natural fact acquired by birth; both were constantly justifying not what they did, but what they were” (*Origins of Totalitarianism* 84).

MOTHERS

Arendt’s conception of the mothers during the school integration is rooted in racial bias and misinformation. Her critique centers on the mothers, something that is in direct contradiction to her own mother’s response to anti-Semitism. Arendt considered the issue of school integration as firmly located within the social, something that the state should not intervene in. I will now consider “Reflections on Little Rock” with these two considerations to better understand a different approach and interpretation of Arendt’s contribution, in spite of herself, on racial politics.

Gines notes that Arendt had situational knowledge of Nazism that impacts the way she views anti-Semitism but results in an inability to make connections between racism, colonialism, and imperialism. Gines points out Arendt’s “thoughtlessness” which Arendt herself is a graver sin than intention. Arendt believes imperialism to be more brutal than colonialism while Giles notes that while imperialism denied expansion of laws, colonialism “involved more of an extension of the laws and ideals of the mother country into the colonial territory” (78). Gines points out Arendt’s distinction between “race thinking” and “racism” in *Origins of Totalitarianism*. Gines sees Arendt’s “race thinking” as a “matter of free opinion” compared to racism and the way “it permeates public opinion and leads people to abandon concrete facts for racist principles” (83). Arendt effectively illustrates the connection of anti-semitism,

imperialism, and totalitarianism as contributing the rise of Nazism, but fails to make the connection between racism, colonialism and racial hierarchies.

For Arendt, some rights did require state intervention including voting rights, and in her view, the unlawful anti-miscegenation laws. She champions the validity of marriage laws over the laws surrounding education. Arendt does note that segregation that is legalized should be challenged, but that once that intervention is made, any problems with segregation are social, no longer in the political sphere. This is the fundamental aspect of her argument that exposes the limits of her theory only because of where she has placed education. Because Arendt locates it in the social, then the response must be different. Her reasoning for locating it in the social is inherently race-based, exposing a bias that changes the approach to the problem. This construction of Arendt is in conflict with her saying that slavery was “one great crime in America’s history” (Gines 7). Arendt notes, “the color question was created by slavery and requires a solution within the political and historical framework of the United States. This suggests that a political solution is needed” (Gines 14).

Arendt’s response to anti-Semitism and Jewish identity is often rooted in conversations about her mother. It is also the mothers she criticizes most harshly in “Reflections on Little Rock.” Arendt claims, from misidentifying actors in a picture and incomplete information, that the parents of the children are absent, forcing someone else to do the difficult work walking them into school. Arendt notes that black mothers denied their children “absolute protection and dignity” something her own mother fought for fiercely when she was faced with anti-Semitism (Gines 19). Arendt’s harsh criticism of black parenting goes so far as to say that the Supreme Court decision to end segregation creates a more humiliating position for students than before (Gines 20). She perceives the parents as attempting to gain social status through their children

rather than protect them from racism. Arendt's unwillingness to consider the perspective of the black parents is from a point of refusal, not from a lack of evidence. Further, later in her correspondence with Ralph Ellison where she does acknowledge some inaccuracies in her previous statements, she still refuses to acknowledge the value of the black parent's activism.

Arendt saw the mothers as social climbers and this for Arendt links to her conception of the parvenu. She must "sacrifice every natural impulse, to conceal all truth, to misuse all love, not only to suppress [her] passions, but worse still, to convert it into means for social climbing" (208). The assimilation required is not just to gain entrance into a new social world, but instead of access to networks and abilities for survival. Access to education, which the Little Rock parents were demanding is not a social luxury, but a necessity that offers one of the few mechanisms to solidify economic security. Yet, this public act is required and necessary. Incumbent to the space for political action is the observance of others. "There is a reliance on public watching, not only to shape the issues brought forward, but also to instill accountability. The public eye is required because of the demands to justice" (*Correspondence of Arendt and Jasper* 75).

Her racial bias, however, is what leads her to this assessment rather than a political question. Consider this in conversation with the experiences that she acknowledged and valued from her own mother when Arendt was dealing with anti-semitism as a child. To develop a politics of resistance that works with regards to racist sentiment in the United States, it is worth examining the words of Arendt's mother as well as the importance Arendt ascribes to them. On the importance of claiming one's Jewish identity, she says, "One may not duck out of it! One must defend it!" After Arendt's mother would hear of anti-semitism in the classroom, her mother's response is important in contextualizing the importance of an identity-based response.

To remove the aspect of Jewish identity from it fails to fully engage the context of the situation. “When my teachers made anti-Semitic remarks — usually they were not directed at me but at my other classmates, particularly at the Eastern Jewesses — I was instructed to stand up immediately, to leave the class, go home” (Arendt, *For Love of the World* 11). This defiance, the act her mother told her to do, was crucial to learning resistance. Arendt said that the mothers of Little Rock were politicizing their children. Some point to this example of Arendt’s mother making her leave as falling within the same conception of politicization. Yet, both of these fail to account for the ways that children are responding to a politicized moment. Their bodies already exist as political actors. Arendt’s mother and the mothers in Little Rock were not creating political situations, rather encouraging their children to make a choice of action in their response. It was precisely because they had been engaged as political or representative actors that the moment is political, their response does not politicize the moment.

Arendt’s mother would also engage the school by writing letters. This approach emphasizes the importance of a communal effort. Just as with the Little Rock case, there were family members, community members, and religious leaders engaging the issues of inequality, not situating it squarely on the shoulders of the children. The challenge of inequality was leveled at the administration and the legal system. This made it political, while also acknowledging the existence of the social within this realm. “But if remarks came at me from other children, I was not allowed to go home and tell. That did not count. One had to defend oneself against remarks from other children” (Young-Bruehl 11-12). It was not simply that Jewish people in hopes of assimilating, turned their backs on or rejected other less successful Jews, but even non-Jewish people worked fervently to disassociate themselves because they located the threat only in their

relationship to Jewish people. Under this pressure of assimilation, even expressions of intimacy must be avoided, and that included sympathy.

Arendt labels the parents of the children at Little Rock as social climbers, interested in social rather than political success. Arendt even goes so far as to misidentify, through assumption, who is present in the photo. She says that the parents do not show up. Arendt's assumptions that led her to misjudge the photograph point to a larger problem both in her work and political thought as a whole, the oversimplification and misrepresentation of the black community and black parents specifically. Arendt assumes that the parents are introducing children to violence while failing to realize the systemic violence from colonialism, slavery, and Jim Crow that is present before children are even born. The foundational point of contention was Arendt's view that schools were a social space and as such, not part of the political sphere. The potential of the social as political exists in potential, but the argument must acknowledge that education and segregation were already state sponsored and enforced. Arendt "defends racial discrimination as a social custom and rejects the legal enforcement of desegregation" (Gines 37). These students (and their parents) had already been established in their identities as political fact. And as such, should respond from that position. For Arendt, forced social equality through state intervention set a dangerous precedent. Arendt held that the mothers should be protecting children from the political world instead of using them as tools to intercede in it. Yet, it is clear that black children already existed in the political world. Their bodies were already sites of exclusion from social, political, and educational realms. Their existence is seen as a cause for legal intervention to prevent them from occupying public spaces. Arendt contends that changes to education needed to be grassroots, bottom-up transformations through action of the parents and teachers. What she fails to acknowledge was that this work was being done since the start of

education in the United States. Slaves organized schools for informal training and education and with the institutionalization of education, black parents and teachers worked continuously to ensure quality education. Arendt fails to see that often these works of political action were legally ignored by the institutions of the state. This did not mean that this work was not political, but rather that the tactic required modification. When the effects of racism are economically, socially and politically systemic, grassroots mobilization often becomes a call for large movements. These movements that formed surrounding education were examples that would only support Arendt's space of appearance concept. While Arendt believed that it was through the work of racially integrated coalitions of teachers and parents that would create this bottom-up type of change, she failed to recognize the social and legal barriers to these types of relationships possessing the potential to exist or even legal protection for institutional collaboration. Ultimately, Arendt's conception and strictly defined categories lead to a "paradox of public space" where she fails to account for the overlapping aspects of Black citizens in the United States (Gines 55).

Arendt thought that top-down integration was a form of assimilation and offered nothing to change the value or impact of education. In "The Crisis in Education" she notes that public education works towards the "emancipation of children" and removing them from the responsibility of adults. Children then contributed to the economic model, instead of becoming liberated by it. They now learned to participate in society as adults suffering from group cohesion, homogenous thought, and as capitalist units. It was in this way that she saw the civil rights movement, as well as the Zionist movement, as engaged by conscious pariahs. These movements offered assimilation that only distracted from larger political tasks. The complaints of oppressed people were then absorbed and repackaged in a way that presented itself as

progress. It was not that she found no power or significance in these movements, but instead that the motivation to challenge existing institutions could not be found in a common experience of oppression. “Oppressed minorities were never the best judges... there are many instances when they preferred to fight for social opportunity rather than for basic human (e.g., interracial [or same-sex marriage] or political rights” (“Reflections on Little Rock”). While her critique is elitist and racist, similar claims have been made that identity and experience of oppression cannot be the common source of community building. Yet, it was her mother who taught her to respond as a Jew, and also the pursuit of Jewish causes that she left academia.

Despite Arendt’s racist tone, she does make it clear in other writings that white supremacy and institutionalized racism are against political action and power. It is perhaps when she removes herself from the social commentary and focuses on institutions that we see a more hopeful, idealistic approach to race. She predicts that following integration, there will be a resurgence of a white backlash which will give way to groups organizing around hegemonic white norms. These groups, it follows, will create movements attempted to undo the progress of integration and she predicts will focus particularly on education. This prediction did come true through the emergence of private schools thinly veiled as places of religious freedom, as well as massive white flight from integrated school systems. This is of particular importance in places like Alabama that became the sites of massive resistance during the Civil Rights Movement and then the justification for gutting the Voting Rights Act. It is no coincidence that education solidified a new type of segregation that allowed for a nuance of racism. The fact that education becomes the battleground where racism is enacted and challenged only further supports the idea that children are already present in a political sphere. These children already existed in a political space, not the civil rights movement that thrust them there. Furthermore, it is precisely

because school is both political and social that it requires oversight and intervention. Compared to other political spaces, where actors are able to have choices (although some are limited), school is required, the child is forced into a space that organizes their behavior, methods of learning, and modes of social engagement. It is perhaps one of the most politicized spaces with regards to funding, supplies, teachers, test scores, so much so that it drives economics in the area around it through purchasing homes, etc. A selling factor for neighborhoods was often having “good” schools.

For Arendt, the law that is “the most outrageous law of Southern states” is the anti-miscegenation law. Gines works to link this law with school segregation laws. For Gines, this clearly exhibits that segregating schools is an attempt to prevent, among other things, the potential for interracial relationships. Gines points to a primary concern with desegregation is a fear of white women becoming more sexually accessible to Black men (37). Gines notes that Arendt’s defense of segregation as a social problem creates a “hierarchy of rights” in that one should be guaranteed a right to marry, and this right is weighed more heavily than the right to education (33). Gines notes that Arendt’s dismissal of desegregation can be attributed to Arendt’s ascription of poverty and education to the social sphere. Valuing a right to marry, while important, fails to account for the existing institutions, including education, that lead to this type of legal status. The fear of this type of intimacy between black men and white women does the work to define bureaucratic norms in the social. It is precisely because this law intervenes in the ability to gather together that it poses a particular threat to political action. Preventing the potential for intimate partnerships and friendships creates a loss that directly affects the ability for political action. It is her strong rejection of this law that emphasizes the importance of the social and intimacy that is necessary for political action.

Arendt sees the right to marry as foundational while she “belittles discrimination in employment, housing, and educating as issues of social opportunity rather than basic human or political rights” (Gines 37). Her failure to acknowledge that these types of discrimination not only encourage anti-miscegenation laws but actually work to create the conditions where integrated spaces could exist, is a failure to grapple with the political aspects of racism. Arendt is “oblivious to the fact that many of the arguments she makes against marriage laws are also applicable to the discrimination laws in education she defends” (Gines 39). Arendt’s claim that marriage laws and segregation laws are mutually exclusive fails to acknowledge the ways that the norms and customs of public spaces, including education, perpetuate and reinforce one another. This is perhaps the most relevant aspect of Gines’ critique to the ways that public spaces have and continue to enforce racial violence. The ability of white students to flee integration for private schools and the ever-spreading suburbs all point to the social customs that perpetuate structural racism. It is this very mechanism that is most difficult to challenge. Because the segregation is no longer seen as legally protected, and instead naturally occurring, it limits the ability of the democratic process to intervene. If you are able to point to explicit discrimination that meets certain conditions, not only do you have a legal case, but also a legitimate case within the public sphere. Even if it is not a challenge that is administered in the legal system, the ability to bring it into the public space and have it be considered political action is still incumbent on democratic processes.

STORYTELLING AND MEMORY

Perhaps the most important contribution of Gines’ is her use of different historical memory to point out Arendt’s inability to connect legacies of violence. She challenge’s Arendt’s description of memory by noting that Arendt fails to recognize collective memories from slavery

and the Holocaust or imperialism and colonialism are connected. These memories could collectively be seen as an act of storytelling that contributes to the political sphere, yet for Arendt, that is not extended to Black Americans. Gines sees these memories as referential points for one another, not as a competition for varying degrees of experiencing trauma. Arendt's description of the Black Power movement and black student protests is one of the most illuminating. Arendt clearly distinguishes some acts of violence as appropriate while others are not. She also claims that the student protesters do not meet the academic standards of the white students. She even goes so far to say that these students lowered the academic integrity of the university and created "soul courses" which are nonessential. Here, she actively works to erase the contributions and political actions of these students. Arendt sees police action against white students as a "violent intervention" she also says that "serious violence" did not occur until black students and the Black Power movement came onto campus, illuminating more completely that the Negro problem is Black problem (Gines 119).

Gines' analysis is important because it complicates Arendt's writing on race precisely because it includes Arendt's personal politics. This is in the same vein of what I have worked towards in this chapter. Her bias clouds her assessments, but her personal experiences illuminate a different approach to politics. Arendt's theory of judgment serves as the culprit for her inability to critique the white supremacy in the United States. Arendt's description of how to best develop a perspective would require "the liberation of one's own private interests" (Honig 321). This then would hold that "I remain in this world of universal interdependence, where I can make myself representative of everybody else" (Gines 125). Gines notes that for Arendt, judgement "must liberate itself from 'the subjective private conditions'" (Gines 124). To fully move beyond one's own opinions and to develop a political action, it is necessary to

communicate and agree with theirs, to be seen and consider other perspectives in the public sphere. Arendt forms political thought by considering different viewpoints, by “making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them (Gines 125). Gines argues that Arendt does not in fact make present those standpoints that are absent, instead, she occupies “the standpoints of those already present in the public realm, the oppressors” (124). This holds true in her perspective about black Americans, and yet is in contradiction with her experience as a Jewish woman. This is why the insight is best seen through her individual experience as a way to then think of the Civil Rights movement.

CONCLUSION

Arendt’s time in an internment camp influenced her decision to embark on a personal project. She organized, built coalitions, and importantly, learned the different methods of survival both within the camp and after liberation. Arendt describes the attempts to organize resistance during her time in the camp, one idea suggested was a mass suicide. Someone mentions they were brought there to die anyway, changing the mood and momentum behind this idea. The plans for mass suicide dissipated soon after. But, the collective existed, the constant renegotiating of ideas, all voices, making it a worthwhile endeavor. Part of the transformation to form the collective was the importance of identifying the actors around you. It became necessary to identify who was friend and who was enemy in order to realize that their misfortune was not “some mysterious shortcomings in themselves,” and in this realization, developed “a violent courage of life.” But, the “same people, as soon as they returned to their own individual lives, being faced with seemingly individual problems,” retreated back into “insane optimism which is next door to despair” (Arendt, *The Jewish Writings* 268). It taught her the potential of political action, the results once an imminent threat was lifted, and the need for a sustained, systemic

response. It is here we see Arendt's frustration with the return to monotony. It was this formative time that solidified her commitment to a personal political project. It is the potential mundane of the social to overwhelm the importance of the political response, but it can also create the coalitions prior to a catastrophic event.

Arendt thought Zionism offered something that the Civil Rights Movement did not. The civil rights movement was trivialized by Arendt because she assumed it only considered the daily, social conditions of life. The Civil Rights Movement, she believed, offered citizens individual rights instead of challenging institutions to secure rights more broadly. Yet, she fails to see the collective of rights advocated for through education and the broad implications of those gains. Arendt's commentary on school integration can be considered political, happening in the public sphere, yet she is rendering the critique of black experience as not an issue worth creating a political project. Her dismissal of the action of black activists works to undermine the ability for their work to exist within the political sphere. Ultimately, if others are not present, or perhaps worse, if their perspective is being falsely represented, the decisions are ultimately biased. Gines said that representation thinking involves displacing Black people's "standpoint while inserting one's own, imagining oneself in their place, but never inquiring about their own experience in their own place" (Gines 125). This leaves their perspective unexamined, seemingly assuming that the dominant perspective exists without question, and without bias. It is as if Arendt assumes she is not writing from her own perspective, but instead one of a neutral political thinker, ignoring the implications for the ways in which her experiences taint her political thought. Gines notes that Arendt occupies a position "in the Little Rock essay is actually the position of white racists" (127). Arendt's mentality is "exclusive misrepresentative thinking" (Gines 126). It appears Arendt's thought it arrogant enough to ignore and misrepresent

the perspectives of Black Americans, reducing the possibility of what makes political action possible and taking away plurality. Instead, it is important to see her response to the rise of Naziism as the evaluation of intervention.

So what of Arendt? It is possible to hold writers and their work to the contemporary truths. Working to undo their work preemptively undermines their need to be studied. Evaluating the authors it is also not enough to just consider their work within the ideology of the time. Doing so removes these voices and critiques of scholars who have been consistently pushed to the margins. For many, who also remain critical of her work, she offers a theory to begin a new political attempt at freedom and equality. It is her reliance on the power and necessity of the individual to the political process. She offers the promise of political action to many who have been marginalized throughout traditional texts of political thought. Central to Arendt's thought is the ability and power of individuals to access and change their own communities and institutions. It is within Arendt that the space of possibility exists where actors can become democratic agents. Arendt requires that actors be seen as equal in order for political action, so this becomes the space where people can be seen and known to others. In fact, the space demands their bodies be present and seen, without them, political action does not occur. While this requires critical readings and disagreements Arendt's own writings, is this not the purpose of political theory? Within Arendt's own work she points to the constant possibility of renewal and creation through political processes. Arendt notes that no achievement in the private sphere is as important as what can be achieved in the public sphere. But if we are to rethink of the political potential, it would be possible to revisit the politics of the private through its manifestation in the social.

Perhaps one of the greatest insights to the various readings of Arendt is an effort to read theorists in the margins of their own work. Arendt offers something that many students find accessible. Despite her both obvious and subtle discrimination, she provides many graduate students, myself included, a chance to locate and name our own political power, and more importantly, her own life acts as the impetus to make a choice about our personal and political lives. She offered a text that was the first time we had a discussion on the necessity of plurality for legitimacy. Finally, there is a method of thought that can support the claims of our political action. While Arendt's work did rely heavily on categories that are intrinsically exclusionary, her descriptions still offered more than traditional theorists. Arendt chose to address the complex ideologies and political thought in her categorical terms. It is through this critique that we find new questions. Arendt offers "innovative insights alongside outrageous oversights" (Gines 30).

It is clear that she has been cast aside by many feminist authors and scholars because of her racism and elitism. Often this is done so without consideration of anything of value that can be gleaned from her work. The attempt to be seen as a theorist and to only comment on what is considered politically valuable, leaving out the complex notions of identity would perhaps give her more legitimacy in academic life and her work at the time. While other theorists and philosophers are not held accountable to the standards of their time, it seems as if this courtesy is not extended to Arendt. Why, then, do we see value in the canon but not Arendt's discussion of nationalism? This is not an attempt to forgive or overlook the flaws of her work and her personal political practice, but instead to hold all theorists to these standards where constructive critique is possible. Arendt is a contentious author that offers unique insight and requires robust critique. The potential of the social and the expansion of its understanding, as seen through her own

private life, offers a spaces for those who have been historically marginalized to rethink notions of the political action, intimacy, and community.

SOCIAL INTIMATE PUBLICS

INTRODUCTION

The descriptions of the ways that the social works to homogenize identity and cultural norms that Arendt maligned inform and develop the way that we understand intimacy as well as the resistance that is possible within these spheres. But in denying the political power of the social, it only works to entrench those norms, leaving them unexamined as unnecessary spaces of inquiry. The choice to make something public should be viewed as a political one, and also through different avenues of expression. This chapter will build on the previous discussion that highlighted the social as a political sphere and a way to combat identity-based oppression. Expanding on the notion of the social, I will use Lauren Berlant's description of intimate public to demonstrate the ways that gender and race are perpetuated through institutional and social intimate publics. I will use the sororities and the fraternities from the Greek system at the University of Alabama as an illustrative example to analyze the complicated construction of intimacy, gender and racial identities, and interpersonal and intimate violence.

While sororities and fraternities are often discounted as trivial social clubs for the elite, they are also important in shaping our political understanding of democratic practice, development of the self, and the perpetuation of white supremacy and patriarchal norms. The discussion will serve as an example that can then be understood and reimagined in other social and institutional settings to expand on the ways that we create and informed by our notions of intimacy. I will foreground the experiences and narratives of women in sororities as a way to describe the problems of gendered relationships and the ways that the social informs and

develops conceptions of race and the absorption of resistance. The bonds of these communities are formed because of their reliance on an affective, collective community.

Interwoven into the notions of social, public, and private are descriptions of power that are constantly shifting and changing. Foucault's work on power will identify and locate the insidious and prevalent ways that women are surveilled both by the men in fraternities and by one another — with a constant understanding of its implications for not only themselves and how they are viewed in the collective, but the responsibility for the entirety of the collective's identity. It is my hope to “make things more fragile through a historical analysis” as well trouble the current moments we find ourselves in (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* VI). To understand the potential for political action, it is necessary to discuss how one becomes capable of being engaging with the social. Those who fall outside of these identities are necessary to reveal the limits of inclusion in the social. The methods of discipline used on these college women will exemplify the ways that their bodies and ideas become shaped by a shard identity, eventually turning them into the distributor of discipline of identity. Outcomes are measured and observed, but it is the shaping and evolution of the punishment that satisfies the need to possess. The oppressor does not revel when the subject becomes more submissive; instead it is the act of punishing that satiates them.

I will examine the development of both the collective understanding of the category of women as well as the shaping of the individual and to highlight the complicated ways the cult of true womanhood has been fortified and expanded. Women in the sororities are not the only ones shaped by the identity that is reproduced within the institution, but it also works to shape the understanding of politics, femininity, and intimacy across campus. Next, I will point to the possible issuers that allow for resistance while also the existence of false resistance that only

works to absorb dissonance and redirect it instead of dismantling the systems and mechanisms that perpetuate racism and sexism within these institutions. Moments of manufactured resistance only work so further encapsulate the identities and norms of the institution while seemingly offering progress for the bettering of the institution. While it may seem that sororities are unique institutions that are only accessible to elites, often thought of as frivolous, their existence and modes of engagement inform not only the way that we understand femininity and the promise of fulfillment, but also our conceptions about race. The mechanisms seen in sororities are mirrored in other social institutions that find themselves in corporate America, country clubs, political organizations, Parent-Teacher organizations, and many more. By teasing out the ways that sororities function and flourish will illuminate similar narratives the texts throughout society, often in other places that are trivialized and often fail to be viewed as worth political interrogation.

