

New Errands:

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Welcome to New Errands!

The Eastern American Studies Association and the American Studies Program at Penn State Harrisburg are pleased to present the Fall 2019 issue of *New Errands*, an online journal that publishes exemplary American Studies work by undergraduate students.

Seeking to develop the next generation of Americanists, *New Errands*' mission is both to provide a venue for the publication of important original scholarship by emerging young scholars and to provide a teaching resource for instructors of American Studies looking for exemplary work to use in the classroom.

New Errands is published semi-annually, after the end of each academic semester. The goal of this timetable is to collect and publish essays produced during the previous term, so that they can be made available as quickly as possible for use in the following term. We encourage both self-submission by undergraduate students and nominated submissions by instructional faculty. Essays must have an American focus, but can employ a variety of disciplinary methods. Submissions can be emailed as Word documents to: newerrandsjournal@gmail.com or submitted directly through the *New Errands* website.

Essays can be of any length, but they must have a research focus. Any visual images should be placed at the end of the manuscript, and tags should be placed in the text to indicate the intended placement of each image. Manuscripts should conform to Chicago guidelines.

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For further information about the Eastern American Studies Association, including the annual undergraduate roundtable and the EASA undergraduate honors society, please visit: <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/eastern-american-studies-association>.

A Message from the Editor—

The Fall 2019 edition of *New Errands* contains 5 fantastic essays spanning an abundance of methodological categories. Ranging in topic from the modern film *Phoenix* to Bob Dylan’s “Desolation Row,” the Girl Scouts, Hurricane Katrina, and Woodrow Wilson’s role in the formation of the League of Nations, these essays exemplify the wide interdisciplinary breadth of American Studies scholarship. The format of the essays themselves differs drastically as well, including everything from shorter term essays to Senior theses—strong evidence that all forms of scholarship can contribute to important scholarly conversations.

This exciting collection of papers contains compelling research and cultural analysis—a truly wonderful foray into America’s important contemporary and historical issues. We hope that you will find in these papers strong examples of undergraduate writing that models interesting assignments and approaches.

Thank you to the authors who submitted this exemplary work and to the readers who engage with it.

Evan Davis

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Life Cycle of the Phoenix: Phoenix, the Tanakh, Gender Performance, and Depictions of Gehenna

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Christian Petzold's film *Phoenix* follows the story of Nelly Lenz, an ex-cabaret singer and Jewish survivor of Auschwitz. Just before or during the liberation of her camp, Nelly is shot in the face. Nelly is then reunited with her best friend, Lene, a fellow survivor, who takes her to get facial reconstruction surgery. The plastic surgeon presents her with pictures of popular female stars to model her new face after, but Nelly requests that her face look like it did before she was detained. The surgeon cautions her that the results are never exact, but Nelly remains resolute. Ultimately, however, she is disappointed with the result; she looks like her old self, but that is her dilemma: the result of the surgery only *resembles* her old face.

After she fully recovers from surgery, Nelly moves with Lene back to Germany, where they learn that as the sole survivor of her family, Nelly is set to inherit a large amount of money. Lene suggests that they collect the inheritance and use it to immigrate to Palestine together. Nelly, however, has become fixated on reuniting with her gentile husband, Johnny. Lene tries to persuade Nelly to go to Palestine with her instead because she believes Johnny had something to do with Nelly's arrest, a notion that Nelly finds ludicrous. Nelly then sets out to locate Johnny, and she eventually finds him at the Phoenix—the club at which he is working. She is overjoyed to see him, but he does not recognize her, telling her that she resembles his late wife. Shocked and disappointed, she tells him that her name is Esther. Johnny proposes to Esther on a whim that they would work together to claim his former wife's inheritance and split the money. As per his plan, Johnny would teach Esther how to play Nelly believably, and once she could play her convincingly, they would collect the inheritance. Nelly/Esther is initially unsure but, despite Lene's disapproval and continued warnings that Johnny was complicit in Nelly's arrest, she eventually agrees to Johnny's plan. To help Esther impersonate Nelly, Johnny buys her dresses and shoes similar to what Nelly used to wear, and has Esther dye her hair and learn to do her makeup the

way Nelly used to do hers. He plans to stage a reunion between them at the train station, along with some of their pre-war friends, all of whom are under the impression that Nelly was killed. He believes the fashion and makeup to be vital to the plan; Nelly will get off the train looking exactly how she did before she was arrested—beautiful and picturesque. Esther protests that no camp survivor would look that way, but Johnny replies that he knows very well how survivors look: they are burned, have gunshot wounds, or are otherwise disfigured, and no one wants to look at them. His goal is not for Esther to look like she just stepped out of a death camp, but instead for everyone to recognize Esther as Nelly, so that there is no doubt in anyone's mind that she is Nelly. Throughout their journey, Esther questions Johnny about his relationship with Nelly, finding her ruse to be a nostalgic and romantic way to relive their relationship. To Esther's dismay, however, Johnny is cagey about his and Nelly's relationship, especially in regard to her arrest. Despite Johnny's ambiguity concerning his role in Nelly's arrest, Esther convinces herself that he must have been pressured to give her up, so it was not a real betrayal.

After spending several days with Johnny, Nelly/Esther returns to the apartment she shares with Lene. Their housekeeper reveals that Lene committed suicide and gives her the note that Lene left for Nelly. Along with the note, Lene left her a copy of a divorce certificate, revealing that Johnny had filed for divorce the day of Nelly's arrest by the Nazis. Despite this revelation, Esther goes through with Johnny's plan, and meets him and their friends at the train station. After their reunion, a friend invites everyone to their house, and Nelly sings for them while Johnny accompanies her on the piano. Johnny clearly recognizes her voice, and then notices the serial number tattooed on her forearm, finally realizing that "Esther" was Nelly all along. He abruptly stops playing, but Nelly finishes the song, and then leaves.

Phoenix is a film that deals very explicitly with the concept of identity; mistaken/false identity is the central framework of the narrative. However, upon a more in-depth analysis of *Phoenix*, it is revealed that the film deals very closely with notions of trauma and gender performance and the blending of these important concepts. In this paper, I explore trauma, gender performance, and their interactions through a contemporary reinterpretation of the Biblical story of Esther.

Part I: Birth; Esther & Biblical Allegory

Phoenix draws heavy narrative influence from the book of Esther. In this Biblical story, the king of Persia executes his wife and sets out to find a new one by having a beauty contest in which the most beautiful women from each state in his empire would compete for his hand. Esther, a Jew, wins the contest, but her cousin/father-figure, Mordechai, warns her not to reveal her identity as a Jew. Esther goes on to use her position as the king's wife to save her people from extermination at the hands of the king's prime minister, Haman.¹ If we examine the plot of *Phoenix* through Esther's lens, we can observe very explicit parallels. Johnny takes on the role of the king of Persia, killing his wife, Nelly (Queen Vashti) by secretly divorcing her and giving her up to the Nazis, who will kill her in Auschwitz. Though Nelly does not physically die in Auschwitz, it destroys her in every other conceivable way. Nelly's "death" can be properly articulated by Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz and author of the famous memoir, *Night*:

"Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. "Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.

"Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

"Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never."²

After Nelly's "death," Johnny wants to claim her inheritance, so he takes Esther as his replacement for Nelly, much like how the king became bored without Vashti, so he took the Biblical Esther as her replacement. Nelly hides her identity as a survivor (and implicitly as a Jew) in order to gain Johnny's favor, much like how Esther hid her identity as a Jew to maintain her status in the king's eyes.

In the Biblical story, Esther uses her status

¹ sefaria.org, "Book of Esther," *A Living Library of Jewish Texts*, www.sefaria.org.

² Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), 34.

to stop the extermination of the Persian Jews. In a post-holocaust narrative like *Phoenix*, however, how does Esther save her people, especially when she is the sole survivor in her family? In *Phoenix*, I contend that the Jewish people are saved by Nelly/Esther's choice to embrace her identity as a Jew. Prior to her arrest, she was a cabaret singer of Jewish descent, but as an Auschwitz survivor, she has had Jewishness forced to the forefront of her identity; she is no longer of Jewish descent, she is a Jew. For most of the film, Nelly is in denial of this fact. She wants desperately to go back to her life as if nothing had changed; but in the final scene, when she reveals to Johnny her true identity via her tattoo from Auschwitz, she completely embraces her newfound identity as Esther, the Jew, not Nelly, the singer. Nelly, the singer's, death was the birth of Esther, the Jewish survivor; Esther saved her people by embracing her people and acknowledging both her personal trauma and the trauma that affected her entire culture, her people. Jonathan Safran Foer's words from his work *Everything Is Illuminated* effectively articulate this idea:

"Jews have six senses: touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing ... memory. While Gentiles experience and process the world through the traditional senses, and use memory only as a second-order means of interpreting events, for Jews memory is no less primary than the prick of a pin, or its silver glimmer, or the taste of the blood it pulls from the finger. The Jew is pricked by a pin and remembers other pins. It is only by tracing the pinprick back to other pinpricks – when his mother tried to fix his sleeve while his arm was still in it, when his grandfather's fingers fell asleep from stroking his great-grandfather's damp forehead, when Abraham tested the knife point to be sure Isaac would feel no pain – that the Jew is able to know why it hurts.

"When a Jew encounters a pin, he asks: What does it remember like?"³

Foer provides an apt description of how Esther "saved" the Jewish people in *Phoenix*; by choosing to accept her new identity as a Jew, and as a survivor—someone who could not be killed, could not be defeated by genocide—she is *preserving* the Jewish people, she is *preserving* Jewish history, she is *living memory* of her people.

³ Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated* (London: Penguin Books, 2016).

Part II: Death; Destruction of Gender

While the Biblical story of Esther sets up the narrative framework of the film, there is much more to *Phoenix* than being a simple retelling or re-imagining of this tale from the Bible. *Phoenix* transforms Esther from a story of resistance to an equally compelling story about gender performance. In her book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir notes “[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes a woman,” referring to the process of gender socialization that women undergo.⁴ According to de Beauvoir, women are not born with a compelling material difference from men; society, however, teaches both men and women what is expected of women. de Beauvoir says we learn what is and is not acceptable behavior for a woman through both punishment (experienced first-hand or observed) and imitation of our role models and peers. This landmark contention is the basis of the writings of gender theorist and postmodern philosopher Judith Butler, who took de Beauvoir’s assertions even farther, contending that gender itself is a dramaturgical construct of our culture, and exists as a series of acts that we perform. Butler famously states that gender in and of itself can be likened to a kind of socially acceptable, socially enforced, habitual drag:

“And yet, I remember quite distinctly when I first read Esther Newton’s *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* that drag is not an imitation or a copy of some prior and true gender; according to Newton, drag enacts the very structure of impersonation by which *any gender* is assumed [...] Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation.”⁵

Johnny’s plan for Esther’s impersonation of Nelly is the embodiment of Butler’s gender performance theory. When she writes that drag “constitutes the... way... genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn and done,” Butler is contending that gender is not something you *are*, but rather something you *do*. Femaleness is not inherent—femaleness and womanhood are a series of acts and behaviors one is conditioned to believe is appropriate for her to perform. Johnny’s entire plan rests on the hope that Esther can properly

4 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949).

