



Contexts

Stanford
Undergraduate
Research Journal
in Anthropology

Department of Anthropology
Spring 2017

CONTEXTS

STANFORD UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL IN ANTHROPOLOGY

SPRING 2017

Contexts is a peer reviewed journal designed to allow Stanford undergraduates to share, discuss, and reflect on anthropology-informed thought and research. For questions, comments, or to get involved please visit contexts.stanford.edu or email Stanford.contexts@gmail.com

All papers published in contexts are published under an attribution, non-commercial, and share-alike Creative Commons License. All copyright is retained by the original authors.

Cover Image: Wei-Feng Xue

Contents

- 2** Letter from the Editors
- 4** Presumptuous Planning: How Proponents of Urban Greening Lost their Way
By Allison Perry
- 8** Consent and Efficiency in Isolation and Quarantine During SARS Outbreak in China
By Yuan Zhang
- 14** At the End of the Line: The Ethical Withholding of Patient Information
By Erin Hawley
- 19** Uber and Labor: Sharing Economy, Independent Contractor Model, and Driver Profile
By Solveij Rosa Praxis
- 28** Structure Reproducing Social Construct: An Investigation of Stanford Dorm Rooms
By Kylie Fischer
- 33** The Unrepresented in Environmental Debates: The Impact of Climate Change on Low-Income Transwomen of Color
By Sarah Cobarruvias
- 41** Author Bios

Letter from the Editors

Dear reader,

We the editorial team are proud to share the 2017 edition of CONTEXTS, Stanford’s Undergraduate Journal of Anthropology. The process of creating this issue has involved much personal growth and insight for us, and the theme of human relationships to institutions of power has felt deeply relevant in light of the growing pressures and visibility of state violence and control, as well as economic inequality and uncertainty in the U.S. We would like to thank Yasemin Ipek, Anahid Sarkisian, Emily Bishop, Professor Angela Garcia and the Department of Anthropology for their support throughout this process, and their dedication to the development of Stanford students in anthropology.

The urgency of investigating and interpreting humans’ relationships and interactions with institutions of power, whether it’s the University, the corporation, the state, local government, the medical establishment, particularly through anthropological perspectives, has been reaffirmed for us all in the process. We are grateful to each of our authors for their passionate insights and attentiveness to how capitalism, transphobia, racism and systems of violence permeate our everyday interactions with institutions of power.

Allison Perry engages with how, in the midst of pressing concerns of global climate change and a need for sustainable interactions between humans and the environment, systemic racism within the U.S. urban greening movement shapes the lives of working class people of color at the intersections of environmentalism and gentrification.

Yuan Zhang, in her examination of the 2002 SARS crisis in China, elucidates how citizens are mobilized to enact mechanisms of state surveillance and control. In this case study, citizens consent to and actively participate in roles of watching fellow citizens who are possibly infected, as well as complying with quarantine and isolation measures as they experience great fear of the threat of a highly communicable virus.

Erin Hawley explores patients’ relationships to the medical establishment and the state, centering the experience of Brittany Maynard, who led a “death-with-dignity” campaign after receiving a terminal cancer diagnosis. She illuminates the complications of bioethical principles and necessity of prioritizing patients’ rights and agency in the sharing of medical information and decisions of physician-assisted suicide.

Solveij Rosa Praxis approaches the reformulation of the relationships between workers and corporations in a time of economic precarity through the case study of Uber’s drivers classified as “independent contractors.” She investigates how “sharing economy” tech companies redefine their responsibilities to workers by shaping the public’s understanding of both their workers’ experiences and how their technology impacts business and labor models.

Kylie Fischer investigates how the social expectations attached to certain Stanford dorms, such as Greek housing and four-class dorms, manifest in how students choose to organize and engage with others in their personal spaces, reinforcing the very hierarchies and social constructs that inform these seemingly individual choices.

Sarah Cobarruvias explores how the consequences of climate change are compounded within marginalized populations, especially for transwomen of color, and how an effective course of action to protect our environment and society must first address the systemic violence that prevents equal access to a sustainable means of survival.

All of our authors deeply engage with how people and institutions interact with, act upon, and change each other, at the intersections of gender, class, race, ability, illness, and other identities and experiences shaping their positionality and agency. Through their ethnographic work, they illuminate how people are shaped, threatened, and mobilized by these institutions. They also discuss possibilities for people to reform, resist and rebuild institutions, informed by their ethnographic interpretations of historical, cultural and social experiences.

At a time when life is increasingly threatened by state violence and uncertain economic prospects, we must continue to bring light to historical and cultural realities through anthropological investigation. With a more grounded understanding, we are empowered to interact with people with different identities and positionalities, approach institutions of power within which we are all intertwined, and listen to and amplify the experiences of those more hidden in public discourse.

Many of these papers were originally written with the guidance and support of anthropology professors in undergraduate Anthropology classes. We greatly encourage our readers to enjoy the challenging, attentive approach of the Anthropology Department by taking classes that speak to realities personally urgent to them. Anthropology provides a critically informed and socially cognizant lens to identify, understand, and engage with the structures of power that shape who we are and how we interact with the world. We hope that these pieces both illuminate and inspire, and we encourage you to participate in the conversation—always with these contexts in mind.

Many thanks,

The Editors of Contexts

Sera Park—Anthropology Honors and English '17

Vivian Lam—Human Biology and Comparative Literature '17

Kylie Fischer—Anthropology Honors, Biology(Minor) and History (Minor) '17

Solveij Rosa Praxis—Anthropology Honors '17

Presumptuous Planning: How Proponents of Urban Greening Lost their Way

by Allison Perry

I first wrote this paper for a class called Multispecies Ethnography, hoping to examine how the desire to incorporate other beneficial life forms into the urban environment has sometimes taken precedence over the needs of human residents, namely poor people of color. In its current form, this piece brings a critical eye to the celebrated urban greening movement. In recent years, the field of urban planning has been swept up in two overlapping phenomena: the looming global climate change and the worry about our disconnection from nature. The legion of support behind these initiatives has encouraged planners to expedite projects, de-prioritizing lengthy processes of public participation that reach out to marginalized groups like poor communities of color. Connecting with these groups is particularly important in acknowledging that the current urban greening movement is built upon the labor and ideas of low income people of color. I argue that green-minded planners must reposition themselves as partners, not experts, accepting that their first step is to learn what kind of greening the communities desire.

Introduction

In recent years, two overlapping phenomena dominate the field of urban planning: the first is global climate change, and the second is worry about our disconnection from nature. These two forces created a desire for environmentally sustainable urban developments that integrate organic elements. The pressing timeline of climate change discourages time-consuming political processes, and the acceptance of humans' innate relationship with nature has created a rhetoric of political neutrality around integrating it into the urban environment. The combination of these two factors has encouraged planners to de-prioritize public participation, meaning they are less likely to hear from a full spectrum of local stakeholders, namely marginalized groups with less political power (Checker 2011; Lugo 2015). Such a topic is significant to explore because it highlights the ways in which seemingly beneficial policies have harmful consequences to groups that should

have more input.

Environmentalism has a long history of racism and colonialism that planners perpetuate when they favor upscale environmental developments over the needs of the low-income people of color they often displace (Purdy 2015). Throughout this paper, the environmentalism that I will focus on is an environmentalism specifically in the United States, looking into case studies in Seattle and New York City. Inspired by Lindsey Dillon and Miriam Greenberg's Critical Sustainable project (2015), I assert that green-minded planners must acknowledge that their work is built upon the labor and ideas of the poor people of color who were the earliest proponents of urban greening. In recognizing this history, planners must reposition themselves as partners, not experts, accepting that their first step must be to learn what kind of greening the communities they work with desire. While flashy projects that maximize environmental sustainability

may bring good publicity and economic benefit, planners need to put equal weight on social sustainability by recommitting to the needs of current residents.

To argue that greening must become more democratic, I first assert that the stakes for just urban planning are high. I then discuss examples of the rhetoric green-minded planners use, both with respect to humans' innate connection to nature as well as combating climate change. From there, I give a brief historical perspective on urban environmentalism, showing how the rhetoric today's developers and planners utilize connects to, and perpetuates, racist and colonialist histories of mainstream environmentalism. Finally, I end with a hopeful example of how communities of color can and planners can resist gentrification.

The Stakes for Just Greening

Before and during the Civil Rights Movement, extreme racial residen-



Urban greening creates more expensive housing and displaces poor people of color

tial segregation marked cities across the United States. However, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed the discriminatory zoning and other tactics for gatekeeping that were explicitly based on race. While the act failed to have a significant impact in the immediate years after its implementation, there has been a slow decline in racial segregation in the past three decades. While low relative to past statistics, dramatic segregation persists, particularly for African Americans (Massey et al. 2009). As spatial divisions based explicitly on race were declining, income then became a significant factor for residential segregation. Massey et al. (2009) conclude that the ongoing regime of social segregation will involve intersections of race and economic class in which people are sorted using indirectly discriminatory methods, such as zoning that doesn't accommodate affordable housing. When poor people of color live separated from wealthier communities, they are isolated from resources. Zenovia Toloudi's article on declining

public space provides an example of the consequences of residential segregation. In recent years, municipal governments have decreased funding for public spaces. In wealthy neighborhoods, this deficit is often made up with philanthropic donations from residents who are serving their own interests for the maintenance and/or creation of green space. However, because of income and racial segregation, these donations serve their own wealthy communities, not the poor people of color whose neighborhood parks take the full force of funding cuts (Toloudi 2016).

These resources include not only access to green spaces but to economic opportunities in general. In *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, urban planning activist and author, Jane Jacobs, writes that redevelopment can lead to "each sorted-out chunk of price-tagged populace [living] in growing suspicion and tension against the surrounding city." (Jacobs 1961, 4). Separated from the upper and middle classes, poor

people (often of color) that have been 'sorted-out' live in social isolation that disconnects them from mainstream society (Wilson 1987, Jargowsky 1997, Tigges et al. 1998). Because they rarely have opportunities to interact with people who have resources and connections, the urban poor do not have many social connections to find jobs, housing, or other kinds of informal support (Tigges et al. 1998). In sum, spatial divisions play a significant role in keeping poor people poor. If urban greening projects are not carried out with attention to social consequences, they are likely to contribute to income segregation through gentrification. Most simply, gentrification can happen when urban sustainable (re)developments provide neighborhoods with amenities that increase their desirability, contributing to an increase in the surrounding neighborhood's housing prices that forces out low income residents. Developing green spaces is a way in which planners can increase an area's desirability, in turn forcing out the

poor people of color who previously lived in the space.

Foundations of the Urban Greening Movement

Policymakers have recognized the need for nature in American cities since the mid-19th century (Dooling, 2009), but the rhetoric surrounding these spaces has changed with the times. The two problems that officials currently see green spaces addressing are global climate change (by cutting greenhouse gas emissions) and local human health (by reducing toxic pollutants and promoting exercise and mental health).

My first example of green urbanism, planner Timothy Beatley's 2010 book and project *Biophilic Cities*, directly addresses local health. Based on naturalist, E.O. Wilson's *Biophilia*, the project aimed to reconnect urbanites to what Wilson (1984) calls our "innate" "urge to affiliate with other forms of life." In the decades since *Biophilia's* publication, a plethora of studies have reported on the physical and mental health benefits of public green spaces, such as providing space for play and exercise, reducing stress, creating a sense of communal pride, reducing crime, and bringing people together (Lee & Maheswaran 2011). The implied benefits of nature therefore create a seemingly undisputed positive rhetoric around changes that also have underlying negative consequences.

The rhetoric Beatley uses to promote his project is evident in a video entitled "The Nature of Cities," published on the *Biophilic Cities* website. The video celebrates the initiative's success in improving the quality of life for people who move into the greened areas, but ignores the social processes (such as possible gentrification and displacement) involved in urban redevelopment. For example, a woman Beatley interviews in the proj-



Urban bike lanes

ect's Swedish partner city says, "I ask people, 'why do you move here?' And it's a lot about green spaces." This soundbite captures the idea that the project is about attracting new people to improved spaces, not partnering with current residents to meet their needs. The end of the film shows a quote by James Howard Kunstler that says: "We are never going to save rural places or the wild and scenic places unless we identify human habitat, and then strive to make it so good humans will voluntarily inhabit it" (emphasis mine). Kunstler, and in turn Beatley, suggest that only certain people - those who are white and wealthy - deserve access to nature. While *Biophilic Cities* claims to make life better, their discriminatory rhetoric implies that only a privileged few are welcome to live healthy urban lives.

Global climate change is the second main justification behind the urban greening movement. Besides bringing nature into cities, greening also means reducing energy consumption through design, technology, and behavior change. In her study of bi-

cycle lane construction in Seattle and Los Angeles, Lugo (2015) discusses how officials see the pressing nature of climate change as justification for accelerating policy implementation, therefore failing to take the time to listen to residents' thoughts. Without accounting for a diversity of opinions on green development, planners treat "urban neighborhoods [as] design products rather than lived places" (Lugo 2015). Many of the residents of the ethnically-diverse Seattle neighborhoods Lugo studies view bike lanes as facilitating "an elite pastime practiced by gentrifiers" (Lugo 2015). Through trying to force the white and wealthy green agenda where it isn't wanted, planners create a "manifest destiny of green development" that disrespects locals' desire to protect the neighborhood from gentrification (Lugo 2015).

These two examples show the problematic nature of rhetoric and action in the field of green planning. A vital step in addressing these shortcomings is understanding that urban greening has its roots within

poor communities of color. The first example of this often-ignored history takes place in Seattle. In 1969, the City received a grant from the federal program called Model Cities, designed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to combat poverty and promote civic engagement. In Seattle's racially-diverse Central District, local community leaders used their funding to clean up the neighborhood and take care of a terrible rat problem. In this clean up, the self-proclaimed 'Pack Rats' were one of the first Seattle groups to link urban neighborhood cleanup with environmental concerns through projects like recycling. The Pack Rats' story demonstrates the interconnectedness of living in urban poverty and dealing with environmental problems (Sanders 2010), showing that poverty does not need to be equated with poor environmental quality. These communities can't just pick up and move to a nicer part of town, so they are instead tasked with making the best of where they live.

In New York City, we find another early example of poor people of color promoting urban environmentalism. As a result of their proximity to industry and its related pollutants, the Harlem community has long organized itself around environmental justice. In 1988, residents formed the West Harlem Environmental Action Coalition (WE ACT) to "[fight] against environmental burdens and [work] to create environmental amenities." (Checker 2011). WE ACT began asserting the need for sustainable development before the movement hit mainstream consciousness: before eco-friendly consumer products, before An Inconvenient Truth, and before Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC large-scale sustainability plan. When environmentalism did hit the mainstream, WE ACT's past work facilitated the gentrification of Harlem, its green amenities attracting wealth at a relatively low cost of living (Checker 2011). In contrast to their white and wealthy counterparts, the urban poor did not take on environmentalism based on social or economic trends, but because it was

central to their survival.

Mainstream Environmentalism: Prejudice Past and Present

Though founded by marginalized groups, the current iteration of urban greening has been more strongly connected to mainstream environmentalism. Green-minded developers cite white naturalists like Rachel Carson, John Muir, or E.O. Wilson as their inspiration even though these figures did not work in urban environments. When those in power align themselves with mainstream environmentalism, they not only ignore the pioneering work of people of color, but they also don't acknowledge that the ideas come from the racist men that founded the American environmental movement. Within these elite circles that spurred the creation of the national parks were proud eugenicists and white nationalists whose racist associations were fully supported by their colleagues. Even now, most environmental groups prefer to focus on preserving wilderness for those able to visit it instead of working for equality or socioenvironmental justice (Purdy 2015).

While developers and policy-makers ignore the diverse history of urban environmentalism in their rhetoric, they simultaneously co-opt and commodify bits and pieces as they see fit. The story of a housing development in Seattle captures the power of commercialized urban greening. As previously discussed, Seattle's environmentalism has a diverse history, including sustained engagement of poor communities of color. In 2003, Paul Allen (co-founder of Microsoft) used the environmental and ecological ethos established in Seattle's previous grassroots environmental campaigns to promote his redevelopment of a low-income neighborhood. The project was environmentally sustainable, unlike the environmentalism of the city's past; it was not community-based and democratic but rather singularly designed and implemented by a corporate developer. Allen took the pieces of sustainability he liked

while leaving out the social engagement component to create a faster and more profitable process. As in the Harlem example, those that Allen's green development displaced were mostly poor people of color.

Hope for Change

Despite the somber tone of this paper so far, it is important to consider what positive changes are happening to make urban greening more just. After a federally-mandated cleanup of industrial toxins, the low-income neighborhood of Greenpoint, Brooklyn started to look appealing to developers. Although relieved that toxins were being removed from their neighborhood, residents expressed to planners a desire to keep industry, and its connected jobs, nearby. Instead of the typical "parks, cafes, and riverwalk" aesthetic, residents wanted a practical neighborhood that was safe and affordable. Curran and Hamilton (2012) term this idea "just green enough" development. Too often, greening the aesthetic is code for whitening the demographic of residents (Gould & Lewis 2017), but it doesn't have to be. Greenpoint's residents challenge the notion that something green is always something aesthetically striking. As the residents point out, creating a plan within the current makeup of the neighborhood is important because it is less likely to trigger gentrification, keeping the community intact while making it safer and healthier (Curran & Hamilton 2012). These are the kinds of concerns planners must keep in mind as they move forward with greening initiatives.

With this hope, I want to include a direct call to action for urban planners. After all, they are the individuals tasked with seeking opinions and information from a wide variety of community members in order to inform future city plans. The American Planning Association's (APA) webpage provides a definition of what a planner is:

"A planner partners with communities to help them

become wonderful places to live, work, grow up, and play. They help decide what kinds of buildings should go where, where new parks might be needed, and what areas in the community are in need of changes to make them better places to be... A planner can do anything from interpreting a community's zoning code, determining what kinds of buildings are allowed in what places, and helping a community create a vision for what it wants to become, to reaching out to and educating community leaders on what can make their community better" (Sutherland 2016, emphasis mine)."

The profession situates itself as a partner to communities, supposedly helping, rather than imposing, decide what is best. However, based on evidence that greening initiatives address climate change and increase our quality of life, planners assume that they need not ask communities if they are in favor. That the seemingly beneficial environmental rhetoric implies that no one would oppose or be harmed by such changes shows a pressing need for planners to engage with concepts of social sustainability to recognize the nuanced desires of current residents.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that green-minded planners favor the rhetoric and methods of mainstream white and wealthy environmentalism while ignoring poor communities of color who were the historical leaders of the movement in the urban context. Despite its current problems, the urban sustainability movement can be salvaged through conscious recognition of the diverse history of grassroots urban greening and an emphasis on social sustainability and socioenvironmental justice in the planning process.

In the "Nature of Cities" video, Richard Louv, author of *The Last Child in the Woods* and proponent of bringing nature into cities says, "The definition of life is up for grabs. We don't know what nature is." This statement is ironically placed in a video, and larger movement, that fails to consider diverse perspectives on what urban green development should look like, and whose lives are involved. The way forward for urban greening involves sustainability-minded planners embracing their unknowingness of what nature means to different people. Only as open-minded partners can planners justly serve the many communities with which they work.