The visual reminders of the southern history that these sororities are trying to preserve can be seen immediately. The houses being built often find their costs around \$10-13 million. The architecture and location point to both the importance of these organizations and their continued investment in a genteel, southern identity that glorifies days of plantations and slavery. The houses are neatly situated around the football stadium. Arguably, football is the primary symbol of community at Alabama, student football tickets are highly coveted and many students stand for hours to get good seats. The Greek students, however, have reserved seating. The houses along the streets as you make your way to the stadium are impossible to miss. From their colonial columns, wrap around porches, and crowds hanging from the numerous balconies. It should come as no surprise that black students are often called the n-word from these spaces as they make their way to the football stadium. Previously, the state of Alabama rented the

property the houses sit on for \$1, but has since been raised to \$100. It is some of the most desirable land on campus, and member dues average \$4000 a semester, that does not include the cost to live in the house. Chapters normally have around 400 members. Retail value of each piece of property was estimated to be around \$600,000. In a report from 2013, it was found that “Records from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education show that the Tuscaloosa campus had \$661 million in bond debt as of Sept. 30, 2012, with \$50 million due annually in payments. The university pays the bill with funding sources that include fraternities and sororities, which no other public university in the state reported doing, according to the report.” According to estimates, at least \$50 of each student’s annual fee goes to supporting fraternities and sororities. Because this is state funded, not only are students who are not members (or refused access) to these organizations paying to support them, so are residents of the state of Alabama.

WOMEN’S CULTURE

The recent national conversations surrounding gender often start from a point trying to complicate our notions of gender, many people and for much of history, gender was assumed to be something obvious and easily understood. The understanding of gender then informed the ways that these bodies moved through spaces, could participate informally and formally, and the basis for granting or refusing political rights. A common portrayal of women was as dependent and in need of protection, this notion then limited the political ability and even encouraged the withdrawal from public spaces (Pateman, *Sexual Contract*). Women’s fragility then supported the idea of a natural disposition of all women. As such, gender norms are regulated “by standing for common sense by providing a tacit or seemingly foundational sense of sale and appropriateness for collective life” (Butler). These behaviors are used to describe a common experience and identity, a way of not only understanding the way women “are” but also what

they hope to be and achieve. It creates a relatable story about oneself and others (Berlant, *Intimacy* 281). This shared identity is what Berlant describes as “women’s culture.”

The concept of “women’s culture” has been developed and commodified since the 1830s in an attempt to make women feel a commonality through the experience and consumption of the markers of womanhood like perfume, apparel, and make up. Berlant expands this idea by identifying the commodity of affect and sentimentality. It is because society diminishes the contributions of women that leaves a vulnerable space that sentimentality can fill while also simultaneously stifling the ability for agency and true community. This exposes the ways that the notion of femininity is routinely displayed through literature and film and the utilization of affect on gendered notions of women. It is not that romantic relationships become something fulfilling, but rather instead that success is found by being in one, despite its reality. The source and hope of achievement is the obtaining of the relationship, not the relationship itself. It is better to be unhappily married, than single. Literature for women develops the sense of community through the experience of feelings. One must push through the bad break up, or lonely time in life because ultimately, a relationship may be waiting at the end. Having it all includes a man. Otherwise, the main character is “missing something” and even when married, that missing link can still be felt in the need for children. It is precisely this construction that leads to a competition for male attention that requires us to ignore the realities of our experiences. Imperative is the common utopian idea of self actualization that can be “found” through a romantic relationship. “Women’s culture” assumes shared experience and desires, creating an attempt at comfort in a commonality of interest. This works to both acknowledge alienation while also grounding a sense of intimacy in an understood shared world view that is derived largely from an assumed common historical experience. Women in turn consume products,

create a market for their femininity to be measured in and valued through commodities. Economizing women's identity is essential because of its promise of attainment. If you have enough wealth, you will be able to purchase this product to make you more feminine, which will hopefully lead to finding romantic love. The rollercoaster of failure and success both with partners and in attempting to achieve a better self grounds women's culture. The context of women's culture is one embedded in an understood suffering, a mutual disappointment in which "all women" can identify. The disappointment is always mitigated through the "tender fantasies of a better good life" and a reliance on a concept of redemptive love (Berlant, *The Female Complaint* 1). Even terrible, bad, traumatizing love permits you to "stay in the scene of fantasy of the better good life" (Berlant, *The Female Complaint* 1).

Central to shaping the identity of women is the way that these communities work to define our understanding of race. Women's culture builds upon the ideals of the cult of true womanhood and as such, the idealized woman is white (and straight). Not only does this exclusionary model only allow some to believe that success is a possibility, it simultaneously eliminates those outside the bounds from the possibility, shaping the perception of these outsiders in order to more fully define those on the inside. "Women's culture claim[s] a certain emotional generality among women, even though the stories that circulate demonstrate diverse historical locations of the readers and audience, especially of class and race" (Berlant, *Female Complaint* 5). The idea of belonging is posited as universal, yet because of the ignoring of different identities, fails to be an accurate description. To belong, despite its universal impossibility, is emphasized so much so that collectives are required.

Women's culture also heavily relies on sentimentality. Berlant describes sentimentality as one that is national and cultural. The notion of belonging is mediated by informal and formal

networks, including the state through law that informs social engagement. Berlant's understanding of the fiction of belonging is that there is a pleasure in belonging in society while simultaneously finding it impossible to exist in a world with heteronormative convention, this offers a narrow room of critique without rejecting the system in whole. This informs the way that we think of political action because, similar to salons of Europe, the lives of women and their concerns operate in concert, alongside the political, intermingling on the edges of the sphere of the elite (men). Both women's culture and the elite sphere uphold the other and to engage (or undo) the sentimentality of women would work simultaneously within the elite political spheres. While these areas are separate, they rely on one another, as Berlant puts it, they "flourish in proximity."

It is the perception that the romantic relationship offers access to importance. Love, and the perceived realization of the relationship, begins to be the measuring stick by which women understand their own personhood. This realization requires the selective remembering or forgetting of those moments that do not fill this script, otherwise the reality and possibility of utopia is not possible. The collective act of constantly re-scripting our experiences only works to inform and support our notions and investment in heteronormativity. When watching or reading narratives that are similar to your own, they work to reinforce your experience while also offering the promise that these moments and events could be more significant than previously believed. It creates an importance to the ordinary, something that validates women's lives and experiences. The common consumption of "women's culture" that bonds the community into an intimate public. It is through these attachments to one another, the group project of shaping and almost achieving, that develop these enclaves of expected intimacy. These attachments "make people public, producing personal identities and subjectivities" and function both through

spontaneous social interaction, but offer their best models through institutions that utilize these sites of intimacy like sororities on a college campus. The sorority offers not what one should be, but rather the potential of what you could be. The successful sororities are the ones that are popular with the fraternities. They are invited to their parties, an invitation that is delivered with pomp and circumstance, all while maintaining a relatively chaste, yet fun, persona and above average GPA. The most successful women do all of this and secure a marriage proposal, complete with a coveted candlelight ceremony, all before graduation. In a candlelight ceremony, a ritual song begins as everyone sits in a circle. A lit candle is passed around the room until the engaged sister blows it out. Everyone squeals and some cry. We listen to the story, take pictures, and celebrate that this success is not only individual success, but also rather one for our sorority. A banner is made overnight to hang from the front of the sorority house to signal to the other houses that we have an engaged member.

To trivialize this ceremony would be easy, but, it is important to understand that no other achievements are celebrated in a similar fashion, there is no communal gathering—a signal of importance itself—no tears and squeals when someone gets into medical school, law school, or an impressive internship or job. The milestones of life that are measured are in relation to men, our proudest moments are those that reflect the status and proximity to “powerful” and “important” men. This was perhaps most notable when one of my friends staged a fake candlelight. The candle was passed around the circle several times until someone who was already engaged blew it out. Everyone quickly realized it was a prank and the senior sorority members were furious. We were lectured on how important this moment was, that we had minimized the experience and stolen the joy of those engaged and those who will be soon. They

never found out it was my friend, but promised to fine and put the member on probation for such an egregious act. The ritual of marriage, its importance, was integral to sorority experience.

THE FEMALE COMPLAINT

Women's culture is informed by what Berlant calls the female complaint. The female complaint offers the ability to witness to one another, critique the system, but also to survive it which makes it difficult to dismantle the structures that uphold it. Its power is located in the familiarity with its reproduction such that it almost becomes invisible. Berlant says that "love is the enemy of memory" (*Female Complaint* 169). It "requires that, if you are a woman, you must at least *entertain* believing in love's capacity both to rescue you from your life and to give you a new one, a fantasy that romantic love's narratives constantly invest with beauty and utopian power" (*Female Complaint* 171). This fantasy requires an outward focus on others rather than oneself. Working as a loose contract, there is a set of behaviors that one hopes will lead to fulfillment of true love. It works to minimize the hesitations, pain, uncertainty, and un-safety that are a product of the journey and result. These fantasies, Berlant contends are something to be taken seriously. Rather than existing as a way to unburden oneself from the reality of everyday, saying that "the utopian is not in some elsewhere of perfection but a sense in the here and now that thickens the present" (*Female Complaint* 272).

Instead of reimagining the "female complaint" as something else, it is more important to engage it as a political project. Instead, an examination of the ordinariness of the every day works to better engage with the creation of intimacy in the public and social spheres. Rather than dismissing or justifying the normalcy of women's lives, the experiences of women work to inform our understanding of intimacy and its potential to stifle or liberate. Berlant tell us that the female complaint encapsulates "women's disappointment in the tenuous relation of romantic

fantasy to lived intimacy (*Female Complaint* 1-2). Berlant's description centers around romantic love and the fulfillment (or lack there of) that happens in the actualization, formation of a relationship, of this notion. Expanding this conception, this notion of actualization should also include the perceived connections of kinship that develop our interpersonal and intimate communities. These communities can sometimes become more important to analyze the ways they support and cause violence in an effort to achieve a redemptive love such that the collective ideal of love is supported more than the individual. This collective responsibility and attachment to an ideal of heteronormative love prevents many women from identifying and naming their abuse, particularly outside of the intimate spaces established for women. Women are able to voice concerns in the private sphere, but this rarely translates to the ability to be validated about the same concerns in the public (and often political) sphere. This complaint should be something that is not only affirmed, even if it is in private, but also encouraged. It is the place where women are able and capable of doing work of resistance and liberation. It is not that I am arguing that women's concerns should be relegated to the private sphere, or even that the work being done to move them beyond should stop, but instead an acknowledgment of the importance that the private, and if expanded, socially intimate spaces provide women. While this will not remove the notions and ascriptions of gendered identity it will value a space where women have effectively negotiated these identities and defined this work as political. This must be done while simultaneously acknowledging the ways that social and public spaces are routinely manipulated to create the illusion of political fulfillment while merely allowing these two spheres to run alongside each other rather than both being integrated or viewed as political.

Berlant acknowledges that the intimacy this creates is not just acted upon and engaged with by women, despite their association with femininity. The purpose of these collectives is an effort

to better prepare for potential marriage partners. This necessitates not only the male gaze, and with it the transformation and affirmation of women's bodies and behaviors, but also their engagement. Interacting with these men is often a way to measure and value the woman rather than the man. Consider the examples of times when men have sexually assaulted or used violence against women with no consequence, except to the woman. Fraternities each have their premier party every year. Some of them will travel to New Orleans and others are held locally. Two instances of these traumas happened while I was an undergraduate. One of my friends, a member of our executive board, had been "lucky" enough to be asked to attend one of these events in New Orleans. They arrived Thursday and would return Sunday. The majority of the experiences revolve around alcohol and partying. Her date insisted they have their own room. Sometimes couples will share rooms so that the women can sleep together and feel more comfortable; it is quite common to barely know your date for these functions. She acquiesced, in part because he had spent money for her to come, but more importantly, she wanted to be a positive reflection on our sorority. Before she left, everyone was sending her off like a mom would on their child's first day of school, saying things like, "make us proud" as a way to acknowledge the collective investment in her experience. Friday morning she woke up and her date was not in the room, and she was naked. There was blood on the sheets and her vagina was sore. She called her mom who paid to fly her home. She went to a local doctor for some prophylactic STD medication, a vaginal examination, and Plan B. She told a handful of us about the incident. She did not report it, nor would she ever even speak publicly when someone else had a similar experience. She went on to become our president and attend medical school. She never labeled it as rape; just avoided the topic and chose her words carefully.

While this example is personal, I have known many who were assaulted by fraternity members. We knew which houses to avoid, which common sources would be laced with drugs, and which guys had the worst reputations. Even speaking of it is an act of resistance; one that is often punished in some form. The first time I was drugged at a fraternity party, I came to the sorority house during lunch the following day. I asked everyone in the dining room if anything strange happened to them the night before. There were several stories of being “too drunk” and doing things out of character that were met with laughter. I said that I knew I had been drugged. Suddenly the room shifted. I could tell the familiar moment of reliving that night, realizing that you did only have a couple of drinks, that you never react to alcohol that way, and that a disproportionate amount of women had spent the night at the fraternity house. One woman said that her friend, a member of the fraternity, helped her when she started to get sick and told her to go to his room. She said he locked the door and told her not to let anyone in; he went to sleep in a friend’s room who was out of town. At the time she didn’t think much of it, but when she told the story, many women wondered why they had not been offered the same protection. I was called into a meeting saying that I should not make public accusations and that it might not be true. I began being fined for minor infractions for a month or so following that, coupled with a certain level of ostracizing, the point was made.

The next incident was a local fraternity party. Their party is known as “Old South” where they dress in confederate uniforms, women in hoop skirts, and sing renditions of Dixie with confederate flags as the party theme. It is hosted by one of UA’s most notable fraternities and it is no secret they pride themselves on their southern heritage. For this party, the members of the fraternity would come to the sorority house and formally ask the women to attend. Sororities were devastated if no members were asked. The lucky women would stand on the front porch of

their sorority house in their custom fitted hoop skirts and wait to be picked up on a trailer bed by the fraternity members-. That year, they stopped in front of the AKA house, a predominantly black sorority, singing Dixie and yelling racial slurs at the women. Following national news of this racist incident, they had to apologize and the tradition of being picked up ended. The national fraternity banned the use of confederate uniforms. Many women felt that the men were wrong, some women even dropped out of the sororities because of the behavior. But many were angry that AKA members had been so sensitive and this time honored tradition was unjustly stopped. This type of verbal assault is not uncommon at UA, but the use of a social institution to intentionally disparage a group of people based on race could not be ignored. Interestingly enough, in these situations it is often the national fraternity that disciplines the chapter or members rather than the sorority.

In these examples, our notions of community were shaped. Specifically to race, we learned quickly that while we may disagree with what the fraternity members did, it was still best not to punish the fraternity or to prevent a tradition. Even with the instances of sexual violence, it is more important to consider the motive and intention of the assailants rather than the experiences of the victims. The men are always re-centered. Without realizing it, we are defying the stereotype we believe to be true about our own fragility, and protecting the men instead, without realizing what we are doing. But even these traumas, the shared experience of sexual violence, can become a way to solidify our understanding of collective. The person who speaks out becomes brave, others often follow. The relief comes when we realize we have all experienced this, at least on some level. This process of mutual recognition is desperately desired in a society that often fails to acknowledge the narratives of women. Femininity is not an identity as much as a way of orienting oneself to the world. The female complaint orchestrates the possibility of

discussing the shortcomings of men, relationships, and even motherhood while still maintaining the perceived importance and connection to those institutions.

INTIMATE PUBLIC

Berlant's description of intimate publics is informed by Habermas' notion of the public sphere. This was a place where people gathered to share ideas, problems and construct a collective idea of judgment. This was a new concept because previously only royals and elites had the ability to gather with a sense of public political power. With the emergence of democratic governance in the eighteenth-century, the public became a place where the possibility to transcend status (or suspend it) could happen to engage in difference of opinion. The discourse that this facilitated became something that was now accessible to citizens rather than just the bourgeoisie. The function of salons and cafes paved the way for this type of gathering to become a possibility in the public forum. While salons may not have been accessible to everyone, the idea and promise of the collective for organizing, debating and sharing ideas retained its value. This led to a shift in politics because now many people had access to sharing and exhibiting political power (Habermas 7). His concept of 'critical publicness' informs public intimacy because its emphasis on liberalism's requirement of a highly politicized public intimacy. This is developed through the domestic sphere (family), cafes (similar to the concept of the salon), and media. Berlant argues that the public and private have blended, with no clear distinction, with the watchfulness and expectations of a public audience. The danger of drawing distinct boundaries of these spheres does, as many feminist theorists have noted, reproduce norms that contribute to aspects of the domestic sphere remain gendered such as division of labor, etc. Nancy Fraser notes that historically there is a distinction between publics that is gendered. Weak publics primary concerned with home spaces and the domestic sphere is contrasted with strong publics

where the ability for authoritative decision making exists. She advocates for the creation of counter-publics “where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 123). These subversive counter-publics can be utilized within the social as ways to challenge dominant groups from within. To understand the way that these spaces are constructed and their potential for subversion, it must first be understood that the structures weighing them are both formal and informal. Berlant is attempting to argue that affect is not simply present in the private sphere, but that public institutions can be understood to be ‘institutions of intimacy’ (*Female Complaint* 288). These attachments “make people public, producing personal identities and subjectivities through such public institutions.”

Berlant’s notion of a counter public relates to a dominant and subordinate sphere in which the public is either decision-making, influences institutions, or opinion making, influence on culture. The important aspect of this is that whether it falls into either category, the counter public is political. By being political, intimate publics offer a “space of permission to thrive.” The appeal of the intimate public is the idea that I am promised something, there is the possibility of the realization of things we have desired, but felt have been trivialized. This creates a collective fantasy. The intimate public of femininity “whose core is to witness women’s lives in a conflation of extremity and ordinariness that constitutes the struggle to master a social situation rife with contradictions about desire, suffering, and fantasies of amelioration; and we will ask how transformed subjectivity can make and change worlds” (*Female Complaint* 12). This is not to say that gender, or the experience of identifying or being identified as a woman, is universal in outcomes and expectations. Rather, that the perception of femininity, while complex particularly along racial lines, is a social construction of expectations that people rely on to

negotiate their experiences, desires, and trauma. That notion is relatively accepted, so to push beyond that, the perception of femininity and its experiences, rules and norms, also shapes the way that we engage with the public sphere, the political moments that are tolerated or brushed away, to measure our ordinary value. The ordinary informs the moments of extreme experiences, more formatively than extreme moments inform the ordinary.

Participation in sororities develops a problematic intimate public. This membership offers a unique sense of belonging that women so often do not experience in other aspects of their life. They promise uniqueness and success through a variety of grooming methods from grades to looks to business networks. Most importantly, these organizations collectively perpetuate a cult of true womanhood, which promises you a desirable partner while also increasing your access to potential partners. Heteronormative sexuality requires intimate monogamy to reproduce capital through procreation. This experience is routinized and perfected, leading to a perception of success simply through membership. One of the ways that sororities are able to be successful is not only because they cultivate a shared sense of emotional and physical space, but because of their ability to bring together women who are so similar. The intentional exclusivity and selectiveness builds a false sense of camaraderie and instant bonding because of so many similar life experiences, class status, and goals. Berlant says, “participants in the intimate public feel as though it expresses what is common among them, a subjective likeness that seems to emanate from their history and their ongoing attachments actions” (*Female Complaint* 5). The reinforcement through the shared experience moments of traveling abroad, or a senior trip, falsely establish a kinship that is just a reproduction of the same life, lending itself to an inaccurate sense of closeness.

The necessity of the market cannot be ignored in establishing this culture. For sororities in particular, they are shaped by the financial standing of the institution and its members. There is an explicit cost to membership but also underlying costs that occur prior to the week of recruitment. These costs are social and generational that not only shape the social class of potential members, but also their race. The composition of these groups is homogenous - white, upper-middle class, Christian, and conservative. Each year, campus opens early for the ever growing number of women participating in recruitment and each year, there is a record set for the number of women participating. It is a time of incredible vulnerability. You arrive to campus a week early for the specific purpose of joining one of the “elitist” organizations on campus. No other students are permitted on campus, reinforcing the community that has already been established. If you decide to withdraw or you are dropped from recruitment, everyone in your dorm is still participating in days that start at 8am and last roughly 12 hours. You are isolated without the participatory experience. While there are many alternatives to Greek organizations, these are not readily available or even offered as potentials. You can't use your extra time to check out the honor's program, club sports, etc. They are not there yet, only compounding the idea that this loss is a detrimental way to begin your college career.

Those who remain wake up each morning and put on an outfit that coordinates with the day's theme. This ranges from sun dresses, to philanthropy day t-shirts, to cocktail dresses. You understand that as you balance on your heels, walking through the muggy 90-degree heat, that you will be judged on a variety of factors. They know about you before you walk in, you have already submitted your resume and recommendation letters from previous members. By the second day, if you have not done these things, you know your time is limited. You are just part of the excess, those not worth knowing and will surely fall below the drop line. The drop line is

the constant vacillating line that decides potential members futures. It moves up or down based on required drop percentages. On the inside of the house, you are able to meet women who may have previously been unknown, we called them “discoveries” and you must scramble to find them letters of recommendation before philanthropy day ends — the day we cut everyone without a rec. Trivializing this procedure and process only works in the sororities favor. Sure, allow it to be seen as something vapid. This is a well-oiled machine that initially only produce society’s elitist wives, but now, it is producing policy makers, candidates for elected positions, powerful business women, provosts, deans, lawyers, and judges. It is something that can easily be hidden from a resume, but also called upon when its network matters most. Women in my sorority, through connections, were able to work as US senate assistants, intern at prestigious banking institutions in New York, gain acceptance to top 10 law schools, and the least successful came out with powerful jobs with little to no experience in that field. Some of my friends who fell into the last category, the more traditional of those, are now making six figures, living a comfortable life. They do not care that others do not see value in the sorority, it is only when the institution is threatened, that they react, and it is swift and powerful. The failure to recognize this type of power leads to a diminishing of social value of the everyday. It is something that is disparaged as an ol’ boy’s network when it comes to these type of networks built from the casual, yet intentional, formations of men’s social outlets. Yet, the more elusive, and less valued, networks built by women have the potential to yield damaging or formative influence.

The sorority demands intimacy even from the time you attempt to join. You send a resume, a glimpse into your measured value during your high school times. But, you must also seek out alumni members from the sororities you wish to join (a safe bet is to get them for all 18 sororities). Often, one recommendation is not considered enough, and they are best if they come

from a member that went to the school you are attending. In my town, there is a point person who can collect these on your behalf. I called her, she had me three letters for all of the “best” sororities mailed in within a couple of days. Other women without this network must ask friends to help or worse, go through a local alumni list and contact these women. Until 2013, there had not been a black woman in a sorority at Alabama, making this a particularly arduous task for women who were not white. Each part of this process further establishes the importance and boundaries of this intimate community. Integral to how these communities are shaped is their reliance on gatekeeping that would prevent black women from joining.

Greek life at the University of Alabama is influential and manipulative as a political sphere. While it may seem that these organizations are democratic and rely on a variety of voices, they cannot be described as democratic or contributing to a campus democracy. Arendt described the polis as the “organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be” (Arendt, *Human Condition* 198). The removal of violence or coercion was essential to establish a polis. “To be political, to live in a *polis* meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence” (Arendt, *Human Condition* 26). Yet, the Greek system at Alabama relies on physical and social violence to maintain control. The polis is more than gathering together, it is also the space of appearance. This is “where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly” (Arendt, *Human Condition* 199). This space is a gathering of the public, one that Arendt assumes can be recreated with new individuals gathering publicly, politically. These exist “wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action” (Arendt, *Human Condition* 198). Arendt does acknowledge the fragility of

this space, but the tenuous existence comes from a rarity of actualizing political action — not from the ability of people to freely enter into this space. “ [The space] disappears not only with the dispersal of men — as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed — but with the disappearance of arrest of the activities themselves” (Arendt, *Human Condition* 199). On many campuses, the spaces of appearance are found in honors programs, sorority and fraternity basements, and student government. The University of Alabama is no different. But, the Greek system manufactures an allusion of a space of appearance.