5 Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, edited by John Storey (London: Routledge, 2018), 230.

impersonate Nelly; this manifests in Johnny buying her clothes, shoes, makeup, perfume, and hair dye that Nelly used before she was detained. Esther must perform her gender the way Nelly did. She must adorn herself with all the trappings of womanhood that she did in her past life. Esther argues that people will not believe her performance because Holocaust survivors do not look like the ideal woman; however, Johnny rightly argues that it does not matter what real Holocaust survivors look like, but instead that Esther’s performance is in *believable/acceptable drag*. In other words, it does not matter that Holocaust survivors are scarred mentally and physically, but that the performance of Nelly’s gender is *deemed correct by onlookers*. Transgender philosopher, theorist, and actress Natalie Wynn discussed this “aesthetic” of gender performance in a constructed dialogue between two of her characters, Tabby and Justine—two transgender women that represent the two prevailing views of passing and aestheticism in regard to gender.⁶ Below are two relevant points in this dialogue:

Justine: Do you remember that debate between Blaire White and [Natalie Wynn]? [...] This was before she transitioned, and in that debate, Blaire [another trans woman youtuber] looked like she had two X chromosomes and the other one looked like this awkward dude in an anime wig [...] The pink wig lost that debate so bad, it was embarrassing to watch.

Tabby: Not really. I mean, she was right, and her arguments were better.

J: [...] Arguments don’t matter. How pretty you are matters. [...] If you’re a trans woman in the public eye, what matters is one thing and one thing only. [...] You have to look like a fucking woman.

[Tabby goes on to argue that women have many looks; some are fat, some have masculine attributes, etc]

J: And what is society’s opinion about those [...] women? [...] That’s why these women are marginalized.⁷

and

J: The world we live in is not a philosophical world [...] it’s all about transforming your life into an enviable spectacle. Who cares if you cry yourself to sleep every night? Who cares;

6 Natalie Wynn, *The Aesthetic. Contrapoints*, YouTube, September 19, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlafqR5QkDM.

7 Wynn, *The Aesthetic. Contrapoints*.

no one sees that. They only see the show you're putting on [...] In history there are ages of reason, and there are ages of spectacle, and it's important to know which you're in. Our America [...] is not ancient Athens. It's Rome. And your problem is you think you're in the forum, when you're really in the circus.⁸

Wynn's character Justine expands on Butler's philosophy; not only is gender habitual drag, it is also a performance deemed acceptable by spectators, and it is positive optics by an implied audience that make gender real and valid. Gender is not only a performance, but it is also a societally approved role in a grand performance in which we are all actors. Though Nelly is not a transgender woman, Wynn's expansion on Butler's theories can be accurately applied. Much like a transgender person, Nelly undergoes a psychological shift similar in profundity to transition; trans women and Nelly are both *reborn*. The trauma of imprisonment in Auschwitz profoundly transforms Nelly; Nelly's Vashti-inspired, phoenix-like death and rebirth as Esther are manifested in a complete identity and social change not unlike the change transgender people undergo when they come out. Nelly's presentation changed drastically after her rebirth as Esther; not only did her physical face change, but she also stopped performing womanhood in the way that she did in her past life. Before Johnny forced the notions of ideal womanhood upon her, Esther did not, in Wynn's words, "look like a fucking woman," not because she did not appear to have XX chromosomes, but because she failed to uphold traditional notions of female presentation. Esther failed to perform acceptable drag until she began impersonating Nelly.

A crucial aspect of Johnny's plan is that Esther perform her role of Nelly perfectly. What Johnny fails to notice is that when they were together, Nelly's womanhood was not inherent to her; she was performing her gender for an audience, that audience including Johnny. The role Esther is expected to play is not truly Nelly, it is the show that Nelly put on for Johnny to please him. The traits that Johnny thought essential to Esther's performance are not her personality, nor even experiences or anecdotes about their marriage, which Esther believes are important; instead, the traits Johnny believes are important are her style of dress, her makeup, and the way she does her hair. Johnny cares only for Nelly's aesthetic, rather than her true essence.

⁸ Wynn, *The Aesthetic. Contrapoints*.

Esther's performance of Nelly then takes on a feeling of Baudrillardian hyperreality; Esther is imitating an imitation of something that never existed.⁹ Esther is not imitating Nelly, but an image of Nelly. Nelly is imitating something that never existed; she is imitating her perception of Johnny's ideal woman.

Part III: Rebirth; Representation of the Unimaginable

The death of Nelly's gender performance is symptomatic of her larger social death. Esther's birth signifies the death of Nelly's ability to relate to society in a manner that is deemed acceptable. Not only is she incapable of performing drag acceptably without assistance and pressure from Johnny, she is fundamentally incapable of interacting with her society and interpreting her life correctly, with "correctly" in this context meaning in a fashion that does not call attention to her trauma, or her Jewishness. In short, she is incapable of properly reintegrating into post-genocide society in a way that does not endanger the status quo. Post-genocide reintegration is a phenomenon not often talked about and is not as well-documented or as well-known as the excruciating details of the Holocaust itself. In many fictional stories dealing with the Holocaust, and even many nonfiction materials dealing with it as well, the story ends with liberation. For example, one of the most undocumented phenomena of post-Holocaust Europe is Jewish resistance and revenge. Even the most notable event of this period is not well documented; this of course was the post-liberation partisan work of the group, *Nekamah*, which sought revenge for the lives lost in the Holocaust. Their plot is worthy of note because of its radical stance—they did not only seek to kill the direct perpetrators of the Holocaust (SS officers, the Gestapo, etc.), but they also contended that the Holocaust could not have been executed had it not been for the complicity of the German public. The *Nekamah* then devised two plans, Plan A: to poison the German water supply and kill a sizable population of Germans in retribution (this plot was foiled), and Plan B: to poison a Displaced Persons camp that housed former SS and SA officers (this plot was executed, but they did not manage to kill any officers).¹⁰ This extremist reaction often comes as

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, edited by John Storey (London: Routledge, 2019), 409-415.

¹⁰ Berel Lang, "Holocaust Memory and Revenge: The Presence of the Past," *Jewish Social Studies* 2, no. 2 (1996): 1-20, www.jstor.org/stable/4467468.

a surprise, as the prevailing narrative about Holocaust survivors is one of passive victimhood, as seen in the fate of *Phoenix*'s Lene, Nelly's best friend who committed suicide. Findings have shown that there is an increased likelihood of not only mental illnesses such as depression, cognitive disturbances (difficulty in concentration, memory, etc.), and suicide ideation, but also physical illnesses such as diseases of the heart, lungs, stomach, and skeletal system.¹¹ However, other studies have shown that despite this increased vulnerability, Jewish survivors have exhibited higher rates of emotional resilience in the face of trauma than other control groups tested.¹²

I subtitled this paper, “*Phoenix*, the Tanakh, Gender Performance, and Depictions of Gehenna;” so far, I have focused on the narrative of *Phoenix*—mostly its structure and thematic meaning. However, films neither exist in a vacuum nor outside of cultural norms and patterns. I have presented statistics on Jewish survivors and accounts of Jewish resistance because I believe that it is important that we examine why the Holocaust is depicted in media the way it is, and why the prevailing narrative about it is what it is. גֵּהֶנָּה, or “Gehenna” is the Hebrew word for hell; in the remainder of this section, I will examine the ways in which the horrors of the Holocaust are depicted in *Phoenix* and related media.

Speaking anecdotally as a person who received an American public school education, I can testify that there is indeed a grotesque fascination with the Holocaust in classrooms; students, and people in general, are captivated by the unimaginable atrocities committed during the Holocaust, in a way that almost commodifies the suffering of the Jewish people. This is due in part to the depiction of the Holocaust in American (and therefore widely distributed global) media. The way we consume media about the Holocaust and even the way we learn about the Holocaust in history classes revises and repackages genocide as something far away, an object of fascination, rather than a war

crime, an atrocity that happened within living memory.

This critique of Holocaust media is not unheard of; in their book, *Frames of Evil*, Joan Picart and David Frank harshly critique the popular film *Schindler's List* for its voyeuristic point of view, and its use of traditional techniques of the horror genre.¹³ Such horror techniques mentioned include the depiction of Nazis in the film as monstrous and inhuman *people*, something Picart and Frank contend was pioneered by Alfred Hitchcock in the film *Psycho*. They argue that like Norman Bates, the “bad guys” in *Schindler's List* and many other Holocaust movies become a caricature of evil, behaving in such unthinkable, perverted, and outlandish ways that we are able to distance ourselves from them. However, they are masked behind a veneer of realism because they are people instead of actual monsters like Nosferatu and Frankenstein. The Nazis in films like *Schindler's List* act as a comforting element in these Holocaust narratives. They are so violent, so cruel, so inhuman that we forget the real evil of events like the Holocaust, or even the real evil at play with serial killers; they are humans influenced by systems of thought that go unchecked in our societies. Take, for instance, Norman Bates as a representation of the serial killer. Norman is a monstrosity—he is a vampire that is not supernatural. Characters like Norman comfort the male viewer by distancing serial killings not unlike Norman's from misogyny, which is something that realistically can never be done; the most common victims of serial killings, specifically sadistic/sexual killings, are female sex workers. However, by portraying serial killers as deranged, male audiences do not have to recognize their own complicity in misogyny. This is the same thing at work with the infusion of the horror genre into Holocaust film; Nazis are portrayed as outlandish villains, caricatured in their nature, and the audience is lulled into false comfort knowing that they could never be capable of such violent, brutal antisemitism. This, of course, is a farce; the average German may not have shot Jews in the face, but the average German *did* vote the Nazi party into power for pragmatic, economic reasons like job security. Though every German may not have personally torched synagogues, they did benefit from the Holocaust, they did steal Jewish property, and they did give their Jewish neighbors up to the authorities.

11 Diana Clarke, “Holocaust Experience and Suicidal Ideation in High-Risk Older Adults,” *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 12, no. 1 (2004): 65–74, doi:10.1176/appi.ajgp.12.1.65.; John J. Sigal, “Long-Term Effects of the Holocaust: Empirical Evidence for Resilience in the First, Second, and Third Generation,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 85, no. 4 (1998): 578–585.

12 Zev Harel et al, “Psychological Well-Being among Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants in Israel,” *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 1, no. 4 (1988): 413–429, doi:10.1007/bf00980364.

13 Caroline Joan Picart and David A. Frank, *Frames of Evil: The Holocaust as Horror in American Film* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006).

This aspect of Nazi Europe is explored in Paweł Pawlikowski's 2013 film, *Ida*, which follows the journey of a young woman orphaned by the Nazi occupation of Poland who finds out that she is Jewish after being raised in a convent. In this film, it is revealed that her parents and cousin were not killed by the Nazis but were killed by their neighbor who was hiding them. After Poland was freed from Nazi occupation and became a Communist state, they found that revealing that they had hidden a family of Jews to be a liability. The Communist government was killing those they found to be enemies of the state, and the neighbors hiding *Ida's* family believed that if the government caught wind of their resistance to the Nazis, they would be more likely to subvert the Communist regime. As a result, they killed *Ida's* family, for the same reasons that a German may have sold out their Jewish neighbor; it was the safer choice, and human decency was too much of a risk.