Works Cited

- Beatley, Timothy. *Biophilic Cities: Integrating Nature into Urban Design and Planning*. Washington, DC: Island, 2010. Print.
- Checker, M. "Wiped Out by the "Greenwave": Environmental Gentrification and the Paradoxical Politics of Urban Sustainability." *City and Society* 23.2 (2011): 210-29. Web.
- Curran, Winifred, and Trina Hamilton. "Just Green enough: Contesting Environmental Gentrification in Greenpoint, Brooklyn." *Local Environment* 17.9 (2012): 1027-42. Web.
- Dillon, Lindsey, and Miriam Greenberg. "Geographies of Sustainability in the San Francisco Bay Area." *American Association of Geographers* (2015). Web. 19 Mar. 2016.
- Doolling, Sarah. "Ecological Gentrification: A Research Agenda Exploring Justice in the City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33.3 (2009): 621-39. Web.
- Gould, Kenneth A, and Tammy L. Lewis. *Green Gentrification: Urban Sustainability and the Struggle for Environmental Justice*. 2017. Print.
- Jacobs, Jane. "Introduction." *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York : Random House, 1961. 3-25. Print.
- Jargowsky, Paul A. *Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997. Print.
- Lee, A.C.K, and Maheswaran, R. "The Health Benefits of Urban Green Spaces: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Public Health* 33.2 (2011): 212-22. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.
- Lugo, Adonia E. "Can Human Infrastructure Combat Green Gentrification?: Ethnographic Research on Bicycling in Los Angeles and Seattle." In: *Sustainability in the Global City*. Ed. Cindy Isenhour, Ed. Gary McDonogh, Ed. Melissa Checker. Cambridge University Press, 2015. 306-328. Print.
- Massey, Douglas S., Jonathan Rothwell, and Thurston Domina. "The Changing Bases of Segregation in the United States." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 626 (2009): 74-90. Print.
- "The Nature of Cities." Dir. Tim Beatley and Chuck Davis. Perf. Timothy Beatley. *Biophilic Cities*. Throughline Productions with The Electric Lodge, n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.
- Purdy, Jedediah. "Environmentalism's Racist History." *The New Yorker*. N.p., 13 Aug. 2015. Web. 11 Jan. 2017.
- Sanders, Jeffrey C. *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia*. Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh, 2010. Print.
- Sutherland, Jill. "What Is a City Planner?" *Kids and Community*. American Planning Association, n.d. Web. 15 Mar. 2016.
- Tigges, L. M., Browne, I. and Green, G. P. (1998), SOCIAL ISOLATION OF THE URBAN POOR.: *Sociological Quarterly*, 39: 53-77.
- Toloudi, Zenovia. "Are We in the Midst of a Public Space Crisis?" *The Conversation*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 June 2016.
- Wilson, Edward O. *Biophilia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984. Print.
- Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Consent and Efficiency in Isolation and Quarantine During SARS Outbreak in China

by Yuan Zhang

At the end of 2002, China experienced the outbreak of a highly contagious and deadly virus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The state established a state of emergency, creating mechanisms of isolation and quarantine for the exceptional “SARS crisis”. Within this state of exception, ostensibly formed for the safety of the population, personal freedoms were suspended. Citizens consented to and enacted mechanisms of state surveillance and control, mobilized by fear of the virus’ communicability. This made these exceptional measures efficient and effective, legitimizing them among the public despite deprivations of personal freedoms. This case study demonstrates how a seemingly uncontrollable threat can cause people to become active agents in surveillance through the fear perpetuated by the nature of the crisis.

Introduction

The outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in People’s Republic of China (PRC) initially began in November 2002, and reached its peak in the spring of 2003. As a contagious disease caused by the SARS coronavirus, it spread across the nation, exposing its population to fear and death. In order to contain the epidemic, the state government implemented measures of isolation of confirmed cases in designated SARS hospitals, and quarantine of heavily infected areas and exposed individuals. In Beijing alone, the capital of PRC and the city which accounted for almost half of all SARS cases in China, 30,173 persons were isolated and quarantined during the outbreak. Among them, 12,131 persons were isolated or quarantined collectively, where entire hospitals, districts of cities, villages, universities, and residential areas were isolated or quarantined.¹ The government viewed early and effective quarantine and isolation as one of the most fundamental measures for the epidemic control.²

According to Constitution of the PRC, the right of personal freedoms of citizens shall not be violated. Even in its narrowest sense, personal freedoms include avoidance of illegal detainment or restriction of physical mobility. Thus, SARS isolation and quarantine were measures of exceptionality in which juridical orders were suspended. Although these exceptional measures were resisted by a number of people at the time, they were, as we shall see in the ensuing discussion, also supported and desired by many. Such support and consent lead us to the intriguing questions: Why would so many citizens, even those under quarantine and isolation, favor the policy that restricted their individual freedoms? How was the government able to implement these isolation and quarantine measures at the large scales and high efficiency?

Uncertainty and crises, founded in fear of disease and other threats, permeate our daily and public conversations regarding the state of this society and our world. Such narratives of crisis present their own complications and dangers. With this in mind, it is crucial to understand the special relationship between crisis situations, or states of exception, with the state’s mobilization of surveillance measures and biopolitical controls. In this paper, I will argue that while the proclamation of state of emergency lay the juridical foundation for the exceptional measures of isolation and quarantine, concepts of fear, surveillance, and subjectivity constitutively inform us about the detailed

1 Center for Disease Control, Mark A. Rothstein, M. Gabriela Alcalde, Nanette R. Elster, Mary Anderlik Majumder, Larry I. Palmer, T. Howard Stone, and Richard E. Hoffman. Quarantine and Isolation: Lessons Learned from SARS. University of Louisville School of Medicine, Institute for Bioethics, Health Policy and Law, 2003, 72.

2 Wu, Yi, Vice Premier of PRC State Council, Guanyu feidianxing feiyan fangzhi gongzuo de baogao—April 25, 2003 zai dishijie quanguo renmin daibiao dahui changwu weiyuanhui di’erci huiyi shang, (Report of the Prevention and Treatment of SARS—April 25, 2003 on the Second Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Tenth National

People’s Congress), accessed June 5, 2016, http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/gongbao/2003-06/12/content_5315476.htm.



photo 1: May 10, 2003, SARS patient transferred into designated SARS hospital Beijing Xiaotangshan Hospital. (PRC Xinhua News Agency: Wang Jianmin)

mechanisms through which isolation and quarantine were made acceptable to many citizens, who not only consented to the biopolitical measures but also served as the active agents to efficiently enforce their implementation.

Focusing on the exceptionality of isolation and quarantine, I will devote the first section of this paper to discuss the context, rationale, and juridical basis of these measures. I will then explore how, due to unique communicability of the viral disease, the unpredictability of the coronavirus transmission made the isolated and quarantined spaces fearful in a way that led citizens to willingly consent to the seemingly unacceptable deprivation of individual freedoms. Finally, I will examine how fear was mobilized to create a detailed mechanism of surveillance to ensure the efficiency of quarantine policy implementation at the most basic level in communities, as well as the subjectivity, or social construction of a subject's mode of being that the surveillance mechanism produced among the citizens.

Perhaps readers will be able to imagine the real, fearful experiences throughout the establishment of a state of exception, the enactment of surveillance measures and biopolitical controls, as well as how fearful citizens' are mobilized to consent to such measures and make them efficient, even as they deprive personal freedoms. My hope is that readers develop an understanding of how we may respond as we face our own fears and crises.

Exceptionality of isolation and quarantine

Isolation and quarantine are two common public health strategies used to protect the uninfected population by preventing exposure to infected or potentially infected persons.³ Isolation is the separation, for the period of communicability, of known infected persons to

3 Blum, John D., and Norchaya Talib. "Balancing Individual Rights versus Collective Good in Public Health Enforcement." *Med. & L.* 25 (2006): 273.

prevent or limit the transmission of the infectious agent. In contrast, quarantine is the restriction of activities of healthy persons who have been exposed to a communicable disease, during its period of communicability, to prevent transmission during the incubation period if infection should occur.⁴ A variety of formats of quarantine and isolation took place during the SARS outbreak in China. Confirmed and probable cases were hospitalized and treated in designated isolation wards in designated hospitals. People in close contact with confirmed cases and people who had travel history to heavily infected regions were subjected to home quarantine. Upon emergence of confirmed cases in dense population areas, entire schools, residential areas, hotels, and even villages were collectively quarantined as a whole. Regardless of the specific formats, all such measures involved the deprivation of liberty of targeted subjects, in the form of restriction of physical mobility.

Before we examine and discuss the consent to and efficiency of these exceptional measures, let us first consider the context in which the measures of collective isolation and quarantine were implemented. On April 17th, 2003, the Central Politburo of the Communist Party of China convened a meeting on the prevention and treatment of SARS, acknowledging the task as a national priority.⁵ Shortly after, it was announced that the State Council had decided to suspend the 7-day "May 1st" national holiday of the year in order to avoid the flow of population and spread of the SARS epidemic. As of April 23rd, SARS had emerged in 25 out of 34 provinces and regions of China, with a total of 2,422 confirmed cases.⁶ In discussions on the government's reaction of mobilization during the outbreak,, the SARS crisis was compared to other states of emergency, including the September 11 Attack and the Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack, by scholars in the fields of sociology and communication.⁷ Although only officially defined at the time as a crisis or sudden epidemic, the nation-state essentially entered a state of emergency, a state of exception, where legal holidays were cancelled, and absolute authority over all other institutions was sanctioned to the newly established national state leadership group dedicated to SARS prevention and treatment. It was under such circumstances that the Beijing city government announced the decision for the first collective isolation in Beijing, where Peking University People's Hospital (abbrev. People's Hospital) was isolated as a whole, with 1,554 providers, patients, and

4 Center for Disease Control, *Quarantine and Isolation*, 23.

5 Yan, Xuetong, "Feidian jianyan zhongguo duiwai guanxi" (SARS Tests China's Foreign Relations), *Global Times*, May 23, 2003.

6 Wu, Report of the Prevention and Treatment of SARS.

7 "Zhengfu yingdui feidian weiiji" (Government Reacts to the SARS Crisis), *Life Week*, May 26, 2003.

family members affected.⁸ In the SARS crisis, the state of emergency was first proclaimed to the entire population of the nation. The localized isolation was then implemented as part of the state of exception.

The proclamation of the state of siege or state of exception became the juridical foundation for the deprivation of personal freedoms during isolation and quarantine. Based on scientific research on the transmission of the viral disease, the state government and medical experts often medicalized the isolation and quarantine measures as technical problems to scientifically prevent virus transmission.

Meanwhile, what was at stake was also the biosecurity of the state, threatened by the spread of the virus by patients and carriers, unknowingly or purposefully. Although isolation and quarantine were not considered custody of any kind, the escape from such measures were criminalized with a charge of “jeopardizing public health and safety”.⁹ The function and rationale of the exceptional measures were as political as they were medical.

In the above discussion, the concept of state of exception has informed us to understand the context under which the PRC state government was able to carry out the measures despite the suspension of law in terms of depriving personal freedoms deprivation, and why such measures of exceptionality were critical to the state’s agenda to defend its biosecurity. However, while providing juridical justification for isolation and quarantine implementation, such discussion does not explain why citizens would willingly support and even desire for such measures; after all, not all legalized policies are expected to be well received. In the next section, I will attempt to address this



photo 2: May, 2003, staff in isolation gowns waiting to move medical supplies in an isolated area. (PRC Xinhua News Agency: Wang Jianmin)

question by introducing the concept of fear to our discussion.

Fear of the blurry and fluid boundary

Spatial localization and confinements are key features of isolation and quarantine. An individual would find themselves either inside or outside the boundary. What is unique in SARS isolation and quarantine is that, the contagiousness of the disease caused these boundaries to be particularly blurry and fluid. The transmission of the coronavirus made the list of isolated and quarantined

individuals an ever-changing one; the contagiousness of the disease blurred the boundaries between the inside and the outside.

The collective isolation of the People’s Hospital provides an example that demonstrates this uncertainty of boundaries. On April 5th, 2003, People’s Hospital admitted its first SARS patient from its emergency department. It only took three

days before four nurses in the department contracted the disease. Upon realization of the severity of the contagiousness, the hospital soon established a SARS isolation ward, shortly followed by two more. However, faced with the rapid growth of new case numbers, the isolation was not able to keep up with the transmission of the disease. More and more physicians and nurses were infected. Wu Xi, a nurse at the emergency department, contracted the disease herself soon after treating her colleagues who had been infected earlier.¹⁰ Before long, the entire hospital was isolated for 22 days. Among the 1,554 people isolated, 942 were hospital staff.¹¹ With the growth and spread of the coronavirus, the hospital staff who established and ran the

8 Wu, Shan, “Huanyuan beida renmin yiyuan shouli SARS quezhen zhi zhengti geli” (Reproduce the Process from Peking University People’s Hospital’s First Confirmed SARS Case to Collective Isolation), Souhu Xinwen, March 20, 2013, Source: Southern Metropolis Daily, accessed June 5, 2016, <http://news.sohu.com/20130320/n369486838.shtml>.

9 Wang, Wei and Gang Li, “Beijing: feidian huanzhe taoyi ke bei panxing” (Beijing: SARS Patients Subjective to Sentence if Escape), Beijing Youth Daily, May 2, 2003.

10 Han, Yong, “Chongfan beida renmin yiyuan: fuyuanzhang yi naodai danbao yaoqiu yiyuan geli” (Returning to Peking University People’s Hospital: Vice president requires the hospital to be isolated), Fenghuang Zixun, February 18, 2013, Source: China News Weekly, accessed June 5, 2016, http://news.ifeng.com/shendu/zgwxwk/detail_2013_02/28/22596696_0.shtml.

11 Wu, Shan, “People’s Hospital’s First Confirmed SARS Case to Collective Isolation,” data obtained from pictures attached.

isolation wards previously, at this moment, had become the people under isolation themselves. Here, we see a blurry and fluid boundary between the subject and object of isolation and quarantine.

This blurry and fluid boundary had its consequences. The possibility of anyone, even the hospital staff, being forced across the boundary created fear, and made the exceptionality related to isolation and quarantine more acceptable and pervasive. Infection cases of health providers exemplified by the closure of People's Hospital were far from rare. The apparent high communicability of the virus and awareness of the medical system's incapacity to neutralize the disease, even among medical staff, generated great fear in the nation's population—the healthy feared being infected, and the infected feared of transmitting the disease to the ones they loved. People feared finding themselves or their family members inside the boundaries of the isolation and quarantine. During an interview ten years after the outbreak, a SARS survivor named Li Lu recalled, "I told A Bin [a cousin at the time staying with Li Lu]

to leave immediately. I thought he was the only child in his family. It would be fine if only me was going to die. Yet if he was infected by me, it would have not been acceptable."¹² Li Lu was one of the many patients who were willing to separate from their families and friends, to self-isolate. The fear of becoming the source of further infection or becoming the infected evoked by the contagiousness of the disease made the exceptional measures of isolation and quarantine accepted or even desired by many.

Such wide acceptance and support of measures of exceptionality and state of emergency were not unprecedented. In the case study on the political management of the 1999 Venezuelan landslide, Fassin and Vasquez demonstrate that proclamation of state of emergency appeared to be desired by the majority of the population, and the reunification of the army was achieved "through communion in solidarity with the victims."¹³ To a certain extent, La

12 Li, Jing, "Huanzhe Li Lu: shengsi zhijian" (Patient Li Lu: between the life and death), *Life Week*, March 11, 2013.

13 Fassin, Didier, and Paula Vasquez. "Humanitarian Exception as the Rule: the Political Theology of the 1999 Tragedia in Venezuela." *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 3 (2005): 389.

Tragedia created an egalitarian illusion obscuring inequality in Venezuelan society, by focusing attention to an event in which all lives were exposed to death.¹⁴ Similarly, the fear of SARS transmission shifted away some of the vigilant attention PRC citizens would otherwise have towards the government's absolute power. Indeed, scholars have previously shown that a background of generalized fear and mounting perceptions of emergency conditions can all be mobilized to introduce more coercive policy styles.¹⁵ By denoting the outbreak as "SARS crisis" and proclaiming the state of emergency, the state government took advantage

of people's fear to unite its population against the threat of the virus and to reaffirm its authority.

In short, the communicability of the coronavirus blurred the boundaries between the inside and the outside, the subject and object of isolation and quarantine. The blurry boundaries evoked fear among the population, regardless of their current position relative to the boundaries, as each and every one of the population was subject to the possibility of being forced to cross the boundary,

being infected by the virus and exposed to death. This fear made the isolation and quarantine measures acceptable and even desirable to many, in spite of the exceptionality, the violation of personal freedoms, and their function of reaffirming state authority. Nevertheless, the function of the fear reached beyond gaining the government consent from the citizens; the fear became the basis of some of the operational details of the isolation and quarantine, of some mechanisms of surveillance, which contributed to the efficient implementation of these measures.

Surveillance and Subjectivity

Throughout this section, I base a significant part of my analysis on French social theorist Michel Foucault and his theories on the relationship between power and knowledge, engaging with ideas of creating subjectivities through surveillance mechanisms. During the SARS crisis, many of the most heavily infected spaces under collective

14 Fassin et al. "Humanitarian Exception as the Rule", 389-405.

15 Lawson, James, and Feng Xu. "SARS in Canada and China: Two Approaches to Emergency Health Policy." *Governance* 20, no. 2 (2007): 209-232.



photo 3: April 26, 2003, police officers at Beijing Railway Station measuring the body temperature of passengers. (PRC Xinhua News Agency: Tang Zhaoming)

isolation or quarantine were guarded by military personnel or police officers. However, many other quarantines on smaller scales, e.g. self-quarantine at home, depended on other surveillance techniques, which in turn depended on mobilizing fearful subjects. Corresponding to the large variety of the formats of isolation and quarantine, the surveillance also took place in various ways and was achieved through a wide range of institutions and methods. A close investigation of the detailed surveillance mechanisms will reveal that isolation and quarantine produced new forms of subjectivity among citizens. By subjectivity, I refer to the social construction of a subject through the disciplinary effects of mechanisms of state and social power.

The most straightforward method of surveillance was a network of surveillance technology, legitimized by the fear among the population. Surveillance cameras and thermal detectors were installed at the gates of hospitals, schools, shopping malls, train stations, and airports.¹⁶ These large-scale screenings made it challenging, if not impossible, for patients with fever to enter any places with a high population density. Without any shortcuts to differentiate SARS from other common diseases like flu that may result in a fever, anyone detected to have a fever was forced to quarantine on the spot.

As a disease caused by coronavirus, SARS has a 10-day incubation period,¹⁷ which significantly complicated the surveillance process. On the one hand, the 10-day period helped draw a temporal limit for quarantine; no one would be detained forever as a result. On the other hand, the incubation period made it impossible to scale down the number of people subject to quarantine. During the incubation period, virus carriers do not present any symptoms, thus cannot be detected with thermal sensors, but are capable of transmitting the virus.