Sororities and fraternities are embedded within the University of Alabama and state institutions. They are supported with tax dollars, run a secret society-, and have influenced local elections -. Many of our state and federal elected officials were members of the machine. Crosses have been burned in people’s yards-, women threatened to be raped-, women threatened with knives, as well as threatening messages and phone calls. Even in light of these occurrences, the Greek system still dominates the political culture at UA. Women in sororities are some of the most involved while being the least benefitted group. There have only been four SGA presidents who are women, and the consolation prize is homecoming queen. Yet, the women have higher voting turnout and are required to campaign for the entire Greek system. The threat of rape or sexual violence towards those who dissent further embeds the potential of sexual violence as woven deeply into the existing structure of the Greek system and by extension the university of Alabama. Women were only allowed to participate as political actors and decision makers when, in rebellion, they backed the first black SGA president elected. The next year they were allowed to have representatives meet in political meetings with the men. By understanding their pervasive nature within both the social, cultural, and institutional structure of the university and the state, it will then follow why examining their functions and methods is imperative to

establish the ways intimacy is created in social spheres. To separate these from institutions not only fails to account for the way they shape our understandings of the social, but also allows them to operate without oversight or intervention.

Many black women who had been successful at majority white high schools by sorority standards, most of which had incorporated as a response to integration in the Birmingham area, were not allowed admittance to these organizations. Of course, the reasoning for no black women being accepted was never linked to race, but the inability to attain or score high enough on a letter of recommendation. This illustrates one of the most insidious ways that these communities were formed because it becomes explicitly generational. Older members submit the letter as a way to “protect” the chapter and its reputation and legacy. It becomes more important to consider the chapter, because of its potential, rather than the candidate. These letters were essential to gain entrance and since no black women had been admitted, it was nearly impossible to establish a legacy (a mother or grandmother being a member) and of course, legacies who pledge at the University of Alabama were weighed more heavily. A great fear existed that white fraternities would refuse to have social parties with sororities if black women were members. Once accepted, members are given a book of rules and values. This includes the history of the organization as well as behaviors that are unacceptable, including smoking standing up, spending the night at boy’s residences, or going to bars underage. There is an importance in solidifying an identity. This positive use of power, as Foucault describes it, “exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls, and comprehensive regulations” (*History of Sexuality* 137). We were told how to dress, who to date, and how to exist. This is when we learned to surveil one another and ourselves. Adhering to group norms and identities was essential to belonging to the

group. We socialized together, studied together, and voted together. Our politics became homogenous, moving most people significantly to the right. Looking back now, it was a dangerous social experiment that has been repeated and mastered over one hundred years. And yet, it was the surveillance that worked to simultaneously separate us. This separation made it possible for us to report back on one another. As Arendt notes in the *Human Condition*, “What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of persons involved, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them” (53).

RITUAL

Berlant’s intimate public offers the promise of developing a “better good” version of our lives. Each of these understandings of public action is firmly rooted in an assumption of community. Physical bodies represented and present must congregate whether it be in a geographical location or through a manifestation of their thoughts in order for these spaces to occur. There is something essential that society has searched for in our creation and understanding of justice, truth, and government. Despite the historically limited spaces that these meeting points offer people, their importance and the nature of the necessity of their work is clear. In the sorority, normative processes were developed around ritual of dressing similarly, attending the same functions, eating the same food, socializing in the same spaces. The rituals of these behaviors worked to embed them into our lives as well as to cultivate a false notion of a collective belonging. One facet of the sorority that makes it so essential is that it functions on an understood expectation of every day, or multiple connections during the week. There are mandatory weekly meetings to outline the state of the sorority, daily communal meals, and mandatory attendance at parties. There is a formality to the daily meetings, even including

rituals that must be learned. One must be initiated to engage in this aspect of sisterhood, an honor. When I first joined sorority, there was a party every week night except for Fridays. Fridays you would bounce around different Fraternity house basements, a rite of passage for Freshman women. Weeknights, there were pledge parties. These were when new members of fraternities and sororities got together and mingled, but mostly drank. The boys provided the alcohol. Attendance at these waned for a variety of reasons. They were filled with alcohol, some of the women did not drink. The boys were always drunk, overwhelmingly so. They were uncomfortable because of the forced socialization with men that you knew had contest about sleeping with you. They interfered with studying or other social outlets. The executive board came up with a solution, because we did not want to have a poor showing for the men, of course. We were assigned a color. If your color was one night, you had to attend or find another pledge to attend in your place. We were interchangeable after all. It was just a body count that they needed. Socializing became a chore for most of us, but we related to one another on the shared experience of this task. I made a handful of friends that I was particularly close to and it was understood that if one of our colors was required to attend, one of us would go too, even if it was not our night. We did not speak about this as an act of safety or a way to attempt to protect ourselves from being raped, but we didn't need to. We understood why it was important.

The intimacy of the sororities included an entitlement to knowing your grades, financial status, who you date, who you sleep with, your major, how you dress, etc. These repeated violations of expected intimacy were intended to be viewed as an openness, an instant sisterhood with which you could share many things. Its connection to familial terminology and behavior was powerful in developing and strengthening these bonds. Yet, the bonding moments, the times we came together that seemed genuine, were those moments of sharing our personal struggles.

Without reflection, however, we often failed to realize these problems were created through the sorority and their existence and resolution through these shared moments only worked to deepen our perception of intimacy. And, because in popular culture ambivalence is “seen as the failure of a relation, the opposite of happiness,” these works “tend to foreground a view of power that blames flawed men and bad ideologies for women’s intimate suffering, all while maintaining some fidelity to the world of distinction and desire that produced such disappointment in the first place” (*Female Complaint* 2). The issues the sorority promises to solve are assumed to have existed prior to the sorority. The sorority is even seen as a solution to an existing issue. It is a space where women can gather and have community while simultaneously offering the promise of happiness through wealth, a husband, status, power, and ultimately whiteness. Berlant describes this as “even before there was a market addressed to them, there existed a world of strangers who would be emotionally literate in each other’s experience of power, intimacy, desire and discontent” (*Female Complaint* 5). The emotional release and satisfaction that comes from establishing and reinforcing group identity works to stabilize, contextualize, and adapt to our personal experiences. Some of these problems ranged from how we were going to attend a party and do our school work to the (very real) anxieties surrounding our forced socialization when we knew the reputations and behaviors of some fraternities to be particularly dangerous. But these connections are maintained because of the promise of a romantic relationship. The sorority is often heralded as the bridge to other lifestyle options such as the debutante, the good job, or the fancy club. There is a perception of a non-hierarchical organization. Perhaps the pledge class above you is more important, simply because of age, but there is a collective importance to your own pledge class. Because only members can attend these parties, you develop an assumed importance often out of lack of time or availability to only be able to invest

in people situated similarly. While other students may make friends with people who share their marriage or interests, your interests become homogenized to facilitate kinship and group cohesion. But, because the pressure to assimilate and identify is so strong, any deviation is kept fiercely private. There are no women who come out as lesbians — or who even would admit to a same sex attraction. No women who even defy the perceived value of these men who have assaulted our sisters and friends. So this false notion of intimacy has strict borders of acceptable closeness that perpetuate an isolation and loneliness that requires a more fervent attachment to the norms.

Important to the ritual of communities is the ways that sentiment acts as an archive of knowledge. Photographers come to these parties and take pictures. The pictures are then at the sorority house where you can order them, a collection of memories of a momentous time. Everyone gathers to look at them, inspect the behaviors, and find the pictures of their closest friends. This often leads to an explanation of behaviors, particularly with men. You are to trust your sisters with this knowledge and this level of intimacy develops a myriad of confession and truths. There was an understanding that you must disclose which fraternity members you had been intimate with, not only in the spirit of friendship, but also so other members would know who was “off limits.” The idea that you were accountable in so many facets of your deeply personal life deepened the power that was exerted over your identity and development. The compulsion to disclose was powerful. The confession becomes routinized, part of the ritual and functions to foster a self reflexive subject. “The obligation to confess is no relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that the truth, lodged in our most secret nature, “demands” only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because constraint holds it in

place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation” (*The Will to Knowledge* 60).

This community building practice led to a public intimacy both inside the sorority house and around campus with the members of our sorority. Perhaps even more importantly, though, this extended to other Greek members as well. The notion of intimacy and connectedness dictated the way we paired up for group projects in class, even with strangers, if they were Greek. Who we shared test answers with and even who we sat next to on the bus. The difficult work of establishing the community within the sorority house paid out in the long run because of the extension to the rest of the campus, benefitting most obviously the Greek men. This intimacy includes a shared world view complete with “emotional knowledge” that requires a common history. Further bolstering the communal identification is the “porous, affective sense of identification” that Greek members feel. These communities now work to affirm belongingness, and for the Greek system it happens at one of the most vulnerable times in a person’s life. The transition from child to adult is complicated and one that often can lead to a sense of isolation, a real desire to fit in. When the culture of the community is particularly homogenous, it becomes dangerously easy to assimilate groups into a common sense of identity an ideology. The intimate public responds to an already felt need; by generating a sense of emotional continuity among its members. Berlant says that this community provides a “rich continuity with a vaguely defined set of others” which acts as a magnet. The allure of this community is the ability to transcend your individual situation to become part of an understood community. The difference with social organizations like sororities is that the other is easily identifiable and becomes part of something to detest. The strengthening of the boundaries of the Greek system is because not being Greek is something undesirable. This shores up the necessity of belonging and the feeling of loss and

failure if someone does retreat or drop out. In Berlant's conception of intimate public, it is perhaps more appropriate for the informal communities we constantly build and that disseminate sometimes just in moments. Walking down the street, I may see someone in an Alabama sweatshirt and if I am in another state, I may say her or feel familiarity because of the belief of connectedness. More diffusely, when I walk into a conference panel and only men are in the room, if I see another woman we may or may not acknowledge each other, but if she is already seated, I will sit with her. Or, perhaps, I choose to sit away to not be seen as needing to be together. Yet, my moment of action is still defined by her presence, my sense of community with her. It is not that I choose my seat because of the community the men have created, but instead that I choose it precisely because I recognize my community with her and it is attempt to negotiate the appearance of that relationship to everyone else and myself. In this way, there may be a common understanding of our community, even with the undefinedness that implies. Sororities, however, have mechanized this intimacy into something that is identified and important to justify its application. Ultimately these public intimacies work to make the world more intelligible and transforms a "cluster of taxonomy associations into facts" (*Female Complaint* 283). Disruptions of the binary between public and private (such as forced integration), are "experienced as an irruption of ...the rational forms of intimate intelligibility, a cancelling out of individual collective destinies, an impediment to narrative and to the future itself" (*Female Complaint* 287). This lends itself to a sense of crisis because the fabric of the collective has been challenged.

One function of the sorority that allows for such success is the appeal of retreat. The sorority seems to promise that a group of like-minded women are able to find a space on campus to exist free from the stressors and expectations of normal college experience. You can eat like

you want, with no men (usually) to watch you. You can talk and laugh and cry together at a communal table. There are study spaces, areas for TV, you can sit outside, and there is always someone to talk to. It sounds like a utopia for many women who have been whistled at as they hurry to their chemistry class, hit on during class, and even tired of just existing in a space where being a woman calls for constant self-regulation. You are able to feel recognized as part of something, engage in discourse without feeling trivial, no matter the content, and feel relatively physically safe in a way that is impossible for most women on campus. There is a lock on the door, someone is always around, and no men (other than normally a couple of staff members with limited access to the college women). That protection definitely does not exist in the dorm, or even one's own apartment. The collection of sorority houses ensure that those who are "suspicious" are watched with extra skepticism by the other members, the staff and the security guards.

The mornings after parties and events, everyone gathers in the dining room and laments their hangover, the awkward kiss, or a fall they took on their way home. While these conversations hinge on a privilege and experience of leisure to exist, they are also strategically manufactured. You return to the organization and the sense of familiarity and community offers a homecoming to work through the events of the night before. This becomes a ritual and crucial part of not only your duty to yourself but also to your other sisters. Avoiding this moment is difficult, and becomes suspicious if too often. The moment can be ruined if one was to mention their rape, how they were groped, or drugged. Everyone is sitting at long tables, groups forming clusters around the room, a feeling of intimacy while simultaneously feeling vulnerable. While your conversation is seemingly private between you and your friend group, others can always hear. To confide about the painful experiences, the trauma, would require a disclosure to

everyone and also be responsible for tainting a ritual that normally is used to manufacture connectedness and kinship, a seemingly positive experience. This confessional project works to ensure a feeling of intimacy as public disclosure is both an act to confess and receive confession.

Too strong of a confession would lead to an interrogation of the intimate publics and potentially create a necessary critique of the lack of political action because of the perception that political work is futile. A robust interrogation produces the potential for collective action by acknowledging the structures and ways that the female complaint gives an allusion of resistance while maintaining the structures of subordination. A common experience is the ritual of gathering the Friday morning after a swap. Swaps are themed parties where one sorority and one fraternity have a themed party. The theme is benign or offensive ranging from spring break to pimp's and ho's to Cinco de Mayo. During a swap, the new members of the sororities and fraternities are in separate lines and then walked backwards toward each other, one at a time. When you touch backs, you turn around and that is your "date" for the night. This site of the "bump" has become infamously a space of sexual violence. The fraternity members will try to kiss you, grope you, or a variety of other sexual acts all while the older men and often sorority women cheer them on. I have seen men put their face in women's breasts, pull their dresses over their head, and perhaps at the worst event, the men would hang from the rafters and wrap their legs around the girls' heads. The next day, everyone talks about how disgusting it was, or which fraternities are the worst. It is a lighthearted way to at least broach the subject of serious trauma. The women all return to the party the next week. If they do not, they are fined. It is seen as a rite of passage and there exists little sympathy from the older women in the sorority. In fact, one of the greatest fears during integration discussions is that the fraternities would stop swapping with sororities who pledged black members. While this seems ludicrous to concern ourselves

with the prospect of a party seemingly justifying racism, the precedent of the removal of the relationship had been established in precedent. It was these times that it was most clear to me that although we may have been powerful, our perception that the men offered something - whether it be power, wealth, status, security or even just partners - was so overwhelming, even if unsubstantiated to cause the majority of members to vote against a black woman joining the sorority.

We maintain a 'cruel optimism' by believing in these clusters of promises. This reinforces our attachments that maintain a belief that the good life is achievable or existing even when day to day has become unbearable. Berlant explains that it is not the end goal that maintains this optimism, but rather the relationship and negotiation of behaviors. "A relation of cruel optimism is a double-bind in which your attachment to an object sustains you in life at the same time as that object is actually a threat to your flourishing. So you can't say there are objects that have the quality of cruelty or not cruelty, it's how you have the relation to them" (Interview with Lauren Berlant). The optimism of our future dulls us to the reality of our situation. "Social violences they have been perfectly willing to see as ordinary" (*Female Complaint* 43). We also begin to pursue achievement in the private sphere, something we are capable of mastering, despite its inability by many to be seen as a space of political action. Women are great at entertaining, throwing parties and dazzling guests, praised for their social skills, but these talents are often not translated as political skills and instead something that makes one a good help mate.

RACE

Berlant's description of the ways we solidify the past to fit a current narrative, and one that is particularly consumed with race, center around the performance of "Love Boat" and the forms of slavery songs. White audiences enjoy the performance rather than feeling shame or sadness

from a traumatic part of history. The witnessing towards revisionist, through affect, part of history create a modern identity. These recreations come together “for the purpose of creating a modern American culture that might flaunt a rich past while feeling free from accountability to the past’s ongoing activities” (*Female Complaint* 71). This is particularly relevant to the ways in which this relationship is reproduced through the sorority house. The house staff in my sorority was all black women and one black handyman. We called the women Miss and Aunt, affectionate and acted as if we had a familial connection to them. The romanticization of their position in society and its relation to us presented as a glorified version of *Gone With the Wind*. It was the same way that many women in the sorority spoke of being raised by a black nanny who was “part of the family.” Yet, these sorority women did not know their “black mother’s” children, some of them did not even realize that these second mothers had a life outside of raising them. The status symbol of proximity to managed blackness was not lost on me. To have a black nanny means more than to have a white babysitter in the south. it is representation of an Old South, a remnant of a romanticized past that negotiates blackness because it is so close ad yet still subjugated.

The notion of sentimentality has shaped the way that (white) women imagine themselves in the world. It is also the tool by which they are often able to construct and respond to race. James Baldwin’s critique of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* pointed directly to this notion as a way to critique racist actions. He says, “Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet yes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty” (*Notes of a Native*

Son). This critique works as a starting point for the ways that white women in sororities experience emotion and yet lack the ability to connect this to racist ideology.

Each year, the Greek system at UA sponsors and helps fund a mission trip, always to a country with black and brown children. We were required to attend an informational session and there was testimonial witnessing to the “transformative” power of the trip. White women would lament, often in tears, over the children in Africa they could not save, yet failed to acknowledge the ways that they contributed to their house staff, all black women, having to work multiple jobs because their pay from the sororities was not a living wage. One must not simply feel the despair, that does nothing to emancipate its source nor does it challenge one being complicit. This is one of the largest issues I have found with white students and their reactions to racism and white supremacy. It is often met with guilt, shame, and tears, but rarely action. The concept of the female complaint outlined previously, however, wrestles with the personal frustrations rather than those existing around you. This both offers a strength and a weakness. The dismantling of the structures around us that imprison us is a separate project than seeing the ways we are complicit and implication in the prisons around others. These can be critiqued and challenged simultaneously, but they are different projects. Berlant says sentimentality “is the only vehicle for social change that neither produces more pain nor requires much courage.”

White women in particular have long been taught to communicate through their tears. Often, one of the only accepted emotions in response to discipline or authority, and the only emotion (sadness) that can be expressed outside of joy (laughter — but not too loud) is tears. So it comes as no surprise that when white women are confronted with the complex issues of racism, this is their response. Part of the reason it is so frustrating, but also so effective as a learned response, is because it is capable of disarming a conversation, but I argue, more

importantly, it diverts from the problem leaving a false salve on a wound. Growing up, my father was quite the disciplinarian in my traditional, conservative southern household. He yelled often at my mom, or myself, sometimes my younger sister. It seemed his goal was to break us down. Any resistance, any reaction to his tirades resulted in a doubling down of the abuse. While physical abuse was not a primary concern, the threat of its potential always existed. Normally, the best way to escape was to cry. He did not feel sorry for us, rather it was as if his mission had been accomplished. As we grew older, our tears would often infuriate him, perhaps because they came too soon, he had had not been able to inflict the full spectrum of punishment he desired. More than once I was told to stop crying or “he would give me something to cry about.” I would push that emotion back down and plug my tears to the softest whimper I could muster. There was no discussion of either of our experiences, during or after these moments of parenting. The only way I learned to engage with authority, particularly men, was through sentimentality. Ultimately, this felt cathartic because “what makes a thing sentimental is the presumption of emotional clarity and affective recognition in the seen of the mediated encounter.” Learning to socialize, and do it well, made my father proud and with that, I avoided a session of berating. This does nothing to remove the ways I contributed to and was informed by a racist ideology, but the response was required and a learner behavior learned similar to crossing my legs. Not only did this cycle of learned behavior solidify my subordination, it stymied my ability to participate as a contributing actor in a public sphere. No one takes seriously the woman who crumples under pressure, whose response is tears rather than strength. It created a choke hold of dependency that could only be lifted by another man. I thought freedom came in relationships, but I did not realize that I still believed that a relationship was necessary for freedom. I vowed to never marry someone like my father, to never allow my

husband to treat my children that way. My future fantasy never considered the possibility of life, full of freedom and liberation, on my own terms, without a man, even if he was better than my father.

Many members of the sorority share this experience, and yet it remains just below the surface to not interfere with the construction of the world around us. Ultimately we knew this pain to exist, and the sorority offered at least someone like me who understood, even if it was not identified. Clinging to this community required the denigration of those outside of it from denying access to constructing and protecting our conceptions of whiteness even when black bodies were absent. The “spectacle of subaltern pain and their alleviation” (*Female Complaint* 28) is used as a form of entertainment for white audiences. The history of African Americans serves as a resource (*Female Complaint* 74) to reimagine modernity rather than the context of history that places us here. At many points throughout American modernity there have been effort to commodify slavery into a market form of entertainment. It is in this sense that the idea of blackness forms a basis for understanding and enforcing whiteness. In *Abnormal*, Foucault described racism as something “whose function the prejudice or defense of one group against another as the detection of all those within a group may be the carriers of a danger to it. It is an internal racism that permits the screening of every individual within a given society” (316-17). Foucault does not mean to say that the power that is used towards the individual is the final power. Rather, he says this power is used to create and define the “background-body” (*Abnormal* 313). “What is the background-body, this body behind the abnormal body? It is the parent’s body... the body of the family, the body of heredity” (*Abnormal* 313). The background-body is the communal body, one that encompasses and defines the individual. It is this notion that informs the ways that genetics and biology are seen as indicators or propensity towards

disease. When the individual is seen, it is with the background-body as the baseline, the rule for the group the individual represents. “Grinding like a black girl” was understood to be beneath the “ladies” of our chapter. To more firmly enforce the distance we needed to keep from blackness, there were parties with themes like “Rappers and Hos” or “White Trash” in which someone invariably showed up carrying a black baby doll. These parties also taught us how to consume blackness without letting it become part of our identity. The music that is playing is hip hop, the “coolest” men and women speak in terms that originated in black communities, and terms like slay, swag or shade located in queer black drag communities. Their borrowing of fashion from black icons, yet the only black bodies in the space are the staff. Affectionately termed part of the family, the black women are always addressed with “Miss” and the black men are usually allowed to join the men for a late night beer or cigarette, an important ritual for the fraternity men that they see as bonding for them and the staff. As the fraternity members sleep away the morning, the staff is out picking up their discarded beer cans and liquor bottles on the front lawn as students walk to class. No one throws things in trash cans, just on the ground. Everyone knows the staff will pick it up.

Aside from the problematic nature of entertainment for bored, wealthy college students, it represents a larger problem within the Greek community. There are more subtle forms of commodification. Each weekend, the music played is mostly hip hop with some country or pop sprinkled in. These students know every word to these hip hop songs and few even pause before singing along saying the N-word, regardless of the lack of presence of black bodies outside of staff or security. The most obvious and public expression of this commodification comes through football as a school like Alabama. The end zone of the student section is blocked off for Greek organizations. They are the ones seen on TV and the only ones with saved seats while everyone

else lines up hours before kick off to commandeer a seat in a free for all setting. Sorority women and Fraternity men get dressed up and don themselves with a pin saying the sorority of affiliation loves the Tide. It is a physical representation of wealth, a reminder of status and belonging. They cheer for their team and are ruthless when they are losing. But if one of these sorority women attempted to date one of the (black) football players, it would be a complicated and isolating experience. The colonial inspired sorority mansions face the football stadium. It is impossible to avoid the similarly styled fraternity houses that line the main boulevard of campus. The bands and DJs that play loudly on game days can be heard across the street as upwards of 100,000 people come to Tuscaloosa on a football Saturday. Alumni come back and are allowed admittance to the houses and the parties, a chance to drum up nostalgia with their former brothers and current members of the glory days.