Phoenix, like *Ida*, takes a decidedly different approach than *Schindler's List*. Though Johnny is a Nazi collaborator, he is not portrayed as a monstrous being; though the narrative is not forgiving to him, he is portrayed in a much more realistic way. He is the aforementioned every man, the average German. He was married to a Jewish woman but ultimately he allowed the Nazis to get away with genocide. He is not an evil, perverted, domestic abuser, he is a man that did not stand up to injustice, just like millions of other Germans. This is what is ultimately so moving about *Phoenix*; when Nelly naively justifies Johnny's betrayal to herself by reasoning that he was pressured into giving her up, the viewer understands that Johnny didn't give her up because he was forced to, nor did he give her up because he wanted to out of some violent, caricatured antisemitism that he was harboring. He gave her up for pragmatic reasons; he did not want to go to jail, it was too hard and risky to keep her hidden, and their marriage was not worth the social stigma or ostracization. And it is this unfeeling practicality that is so painful for Nelly, and so painful for the audience to witness. Johnny's complicity in Nelly's trauma, his complicity in Nazism, the ease with which he became a collaborator exposes the potential in the viewer to make the same mistakes. In Jane Campion's film, *The Piano*, she uses sex scenes to expose voyeurism inherent in cinema, and inherent in the viewing practices of our culture; in *Phoenix*, Christian Petzold uses Johnny's rational betrayal to expose the complicity of

the bystander.

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Girl Scouts of the Progressive Era: A Literature Review

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Scholars of the Girl Scout movement have given much attention to its formative years, which corresponds roughly to the Progressive Era in the United States. Scholarship on the Girl Scouts is generally an extension of children's and women's studies. The experts from these fields have analyzed the goals, influences, and ideals of the early Girl Scouts to achieve a strong understanding of how the foundation of the organization affects its current state, as well as how Progressive Era Girl Scouting reflected ideas of the time.

These ideas and goals, however, are not universally agreed upon in the scholarship. There are multiple points of disagreement within the literature of the field; despite the fact that most scholars are using the same available materials as research sources, they draw relatively different conclusions. The tension between progressive female advancement and the preservation of conservative values, for example, is a dichotomy that these researchers continue to study. Other scholars go a completely different route, discussing the Americanization efforts of the early Girl Scouts, arguing whether it was an extension of female-led activism, or an effort to recruit immigrant girls to shape them into the ideal American woman. This literature review highlights these overlaps and differences in the field's scholarship, focusing on the three main focal points of the Progressive Era Girl Scouts that scholars tend to hone in on: tradition, modernity, and Americanization.

Modernity and Feminism in the Girl Scouts

The scholars of the Girl Scout movement seem to agree that the organization, to some degree, propagated modern ideals of gender, girlhood, and equality. Many cite the aspect of independence that the Girl Scouts promoted for their members. Rebekah Revzin, author of "American girlhood in the early twentieth century: The ideology of Girl Scout literature, 1913-1930," argues that the proof of the Girl Scout's modernity can undeniably be seen through their emphasis on personal goals and self-sufficiency during an era

that viewed weak women as more desirable.¹ Revzin also discusses a counterargument to her claim that the Girl Scouts were a progressive organization: the handbook devoted a significant amount of its pages to housework, making it reasonable to assume that the Girl Scouts were very traditional. Revzin contends that a complete analysis of the handbook renders an entirely different impression. The Pre-World War II Girl Scouts handbook "contains a significant amount of material that challenges the more conventional feminine doctrine espoused at the time" and empowered young girls to be self-reliant, goal-oriented, well-educated, and strong.²

Revzin also cites the financial literacy aspect of the Girl Scouts as further proof of the organization's modernity, arguing that it taught girls to support themselves and become independent. Revzin connects the financial independence to the fact that the Girl Scouts advocated for professional careers and higher education for women. Mary Rothschild, author of "To Scout or to Guide? The Girl Scout-Boy Scout Controversy, 1912-1941," also argues that the Girl Scouts were more Progressive; they challenged gender roles much more than their male counterparts. The Boy Scouts, Rothschild says, focused on the traditional aspects of masculinity: outdoor adventure, strong physicality, independence, and citizenship.³ For girls, these were new areas of exploration the Girl Scouts granted to them.

Many scholars note that the Girl Scouts gave girls a way to experience independence and outdoor adventure like boys had been able to do for so long. Lauren Tedesco in particular focuses on the masculine identity of the Girl Scouts as evidence for its modernity in much more depth than other scholars. Her article "The Lost Manhood of the American Girl: A Dilemma in Early Twentieth-Century Girl Scouting" highlights the militarism in the Girl Scouts as proof that the Girl Scouts were more Progressive. Tedesco cites intense drills, military-esque scouting uniforms similar to the Boys Scouts', military-inspired medals, and the instruction of Army-inspired signaling

¹ Rebekah Revzin, "American girlhood in the early twentieth century: The ideology of Girl Scout literature, 1913-1930," *The Library Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (1998): 268.

² *Ibid*, 268.

³ Mary Rothschild, "To Scout or to Guide? The Girl Scout-Boy Scout Controversy, 1912-1941." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 6, no. 3 (1981): 120.

codes as evidence that the Girl Scouts had a definitive masculine influence. She states the inclusion of these militaristic elements like uniforms and drills “opened an imaginary portal to a realm of ritual and service from which women were excluded” since women were not allowed in the military.⁴ It also gave Girl Scouts a chance to have a similar experience as the Boy Scouts, showing that the organization was taking steps towards gender parity. In the same vein, Tedesco argues that the Girl Scouts firmly taught girls how to “prepare [themselves] physically and mentally for whatever circumstances might require” by emphasizing safety knowledge, first aid training, fitness, and observation skills.⁵ These skills, Tedesco argues, highlighted the self-sufficiency and individualism that was crucial to the masculine and Progressive heritage that was supposedly inherent in the Girl Scouts.

Traditional Notions of Gender in the Girl Scouts

Scholars of the Girl Scout movement have noted the traditional notions of domesticity and femininity, as opposed to its Progressive ideals, associated with its formative years. Although the focus shifted to a more scientific, efficient, and business-like attitude towards housework and child rearing, according to Laureen Tedesco, the author of “Progressive Era Girl Scouts and the Immigrant: Scouting for Girls (1920) as a Handbook for American Girlhood,” there was no question that the Girl Scouts believed that the duty and destiny of the American girl was to be a wife and mother. Some scholars, like Rothschild, even state that the proper instruction of housework was *central* to the Girl Scout program.⁶ Multiple scholars also highlight the fact that the Girl Scout organization of the Progressive Era never formally stated their opinion on gender equality or women’s rights, yet keep very evident in their writings their views that housework is women’s work. Even scholars who argue that the Girl Scouts were more Progressive, like Revzin, concede that a significant portion of the literature of the organization was focused on traditional femininity.

The experiences of non-Caucasian, middle-class, able-bodied American girls in the Girl

4 Laureen Tedesco, “The Lost Manhood of the American Girl: A Dilemma in Early Twentieth-Century Girl Scouting,” *Children’s Folklore Review* (2018): 93.

5 Ibid, 95.

6 Rothschild, 115.

Scout organization is interpreted in different ways by experts of the Girl Scout movement. Some scholars, like Revzin, use the existence of African American, disabled, and immigrant Girl Scouts as proof that the organization was more Progressive and ahead of its time. She argues that since these girls could participate in the organization, and that they made no formal distinction or segregation between the troops, that the Girl Scouts had a vision of equality well beyond that of the early twentieth century. Laureen Tedesco argues otherwise. Her research highlights the absence of non-Caucasian girls from the handbook and states that they were likely in the handbook as models of American identity, suggesting that perhaps the Girl Scouts were not as modern as other scholars have concluded.⁷

Americanization and the Girl Scouts

Americanization and patriotism were a focus of many Progressive Era reformers, and thus are a focus of some literature regarding Progressive Era Girl Scouts. With an influx of immigrants in the country, activists, many of whom were women, focused their charitable efforts on acculturating immigrants to American culture through hygiene, patriotism, and self-reliance. Some scholars of the Girl Scout movement argue that this female-centered vein of Americanization and patriotism were primary focuses of the Girl Scouts. A main proponent of this idea in the field of Girl Scout research is Laureen Tedesco, who posits that most Girl Scout scholars have given little attention to the organization’s intended audiences. She takes the Girl Scout handbook and analyzes it in a completely different light than most scholars, saying that the domesticity throughout the handbook was not simply a reflection of the times but rather “a vision of home-oriented American womanhood that complemented the public-sphere activism the 1920 handbook advocated in its passages on safeguarding community health.”⁸

She even mentions other Girl Scout scholars like Revzin and Rothschild, saying that they, along with the field as a whole, have paid little attention to the supposed true goals of the organization: Americanization and patriotism. She argues that the Girl Scout movement was an extension of many of the female-led

7 Laureen Tedesco, “Progressive Era Girl Scouts and the Immigrant: Scouting for Girls (1920) as a Handbook for American Girlhood,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2006): 351-352.

8 Ibid, 351.

immigrant and public health activism occurring during the Progressive Era. Tedesco suggests that the handbook's guides to hygiene for the girl and her future family provide evidence of the Girl Scouts' political and activist motives: "Girls were to grow up knowing proper childcare methods, nutrition basics, principles of germ warfare, and medical reasons to care for their own bodies as well as political strategies for securing healthy conditions for themselves and other children."⁹ Tedesco draws parallels between this domestic instruction and the maternalist and Americanization efforts of women during the early twentieth century. These activists promoted traditional gender responsibilities to America's growing immigrant population, and the Girl Scouts were to be the next generation of those activists.

Other scholars argue that the Americanization efforts of the Girl Scouts were meant to imbue foreign girls with American values, patriotic regimens, and proper domestic routines that would allow immigrant girls to dissociate from their own culture and grow to be a modern American housewife. Leslie Hahner, author of "Practical Patriotism: Camp Fire Girls, Girl Scouts, and Americanization," discusses this viewpoint at length in her research. She references Laureen Tedesco's work, saying that although she did highlight the Americanization efforts of the early Girl Scouts, something she says most scholars of the field unfortunately do not touch on, Tedesco mainly focuses on white, middle-class girls who "implemented Americanization measures to embody those 'womanly' values."¹⁰ Hahner instead chooses to focus on the immigrant recruitment efforts of the Girl Scouts and similar girls' organizations, arguing that they wanted to educate immigrant girls in American ways in order to pass on this way of life to their families and eventual children.

Hahner ties in the aforementioned aspect of domesticity in the Girl Scouts, saying that it was actually a reflection of immigrant anxieties in the United States. Scholars like Revzin and Rothschild typically discuss domesticity as a reflection of traditional ideals of the time period, while Hahner sees this as a way that the Girl Scouts taught domestic values of cleaning and hygiene as an extension of

⁹ Ibid, 349.
¹⁰ Leslie Hahner, "Practical Patriotism: Camp Fire Girls, Girl Scouts, and Americanization," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5, no. 2 (2008): 117.

the Americanization efforts, largely to combat the fear of the supposed dirty and disease-ridden Old World and bring immigrant girls to an American standard of living.

Conclusion and Implications

The academic literature on Girl Scouting in the early twentieth century is as varied and diverse as the field itself. All of these scholars referenced the same primary sources, like the handbook and magazine, yet they drew vastly different conclusions about the goals and implications of this organization. Nonetheless, the field's research still tends to focus on supposed tradition or modernity in the organization, as well as the Girl Scouts' efforts to instill patriotic values in young girls, both American and foreign. Something that could be extended upon in the field is the experience of African American, Native American, low-income, and non-abled girls who participated in the Girl Scouts during the Progressive Era. This topic is touched upon by both Revzin and Tedesco, but not fully investigated. Perhaps further literature could be developed by scholars in the field to get an idea of the unique experiences and obstacles that these marginalized groups faced in the early Girl Scouts. Another way the literature could be further developed would be through using sources other than what scholars seem to focus on; rather than relying mainly on the Girl Scout Handbook and their publications, perhaps scholars could analyze sources such as diaries from members of the organization at the time or accounts of the Girl Scouts written by those outside of the organization. These sources could provide fresh perspectives on the subject and would shed light on the organization in a way that the handbook cannot.