To contain the possibility of transmission by virus carriers during incubation, individuals with recent travel history to regions with SARS cases or with contact with probable patients were all subjected to quarantine for 10 days, often conducted at home. In these scenarios, the neighborhood community committees (Jumin Weiyuanhui, 居民委员会) played a crucial role in the surveillance of quarantined individuals or families. The city government of Shanghai required the committees to conduct at least three spot-checks a day for all residents under quarantine. The spot-checks took place in formats of visits or phone calls to the residents' apartments at random times of the day.¹⁸

16 Cntr for Disease Control, Quarantine and Isolation, 68.

17 Cntr for Disease Control, Quarantine and Isolation, 91.

18 "Shanghai fabu fangzhi feidian di'er ge tonggao" (Shanghai Announces the Second Notice regarding SARS Prevention and Treatment", Souhu Xinwen, May 8, 2003, Source: Shanghai Morning Post, accessed June 5, 2016, <http://news.sohu.com/41/03/news209130341.shtml>.

Besides the government-issued official surveillance and inspection, the mobilization of the public,¹⁹ in many cases though the neighborhood community committees, became another important mechanism of surveillance. The neighborhood community committee is by law a mass autonomous organization established at the basic level in city residential areas for residents' self-management, self-education, and self-service. Residents were obliged to report suspicious activities or suspicious personnel to community committees or media hotlines.²⁰ During the SARS outbreak, "suspicious activities" referred to the return of neighbors from SARS infected regions of the country or other attempted violation of the quarantine measures.

In the residents' reporting system, fear of the communicability of the virus was again mobilized to contribute to the successful surveillance. In a neighborhood in Shanghai, the head of the neighborhood community committee Ms. Qian received a report regarding the return of Ms. Zhang from a business trip. To confirm the situation, she paid a visit to Ms. Zhang's office to investigate. Ms. Qian encouraged one of Ms. Zhang's employee to report the truth, warning that "If there really is a problem, people in close contact with her [Ms. Zhang] like you [the employee] would be the first to be exposed to danger." After a bit of hesitation, the employee confirmed, "Ms. Zhang just returned from Zhengjiang Province two days ago. She has presented signs of fever since coming back. She often complains of feeling cold and requires warm air conditioning. We are in great fear."²¹ In this instance, we clearly see a resident whose fear of contracting the virus, being subjected to fearful spaces of quarantine and isolation, having the virus spread among their family and friends in their neighborhood, and other fearful contingencies, became an active agent of mechanisms of state surveillance.

The reporting system worked very well during the SARS outbreak, to encourage reporting and manage this aspect of the disease intervention. Fear played a crucial role in motivating people to keep a vigilant eye on their surroundings and neighbors. While fear was created by people's inability to predict whether they would become the next target of transmission by the virus, by helping reinforce the containment of virus through vigilant surveillance of suspicious neighbors, they could find some comfort from the fear. Suddenly, everyone became everyone else's subject and object of surveillance. Communities soon became panopticons; each member becoming a potential subject of their watchful gazes of neighbors in

19 Lawson et al. "SARS in Canada and China", 216.

20 "Shanghai Announces the Second Notice".

21 Ni, Jie, "Feidian shiqi de dianxing yitian" (A Typical Day during the Atypical Time), Dongfang Caijing, Source: Shanghai Morning Post, accessed June 5, 2016, <http://travel.eastday.com/epublish/gb/paper62/87/class006200004/hwz1118793.htm>.



photo 5: June 20, 2003, after discharging the last cohort of SARS patients, medical staff sealing the wards of Beijing Xiaotangshan Hospital after complete disinfection. (PRC Xinhua News Agency: Wang Jianhua)

boundaries between the inside and outside, the object and subject of the isolation and quarantine, due to the biological nature of virus' communicability, generated fear that led citizens to willingly consent to the exceptional measures. On one hand, this fear created a new technique for the state government and designated authorities to mobilize the public to cooperate and even contribute to the detailed implementation of isolation and quarantine. On the other hand, it promoted a new form

of their surrounding community.²² Quarantine produced new subjectivities that the citizens would not have had otherwise, i.e. serving as the active agents of surveillance. As an important part of disciplinary power, Foucault argues that surveillance is not a repressive technique. Instead, he argues that it is rather a productive one, designed to maximize and extract forces that make quarantine more effective and efficient.²³ Through surveillance fueled by fear, the measures of exceptionality not only became acceptable to many citizens, but also empowering and comforting to them. The discursive technique served as a novel mechanism through which the exceptionality was implemented in detail.

Conclusion

Establishing the state of emergency during the "SARS crisis" created exceptional isolation and quarantine measures specific to the epidemic outbreak, actions the populations accepted due to its fear of the disease. Emerging in the state of exception with the ostensible purpose of guarding the biosecurity of the state and state population, the deprivation of personal freedoms in a confined and localized space realized a suspension of juridical orders while also being legally justified. The lack of clear

of subjectivity in the population to make citizens become active agents in the surveillance that enforced the policies. Mobilization of fear made the exceptional measures that deprived legal rights of personal freedoms not only acceptable to many but also efficient and effective by creating a mass number of active surveillance agents.

The SARS case in China exemplifies state strategies and social responses to seemingly uncontrollable forces that generate fear. The formation of surveillance mechanisms through the mobilization of fear, for the ostensible purpose of creating safety in times of crisis, has the potential of limiting personal freedoms. Fear created by crises can lead citizens to consent to, and even welcome, such limits. They become the articulations of surveillance mechanisms through their participation as active agents in limiting this freedom and controlling other members of their communities. When faced with a seemingly uncontrollable threat and an atmosphere of uncertainty, people living may seek the protection and expertise of the modern state to add control to a situation characterized by fear, a sense of helplessness, and lack of control.

22 Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Print.

23 Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 246

At the End of the Line: The Ethical Withholding of Patient Information

by Erin Hawley

Brittany Maynard led a death-with-dignity campaign that helped inspire popular attention and legislative change in regard to physician-assisted suicide. If her physician had decided to withhold the diagnosis that led Maynard to physician-assisted suicide, her illness experience would have been decidedly different. In this paper, I argue that patients have the right to not know biomedical information and should be asked early in their healthcare experience about their desired relationship with their own information. I discuss bioethical considerations in the context of patients' receiving biomedical information, and the need for patient-driven reforms. The morality of physician deception and a patient's choice to remain ignorant are important issues in the consideration of physician-assisted suicide and end-of-life care, particularly as the population lives longer lives and interacts more with the health care system.

Introduction

Would you want to know if you were to die by your next birthday? Would you speed the process and cut the suffering short, or give doctors the opportunity to save your life? The biomedical advances of the past century have afforded the biomedically-focused community more information and insight into patients' expiration dates. While we may celebrate the potential of possessing the nearly godly knowledge of an individual's future, we must also possess the consequences that accompany this knowledge. That is, doctors give patients the knowledge of impending death and other unfavorable diagnoses but do not offer the option to refuse to receive this information.

The agency of the patient in regard to medical information exchange is especially significant as medical advances increase the amount of potentially available information. However, the limits and expectations of the patient's autonomy, meaning control over themselves and their choices,

do not simultaneously increase or expand. One medical professional proposed an alternative: a standard of being aware before a diagnosis of the patient's desire to know certain medical information and subsequently limit the information that the patient receives. I will discuss the viability and ethics of a medical standard of limiting patients' knowledge of their own medical information through a discussion of the case of Brittany Maynard, bioethical principles, the role of government, and the distinction between disease and illness. While this paper discusses conflicting perspectives in bioethics, I argue that matters of choice in knowing medical information must be discussed and investigated further to provide more desirable patient-driven outcomes.

A Patient's Story

Brittany Maynard was a California resident whose life was radically shifted at age 29 with a terminal diagnosis of cancer and a forecast of only six months of life. She was left with little

recourse for treatment and no chance of a cure. Maynard chose to pursue physician-assisted suicide, which entails a prescription of barbiturates that would quickly and painlessly end her life at the time of her choosing. She was legally declared of competent mind to make this decision. At the time of her diagnosis in 2014, California outlawed physician-assisted suicide, so Maynard moved to Oregon to take advantage of their Death with Dignity Act. As part of her public campaign to expand these rights, Brittany Maynard explained her decision, "My quality of life, as I knew it, would be gone. After months of research, my family and I reached a heartbreaking conclusion: There is no treatment that would save my life, and the recommended treatments would have destroyed the time I had left" (Maynard 2014).

Her published editorial caused international controversy as the whole world weighed in. A Dartmouth professor of ethics declared that her physician-assisted suicide "is a simple



Brittany Maynard

expression of respect for human freedom, autonomy and dignity, and it is also an expression of compassion to allow [patients] to do it” (Green 2014). One University of Sunderland American Studies professor dissented that “to offer death as a menu choice delivers a despairing, defeatist message to everyone left behind, let alone those who continue to fight on living ‘undignified’ lives” (Yuill 2014). Religious, moral, and legal experts who had never met Brittany Maynard decried and praised her very personal choice. Maynard rebuffed the negative opinions, writing, “Who has the right to tell me that I don’t deserve this choice? That I deserve to suffer for weeks or months in tremendous amounts of physical and emotional pain? Why should anyone have the right to make that choice for me?” (Maynard 2014)

Disease and Illness Experience

The physicians, in delivering Maynard’s diagnosis and prognosis, attributed her headaches, nausea, and other symptoms to stage 4 glioblastoma (Fox-Leonard 2016). This link spawned an illness experience that was defined by a brain cancer diagnosis and its consequent death sentence. Her choice to pursue and administer a prescription for life-ending medication

was the culmination of a relatively short illness experience. Maynard’s symptoms began in the latter part of 2013, she was diagnosed in January of 2014, and she ultimately passed away in November of the same year. Outside of Maynard’s circle of family and friends, the world was judging and debating without appreciating Maynard’s agency and rational sense in the choice.

Scholars of Western medicine have treated disease and illness as synonyms, and therein lies the problem to this and many other modern medical issues. The focus of biomedicine is on disease, the deviance from the understanding of a normal function of a human body. Disease is simple and entirely biological; it can be isolated and pursued. Illness, on the other hand, is the entire experience of the symptoms and suffering (Helman 1981). If the psychological, social, and cultural factors shaping the patient’s reactions and experiences with the disease (i.e., their illness experience) are ignored, a series of standardized steps can move a physician from the physical symptoms to a diagnosis to a treatment. This would be very practical, but disease is not so easily delineated.

Disease is defined by abnormality, which implies a normality of

health, a single state of being that can be observed in all humans and identified as “healthy” (Helman 1981, 548). Assuming this uniform status exists, disease relies on consistency to a fault; the disease model is only valid if a disease is triggered by the same event, displays the same symptoms, and requires the same treatment always and without exception. This also assumes that all patients would choose the same treatment path and are affected by the diagnosis in the same way. The overemphasis of disease is understandable; this aspect of ill-health is so easily summarized in definitive language. Illness, however, molds the quality of life, and is often far more nuanced than the accompanying diagnosis. Maynard and others deserve the ability to dictate their illness experiences. Understanding the nuances between disease as a medicalized condition and illness as the social experience is crucial when considering bioethical choices.

Standard in Limiting Medical Information

A terminal diagnosis of six months or less to live gives the residents of six states in which physician-assisted suicide is legal the right to seek medication to aid in their dying. It should be noted that although a physician prescribes the medication, the patient must ultimately ingest the medication on their own accord with or without physician administration (Green 2014). In this way, physicians have a hand in the decision but allow the patient to ultimately make the decision. This is important because more than ninety percent of people requesting a lethal prescription in Oregon cite “losing autonomy” as a reason for choosing to terminate life (Emanuel 2016). Therefore, retaining control over one’s life is especially significant to a patient in their final moments. The feelings of control characteristic of adulthood can also particularly dissipate when the patient feels hopelessness or begins to accept and embrace their demise. In this sense,

some patients may want to choose to have their physician withhold information about their prognosis to avoid such feelings of lack of control.

Dr. Atsushi Asai, a Kumamoto University professor of bioethics, found that most patients, but not all, want to know the possibly devastating truth about their diagnoses. This wish, however, varies greatly among cultures. Although possibly not the opinion of white Christian Westerners dominating Western medical discussion, individuals who wish to live their lives without biomedical labels deserve the option to do so. In Greece and Italy, the respondents were more or less evenly divided on whether they wanted to be informed of a terminal diagnosis of cancer. In Japan and Spain, meanwhile, the majority wanted to know their fate regardless of external circumstances. Physicians, on the other hand, did not adjust to these preferences. In these aforementioned countries, less than forty percent of physicians disclosed diagnoses of cancer to their patients in every circumstance (Asai 1995, 36).

Families can be aware of the patient's desire for medical knowledge. Just as the relationship between a medical professional and a patient can be quite complicated, families may also have complicated dynamics that result in a medical decision for an individual. Individuals are not given the opportunity in the United States to have their loved ones intercede between the physician and patient relationship, and the availability of this option may be more concordant with family values. Maynard's family may have shielded this young woman of her grim diagnosis, preventing the possibility of her chosen time of demise. In states with physician-assisted suicide, legislation stipulates that patient must initiate this process. The current and most widely accepted standard in medicine regarding patient autonomy is always disclosing the truth and honoring the patient's wishes.

These two are not always con-

cordant; Dr. Asai offers, "[i]t is difficult to satisfy patients by ignoring their preferences" (Asai 1995, 39). It may be the patient's preference to not know. If a person can decide while registering for a driver's license the fate of their organs after their death, it stands to reason that one ought to be able to decide what sort of information is delivered to them before their diagnosis. Although organs are a tangible possession and thus more obviously require preemptive discussion before eventual donation, "diagnostic information regarding one's body and life belongs to the person to whom it refers, not to family or physicians" (Asai 1995, 37). A regular component of Dr. Atsushi Asai's medical practice is to administer a questionnaire that implores patients to ponder whether they would like to know about a diagnosis of either curable or incurable cancers, and, if not, who should know about their diagnoses and make decisions. The questions help the physician understand who should know this health information, who should know whether to disseminate the information to the patient, how much unfavorable information should be given to the patient, and other unsavory aspects of end-of-life care often ignored.

A complication is that the patient will have potentially unpredictable expectations as to what constitutes unfavorable news; one might find a terminal illness like Maynard's far less disconcerting than a chronic debilitating illness like Parkinson's. The answers to these questions are binding between this physician and patient, but Asai suggests revisiting the questionnaire regularly to ensure that the preferences of the patient are upheld. The burden is on the medical professional, however, to regularly update these preferences with the patient. In this way of placing limits on medical knowledge followed precisely, the physician would be in the habit of having regular discussions about the patient's comfort level with biomedical labels and the subsequent

limitations on life. There are inherent issues in assigning the role of such a powerful gatekeeper of knowledge to one person. Moreover, inconsistencies in care, characteristic of underprivileged populations, may result in confusion and lack of adherence to a patient's previous wishes regarding the flow of information.

Bioethics Principles

The four principles of bioethics are a useful tool for evaluating the ethical implications of this proposed policy, as the principles criticize the motivations and intentions as well as potential consequences of such a proposal. McCormick summarizes these bioethics tenets as the following: respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice (2013). Informed consent is a major component of respect for autonomy; the patient is able to consider and choose their own treatment or lack thereof. Nonmaleficence is the promise to not intentionally harm a patient; harm is a debatable concept in the argument for the right-to-die, especially in regards to physician-assisted suicide. The opposite but complementary tenet to nonmaleficence is beneficence; health care providers should act only when the action will benefit the patient. Finally, ethics necessitate justice, meaning a fair distribution and access to care and resources. Ethicists have explored the physician-assisted suicide issue with these principles, but criticisms to this four-principle approach are also significant in evaluating Asai's approach.

A key criticism of this approach is that these four principles are considerations, not clear policies or procedures to determine an ethically sound decision. As a result, contemplation of bioethical concerns must incorporate a more holistic investigation of relevant issues that extend past these four principles. Beauchamp and Childress, American academics who penned the treatise on the four principles, devised these four principles to approach U.S. American ethical problems, indicating

the need for bioethics decision-making to include ambiguity and nuance for cross-cultural dilemmas. Lastly, there is no established methodology to address potential conflicts between the four principles (Gordon n.d.). The relationship between each principle and the delivery of information that leads to a terminal decision also deserves a rigorous analysis.

The understanding of patient autonomy must be expanded to acknowledge the weight of being informed. The decision to withhold information undoubtedly recognizes that physicians are in the uncomfortable position of wielding incredible power over a patient's life, but Asai notes, "when offering truth, physicians must recognize that patients' choices should be respected not because they or others agree with those choices, but simply because it is the patient's right not to know" (Asai 1995, 37). The patient has the right to control their own body by controlling what information colors their perspective of their life. Maynard exercised her right to patient autonomy by utilizing the right to die, but she may have wished for her autonomy to be exercised differently through this proposal.

When a physician knows that a terminal diagnosis will harm the patient, delivering the diagnosis would inherently be violating the physician's vow to do no harm. And when a physician knows that a patient would want to know they had a terminal diagnosis, not delivering the diagnosis would inherently be harming the patient. Harm, through this perspective, is the potential emotional pain from receiving a diagnosis as well as the physical pain from treatments due to unwanted disclosed diagnoses. Brittany Maynard most likely suffered emotional pain following her diagnosis, but she found incredible power and comfort in her decision to limit her own suffering, declaring, "I do not want to die. But I am dying. And I want to die on my own terms" (Maynard 2014). On the other hand, Jauhar found

"patients who have been deceived by their physicians, even if the deception is well intentioned, have reported immense frustration and even thoughts of suicide" (Jauhar 2014). Maynard would probably have taken issue with an outside party interrupting her unrestricted access and influence to her medical information and thus feelings of control, but she would have had the ability, through this method, to inform the physician she would like to be informed of all information. When a physician does not know what the patient wants, the physician is at risk of committing both of these acts of harm. Acting on the best behalf of the patients and honoring the beneficence tenet, therefore, would necessitate being aware of how the patient would like to be treated. Asai's proposal to ask patients about their desires to receive medical information before being delivered this information gathers these preferences quite effectively and would allow the physician to act by the patient's direct orders. This assumes these orders are still reflective of a patient's wishes at that time in their life. Although Maynard needed the information of her terminal diagnosis in order to choose physician-assisted suicide, at a different time in her life she may have wanted to be unaware of her medical information.

Justice is also a major consideration for proposal to restrict information flow. Allowing the physicians to judge which patients should receive information is inherently unfair, as the physician's own biases regarding proper treatment paths would interfere. Asai found physicians were "more comfortable discussing a diagnosis of cancer if the patient ha[d] a stable personality, strong family support, and religious beliefs" but that they are more likely "to not inform patients of a diagnosis of cancer if the patient is female, older, less educated, or unemployed" (Asai 1995, 37). Leaving medical professionals, already powerful players in individuals' lives, to make decisions regarding the

control of medical knowledge could eliminate the empowering aspects of withholding information. For justice to be upheld, therefore, careful balance of therapeutic privilege could be established, such as mandatory re-evaluation of information limits or more detailed guidance in medical training.

The Role of the State: A Call for Patient-Driven Reform

Protests to limit government involvement in the care of individual bodies are justified and productive, but the current lack of regulation is also indicative of the state's control. The body politic, referring to "the regulation, surveillance, and control of bodies (individual and collective) in reproduction and sexuality, in work and in leisure, in sickness and other forms of deviance and human differences" (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987, 8), is often discussed by anthropologists to gauge and critique the state's reach and place in bodily autonomy. Medical professionals presently are obligated to share all of the information pertinent to a patient's life, and, with this duty, have the ability to radically disrupt and destroy a person's feelings of control and contentment through a single diagnosis. Reducing this ambiguity eliminates the need for the physician to withhold or propagate information at their own discretion.