The response to integration of sororities was powerful. Women who participated in working to integrate sororities were ostracized, fined, and asked to leave. This moment began to unravel the false sense of belongingness. It was precisely because these intimate communities had been created that some women were able to work within them to organize and resist. It began to dismantle the structures of power and whiteness. As Foucault said, ‘When states, populations, or persons sense that their definition of the real is under threat; when the normative relays between personal and collective ethics become frayed, and exposed; when the traditional sites of pleasure and profit seem to get ‘taken away’ by the political actions of subordinated groups, a sense of anxiety will be pervasively felt about how to determine responsibility for the disruption of hegemonic comfort. This unease unsettles social and political relations between, within and among many people, nations and populations, especially formerly sovereign ones. Various kinds of hate crime, bitterness and “comedic” satire frequently ensue’ (Foucault 287).

But, the response shifted, once it became clear it could not be avoided, and some black women were admitted. The dissent was effectively absorbed and allowed women to feel better about the organizations they found themselves in without dismantling the structures of power.

SEXUALITY AND VIOLENCE

Part of the ritual of Greek life is that women must learn to be seen as an object. We want to recruit new members that fraternity men will be attracted to. There is body shaming with a continued reconstruction and reinforcement of the ideal woman, and a constant obsession around body image. Your body is something to be viewed and admired by the men in fraternities. With this also comes the knowledge of the extent and dangers of the male gaze. Women in sororities learn to mediate and expect sexual violence. It is a cost of membership as well as an understood reality. Yet, the fear of sexual violence is assumed to exist outside of the confines of Greek life. Students often get emails of attempted sexual violence of a nefarious unidentified, tall, hooded, hulking, black man. An email is never sent of the countless instances of sexual violence that occur in fraternity houses or dorm rooms. The perpetrator is outside of the Greek System and often even outside of the margins of the university. There is a vigilance of monitoring the borders of the campus. There are emails reminding students to lock their doors, alert the campus police if there is anyone suspicious. Monitoring non-students (or “suspicious” black students) is a more important way of maintaining safety that allows predators to operate easily within the borders of the established community. The constant repetition of who the danger is reinforces the inability for it to be someone within the organization. This model is repeated outside of college campuses for women everywhere. The threat is everywhere and nowhere with little chance of recourse or justice for an assault. It is complicated and overwhelming to pursue a case of sexual violence. There is rarely a loss of economic value assigned to the victim, so it makes it difficult

to assess the damage. Because liberalism often requires things to be measured in terms of the market or economic value, qualifying the effects of sexual violence is difficult.

The economic value of the Greek system can be seen in the ways that access and symbolic belonging are bought. At UA, a t-shirt can be an effective marker of status, most importantly signaling to other elites your level of belonging. Not only do they denote you are part of an elite circle and organization, they are then used to form an internal hierarchy between old row and new row. Old Row are the “oldest” fraternities and sororities on campus that tend to have the most money, most important political members, and most sway in Greek life and the political direction of campus. Women would spend the night with fraternity men to “earn” a t-shirt. Often, women would steal them from their drawers to be able to have one to wear around campus, further entrenching her sense of belonging, maximizing her objectification. There are a handful of fraternities even within old row that form the most elite. One fraternity has a shirt with WNDC on the front pocket. This is from an informal gathering - Wednesday Night Drinking Club. I was told by an older girl in my sorority to be careful of the color t-shirt you got (if you were lucky to be a recipient), the colors signaled your sexual experience. Whether or not this was true mattered little, it was one more tool to acknowledge the importance of them, the need for their attention, but also to remind us of the potential loss if we did not value our chasteness. My “big sister” in the sorority told me before certain parties which fraternities lined men up the next day to ask the names of the girl they had slept with. It was required, and of course many of the men lied. Her boyfriend was one of the pledge trainers and she told me to avoid that fraternity party entirely. The community building and intimacy lends itself to a false sense of security within these organizations. Perhaps, more so than that, it is the notion and fulfillment that it is more important to protect the system than the individuals. When women talk about their

assaults, there are attempts to both individualize the issue as well as put the impetus back on the victims. Proposals for buddy systems, fingernail polish that can detect GHB (but does not detect Xanax, and other drugs that are also used to incapacitate or lower inhibitions of women), or even reminding women to not drink from a common source or take drinks from anyone. Many times they are taking drinks from their friends, and those people are never held accountable for their actions. Because of the community, the eliteness of it, freshmen and sophomores, too young for the bars, find themselves engaging socially at fraternity houses. They are on the men's terms, no other men allowed. There is a list, it is members only, but any women (often black women are denied entrance) can come in. The odds are in their favor, like "shooting fish in a barrel" as a fraternity members in one of my classes once described the parties. When sexual assault is acknowledged at a fraternity, often through an outside intervention, it is seen as a problem of one member, not a culture of acceptance that is embedded and encouraged in these organizations. These attempts to regain control and enforce a stability that cannot exist, locate the violence within the private sphere, rather than an issue of public concern. What follows these cases, if they are accepted, is the national push to "eliminate rape on college campuses." It is agreed that rape and sexual violence are not acceptable parts of society, but because they have been individualized, it makes a systemic response nearly impossible. The rapist was not raised properly, was mentally ill, or not aligned with our values. He becomes the scapegoat of the bad behavior. The intensity of rejection allows others who would be rapists, or even who refuse to intervene when they know or see it happening, to vehemently say they would "kill" someone who did this. The communal belief that rape is wrong, and that its eradication is necessary to have a safe society, without acknowledging its existence in these social settings, muddies the realities of our experiences. How can it be something that is so vehemently disavowed and yet

still happens with such frequency and almost no uniform response or approach? These efforts by fraternity members, organizations, and institutional responses only work to deepen the construction and reproduction of the notions of public and private when this particular issue happens in the hybrid of both.

Following this notion of sexual assault, it becomes required to weave race into the understanding of perpetrator. It serves the interest of the fraternities to maintain the boundaries of the community. If the fear of violence is located outside of the organizations, it is a strong motivator to stay within them for the illusion of protection. It is here we can most clearly see the social constructions, particularly the false ones, most strongly support the environments that allow for sexual violence to be perpetuated with alarming ease. To truly approach the issue of sexual violence, it would require a deconstruction of the communities we find ourselves in, particularly the freedom seen in Greek communities. By understanding the assailant to be a stranger, and particularly a black stranger, offers a hunting ground of unsuspecting women while also fortifying the perception of protection that exists within the bounds of the community. Statements about sexual violence, and even their constant reminder of manifestation through the onslaught of its presence around us, work to structure our attachment to the institutions and communities around us because they rely on binaries of entrance. For example, we believe that these spaces are regulated and as such, our safety is also regulated. Fraternities are able to “control” who enters, with a perception of no outsiders. The dangerous men are forbidden entrance (black men) and this is a courtesy for our safety, giving the illusion we can now enjoy a social space more freely. This also enforces which bodies, or femininity, are under attack and the threat is identified. This then shapes the way we view safety in all institutions as well as the intimacy of our social spaces. It is in the social moment that we learn the political acts that we

transfer into our dealings with other students on campus. This also characterizes which bodies matter, white, straight women that works against coalition building by developing a hierarchy of bodies within the context of gender.

Untangling of the complexity of these situations of discipline and injustice is difficult because of the common practice of individualizing the problem. Foucault notes the tension that arises when problems become individualized. It releases the organizations and institutions from culpability with the problem and instead creates a problem with the person, a situational experience, that if it can be fixed solves the problem. Identifying perpetrators and criminals allows violence and injustice to be loaded onto an individual body, effectively allowing for the exercise of an apparatus of discipline. In *Regimes of Truth*, Foucault writes that “bodies must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and punished” (242). Yet, this cannot explain the limits of locating individual actions or bodies as deviant or criminal when blackness serves to locate criminality amongst itself, making the apparatus operate both on the individual and the group. In the Greek system, it is the story of the individual that garners the most attention, the individual trauma or victory. The trauma captivates the emotions of society while the victory absolves responsibility and complicity of the larger issue. To unpack the institutional implications would require an undoing of the very fabric of the ways our lives function. It is not enough to simply acknowledge and punish the one individual or fraternity where sexual violence occurs, it would require dismantling the entire fraternal system that perpetuates and encourages this violence. For Foucault, the body cannot be located outside of the discourse of power. It is merely a resting point, a way of positioning the power of discourse. It is both what offers access to knowledge and our biggest stumbling block. This makes it nearly impossible to liberate the body. Still operating with the possibility of

resistance, total resistance, or emancipation of the body, is not a possibility for Foucault. If the body is merely a subject constructed to discourse, it must exist prior to the discourse to be possible of being acted upon. The body cannot simply be thought of as existing because of power and discourse, but as something existing prior and then acted upon by this power and discourse. Foucault uncouples power from the state, or the law specifically. This moves power from a purely political realm and allows it to be conceived through social and private realms as well.

DISCIPLINE

While the aspirational hope of the idealization of womanhood is often a strong motivator, it is impossible to ignore the ways that discipline operates to embed the practices of femininity and constructions of racial identity. One of the strongest enforcements of this punishment is through reputation and opinion. John Stuart Mill wrote that the offender may be punished by opinion, though not by law (*On Liberty* 73). To offend notions of appropriate behavior “damages” not only the individual but also the organization. Because previous methods of punishment such as outright hazing have been mostly eradicated in sororities at UA, control is accomplished through other strategies. While Mill is referencing criminality, offenses against these organizations are met with a variety of punitive methods. One can be fined, put on probation, or socially outcast (the latter often being the most humiliating). Mill distinguishes separate institutions, formal and informal, that are capable of punishing an offender. Both serve to regulate, and can work preemptively or after the crime. The law is presented as more fixed, a locatable and knowable entity. In this case, the law would be the established rule. You have to show up for chapter meetings or be fined \$25, or you must complete your study hall hours or a fine of \$50 per hour will be enforced. This is clearly defined and outlined in your membership rules. The informal would be the notions of appropriate behavior and violations of those — such as smoking while

standing, dancing on a table, throwing up at fraternity house or party, and perhaps the most egregious — datings someone who is not white. Of course there exists a racial hierarchy at Alabama and some allowances will be made for men who are not white, but women keep their black boyfriends a closely held secret.

Foucault notes that power is slowly shaped and remade through history. It is through the work of legal institutions, as well as other informal and formal institutions, that create obligations for the body as well as constraints that are manifested physically and through behaviors. These constraints become internalized so that we begin to monitor and discipline ourselves. Here, it is important to note how this contributes to the concept of punishment that intentionally limits political action while being seen as fair and equal. This can be defined as the limiting of abilities both literally and metaphorically. Consider the first time I brought a classmate who was South Asian to the sorority house. When we walked in, the bustling lunchroom became noticeably quiet. She kept asking me if it was ok that she was there. I was embarrassed, but kept reassuring her that it was fine. Eventually things came back up to their normal decibel, but the damage had been done. I never asked her back and I doubt she would have come. The rules of engagement had worked, without explicit racist action I was deterred from bringing her back and she was made to feel so uncomfortable she most likely would not return. Neither of us had the tools to talk to each other or challenge the institution about the incident. It was so insidious that it permanently changed our friendship. This works to physically separate bodies, particularly those that would otherwise interact in a social sphere. The boundaries of physical separation may not be as obvious like a jail cell, but are steeped in the economic and legal restrictions that work in the same ways to restrict movements and the literal ability to occupy space.

The warning emails of a nondescript black man robbing or assaulting people (normally assumed to be white women) offers an extra measure of shoring up racial identity. Because these announcements are communicated through institutional channels that can operate as just “reporting” they can masquerade as being race neutral. This multi-faceted use of power is informed, reshaped, and interlinked with neoliberal practice, what Foucault describes as biopower. Sovereignty (whether it be the university or the sorority) is established through biopower while simultaneously becoming harder to locate. Technology now acts as apparatus in which to surveil, train, use and punish individual bodies. Liberalism shifts its focus to social interactions within society as a way of understanding the state. Because of the focus of individuals, rather than the state, a self-rationalizing for the necessity and use of the state occurs. In the case of the sororities, the intervention of the sorority seems necessary. The appearance is made that someone or some group in the sorority knows best and has our best interest at heart. When evaluating this knowledge, however, the women in charge are only a few years older with us. The outside women who consult the chapters are significantly older, and where the mentorship for the development occurs. Yet, most of us have never met these outside women. Although the surveillance creates behaviors out of fear, vigilance, and created populations to surveil, when conflicts or “wrong actions” occur, the surveillance is deemed necessary and requests for expansion are imminent. A woman is seen by another member leaving a fraternity house the morning after a party before she has been initiated (under the list of no’s in our handbook). The person most likely to turn her in is someone in her own pledge class. The reporter is rewarded, validated in their surveillance and commitment to being a good member and perpetuating a positive notion of the sorority. It is through the shift of liberalism that requires individuals, instead of institutions, to be the object that then allows for justifications for

the market. Extending beyond just the market, however, this form of individual valuation then extends into human life and relationships, based off of contribution and return.

CONCLUSION

While intimacy, and particular that amongst women, can work as a powerful moment of solidarity and collective action, it can also work to homogenize identity and ideology. The sororities offer an example of the ways that calls for “sisterhood” can simply serve as a tool to further notions of patriarchy and white supremacy. While narratives are certainly powerful tools of resistance, it is imperative to interrogate the foundational identities present. Complicating the notions of experience and identity is the impossibility of “all women.” The #metoo movement was a watershed moment, and for many women a time of community building. It was necessarily inclusive of a variety of harassment and violence with many advocates offering a complex, multi-layered response and analysis of gendered violence. Many women in the sororities, however, cannot (and often refuse to) see themselves as included in this movement. They would have to acknowledge their own experiences with sexual violence, but also the ways that the institution they love so much facilitates this violence. To say #metoo would signal a break from white identity, particularly because the overwhelming probability is that her attacker would be found in the fraternity house. It undoes less to think it is a personal failure. If it is something I did wrong, I can still cling to the possibility and promise held within the institution I have given up so much to be included. One of the most dangerous assumptions when I teach women’s studies is that somehow a community has been formed there that will accept and love “all women.” Some students share vulnerable experiences and find that other women do not run to stand with them. They feel betrayed and their first reaction is often to reject feminism. They may have said and done racist and homophobic things throughout the semester, but demand

understanding and compassion when sharing their own traumas. It is a complicated space, but at least one where the tension is allowed to rise and where the facilitator (hopefully) can do the important work to critique and vigorously love their students so that it becomes possible to uplift and be accountable. Imperative in these moments is to shift the frustration back to the institution that has made these connections almost impossible. The student often wants these women to love and accept her, but she must also realize they would be unwelcome to eat lunch with her in her sorority house. So many of these women are desperate for community.

This construction of community while being a homogenizing force, can then become a vehicle for powerful collective action. The problematic space of sororities is created and maintained through a perception of achieved belonging. These spaces work to fortify notions of femininity, gender and race while purporting to achieve the promise of ultimate actualization in a the likelihood of a romantic relationship. Yet, moments of tension, particularly those of sexual violence, allow for a moment of unraveling. The intimacy of these communities creates the probability of sexual violence and this often leads to the only attempt to wrestle with the facade of the promise. The next chapter will work to expand on this experience of sexual violence. Often, it is not believed, even by other women, and the power of belief is what offers the promise of liberation and emancipation from the intimate publics that can be so dangerous. There is potential in a “sisterhood” but the importance of acknowledging the experiences of women grounds it in the potential for resistance. To ground this interrogation, a full examination of the function of power within both the Greek system and university is necessary. As Foucault says, “Our object is, on the contrary, to understand power by looking at its extremities, at its outer limits at the point where it becomes capillary; in other words, to understand power in its most regional forms and institutions and especially at the points where this power transgresses the

rules of right that organize and delineate it, oversteps those rules and is invested in institutions, is embodied in techniques and acquires the material means to intervene, sometimes in violent ways” (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 27-28).

Part of the ability to navigate the social and to fail to critically assess its construction is the idea that we must simply tolerate it to survive. It is the distractions of daily life, the cause a perceived momentum towards something that allows us to ignore the harsh realities. In the complex world of society and the way that the social is constructed, this is exhibited in the need to network, to be seen, to appear and be noticed. For women, it extends to the ways we negotiate our bodies in public spaces. We must be attractive, but not so much so that we are blamed for our assault: delicate and strong, waif-like but not too dependent; needy and self-sufficient; smart but still subordinated in our financial lives. It is because of this, that moments of obvious discord become the flash point for resistance. And, as difficult as it is, women must be vigorous in our critiques during those times.

POLITICS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

While many scholars have complicated the use of gender and description of violence surrounding sexual assault and rape, it seems that progress on the topic has waned. This chapter will not work to redefine gender, but instead focus on the relationships of men and women that descriptions of gender identity have inscribed. A historical analysis will not include the ways that “feminine” was described; rather it will interrogate the function of women in relation to men. It is not simply enough to say women wore dresses, spoke softly, and understood themselves to be ornamental objects. Many women rejected these social customs, and many times only white women who were wealthy — a very small minority — could afford to achieve a femininity that gave them a “true womanhood.” While this certainly informed women’s ways of evaluating themselves and created a moving target of the ideal woman, it does not fully account for the ways that women have been able to live with, marry, work, and love men who are capable of such gendered violence. How are these relationships negotiated? How do women exist? And what are the social practices in these relationships that perpetuate the existence of sexual violence? Importantly, how is it that men can conceive of a situation where it would be possible to commit rape? This chapter will engage in description of gender through political theory and how its shifting nature inscribes a certain understanding of violence against women. First, I will explore a historical conception of the roles of women and men and the categories and characteristics of gender within the context of political theory using Rousseau’s discussion of *Emile*. Next, I will discuss the existing literature on sexual violence and democracy. Finally, I will offer a critique of the existing work as well as develop a theoretical framework for how

democratic practices reinscribes sexual violence through institutions, norms, and conceptions of masculinity.

Much attention has been paid to attempting to conceptualize women -- the category, the characteristics and exploring the agency of gendered actors. The category of “woman” has been complicated and deconstructed. The broadening of the concepts associated with womanhood has been liberating for those who self-identify. Yet, with each intervention and expansion, sexual violence still remains a primary concern for women in a way that has not lessened, even with interventions into gender identity. This chapter will discuss masculinity to address the ways that sexual violence becomes possible. It is not that women must make themselves stronger, but instead men must become incapable of rape. This, however, is not a way of changing or reshaping masculine identity politics, but instead a discussion of how institutions and political systems work to enable and encourage sexual violence by utilizing masculine as an extension of their power.

EDUCATION

In chapter one, I noted the ways that Rousseau used the idea of Sophie to construct Emile into his most actualized self. It was his link to education that provided him the tools to fortify this development. Rousseau’s model of education offers an insight into the ways that the roles of women and their relationships to men has transformed from rigid standards of gender and femininity and has seemingly moved to a progressive, complicated balance of equality. While women now occupy the most prestigious of institutions both as faculty members and students, the understanding of their function is still offered in relation to men. Prospective students are taken on a tour of the campus daily at the University of Alabama. This tour walks through the courtyard that houses the Gender and Race Department (GRS). One day, during one of these

tours, I was sitting on a bench with a student from my women's studies class. She was describing to me her sexual assault from the night before. As the tour guide walks through, a college junior or senior in a nice suite, women always in pumps, and a bright red lipstick that they are all required to wear, I brace myself for this part of the memorized speech. Manly Hall, where GRS is housed, was named after a University President. It is also well known that he encouraged students, only men at the time, to bring slaves or would provide them to aid during their time at UA. He is also known to bring in enslaved women as prostitutes. At this point in the speech, they are describing the scene when men at the university staged a revolt. The cheery guide asks, "What do you think the men wanted?" "GIRLS AND FOOTBALL." Laughter, some uncomfortably, as these high school seniors and their parents are reminded of the campus' understanding women's relationship to men. Making this moment even more ironic, there is not truth to this story. It is a false historical memory given to all the students on this campus to reinforce the relationship between men and women students. Just as Sophie was trained through history and learned her role in relation to men, so do the women on this campus. We are not far removed from the times when women had difficulty attaining an education, much less choosing the career they wanted. But the joke—it is important and crucial to identities to be built and reinforced on campus should a prospective student attend UA next Fall. Its intent is to place us back in that "history," and is made all the more powerful as a women delivers the punch line. As I sit there with my student, she has tears in her eyes. The "joke" is too much, and we leave as the crowd passes by us.

This false collective memory is the first tangible example of women's relationship to men on the campus. There is a social learning, to laugh at the joke, while being led around by preselect prestigious members of campus. The women chosen to lead these tours are some of the

most academically competitive on campus. Not only are they intelligent, meeting the high GPA requirements to be a member of the exclusive group of campus representatives, they have been involved in philanthropies and countless organizations on campus. They are conscious of their bodies, their outfits are uniforms, tailored to their individual bodies with a strict code of wear, down to that shade of lipstick. These women are not merely ornamental, they must be skilled at storytelling and selling a version of the University. They are funny, beautiful, and social. It is clear to everyone on these tours, these are not only some of the best students, but the ideal. The history that they tell is what informs their role on campus and teaches the incoming students this identity as well. The university does not select them despite their gender, they need them to be women. This marker of progress in the collective of women representing the campus, nuances the conceptions of gender while making the joke possible.

The negotiation of women's relationship to men is a learned practice and a skill that is modeled by society that extends to give access to her body and sexuality. What does this mean for sexual violence? How does it become possible within the performance of gender and the relationship that encapsulates them? Sexuality is developed in relationship to other parts of her identity, not independently from them. Education is not merely learning to be domestic, but also sexually available for your partner, or spouse. Learning to behave as a woman, with her legs crossed, in a skirt, all the markers of her gendered identity, allude to her sexuality. This must be controlled because it is valuable, essential to her identity. She learns to not flaunt her sexuality, but not of the potential risk except that which she brings on herself.

Sexual assault has recently been thrust back into the spotlight as an urgent issue. Former Vice President Joe Biden addressed new initiatives to combat sexual violence on campus, President Obama promised there were be new evaluations made to Title IX programs on college

campuses. The popular “It’s on Us” campaign quickly spread through college campuses with hopes of holding students to levels of accountability, including bystander training. Unique to the conversation surrounding sexual assault is its proximity and emphasis on combatting the occurrences on college campuses. The highly publicized Stanford swimmer case showed many people, some for the first time, the truth about sexual violence and the consequences for those committing it. The assailant, Brock Turner, was convicted, but because the judge wanted to consider his “potential,” he did not want to alter his life for “one bad decision.” His relationship to the woman he assaulted and his capacity for violence were weighed against his potential productivity. The importance of him being a college student was central to his identity. Much like Emile, it was what the woman represented and what Turner could learn from his interaction with her that produced her utility for the judge. His actions have consequences, but these consequences need to be productive, not overly harsh. The woman’s body is the site of learning for this behavior in a way that men’s bodies are not vulnerable. This instance provided a way to shape the citizen— the rapist — while simultaneously shaping the victim, and by extension, all women. It is uncommon for these cases to go to trial, and even more rare for the trial to end in a conviction. The result of this case offered a reminder, solidified in the institutions of justice, that while Turner had committed a crime, his punishment should not be something that was detrimental to his future. His ability as a citizen in society should not be hampered by one night of impaired judgment. Unlike other crimes, like stealing because of poverty, this act was not out of necessity. Yet, despite the type of crime, and lack of a guarantee that this would not happen again, it was still important to allow this man to have the potential to be a member of society. Women must learn to manage their trauma, and be transformed and strengthened by these experiences, because there is no promise they will stop.