Perhaps there is a reason as to why research in the Girl Scouts of this era is so extensive, despite how niche the topic is. Reflecting on how a youth organization for young girls felt about gender, immigration, patriotism, and equality gives one a unique glimpse into how the ideals of the Progressive Era translated into everyday life for American women and girls. One could argue that this research is vitally important in showing how ideas of Americanization and Progressivism were imparted to youth, in a way that cannot be captured in history textbooks or by political theorists. The attitudes and implications seen in the Girl Scouts of the Progressive Era extend

far beyond the organization itself. They reflect ideas and attitudes possessed by American society of that time period and give one a glimpse into the direction in which modernism, tradition, and patriotism were headed by the end of the Progressive Era.

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Bob Dylan's America: American Culture on "Desolation Row"

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When considering contemporary American culture, music is often a cultural category that provides not only entertainment, but also pertinent commentary. For those who lived through the 1960s, they would share certain thoughts about their experiences; however, those who did not can relate to similar themes. One of the most prolific songwriters of the twentieth century whose lyrics described the undercurrents of American culture is Bob Dylan. Hailing from the turbulent 1960s, Dylan is most remembered for his protest songs advocating for equal civil rights for African Americans and warning about the Cold War's eminent dangers. While these specific songs are critical to contextualizing both Dylan's canon as well as the events of the 1960s, his lyrics also provide direct commentary about his concerns with aspects of American culture. These concerns are especially evident on his 1965 album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and are also present throughout later chapters in his career. This paper will evaluate Dylan's commentary on *Highway 61 Revisited*, especially the song "Desolation Row," as an excoriating indictment of American culture during the 1960s, a theme that remained critical in his work throughout his career.

In his career, Bob Dylan has experienced several distinct periods which characterize his works. In the beginning stages of his career in the early 1960s, Dylan was most well known as a folk singer with powerful protest songs. These classic songs were pivotal because they reflected growing American concerns over the omnipresent and looming Cold War and the struggles advocated for in the civil rights movement. This music was critical because it provided a soundtrack for the major concerns facing the lives of many Americans through cultural practices. While protest songs were especially prevalent in Dylan's early career, his next phase included a transition from folk music into folk rock. This shift is most recognizable as Dylan "going electric" at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. At this event, Dylan disregarded his beloved folk community and played rock and roll music with an electric guitar. Although the audience

did not receive this performance particularly well, it is symbolic of his next foray into exploring his roots as a rock musician and connecting different themes in American culture to one another.

What Dylan explored at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival became most well-known on his 1965 album *Highway 61 Revisited*. At its outset, this album is a direct commentary about American culture due to its title. The title of the album encourages listeners to consider the famous route which stretched the United States and included stops in Dylan's hometown Hibbing, Minnesota and in various spots once home to blues musicians.¹ This factor is significant because as Dylan shifted away from folk music to rock and roll, he was heavily influenced by many of these blues musicians, which include Robert Johnson, Charley Patton, and Muddy Waters, among several others. If listeners trace this route, its origin rests in the Mississippi Delta region, where many of these blues musicians hailed. In turn, listeners can anticipate various sounds traveling along this route. At the same time, the album's title and content also encourage the listener to reconsider what constitutes American culture. In other words, this album and many later works demonstrate how African American cultural forms, particularly music, were not only used but also appropriated to create what was defined then in the 1960s and what continues to represent contemporary American culture today. Many of the stylistic elements present on *Highway 61 Revisited* are intrinsically linked to the African American musical tradition.² Dylan uses this material, however, to celebrate the genres, culture, and heritage of Highway 61 and the influence these artists had on developing his own catalog. As many historians note, Dylan's record company did not like the album title because it was confusing; however, his title encourages listeners to reconsider American culture and to "revisit," recognize, appreciate, and celebrate the different features which comprise the United States.³ Dylan's infusion of blues resonated with Americans during the 1960s and made the album a commercial success, even as Dylan critiqued American culture.

To understand "Desolation Row," it is import-

1 Greil Marcus, *Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 167.

2 Dennis McNally, *On Highway 61: Music, Race, and the Evolution of Cultural Freedom* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014), 428.

3 Marcus, 167.

ant to decode its title. From the outset, the song's title suggests that Desolation Row is a place filled with hope and despair in which Americans have limited chances of improving their livelihoods. Many scholars and fans claim that the inspiration for the song's title comes from two novels—*Desolation Angels* by Jack Kerouac and *Cannery Row* by John Steinbeck. During Dylan's initial zeitgeist in the early 1960s, Beat Generation writers like Kerouac were heavily influential on American youth and would later be used as justification for the emerging counterculture movement. According to historian Sean Wilentz, the Beat influences were critical in both pieces of literature, which made it appealing to Dylan.⁴ It is likely that Dylan was considering Kerouac's work when creating "Desolation Row" because when asked about the location of this place, he suggested it was in Mexico, which is one of the plot settings for *Desolation Angels*.⁵ The book is interesting because throughout the novel, which is largely based on Kerouac's own life, he is often straddling the major problems facing American culture in the Cold War era. These ideas would be influential for someone like Dylan who was interpreting the world and infusing his beliefs about culture through song. It is important to note that Beat writer Allen Ginsberg was also a major influence on Dylan's writing, with the song containing Ginsberg's stream of consciousness style.⁶ Likewise, *Cannery Row* is based on a street in Monterey, California which features a line of different cannery shops selling sardines, which would later be referred to as "Cannery Row" due to Steinbeck's novel. While this location does not necessarily imply harm, it does not sound particularly pleasant. There is no indication that either of these works shaped the titles for or content of Dylan's other songs on *Highway 61 Revisited*; however, the influences of Kerouac and Steinbeck on Dylan is critical to understanding and interpreting his lyrics.

Based on the images from both *Desolation Angels* and *Cannery Row*, it is evident that "Desolation Row" is not a decent place for Americans to visit. Rather, Dylan's vision of "Desolation Row" constitutes a dangerous place in the vanguard of American culture filled with seedy forms of entertainment. This

4 Sean Wilentz, *Bob Dylan in America* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 82.

5 McNally, 426.

6 Clinton Heylin, *Revolution in the Air: The Songs of Bob Dylan Vol. 1: 1957-73* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 301-302.

place likely includes rampant crime and prostitution throughout the area. While contemporary American culture did not completely evoke these types of activities, Dylan's dramatization of the United States in peril illustrates that he was concerned about what cultural practices Americans celebrated and at the same time what societal issues they ignored.⁷ According to Dylan, "Desolation Row" can harm Americans who are quick to accept these cultural forms which will more than likely destroy American culture. Dylan demonstrates the danger of this type of culture through punishing certain characters in the song, such as Casanova being harmed due to simply coming to this destination.⁸ The severity of his punishment suggests the growing fear that this type of dangerous American culture would permeate throughout the nation, at least judging by Dylan's portrayal it in 1965. It reflects many of the tensions that existed during the 1960s when American culture was greatly threatened, placing the nation on the fringes of becoming the new "Desolation Row." Even though it is a rock and roll song, "Desolation Row" is not a worthwhile place to celebrate American culture.

In the first verse of "Desolation Row," Dylan sharply criticizes lynching as a form of entertainment. He writes "They're selling postcards of the hanging / They're painting the passports brown."⁹ In this line, Dylan refers to the celebration of lynching that was prevalent in the United States for much of the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. During lynchings, which were most prevalent in the American South, white citizens would gather together and murder African Americans for alleged crimes they committed, completely ignoring due process. Dylan specifically references a lynching which occurred in Duluth, Minnesota, nearby his hometown of Hibbing, in 1920 in which thousands of white citizens stormed a local prison and lynched three African American men.¹⁰ While lynching was not as prevalent of a problem in Minnesota as it was in other states, Dylan reflects upon the dark nature of lynchings in the United States since they still occurred in the 1960s. Furthermore, Dylan criticizes American culture for its glorification of these lynchings. He describes in this lyric a 'postcard,' referring to an individual taking a

7 Marcus, 168.

8 Bob Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 182.

9 Ibid, 181.

10 McNally, 426.

photograph of the 1920 Duluth lynchings and then printing them for people to share with others.¹¹ Dylan suggests that Americans are not celebrating the correct virtues of their culture, instead acting inhumanely. The action of sending postcards of lynchings was very common in the United States during the heyday of lynching activity and Dylan uses this image to introduce the problematic nature of American culture during its past and into the 1960s. Lynchings still occurred frequently during the 1960s, so Dylan recognized this imagery would resonate with listeners.

At the same time, Dylan's lyrics also represent the challenges concerning how Americans spend their leisure time by emphasizing the struggles between highbrow and lowbrow culture. This theme will be prevalent in other sections of this paper; however, Dylan represents this debate when considering American culture. The argument is reflective of tensions that arose in the nineteenth century regarding how people spent their leisure time. A representation of lowbrow culture would be the establishment of Coney Island in the late nineteenth century, which encouraged working and middle class Americans to leave New York City for a day and spend time at a carnival-like atmosphere for family entertainment.¹² Many Americans thought that the absence of these types of experiences for these groups of Americans would lead to further unrest. Dylan most directly echoes this sentiment in the line "And the riot squad they're restless / They need somewhere to go."¹³ This may seem like a fun time, but this entertainment is not viewed in a sophisticated manner like other cultural practices. Coney Island is a particularly effective analogy to explore Dylan's lyrics since he references circus imagery when he states, "the circus is in town."¹⁴ This is important to understanding "Desolation Row" because Dylan uses this imagery to portray American culture as a chaotic space with negative connotations. This imagery also resonates with lynching, which represents a form of cultural entertainment that should not be celebrated. The tensions regarding lowbrow culture are prevalent because "Desolation Row" is the type of culture that Dylan views as the future of the United States in the 1960s. A circus suggests the notion of chaos, a space that contains entertainment which does not enhance

11 McNally, 426.

12 John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 7.

13 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 181.

14 Ibid, 181.

American culture but rather deconstructs the meaning and significance of it. Dylan emulates these concerns through his use of this imagery in his lyrics.

Dylan's commentary also portrays the growing fears that existed for many Americans in the 1960s. Following World War II, American culture reflected the ominous threats of the Cold War and the constant fear of Communism overpowering democracy. Even though these events did not occur, many Americans were fearful of Communist states, especially the Soviet Union, because these powerful nations had the capability of destroying others with nuclear weapons. Dylan scholar Mike Marqusee notes "in the sixties in the United States of America, to be young was to be constantly challenged, frequently insecure, often frightened; it was to be torn by multiple desires, thrown into the cauldron of history ill-prepared, and often ill-guided."¹⁵ With a title such as "Desolation Row," the word "desolation" implies that there is a sense of destruction that is looming ahead for many Americans. Dylan writes in the song "Now the moon is almost hidden / The stars are beginning to hide."¹⁶ This scene suggests that the dreams and aspirations of many Americans are disappearing, perhaps due to the looming threats from Cold War tensions. He further sings "The fortune-telling lady / Has even taken all her things inside."¹⁷ The imagery of a fortune-telling lady packing away her business implies that the future does not look optimistic and thus customers will not want to partake in spending their money on lowbrow entertainment if they will not be provided with an optimistic outlook. Although these are simply interpretations of Dylan's lyrics, it is evident that American culture would suffer if Americans continue to pursue the vices present in "Desolation Row."