Definitive protections must be established to respect the equal opportunity to receive information. The proposal to restrict medical information that the patient does not want to know, given consideration to issues and complications I've discussed, passes all four tenets of bioethics. Formalizing the standard to offer all patients the opportunity to decide to receive medical information would require government intervention to ensure benevolent intentions and fairness. A potential issue is inconsistency in the government's control of medical information at the state-level. Maynard received a very different course of treatment just by nature of residing in a different state. Some states offer

the privilege of physician-assisted suicide not offered in other states. The complications that accompany this disparity in patient powers would surely also follow if only certain states legally mandated the availability of therapeutic privilege.

Conclusions

While heralded in the present age as the defining pillar of medicine, “autonomy is a double-edged sword” (Jauhar 2014) and the health care system should be prepared to honor patient autonomy in all regards. The sword cuts both ways in that although the medical community may endeavor to protect and uphold informed consent in the hopes patients might make the “correct” decision, patients will ultimately make their own decisions. That is, patients may decide to end their own life or not follow a course that results in the longest possible lifetime, despite society’s or the medical community’s desires otherwise. The traditional biomedical philosophy is rigid, formulaic, and one-size-fits-all and does not adequately respond to end-of-life needs or how a patient wants to be treated. The laws and guidelines for medical professionals reflect this ambiguity and inconsistency.

The American Medical Association interprets therapeutic privilege as a potentially ethical course of action but offers little insight into actual ethical implementation of this practice. The AMA advises “physicians should honor patient requests not to be informed of certain medical informa-

tion or to convey the information to a designated proxy, provided these requests appear to genuinely represent the patient’s own wishes” (AMA 2006, 555). There is no discourse, however, on how to go about honoring these requests or how to gauge whether a request truly represents a patient’s wishes. The consequences of ambiguity in this policy and its interpretation can be emotional and painful, making the remaining time for patients and their families tumultuous. As Schepher-Hughes and Lock observe, “the medical gaze is a controlling gaze” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987, 27), and the fruits of this gaze, diagnoses and prognoses, can define a person’s life and their last moments with loved ones. Asai’s proposal of preemptively asking whether to withhold information is only one approach to this issue. This proposition could very well be more harmful than the status quo. It would be extremely difficult to ask patients whether they were happy with being unaware of their terminal diagnosis without revealing the very information that was to be concealed. This proposition, however, could spark a much needed re-evaluation on the liberties of patients to control the relationship with their medical professional.

Further work by anthropologists exploring the implications of limiting information as well as the consequences of this decision on the physician-patient relationship are essential to respecting patient autonomy in an increasingly informed age. There are more options to receive information about their health than ever before,

despite how relatively unhelpful it can be for the patient’s health. Patients have the option to procure incredibly detailed images of their body, seek genetic counseling on their predispositions, and gain comprehensive estimates and counts of the contents of their body. But they lack the option to restrict these choices. The medical community should be mindful of the consequences of offering yet another option in a patient’s health care journey in the form of limits of medical information received but should also see this proposal as yet another tool to add to the betterment of their patient.

Brittany Maynard utilized her illness narrative and illness experience to advocate for physician-assisted suicide, but she also suffered the emotional costs of being aware of her limited remaining time and terminal diagnosis. If her physicians had not delivered the diagnosis, Maynard may have ignorantly and quite rapidly deteriorated. If her physicians had not delivered the severity of the diagnosis, she may have pursued extensive and invasive medical intervention to little avail. With Asai’s proposal in practice, Maynard may also have specified that she wished to receive all information as soon as available, despite potential considerations of the emotional toll of the information received. She likely would have made the same decision to undertake physician-assisted suicide. With the regular restriction of medical information, any of these eventualities would be possible. But all would have been Brittany Maynard’s wholehearted decision.

Works Cited

- American Medical Association. 2006. “The AMA Code of Medical Ethics’ Opinions on Informing Patients.” *Virtual Mentor* 14(7), 555-556.
- Asai, Atsushi. 1995. “Should Physicians Tell Patients the Truth?” *The Western Journal of Medicine* 163(1): 36-39.
- Emanuel, Ezekiel J. 2016. “Legal Aspects in Palliative and End of Life Care.” UpToDate website, Nov. Accessed Nov. 14, 2016. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/legal-aspects-in-palliative-and-end-of-life-care#H192990527>.
- Fox-Leonard, Boudicca. 2016. “My Daughter Brittany Maynard Fought for the Right to Die - but Her Spirit Lives on.” The Telegraph website, Nov 8. Accessed Dec. 6, 2016. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/family/my-daughter-brittany-maynard-fought-for-the-right-to-die---but-h/>.
- Gordon, James-Stewart. n.d. “Bioethics.” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy website. Accessed Jan. 1, 2017. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/bioethic/#SH2a>.
- Green, Ronald. 2014. “Brittany Maynard was courageous and

Continued on page 40



Uber and Labor: Sharing Economy, Independent Contractor Model, and Driver Profile

by Solveij Rosa Praxis

Uber's business model relies on drivers partnering with the company as independent contractors. The company's model has been at odds with regulatory landscapes in different cities across the world (Haavardsrud 2016), while some drivers and cities confront the Uber labor model with lawsuits and other attempts to challenge the company's policies. Though much has been said about the economic shifts and political battles of which Uber is often at the center, there has been little in-depth analysis of Uber's own discourses, with assumed authority in Uber's big data regarding drivers' demographics, motivations, and perceptions of working for Uber. In this paper, I review the discourses that Uber utilizes in order to position its business model as revolutionary, and rewarding for the drivers. I then form a critique of the sharing economy, the supposedly "new" Uber labor model, and the desirability of Uber driver jobs. I then discuss the possibilities of bias in the methodology for gathering and presenting Uber's "big data," a principal mechanism through which the public comes to view the company as more credible and objective. I review instances of confrontation between Uber drivers and the company's labor model, and discuss possibilities for worker-driven change of the sharing economy. Finally, I reflect on the implications of tech companies disrupting secure labor by creating less accountable and more individualized work on the pretense that an app or digital platform necessitates a fundamentally new business model.

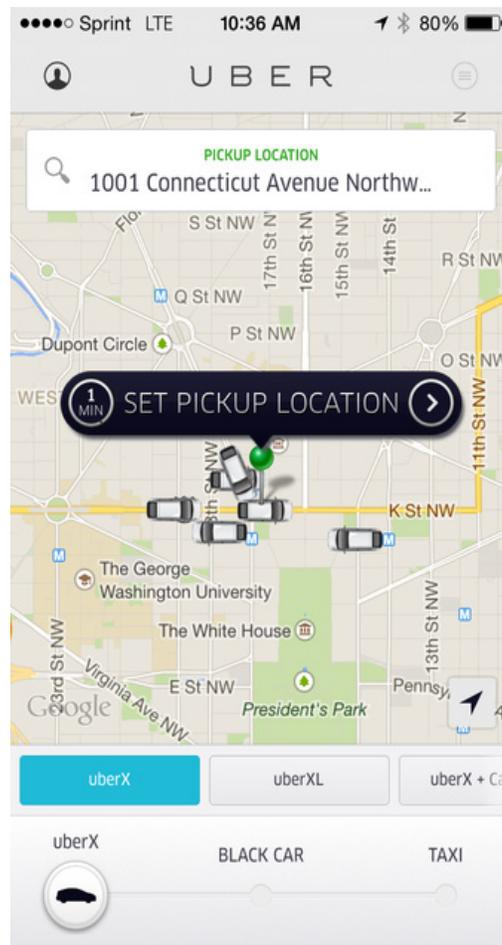
Uber as a Case Study of the Tech Industry's Bumpy Ride into the Trump Era

On the night of January 28, Uber decided to turn off surge pricing, offering cheaper rides to travelers at New York's JFK International Airport, amidst massive protests at major airports all over the country against Trump's "Muslim Ban" and anti-immigrant/refugee executive orders. This prompted the #DeleteUber protest among those in solidarity with the protesters and striking taxi drivers, with claims that the move by Uber was effectively strike-breaking and undermining the protest (Shen 2017). This was not Uber's first disruption of taxi drivers' activities, the power of unions, or labor in general.

Whether they collaborate with Trump or not, tech companies profoundly shape our economic and political future. Under the guise of technology claimed to create a "revolutionary" business model and a "sharing" economy, companies like Uber shifts labor and the responsibility of the corporation to workers. In this paper, I critically approach Uber's public discourse to justify its model to the public as "sharing economy," as well as the Krueger-Hall study that this discourse mainly relies on. Through its own discourses that gloss over its potentially unfavorable impact on "driver-partners" while advancing its credibility and power in the public perception, Uber is an example of how a big tech company mobilizes not only its technology, but also massive social and economic capital to restructure labor and redefine its relationship to workers.

Uber's Discourses: Creating Good Jobs through a Revolutionary Business Model

Uber's discourses have established the company as distinct from traditional business models. The sharing economy is key in Uber's discourses of itself as a company in which drivers reap financial security,



flexibility, and entrepreneurial interests in being your own boss. A rapidly expanding market model responsible for \$15 billion in revenue globally in 2014 and projected by multinational accountancy firm PwC to reach \$335 billion by 2025, the sharing economy "allow[s] individuals and groups to make money from underused assets[, so that] physical assets are shared as services" ("Consumer" 2015, 5). In the case of Uber, popularly known as a "ride-sharing" company, automotive or transportation assets and drivers' time for rides are employed for a more efficient utilization of these underused assets. The infrastructure that hosts sharing economy business models are "digital platforms [which] connect spare capacity and demand [...] enabl[ing] a more precise, real-time measurement of spare capacity" while "connect[ing] that capacity with those who need it" (15). Uber argues that its business model, specifically Uber's

relationship with workers, is revolutionized by the digital platforms which use big data and algorithms to interpret the ride-sharing market, connecting what it calls "underutilized" assets, such as drivers' time and cars, with consumers or "riders." The efficiency of transactions facilitated by these platforms shape the characteristics of the driving job and rider's activity, allowing a level of flexibility for drivers and riders utilizing Uber's digital platforms.

The Krueger-Hall study, published by Princeton economist Alan Krueger and Uber's Head of Economic Research Jonathan Hall, is often cited in Uber's own advertising and public discourses. It frames Uber as a good company, and Uber driving as a "good" job, claiming "exponential growth" in adoption of Uber's product clearly indicates that "the advent of Uber has provided new opportunities in the economy that a large and growing segment of the workforce finds attractive." (Hall and Krueger 2015, 1).

Currently, Uber workers are classified as independent contractors.

Through the language of "partnership," Uber redefines its relationship to workers as one of facilitating their small business as a partner or independent contractor. Uber's driver ad advertises on Uber Newsroom that "Uber is a smartphone app that connects drivers with riders with the tap of a button," just as the Krueger-Hall researchers consider drivers' use of the Uber platform to "provide transportation services to customers requesting rides via Uber's app on their smartphones or other devices" (Hall and Krueger 2015, 1) to be the extent of Uber's relationship with these "partners." The only requirements, according to Uber, are that you are 21 or older, "have a 4-door vehicle, 2005 or newer, [...] a driver's license and insurance[, and a] great personality!" (Brian 2014) Uber offers to "help connect [potential drivers] to companies who will offer you special rates available to virtually any driver[,] regard-

less of credit history” and claims drivers “can earn up to \$20+/hour in fares – more than any ridesharing platform around.” (Brian 2014) Rather than framing Uber driving as a job done for the Uber company, the ad projects an image of Uber as a company “you partner with,” doing partners a service by “always working to provide you with a growing network of riders, better tools, and a secure, stable way to make a living” (Brian 2014). These are used as Uber talking points for the benefits of a lifestyle as an independent contractor. By claiming that you can “earn great money as an independent contractor,” “[b]e your own boss and get paid in fares for driving on your own schedule.” (“Sign Up To Drive With Uber - Earn Cash With Your Car”, 2016), Uber positions itself as both a friendly company supporting their partner’s well being and an entity with interests and responsibilities separate from those of their drivers, who are in Uber’s words, independent contractors and “entrepreneurs” (Hall and Krueger 2015, 3).

Uber Economics: “Sharing” or “Taking” Economy?

The public is relatively new to the idea of a “sharing economy” company that operates with the use of big data and conducts business through an app. With the advantage of the novelty and lack of public awareness of the implications of its technology, Uber fills in this gap in understanding, establishing the public discourse of what its app and business model are and mean for the economy. In the process, Uber redefines the existing discourses around what a good job is and what the nature of a company’s relationship with and accountability to workers should be. Due to the reliance of its business model on a digital platform which is highly visible to the public, Uber is able to create the appearance that it exists to drivers and consumers in a limited way: as simply an app or a portal.

According to Uber Canada spokesperson Xavier Van Chau, Uber

is an app that is only “connecting individuals who’d like to take a ride from point A to point B to individuals who want to use their personal vehicle to share a ride and make some income[,...] through the app” (Haavardsrud 2016). Uber characterizes its business as an app facilitating two individuals’ personal arrangement, rather than a business similar to a taxi service that depends upon drivers to provide rides offered to customers. Uber claims that its platform is the company’s business itself, and because the platform connects individuals, drivers, and riders to each other, drivers should be classified as independent contractors, not employees. This classification of workers as independent contractors is a key feature of the sharing economy, and “an important legal distinction that transfers many responsibilities and risks from the company to the worker and the consumer” (“The Future of Work” 2014, 2). Claiming to have a revolutionary business model unfettered by the costly legal responsibilities of a company to employees, while flexing its muscles as a start-up juggernaut, Uber has successfully convinced many consumers and cities of its inevitable market expansion and the need for regulatory frameworks to give way to its rise.

These developments have prompted critics to claim that Uber is taking advantage of vulnerable and displaced workers in an insecure job market, who are willing to take a job without benefits and a steady income, exacerbating economic precarity as it creates new models of less secure work. Critics believe Uber perpetuates the “taking” economy, which relies on extracting the cost of the means of production, or capital, from drivers and society (Slee 2016, “What’s Yours”). Uber’s profits are founded upon this externalization of costs the company is traditionally responsible for, facilitated by the app to run a ride-sharing business that attracts customers with low fares while expanding into new markets

and satisfying investors. To keep costs low for consumers and profits high for investors, drivers and society bear the burden of costs Uber externalizes for maintaining workers and purchasing cars. Drivers must take care of operating costs for driving, such as insurance, gas and maintenance. In this way, Though Uber claims drivers are independent of Uber’s core business, Uber’s business is in actuality more dependent upon workers than traditional businesses have been. Uber depends upon not only workers’ labor but also their assets such as their cars and income for gas and maintenance. Uber’s Justification for Independent Contracting

Were Uber drivers to be re-classified as employees rather than as independent contractors, costs would compromise the basis of the Uber work model’s competitive advantage (Haavardsrud 2016). This continues the shift away from the American system known as welfare capitalism, in which “legal perks are tied to being an employee,” including “minimum wages, overtime benefits, health insurance, workers compensation for those hurt on the job, unemployment benefits for those who are laid off, proof of employment for those trying to rent or get a loan, and, perhaps most significantly, lower taxes (workers who are ‘independent contractors’ have to pay the employer’s share of payroll taxes)” (White 2015).

The emphasis on partnership obscures and is disconnected from the legal definition for classifying workers: that independent contractors are workers performing work that is not “integral” to the core of the employer’s business. Uber claims that because the job has relatively more flexible hours than other jobs, the company no longer has the basic responsibilities to the workers upon whom their business depends. But flexibility is not the determinant of whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor—it is whether the work performed is integral to the core of the employer’s

business. Additionally, it ought to be possible to maintain this flexible agency over work habits while being classified as an employee and receiving benefits for working with, or for, a company that takes 20% of each ride fare. Uber wouldn't make a profit without offering rides to consumers who are dependent upon driving performed by these workers. Uber is able to obscure drivers' misclassification due to the new-ness of their technology and status as a tech company with claims to ownership over big data and their drivers' work reality.

Due to a myriad of worker conditions, including that drivers "don't set their own fares or freely choose their own customers, their performance is measured and controlled by Uber, their driving is essential to Uber's business, and the economic reality is that they are not independent businesses but small cogs in Uber's powerful multinational business," the EPI attests that Uber drivers have been misclassified as independent contractors (Eisenbrey and Mishel, 2016). "Uber hasn't revolutionized the nature of work," refuting the "independent worker category" on the basis that workers find little independence in requirements that drivers have "15 seconds to respond to ride requests [...] while the app is on[,...] drivers can't reject rides with low fares or inconvenient destinations, because they don't know ahead of time where they are going[,] Uber drivers can be fired if they don't accept at least 80% of ride requests, [and] drivers hours are measured to the minute [...] and Uber has implemented its own guaranteed hourly wage in many cities" (Eisenbrey and Mishel, 2016).

Characterizing the company's core business as creating platforms facilitating individual arrangements is easy because Uber's technology creates distance, interfacing with consumers and drivers through an app rather than more personal or formalized relations. This is made all the easier by the power a big tech company such as Uber holds in shaping public

discourse around its own technology, for innovative technologies disrupt legal frameworks and the public's understanding of what to expect, both of which determine social standards of what tech business and labor ought to be. The company's discourse directs the public to the novelty of the app rather than massive corporate structure. Uber can shape the narrative of the formation of an entirely new business model in the public discourse, even though less accountable standards underlie this newness.

"Big Data" on Workers' Experiences: Driver-Partners' Demographic Profile, Job (In)Security, (Dis)Satisfaction, and Income

Big data, in the context of Uber's powerful capacity to collect, aggregate, and interpret this data, is the foundation for much of the public's perception of Uber's credibility. The power that big tech companies have to gather big data imbues their findings with an ethos of irrefutable objectivity. The public invests a great deal of trust in tech companies due to their ethos of being highly intelligent and scientific, to the point that they may appear to be all-knowing of the expansiveness of the knowledge they gather. The data included in the studies I review is from Uber's business operations as well as a study conducted by a firm hired by Uber to collect qualitative data about worker's experiences. The data was selectively made accessible to researchers chosen by Uber, one of whom is directly employed by Uber. This data is strategically employed to shape public discourse on the extremely sensitive and controversial issue of driving for Uber. I will argue that the data does not transcend the political discussion of Uber's labor model, due to the fact that big data is owned by Uber, and as such has been selectively collected and strategically made accessible or inaccessible to the public. I hope to convey the dangers of trusting big data owned by a company when the outcomes of the data shape the dis-

course foundational to the company's profit-model. For each claim regarding drivers' experiences, I will indicate my concerns for bias in the methodology in gathering and presenting this big data.