While it does seem that college campuses are environments that have more instances of sexual assaults, it also seems that they are getting the most attention for prevention. The initiatives and programs for ending sexual violence often involve protecting the “most valuable” members of society or rescuing those at the “bottom” who are often the faces of the anti-human trafficking campaigns. These two narratives further stereotypes, solidifying in society who is seen as a victim — the sweet, unsuspecting college student, or the poor vulnerable young girl — they also fail to acknowledge the vast number of victims who fall outside of these categories. To address the actual scope of sexual violence would force an acknowledgment of its embedded nature within the formal and informal institutions of our society. While the women who experience sexual assault in these two narratives are still subjected to intense scrutiny, condescension and doubt that perpetuate a silence and shame around sexual violence, it is their cases that are most likely to be advocated for instead of those women on the margins. It is precisely because lived experiences of women are not seen as valid that a viable solution to sexual violence cannot be developed.

The narratives of these two groups of acceptable victims often include their lived experience, but only as a way to develop a particular type of victim. She is the sweet girl from the Midwest who loves tennis and has a perfect GPA. Or, there is a woman who needs saving, was abused by her parents and ran into the arms of her pimp looking for love and protection. In each case, it is their naiveté and their vulnerability that makes them a sympathetic actor. It is not simply that the women who are not taken seriously are not ideal victims, but they are not ideal citizens. Their stories have never been seen as valid, their voices are marginalized in all of their daily lived experiences. To support them in their experience after a sexual assault, it would require a shift in the way they were viewed in totality, as human beings. It is precisely because

these women have already been deemed (lower, less than, non contributing) actors that their lived experience in the mundane to the violent is trivialized through an institutionalized practice. Their ability to add to history, to be storytellers, is resisted. It is no coincidence that sexual violence is a special type of category that is seen as something private, not thought of as a problem of the public sphere, removing its ability to be a political issue.

CONCEPTUALIZING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In *Rethinking Rape*, Ann Cahill argues that when someone is raped, this disrupts a person's "being and experience" which then removes their intersubjectivity that is necessary to sustain identity (132). In doing so, the rapist has removed an integral part of the victim being able to "practice her intersubjectivity agency" (Cahill 132). Cahill argues that a woman's agency is suspended during this act or that her choices are constrained in ways that are specific and unique. Michel Foucault describes this as a situation of domination, where dynamic power relations are completely frozen. It is true that people are raped because there are rapists; individuals enact this sexual violence. But, it is also important to acknowledge the ways that sexual violence is tied to patriarchal culture and dominance. Each act that responds to or relates to sexual violence (and even those that do not) fortify its existence. These acts include the decision to include it in the academic code of conduct, developing the app to find a buddy to walk home with, laws regarding consent, the decision to defund women's health, the availability of shelters, the difficulty to find women's resource center, the lack of access to nurse's trained in sexual assault examinations, the refusal of medical institutions to include sexual assault crisis management in staff trainings, the fraternity parties named "fox chase" and "dog hunt", the fraternity parties with no institutional oversight or consequences, the list is unending. These reminders surround women while also working to create an institutional structure that perpetuates, ignores, and encourages sexual

violence. The experiences of those who have survived sexual violence, often forces them to confront this directly at a time when they are feeling most vulnerable.

I have worked as a rape response advocate in Birmingham, Alabama for two years. During this time, I learned the language, was trained on crisis response, and heard many different stories. We called the people who came into our clinic “clients.” A complicated, economic term, for a complicated, and mostly grant funded, organization. A large number of our clients at the crisis center were women who were homeless or in temporary housing. Many women would not stay at certain shelters. These were known for higher instances of sexual violence. Most of these shelters were funded through churches, rarely were they institutions established by local or state governments. Many women would choose to go back to their homes, where they lived with their assailant, than go to these shelters. They understood their options were limited, and this often works to prevent them from even coming in. The state takes no interest in establishing safer options for these women, which forces a piecemeal approach to dealing with the consequences of this type of violence. The realities of the trauma that happens after the assault makes the likelihood of reporting subsequent violences less likely. Many of our clients attempt to restructure their lives and behaviors to make the chance of a repeat assault more likely. They stop drinking, stop going out, move apartments, or quit their jobs. All of these lifestyle changes also coincide with behavioral changes like a hyper awareness of surroundings, avoiding spaces or bodily contact with men, or wearing oversized or baggy clothing. These choices are attempts to control the environment, an attempt either consciously or subconsciously to prevent another assault.

Cahill also makes a distinction between an embodied habit and intellectual decision. For example, the embodied habit is when a man sits next to me, I cross my legs to give him more

space or when I apologize before I speak in class. Extending this practice of embodied habit further can be useful to describe the ways in which the anticipation of violence produces responses to things that can be explained away as mundane and our reactions classified as overly dramatic. When women jump and scream when their friend surprises them from behind, the actual fear she feels is laughed away, but it is the response that is learned to the assumption that violence is possible, or even expected. I am not arguing that we should examine the lived experiences of women, and particularly those who experience sexual assault, but instead arguing that the continual denial of the entirety of women's lived daily lives is one of the tools that reproduces sexual violence.

These habits and moments of decision are attempts to understand a world where this violence is normal, even expected. For many women, it is seen in their constantly negotiations of daily existence, yet it is something seen as personal, not happening as a political act. Understanding the ways that sexual violence is seen as happening in the private sphere instead of the public can illuminate the defining of the subject and the object and shift a discourse of agency from one of a binary of actions. The agency that surrounds sexual violence is not bound in just the moment of the assault, but instead in the lived experiences that surround the violence. The act of walking alone, going to a bar, or even just existing in public are agentic acts that offer a more complete picture of our own embodiment than separating the act of violence from the entirety of our experiences. The embodiment of our fear is not only experienced in our daily routines, but also in our practice of sleep.

Cressida Hayes argues that the unconscious or sleeping states of our bodies should also be constituted in the understanding and explanation of our daily lived experience. Sleep offers a respite, a way to heal from the toils of the world. But, if sleep is tenuous or uneasy, then it is not

a retreat. If the survivor of sexual assault cannot find rest in one of the most basic ways, it begins to alter the experience of the world. Even without the experience of sexual assault, sleep can often be uneasy, with the trepidation of assault that is impending. Merleau-Ponty notes that sleep allows us to become “an unseeing and almost unthinking mass” (189-90). That peace that comes with unfurling into a calm, almost thoughtless relaxation becomes almost impossible through the embodiment of our fears of sexual assault.

The first time I was afraid of my rape was when I started middle school. I was old enough to move to the bedroom in the basement, an obvious space of independence and freedom. Part of the room was underground, with windows at the top of the wall behind my bed. When I looked out, I could see the ground about three inches below the windowsill. Can he sit here and see me? My rapist. Could he do that? I had intense dreams of being kidnapped. I did not fear the kidnapping, instead, I feared what they could do to me. The imagined sexual assault was the reason I woke up covered in sweat with my heart racing. I would make our dog sleep in our room. I never thought much of these fears, never discussed them with my parents or my friends. They just existed. I ate a pop tart for breakfast, hated my glasses, and dreamt of my rape. A college boyfriend asked me, “Why is that there?” about the water glass leaning on the windowsill. Then he pointed to the stick that was wedged diagonally across my window. Explaining it to him, I felt stupid. “It’s so that if someone breaks in, the stick will slow them down and I will hear the glass break.” He laughed patronizingly at me. He should have patted my head after. I was embarrassed. After he left, I thought how ridiculous that looked, I thought about taking it down, but being raped was more terrifying. Walking to class the next day, I saw several windows with the diagonal stick. “Girls must live there,” I thought. The men walking to class moved freely in and out of their front doors. I noticed a lot of them did not even

lock it behind them. That must be nice. I did not realize it then, but not being able to move freely in my neighborhood, on my campus, or even in my home was the price I paid. When I moved into the house with six other girls, our dads came to fortify the locks and added locks to our bedroom doors. There are other stories, of course, that all point to the ways we constantly worked to protect ourselves, but they are mundane, all women have them. My husband was telling one of his supervisors that he falls asleep so easily at home all the time, and how annoyed it makes me. The supervisor responded, "Sleep is easy when you work hard and have a clean conscience." I guess that must be true, but that also comes with the innate understanding that you can trust the environment around you.

Race also plays an integral role in the ability to be at rest. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon desperately wants anonymity, to be a neutral body amongst other citizens (112). He has no place of rest, his body constantly called into not only its black skin, but the expression of that skin. When the child says, "Look, a Negro!" his body is distorted, reimagined and he now sees himself as she sees him (Fanon 113). In a similar way, it is not just our sexuality or gender that is exposed when we are cat called on the streets. When he says, "Hey baby" and licks his lips or lets his eyes pass slowly over our bodies, it is not a reminder that we are women, instead a reminder that we are something to be possessed, something he believes he can have access to both in public and in private. Our reminder is not like Fanon's, as he "moves towards the other" he is "responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by my tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships, and above all else, above all: 'Sho' good eatin'" (Fanon 112). For race, the moment of interpellation, is an acknowledgment of being seen as someone else sees you, which

could also be said for women in the moment of their bodies becoming sexual objects to be possessed. But, for women, the histories are not a common memory that can be recognized in Fanon's expression. Our history of sexual violence is intimately woven in with our partners, our teachers, the people that we love, so much so that to see that as dangerous, as Fanon is seeing with white people around him, would only push us towards a delegitimized notion of self and experience.

The communal gaze is perhaps the most powerful and terrifying. When the intended subject is alone to be ogled by a community of men, all arousing each other by using the woman as the proxy. They are spurred on by one another, the woman is simply a place holder for what she represents. It does not matter if she is stereotypically attractive, her style of dress (while some attract more attention — like a hijab), or even the shape of her body. Instead, it is her act of existing in the same space as these men that makes her a target. Just as if it is not enough to be in proximity, to work or go to school, with people of color to end racism, the best example is the thriving sexism while men and women engage in a variety of relationships. In order to exist, we learn how to behave, what garners positive attention. The first time I remember being told I was pretty by my father was when I had on my Easter dress. It was itchy, I hated it, but I remember how proud he was of me. I loved the dress after that, despite its constraints. "I bet you have a boyfriend at school!" Young girls are asked who they like, and are met with positive praise when we reply correctly. All of this occurs in relation to the men in our lives and how they respond and receive us. It means more when my dad tells me he is proud of me. My mom would constantly praise me, support me, and love me, but because I had already learned to value his seldom-heard support, it meant more.

RESPONSES TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In “Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention” Sharon Marcus rejects the idea that a woman’s body is always already raped and rapeable. This narrative, according to Marcus, works to re-inscribe masculine power and women’s powerlessness through societal norms. Marcus points out that perceiving women as always vulnerable, already violated claims women’s minds are sexually colonized to perform in accordance with a “rape script.” “To speak of a rape script implies a narrative of rape, a series of steps and signals whose typical initial moments we can learn to recognize and whose final outcome we can learn to stave off. The narrative element of a script leaves room and makes time for revision” (Marcus 390-391). She hopes to intervene to find a moment where women can recognize her assailant and to see that her own assault is her succumbing to an accepted social script she can reject. Marcus sees rape happening in moments that are static and separate from the moment before and after it. She argues the time between those stages is “the gap in which women can try to intervene, overpower and deflect the threatened action” (Marcus 389).

Much of the literature I have come across dealing with sexual violence has attempted to create an intervention similar to Marcus encouraging women to “Fight back.” While it is more nuanced than assuming self-defense classes will save us, their arguments are not sufficient to rethink gender in the ways that it claims. The concept of a “rape script” is a completely gendered interaction assuming women rely on previously held behaviors and notions in response to sexual violence. She is attempting to challenge women to think of themselves as strong, to defy social norms and customs and to realize their power and ability to fight back. She does not want women to merely see themselves as victims, capable of being raped, but instead to think that men are not the only ones capable of rape. Part of this approach to fending off an attacker is

to become like a rapist, something that many would not be willing to entertain. Aside from that, assuming that sexual assault is a linear act would make it operate as the only form of violence that can be written out in exact terms. Because women are required to present their assault as a simple, linear explanation, it fails to capture the entirety and complexity of the experience. This fails to acknowledge the ways that assailants often stalk their victims, perfect their techniques, and utilize methods that are not simple. Women are usually not assaulted by the man walking up to them on the street: it is their friend, their partner, or someone they know. This complicates notions of violence if the entirety of the relationship must be reconsidered. The complexity of it being a friend or partner creates a tension in the way we understand our relationships to men, friends, and lovers to function. If it were easy to assume that this is the intention of someone they trust, it would require relying on a constant surveillance and critique of anyone around them. Something that is not only mostly impossible, but would only work to reinforce a persistence of rape culture. The act of assault is not just its moment of violence. It is the moments before and moments after. It never leaves, its possibility always exists in the ways we are told to lock our doors, not walk alone, its appearance (or the possibility) in almost every movie or television show. Even the women who are the heroines in these films and shows must address it either by becoming a victim, overcoming it, or being rescued from it.

If the assumption is that you are able to fight your attacker if only you learn the habits and behaviors in order to identify them, it heightens the perception that rape is always a possibility and could be preventable. Marcus argues that the barriers around women are both physical and linguistic. She says that women need to turn from “self-defeating rules which govern polite, empathetic feminine conversation” which lead to “non-combative responses to rapists” (389). She fails to acknowledge the ways in which women do continuously prepare for the potential of

an attack. Women go to great lengths to be armed with mace, keys between their fingers, self defense classes, walking in groups, not leaving their homes, etc. This negotiation of prevention already exists as well as the possibility of defending or attacking their would be assailants. It is not simply enough that now we know and understand the constructions of our gender to not only be able to dismantle them, but to challenge these constructions during a specific type of intimate violence. Bordo puts it this way: the realities of our bodies, culture and gender are not “transcended or ‘transgressed’ just because we can ‘destabilize’ them in theory” (185). Hyper surveillance of ourselves, and those around us, works to offer the hope that we can survive, or be able prevent our own violent attack. This notion utilizes Foucault’s discussion of the panopticon beyond the ways that society enforces social norms. We understand the surveilling and internalize it as a way to exist in society without breaking any rules, to be a good citizen. But to create a level of surveillance in which we save ourselves from the violent attacks of others utilizes a particular type of power. Our adherence to social norms and customs makes us believe that there is a good citizen and by practicing these behaviors, one can become one.

To extend this further and say that by also learning to study others to find moments of intervention to protect ourselves from our own rape weaves together political institutions and sexual assault. Here is the idea that citizenship for women is being dainty, polite, and chaste, while also constantly working to prevent your own sexual assault even when methods to stave it off do not work. It is a commonly held idea that if women do everything right, dress properly, behave appropriately, that they will not be assaulted. Yet, assaults still happened to “good” women. So it became necessary to develop an alternative explanation. While it is still held that these behaviors will prevent most from being a victim, it is also understood that sometimes it will happen. Compounding the burden on women, they must now also possess the ability to

identify the moment of intervention, fight off their attacker and prevent their rape. Yet, the norms of appropriate behavior prevent this type of action specifically. Failure to acknowledge the completeness of the sexual violence and its totalizing impact on women would prevent the intervention from even being possible to exist.

Wendy Brown, in *States of Inquiry*, makes the argument that including sexual violence into law creates a “females a sexual violability” and “injury as identity.” She says not only does this inscribe a woman as “wounded,” it also “legitimizes law and the state as appropriate protectors against injury” (Brown 27). This functions to simultaneously uncouple the state from the ability to be one of the actors in this type of violence. While I am not arguing that paying these types of crimes special attention legally will do anything to deter them, it is important to note that women are attacked specifically because of their identities. As Brownmiller argues, it is often an attack against a class of people (women, LGBTQ+) that is the trigger for the rapist. Of course, Brown is correct that this type of legislation could lead to a reinforcing of neoliberal policies and identity politics that label women as already dependent and victims. But, again, she is locating the intention of the law on the body of the victim instead of leveraging it against the attacker. It was his intention to harm a woman because he believed her to be a victim, not the woman herself believing herself capable of being a victim. In “Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape” Carine Mardorossian argues that by having specific rights for victims of sexual violence such as the right “to register objection to negotiated pleas or releases” and to “receive financial restitution from the offender” work to “reinforce victim status” (759). She argues these laws and privileges perpetuate the idea that “the state is a neutral arbitrator ready to intervene when...constitutionalized restitution does not occur” (Mardorossian 759). This type of legislation, she argues, only works to create a justification for vengeance, often used by those

legislators who are already advocating for more control in the prison system. These policies, many of which were codified under Reagan, create longer prison sentences which can work to further the problem within the prison industrial complex. Furthermore, the state has already proved itself to not be a neutral actor and is incentivized against acknowledging this issue.

Brown's approach to laws surrounding sexual violence is structured by Nietzschean logic of resentment, "an effect of domination that reiterates impotence, a substitute for action, for power, for self-affirmation that reinscribes incapacity, powerlessness, rejection" (*States of Inquiry* 69). Brown sees this type of legislation as rights-based politics that introduces powerlessness as a "dissimulated political discourse of recriminations and toxic resentments parading as radical critique" (*States of Inquiry* xi). This type of legislation does not work to correct the problem of rape, instead acts proactively as if it is somehow acknowledging this problem of sexual violence. If this legislation is masquerading as a solution for sexual violence, it is indeed a substitute for action. But, if it is simply a way for those who suffer this type of violence to collect some type of restitution, it does complicate this issue. While sexual violence does pose an economic impact to victims through lost wages, time, trauma, and medical bills, giving it an economic value falsely gives sexual violence an exchange value. But, again, the court or legislation is not going to undo this problem.

Brown uses Foucault's discussion of sexuality as a way to describe how this type of policy can work to entrench norms and genders. "Homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (*States of Inquiry* 101). This does not offer sexual liberation, but instead works to utilize the existing structures of power to validate sex as an essential part of our identity. Brown writes that "truth-telling" about experiences is

“construed as deliverance from the power that silences and represses them rather than as itself a site and effect of regulatory power” (*States of Inquiry* 42). Brown sees this work to unearth “hidden” stories merely props up gendered identities within hierarchical structures instead of interrogating their existence and ideology.

While it is true that rape, its trauma, and targeted nature have a history of being co-opted to scare women into civility and to enforce gendered norms usually involving religion, my goal is not to simply get women to tell their stories. Rather, it is the fact that women’s every day stories are dismissed that when women choose to testify to their experiences of sexual trauma, their ability to speak as an expert or about a personal experience has already been removed. Men are often perceived to be telling the truth without any further critical inquiry. But, it is not simply enough that women’s stories are heard with the validity of men’s stories. Instead, to further interrogate the constructions of identity, experience, and truth that preclude women from existing in and speaking in those realms. It does not work to say to men, “See, we matter.” Instead, it creates an understanding that this happens to others. If enough of us tell our stories to our rapists, then maybe they will believe us, yet this does not work to bring validation. It works to speak these stories as our own while also working to speak as a collective. It is in these sites where women learn not only that their experience is not isolated, but also how these stories and experiences root us in a social and historical construction that allowed and encouraged these experiences. These moments are when victims/survivors can see the problem of sexual assault outside of identity politics. It becomes a collective problem, something that can be addressed as a group, a burden that women can make structural instead of individualized. Foucault explains, homosexuality became an identity rather than an act. In the same way, I argue that sexual violence has become an identity rather than an act. This type of discourse is unproductive

because it links the victim with the violence as something intrinsic instead of as an act committed against a certain class of individuals. My aim is to create a discourse that shifts the acts of sexual violence away from an individual focus, and instead towards a collective interrogation of systems of violence. Powerlessness is not within one's gendered body, but instead within the institutions that surround women.

Freud discusses the experience of pain and trauma as a disruption of the body as well as a breakdown of barriers for the body between imagined and real (Ego and Id 25). The barriers that exist are not just physical, someone physically harmed you, but also socially constructed. This disruption becomes a crisis that is not simply because we have been physically assaulted, but deconstructs our notions of intimacy. We are suddenly confronted with the actuality of our experience, that not only is this possible, it is happening, and there is no recourse, no corrective action.

Merleau-Ponty describes the embodied subject as our bodies existing in reference and relation to other objects. This is what creates my self-perception and the ways that I interact with the world. It is not just the observation of these other objects, but also the ways that I move through and interact with them that forms my contextualization of my own body. This cannot be formed just through seeing these other subjects, but the interactions are how I know that my world and experiences are real. If these subjects fail to acknowledge my lived experience, part of the contextualization of that reality is diminished. When my fear, the panic, of having someone come up quickly behind me, is not validated, it becomes easy to rename that feeling as an illusion, a false reality, instead of interrogating it as a learned behavior in response to actual realities of violence. When the actuality of women's lives, even absent of narratives of sexual assault, is not seen as true or mocked as hysterical or dramatic, the reality of our world and

experience shrinks. Our boundaries become self imposed, removing an ability to even believe ourselves.

RAPE AND THE LAW

Most often, the perception of the greatest evidence a sexual violence survivor could provide is physical evidence of the attack. This offers proof that the woman did not consent. This proof comes in the form of visible injuries to her body. It is not enough to say that this act was not desired, it must be shown that she physically resisted through the beating of her own body. It is not enough to create a situation of terror that would render a woman less likely to physically resist to the point of the attacker harming her. And, he must harm her enough to leave marks, for the damage to be judged as suitable for labeling it as violent, another arbitrator of her experience. Instead, just as Rousseau suggested, it is the man's interpretation of the events that are presented as fact. She accepted his date, and he believed she wanted to have sex. It is his belief about her desires as well as the composition of her character that serve as the basis of fact evidence in the court. Rather than considering the denial of consent by the woman, it is his interpretation of her desires that carries weight.

Pateman points out that often legal opinions imply that "rapists are not criminal or vicious men, or men clearly deficient in concern for the well-being, integrity, and respect of another person, but merely stupid or careless" ("Women and Consent" 160). They have simply misjudged the will of the person they assaulted. This is an error that is not seen as indicative of their character. This again exposes that some men are capable of rape, "bad" men, yet we provide little to no evidence in these cases that many of these men are bad. The men who made the mistake are those who have erred in their judgment of the will of the woman, rather than denying a woman the autonomy of consent. Often the issue of sexual violence centers around

the concept of consent. Did he believe her to be consenting? Did she remove consent? Yet, Pateman notes that if a man's defense is that a woman consented, "then we must assume that he considered the possibility that she was not consenting, and rejected it" (Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* 55). This fails to acknowledge that most instances of sexual violence are not due to oversight or mistakes (even in interpreting women's consent), but deliberate acts. For a man to be misguided about the intentions of the woman shifts the conversation away from the actual problem that exists with sexual violence. When a robbery occurs, the first thought is not if the their misunderstood whether or not someone wanted their belongings taken. The consent of the person who was stolen from is assumed to be withheld from the beginning, by the very claim of robbery. For women who claim sexual assault, consent is the aspect interrogated in the situation. It is not a matter of interrogating the crime, but instead evaluating if a crime took place. If a woman's ability to consent to her own body is questioned, what does this mean for her actions within the democratic process? What does this reveal about the limits of gender within democracy?