Dylan implies that under this new American culture, people will soon become degraded. Dylan shows these concerns and fears through his reference to Albert Einstein. Einstein is an important figure due to his significant scientific accomplishments; however, Dylan chooses to portray Einstein as someone lost in the perplexities of American culture. He writes "Einstein, disguised as Robin Hood / With his memories in a trunk."¹⁸ In the United States of "Desolation Row,"

15 Mike Marqusee, *Wicked Messenger: Bob Dylan and the 1960s* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 2.

16 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 181.

17 Ibid, 181.

18 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 182.

Einstein is not recognized for his past achievements and contributions to science but instead must spend his time disguised as a different individual. While there is no direct understanding of Einstein's presence in the lyrics, it is plausible that Dylan uses him to represent the growing tensions regarding the building of arms during the Cold War. Einstein had a vast knowledge about nuclear power at a time when the presence of nuclear warfare was increasing, especially during World War II. Even though Einstein was not involved in various projects such as the Manhattan Project, Dylan's reference still captures the wonder that many individuals like Einstein had about different objects or even locations such as the song's setting.¹⁹ Moving forward to 1965 when this song was written and a time when many Americans were fearful of nuclear attacks from the Soviet Union, it is understandable that some Americans would not appreciate Einstein's knowledge. In "Desolation Row," Einstein is an outcast—"He looked so immaculately frightful / As he bummed a cigarette / Then he went off sniffing drainpipes."²⁰

These descriptions are not positive; Einstein represents a symbol of individuals who might cause damage to American culture. Dylan's interpretation of Einstein is not a question of evaluating this specific character but rather selecting an identifiable individual and making them a representation of problems resulting from America's fear of nuclear power, ultimately requiring these individuals to disguise themselves.

Besides Einstein, Dylan also references other characters in "Desolation Row" who are primarily included to critique American culture. He alludes to characters such as Cain and Abel as well as the Hunchback of Notre Dame when he states, "All except for Cain and Abel / And the Hunchback of Notre Dame / Everybody is making love / Or else expecting rain."²¹ First, Cain and Abel are two individuals from the Bible, the first two sons of Adam and Eve. They are particularly noteworthy because Cain murdered his brother Abel. These individuals are influential because this story in the Bible provides a groundwork for what not to do in Christian teachings. At the same time, the Hunchback of Notre Dame refers to the main character, Quasimodo, in the 1831 novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* by French novelist Victor Hugo. This character is significant because he is ordered to kid-

nap a gypsy named Esmeralda for Claude Frollo, the Archdeacon for Notre Dame. Dylan reflects on each of these figures in "Desolation Row" because they are participating in noteworthy activities that could alarm others. Some also suggest that these reflections imply that both characters are the results of unfortunate events, which amount to little in the present.²² Despite these considerations, however, many Americans living in the song's plot setting are non-observant to these mischievous activities. As the line suggests, they will likely be preoccupied with some other task, whether that be having sex or just simply avoiding adverse weather conditions. There are many components of this song that seem out of place; however, as historian Sean Wilentz notes, these characters are used to represent the chaotic reality of life during the 1960s and add meaning to one another.²³ Through the inclusion of these figures, Dylan shapes his concerns about American culture not paying attention to what else is happening in society.

Throughout this piece, Dylan presents "Desolation Row" as a luring place that makes many Americans intrigued. Some of these images might be out of sheer curiosity but could also be in amazement that American culture has several different problems that need to be addressed. There are many characters throughout the song that are observing the occurrences on "Desolation Row" in amazement. For example, Dylan ends the first verse with the line "As Lady and I look out tonight / From Desolation Row."²⁴ Americans cannot help but evaluate the problems they are witnessing firsthand in their culture. Dylan mimics the sense of wonder many Americans had in the 1960s when they observed a society confronting challenges amidst the Cold War. At the same time, Ophelia, a character from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, is described with the lyrics "She spends her time peeking / Into Desolation Row."²⁵ Ophelia's experiences are like the other responses in that it is impossible for Americans to ignore the problems that permeate their culture. Many of the characters Dylan references are personified to express their concerns about the culture of "Desolation Row," which Dennis McNally describes as "both the last home of the authentic and also hell,

22 Daniel Wolff, "Postcards of the Hanging." *Oxford American*, no. 80 (2013): 8.

23 Wilentz, 82-83.

24 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 181.

25 Ibid, 182.

19 Marcus, 173.

20 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 182.

21 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 181.

the junkyard of all American culture.”²⁶ These characters serve as a conglomeration to indicate the problems and anxieties Dylan has with the United States’ trajectory. Dylan also invites listeners into the song to experience the chaos of American culture when he states, “You can hear them blow / If you lean your head out far enough / From Desolation Row.”²⁷ Dylan echoes the fact that Americans want to know what major events are occurring and this lyric elicits this behavior from his devoted record listeners and concert attendees. This diction could also be an invitation for later generations to gain a snapshot of the events that made the 1960s turbulent. Regardless, Dylan’s lyrics demonstrate how Americans are lured and intrigued by the shock and awe that exists within their societies during this period and beyond.

Regarding Ophelia, Dylan also uses this character to represent Americans who give in to their vices and partake in uncelebrated cultural practices. When Ophelia is presented in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, she is a dignified character and noble person. Yet Dylan distorts her image by describing Ophelia not as a noble person, but essentially as a prostitute. He says “Her profession’s her religion / Her sin is her lifelessness / And though her eyes are fixed upon / Noah’s great rainbow / She spends her time peeking / Into Desolation Row.”²⁸ Referring to Ophelia as lifeless suggests that her fate in the United States is doomed and there is no hope for a better tomorrow. This idea was prevalent for many Americans during the 1960s because, as mentioned earlier, there was immense anxiety concerning what type of future would exist for the United States. It would be especially difficult for Americans such as this warped caricature of Ophelia to succeed in the world if they are already lifeless and consumed by the vices of American life, like prostitution. Earlier, Dylan sings “For her I feel so afraid / On her twenty-second birthday / She already is an old maid / To her death is quite romantic / She wears an iron vest.”²⁹ Her life seems hopeless, even at a young age, reflecting how many other Americans might have felt during the 1960s. Dylan uses this imagery to reflect on the pessimism many Americans felt as they embraced new cultural changes which threatened their society.

Dylan’s song refers to numerous tensions that

26 McNally, 426.

27 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 182.

28 Ibid, 182.

29 Ibid, 181.

relate to American culture accepting lowbrow cultural forms. Ophelia’s inclusion in Dylan’s “Desolation Row” is also significant due to the historicism surrounding Shakespeare productions in nineteenth century American culture. According to historian Lawrence Levine, Shakespeare was considered to be a form of popular culture in the nineteenth century; however, this soon shifted and became a highbrow cultural practice following the Astor Place Riots, in which many people were killed over the selection of an English actor rather than an American.³⁰ Dylan’s inclusion of Shakespeare is important because it symbolizes that a cultural practice that once was enjoyed by many is now only cherished by a select few, representing a shift in American cultural values. These references to lowbrow culture are also evident in the second stanza of the lyrics, in which characters are juxtaposed with one another. One of the major characters who appears in this song is Cinderella. Unlike many characters, Cinderella is unique because there have been various interpretations of her character, including interpretations from Brothers Grimm, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and Disney. When referencing Cinderella, Dylan writes “Cinderella, she seems so easy / ‘It takes one to know one,’ she smiles / And puts her hands in her back pockets / Bette Davis style.”³¹ Cinderella represents a poor working class woman yet on the other hand is portrayed as a stylish princess. These distinctions are critical in Dylan’s work because they represent the contrasts between highbrow and lowbrow culture. Cinderella symbolizes the middle ground between these two different approaches. Later in the stanza, after the kerfuffle dies down in the plot, Dylan describes “And the only sound that’s left / After the ambulances go / Is Cinderella sweeping up / On Desolation Row.”³² It does not matter what a person’s status is in society because at the end of the day, if problems such as those that occur on Desolation Row continue, everyone will eventually need to deal with them. This concept resonates with ideas from Progressive era thinkers such as Edward Bellamy, who described in *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* that the rich and wealthy are supported by the poor and will not be able to fend for themselves if they must work. The problems facing American culture in the 1960s impacted many different groups of individuals, and Dylan echoes this idea

30 Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 63-65.

31 Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 181.

32 Ibid, 181.

in “Desolation Row.”

Dylan also evaluates the tensions between highbrow and lowbrow culture through the inclusion of several literary figures—specifically Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. Both individuals are most remembered as early-twentieth century modernist poets. According to Richard Thomas, Eliot’s *The Waste Land* was influential to Dylan’s work, especially “Desolation Row,” because both writers draw from similar influences regarding the content of their writing.³³ When Eliot and Pound are referenced in the song, they are aboard the sinking Titanic, attempting to contextualize the chaos. The fact that the song is closely modeled after *The Waste Land* is noteworthy because it provides an examination of American culture following the disillusionment after the end of World War I. This idea resonates in Dylan’s work because he was also concerned about the many challenges facing Americans during the 1960s, such as the growing Cold War tensions. Both writers were aware of the cultural changes facing Americans, and therefore sought to emulate their ideas through writing. In a way, the location of “Desolation Row” is like a “waste land” in that both contain people filled with hope and despair as well as anxiety about the future.

What is also unique about the reference to T. S. Eliot’s work is the extended consideration of tensions between highbrow and lowbrow American popular culture. In *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot also makes several references to cultural figures from both realms, similar to Dylan. Dylan juxtaposes the image of Eliot and Pound sinking on the Titanic with an image of Calypso singers making fun of them.³⁴ In general, calypso music is a type of music originating from the Caribbean region that is fused together with African rhythms. While not necessarily a lowbrow entertainment form, Dylan demonstrates the cultural differences between the authors and musicians. In turn, this could resonate with listeners in the 1960s who would be encouraged to consider all of their differences with others during turbulent period. By placing Pound and Eliot on the sinking Titanic while Calypso singers laugh about the situation, it implies that Dylan believed that American culture was deteriorating to a point of being unsalvageable during this period.³⁵ Dylan does not only

³³ Richard F. Thomas, *Why Bob Dylan Matters* (New York: Dey Street Books, 2017), 16.

³⁴ Wilentz, 83.

³⁵ Ibid, 83.

refer to these cultural differences strictly in this scene, but also throughout the rest of “Desolation Row.” While it may not be obvious to listeners, these differences signify the problems and anxieties Dylan fears Americans will face in the future.

Within the verse containing the sailing of the Titanic, Dylan also refers to American protest. This inclusion is not surprising considering most of Dylan’s music prior to *Highway 61 Revisited* was primarily protest songs. In the verse, Dylan writes “And everybody’s shouting / ‘Which Side Are You On?’”³⁶ This line refers to the protest song “Which Side Are You On?” written in 1931 by Florence Reece. According to an article from *The New York Times* at the time of Reece’s death in 1986, the song refers to a coal mine strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, which also involved her husband Sam Reece.³⁷ As the title suggests, Reece is imploring American listeners to choose between supporting the rights of laborers or the coal mine administration. Dylan’s placement of this title in this verse is intriguing because listeners who understand the historical background of the Titanic sinking might think the passengers on the boat were simply calling out to one another. Yet Dylan is subtly reminding listeners that active protests are still present in the 1960s, even if “Desolation Row” and the rest of the *Highway 61 Revisited* album are not explicitly advocating for change. In the scene, and throughout much of “Desolation Row,” characters seem unconvinced that any type of change will occur, especially as the likes of Pound and Eliot chant this folk song.³⁸ While the mood for this song reflects a chaotic environment, Dylan is appealing to listeners to make the necessary changes they want to see in the world. With this inclusion, Dylan is able to connect themes in the song that relate to the protest phase in his career, but more importantly he expands on his work to provide an analysis of American culture during the 1960s.