Uber Workers: Demographic Profile

By the end of 2015, Uber had 400,000 active driver-partners (Jessica 2015). This figure had more than doubled from 160,000 at the end of 2014, having risen to that point from about zero active driver-partners in mid-2012. (Hall and Krueger 2015m 1) As of November 2015, 19% of drivers were women. This exceeds the 8% of women in the taxi driver and chauffeur workforce, (Hall and Krueger 2015, 8) but is less than the 47% of women in the US workforce overall (US Census Bureau 2014). Due to the individual-based nature of participation as a driver using Uber's platform, it appears that driving for Uber is more accessible to women who may face exclusion and alienation in the male-dominated taxi industry. However, security factors such as increased risk to women operating as solitary drivers without safety precautions or assurances may make the work less attractive to women than other jobs. Uber drivers are more racially diverse than the general workforce. Only 40% are White, while 24% of drivers are Black/African American, 20% Latino/Hispanic, 13% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 6% are of another ethnic background. (Uber Driver Roadmap 2.0) These statistics became more skewed towards non-White drivers from the BSG study conducted in 2014 to the study completed in 2015.

This "diversity" big data is employed in Uber's discourse to appear more liberal, ethical and inclusive than other industries, such as the taxi industry. That women and people of color disproportionately make up the Uber workforce need not be surprising or a badge of honor for Uber, however, given the fact that many exploitative industries rely on women, immigrants and people of color to fill

precarious, low-wage jobs. Appeals based on workers' gender and racial diversity ought to be examined critically when determining whether a job is desirable and accessible to a wide range of people, or whether the industry relies upon marginalized workers who may accept less desirable, more insecure labor.

Job (In)Security

Other statistics provided by the aforementioned studies paint a picture of Uber drivers as people from different sectors of society with different ideas of work-life balance, but who predominantly appreciate the flexibility of Uber's labor model, as well as the entrepreneurial advantage of being your own boss. Uber drivers are mostly middle-aged people with dependents at home, who work other part-time or full-time jobs (69%) and use Uber to supplement their income. A significant minority of 20% of drivers, approximately 80,000 workers, rely on Uber driving fares as their only source of income ("Uber Driver Roadmap 2.0" 2015).

The Krueger-Hall study claims, just as the Uber company does, that "most driver-partners do not turn to Uber out of desperation or because they face an absence of other opportunities in the job market." (Hall and Krueger 2015, 2) However, this interpretation is based on a statistic that 88% "started driving with Uber because it fit their life well, not because it was their only option." ("The Driver Roadmap" 2014) Though this data isn't entirely without merit, vague language such as "fit their life well" and "only option" add a layer of uncertainty to the credibility or clarity of this research. The BSG study did not ask drivers if they had felt they had few options before choosing Uber driving, or if they believed they'd need to seek supplemental income had their full-time job kept up with inflation, the cost of living, and other economic pressures.

Despite featuring statistics that support an interpretation that drivers are attracted to Uber's benefits, rath-

er than driven to Uber by an insecure labor market, the Krueger-Hall study also reports that two-thirds of drivers were actively looking for a job before becoming partners at Uber, and 24% of those had been looking for 6 months or more. ("The Driver Roadmap" 2014) The study asserts that "Uber's driver-partners also often cited the desire to smooth fluctuations in their income as a reason for partnering with Uber." (Hall and Krueger 2015, 1). Income fluctuations and lengthy job searches referenced by drivers may be caused by market instability and job insecurity. This issue has sparked debate over whether Uber is a safety net for drivers or is promoting a model of insecure work without benefits.

(Dis)Satisfaction

Flexibility is a major advantage that many Uber drivers appear to enjoy. Uber drivers with whom I spoke often note their appreciation of the flexibility of the work schedule, framed by Krueger-Hall as an extremely different labor model empowering drivers' through "choice." Choice, however, is a loaded word to use when many of the drivers may choose their schedules, but are ultimately compelled by economic necessity to work a job they might avoid had they found better work options with employee benefits. Inactive drivers are classified as such "at the start of any period in which he or she does not record a trip for six or more months" (Hall and Krueger 2015, 16). "Within a month of becoming an active Uber driver-partner, 11 percent of drivers became inactive," and "more than half [...] remained active a year after starting" (Hall and Krueger 2015, 16). The Krueger-Hall study frames this loss of almost half of active drivers after a year as evidence that Uber driving "provides a bridge for many who are seeking another position in the labor market" (Hall and Krueger 2015, 16). However, this interpretation does not take into account the factor that drivers who become inactive may have found driving for Uber to be unattractive or unsustainable work. It

is hard to determine what the motivations behind drivers who leave Uber may be, because the BSG study did not make this data publicly available, if it exists. Such data gaps in this study by a firm hired by Uber, as well as in the "independent" study, recur when it comes to many aspects of workers' experiences to which Uber's image could be sensitive.

The most recent BSG study, collecting data from a sample of active drivers, found overwhelming driver satisfaction "with experience overall" (81%), "with their ability to balance their work with Uber with the rest of their life" (91%), and "with flexibility of their schedule" (97%) ("Uber Driver Roadmap 2.0" 2015). The Krueger-Hall study's abstract reads similarly to Uber's hiring advertisement, highlighting findings that driver-partners "appear to be attracted to the platform in large part because of the flexibility it offers, the level of compensation, and the fact that earnings per hour do not vary much with hours worked, which facilitates part-time and variable hours" (Hall and Krueger 2015, 1). In the abstract, researchers indicate upward job mobility, claiming "Uber may serve as a bridge for many seeking other employment opportunities," (Hall and Krueger 2015, 1) among providing other benefits to driver-partners and consumers. This study has been criticized due to the potential bias of co-author Dr. Jonathan Hall, as the Head of Policy Research at Uber, and that the co-author Alan Krueger was chosen by Uber to have access to the company's big data, rather than an independent party.

Income

Uber claims an entrepreneurial driver can not only supplement their income, but become a top earner. One such claim, that "the potential income a driver on uberX can make in a year is more than \$90,000 in New York and more than \$74,000 in San Francisco" (Lee 2017) came under fire by journalists and sharing economy critics. Technology and society commentator Tom Slee's central criticism of the

Krueger-Hall study and Uber's median income estimates for drivers is that "[a]s with other company reports on driver incomes, the Krueger-Hall paper lacked any data about driver expenses, claiming that such data is not available" (Slee 2016, "Dirty Laundry"). It is a cynical claim, from a company whose dominance is founded largely upon effective collection and synthesis of big data. It is safe to assume that Uber is either hiding or intentionally neglecting to gather data regarding

drivers' incomes, stating "Uber has so far proved unable to produce one driver earning that amount [of \$90,000 per year]" (Grisworld 2014). The Uber driver Griswold spoke with claimed that after working 40 hours in a week with \$1,163.30 in fares, deductions by Uber reduced his earnings to \$850. Additionally, the driver would budget \$350 for gas, car cleanings, insurance, maintenance, and parking costs over the course of a week. With \$480 left before income taxes, the driver was

driving for Uber "increased financial security," 28% that it remained the "same," 11% that it became "worse" ("Uber Driver Roadmap 2.0." 2015). Though this appears to frame the experiences of the majority of Uber drivers as positive, meeting aforementioned goals of increased income and financial security, it may be enlightening to compare these outcomes to responses of workers in low-wage jobs with few benefits that are generally regarded as undesirable. If workers

were asked if working for Uber provided the income and financial security they desired, rather than simply "increasing" these factors to any degree, perhaps the outcome of the studies would be more insightful. Instead, such a gap in the big data Uber collects or reveals, shapes the discourses about the recorded and accessible realities of the company's own workers. These are the dangerous pitfalls of understanding the highly politicized, sensitive realities of a company using "big data" the company itself has created and owns, with the power to selectively disseminate or withhold.

When speaking with the same Midwestern Uber driver who reported making \$10.40 an hour that particular week, they had begun our

conversation by voicing how glad they were to have access to this income, in this harsh economy. As we cruised through the city, they at one moment pointed to a building that had formerly been occupied by a major company that had since left the city. My assessment was that the worker situated their understanding of work for Uber within an insecure economy, and appreciated having access to any source of income through Uber driving. How ideal that source of income was, however, was another story. For one thing, they said that they liked being able to decide when to drive, often choosing to drive for 3 to 4 hours at a time, often between the hours of 1am and 6am. Flexibility seems truly to be beneficial to drivers who can fit the job in their schedule.



factors that are fundamental to a clear assessment of its workers' income levels and experiences. Focusing on driver-partners' reasons for being "attracted to" Uber's platform rather than a more holistic approach gleaned positive and less than ideal experiences driving for Uber, as well as citing total annual income estimates that have not been adjusted for drivers' operating expenses, are fundamental failures in the methods and framing of these studies. When it comes to politicized areas important to the company's profit model, the credibility of tech companies' "big data" must be called into careful scrutiny to discern selective presentation of data.

One journalist challenged Uber's seemingly exaggerated estimates of

making \$12 an hour (Grisworld 2014). One Uber driver to whom I spoke in a mid-sized city in the Midwest showed me the breakdown of their payments per ride from Uber, and divided the \$260 earned by twenty-five hours worked, for a total of \$10.40 per hour on average. This was, for this driver, an above-average week, and this was before gas or maintenance expenses were included. Due to lack of data, it is unclear if such is a typical experience of income and hidden operating costs for Uber drivers.

The 2014 BSG study found that 71% of drivers said working for Uber "increased [their] income," while 17% said their income remained the "same," and 11% that it became "worse" ("Uber Driver Roadmap 2.0." 2015). Additionally, 61% reported

Early in the conversation, I asked the driver if they thought it was fair that they worked over forty-hours a week driving for Uber, but didn't have employment benefits and other protections. Seeming excited that a young person seemed to care about their work experience and to be included in research, the driver began to describe a laundry list of issues with the job. They first openly shared that they thought, since they were driving on a full-time schedule, sometimes fifty hours a week, it was unfair that they did not get benefits. They elaborated on more specific frustrations of the job: travelling to pick up a rider and having the ride cancelled just as they pulled up to the block or driveway, having to drive far out to inconvenient areas when the rider told them their destination after the ride had been booked, knowing some drivers would work for tens of hours on end, driving exhausted without consistent breaks or caps on the length of the workday, among many other issues.

We had an exuberant conversation, and the driver was enthusiastic in showing me how their app interface worked, navigating to my destination while switching tabs on their very large tablet which was secured on the dashboard. They showed me how for each continuous chunk of time they spent working for Uber, a tab on the application with a bar graph would record the total income they were paid for those hours, though not the hourly break-down over the course of a week. We calculated that on another app. When I mentioned this didn't include the costs of gas or car maintenance, they said usually they didn't make those calculations themselves, and didn't know what their net income would look like with these deductions. I admired their ability to hold a conversation while driving the car an efficient route, and safely, to my destination.

Regulatory Battles and Possibilities for Worker-Driven Reformu-

lations of the Sharing Economy

With the "Uberization" of the market, the question of "what happens to employee benefits and protections if employers choose to reinvent themselves as an app" (Haavardsrud 2016) is up for live debate. As Uber's business model of labor is found to be at odds with the status quo in different cities across the world, Uber exercises its might as a tech start-up giant to shape regulatory landscapes. In each battle, "[t]he conversation Uber really wants to avoid is whether its drivers are employees or independent contractors" (Haavardsrud 2016). An Uber driver who filed a wage complaint on September 16, 2014 in California was awarded "reimbursement for outstanding business expenses, namely for gas and bridge tolls" and was, in fact, an employee of Uber (Barreiro). The court found that Uber "drivers were not involved in an occupation that was separate and distinct from Uber's core business[,] as are required for classification as independent contractors. The ruling applies only on an individual basis, and Uber has appealed the decision.

Uber's worker model has been the site of many political battles, from independent contractor designation to flexible oversight of workers not completing background checks according to a city's standards. Historically, when Uber drivers have been impacted by such scuffles, "Uber [...] works to defuse this deterrent by paying for tickets and legal costs incurred by its drivers." With a "war chest at more than \$8 billion," Uber wages a social media campaign to mobilize consumers and "deploy[s] a small army of lawyers and lobbyists to influence policy in targeted cities." (Haavardsrud 2016). In very few instances does Uber lose. Though very few violent crimes have been perpetrated by drivers, in Austin, TX, the City Council wrote a policy that Uber drivers had to have fingerprint scans in order to operate, based on the fact that "to become a cabbie in Austin, you have to have a chauffeur's license,

something that requires having your fingerprints taken" (Wear 2015). It's the City of Austin's safeguard for criminal background checking. If the fingerprints are linked to a variety of convictions through the DPS and FBI database checks, the license is denied. (Wear 2015) Any driver who goes to have their fingerprints taken may "be disqualified for an incident that led to an arrest but not a conviction[,] and "prospective drivers might have to produce evidence of their innocence, or at least of an unsuccessful prosecution" (Wear 2015). Sharing economy critics broadly supported the policy. Despite an expensive effort of Uber and Lyft, spending \$8 million for a campaign to pass a proposition that would reverse it, what transpired was a relatively rare occurrence. On May 7, 2016, "Austin voted 56% to 44% against Proposition 1," and Uber and Lyft made good on a promise to leave Austin shortly thereafter (Kelly 2016).

Unfortunately, in an attempt to keep a sharing economy company in line with employment standards in the traditional economy, city officials and local activists supporting the policy targeted workers marginalized by association with the criminal justice system. Additionally, there is no evidence this shift will revitalize unionized cab jobs. In Austin, "[a]s in other cities, discussion about Uber is [...] centered on issues such as passenger safety, insurance, background checks and vehicle inspections[,] rather than workers' rights (Haavardsrud 2016). It is widely speculated that Uber's decision to leave Austin was related to the fact that fingerprinting, a standard originally applied to cab drivers, would create a further linkage between drivers and the company as employees, rather than independent contractors.

Such a disruption to Uber's labor model of work was narrowly avoided by the company when it quashed two class action lawsuits brought by 385,000 Uber drivers in California and Massachusetts claiming they were misclassified as independent contractors and deserved to be

re-classified as employees with all of the legally guaranteed economic and social benefits. By settling with a maximum potential of “\$100 million to the drivers represented in the cases” Uber, valued at \$62.5 billion, will be “allow[ed...] to keep categorizing them as independent contractors, rather than employees” with little impact on Uber’s bottom line (Levine 2016). Uber is making minor concessions to drivers, such as rectifying an inaccurate claim that “drivers are removed from their platform solely on the basis of bad ratings, [in spite of] numerous reports of Uber executives firing drivers for personal and capricious reasons[,]” as well as (Slee 2016, “Dirty Laundry”) “giv[ing] drivers more information about their quality rating[,] allow[ing] them to judge it against fellow drivers” (McCormick 2016). Additionally, “Uber will create [...] a ‘Driver Association’” with the power to “represent drivers to the management each quarter” (Farivar 2016). An association meant to represent workers to the company that is managed by the company is a far cry from the collective power workers deserve. The attorney representing the drivers stated that “the case is being settled—not decided. No court has decided here whether Uber drivers are employees or independent contractors and that debate will not end here” (Farivar 2016). The shifting labor landscape also destabilizes traditional strategies of organizing workers’ power, among which the strike by New York taxi drivers is an example. Uber drivers work in rather atomized work situations, with little interaction among the labor force, lit-

tle accountability and less immediately direct interaction with the company. Organizing a strike, work-stoppages and other traditional forms of labor actions which are meant to disrupt business to put immediate pressure on an employer may prove exceedingly difficult for any workers attempting such organizing in the sharing economy. For these reasons, these workers’ precarity extends beyond a lack of employment benefits, and to the narrowing possibilities of building their power. Insights about when, where and how workers are visible and connected to each other, as well as aware of how Uber’s business is dependent upon workers’ collective production, would be necessary to draw upon during any attempts to unionize the sharing economy.

Because working for Uber involves less direct supervision and vetting by the employer than other jobs do, as is often the case with more precarious labor, driving for Uber may be more accessible to undocumented immigrants, folks with “criminal” records, and other marginalized workers. For those with intentions to promote worker-driven changes to Uber’s and other sharing economy companies’ models of labor, any strategies must take into account the well-being of those most marginalized within the labor force, including undocumented people and people with criminal records in visions of reform, rather than scapegoating them for anti-tech political battles. Some hopefully suggest that cooperative economic models for sharing may develop which utilize “new technologies of peer-to-peer economic activity” in conjunction

with “democratiz[ed] ownership and governance of the platforms” (Schor 2014).

Conclusion

Characterizing its business as an app connecting individuals, and its relationship to drivers as a partnership, Uber claims to transform the traditional relationship between company and employee while holding very little accountability for its drivers in order to protect its profit model. Uber is a multinational corporation, not an app, and its core business is dependent upon drivers, who should be characterized as employees with the benefits of this more accountable legal classification. Uber further shapes public understanding of what driving for Uber means through its own “big data” it gathers as part of its business activities, and through a consultancy firm it hired.

When it comes to highly politicized experiences of workers who determine the profit-making of a tech behemoth, as well as the profitability of the sharing economy in general, the discourses constructed by the companies themselves and put forth by studies like Krueger and Hall should be subject to independent, ethnographic understandings of workers’ experiences. The future of our economy, and the extent to which precarious forms of labor will be justified by technological innovations, depend upon workers and their advocates critically examining the discourses that tech companies produce to justify their profit-making strategies, as well as relying upon workers’ experiences to develop worker-driven responses to insecure, exploitative labor.

Bibliography:

Barreiro, Sachi. “Are Uber Drivers Employees or Independent Contractors in California?” Nolo.com. Accessed June 1, 2016. <http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/california-labor-commissioner-rules-uber-driver-employee-not-independent-contractor.html>.

Brian. 2014. “Uber Driver Partner (Full-Time Independent Contractor).” Uber Global, March 28, 2014.. Accessed May 20, 2016. [https://newsroom.uber.com/drive-with-uber-earn-cash-with-](https://newsroom.uber.com/drive-with-uber-earn-cash-with-your-car-4/)

[your-car-4/](https://newsroom.uber.com/drive-with-uber-earn-cash-with-your-car-4/).

“Consumer Intelligence Series ‘The Sharing Economy.’” PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2015. <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/technology/publications/assets/pwc-consumer-intelligence-series-the-sharing-economy.pdf>.

Craig. “An Uber Impact: 20,000 Jobs Created on the Uber Platform Every Month.” Uber Global, May 27, 2014. Accessed June 1, 2016. <https://newsroom.uber.com/an-uber-impact-20000-jobs-created-on-the-uber-platform-every-month-2/>.