Pateman asks, "Why should a woman's 'yes' be more privileged, be any less open to invalidation, than her 'no'?" ("Women and Consent" 162). Does this render her yes meaningless? Does it simply work to mirror back whatever the man is desiring? It seems that men would use her 'yes' as a validation of acceptance, proof her ability to consent when the opposite, the negation, is not possible for women. The acknowledgment of a 'yes' is a false affirmation that a 'no' can exist. Pateman identifies this as the primary issue in consent theory. The idea of voluntarism, or free commitment, and its necessary to consider it if consent is to be taken seriously in liberal democratic theory and practice (Pateman, "Women and Consent" 162). She notes that consent, fundamental to liberal democracy, is necessary to

“maintain individual freedom and equality” but is also a problem because “individual freedom and equality is also a precondition for the practice of consent” (“Women and Consent” 162). Pateman is not necessarily arguing that consent is not possible, but to identify it as existing currently fails to acknowledge its bounds and the implications of its historical conception. Liberal theorists rely on consent and establish its bounds concerning when it should not be given - no individual ought (or can) consent to being a slave, because doing so would remove an individual’s freedom, denying the possibility of consent. Yet, the relationship between existing institutions and individuals goes largely unexamined. Pateman’s final point about the fact that consent must be given to something, in the conversation surrounding sexual violence, the assumption is that the woman must give consent to the man. The superior, the man, offers the contract, and the submissive person consents, the woman (“Women and Consent” 164). For Pateman, an egalitarian relationship cannot rest on the groups of consent, because one person is always the contract issuer, the more powerful of the two, offering the option for one to subordinate themselves. She notes that perhaps the greatest issue in all of this is there exists no method, no discourse from which to begin to describe the possibility of two individuals equally agreeing, through their own freedom, to create an enduring relationship. While the concept of consent is worth addressing, it does not fully engage the reason rape occurs. If we clear of notions of consent, educate men to better understand it, sexual violence will still occur. It is the turn towards that law, defining terms, that is seen to offer some type of resolution. Yet, the law has failed to provide us liberation.

In *Feminist Contentions*, Judith Butler notes the legality of what constitutes rape is the site where “the politics of violence operate through regulating what will and will not be able to appear as an effect of violence” (Butler 162). Survivors cannot say, I was raped outside of the

parameters of what the law tells them happened to their bodies. Butler notes that this “foreclosure” is already consumed by “a violence at work, a marking off in advance of what will or will not count under the signs of ‘rape’ or ‘government violence,’ or in the case of states in which twelve separate pieces of empirical evidence are required to establish ‘rape.’ What can then be called a governmentally facilitated rape” (Butler, *Feminist Contentions* 162-63). Butler is pointing to the false notion that women can even claim they have been assaulted. The court, the government, the state, has already decided on the violations of the body that would all under this category. This legal code works to recreate the status of victim. The pouring over her body, the details of her story, and the evidence, even though there is never enough. The law and the courts have made it so difficult to classify our own violence that there is no official naming of it, forcing this violence to exist outside of the law. It moves it to a place of no regulation where it is able to operate within certain parameters to ensure it remains.

LEARNING AND DEALING WITH SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The inability to even call what has happened rape reinforces the normalization of the assault. Many of the people I worked with at the crisis center rejected working with any type of state institution, feeling that their experience would only be invalidated or minimized. Instead, they found community through other survivors and the healthcare staff working at our facility. Surprisingly healthcare, while still in many ways contributing to this problem, offered a sense of relief for many of our clients. The nurse was able to point out physical signs or trauma or point to emotional indicators of trauma. Yet, the physical exam exposes, once more, the intimacy and violation of our own bodies. We have worked so hard to keep our bodies covered, and Sexual assault undoes that while also forcing exposure to the interior of our bodies. The actual physical spaces that are inside of us have become public, accessed by someone else. It is the act of not

just grabbing, but penetrating the interior that offers a specific type of betrayal. This is then repeated during a forensic exam, a literal process of not only remembering the assault, but an outsider, a stranger revisiting the site that is normally hidden from public view. There is a paralyzing fear of others knowing what has happened to you. Most are polite enough not to ask, but everyone wants the details, to imagine and know what happened to your body. Your body is a public space. It is either used as an example for the dangers of assault, as a figure on a slide show of crime or an object to be had, assaulted with no fear of the consequences.

Now the examination is wrapped up in the validation of our experience. The nurse offers something through the ritual that does not exist elsewhere for survivors. It was never the police office who validated these women, instead it was the understanding of collective experience. Just existing in a space where they were believed, where their stories could be told, shifted the nature of that space. This was a political act that was not happening outside of that center. It was when our clients realized that most of us had been through an experience with sexual violence that they could feel a small amount of relief. One client told me that she was just glad to not have to explain what it feels like to be raped to someone else. She said it was nice to sit with someone and know that they knew the anger, the betrayal, the self doubt, the numbness and just exist as two people who understood. The work to explain her feelings would be too exhausting on top of the trauma she had already experienced.

These centers and the spaces that are similarly created are important not only for dealing with the trauma of the violence, but also establishing a community where experiences are validated. Often when stories of violence are told, people respond with sympathy in a way that often makes survivors feel pitied. Instead of this offering a respite from the experience, it instead solidifies the survivor as victim. Brown says that there is a practice of fixing “the identities of

the injured and the injuring as social positions... fabricating something like a plastic cage that reproduces and further regulates the injured subjects it could protect” (*States of Inquiry*, 27-28).

It is because these women’s stories are not seen as part of the collective experience of all women, having thousands of moments of violence minimized and normalized around them, that the cage is constructed. The crisis center, and others like it, work to deconstruct this cage through days of training, mentorships, and supervised consultations. The training must be extensive; it is working to undo literally centuries of construction that surround gender and sexual violence.

I was placed at the crisis center as part of my involvement with the Junior League. Women from the Junior League are traditionally white, wealthy, stay at home moms. Many of these women who volunteered at the crisis center saw themselves as saviors, capable of helping a specific type of woman work through her trauma. For many of these women, survivors were an object, pictured as poor, probably a woman of color, and often uneducated. They were often surprised when someone from a similar background came to the clinic. The volunteers thought themselves as specially equipped to help a “low income” client work through her trauma, often feeling that these women were incapable of defining their own experiences and dealing with the assault. These clients would not be seen as capable of coming back to serve as a crisis counselor, and ultimately the white women volunteers left feeling they had contributed something to a specific class of people. Survivors are imagined to be a monolithic group, all having similar experiences and backgrounds and to be addressed as such. Of course, not all volunteers felt this way, but the overwhelming majority from the Junior League, philanthropists, were clueless when presented about information concerning trans, queer, differently abled, or other types of clients that would come to the clinic. The handling of their insensitive questions during training was delicate and diplomatic by the staff. The majority of volunteers were not from the Junior League

and were deeply committed to and passionate about confronting this problem. The JL volunteers normally completed their hours and never returned. It was not that these women offered much as volunteers, but instead that their organization was responsible for significant financial contributions that, if lost, would devastate the clinic. Many crisis service organizations require funding from wealthy, well-meaning individuals and institutions, with little help from government subsidies. This center would not survive solely on money allocated from the state or federal budget. Like many organizations that support women, it is not seen as a public good to be valued in the yearly budget. Instead, it has been shifted into the private, charitable realm, making it dependent on the whims of its donors. This type of dependency necessitates a pandering that can never really hold the individual donor or institution accountable for their own behavior both towards survivors and for their complicity in a culture of sexual violence. No longer can the crisis center be an agent working towards ending sexual violence, but instead work towards individual healing with resources like counseling, treating the symptoms. All of which are important, but it effectively removes any ability for radical activism.

While women's bodies are also given back "sprawled out and distorted" through a sexualized gaze, race complicates the experience. For many white women, it is not that they deserve to be unburdened by the objectification of men, it is instead that their sexualized identity is to be possessed by white men. White women's bodies serve as space for a particular type of power. They are an extension of white men, their property. These men do not become protective because someone has been wrong in their treatment of women, instead it is to be understood that these women are possessions of these white men. For white women and black women, it is racism that has already denied their own lived experiences. White women's pain, anguish, stories are only powerful and true if they relate to men -- their power, their bodies.

Their stories serve as a reflection of white masculinity. It was challenged when Emmett Till whistled at the white woman, when another man grabs their girlfriend's ass in the bar. Black women's stories are never seen as valid, always marginalized because white men believe they already own them than these women. Because of this, we can never escape, never be anonymous. The complexity of who is believed when it comes to sexual violence cannot be separated from the way it works to reinforce racial hierarchy. If the victim is a white woman and her attacker black, it is more likely she will be believed. It allows for a justification for racism and often leads to vigilante justice. This becomes embedded in the practice of femininity. Young white girls are taught to fear black boys because of their propensity towards sexual violence. One of the first times I remember caring for someone was in third grade, my best friend who was a black boy that lived down the street. A girl who lived in my neighborhood told me to be careful around him because his parents said he may try to touch me. I recounted this story to my mom as an adult. She told me that when she was in school, her date, a white guy, was trying to kiss her, pawing at her during a dance. She refused his advances and said hey to one of her friends walking by, a black boy. My mom's date called her a N-lover and made a spectacle of my mom and her friend. This type of generational violence, that I am sure has never left that man my mom was talking to, and has certainly never left my mom, worked to reinforce a particular type of appropriate sexuality. My mom's date bullied her all night about whether or not she had been intimate with her friend, obviously he was disgusted at the possibility. It was not a moment to protect chastity in all forms, just a moment to discipline her for the friendship with a black man, and punish her for refusing to become her date's sexual object. Despite her struggle against this, the discipline was internalized. Even as she talked about it thirty years later, she still regretted speaking to the her friend. She said she caused them both unnecessary pain. That moment was foundational and

sexuality and race were bound up in her learning to discipline herself to avoid those moments in the future.

Utilizing this type of self-discipline yields a false sense of autonomy. Foucault's term "technologies of the self" is a system of utilizing self-discipline as a method towards this perception of autonomy. It was thought that through the locating of our problems within our own bodies that we could exercise this self-discipline. Failures could then be dealt with through our own personal control, we could enlist our own correction. It becomes overwhelming when the intervention is outside of ourselves. When we experience sexual violence, our normal methods of self-discipline have failed us, proving them to be falsely productive. If we cannot locate the shortcomings within ourselves, it produces a unique type of vulnerability. Interestingly enough, the self-policing does not seem to be at work in the self regulation of the rapist, otherwise it would be rare, rather than a normalized occurrence.

Theorists like Susan Brownmiller have argued that men possess the "tools" to commit sexual violence (a penis) and women have the ability to be raped. This assumption positions women as fixed within their gender identity, and links this identity to a perpetual state of victim. This also links sex and gender to one another in a way that confuses the two. Women, in this argument are reduced to their genitalia, connecting sexual assault to sexuality and the physical representation of that. What it does not do is grapple with the category and construction of the category of woman such that it is a more powerful influence than an assumption of sexual organs. My argument, however, assumes gendered categories because of construction, not because of the physicality of the body. It is not necessarily that women are assaulted because they have vaginas, but instead of what the construction of the identity, whether self-ascribed or socially ascribed to them, represents. It is often the rebellion from conforming to a gender, sexual

identity, or social norm that can serve as a point of anger for the rapist. It is still the rapist's intention to rely on gender when engaging in violent acts. It is not that women are assaulted because of their anatomy, but because the rapist identifies the gender of the woman or he works to discipline those who fall outside of that binary. Rape often works to reinscribe gender norms rather than to affirm them. It is an act of discipline, and its use as a tool works to combat any notion of it being "natural." It has somehow been linked to biological sex which can take us to a place of thinking where it becomes something that is intrinsic, instead of considering the constructions surrounding gender for it to exist.

Sharon Marcus argues that sexual violence "feminizes women in the West, where the entire female body comes to be symbolized by the vagina, itself conceived of as a delicate, perhaps inevitably damaged and pained inner space" (398). This works not only to reproduce narratives of women as weak, but also the counter, to shore up men's masculinity. Either they are the rapist or the protector. At the University of Alabama, this phenomenon can be witnessed often, whether at a bar or in the classroom. The scene in social settings is a common one, men are engaging with women either by approaching them sexually or fending off someone who is. In the classroom, the times men in the room were most vocal was when we discussed sexuality, boasting of their prowess. When we covered sexual violence they were all adamant that they were incapable and would "kill" anyone who did that to someone they knew. The response was never to grapple with the fact that it did exist, but instead that they were either not responsible, or a defender of the potential victim. In the classroom and at the bar, women were never seen of independent of their sexuality or gender, their potential to be a victim was understood to be part of their identity. Men never saw themselves as the potential victim in these scenarios. It was odd that they thought themselves more closely identified with the assailant than the survivor.

Is the fact that men rape women an acknowledgment that institutions fail to fully make men feel masculine so that they must pursue it elsewhere? Is it such that within institutions, because of neoliberal practice, that their masculinity is not complete -- that it must be forcefully demonstrated beyond the bound of institutions and respectability? If this is an expression of masculine domination, then the act of speaking about it, of telling of the occurrence would disrupt the ceremony of masculinity. Foucault argued that while the act of confessing may appear to liberate the confessor, it creates dependencies on the rules and notions of discourse that allow her confession to exist. And, to address the attacker would remove his anonymity and perhaps this is why men become so angry. This act becomes individualized, something they cannot escape from when they are addressed as "You. You are the rapist." The agency within the accusation offers women something that no institution has given her.

CONCLUSION

What does sexual violence expose for us about democracy? If one of women's most intimate aspects of her body, her own will and desires surrounding her sexuality, are able to be interoperated and determined by a man accused of committing a crime against her, how can fair and equal consent exist in her relationship to democracy? Would each representation of her will and participation in citizenship not be coerced in the same way? There exists a crime that most of its victims are a certain gender, and beyond that, many ascribe to non traditional identities, that the legitimacy is evaluated by those who are most likely to have committed the act. The logic of the law and response to the crime is constructed by those who have been built by a coercive use of democratic principles. This does not render women incapable of consenting, they are still agentic actors within this system. Instead, it highlights the need to interrogate who how intimately gender is linked to violence. Women's assertions and claims about their own bodies,

their participation, and existence are always valid, the larger question is whether or not democracy can recognize women as free and capable to accept the agency of women. Women resist democratic practices and coercion and have done so since history has been recorded, it is not that they are weak-willed, incapable or relegated to shells of dominated humans. It is the problem of how their stories and experiences are recognized and acknowledged by the courts and other individuals, the solution is not to empower women, but to question the very systems that perpetuate this violence.

It is not enough to simply believe a woman when she says she is assaulted, or to convict more rapists, or hand down harsher sentences. The entirety of a woman's existence must be believed to begin to interrogate the problems of sexual violence. Without this, how can women consider themselves signers of the social contract? How can we see ourselves as free and protected members of the democratic process? If such explicit violence is normalized, it can only be followed that the violence of institutions that is more subtle, that contributes to economic inequality, not only exists but also hides within democracy.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Previous chapters worked to unpack institutional and social constructions and their uses of power, discipline, and sovereignty. The complicated way these concepts are embedded within the democratic process function to reproduce racism, sexism, and subordination. This chapter will provide an inquiry into the ways that gender, race, and sexuality inform the academic experience of graduate students. These spaces are inherently intimate and as such should be scrutinized closely because of their potential for violence. It is the hope that this can be used as a model for many situations where oppression and discrimination are common, yet subversive. I will use canonical thinkers throughout this chapter as a way to develop an approach to theory, gender and race to show the ways that the canon could include these questions. In previous chapters, I have worked to explain the subtle shift in sexism and racism in the attempt to articulate it more precisely through the following examples. These examples will deal with the way that sexism is embedded in institutional practice.

As much as the academy attempts to separate itself from those who harm society, we are indistinguishably linked. In explicit ways academics inform the very fabric of democracy. This is found in the academic's articles that are then used to justify policy, Congressional testimony on an area of expertise, comments given to the media and even their public and private commentary on social issues. On the other hand, there are less obvious ways that the academy enacts its arbitrary power. These methods include the gatekeeping for graduate programs, an ignorance surrounding the lack of diverse faculty members and even whose work is worth reading and assigning. The greatest disservice, perhaps, is when the fields that are purported to

be different are not. Political theory has produced beautifully critical texts that work to undo categories, that perfectly lay out arguments about seemingly mundane violence, and that propel us to think and read and write. Always more.

GENDER

Previously, I have unpacked notions of the political and social and the ways it informs political action. Similar to the experiences of women in the sorority, the academy often presents a certain type of woman as permitted to exist. While it often homogenizes identity and ideology, political intimacy can also work to reinforce notions of gendered identity. Sentimentality, emotion, and general feminine expressions of identity are frowned upon. If a woman is fashionable, she becomes an object, she must walk a fine line between being a professional and recognizing the ways her body is perceived. One problem is the lack of women as faculty members. There are a number of burdens placed on women that are not present for men, that are more likely to lead to attrition in graduate school or being placed in non Tenured positions. In *Manhood and Politics*, Wendy Brown argues that women are relegated to the realm of necessity, freeing men from their own bodies, to become political actors capable of reasoning. He has effectively alienated his head from his body, he has learned the body is something to be dominated and “strives to conquer, master, dominate, or control all that threatens his precarious freedom from the body” (Brown, *Manhood and Politics* 80). Brown describes the ways that manhood has sought to protect the realm of political through a rejection of the “dirtiness” of necessity (Brown, *Manhood and Politics* 44). Because women are tied to the natural state of necessity, women’s physical bodies become intertwined with this dirtiness, also extending to their minds. Her body and her mind both need to be ordered, ruled. Women faculty members, often through training as PhD students, learn the importance of control and discipline. It is a fine

line between occupying a space not meant for you and reproducing the very mechanisms that perpetuate the sexism. While Brown's argument about the perceived necessity of disciplining the (female) body and the absence of the body from the political realm, she fails to account for the ways that bodies are present but just ignored or utilized for masculine/political needs.

Women are teachers, "experts" in their fields, their bodies present within the political realm.

This allowance of acceptance is mechanized through domination that can clearly be seen in the training of the academy. The mastery of the political, in masculine terms, requires the ability to overcome the necessity, something that women - by nature - are incapable of doing.

When I began graduate school, I did not possess the knowledge and tools that I now have. This, after all, is the purpose of a PhD program. It works to develop a scholar with particular expertise in a field of inquiry while simultaneously working as a fundamental part of perpetuating sexism and racism within the academy. It is in graduate school that we learn, often without realizing it, how intricately and expertly racism and sexism are woven into our training. We learn to embody it, reproduce it, and most importantly, remain silent about our experiences. I will show the ways that canonical thinkers can be used to create a more liberatory notion of political theory within the context of classic works. I will utilize thinkers like Mill, Arendt, and others for a discussion of the ways that political theory attempts to discuss gender, race and sexuality.

It was also through the texts we read that I learned my value. As readers, we attempt to insert ourselves into the work. Political theory has many authors who offer robust critique of political thinkers that leave it particularly vulnerable to ignoring interrogations of those at the margins. Where can women and students of color locate themselves in the "canon" except as slave or housewife? It is not that these identities are false, but their voices are removed. Iris

Marion Young's book *Inclusion and Democracy* describes the concept of deliberative democracy as limiting because of its inherent assumptions. Historically those who have argumentative skills, normally because of formal education, are those allowed to participate in the public sphere of democracy. This gives the illusion of consensus about topics while erasing those without the tools to enter the conversation. Similarly, this practice is executed quite effectively in the classroom, particularly when appropriate vernacular mastery of the English language implies intellect and ability.

This is also seen in the assigned authors for courses. These texts pretend that these women, servants, slaves, and individuals did not write, think, or discuss. Their voices are heard through the interpretation of others, constructing the box around them as if the individual put it there themselves. Susan Okin tackles this subject in *Women in Western Political Thought* by saying, "It is by no means a simple matter to integrate the female half of the human race into a tradition of political theory which has... defined them, and interfamilial relationships, as outside the scope of political" (1979). Canonical texts do not offer women or people of color to identify as agents of political action. While these texts offer more insight for (white) women, it is still through relegation to the domestic or private sphere, with defined norms and behaviors, as the conditions of their acceptance. Women are also used as way to position reason and rational thinking, contrasting the enlightened individual to the "natural" state of women. It was in these political theory texts and courses that I began to realize that the individual we discussed was understood to be male (and white). The texts that we define and point to as the foundational work of the democratic process and touted as being universal, failed to acknowledge the original intent was, in fact, explicitly exclusionary. This fundamental assumption of universal male dominance is a common thread in the work of political theorists. It is the starting point that critique can begin

from when discussing the role and actions of women. Many have critiqued this position noting that Western thinkers assume a universality of their perspective and their critiques are able to respond to a universal way of thinking about race or gender. Yet, it still remains a bias in much of political thought that continues to hinder the ways that we approach gender in political thought. Many sociologists, anthropologists, and cultural studies scholars have meticulously detailed ancient and modern communities where gender does not function the same as Western society. The attempt to suggest that male domination is universal erases much of the work and learning that happens outside of the West. This male-dominated model begins our learning of democracy with few interventions that concern themselves with the inherent inequality of these thinkers and their work. The litany of scholars listed as crucial to understanding the formation of our current selves.

The issue of gender is compounded even more so when considering women of color, and specifically black women. The toll that academics takes on a woman's body is magnified in black women's bodies. The cost of entrance is high. Patricia Hill Collins notes that black women are conditionally accepted into the academy, they must be accountable to "masculinist, white Eurocentric systems of knowledge validation" (Collins 751). Claudia Rankin chronicles her academic journal in *Citizen*, saying that "gathering energy has become its own task" (8). Space for women has barely been created, much less women of color. Black people make up approximately 4-5% of full time faculty members in higher education. Less than 2% are tenured or on the tenured track-. Little opportunity and discrimination are difficult enough, but coalition building is tenuous. The narrowness of expressions allowed of our identities makes us claw and fight for what little recognition we can muster, even at the cost of suppressing someone else. To grapple with this would require the use of joy, anger, love, pain, and hope. But, for many of us,

we have pushed those feelings down, because they are not professional. So, we weep when we read de Beauvoir, Lorde, Friedan, Fanon, or Baldwin. We find ourselves messily placed in the text, unsure of how to properly summarize what we have read, void of emotion, so that we can draw out theoretical importance. Affect distinguished. We build a separation where outside of the classroom, we read Lorde's words, "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained. Nor is anyone of you" ("Uses of Anger" 133). And we know it to be true. But the spaces carved out for us seem like impossible places to address this. So, we begin to circumvent. We take classes outside of the department, we find sympathetic faculty members, but probably most powerfully, we use it in our classrooms. We attempt to push back on these moments and construct our own intimacies. We realize that the rules of surviving were not made for us. "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support." But, to survive until the end, we often acquiesce.

The classroom is not the first time that one must wrestle with their own identity. It is not here where we realize we are white or not white, women or men. *Gender Trouble* offers a theory that challenged the traditional construction of the body. In this book, Judith Butler shows that the body becomes "texted" through a discursive process where gender then becomes a performative identity. In *Bodies That Matter*, she explains that her description of performativity is not just individual acts, changing clothes or even expanding sexual identities. Drag provides a useful point of conversation because of its ability to perform while not fully encapsulating gender. Drag consists of your wardrobe, makeup, or style. It is here where Butler focuses of the

limits of “sex.” Drag does, however, work to expose the strategies by which gender is fluid and constructed. “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency” (*Gender Trouble* 137).

Gender Trouble points out the importance of understanding the constructions of our own identities and how we repeat and embody the practices of gender. The compulsory nature of heterosexuality produces a self-policing as well as identifiable categories that others also police the boundaries. Important in this work is the ways that reproduce the gender identities. By making us aware of our own performance, Butler is working to destabilize the categories of gender and sex in hopes of creating a new way of engaging as individuals. This also works to illuminate the margins of gender categories and the importance of understanding the bodies that are able to exist in this performative space, and those rendered incapable or outside of gender performance.

This work offers a way to think about subversive resistance. She says, “The subject is not determined by the rule through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of reputation that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat, ‘agency,’ then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition” (*Gender Trouble* 185).