Beyond “Desolation Row,” Dylan explores other themes in his evaluation of American culture. In fact, many of the same themes expressed in this song resonate with other tracks, most notably “Like a Rolling Stone” and “Ballad of a Thin Man.” Both songs reference various elements that make certain aspects of American culture unappealing. For the purposes

³⁶ Dylan, *The Lyrics: 1961-2012*, 183.

³⁷ *New York Times*, “Writer of Labor Anthem Dies,” August 6, 1986, paragraph 3.

³⁸ Wilentz, 83.

of this paper, it is more impactful to use “Desolation Row” as a catalyst to show Dylan’s views about American culture during the 1960s. In later decades, however, much of his catalog has utilized similar thematic approaches. For example, in the 1970s, Dylan embarked on two distinct phases of his career. The first was the Rolling Thunder Revue, a tour across the United States in 1975 featuring a slew of folk and rock performers as well as Beat luminaries like Allen Ginsberg. This tour, as scholars such as Sean Wilentz have noted, featured circus imagery which demonstrates Dylan’s concerns about the celebration of certain aspects of American culture. The second phase of Dylan’s career in the 1970s was his born-again Christian era. Dylan released several notable albums during this period in his career, which also served as religious interpretations of the problems facing American society. These themes are also consistent in later works, most notably 2001’s *Love and Theft*. Many scholars note this album references Eric Lott’s book *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. In this work, Lott details the problems surrounding blackface minstrel shows and their impact on American culture throughout the country’s history. Like *Highway 61 Revisited*, *Love and Theft* captures the same problems regarding the cultural appropriations of African American music traditions. Dylan was certainly influenced by these works, and he traces this historical process throughout his catalog. While this research could have entered several different directions, “Desolation Row” provides the necessary framework to understanding the purpose of Dylan’s work in the 1960s as well as the basis of his later works.

It is evident that Bob Dylan was a major cultural figure during the 1960s and beyond. Many historians and music critics have evaluated the critical nature of his early 1960s protest songs; however, it is on his 1965 album *Highway 61 Revisited* and especially the song “Desolation Row” that Dylan uses his recordings as a vehicle to forewarn Americans about the current condition of their culture. Throughout “Desolation Row,” Dylan creates a scene of chaos which references many notable figures who cannot make sense of their society, emulating that the United States in the 1960s was becoming undesirable. While “Desolation Row” represents one moment in his lengthy career, Dylan’s catalog demonstrates that his songs are used to reflect American cultural values. During the closing

remarks in his Nobel lecture, Dylan himself stated:³⁹

Our songs are alive in the land of the living. But songs are unlike literature. They’re meant to be sung, not read. The words in Shakespeare’s plays were meant to be acted on the stage. Just as lyrics in songs are meant to be sung, not read on a page. And I hope some of you get the chance to listen to these lyrics the way they were intended to be heard: in concert or on record or however people are listening to songs these days. I return once again to Homer, who says “Sing in me, O Muse, and through me tell the story.”

Dylan recognizes that listeners are going to interpret his music based on various circumstances; however, his lyrics can provide a narrative to a specific period that people can relate to. For “Desolation Row,” Dylan echoed his concerns regarding American culture as the United States faced major issues in the 1960s. Many critiques are employed into this song to create a scathing accusation of American culture for individuals to access during this period and in later decades.

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Evacuees, Refugees, or Internally Displaced Persons: How Labels Perpetuate Dominant Ideological Hierarchies in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

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Introduction

One of 2009's highest-grossing pictures was Roland Emmerich's science fiction disaster film, *2012*.¹ In the final scene of the film, fifteen minutes before a megatsunami is predicted to hit one of the four massive safety ships constructed to survive the end of the world, a room full of world authority figures is faced with a moral panic. Should they open the ships gates to the general public, saving the hundreds of people begging for safety outside? Or should they stick to the original policy of only allowing people who bought the \$1 million ticket onboard? As a result of their decision to open the gates, humanity is saved, "overturning" the classist notion that survival is based solely on the financial status of the individual. The moral of the story? While mankind stands on the brink of extinction, at least we have eliminated classism. However, while science fiction films typically portray the world on the edge of collapse—as a utopian site where racial and class tensions are eliminated—in reality, the mechanisms of division and justice that exist within American society can be seen most predominantly during climate crises. Specifically, the racist and classist hierarchies that prevail within day-to-day American life are catapulted to the overlooked forefront of who is most deeply impacted by natural disasters and why.

Such hierarchies, while portrayed in *2012* as class strife that could easily be resolved, often play out differently in real-life situations such as hurricanes and floods. Many times, the problems faced in climate catastrophes disproportionately impact minority groups, and often are handled with less urgency. And while *2012* seemed like just another apocalyptic disaster film when I saw it in the movie theater, it was not until

¹ *IMDB.com*, "Released between 2009-01-01 and 2009-12-31," accessed February 5, 2019, https://www.imdb.com/search/title?-year=2009,2009&sort=boxoffice_gross_us,desc.

much later that I recognized the film as a potential vehicle for diving deeper into natural disasters and their specific relationships to social hierarchies. The 2005 Hurricane Katrina initiated my interest in the environment and its direct impact on American society. After hearing about the damage and destruction that ravaged New Orleans, my best friend and I ran a lemonade stand to raise money to go to those impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Little did we know that we would raise over \$5,000. Compared to the costs of the damages of Hurricane Katrina, this was not much, but it was something. In following the American Red Cross' designation of aid to the victims of the hurricane, I understood that the lower income black communities of New Orleans faced the most damage from the storm. Even at a young age I was able to recognize the racist and classist hierarchies that existed within American society.² Years later, my college coursework in both Environmental Studies and American Studies helped me place societal hierarchies in conversation with climate catastrophes. The questions that drive the research for this project come out of this conversation. For example, who is most impacted by natural disasters? Who has the ability to leave and who is forced to stay put in such situations? What are the racial and classist implications of these movements or lack thereof? In what ways is subjectivity incorporated into conversations of social hierarchies and natural disasters? What labels are used by the media, and what are the different cultural and legal implications of these labels?

Hurricane Katrina is the focal point of these research questions. Through my research, I became aware of the media's use, or misuse, of labels like "refugee" to represent victims of Hurricane Katrina. Specifically, those whose lack of resources prevented them from evacuating New Orleans prior to the Hurricane's arrival on the Gulf Coast. I contend that this misuse of the label "refugee" to represent the Hurricane's victims unmasks both classist and racist hierarchies existing in New Orleans, and by extension, the United States. This mislabeling also unmasks the reasons for the federal government's failure to aid the victims in a timely fashion. To explore how labels used by the media represent structures of power relations, I analyze the following primary sources: (1) *The*

² *DoSomething.org*, "11 Facts About Hurricane Katrina," accessed February 6, 2019, <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-hurricane-katrina>.

New York Times articles on Hurricane Katrina; and (2) Spike Lee's documentary series *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*.³ I also examine international treaties and U.S. laws and policies regarding subjectivity, labeling, and government input, including The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the legal definitions of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugee(s).⁴ Through my analysis of these primary sources, I complicate the often ignored and undermined conversations and conceptualizations of racial and class formation and their tightly knit relationship with and transcendence through natural disasters, namely Hurricane Katrina. Consequently, I maintain and sustain a dialogue that touches on the implications of the way natural disasters disproportionately impact minority communities and those of lower socio-economic status in America.

In my first section, I outline the theoretical context that forms the backdrop against which my analysis takes place, and the lens through which I analyze my primary sources—*The New York Times* articles and Spike Lee's documentary series chronicling Hurricane Katrina. I use:

- (1) Critical Race Theory as outlined by Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, and Kimberlé Crenshaw in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* and *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*;⁵
- (2) Cultural Hegemony as outlined by Lee Artz and Bren Ortega Murphy in *Cultural Hegemony in the United States*;⁶
- (3) Racial formation as outlined by John E.

3 Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts*, directed by Spike Lee (United States: HBO, 2006).

4 *ohchr.org*, "1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (aka 1951 Refugee Convention) and 1967 Protocol," <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolStatusOfRefugees.aspx>; *IDMC.org*, "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," <http://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement/guiding-principles-on-internal-displacement>; M. Francis Deng, "Introductory Note by the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons," *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guidingprinciples-internal-displacement.html.

5 Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2017); Kimberlé Crenshaw et. al, *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

6 Lee Artz and Bren Murphy, *Cultural Hegemony in the United States* (California: Sage Publications Inc., 2000).

Baptist in *The Half Has Never Been Told*;⁷ and

(4) Race and Subjectivity as outlined by Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lee Lott in *The Idea of Race*.⁸

In the second section of my thesis, I outline the historical contexts of the climate catastrophe, including the federal government's involvement, or lack thereof, in the events leading up to and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In addition to the statistical damage of Hurricane Katrina, I discuss prior natural disasters in New Orleans to contextualize the federal government's historic role during climate catastrophes like Katrina. For this section I look at (1) Susan Parrish's *The Flood Year 1927*; and (2) The U.S. Flood Control Act of 1965 following Hurricane Betsy.⁹

In the third section of my thesis, I explore the difference between the legal definition of the label "refugee," and the way the media chose to redefine this label. To set up my argument that the media's use of the term "refugee" unmask pre-existing racist and classist hierarchies in New Orleans and the way the federal government's response to natural disasters sustains racist and classist hierarchies, I outline international and domestic law definitions of "refugee" and "internally displaced persons" using:

- (1) the 1951 [international] Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its associated 1967 protocol;
- (2) the Refugee Act of 1980;¹⁰ and
- (3) the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

In the fourth section of my thesis, I turn my attention to my first set of primary source documents—*The New York Times* articles reporting on Hurricane Katrina. I also look at a few articles published by other news broadcast organizations such as *The National Public Radio*. Specifically, I focus on the way these

7 John E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

8 Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lee Lott, *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000).

9 Susan Parrish, *The Flood Year 1927* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); *Revolvy.com*, "Flood Control Act of 1965," accessed December 16, 2018, <https://www.revolvy.com/page/Flood-Control-Act-of-1965>.

10 *archivesfoundation.org*, "Refugee Act of 1980." <https://www.archivesfoundation.org/documents/refugee-act-1980/>.

articles use the label “refugee” to represent those impacted by Katrina. I look into how journalists’ specific use of language, rhetoric, and tone created an image surrounding the victims of Hurricane Katrina that distanced the disaster from mainstream American society and justified delayed attention and response from the federal government.¹¹

In my conclusion, I explain how analysis of my primary sources, against the backdrop of Critical Race Theory, racial and class formation theory, and hegemony expands the current conversation of racial and classist hierarchies in America specifically to communities hit hard by climate catastrophes. I do so by outlining the ways in which the media’s use of the term “refugee” differs from its legal definition under international and domestic law. I use Critical Race Theory as the canvas on which I analyze my primary sources to illustrate the ways in which the U.S. federal government continues to perpetuate the racial/classist hierarchies and conditions that benefit the United States’ dominant white population. In light of the analysis of these primary sources, I argue that people of color and of lower socioeconomic status faced the brunt of the impact, risk, damage, chaos, and death before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. I further argue that primary sources pertaining to Katrina unmask both racist and classist hierarchies existing in U.S. society and in the federal government’s responses to climate catastrophes.