- Eisenbrey, Ross, and Lawrence Mishel. 2016. "Uber Business Model Does Not Justify a New 'Independent Worker' Category." Economic Policy Institute, March 17. Accessed Jun. 1, 2016. http://www.epi.org/publication/uber-business-model-does-not-justify-a-new-independent-worker-category/?utm_source=Economic+Policy+Institute&utm_campaign=523afa64of-EPI_News_03_18_163_18_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e7c5826c50-523afa64of-55866341.
- Farivar, Cyrus. 2016. "Uber Settles Class-Action Labor Lawsuits in Massachusetts, California." *Ars Technica*, April 22. Accessed May 20, 2016. <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2016/04/uber-settles-class-action-labor-lawsuits-in-massachusetts-california/>.
- Griswold, Alison. 2014. "In Search of Uber's Unicorn." *Slate*, October 27. Accessed March 20, 2016. http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2014/10/uber_driver_salary_the_ride_sharing_company_says_its_drivers_make_great.html.
- Haavardsrud, Paul. 2016. "Examining the Uber Playbook: How the Ride-Hailing App Aims to Conquer Cities." *CBCNews*. January 22. Accessed May 31, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/uber-playbook-taxis-canada-1.3411401>.
- Hall, Jonathan. 2015. "In the Driver's Seat: A Closer Look at the Uber Partner Experience." *Uber Global*, January 22. <https://newsroom.uber.com/in-the-drivers-seat-understanding-the-uber-partner-experience/>.
- Hall, Jonathan, and Krueger, Alan. 2015. "An Analysis of the Labor Market for Uber's Driver-Partners in the United States," January 22. https://s3.amazonaws.com/uber-static/comms/PDF/Uber_Driver-Partners_Hall_Kreuger_2015.pdf.
- Harris, Seth D. and Alan B. Krueger. 2015. A Proposal for Modernizing Labor Laws for Twenty-First-Century Work: The "Independent Worker." Hamilton Project, Discussion Paper.
- Isaac, Mike. 2017. "Uber C.E.O. to Leave Trump Advisory Council After Criticism." *The New York Times*. February 2. Accessed February 4, 2017.
- Jessica. 2015. "New Survey: Drivers Choose Uber for its Flexibility and Convenience." *Uber Newsroom*, December 7, 2015. Accessed May 20, 2016. <https://newsroom.uber.com/driver-partner-survey/>.
- Kelly, Heather. 2016. "Uber and Lyft to Leave Austin after Losing Fingerprinting Vote." *CNNMoney*, May 8, 2016. Accessed June 17, 2016. <http://money.cnn.com/2016/05/08/technology/uber-lyft-austin-vote-fingerprinting/index.html>.
- Larson, Selena. 2017. "Uber Pleads with Users Deleting the App: 'We're Hurting'." *CNNMoney*. February 23. Accessed [February 25, 2017].
- Leberstein, Sarah. 2012. "Independent Contractor Misclassification Imposes Huge Costs on Workers and Federal and State Treasuries." *National Employment Law Project*, August, 2012. <http://nelp.org/content/uploads/2015/03/IndependentContractorCosts1.pdf>.
- Lee, Dave. 2017. "Uber to pay \$20m to 'mised' drivers." *BBC*, January 20, 2017. Accessed March 13, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-38686787>.
- Levine, Dan. 2016. "Uber Drivers Remain Independent Contractors as Lawsuit Settled." *Reuters*, April 22. Accessed June 18, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-uber-tech-drivers-settlement-idUSKCN0XJ07H>.
- McCormick, Rich. 2016. "Uber Settles Lawsuits to Keep Drivers as Independent Contractors in California and Massachusetts." *The Verge*, April 22. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://www.theverge.com/2016/4/21/11485424/uber-suit-california-Mas-sachusetts-drivers-employee-contractor>.
- Mishel, Lawrence, Ross Eisenbrey, Susan Balding, and Dan Essrow. 2016. "Are Uber Drivers Employees, Contractors, or Something New?" *Economic Policy Institute*. March 17. Accessed June 1, 2016. <http://www.epi.org/multimedia/are-uber-drivers-employees-contractors-or-something-new/>.
- Rampell, Catherine. 2015. "The Dark Side of 'Sharing Economy' Jobs." *The Washington Post*, January 26, 2015. Accessed March 20, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/catherine-rampell-the-dark-side-of-sharing-economy-jobs/2015/01/26/4e05daec-a59f-11e4-a7c2-03d37af98440_story.html.
- Schor, Juliet. 2014. "Debating the Sharing Economy," October 2014. Accessed March 20, 2016. http://www.geo.coop/sites/default/files/schor_debating_the_sharing_economy.pdf.
- Shen, Lucinda. 2017. "200,000 Users Have Left Uber in the #DeleteUber Protest." *Fortune: Tech*. February 3. Accessed February 7, 2017.
- "Sign Up To Drive With Uber - Earn Cash With Your Car." May, 2016. Accessed May 31, 2016. <https://get.uber.com/drive/>.
- Slee, Tom. 2016. "The Sharing Economy's Dirty Laundry." *Jacobin*. March 23. Accessed June 1, 2016. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/03/uber-airbnb-sharing-economy-housing-tech/>.
- Slee, Tom. 2016. What's Yours Is Mine: Against the Sharing Economy. OR Books.
- "The Driver Roadmap Where Uber Driver-Partners Have Been, And Where They're Going." *Benenson Strategy Group*, Dec. 22, 2014. Accessed March 20, 2016. https://newsroom.uber.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BSG_Uber_Report.pdf.
- "The Future of Work in the Sharing Economy." *The Aspen Institute*, December 2, 2014. Accessed Mar. 15, 2016. <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/upload/Background%20Fact%20Sheet%20.pdf>.
- "Uber, Airbnb and Consequences of the Sharing Economy: Research Roundup - Journalist's Resource Journalist's Resource." Accessed Jun. 1, 2016. <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/economics/business/airbnb-lyft-uber-bike-share-sharing-economy-research-roundup>.
- "Uber Driver Roadmap 2.0." *Benenson Strategy Group*, December 7, 2015. Accessed May 16, 2016. https://2q72xc4gmze8b-kcog2f01nlh-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/BSG_Uber-Driver-Roadmap-2.0_12.7.15_FIN2.pdf.
- U.S. Census Bureau, DataFerrett. Current Population Survey. Monthly Microdata. December 2014. Accessed March 21, 2016.
- US Census Bureau, Demographic Internet Staff. "US Census Bureau Poverty Main Page." December 2015. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty.html>.
- US Census Bureau. "Income Distribution to \$250,000 or More for Households: 2014". December 2014. Accessed Mar. 21, 2016. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032015/hhinc/hinco6.xls>
- Wear, Ben. Austin American-Statesman. 2015. "Wear: 'Friction' at Heart of Austin's Dispute with Uber and Lyft." October 16. Accessed June 1, 2016. <http://www.mystatesman.com/news/news/local/friction-at-heart-of-austins-dispute-with-uber-and-lyft/>.
- White, Gillian B. 2015. "In the Sharing Economy, No One's an Employee." *The Atlantic*, June 8. Accessed June 10, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/in-the-sharing-economy-no-ones-an-employee/395027/>

Structure Reproducing Social Construct: An Investigation of Stanford Dorm Rooms

by **Kylie Fischer**

This paper investigates the ways in which social constructs shape the interior design and spatial experience in Stanford dorms. Written for Anthro 91, Methods and Evidence in Anthropology, this project includes interviews and observations from my ethnographic research on the subject. Throughout this essay, I will argue that people tend to organize their rooms in a way that reinforces hierarchies and perceived stereotypes associated with the dorm. I will first discuss how people express the need for comfort in their rooms, both for themselves and others. This provides insight into the types of social spaces that people live in, corresponding to the expectations of the residence. I then discuss how people react to the expectations of their residence and make adjustments according to such expectations. However, students have no control over some factors like their residence placement or its structure, and I address how these features impact their organization. Such an investigation shows how perceived stereotypes are perpetuated through social expectations as well as the fact that sociality dictates decisions that seem, upon first glance, to be personal. This analysis sheds light on social forces and other subtle factors at play in seemingly individual choices as well as ways stereotypes may be reinforced.

Introduction

I sat on the futon in my friend Justin’s room during his fraternity’s all-campus party, straining to hear my friends talk over the booming music. Instead of the overhead lighting, a string of LED lights and a psychedelic screensaver lit the room. As strangers wandered through the room to reach the balcony connected to the room, squeezing through crowds of people, I also strained to distinguish people throughout the room. Justin’s roommate pointed behind the futon and asked: “Do you like our new tapes-try? We just got it.” Sitting in the room that night, I wondered to what extent the fraternity subconsciously dictated Justin and his roommate’s decoration decisions. Thinking more broadly, what types of cultural norms shape interior design and spatial experience in Stanford dorms?

Through interviews and observation, I explored the interplay between how students decorated and organized their dorm rooms and the perceived stereotypes associated with residential spaces. I argue that the social engagement expected in one’s room determines its organization and decoration. This social expectation is shaped in part by the previous stereotypes surrounding the residence as well as through a desire for comfort in the room. However, due to the draw system, people live in dorms with pre-conceived notions about the dorm before they even move in. Some of these include the quality of a residence, as lower

draw numbers cause people to live in “worse” places. As people organize their rooms according to these perceived stereotypes, they reproduce the hierarchy in housing and also adopt the stereotypes attributed to something they did not actually have much control over in the first place. My research shows the large extent to which decisions are socially influenced, even when such decisions are assumed to be personal.

Investigating Stanford Residences

In this project, I investigated how perceived stereotypes in Stanford’s residences created expectations that reinforced external interpretations. Because it is difficult to know everyone in a large group, we use assumptions about groups to categorize those we don’t know. Perceived group stereotypes are relevant to explore because they are a more prevalent mechanism of categorization than class on Stanford’s campus. In fact, Stanford is relatively unique among universities in the sense that undergraduates live on campus in dorm-like buildings for all four years, and therefore most people understand the stereotype of each residence. For instance, row houses are highly desired for their central location on campus, chefs that cook their food, and the high concentration of upperclassmen and events that tend to forge a more social



environment. Four-class dorms, on the other hand, have many singles and two-room doubles that foster seclusion, and the range of age throughout the dorm makes it less common that people will be able to connect with their fellow residents.

It is also important to understand that people are placed in residences through a draw. While they can rank more desired residences, they are not assured their top choice. This is especially relevant because there are also tiers of draw numbers and students can only have the highest pick for one year, meaning that during other years most have to live in residences that wouldn't necessarily be their first choice. There are a few exceptions to the draw system, like Greek housing or applying to live in a cultural or educational themed house. However, despite instances of lack of agency in choice, perceived stereotypes about residences still play a particularly large role in social life at Stanford.

In order to carry out this research, I interviewed eight different students (who will have pseudonyms) living in different residences at Stanford University. Three - Mindy, Arnold, and Tucker - lived in Yost, an "independent house" (which will be denoted by a 'Y' throughout the essay) and were all juniors. Two, Justin (a junior) and Spencer (a senior), lived in the same fraternity (denoted by an 'F'). Steve, a sophomore, lived in a 4-class dorm (denoted by '4'). Peyton, also a sophomore, lived in a sorority (denoted by 'S'). Finally, Jane, a junior, worked as a Resident Assistant in a freshman dorm (denoted by 'RA'). Interviewing

in a variety of residences allowed me to investigate how stereotypes manifested themselves in different types of residences. I also specifically chose a combination of residences that have the most perceived stereotypes, like fraternities, and those with fewer, like Yost (as Mindy commented, "I don't think [people] know it exists").

Theories of Taste in Bourdieu's Distinction

In his book *Distinction* (1984), Pierre Bourdieu argues that class is not only determined through economic wealth but also social position and taste. This position is determined both by social origin and education, constructing people who act according to assigned categories. In his conclusion, Pierre Bourdieu writes that people "defin[e] themselves as the established order defines them" (471). In other words, people tend to adopt tastes and characteristics of the label society attributes to them. Bourdieu further argues that people assume and present traits in order to reinforce a specific social status. According to Bourdieu, people recognize classifications, then produce behaviors that characterize this classification.

Bourdieu's arguments reveal his stance that structure controls people's agency, as their choices have been constructed through social and educational factors. According to Bourdieu, taste "is itself a function of the conventional norms [...] in a certain historical and social situation" (30), showing how social circumstance determines presentation, not necessarily the individual. A key aspect of Bourdieu's argument is that "[forms of classification] function

below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will” (466). In other words, people are not always aware that structures have dictated how they make their decisions. Bourdieu also argues about structure versus agency in his essay about the Berber house. In this essay, Bourdieu illustrates that deeply held societal dichotomies, like those between male and female, are represented in the organization of the house. This again reveals how societal constructions can be so deeply ingrained that they present themselves subconsciously in factors like house organization.

Bourdieu’s observations about class differences also apply to Stanford residences. As Bourdieu writes, the social expectation of class impacts social performance, and my investigation shows that social expectations impact room presentation. People often subconsciously recognize these expectations and act accordingly, something that reinforces the social construct. Bourdieu also notes that everybody has a different set of constructions impacting their tastes, “defined... by the whole set of factors operating in all areas of practice” (112), exemplifying why there is no clear rule as to how one’s room will be decorated.

Rooms for Comfort

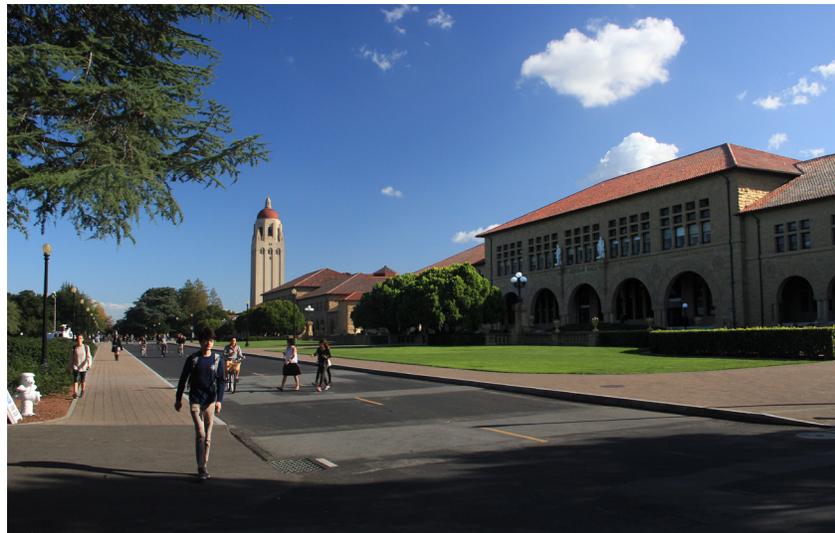
People often associate the idea of a room with the concept of comfort, and this factor guides organizational decisions. Students’ preoccupation with the comfort of their dorm rooms mirrors the ways in which stereotypes fuel expectations of the purpose of their room. While conducting my interviews, people consistently referred to the comfort of their room. However, this comfort varied between making themselves comfortable versus making other people comfortable. Tucker (Y) particularly cared whether his room felt comfortable for himself, explaining that he often liked to do work in the dining room because his room was actually too comfortable for work, which he liked. Mindy (Y) also noted that it was important for her to have her room be “comfortable and functional.” Both she and Tucker only referred to the comfort of visitors when I specifically asked them about it, and even then they mainly cared that people didn’t “find it disgusting” (Tucker). This reveals that other people’s comfort was not a primary concern for them and they therefore didn’t really care how others viewed their rooms.

Justin (F) also noted that he liked “to have my [his] room be calm and relaxing.” However, he also frequently pointed out how he wanted people in general to feel comfortable, evident by his use of “you” in descriptions of the mood. For instance, by saying “if there’s bad lighting... you won’t feel happy” he extended the comfort of his room beyond himself and towards a general population that would experience his room. As Justin lived in a fraternity and had a room that led to a balcony, people flooded his room during social events like the one I outlined in the Introduction. The social expectation of the residence,

including hosting parties, therefore indicates a concern for the comfort of those coming to the fraternity for events.

Spencer lived in the fraternity as well and reflected similar concern for the comfort of other people coming to socialize in his room. Like Justin (F), he referred to how the lighting of a room “sets the mood” and “makes it a little warmer and open to other people.” Again, he referred to the comfort of others, reflecting the social expectation of a fraternity. This expectation stems from the perceived stereotype of fraternities as a relatively extroverted group of friends who often hold social events for the campus. Those in leadership roles of the fraternity as well as students around campus therefore translated these stereotypical perceptions into expectations for fraternity members that their rooms would be presented and displayed for others.

Jane, an RA, experienced a similar expectation that her room be a place where others feel comfortable. She tried to create a space where freshmen can “come in and talk.” Like the people living in the fraternity, Jane (RA) expressed concern for the comfort of others, specifically her residents. For instance, she explained that she doesn’t like her room messy because it could make “people feel super awkward.” Again, this referred to others instead of herself because her job expected her to provide a social space for her freshmen. The social construction around this comfort in rooms therefore contributed to the seemingly personal choice of creating comfort.



Different Representations of “Social”

The focus on organizing one’s room for others reveals the different ways in which people consider their rooms to be a social space as influenced by different types of social expectations. Jane (RA) explained that she “was trying to create a very social space in [her] room” for her residents. These are people she is close to, though she explained she still had to remain in her professional role as an RA. This contrasted with Arnold (Y), who noted that his friends

come and visit him “everyday,” implying that his room was a social space. However, these people include only Arnold’s close friends. Unlike Jane (RA) and the people in fraternities, Arnold said: “I don’t care that much about how [my room] looks.” Arnold’s (Y) residence did not have a stereotype that creates an expectation as a social space for outsiders. Even though he still used his room for social purposes, the absence of expectations from outsiders created no need for a particular presentation of his room.

Steve (4) also noted the social aspects of his room; he said, “if I’m here my door is open so if people are walking by they can stop by and say hi for a second.” However, he specifically identified the difference between his case and social scenes that involve parties: “I mean this isn’t the place where like the guys are coming every Friday night so I didn’t have to like custom revamp it.” Not only does his comment about “the guys” not coming on Friday night reflect his feelings about his dorm’s stereotypical perceptions as a quiet, isolated residential environment (he commented that “it’s a damn quiet dorm and it sucks”) but it also reveals that other spaces function as social spaces of this sort.

People often consider fraternities the space for these social scenes, and Spencer, living in a fraternity, explained that he likes “a lot of people in [his] room” and again referred to ways in which he wants his room to be open to other people. Justin (F) also noted that “you want a mood that’s conducive to socializing.” He explained that he acquired the LED lights in his room specifically for the all-campus parties that his fraternity hosts. This reveals an extent to which the fraternity’s social stereotype correlates to an expectation for them to be social as well.

A social expectation also constructs a sense of unity and community within a dorm, as an external structure that controls actions. A fraternity is a group of people who are supposed to be “brothers,” and therefore a fraternity house would be a unifying feature of this. Justin (F) and Spencer (F) exemplified this idea by having a sense of what other people’s rooms were like, noting that “a lot of people have flags” (Justin) and that some people in the house liked their rooms to be private spaces. Even so, the fraternity attempted to foster a connected community. As Spencer (F) explained, “we [the fraternity] like to encourage people to leave their doors open; we bought everyone door stops.” This demonstrates the attempt to create unity throughout the space and connection among brothers. It also reveals that he was conscious of the expectations of the fraternity and wants to follow them.

Peyton was in a sorority, another group that attempts to create unity among the members. Like Justin and Spencer (F), Peyton easily compared her room to other rooms throughout the sorority house, making comments like “a lot of people have tapestries,” again reflecting that she was comfortable enough with others in her house to be

familiar with others’ rooms. People in Yost, however, did not have the same knowledge of other people throughout their house. Even though Tucker (Y) commented that “there’s an actual community” in Yost, when I asked what his room was like compared to others he responded that he “hadn’t really paid that much attention to them.” This reflects the idea that Yost had no community expectation outside of the residence itself, providing little motivation to socialize in rooms rather than just the dining halls.



Reinforcing Social Constructs

The adjustments people make to their rooms reveal the ways in which they respond to certain stereotypes. Of the spaces I observed, the fraternities and the RA’s room had the most expectations for others to see and spend time in their rooms. After the interviews, I found that these students put more time than others into the display of their rooms. Jane “basically changed everything,” and rearranged her room three or four times before she found an arrangement that satisfied her. This reveals concern for how people view her room based on her role as an RA. Spencer (F) provided furniture in addition to the standard Stanford set, and he even put in the effort to drill holes in his walls to create shelving and hang up his decorations. Justin (F) also talked about how he and his roommate “completely redesigned” the room from the way it was originally organized.