A common critique to Butler’s early work with the performative nature of gender is that often the academic, legal, and economic claims of discrimination rely on the category of ‘woman’. It is because “woman” exists that there can be a discussion about inequality that is perpetuated against a particular group of people. Yet, this critique ignores the fact that while Butler is claiming that gender is not natural, or even an easily identifiable category, the

conception of “woman” is enough to form a romanticized collective identity. It is only through a critical reflection of these categories that a feminist critique can emerge that will unravel the categories and constraints of identity. A failure to examine or acknowledge these categories only works to further solidify them. To ignore the complexities and construction of “gender” works as a type of violence to those who find themselves outside the borders of the category as well as those on the inside. It is through this that the potential for strategic coalitions becomes more powerful.

Butler discusses the materiality and materialization of corporeal beings in *Bodies That Matter*. Similar to Foucault’s concepts of discursive practice, Butler notes that discourse develops bodies into objects. It is not just that one word forms one object, for example to say ‘girl’ does not create a girl, but instead we discover objects and develop our understanding through language. Discourse contributes to “a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and a surface we call matter” (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 9). She deviates from Foucault, who believes that discourse possesses a “god-like agency” that works to bring into being and constitute what it names (*Bodies That Matter* 6). Instead, for Butler, discourse works to translate reality into something understandable, defining the objects we encounter. It is discourse that works to distinguish our environment. For example, when a professor asks, “What does *Lindsey* think?” I become an object, what could *she* possibly offer us. It was not that in doing so, he worked to establish me as a woman, but instead utilized discourse to allow the class, and most importantly, myself, to distinguish who I was in the classroom. A literal gaze from all the students and the professor met me, when for so long I had been taught to stay in the background, to exude docility. If I was correct in his inquiry, it did not work to justify my presence in the space, it would only allow me reprieve for

knowing what everyone else knew. If I failed, then the inquiry had done its job. My reading had been wrong. It was not corrected; no instruction or development was given. It was here that absences of discourse was necessary. Had he worked to teach me, it would imply I was worth teaching. I was hopeless, one to be abandoned and shown to everyone else the limits of my own education. He did not need to say that I was wrong, it was more powerful if he did not. Instead, he humiliated me and made it my own undoing. It was because I was incapable that I could not progress. I had been given the opportunity to justify my presence in the classroom, as a theorist, and through my own fault, I had been shown as undeserving. Judith Butler describes a similar moment in her preface to *Bodies That Matter*. “But what about the materiality of the body, Judy?” This question is posed to her by readers of *Gender Trouble*. She notes that the attempt to remove her from the formal position, Judith, as a way of discipline, even possibly serving as a reminder of her own development necessary as a theorist. This was a discursive attempt to use her gender, call to a maternal or childlike acknowledgment to undermine her work, a critique that was unique in attempting to re-feminize her in the discourse. This act both in my personal experience and Butler’s utilizes the very tools and signifiers of the discursive practice and a failure to recognize the misogyny within the attempt at critique. These moments are part of a democratic modeling, an engagement with the democratic process. Iris Marion Young describes deliberative democracy as having the potential to liberate or include marginalized groups in the process. The rhetorical devices used in the above examples does not fall into Young’s description of inclusive political communication. Instead of attempting to communicate in ways that “people acknowledge one another in particularity” which would work to include marginalized perspectives, it is a direct attempt to minimize the particularity of the object. It removes any perspective or approach outside of the strict boundaries that have been set. It is an

intentional communicative greeting signaling to myself and those around me the limits of my presence and ability.

The materiality of the body cannot be separated from the norms that produce its significance. Sex cannot be seen as understood, rather, that the norms create a sexed body. It is through heteronormative power that identification works as an example of the original. This complicated mechanism is both creating and validating the identity of the subject through discursive practices. Performativity is not an act as much as it is a linguistic tool from which mechanizes the larger regulative structure that process the essence of gender and sex through performative actions. “The process of the sedimentation or what we might call materialization will be a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citing of power, a citing that establishes an originary complicity with power in the formation of the ‘I’” (*Gender Trouble* 15). It is through the power of heterosexuality that sexual hierarchies are created and the sexed subject is interpolated as an individual into a subjected status. This would imagine heteronormativity to work as a discursive event that constantly reproduces a sexed subject, the reiteration of the bodily performance creates the materializing of the sexed form of the body. These processes work to produce the matter of the body that allow us to consider the embodied subject. Outside of discursive practices, the body cannot exist in a way to analyze our impulses.

Butler points out that it is these practices that render some bodies valuable (white, male) while others become objects (black bodies). This happens through a repressive violence that institutionalizes power as necessary. These bodies then comprise the margins, so that the bodies that do matter will understand the limits of their own performativity. These bodies can be seen as liberatory, they are the most dangerous. If they are no longer viewed as abject, it changes the center, or the bodies that do matter. The system while institutionalized is still fragile because of

the existence of these marginalized bodies. While these bodies do have less access to resources, it is the fact that they are not intelligible to the order and process of normal. They become seemingly outside of discursive practices while still being bound in them. The limits of discursive practice creates a body that cannot be understood, it is then this understanding that maintains the body in the margins and limits resources. If these bodies were incorporated and understood through discursive practice, it would destabilize the heteronormative practice that keeps them relegated to the margins. The fragile process is attempting to defend against “an enabling disruption, the occasion for a radical re-articulation of the symbolic horizon in which bodies come to matter at all” (*Bodies That Matter* 23).

Butler’s discussion of race includes “rather than accept a model which understands racism as discrimination on the basis of a pre-given race, I follow those relevant theories which have made the argument that ‘race’ is partially produced as an effect of the history of racism” (*Bodies That Matter* 18). While she is careful not to consider an interchangeability within the theory to equate racism, sexism and homophobia, it is necessary to discuss the implicit differences in these constructions and the ways they are utilized to form identities. Butler says, “speaking of a stranger through and as oneself, the melancholic reiteration of a language that one never chose, that one does not find as an instrument to be used, but that one is, as it were, used by, expropriated in, as the unstable and continuing condition of the ‘one’ and the ‘we,’ the ambivalent condition of the power that binds” (*Bodies That Matter* 42).

For Butler, she must establish the existence of “matter” prior to bodies being able to become objects. For this assumption, matter is neutral, existing not in relation to anything. It becomes produced through a system of production. The complications of this system of productions, however, is that they are assumed to be fixed, existing without critique. Is it

possible for matter to exist in a neutral sphere prior to being brought into existence? Is its existence not constructed prior to discourse? Even as a child develops in the womb, even before knowing the gender, the terms of its existence are already gendered. It becomes necessary to know the sex, something celebrated, to be able to have the child exist. What produces the discourse? Is that construction fixed? In assuming so, the categories and objects it creates would then also be fixed, existing prior to the discourse. If the mechanisms that create such discourse are not examined, then the creation of objects is not only seen as natural, but the categories and identities which create the forms would necessarily preempt the discourse. Butler is working to acknowledge “radically othered” bodies through destabilizing discursive practices. This works to critique normative identity constructions which allows “othered” bodies to come to matter (*Bodies That Matter* 16). For Butler, it is an attempt to work within the methods of discourse to create a space for bodies on the margins. While Butler’s attempt to create more inclusive identities is an enlightening intervention into the tool of discourse, she is still presupposing a neutrality to all bodies. She glosses over the inclusions of race and class into the mechanisms of discourse. Butler does unpack the categories of sexuality and gender, but fails to construct a mechanism to understand racial identity.

Women are not just passive recipients of their creation through discourse, but also propagate a category and identity of woman that is impossible to separate from race. Butler’s attempt to utilize discourse fails to allow for an outside intervention into the construction of identity. If discourse is simply reimagined, it does not work to dismantle the allowance of its existence to begin with. Understandably, an attempt towards a collective undoing of discursive practices relies on an assumption of commonality within the discourse that ignores difference. Yet, a collective critique offers something more revolutionary than just rethinking the use of

discourse to be more inclusive. Foucault's assertions of discipline within discourse is not represented in Butler's discussion. Foucault does not see the subject merely occupying a position within a social category, but there is both explicit and implicit discipline used to relegate bodies to categories. Butler notes that the linking of sex and gender is seen explicitly in Foucault's work. She quotes Foucault saying "the notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elementals, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning" (*History of Sexuality* 92).

An important intervention in the ways that the construction of the sexed body can manifest itself is through Grosz's work, *Volatile Bodies*. Specifically, her discussion of anorexia as a function of "patriarch ideals of slenderness" as well as "a form of social protest at the social meaning of the female body" (40). The anorexic subject can fail to see that they have lost weight because they only depict their body in its pre-anorexic state. In the same way, gender functions to create an unattainable notion of femininity and womanhood. If we are constantly disciplining our bodies to become more gendered, closer to an ideal woman, but we still only see ourselves as pre-feminine, it would be easy to undo our tenuous notion of our own femininity. In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Susan Bordo also engages in a discussion of eating disorders. She notes that there is a never ending need to overcome our own bodily imperfections reinforced by the constant social and pop culture relations around us. The eating disorders are manifestations of practices of femininity. These women are those who have followed the ever changing model of bodily perfection to relative "success" that emphasize the pathologies of the body.

Grad school was the first time I noticed the other women graduate students disciplining their bodies. I had been in a sorority in undergrad, so I was familiar with warped body images and dieting. Other women in my program, however, were rigid with the ways they ate and exercised. It became as important as reading and writing and I began to notice that there were no overweight women in my program, nor did I meet any at conferences. Women's bodies, their size, was explicitly linked to their productive capability and work ethic. There was an amazing pressure to blend in while simultaneously standing out. Is it trivial that professional women are concerned with their bodies? When I teach, I am constantly aware of my body. Is my shirt appropriate? I remember when I had gained weight, my clothes were tighter and teaching each day was torture, a reminder of my failure to control my own body as well as a struggle to feel modest enough. These matters, though, find themselves in the realm of social concern. Of course the beauty myth exists, but the discussion for academic bodily visibility fails to address the ways that this informs graduate students. We may dress how we want, to some extent, creating a false sense of freedom and progress. As Wendy Brown notes, "What makes choices freer when they are constrained by secular and market organizations of femininity and fashion rather than by state or religious law?" (189).

As a graduate student, I experience imposter syndrome with regularity. This, of course, was complicated by the appearance of acceptance that was thinly veiled tolerance. It was as if, without knowing the language or the context, I could feel myself being tolerated by the faculty members around me, regardless if that was actually happening. I felt that I would not catch on as quickly, my interests were not traditional, I was not as smart as everyone else. In the first chapter, I noted that tolerance was one of the methods used in attempts to deal with difference. Tolerance works to see subjectivities that are differences of naturalized distinction, instead of

seeing these differences as caused by historical development and discursive practices. Part of cultivating this practice is using discourse of power (Brown, *Regulating Aversion* 4). Tolerance functions to explain the difference as an essential nature rather than discursive and historical differences. By creating an essence of identity, it works to solidify power. It is not necessary to codify difference into law or policy (although this does happen) because tolerance has already worked to create a “nature” for marginalized groups. This essentializing is then solved through tolerance instead of creating systems of equality, it is a behavioral response instead of justice. As seen in the ways that the social homogenized identity, tolerance becomes an effective tool to manage conflict instead of resolve it and is utilized when unequal power positions already exist. “Tolerance as a political practice is always conferred by the dominant, it is always a certain expression of domination even as it offers protection or incorporation to the less powerful” (Brown, *Regulating Aversion* 178). It was within this context that my presence in academic settings could be understood. It was necessary for those at the center to tolerate those on the margins, the abhorrent, the center created the parameters of acceptance and I had to tread carefully and hope that I could be accepted, even if it was conditional. It relied on my own self-abasement and a need for me to be subservient, otherwise I knew tolerance would not be extended.

Learning to understand and negotiate tolerance happens constantly through educational practices. As children, girls and boys learn quickly their differences. Would it have been possible to survive without the tolerance? The presence of girls works to establish the limits for the others in the classroom. It worked to teach the other men how to set similar boundaries. In fact, without my presence, it would not work. It is a constant re-inscribing of parameters made possible by absorbing some on the margins. It is a process, not an isolated act. It “involves the

simultaneous incorporation and maintenance of the otherness of the tolerated element” (Brown, *Regulating Aversion* 28). It also makes clear that my conditional acceptance can be revoked at any time, it is tenuous with shifting conditions. “Almost all objects of tolerance are marked as deviant, marginal, or undesirable” making it possible to impose a hierarchy of values on the dominated group that functions through the very discourse of tolerance (Brown, *Regulating Aversion* 14). Brown argues that the domestic sphere was an effective way to create a non-legal management of women, in ways that did not function for other minorities — which were often maintained by legal codes and processes. She finds that this is when tolerance discourse was utilized. This discourse relied on the solidifying of difference to develop terms for inclusion. This created a national, homogenous, identity that Brown points to as being a fundamental role of tolerance.

This method of tolerating women becomes more explicit when considering the ways that tolerance works on the bodies of people of color. With the election of Donald Trump, and his executive order effectively being a ban on Muslims, signs in my neighborhood began popping up. There were four languages, on the poster with the English reading, “Wherever you’re from, you’re my neighbor and you’re welcome here.” There existed an assumption that the person with the sign was capable of offering the welcome, firmly situated within a position of power where they could tolerate, and move beyond, to accept and welcome someone else. Perhaps one of the most ironic aspects of this sign is that the ban and the implications of it did not just impact those who were immigrants and refugees, but those who merely *looked* like immigrants. Wherever you are from, offers a particular welcome to a particular person. Yet, systematic killings of black bodies has been happening since slavery and even more pointedly, there have been years of protests and raising of the awareness in recent years of police brutality. Yet, we have no sign to

deal with that. “Tolerance... does not merely serve as the sign of the civilized and the free: it configures the right of the civilized against a barbaric opposite that is both internally oppressive and externally dangerous, neither tolerant nor tolerable” (Brown 204). It is through the promise of tolerance that there seems to exist an understanding that civilized nations can identify those who are uncivilized, whose group, religious, or ethnic collective is to be weighed instead of individual rights.

Brown explores the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance (MOT) as a tool for the use of tolerance. She points out that “On the Jewish question” and how to incorporate Jewish people after the French Revolution had to rely on religious identity, creating a racial identity rather than a Jewish individual gaining citizenship. The problem for liberalism arises when a group has challenged sovereignty and “must be incorporated but also must be sustained as a difference: regulated, managed, controlled” (*Regulating Aversion* 71). A similar shift occurred following the Civil Rights Movement, and even emancipation, where a new politics had to develop to incorporate people who were black into public and political life. White people often see images of marginalized peoples and feel tremendous sadness. Recently, on a trip the Newseum in Washington DC, I saw this firsthand. There were countless images of Syrian refugees, freedom riders, Civil Rights protests, and thousands of other injustices against black and brown bodies. Many white women stood around me, their bodies moving with heavy sobs as they had to face the inhumanity. The Newseum also worked to locate these figures of sympathy in a “barbarous” land. It creates some subjects who deserve sympathy while continuing to villainize the community of people that are allegedly the ones causing this suffering. It presents the viewer as “tolerant,” offering something their own country and community cannot. It is

through their suffering that we are able to either give or deny compassion. Without their death or trauma, their plight is not heard. And also ignores our own country that is implicated in this war.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERROGATING THE CANON

The options that are available for those already in the academy do leave some opportunity to create liberatory practices. The instructor designs the classroom from its foundations. One of the most telling documents in the classroom is the syllabus. It is often explained to students as an example of a social contract, the rules and expectations of the course. The texts are particularly important, curated to encapsulate hundreds of years of thought into weeks long semesters. These are the texts that are essential so that both the student and instructor can more ably grasp the concepts covered. Texts that find their way to the essential section in political theory are usually by men. Students taking a seminar course recognize names like Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Mill. Beyond this, the critiques offered by more modern theorists of these historical thinkers rarely center on race and gender, but rather larger concepts of freedom, justice, liberty, and sovereignty. Discussions of race and gender are often seen as “non-traditional responses.” They are “for fun.” We may get to them, but ultimately the object is to first understand the canonical concepts, and then, perhaps, we can insert questions about race or gender. The implication of these as outside the scope of the traditional narrative affirms the boundaries and limits of what is “real” political theory. Yet, there are many examples of race and gender being woven into notions of political theory. Consider that J. S. Mill’s work *The Subjection of Women*, is often mentioned as an aside, but rarely considered a canonical text. It is often not taught in conversation with *On Liberty* despite their consistencies historically and in subject matter. It was not until feminists called into question the categories and explicit separation of public and private life that this distinction suddenly appeared obvious. Why would

it be that this work is seen as a peripheral part of the canon? Mill does not offer complete liberation for the theorists and their position on women, but he does offer a perspective that is often not readily present in other theorists. While not enough, the absence of this work in conversation with his other texts points to a failure to center concepts of race and gender. Without the use of texts like these, the conception of women of the time is seen as homogenous or irrelevant.

An important discussion of Mill's work highlights concepts of feminism and could work to expand notions of gender in a canonical context. Some argue that Mill's work is one of the first attempts at inserting a feminist critique into canonical theory. Mill states that the legal and social constraints that impact the liberty of women is one of the "chief hindrances to human improvement" (*Subjection of Women* 119). His essays on marriage as well as his work in parliament to extend voting and property rights to women at the very least display a divergence in progressive thought compared to his other male counterparts. It would seem that these works considered in conversation with *Subjection* would allow for a different lens with which to view key concepts found in his other work. Mill held the view that the subordination of women was a lasting relic from a hierarchical society. This hierarchy created exclusion and privileges through the reinforcement of incorrect concepts about the constitution of the "natural" state of men and women. This led to a system of education that developed the sentiments and emotions of women rather than their intellectual ability. He viewed Natural Complement theory as unproven and merely a construction of existing social norms. He posited that if women were given access to a different social environment and equality in education, then it would be possible to know more accurately the constructions of gender and that women would prove themselves to be capable of roles that were normally designated for men. "If whatever we are is the product of

environmental forces, then how can the distinction possibly be made? And why criticize one set of environmental influences as 'distorting'?" (*Subjection of Women* 132). This is not to say that Mill's intervention offers a model of liberatory thought, instead that his dedication to the concept of gender as integral to our understanding of liberty, freedom and citizenship should be worth noting, particularly alongside his texts that are included in the canon.

Mill argues that the condition of women is a national concern, integral to bettering society as a whole. "What individuals wish for themselves...ought to be the result of national reflection and experimentation. Only slaves or conformists can be content with a life in which their individual needs and capacities are repressed" (*Subjection of Women* 141). Mill's acknowledgement of a need to liberate women comes with an assumption that there are individuals who are content in a life without freedom. For Mill, the subject that is the opposite (the slave), content in a state of inequality, to move women more towards men, only reinforcing a hierarchy. Mill's unexamined nature and experiences of those bodies asserts an implicit attribution that they are not worth examining. Their construction is assumed and dictated through his vantage point, stripping these actors of their agentic potential. These bodies, often occupied by women and domestic servants, function to shape the concept and construction of families without discussing this process of domestic life within this sphere.

Part of shaping the discourse around the historical understanding of women would be to include inquiries into family and domestic life as political projects. It is discussed in concrete terms, found in the domestic or private sphere, with duties performed by the mother. These early thinkers do not often cover its complexities aside from concepts of sovereignty. The family acts as a model for the social contract, or the understanding of power, yet the family is seen as existing prior to its discussion. While there is note of the changing roles, or the need or

intervention as seen with Rousseau and Emile, there is little to suggest, other than Mill, that an intervention into the domestic sphere would impact the public and political spheres. The separation of the spheres, however, is an active intervention to prescribe the conditions of the home. The protection of these spheres is equated with the protection of liberty. Marriage is presented before the state and the duties outside of the marriage are socially and politically inscribed.

Mill did not accept coverture and conceptualized marriage as a union of friendship, respect and association that was voluntary. He argues that women in marriage are similar to slaves at the will of their masters (*Subjection of Women* 147). While Mill did value the right of a woman to own property and divorce, he did not necessarily advocate for a fully equal partnership that would require a reshaping of labor in the context of the family. For Mill, education offers the opportunity for emancipation from traditional ideas about womanhood. It is here that we can see an understanding of Mill's relationship to gender as something created by environment rather than naturally present. He advocates for a more inclusive, equal education system as foundational to a properly functioning society. Without this type of equity, it is almost impossible to fully know the capabilities of womanhood without including the social constructions and norms of the time. According to Mill, without the removal of these constraints, it is impossible for women to self-actualize and experience the "higher pleasures." Fitting into Mill's conception of utilitarianism is difficult, however, because this still would not account for the different types of labor that women were engaging in. He sees the only space that could provide emancipation as outside of the limits of the home when many women were practicing resistance during the time. Furthermore, if the argument for emancipation is based on utility, it provides an ineffectual way of measuring productive value. If women are given equal education

(as is attempted in modern times) and still do not seem to produce or function at the rate of men, then would it support the idea that women are actually fundamentally weaker or less capable than men? If the appearance of equal education is all that is required as the measuring stick, the burden would still fall on women to expose and unpack the centuries of discrimination that currently manifest in non-traditional ways.

Mill believed that allowing women the liberty and freedom granted to men would produce measurable benefits for society as a whole. One such benefit would be that men could no longer engage in 'self-worship' that is granted to men based only on their gender (160). For Mill, this practice was unproductive and could not offer any measured value. Ultimately it is because of the gains that will be found in human progress and a greater happiness for society, still weighing the guarantees to liberty through utility. Mill's arguments illuminate his unique way of thinking but ultimately still rely on granting rights and liberties based on potential outcome rather than as fundamental, regardless of an individual's production. For Mill, the entirety of the battle for rights must be measured by the potential productivity of the group. By measuring one woman who has had more access than most and she is found to be measured as less productive, it is not an accurate measure according to Mill. The individual cannot be weighed more heavily than the whole.

Mill argues that it is impossible to know the true nature of women. The accepted notion that women are naturally inferior is a relic of previous notions of survival by strength and ultimately rule by strength has become obsolete in modern society. This is in part due to the social contract but also advances that allow for control of violence as well as the transformation of violence into something that is not just ruled by strength. This rule by strength is then seen as somehow natural despite its complicated origins. Mill sees women who accept this notion of

strength creating and contributing to a socialization process that only perpetuates an inferior status (*Subjection of Women* 132). This conditioning process leads to social customs that shape the behavior of women so that we cannot know their true selves.

Mill states that it would be inaccurate to look at the present behavior of women to judge their true nature. For Mill, women have become completely conditioned beings. He offers them no agency and ultimately, it seems that their liberation would happen at the hands of men. While breaking with the thought of his time, his problematic evaluation of women as well as how things could be different still points to a reliance on women's inferiority. He does note that there are some women leaders in the past, and these leaders work to justify his notion that ultimately women should be afforded more rights (*Subjection of Women* 170). He still sees women and men as fundamentally different, not completely undoing gender constructions that work to disenfranchise women. He sees women as being naturally apprehensive as well as having a "nervous temperament" (*Subjection of Women* 177). While these may ultimately seem to be negatives, Mill sees them as advantages in other fields. He believes women capable of making different types of contributions, but still valuable (*Subjection of Women* 180).

Jennifer Ring writes in *Mill's The Subjection of Women* that Mill utilizes "an unexamined use of feminine 'nature,' in spite of his earlier detail of such concept" (39). While Mill examines the ways that women could potentially contribute, it is still in relation to men. Their characteristics, whether from nature or nurture, are still described as antithetical to a masculine identity. While he does try to recenter these differences as positive, a feminine subject is simply not present without her male counterpart. In the discipline of political theory, it is not only students who are women they are imagined in this way, but also the introduction of texts in an attempt to give a different perspective. These texts are situated against the men's examination of

these concepts. While they may serve as worthwhile interventions, they are not seen as foundational. This then bleeds over into the seemingly non-political interactions between faculty members and students.