Theory

In order to consider the ways in which the U.S. federal government acts to perpetuate racial and classist hierarchies—specifically in times of natural disaster—we must consider how the following theories of racial formation work together to form the backdrop against which my analysis of my primary source documents unfold. Specifically, the theories forming this backdrop include:

(1) Critical Race Theory as outlined by Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, and Kimberlé Crenshaw in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* and *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*;

(2) Race in Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lee

¹¹ Throughout the fourth section of my thesis, I will draw on Spike Lee’s documentary series, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, as Lee refers to numerous articles published by *The New York Times* during and after Hurricane Katrina.

Lott’s *The Idea of Race*; and,

(3) John E. Baptist’s *The Half Has Never Been Told*.

With these theories of race and racial formation in mind, we will see that racist and classist hierarchies illuminated by a federal history of inaction and mismanagement of disaster relief and by the labels used to represent Katrina’s victims, did not result from the Hurricane. Rather, these discriminatory societal hierarchies have been in place since the founding of the United States and continue to function as the ideological structures shaping behaviors and values of Americans in the twenty-first century, and how we relate to and treat each other. In addition, I will also discuss Lee Artz and Bren Ortega Murphy’s theory of cultural hegemony as this theory provides me with a salient a lens to analyze the media’s use of the label “refugee” to represent the victims of the Hurricane and of government inaction or mismanagement in the days and weeks following Katrina’s landfall.

The United States was built on mechanisms of division and separation; ideological structures have existed for centuries as a means to understand and construct subject identities of people from various backgrounds, as well as the way they relate to each other across their differences. Specifically, these formations were designed to maintain the superior and inferior positionings of individuals based on their race and class. In *The Half Has Never Been Told*, author Edward E. Baptist writes about the formation of race as a social construct and the proceeding methods through which white people used these constructs to their own benefit. Slaves and “inferior” individuals of color or lower incomes worked for “superior” wealthy white families, a system in which the profits of the slave’s labor directly benefitted those in power. This slave-labor based economy, and its formulaic and racist social order, became ideologized and seen as natural and inescapable. Exploited slave labor created the foundation of American society as we know it today. Historically, these ideologized social positionings and relationships between black and white people have dominated American culture and consistently work to maintain white superiority.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a lens to analyze and critique the continuation of racist hierarchies in the United States. Critical Race Theory developed during the mid-twentieth century. Some of

the most prolific critical race theorists include Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado and Jean Stafancic.¹² According to these theorists, CRT is best described as problematizing the concept that race, as a function, centers around whiteness. In the context of my research, CRT provides the framework through which we can denaturalize the ideological functions of whiteness in climate catastrophes like Hurricane Katrina. CRT is “the view that race, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that race, as a socially constructed concept, functions as a means to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it.”¹³ Furthermore, while Baptist’s theory explains how racial formations and structures developed, CRT intends to dismantle these ideological structures by unmasking the structural and institutional system that benefits white individuals and maintains white supremacist values. This system has created a subjective, subordinating, and unjust structure within society that routinely targets individuals of color or lesser income. In all, CRT “uncovers the ongoing dynamics of racialized power, and its embeddedness in practices and values which have been shorn of any explicit, formal manifestations of racism.”¹⁴ Additionally, Critical Race Theory maintains the idea that the “racial inequality [that] emerges from the social, economic, and legal differences that white people create between ‘races’...” strategically oppresses many minority communities.¹⁵

Critical Race Theory is a framework that unmasks mechanisms of dominance. Specifically, in relation to my thesis, it allows us to understand how whiteness and its ideological functions exist within climate catastrophes. Against the backdrop of Critical Race Theory and Baptist’s racial formations theory, I analyze my primary sources to demonstrate that the racist and classist ideological structures undergirding American society are starkly illuminated by natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. First, Critical Race Theory allows us to understand who has the privilege of leaving their immediate surroundings, and who does not. When looking at Mayor Nagin’s announcement of a mandatory evacuation prior to Hurricane Katrina, which groups of people had the ability and

¹² Delgado and Stafancic, 4.

¹³ Tommy Curry, “Critical Race Theory,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/critical-race-theory>.

¹⁴ Kimberlé Crenshaw et. al, xxix.

¹⁵ Curry, “Critical Race Theory.”

resources to leave? It was largely the wealthier, mostly white, communities of New Orleans. Second, Critical Race Theory allows us to conceptualize the historical context of natural disasters in New Orleans. The dynamiting of the New Orleans levees to protect the city’s wealthy white neighborhoods during the 1927 flood is a perfect example of how racism and white privilege as ideological structures work to benefit white individuals while deeming people of color disposable. Furthermore, the government’s lack of urgency in completing the projects enacted by The Flood Control Act of 1965 points to the ideological pattern throughout American history that overlooks the safety of black lower class American citizens. Such a pattern has marked, and continues to mark, the safety of these individuals as less important than the safety of white citizens. Later in my thesis I will provide more detail regarding the historical context leading up to Hurricane Katrina. I will explain how racism and classism persist throughout United States law—how legislation enacted by the Federal government works to maintain white supremacy and subordinate communities of color. Specifically, I will look at how these legal mechanisms of division, separation, and privilege played out during Hurricane Katrina.

To understand how ideological and structural hierarchies of racism and classism continue to order American Society, it is important to explore Lee Artz and Bren Ortega Murphy’s theory of hegemony as outlined in *Cultural Hegemony in the United States*. In their book, Artz and Murphy define hegemony as the “process of moral, philosophical, and political leadership that a social group attains only with the active consent of other important social groups.”¹⁶ In other words, hegemony is a relationship in which one “superior” group maintains authority over the “other” “inferior” group through some perceived mutual agreement. Now, when put in the context of how dominant and subordinate race and class relations have existed historically in America, it is hard to ascertain how such terms might be marked as a mutual agreement. Critical Race Theory allows us to unmask and bring forward these ideological, racist and classist hierarchal formations that seem inescapable. These ideological structures of racism and classism are so embedded in American society they are often overlooked.

Critical Race Theory not only helps us recog-

¹⁶ Artz and Murphy, 71.

nize the ideological structures of racism and classism that shape our society, but also helps us to recognize how the hegemonic relationships between wealthier, white groups and lower class, and/or minority groups. This is particularly true in times of natural disasters, like Hurricane Katrina, when hegemonic relationships determine resource allocation as well as allocation of government assistance (or the lack thereof). As Artz and Murphy explain, ideological structures of racism and classism are the cornerstone of race and class relations: “racism occurs in practice and structures that enforce and reinforce distribution of resources and opportunities according to racial preference which are, of course, ideologically coded.”¹⁷ These racial preferences and ideological codes are a part of the hegemonic relationships that we see playing out in natural disasters.

My usage of Critical Race Theory and discussion of hegemony within climate disasters points to the transcendence of racial and class hierarchies, and racial privilege today. The structures of racism and institutions that undergird these hierarchies work to perpetuate uneven and unjust freedoms among American citizens of different racial and financial sectors. Later in my thesis, I will use these theories to ask how we can see these formations in different social and cultural settings, and perhaps more importantly, how the federal government assists in the perpetuation of these hierarchies in climate catastrophes through official legislation.

History

Hurricane Katrina

On August 29, 2005 one of the worst hurricanes in American history made landfall on the Gulf Coast. Starting off as a tropical storm and later garnering a Category 4 rating, Hurricane Katrina “brought sustained winds of 100-140 miles per hour and stretched some 400 miles across.”¹⁸ Being the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history, Hurricane Katrina reaped over \$160 billion in damages and took over 1,800 lives.¹⁹ While Hurricane Katrina impacted a number of coastal cities, I find it most beneficial

¹⁷ Ibid, 81.

¹⁸ History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina,” *History.com*, 2009, accessed February 20, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/hurricane-katrina>.

¹⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Hurricane Katrina,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018, accessed February 20, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Hurricane-Katrina>.

for my thesis to analyze the ways in which the storm impacted New Orleans, Louisiana.

New Orleans is a unique city in terms of its geographic relation to bodies of water, as well as its communal division based on economic status. The city’s “average elevation is about six feet below sea-level and it is completely surrounded by water,” which makes it extremely susceptible to storm devastation.²⁰ While levees have historically been constructed to minimize the potential for storm damage, they have proven to be insufficient in times of climate catastrophe. For example, along Lake Pontchartrain, to the north of New Orleans, the levees were constructed based on a design storm of 101-111 miles per hour.²¹ Along with a storm surge of 26 feet, Hurricane Katrina quickly surpassed this design threshold—something city officials did not predict. As Katrina surpassed the design, the levees failed and mass flooding ensued.²² “Neighborhoods that sat below sea level, many of which housed the city’s poorest and most vulnerable people,” were ultimately the communities that would face the most damage and devastation.²³ While the storm itself was powerfully impactful, with “some twenty percent of the city underwater . . . by the afternoon of August 29th,” a majority of the issues and problems related to Hurricane Katrina occurred in its aftermath.²⁴

Before I move forward to discuss the repercussions of Hurricane Katrina, I want to make note of the mandatory evacuation issued by Ray Nagin, the mayor of New Orleans at the time. I find it important to include this bit of information here as it pertains to my initial thesis questions: who gets to leave in emergency climate disasters, and who has to stay? Why can’t individuals who stay, leave? Are there racial and class implications that ground one’s agency to leave (or lack thereof)? What happens to those who cannot leave?

Nagin relayed this message across the city less than a day before Hurricane Katrina was expected to hit.²⁵ As a result, 1.2 million people were able to evac-

²⁰ History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

²¹ Lawrence Roth, “The New Orleans Levees: The Worst Engineering Catastrophe in U.S. History—What Went Wrong and Why,” *American Society of Civil Engineers*, 2007.

²² Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

²³ History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

²⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

²⁵ History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

uate ahead of the storm.²⁶ However, “tens of thousands of residents” and tourists did not have the cars or resources to leave, and those who believed they could safely wait out the storm were forced to witness what became complete chaos. In addition to the reasons already stated, many of the people who remained did so because they did not want to leave their families or belongings.²⁷ Understanding this, we see who was able to avoid the impact of the storm and who was not. This separation follows the racist and classist hierarchies that exist within larger American society. I address these hierarchies and their pertinence to Hurricane Katrina through both theoretical and analytical lenses later in my thesis.

Equally as important as who remained in the city after the evacuation order is the federal government’s reaction to the Hurricane’s aftermath. Particularly important is the impact of government action and inaction on the people Katrina stranded in New Orleans. By August 30th, a day after the storm hit, New Orleans was at a standstill—80% of the city was under water.²⁸ People began seeking safety on rooftops, with “no relief in sight [as] many local agencies found themselves unable to respond to the increasingly desperate situation, as their own headquarters and control centers were under 20 feet of water.”²⁹ At this time, people began to question the federal government’s response to the natural disaster, claiming that they were “slow to meet the needs of the people affected by the storm.”³⁰

By September 1st, an estimated 30,000 people were seeking shelter under the damaged roof of the Superdome [alongside his mandatory evacuation, Mayor Rob Nagin had designated the arena as a shelter for those who could not leave New Orleans]... shortages of food and potable water quickly became an issue, as daily temperatures reached 90 degrees Fahrenheit. An absence of basic sanitation combined with the omnipresent bacteria-rich floodwaters to create a public health emergency.³¹

As dead bodies floated around the city of New Orleans, the government still had not moved to improve the situation. The Federal Emergency Management

26 Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

27 Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts*.