Steve (4), however, listed a few slight adjustments he made to his room but commented that “besides that [it is] mostly the same.” Similarly, Tucker (Y) and Arnold (Y) only changed their bed heights, but explained that for the most part they left the rooms the way they were. Both Mindy (Y) and Arnold (Y) also left their walls completely blank, explaining that they didn’t really care whether or not their rooms had decoration. Mindy (Y) even commented that she had pictures on her wall during her freshman year but

then she “realized [she] didn’t actually have to do that.” This not only reveals that supposed expectations shaped her decisions, but that a lack of expectation contributed to her decision to not decorate walls. In general, interviewees described the stereotype of these dorms as being a “good tier three [lowest choice in the draw]” (Tucker, Y) or for those who “got screwed over by the draw” (Steve, 4). This connects the lack of expectation in the residence to an association with a place into which people are simply placed rather than desire.

This illustrates that, in many cases, people did not have a choice over the residence that they live in. However, even factors that people do not have control over influence one’s expression in the space. For instance, while Steve (4) complained that his dorm was not social, he was also a part of this culture, as he said he was “working or sleeping” when he was in his room. Even though Steve did not choose his dorm, he was further perpetuating its reputation for being quiet by putting little effort into his room.

Structure vs. Agency

This paper engages with questions about structure versus agency, begging the question of whether individuals have complete control over their actions or the pre-existing structures dictates the individual. Justin (F), for instance, made the claim that “Especially if I were in a situation or setting where social interaction was not as much of the norm I would definitely want to put forth whatever effort it took to make it the norm.” This shows that he viewed himself as a social person in general and that this was not just a product of the fraternity stereotypical perceptions. However, Bourdieu would argue that Justin’s (F) view of himself as a social person may have been a subconscious effect of living among the social atmosphere of a fraternity for two years.

People did not have complete control over the physical space of their room as well, and therefore sometimes did not have a choice over their organization. Students frequently referred to their room’s size, like Tucker (Y), who claimed that his room this year is “better because it is bigger and better shaped,” a factor that has nothing to do with his personal organization or decoration. Jane (RA) also expressed this, saying “we didn’t really have an option on how to put the stuff” when she was a freshman. She also explained that she actually wanted to organize her room differently but the furniture did not fit in the way she anticipated. Peyton (S) also explained constraints due to the physical space, saying that “the layout of [my sorority] is weird so it doesn’t really foster a wander around into people’s room kind of deal.” Due to this, she did not have people coming to socialize in her room as often as she would have liked. However, even though her room was no longer the social space it was her freshman year, she still always had candy out and decorated for the holidays.

Granted, it is important to note that not everybody

in residences subscribed to the behavioral expectations stemming from the stereotypes. For instance, Spencer (F) noted that “there are some people who don’t want anyone in their room ever.” This shows that even though the fraternity encouraged social spaces, some people did not use their room for this purpose. Steve (4) revealed that his dorm’s reputation for being quiet did not mean that everybody lived that way, describing his neighbor’s room as “very much like a social space and not like a living space.” Even though Peyton (S) had a display of fancy shoes above her bed because she saw girls in her sorority do it the year before, she still didn’t think her room was “that standard” because she decorated her walls with paintings she had created instead of tapestries. Jane (RA) explained that not all students on staff were as concerned about making freshmen comfortable through cleanliness, noting that another RA “ha[d] like everything everywhere which is just another type of person.” Expectations from perceive stereotypes influence one’s room organization, but do not necessarily determine it. Students have had around twenty years of prior social experiences, as well as over twelve years of education, to shape them, showing that new expectations often aren’t enough to outweigh deeply ingrained social patterns and preferences.

Conclusion

When people are assigned a role or have little control over being a part of a group, they often imagine their situations based on preconceived notions. In some cases, preconceived notions are not related to the actual existence. For instance, residences have completely different people living in them every year. However, people still tend to have those expectations that have been passed down and therefore reinforce the way that such roles exist. Through my investigation, I have illustrated that people’s rooms may appear to be individual but the connection to a residence’s stereotype shows the importance of societal constructions in creating this “individuality.” Such external constructions include the idea of rooms being comfortable, different extents of social expectation in a space, as well as physical constraints. Understanding stereotypes and expectations is therefore a way in which any group, like those centered in residences on Stanford’s campus, stay somewhat consistent over time, as people conform to what the expectations were when they entered.

Bibliography

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

The Unrepresented in Environmental Debates: The Impact of Climate Change on Low-Income Transwomen of Color

by Sarah Cobarruvias

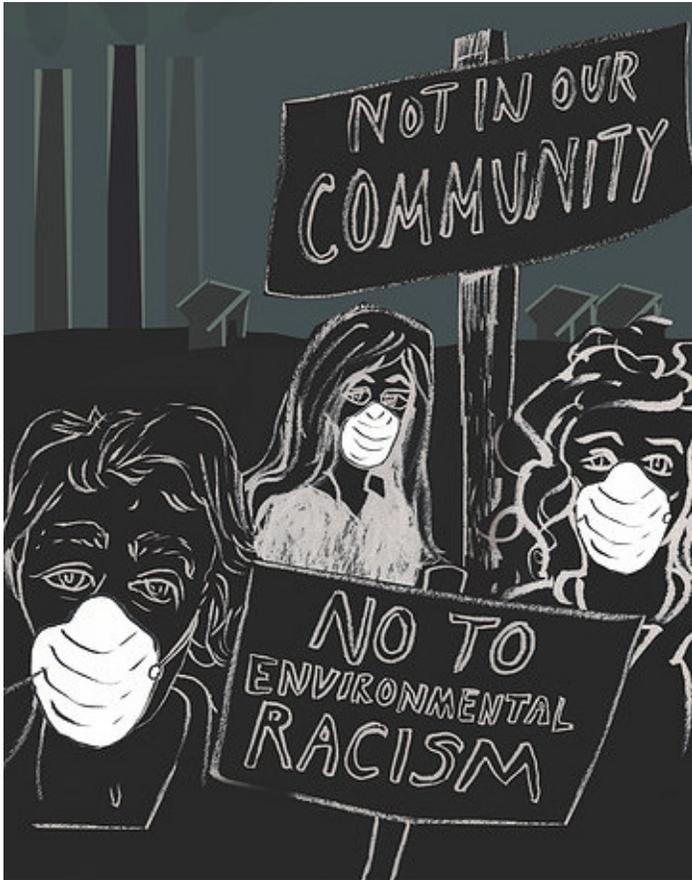
In recent years, numerous studies have proclaimed that climate change will have a direct impact on many aspects of our natural environment and social life. From rising air temperatures to increased rates of discrimination and violence, our world is witnessing the repercussions of global warming most patently than ever. While international organizations agree that marginalized populations will disproportionately suffer from the consequences of climate change, few efforts have been made to ensure that those residing at the frontlines are guaranteed equal access to resources and opportunities for survival. As we will see in this paper, low-income transwomen of color make up one of the most marginalized groups in society because they bear the brunt of the violent effects of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny. Thus, in order to make a productive course of action to confront climate change, we need to prioritize the needs of low-income transwomen of color. A few suggestions made at the end of the paper present tangible ways for us to begin the critical process of ensuring the right to a sustainable natural and social environment across all communities.

With the emergence of a multitude of studies indicating the effect of massive amounts of greenhouse gases on the natural environment, it is paramount that we first remember that our physical surroundings and social structures are intimately connected. Our natural environment shapes our social institutions, like our economy, and influences every aspect of our lives including our health, shelter, and economic opportunities. In 1992, the United Nations Rio Declaration on Environment and Development stated that all inhabitants of Earth have the right to a healthy environment. The issue with this assertion lies in that environmental risks are unevenly spread throughout the world as a result of geographic landscape, location, and social inequalities like racism, sexism, and classism (Cutter 1995). The United

Nations climate panel pointed out this fact in a report stating, “people who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally or otherwise marginalised are especially vulnerable to climate change.” The predicted effects of global warming, like longer droughts, increased sea levels, warmer air temperatures, and increased violence, will therefore disproportionately affect groups that lie at the intersections of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia (Romm 2011). Central to this paper are folks that lie at the center of these intersections of oppression: low-income transwomen of color. Given a long history of economically disadvantaged regions experiencing worse environmental quality, ignoring their security with the advent of climate change continues an intolerable tradi-

tion and undermines our commitment to ensure the security of all. Thus, we need to start paying attention to the well-being and safety of low-income transwomen of color when thinking about effective efforts to reduce the effects of climate change.

Due to a lack of research on low-income transwomen of color with disabilities and issues of transnational identification of folks outside of Western societies as transgender, this paper will focus on low-income transwomen of color in the United States specifically. Unfortunately, limited research on the specific impact of climate change on transwomen of color often results in their clustering in with women, low-income or marginalized populations, LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual) groups, gender non-conforming



not aim to replace the voices of transwomen of color but instead offers a concrete synthesis of how climate change will exacerbate current social issues and dangers already confronting low-income transwomen of color. The question of who is forgotten becomes lost in times of extreme stress and scarcity. Without the critical voices of the silenced, attempts to alleviate the effects of climate change on a global scale

consequence in depth, the increased vulnerability to violence, which currently remains legally unrecognized and socially accepted. The paper concludes with possible pathways toward alleviating the dangers currently faced by low-income transwomen of color.

The (Trans)Gendered Impact of Climate Change

To begin with, low-income transgender women of color are often “excluded from response, relief, and recovery efforts” and are not considered in evacuation procedures that safely displace them (Thuringer 2016). Thuringer refers to “Gender, Place, and Culture,” by Dale Dominey-Howes et al., which found that the LGBTQIA community did not receive appropriate warnings before, during, and after eminent storms. The community’s lack of access to news and relief sources more widely available to heteronormative refugees, like counseling and supportive communities in their new homes, made finding housing and employment in new places extremely difficult. Moreover, media reports followed religious groups who blamed the LGBTQIA community for “attracting the wrath of God with their sins” and caused further social stigmatization of low-income transwomen of color (Thuringer 2016). The aggravation of pre-existing social inequalities by environmental actions and natural storms is difficult to imagine at first, but with continued exploration we will find that they are intimately connected.

With particular attention to the effect of gender discrimination on these marginalized groups, studies have pointed to women, transgender, and gender non-conforming groups as those most affected by environmental shifts. Currently, climate change has displaced 26 million people, 20 million of which were women (Mangaliman 2015). According to a UN report released in 2009, poverty and gender discrimination make women fourteen times more likely to die in a climate-related disaster compared to men. With

groups, or communities of color. As a result, much of the data presented in the following sections will draw from these more general studies to create an interpretation of the current lives of many transwomen of color and incorporate the projected effects of climate change on these groups to show how multiple layers of racism, sexism, social stigma, and transphobia create experiences unique to transwomen of color. Additionally, this paper will not examine the effect of climate change on every facet of low-income transwomen of color’s lives but will mainly discuss its influence on experiences of violence. It is important to remember that the impact of climate change on low-income transwomen’s lives extends beyond violence; increased homelessness, decreased job opportunities, limited healthcare, and unsafe shelters are among a few challenges that will confront this community as climate change advances.

More broadly, this paper does

will continue to be biased towards the privileged and this must not be allowed. For this reason, we must begin to listen to and provide for those marginalized populations that have been predominantly ignored, starting with low-income transgender women of color. This paper suggests that only when low-income transwomen of color are appreciated and prioritized will the efforts to make the world environmentally and socially safe be genuine, productive, and successful. To examine why we must prioritize low-income transwomen of color over other marginalized groups in society, this paper will first examine how the various intersections of marginalization render transwomen of color as among the populations most vulnerable to the repercussions of climate change through a review of their current circumstances and studies of climate change that project these hardships to worsen in the near future. It will explore one particular

approximately 1.3 billion people living below the poverty threshold and about seventy percent of this estimation representing women, many argue that environmental shifts will further feminize the poor, threaten female health, and increase economic, food, and water insecurities (Denton 2002). It is worth noting that these reports that touch on the gendered impact of climate change tend to focus on its effects on women and rarely include transwomen. While this is a result of transphobia, continued discrimination, and a lack of acceptance of transwomen as women, the studies applicable to low-income women of color are also partial experiences of transwomen of color. Transwomen of color absolutely have unique experiences that set them apart from cis-gender women, but both of these groups share a lack of resources to begin with. To ensure that the nuanced experience of transwomen of color is highlighted, further examples will be provided that distinguish them from the larger category of low-income women of color.

Due to discrimination on account of race, gender, and transphobia, many transwomen of color are predominantly low-income. Each of these factors impedes them from achieving a higher social status. On account of race, transgender women of color have a greater likelihood of growing up in a middle- to lower-class family. In 2008, the U.S. Census Press Release found that the poverty rate for people of color was triple that of whites (Saffin 2011). In the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 58% of transwomen, 46% of all participants, had household incomes of under \$10K through \$50K (Grant et al. 2011). It is important to recognize that those that are low-income and marginalized have “the least capacity or opportunity to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate, or to participate in national and international negotiations on tackling climate change” (Demetriades and Esplen 133). This limited economic ability is another reason why climate change is disproportionately

affecting low-income transwomen of color. It not only limits their ability of obtaining housing in general, but also hinders their opportunities to receive natural disaster alerts and migrate in a time of crisis.

When a queer identity is layered on top of a low-income person of color, access to these resources become even scarcer. Of the 2015 USTS (U.S. Trans Survey) transwomen participants, 75% identified as either asexual, bisexual, lesbian, pansexual, or queer (James et al. 2016, 59). These added queer sexualities with their status as gender minorities force low-income transwomen of color not only to bear the consequences of poverty and gender discrimination felt by cis-gender women but also to deal with a further lack of resources due to social stigma, homophobia, transphobia, and transmisogyny. As estimated by the Organization for Refuge, Asylum, and Migration, LGBTQIA individuals suffer from higher rates of alienation, discrimination, and violent abuse based on their sexual and gender identities (Thuringer 2016). In essence, if appropriate measures are not taken to prevent these increased rates of discrimination, low-income transwomen of color will be the first to experience the negative consequences of such negligence. One major consequence resulting from greater discrimination in times of crisis is violence.

Increasing Impact of Violence and Exacerbating Vulnerabilities

In light of recent studies relating times of crisis and climate change with violent repercussions, scholars speculate that violence will spike as global warming grips society and challenges how people react under the pressure of scarce resources. In the Human Relations Area Files of 1992, Ember and Ember found that a “prolonged resource scarcity as well as the perceived threat of future hardship were correlated with increases in interpersonal violence” (5). Lekson suggests that the residual psychological effects of previous events related to climate

change are a factor that increases the possibility of violence (Harrod and Martin 2014). Accordingly, it is as much the perception of scarcity as the scarcity of resources that eventually leads to increased rates of interpersonal violence. This is only one study of many that found a direct correlation between climate change and violence. In October of 2014, the National Bureau of Economic Research made available “Climate and Conflict”, a working paper that examined 55 global studies on the relationship between climate change and violence. It drew a grim picture of the effect of drought conditions, cumulative rainfall, and, in particular, increasing temperatures on different forms of violence experienced on interpersonal and intergroup levels (Spross 2014). While the statistics vary for specific parts of the world, the researchers reported that each one standard deviation increase towards warmer global temperatures resulted in a 2.4% increase in interpersonal conflict and an 11.3% increase in intergroup violence. Further, each one standard deviation increase on the cumulative effect of rainfall increased intergroup conflict by 3.5 percent. These numbers are striking and indicative of the violent effect of climate change on human behavior, but with natural disasters entirely new effects are produced.

On the ground, a large part of the continued rise in air temperatures and more evident climate change effects is rooted in energy projects, otherwise known as ‘man camps’. Wherever these projects, like hydraulic fracturing or ‘fracking’ and oil pipelines, are found, cases of human trafficking and gender-based violence multiply (Olson 2016). After climate catastrophes, violent encounters also drastically augment due to pressure and stress, as well as increased vulnerability to gender-based violence and organized human traffickers (Olson 2016; Mangaliman 2015). For example, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research found that women who experienced gender violence in Mississippi increased from

4.6 per 100,000 women per day when the hurricane hit to 16.3 a year later while many were still displaced and living in temporary trailer homes and shelters (Olson 2016). In general, times of conflict and disaster result in increased reports of domestic violence, sexual violence, and sexual harassment (Demetriades and Esplen 2010, 135). While the research may not suggest explicit causation, it suggests a direct correlation between climate change and violence and warns us of the potential for climate change to increase the odds of violence against marginalized populations (Spross 2014). For this reason, we need to gather our resources to protect those most at risk of violent encounters and ameliorate current injustices ingrained in our society.

Given the surmounting evidence on the link between climate change and violence, prioritizing low-income transwomen of color is absolutely necessary because they have disproportionately been murdered at the hands of our society throughout history. In general, the susceptibility of low-income transwomen of color

to harassment, assault, and murder stems from a long history of media representations, toxic masculinity, stigmatization, dehumanization, and transmisogyny. Of the violence experienced by the LGBTQIA community, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program reported that 17% were transgender in 2009. Of these assaults against the transgender community, 65% were violent acts against transgender women (Saffin 2011). More recently in 2015, the United States had a record number of murdered transgender people with a reported 23 deaths (Cifredo 2016). This past year of 2016, the United States already surpassed this record high in the first 11 months with approximately 26 murders. Of these 26 murders, 22 were people of color and a predominant amount of them Black and Latina transwomen of color (Abeni 2016). According to the article “TMM Update Trans Day of Remembrance 2016,” most data surrounding murdered transgender and gender non-conforming people involve violent misgendering after death and alter the true number of crimes inflicted upon the transgender

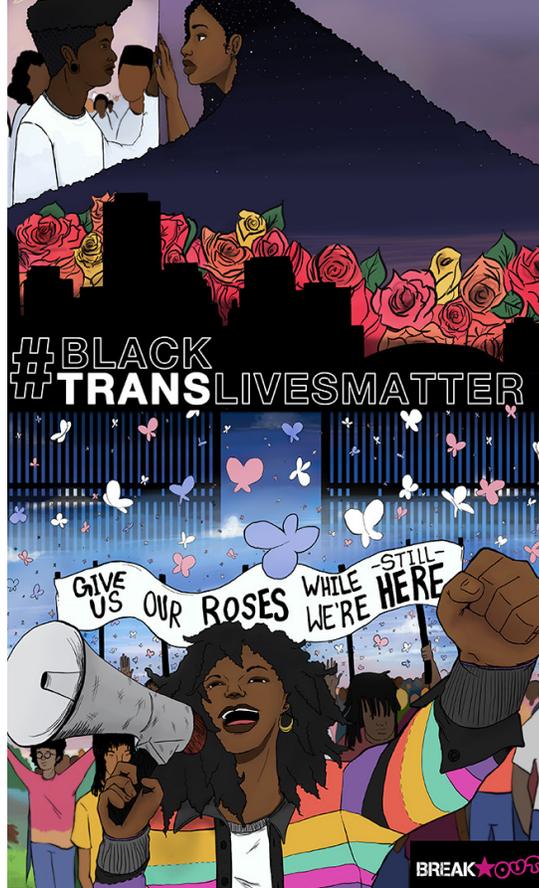
community.