While faculty members claim to know the feminist theories that have done the important and arduous work of deconstructing our notions of gender and femininity, it seems that they rely on these very categories to understand and engage with their female students. My mostly male faculty members would reference familiar feminist theorists when explicitly designating a topic for one week during the semester as the time we would discuss the contributions of women. Faculty often understand women through a conditioned construction of women's identity. This allows them to act as our "ciphers," telling us and the rest of the classroom what we actually mean when we are engaging in a discussion, which usually worked to undermine our ability to speak with our own authority. When they are not working to translate our "inconsistent" or "incoherent ramblings" to other men in the room, issues that are seen as unimportant are then shouldered onto the backs of the few women faculty members in the department.

WOMEN'S WORK

When I began teaching, the problems of the student and student-teacher dynamic were complicated. My attempts at discussing these issues always felt trivial issues and not worth male faculty member's time. The tools that women are often required to develop, social skills of listening and engaging, are often not something taught to be valued by men in the same way. Coming to a faculty member would require the faculty member to possess the skills to listen to our experience, believe it to be true and important, and work to develop a politics with which to respond. Instead of dealing with a nuanced and complicated issue, the emotional and tedious work to confront these situations is delegated to those more "capable" or who are often incapable

of refusing to accept the additional labor. The everyday politics of this additional labor is inconsistently and unfairly delegated to women and minority faculty members. Advocating for women in the academy is difficult. It is complex if we advocate for ourselves, walking a fine line between seeming aggressive and respectfully asking to be treated fairly. Those who want to be allies, because of their training, are often not equipped with the tools to advocate for us and can often do more damage. Mill's assertion that women's freedom would offer the greatest happiness to all citizens only reinforces a reliance on the intrinsic nature of women and their ability to fulfill something that is lacking in men. Similar to Sophie, many women graduate students are placed in second position. They support the emotional needs of other graduate students, do incredible labor, but are often considered as partners with other men rather than individuals. Because of the immeasurability of women's potential contributions, it complicates the argument Mill is making. Without evidence, that cannot exist because of the conditions of women, there is no way to provide empirical based argument advocating for the liberation of women. So Mill must instead rely on what he has called socially constructed behaviors of women as evidence of value and progress. Mill fails to see the division of labor within the family structure as inherently linked to access and utilization of power. Mill sees a negative outcome of women working outside of the home, a decline of the household and domestic sphere. This traditional domestic structure also prevents men from being active participants in raising children, something that Rousseau will take an active participation stance with Emile, yet it is still to train Emile to become the right kind of man.

Traditional advocacy for women is often rooted in notions of legal standing. We celebrate victories like countries requiring equal pay for equal work by mechanizing the factors that provide-. Mill does seem to be progressive on property rights for women, noting that women

have a right to the property that they enter the marriage with or that she earns. Yet, as Okin argues, it gives the appearance of equal property rights, yet “these are rights to property in hearted or earned by the woman herself, not rights to equal shares of the income” (Mill, Liberal feminist 230). While Mill is seemingly working to create a bond that is more equal, without equality in all facets of the marriage, including economic and child rearing, it only reinforces an inequality that appears to be more equal. Mill has effectively rendered women to the home while simultaneously excluding them from the income their husbands are able to earn outside of the home, creating a dependency for women on their spouse. The failure to acquire and develop wealth is something that has systematically been used to disenfranchise both women and black Americans. The failure to link generational wealth to inequality leaves the domestic sphere unexamined and inherently connected to economic disparities.

While women are now “allowed” to work outside of the home, the economic impact of the domestic responsibilities and expectations take a tremendous toll. There are concrete ways of measuring this through data collected on the wage gap, but it is also important to consider the ways that a perception of equality while still maintaining a dependency is a primary contributor to economic inequality. It is difficult for many families to meet the needs of their households with just one income, forcing, instead of allowing, women to work outside of the home. Many women take jobs instead of building careers with the understanding that their work is supplemental, and their primary job is still managing the household and serving as caretaker for the children. Within academia specifically, 70% of men have children while only 40% of women. Contingent faculty are seen as a cheaper alternative with less economic or career benefits, 61% of these are women while women comprise less than half of PhD holders-. Similar to Mill, many argue that engaging in a rich discussion about identifying and meeting the needs of

mothers and women in the academy through paid paternal and maternal leave, affordable child care, or acknowledging the additional demands placed on women will lead to a more productive female academic. Yet, if contributions are only made through measurable output and labor, it fails to acknowledge the fundamental inequality and to address that actual ways that systems and institutions work to disenfranchise women.

Rousseau, as discussed previously, creates a character whose most liberatory aspect is her relationship to a man. Mill also thought it necessary to act on behalf of women, representing their thoughts because of their conditioning, they themselves were incapable. Rather than unearth the work that women were doing, or even to gaze critically on one's self and one's own relationship to gender, the object of study was the woman and how she had been constructed.

When professor's speak for me, when they interpret what I really mean to say, are they acknowledging years of conditioning on women's bodies in the classroom? Or are they recognizing their superiority to engage the subject at hand? Within the context of society, and the democratic process, there is a constant pressure to identify one's self in relationship to those around you. First you are someone's child, a daughter or a son, you are a student, a citizen.

A PhD program, or even college in general, is not the first time women are confronted with the reality of gender. Many women encounter the simple and complex notion of gender identity, sometimes it is subtle, while others can have an abrupt introduction. It could be when she is forced to wear a dress, compelled to style her long cumbersome hair, discouraged from pursuing math, or the first time she experiences sexual violence. For many of us, it is difficult to point to a specific time. It was not even something that we realized all women experienced, but we knew that we had experienced it because we are women. Part of the work has been to first acknowledge that one of the fundamental reasons for the "invisibility" of the work and lives of

women is because of the prioritizing of masculine contributions as legitimate over feminine activities. The little commentary that does exist denotes the domestic work as not qualifying for political thought while the productive potential of men required detailed analysis. This continues to contribute to the ways in which women's work is valued and specifically this ideology shapes the field of political theory. Some of the first inquiries into (white) women's contributions were measured from a reproductive standpoint. The greatest mystery surrounding women was their ability or inability to become pregnant and those most valued who could produce sons. It was clear that the contribution of women was as a vessel, not a complete attempt to unearth the political influence and contributions of women.

CURRENT EVENTS

Important to this discussion is the inaccessibility of engaging the current situation of the lived experience of students. Whether this is an event on campus or the state or national politics, often these traumatic or intense moments are ignored, their impact hanging heavily on the room. When Eric Garner's death made the news, there was no discussion, somehow it did not fit in with the topics of the course. What could have easily become a moment of critique, identifying policy failures, racial bias, or any other multitudes of "independent variables" that led to this occurrence. There was only silence. Theory offers a bridge in these moments that is desperately needed. He was publicly choked, and no one intervened. When the video went viral, there was no push, other than by mostly black people, to challenge the validity and injustice of his death. Instead, there was the consumption of violence without meaning or consequence. Foucault's notion that the public execution or punishment of prisoners led to uncontrolled chaos holds true in many ways if the "criminal" is one that people believe deserves sympathy. Eric Garner was publicly executed and tortured for the public present and those that witnessed it through media.

Yet, there was no public outcry. There was no eruption by the general public, only by people, who were majority black. It was not a consensus of the public or those that stood watching as he took his last breaths that were the ones creating the resistance. Would Foucault then argue that this is just the extension of the shift from physical to emotional punishment? Because of the new methods of control and torture, is that what created a racial criminal? Or, did this already exist and Foucault was merely noting those that deserved the attention of the public. Yet, this act of tolerance did not exist for Eric Garner as we literally watch the life choked out of him. It must exist for Michael Brown, though, right? We must just not have enough volume of suffering, not enough photos. As his body lay in the hot summer sun, it was not cries of sympathy, of shock, no white tears spilled for him, no museum exhibit that white people pay to be reminded that they are saviors. He must not have been young enough. But then we have Tamir Rice. He was a child playing in a park, and his death captured in film. These moments were not discussed in our graduate seminars. Often faculty do not have the tools or freedom to engage in these issues. The absence of discourse is felt by the students of color who then went to their classrooms to learn of freedom, to talk about state sanctioned violence, as if what was happening all around us did not offer fruitful and cathartic discussion. That violence was too close. When a black graduate student was detained by the campus police when someone had reported him as suspicious, there were powerful individual acts of solidarity that illuminated the potential for coalition building within an institution. The conversations happening privately about Garner, Rice, Brown, Castille, Bland, or the countless others led to the possibility of support for this graduate student.

The failure to acknowledge these moments solidifies groups and their boundaries, leaving those historically most marginalized outside of any possible community. While these identity groups are described as being created and informed by a more dominant group, communities

may in fact claim their own identities and group norms. It cannot be that these groups and their identities are completely imposed, rather there has to be room for resistance and agency even within the constructs of tolerance and liberalism. For Brown, this discursive practice is a way of producing essentialized communities. Yet, if we consider that these communities formed of their own volition with their own customs and common interests, then tolerance operates differently. Instead of creating the subjects, it instead maintains an already existing community by solidifying it. The communities certainly may be formed through a myriad of other processes and institutions that actually do work to limit their freedom, making tolerance a tool to shore up the margins, to enforce the boundaries rather than actually working to create them. She, instead, shows how tolerance names the edges that existed but previously went unacknowledged.

The ways that this manifests at a state level could also be incorporated to the discussion of race, tolerance, and political science. The state utilizes tolerance, and other devices, as ways to establish itself as separate from culture. If the citizens are able to police themselves through tolerance, then the state is not required to use legal strategy to intervene in conflicts. Instead, these issues can be seen as cultural or social issues, but not tied to political problems, outside of the purview of the state. The state then works under a guise of policing itself. Let's increase body cameras, because if we know the "objective" truth, we can create solutions for the problem. The hyper surveillance of society does not bring about more accountability, often the assumption that leads to legislating of more observation. Instead, this creates more and more layers for "normal" and "abnormal" behavior that are then ascribed across society, even outside of the intended use of the original surveillance. Foucault uses the example of prisons to explain how we utilize surveillance and then make claims, based on subjects under this system of observation, about society as a whole. When considering body cameras, what this offers us, then is not

liberation. Instead, we are increasing the amount of subjects being observed, namely still the “criminal.” The body camera is not turned inward, on the way engaging in the use and abuse of power. Instead, it is still pointed towards the citizen as a way to monitor their movements to then justify the actions of the existing sovereign. This is propagated under the guise of improving existing institutions, but ultimately forces a consciousness on both the police office and the citizen.

Ultimately this surveillance works for the subject being surveilled to develop their double consciousness. The body becomes the material that is informed and reconstituted by the political institutions. In order for these systems to operate, the body must be controlled and subordinated. Consider the student I had who followed me to my car once after a summer class. My course ended at 4:45 pm in July, the building was always empty as class ended. He had used thinly veiled white supremacy language in class and his agitation was palpable to everyone. When I spoke informally with other teachers, as with most discussions surrounding difficult students, I felt that I was the one being studied. I would tug nervously at my dress or shirt to ensure it wasn't too tight or too short. I felt monitored, not because others imposed this on me, but I had already learned to impose it on myself. I felt anxiety that observing the classroom dynamics would mean ultimately observing me and the ways in which I contribute to the student's behavior. I knew that this would become an evaluation of the way I engaged the student, instead of the erratic and troubling behavior of the student.

PROFESSIONALIZATION

Is the prerequisite of women's presence in the academy such that they must always be the student? Must the man always be the teacher? What is the potential outside of this and how does it become possible? It seems that it is only through this labor, as a student, always

subservient to men, that women are permitted into the intellectual sphere. This role is permissible, after all, because of the inability to be a threat in a subordinate role. It is in this position that we are not capable of “spoiling” philosophy, theory, or knowledge. We were monitored, trained, and appropriately corrected when we failed to adhere to academic standards. The mechanism of surveillance “empowered” the school to become “a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that... enable the teacher, while transmitting his knowledge, to transform his pupils into a whole field of knowledge” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 186). While there are certainly ways in which a pupil’s body is a subject of incredible violence, both explicit and implicit, the public system of education has developed a sophisticated way of engaging and disciplining the student. Through the acquiring of knowledge, the instructor can focus on the soul, in Foucault’s words, or the mind. Because a teacher could not punish me through physical violence, the technique and power of shame will work to communicate the desires of the teacher while maintaining a “civilized” classroom. The civilization works to become another form of imprisonment. It becomes formal, a process for understanding and engaging in other relationships, with that there is a move from explicit punishment to disciplining through shame and embarrassment. The goal is to refine the techniques of control through increased surveillance on the objects of study. One of the fundamental problems with this type of surveillance is the perception of its necessity. The measuring and evaluating of student progress is under the guise of improving the program for both student and teacher. It is in search of constant improvement, ultimately justifying the rigorous surveillance and policing of the student. It takes the form of tests, theses, essays, comprehensive exams, and dissertations. For minority and women bodies in public education, the measuring is used by both the advocate and the critic. Your body, your performance become the data points on figure 1 and you are

always keenly aware of this. You must be the exception or the rule. The arbitrator of your value comes from the one not only evaluating your work but who ultimately established the rules of engagement. There is not the ability to critique the apparatus, because without it, there is no measure of your value to the instructor and the institution as well as little way to measure the contribution of the instructor and institution themselves.

All of this monitoring, evaluating does not work to actually improve, but instead justifies other measures of evaluation, more tests, more exams. Even if the instructor understands that a multiple choice exam is not for everyone, an assumption exists that they must still be evaluated, even if it is changing the method, the test must still exist. With this training, the subject becomes obedient, even justifying the methods of training and ultimately reproducing them. Without submitting and valuing this method, there is not only no place for them in the classroom, but ultimately the system of political domination and citizen shaping could not exist. In most graduate programs, a C is failing. For students who are funded, it could mean losing the invaluable benefits that come with free tuition and a monthly stipend. Because of the reliance on evaluation, and the importance of an arbitrary grade, so much of a student's outcomes are informed by the evaluator, the faculty member with often little to no oversight over their techniques of evaluation. It becomes almost impossible to challenge a grade received. The professor would first have to be willing to acknowledge that their tools of assessment were flawed or insufficient. If the challenge is based on discrimination, the teacher would have to be able to acknowledge and understand their own bias. It becomes much more effective if the student internalizes this bias and it contributes to their own insecurity, leaving the evaluation unexamined. Receiving less than an A is humiliating. Your learning style must be the same, able to be monitored and fit into a rubric that captures the essence of the subject matter.

Tolerance works to distinguish the different behaviors as a mechanism of acceptance or dismissal. Within the context of academics, this functions as a script, a way of behaving. You learn how to socialize, talk about your work, and behave at conferences. It is this very discourse that dictates the rules of practice both within the classroom as well as the academic models of performance at conferences. I had been selected to present at the American Political Science Association's annual meeting. I was attending a panel on political theory that considered the role of prisons as an extension of liberalism. One professor, the only black person (or person of color) in the room, pointed out that he could not locate himself in their awkward discussion of race. He also suggested that the reading of race was incorrect. The panel member responded and said they knew the author of the book, they were good friends, and the reading was correct. The other panelists, all white men, smirked, and the next person was called on for a question. Even while following the rules of engagement, wearing a suit, when many of the people in the "laid back" theory audience were in jeans, raising one's hand, speaking politely, and opening the conversation with a nod to the personal implications of the topic, all did nothing to produce a discourse. He may have been present, yet his acceptance was for appearances, not as an engaged member. He was older than me, probably my father's age, yet nothing could garner the respect if the dominant group was only willing to tolerate, not engage his questions or even his presence. While tolerance does function to allow him in the space, Brown's assessment does not fully engage the limits of this man's acceptance, or even mine as the only woman in a seminar. Brown's work is not about tolerance exclusively, but instead about the ways that liberalism weaponizes it to a political end. Is it such that the academy can operate similar to the state, issuing calls for tolerance "not because it is or can be tolerant, but so that we will be and it does

not have to be” (Brown, *Regulating Aversion* 101). This man’s race mattered in the way he was talk to and the belief about his capabilities to contribute.

The academy works to reproduce this very discipline on the bodies of students. They come to us with difficult questions, complicated understandings of texts, and we fail them over and over again. We create a track that establishes clear boundaries and conditions of acceptance. We “tolerate” different bodies through our work, through our lessons, but keep them at arm’s length to affirm our own authority. I organized a panel for a group of my undergraduate students at a gender conference, five women, four were black, one white. The topic of the panel was race and friendship in Alabama. They presented their work on the complexity of companionship both in the state and at the University. The black women all spoke of a transitioning process, the ways that they negotiated space around white people. The white woman talked about learning of race and realizing that it had always existed, she had just been protected from having to acknowledge and grapple with it. One black woman shared about the first time someone touched her hair, it was right after she had moved from a predominantly black school to a nearly all white middle school. Once her hair was evaluated, she was then allowed into the white friend group. Another black woman shared about the ways she performs blackness. She first tried to hide it, but then she leaned into it, manipulated it, as a way subvert whiteness in the institutions around her. Their stories were a gift to the audience, grappling with the possibilities and limitations for friendship across racial lines. They were incredibly nervous leading up to the panel. I told them what to expect, we talked about what to wear, what constituted a “typical’ presentation. They sent me their papers, we worked on how to present them. This was the first time many of them addressed an audience, and the first time any of them had done so as an authority on a subject. They were vulnerable in front of their audience, a row of chairs facing their spectators without

even a table to mediate the distance and gaze. Some of their voices wavered through the presentations because of the depth of the subject matter and the both courage and vulnerability they were presenting. When it came time to take questions from the audience, a faculty member raised her hand and launched into a three to four minute series of questions. “What of other races? What about social and professional labor? Audre Lorde and bell hooks speak specifically that friendship with white women is not possible, but should be used as a collaborative tool too address specific issues...” My students were shifting around uncomfortably. While I knew this was common at conferences, they suddenly had to pick the armor back up that they had set down. The conditioning that I had experience long ago was being reproduced. Sharing your “feelings” makes your vulnerable and does not allow for “productive” feedback on the real, theoretical work. They did not know how to answer her questions or even what her questions were. They fumbled awkwardly through answers until I interjected. This is the problem of the gauntlet of academics. I told the audience that these women had spoken of bodily autonomy, strategic essentialism, whiteness, institutional power, heteronormativity and much more. Yet, because they failed to use the language, they were punished and embarrassed. Rather than the academy accepting their gift and teasing out the ideas they had, it was more necessary to describe the ways they had failed. This woman was speaking to women who hide their sexuality, not only because of the homophobic environment on their campus, but also within their own families. Here, they were shown once again, they did not belong. We require our students possess tools where access is dependent on already possessing. Of course these women understood the need to think of races other than black and white. But, their subject was their own bodies and experiences. Their accounts and analysis was full of insight and theoretical implications, yet because their arrival to academic work had not followed a path of canonical

stepping stones, they were turned away. Told to go back down the mountain and learn how to communicate to us, the academy. It is perhaps most troubling that this happened at a conference dedicated to a critical inquiry into gender. The woman was not attempting to help, encourage, or mentor these women, it was her own way of establishing authority and exclusion. Perhaps in the same ways that had been used to deny her access to academic spaces.

While teaching, I saw the ways that students were reproducing their training in education to react and engage with me. A student came into my office that I shared with two other male graduate students. The student referred to one of my male colleagues as Dr. so and so. When the student left, I asked him if he had told his students to call him that. He told me he asked them to call him by his first name, but almost every student addressed him by Dr. or Professor. The other male graduate student reported the same. Most of my students called me Ms. or Mrs. and some students called me by my first name. In my entire first year of teaching I was never addressed as Dr. or Professor. A quick assessment of our dress, mine far more formal than their t-shirts and sandals, indicated it was not an issue of professionalization. I had already been told to dress more formally and it would result in more respect from my students (spoiler: that did not happen). They were also not asked out by their students, spoken to suggestively during class discussions, or called derogatory terms by their students as they walked out of class. I was taught to constantly evaluate and monitor my own behavior as if somehow it contributed to a sexist environment in the classroom. Because of the ways that authors like Mill are not included as essential feminist critique, it can establish an erasure of “women’s issues” from the discourse surrounding all aspects of academic work. By incorporating a critical race theory and feminist theory lens on canonical authors and through the secondary sources that establish ways of

engaging these issues, it will reshape the entirety of both academic work and the types of students we produce.

CLOSING

The notion that laws can solve inequality has shown to improve in some areas while simultaneously diminishing and absorbing instances of intimate and interpersonal violence. I began by unpacking the ways that laws have not liberated people, and particularly women and people of color, from oppression. But, because this notion of contracts is upheld as true and productive, it formulates the way we think about citizenship. We have impaired notions of consent that do not account for a more broad understanding of engagement. I have dealt with the concepts of democracy, social contracts, sovereignty and the implications of race and gender bound in these ideas. The social contract not only worked to instill what constitutes fundamental rights and who is able to possess these, but also it was the framework for what is constituted as “political.” These concepts cannot be separated from the ways it informs a reproduction of racial and gender hierarchies. The foundational moments necessitate an interrogation of patriarchal power and language that was present then as well as in the practice of democracy today. The notion of who is capable of consenting and how far these rights have been extended is crucial in ensuring an equitable and fair system. The politics of our personal lives does inform our political lives, even as political theorists.

Arendt offered a way to rethink the spaces of political action. The social, while historically ignored or trivialized, is a political sphere. It is one in which people are able to gather sporadically and with purpose. The potential of social gatherings, and the intentionality behind who is included and how people move through these spaces are political. Arendt’s personal shift informed the ways she responded to violence. She relied on the identity-based responses that

had already been established by the state in order to tease out the implications. Using her ways of responding to Jewish identity offer a new way to evaluate the Civil Rights Movement and the way that Arendt's work opens a space to talk about political action.

Lauren Berlant built on this work to describe the intimate public. It is here that we are able to push up against successes from women's movements while also attempting to explain the juxtaposition of romantic desire, even when it is to women's own detriment. Because notions of affect and sentimentality have been written off, it not only erases the work that many women do, it also allows it to develop without a critical perspective. Instead, we should rethink the potential of sentimentality and the ways it is used as both a weapon against women as well as the potential for political resistance. Pushing the acts of intimacy deeper would allow a cultivation of collectivity that moves beyond the pre-scripted notions and explorations of intimate friendship.

The specific violence that is enacted on the bodies of black and brown people is explicit. The restrictions of rights and participation weakens the institution of democracy for all of us. In the same way, sexual violence works to limit the mobility and political action of women in a way that does not extend to men. If the majority of our country is not free, what obligations do we have to engage with democracy? Is the contract void? The solutions are complicated and incomplete. But, the primary goal must be to acknowledge this discrimination and work to maintain these critiques as part of the canon. If these concepts of race and gender had been included in the construction of thought surrounding the social contract, it would have dramatically shaped the way that we understand the democratic practice. The transformation of power from explicit strength to subversive or biopower is manifested in the institutions and social practices in the United States. Ignoring the nuanced ways that racism and sexism are practiced allow for an environment that is conducive or even encouraging to sexual and political

violence. If the institutions that promise us liberation (colleges) still discipline us to fit into a model that was never designed for us, how can the rest of the nation hope for freedom?

One of the difficulties when confronting instances of discrimination is that to remove the event seems to be a solution. The burden is placed on the person dissenting rather than on the state of things such that this situation could exist in the first place. It is not simply enough to name injustice. While this is necessary, it is the unpacking of the policies, institutions, and social practices that lead to progress. Such is democracy. Moving forward, it is my hope that we will look to these moments, we will look to Alabama, as guideposts for the nature of this type of political power. Our actions must be intentional, deliberate in the ways we approach issue that seemingly present as outside of the scope of race and gender. I hope that I have shown that no work we do is ever race or gender neutral, that it is all political. And if it not viewed in that way, it is enacting political violence, and often on the person not permitted or forced from that space.

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