According to the 2015 USTS and 2011 NTDS (National Transgender Discrimination Survey), bullying, harassment, and violence start early with 77% percent of those out or perceived as transgender and 53% of transwomen experiencing some form of mistreatment on K-12th grade school grounds (James et al. 2016, 4; Grant et al. 2011, 33). Among the USTS participants, about 54% reported verbal harassment, 24% experienced physical attacks, and 13% survived sexual assaults due to their transgender identity. As a result of transmisogyny and racism, daily forms of violence cause 17% of transwomen of color to quit school (James et al. 2016, 4). The combined effects of homelessness, little education, experiences of hate violence, and low-economic status, as well as social stigma and transphobia, allow rates of unemployment for transwomen of color, 15 percent, to exceed national rates by three times. Thus, many barriers disallow low-income transwomen of color from finding secure education, jobs, and recognition for the abuses they face everyday.



With staggering rates of unemployment for low-income transwomen of color, one in five transgender participants are pressured to work in an underground economy for survival, like sex work or the drug economy. Criminalized work, prisons, and homelessness each have a direct effect on their health and increase their risk of violent encounters with customers, law enforcement, and people on the street. Since sex work does not give its workers the protections necessary to deal with violent encounters with customers, many transwomen are afraid to contact the police when they experience harassment or violence. The social stigma attached to sex work produces apathy within law enforcement and society as individuals believe she brought it on herself for choosing sex work, or scared customers with a body that is not anatomically female, or by simply being transgender. When confronted by the police for engaging in sex work or being mistaken for practicing sex work, 89% reported being harassed, physically or sexually assaulted, and/or mistreated by law enforcement. Under these circumstances, transwomen of color rarely experience an unprejudiced legal system and understandably around 57% of transgender folks feel uncomfortable with or refuse to go to the police after violations (James et al. 2016, 14).

Considering the extreme forms and rates of interpersonal violence experienced by low-income transwomen of color on a daily basis, studies on the increased risk of violence with increased temperatures foretell a formidable future for their well-being, safety, and survival (Saffin 2011, 151). It is ever more evident that risks of violence against transwomen of color will only increase with rising temperatures and inconsistent weather patterns. Thus, it is urgent that we begin to take action now to renounce this intolerable abuse against low-income transwomen of color that remains legally



unrecognized and socially accepted, as well as rectify the fear and hate instilled by racism, classism, gender discrimination, and transphobia.

Moving Forward in the Environmental Justice Movement

In this paper, we have explored how climate change will aggravate pre-existing social inequalities and further advance the violent erasure of low-income transwomen of color that exist at the intersections of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and transmisogyny. It must be understood that issues concerning the environment are not isolated from social issues like racial justice, economic disparity, gender and sexual discrimination, prison pipelines, faulty education systems, and much more. The connections between climate change and social change may not be evident at first, but complicating environmental discussions with a social lens brings forward the voices and experiences of the less heard, those of low-income transwomen of color. Present vulnerabilities to violence caused by poverty, unemployment, racial and transmisogynistic discrimination, and criminalized

work will only be multiplied by climatic shifts and result in their imposed silence and increased vulnerability. Consequently, there are multiple efforts that need to be made now to ensure that climate negotiations do not continue to be partial on a national and international level.

In contrast to a competitive philosophy, I suggest that our first step towards creating a cleaner, safer environment for all people starts with creating community centers for low-income transwomen of color. Those with privilege must create these centers to foster solidarity and provide a safe space for support for marginalized communities in times of extraordinary hardship. It is important that these centers be explicitly for low-income transwomen of color and that privileged supporters take a step back. Any interference by more privileged groups would only continue the cycle of hierarchy and disable any productive social change. With transwomen of color in charge of these centers, allies can more productively extend support in these times of extreme change.

Secondly, low-income transwomen of color should not be relegated as vulnerable victims at the hands of an unjust society. They are the solution. Integrating their unique point of view into environmental discussions will not only relieve current social issues affecting them daily, but also alleviate projected issues resultant of climate change (Mangaliman 2015). Solution to issues that affect all peoples are too often influenced by those that can alter the reactionary policies to maintain their power in relation to others. This practice occurs now in discussions surrounding the environment as capitalism fuels policy-makers to put climate change on the bottom of the list of priorities and their debates exclude those already affected by climatic changes. By excluding those most affected and most marginalized, policy-makers facilitate the erasure of

a multitude of lives, especially those of low-income transwomen of color. In view of this potential deletion, it is imperative that those involved in climate debates contact low-income transgender women of color and integrate their suggestions. It must be known that efforts to assuage the effects of climate change will not benefit all individuals without understanding how governments and societies can make life easier and society less dangerous for low-income transwomen of color.

On top of these suggestions, we should give greater attention and support to social organizations already making positive impact on the lives of low-income transwomen of color. One such organization focused on the enriched quality of life for low-income transwomen of color is the National Center for Transgender Equality. Other helpful organizations in the movement includes the Audre Lorde Project, an organization started by Audre Lorde to promote community wellness and socioeconomic justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit,

and gender non-conforming (LGBTST-GNC) communities. Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project, which aims to nurture film-makers and create high-impact films addressing issues in queer communities, is also notable (QWOCMAP). These are only a few of the notable organizations working to change the current and future conditions of low-income transwomen of color and supporters of their movements can only help the arduous endeavor ahead.

In view of the recent inauguration of Donald Trump as the president of the United States, efforts to address climate change and ensure the safety of low-income transwomen of color need to happen now. Understanding the complex web that links society with nature is key in protecting and securing our natural world and its most vulnerable communities. As Polly Rocha, a queer transgender woman of color, proclaimed:

"Undocumented peoples, Muslims, women of color, queer people, disabled people are all going

to experience pushback more than we ever have in recent years. For the sake of my trans brothers, sisters and nonbinary folks, I must iterate that the bullseye that has been placed on trans people will only grow larger and more focused now that bigots have found themselves in the highest elected positions in the land."

Social structures are merely an extension of the environment and the current 'survival of the fittest' approach many environmental policy-makers hold will only leave transwomen of color to be first and most affected by climate change, and the least prioritized. The future of low-income transwomen of color looks formidable and dangerous and only by providing a platform for them in debates about climate change will this dangerous future be amended and efforts to mitigate climate change truly provide economic security, environmental safety, social protection, and overall welfare to all beings.

Works Cited

- "A Solidarity Letter to the Climate Justice Movement." 2016. Audre Lorde Project. Accessed 27 Dec. 2016. <http://audre-lordeproject.tumblr.com/post/97911207957/a-solidarity-letter-to-the-climate-justice>.
- Cifredo, Joanna. 2016. "Why Are So Many Trans Women of Color Murdered Every Year?" Advocate, 19 Nov. Accessed 29 Dec. 2016. www.advocate.com/commentary/2016/11/19/why-are-so-many-trans-women-color-murdered-every-year.
- "Climate and Conflict: Marshall Burke, Solomon M. Hsiang, Edward Miguel." 2014. The National Bureau of Economic Research, Oct. Accessed 27 December 2016. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20598>.
- Cutter, Susan. 1995. "Race, class and environmental justice." Progress in Human Geography 19 (1): 111-122.
- Demetriades, Justina, and Emily Esplen. 2010. "The Gender Dimensions of Poverty and Climate Change Adaptation." Social Dimensions of Climate Change: Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World. Ed. Robin Mearns and Andrew Norton. Washington DC: The World Bank. Print.
- Denton, Fatma. 2002. "Climate change vulnerability, impacts, and adaptation: Why does gender matter?" Gender & Development 10, no. 2 (2002): 10-20. doi:10.1080/13552070215903.
- Foreman, Chris. 2013. "On Justice Movements: Why They Fail the Environment and the Poor." The Breakthrough Institute, Winter 2013. Accessed 27 December 2016. <http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/issue-3/on-jus-tice-movements>.
- Geiling, Natasha. 2015. "Researchers Offer A New Way To Link Extreme Weather And Climate Change." ThinkProgress, 22 Jun. Accessed 27 Dec. 2016. <https://thinkprogress.org/researchers-offer-a-new-way-to-link-extreme-weather-and-climate-change-1f247ef569c3#.smn43xl28>.
- Goldenberg, Suzanne. 2014. "Climate change: the poor will suffer most." The Guardian, 30 March. Accessed 27 December. www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/mar/31/climate-change-poor-suffer-most-un-report.
- Goldenberg, Suzanne. 2014. "Why are so many white men trying to save the planet without the rest of us?" The Guardian, 9 May. Accessed 27 December 2016. www.motherjones.com/environment/2014/05/white-men-run-big-environmental-organizations.
- Grant, Jaime, Lisa Mottet, and Justin Tanis. 2011. Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. National Transgender Discrimination Survey. http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf
- Harrod, Ryan P., and Debra L. Martin. 2013. "The Bioarchaeology of Climate Change and Violence: A Temporal and Cross-Cultural Approach." Bioarchaeology of Climate Change and Violence SpringerBriefs in Anthropology, 2013. 1-11. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-9239-9_1.
- Haskell, Bonnie Elizabeth. 2014. "Sexuality and Natural Disaster: Challenges of LGBT Communities Facing Hurricane Katrina."

- SSRN Electronic Journal, May 10. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2513650.
- James, Sandra, et al. 2016. The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. National Center for Transgender Equality.
- Robert Jensen. 2014. "Ecological and Social Implications of Trans and Climate Change." *Dissident Voice: a radical newsletter in the struggle for peace and social justice*. September 12th. Accessed Dec. 26, 2016. <http://dissidentvoice.org/2014/09/ecological-and-social-implications-of-trans-and-climate-change/>.
- Koronowski, Ryan. 2016. "Climate change's growing impact on people experiencing homelessness." *Think Progress*. 29 June, Accessed 29 December 2016. <https://thinkprogress.org/climate-changes-growing-impact-on-people-experiencing-homelessness-219e2b8ba90d#.5vno4eajjo>.
- "Making Shelters Safe for Transgender Evacuees." 2011. National Center for Transgender Equality. 1 Aug. Accessed 29 Dec. 2016. www.transequality.org/issues/resources/making-shelters-safe-transgender-evacuees.
- Mangaliman, Jill. 2015. "Why gender and climate justice are inextricable." *The Seattle Globalist*, 13 October. Accessed 28 Dec. 2016. www.seattleglobalist.com/2015/10/13/gender-and-climate-justice-are-inextricable/42455.
- Nelson, Valerie, Kate Meadows, Terry Cannon, John Morton, and Adrienne Martin. 2002. "Uncertain predictions, invisible impacts, and the need to mainstream gender in climate change adaptations." *Gender & Development* 10, no. 2 (2002): 51-59. doi:10.1080/13552070215911.
- Olson, Jessica. 2016. "The Violence Behind Dirty Fuels." *Sierra Club*. 28 November. Accessed 28 Dec. 2016. www.sierraclub.org/compass/2016/11/violence-behind-dirty-fuels.
- Pineda, Ceci. 2015. "The Dangerous Erasure of Queer and Trans* People of Color from the Climate Movement." *Bluestockings Magazine*. 5 May. Accessed 27 Dec. 2016. <http://bluestocking-smag.com/2015/05/05/the-dangerous-erasure-of-queer-and-trans-people-of-color-from-the-climate-movement/>.
- QWOCMAP. 2016. *Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project*. Accessed 30 Dec. 2016. www.qwocmap.org.
- Rocha, Polly. 2016. "Trans Panic: Coping with a Trump Presidency and the Shifting Political Climate." *San Antonio Current*, 9 Nov. www.sacurrent.com/the-daily/archives/2016/11/09/trans-panic-coping-with-a-trump-presidency-and-the-shifting-political-climate. Accessed 29 Dec. 2016.
- Romm, Joe. 2011. "Climate Story of the Year: Warming-Driven Drought and Extreme Weather Emerge as Key Threat to Global Food Security." *ThinkProgress*, 21 Dec. Accessed 27 December 2016. <https://thinkprogress.org/climate-story-of-the-year-warming-driven-drought-and-extreme-weather-emerge-as-key-threat-to-global-b926a8264d3e#.xtgv276dw>.
- Romm, Joe. 2012. "Must-See Video: Steroids, Baseball, and Climate Change." *ThinkProgress*, 8 February. Accessed 27 Dec. 2016. <https://thinkprogress.org/must-see-video-steroids-baseball-and-climate-change-9c28dd6205e1#.nrow8djmt>.
- Saffin, Lori. 2011. "Identities Under Siege: Violence Against Transpersons of Color." *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*. Ed. Eric Stanley and Nat Smith. Oakland: AK Press. Print.
- Schlosberg, David. 2003. "The Justice of Environmental Justice: Reconciling Equity, Recognition, and Participation in a Political Movement." *Moral and Political Reasoning in Environmental Practice*, Ed. Andrew Light. MIT Press. pp. 77-106.
- Serano, Julia. 2016. *Whipping Girl: a Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.
- Spade, Dean, and Craig Willse. 2013. "Marriage Will Never Set Us Free." *Organizing Upgrade*, 6 Sep. Accessed 27 December. <http://www.organizingupgrade.com/index.php/modules-menu/beyond-capitalism/item/1002-marriage-will-never-set-us-free>.
- Spross, Jeff. 2014. "Climate Change And Rising Violence Are Linked, According to 55 Scientific Studies." *ThinkProgress*, 23 Oct. Accessed 26 Dec. 2016. <https://thinkprogress.org/climate-change-and-rising-violence-are-linked-according-to-55-scientific-studies-27bb7f7a6a18#.zvkoems38>.
- The Audre Lorde Project. 2016. *Audre Lorde Project*. <http://alp.org>. Accessed 30 Dec. 2016.
- Abeni, Cleis, et al. 2016. "These Are the Trans People Killed in 2016." *Advocate*. Accessed 30 December 2016. <http://www.advocate.com/transgender/2016/10/14/these-are-trans-people-killed-2016#slide-0>.
- Thuringer, Cara. 2016. "Left Out and Behind: Fully Incorporating Gender Into the Climate Discourse." *NewSecurityBeat*. 22 Aug. Accessed 27 Dec. 2016. <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2016/08/left-behind-fully-incorporating-gender-climate-discourse/>.
- Balzer, Carsten, and Carla LaGata. 2016. "TMM Update Trans Day of Remembrance 2016." *Trans Respect Versus Transphobia Worldwide*, 9 Nov. Accessed 29 Dec. 2016. <http://transrespect.org/en/tmm-trans-day-remembrance-2016/>.
- "Transgender Americans Face Staggering Rates of Poverty, Violence." 2015. *Movement Advancement Project*, 18 Feb. Accessed 28 December 2016. <http://www.lgbtmap.org/news/understanding-transgender-issues-unfair-price-release>.

Erin Hawley (Continued from page 19)

- right." *CNN website*, Nov. 3. Accessed Jan. 1, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/03/opinion/green-assisted-suicide/>.
- Helman, Cecil. 1981. "Disease versus illness in general practice." *The Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, 31(230), 548-552.
- Jauhar, Sandeep. 2014. "When Doctors Need to Lie." *The New York Times website*, Feb. 22. Accessed Nov. 14, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/opinion/sunday/when-doctors-need-to-lie.html>.
- Maynard, Brittany. 2014. "My Right to Death with Dignity at 29." *CNN website*, Nov. 2. Accessed Nov. 14, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/opinion/maynard-assisted-suicide-cancer-dignity/index.html>.
- McCormick, Thomas. 2013. "Principles of Bioethics." *University of Washington website*, Oct. 1. Accessed Dec. 5, 2016. <https://depts.washington.edu/bioethx/tools/prinpl.html>.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Margaret M. Lock. 1987. "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1 (1): 6-41. doi:10.1525/maq.1987.1.1.02a00020.
- Wynia, Matthew. 2004. "Invoking Therapeutic Privilege." *Virtual Mentor* 6(2). doi:10.1001/virtualmentor.2004.6.2.msoc1-0402.
- Yuill, Kevin. 2014. "Why Brittany Maynard made the wrong decision." *Spiked website*, Nov. 5. Accessed Jan. 1, 2017. <http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/why-brittany-maynard-made-the-wrong-decision/16147>.

Author Bios



Allison Perry

Allison Perry is a senior majoring in anthropology and minoring in Spanish and urban studies. Her academic interests include social and environmental justice, food systems, and urban sociality. Her hobbies include reading (novels and pop social-science), drawing, playing a variety of sports, outdoor recreation, and cooking and baking.



Erin Hawley

Erin Hawley is a junior Human Biology major concentrating in inequalities in children's health. On campus Erin is an HIV and sexual health counselor and researches patient experiences in radiation oncology. She focuses on obstacles to obtaining excellent health care and plans to eventually participate in inclusive health care as a physician.



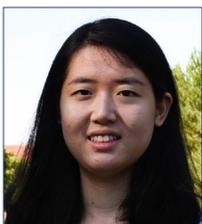
Kylie Fischer

Kylie Fischer a senior majoring in anthropology with minors in history and biology. Originally from a town near Boulder, Colorado, she absolutely loves anything outdoors and will take any opportunity to explore and take photographs. In her years at Stanford, Kylie has been heavily involved in Stanford's outdoor program, particularly SPOT (Stanford Pre-Orientation Trips) and SOOP (Stanford Outdoor Outreach Program). She also played in the LSJUMB (Stanford band) and the women's club soccer team.



Sarah Cobarruvias

Sarah Vanessa Cobarruvias is a senior majoring in medical anthropology and minoring in global studies with a concentration in South Asian studies. Her research interests include issues faced by women of color and queer communities of color. She hopes to work with community-based non-profit organizations after graduation and make sustainable social change during the precarious four years of Donald Drumpf's presidency.



Yuan Zhang

Yuan Zhang is a senior majoring in biology and minoring in anthropology. She is very much devoted to her cardiac stem cell research project at the Stanford Cardiovascular Institute. Born and raised in Beijing, she volunteers at Arbor Free Clinic as a Mandarin interpreter and patient health navigator to serve the local underserved community. She also tutors Chinese and plays with Stanford Chinese Music Ensemble. She finds anthropology appealing as it provides her frameworks to examine medical research and health care from social, cultural and political perspectives.



Solveij Rosa Praxis

Solveij Rosa Praxis is passionate about how community organizing and ethnographic research can help us interpret and build accountable, nurturing political and economic systems. At Stanford and her home of Austin, TX, she tries to balance being a caring friend with building movements for labor and immigrant justice. She loves her Stanford Student and Labor Alliance community at Stanford, is grateful for the support of the Department of Anthropology and her adviser Professor Thiranagama, and excited to graduate from the department with Honors as she writes her thesis about high-tech workers. She hopes that more students will continue critical studies of Silicon Valley, developing our understanding of how our work and social lives are shaped by the tech industry. She would be happy to hear from any students or community members hoping to build inter-community consciousness of economic justice at Stanford and in the Bay Area.

CONTEXTS

STANFORD UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL IN ANTHROPOLOGY
SPRING 2017

Department of Anthropology

Tel: 650-723-3421

Fax: 650-725-0605

E-mail: anthropology@stanford.edu

Web: <https://anthropology.stanford.edu>

<https://contexts.stanford.edu>