28 History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

29 Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

30 History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

31 Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

Agency (FEMA) took days to establish a presence in New Orleans, with the National Guard arriving to provide and assist in the distribution of food and water on September 2nd.³² “Even then [they] did not seem to have a sound plan of action,” and much critique was put on President George W. Bush’s administration for their lack of awareness, aid, and assistance.³³

Government Involvement: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 & The Flood Control Act of 1965

Historically, Hurricane Katrina was not the only time that the federal government’s response to natural disasters shifted the outcome and devastation felt by those directly impacted. In 1927, during the Great Mississippi Flood, after months of relentless rainfall, the Mississippi River began to “swell to unprecedented levels.”³⁴ In attempts to protect New Orleans, specifically in order to prevent the wealthy quarters of the city from being flooded and damaged, “authorities dynamited the levee thirteen miles below the Crescent City at Caernarvon.”³⁵ As a result, lower income, predominantly African American neighborhoods were flooded. Even more to this point:

in the aftermath, authorities were severely criticized for favoring the white population during rescue and relief operations. Thousands of plantation workers, most of them African Americans, had been forced to work, in deplorable conditions, shoring up the levees... As waters rose, they were left stranded for days without food or drinking water, while white women and children were hauled to safety.³⁶

I make note of this as I believe it is crucial to understand how racial and classist hierarchies play out in natural disasters, and how the government perpetuates and assists in their maintenance.

Thirty-eight years after the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, Hurricane Betsy hit New Orleans. This Hurricane stands as yet another example of how the federal government’s response to a natural disaster perpetuates racist and classist hierarchies by engaging

32 History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”; Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

33 History.com Editors, “Hurricane Katrina.”

34 Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Mississippi River Flood of 1927,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018, accessed February 20, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Mississippi-River-flood-of-1927>.

35 Susan Parrish, *The Flood Year 1927*.

36 Encyclopedia Britannica Editors, “Mississippi River Flood of 1927.”

in practices that ensured Hurricane Betsy's impacts were disproportionately felt by communities of color and lower-income communities. In this case, the statistics resulting from Hurricane Betsy do not matter as much as subsequent federal legislation passed to mitigate impacts of future climate catastrophes. The Flood Control Act of 1965 was passed by Congress and "authorized the United States Army Corps of Engineers to design and construct numerous flood control projects... in the New Orleans region of South Louisiana."³⁷ After the levees failed during Hurricane Betsy, and the 9th Ward and lower-income neighborhoods were inundated, The Flood Control Act was designed to assign civil engineers in their efforts to rebuild the levees, but this time using a storm model that would replicate the worst-possible conditions. Theoretically, the project outlined by this law was to be completed in 1978.³⁸ However, forty years later, when Hurricane Katrina hit, "the project, including about 125 miles of levees, was estimated to be from 60-90 percent complete in different areas."³⁹ The new "estimated completion date for the whole project [was] 2015," more than 37 years later than the project was initially supposed to have been completed.⁴⁰ Even more, when Hurricane Katrina hit, parts of the levee broke below design-threshold as "the storm exceeded the design, but the constructed project [also] did not meet the design intent."⁴¹ I highlight The Flood Control Act of 1965 as a failure by the U.S. Federal Government to properly take action in a timely manner in responding to natural disasters that were affecting American citizens.

Legal Implications

Labels and Subjectivity

It is important to understand both of the following terms from a legal standpoint: "Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)" and "Refugee." In doing so, we are able to understand the duality of these labels

³⁷ *Revolvy.com*, "Flood Control Act of 1965."

³⁸ Anu Mittal, "Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project," United States Government Accountability Office (testimony before the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, September 28, 2005), accessed February 20, 2019, <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d051050.pdf>.

³⁹ Mittal, "Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project."

⁴⁰ Mittal, "Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project."

⁴¹ Lawrence Roth, "The New Orleans Levees: The Worst Engineering Catastrophe in U.S. History—What Went Wrong and Why."

as both legal and cultural terms. Based on the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons, the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee, and The Refugee Act of 1980, I outline the legal definition of the terms "refugee" and "IDP." Later in the paper, I juxtapose these legal definitions with the media's use of these labels.

Internally Displaced Persons

According to the Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) published by the United Nations in 2004, the international community defined IDPs as

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situation of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.⁴²

In the 1990's, a large number of individuals across the globe were being "uprooted" within their own countries due to various factors such as "armed conflict, ethnic strife and human rights abuses."⁴³ As fitting with the above definition, the number of displaced persons internationally was almost twice that of the reported number of refugees. To add to the complication of handling such displacement issues, at the time there stood no international law that laid out specific guidelines pertaining to reconciling, mitigating, and ensuring the safety of domestic migrants.⁴⁴ Subsequently, the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement was a "milestone in the process of establishing a normative framework for the protection of IDPs."⁴⁵ As outlined by the United Nations,

The Principles identify the rights and guarantees relevant to protection of the internally displaced in all phases of displacement. They provide protection against arbitrary displacement, offer a basis for protection and assistance during displacement, and set forth guarantee for safe return, resettlement and reintegration. Although they do not constitute a binding instrument, these Principles reflect and are consistent with international human rights

⁴² *ohchr.org*, "Questions and Answers About IDPs," <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/idpersons/pages/issues.aspx>.

⁴³ *IDMC.org*, "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement."

⁴⁴ *IDMC.org*, "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement."

⁴⁵ *IDMC.org*, "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement."

and humanitarian law and analogous refugee law.⁴⁶

The 1998 Guiding Principles consist of 30 principles outlined by Dr. Francis Deng (diplomat of South Sudan) that address and work to resolve issues within the migratory process of displacement, including protection against displacement, protection during displacement, protection during return, humanitarian assistance, integration, and resettlement in another location within the country.⁴⁷ The principles also strictly allocate responsibility and accountability to domestic organizations and state governments in their proper handling of internally displaced individuals. Written to be non-discriminatory, the Guiding Principles for Internally Displaced Persons establishes that IDPs “must not be discriminated against simply because of their displacement, or because of their race, sex, language, religion, social origin or other similar factors,” and correspondingly, they must not face displacement based on religious, racial or ethnic grounds.⁴⁸ Under the guidelines of these principles, Internally Displaced Persons maintain basic rights to “food, water, shelter, dignity and safety,” in addition to any rights held prior to their displacement regardless of their previous location within the country.⁴⁹ In all, the principles work to maintain and reserve the individuals rights as they migrate.

In relation to my thesis, it is of utmost importance to note that an Internally Displaced Person has not crossed an internationally recognized border. Doing so would redefine the individual a refugee. In relation to Hurricane Katrina, American citizens displaced by the hurricane were IDPs not refugees.

Refugee

Based on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention),

a ‘refugee’ is a person who, ‘owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country;

⁴⁶ Deng, “Introductory Note by the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons.”

⁴⁷ *IDMC.org*, “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.”

⁴⁸ *IDMC.org*, “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.”

⁴⁹ *IDMC.org*, “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.”

or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁵⁰

To better understand the initial legal context and connotations of the label “refugee,” I look to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This Convention stands as a multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, outlines the rights reserved for individuals who are granted asylum, and determines responsibilities of the nations that grant asylum. While the 1951 Convention made great strides in mandating concrete definitions, situations, and methods of action surrounding individuals deemed refugees, its shortcomings came in the form of its geographic exclusivity as well as its timeline: the provisions of the Convention were only applicable to European individuals who had sought asylum prior to January 1, 1951.⁵¹ Consequentially, “considering that new refugee situations [had] arisen since the Convention was adopted and that the refugees concerned may therefore not fall within the scope of the Convention,” the 1967 UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees removed the timeline and applied the provisions of the 1951 Convention to any individual who fit the initial definition of refugee (outlined by the Convention), regardless of their geographic location.⁵²

It is important to note that the United States did not sign the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, the United States not only signed the 1967 Protocol, but also passed domestic legislation implementing the Protocol into U.S. law in 1980. Prior to 1980, refugees were protected under U.S. domestic law by the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and the Migration and Refugee Act (MRAA). Under both the 1980 U.S. Refugee Act and the 1967 Protocol to the Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person who leaves his/her country of origin and crosses an international border into another country seeking asylum and protection. Again, legally, the victims of Hurricane Katrina were internally displaced persons, not refugees. Additionally, it is extremely important to highlight the notion that in order for an individual to be legally labeled a refugee, they must have crossed an interna-

⁵⁰ *ohchr.org*, “Questions and Answers About IDPs,” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/idpersons/pages/issues.aspx>.

⁵¹ *ohchr.org*, “1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (aka 1951 Refugee Convention) and 1967 Protocol.”

⁵² *ohchr.org*, “1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (aka 1951 Refugee Convention) and 1967 Protocol.”

tionally recognized border. I accentuate this point to compare the terms “internally displaced persons” and “refugee.” The following section of my thesis analyzes the ways in which news media broadcasters and social documentarians misused these terms, specifically “refugee,” to describe American citizens impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

Social and Cultural Implications

Media Representations

I include the legal definitions of the terms “internally displaced persons” and “refugee” as a central part of my thesis because, in the following section, I illuminate the use of the term “refugee” by news media and other media outlets to refer to American citizens displaced by Katrina. In doing so, I unpack the media’s problematic use of the term “refugee” and the term’s use to justify the federal government’s delayed response to Hurricane Katrina. In addition, I analyze the ways in which the media’s use of the term “refugee” perpetuated racist and classist hierarchies in American society in 2005. Throughout this section, I will use the term “other” or “othering” to refer to marking a group as inferior and/or perceived to be separated from larger American society.⁵³

In his September 5th, 2005 opinion piece published on the *National Public Radio’s* (NPR) website, journalist Mike Pesca describes Hurricane Katrina and its impact on New Orleans in a similar manner as other news broadcast systems and outlets. Working to separate and “other” the victims of the natural disaster from larger American society, Pesca claimed that “Hurricane Katrina created thousands of refugees who were forced into states” throughout the American South. His use of the term “refugee,” while shocking and inaccurate, was not unique; many news media

53 Spike Lee’s documentary series, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, works to critique the narratives created by news media regarding the subjectivities of the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Through real time footage and interviews throughout Hurricane Katrina, Lee asks how the victims of the storm feel in their being labeled as “refugees.” Lee makes a continuous point to clarify that the victims are not refugees—they are American citizens who are relying on their federal government to assist them in their time of need. His documentary showcases how such labeling, specifically by *The New York Times*, impacts the morale of the victims, as well as their allegiance to the Bush administration. A few of the articles that I use throughout this section are mentioned within Lee’s documentary series, although he goes into more detail on the responses of the victims to their labeling as “refugees.”

outlets quickly began labeling those displaced by Hurricane Katrina as “refugees.” Quite rapidly, this label began to stand out as an extremely problematic subjectivity. Namely, these American citizens were simply relocated to different U.S. states to protect them from the damage and destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. They did not cross an internationally recognized border, which under both U.S. domestic and international treaty law is required before a person can be identified as a “refugee.”⁵⁴

In order to understand the weight of the labels used in the news coverage of Hurricane Katrina, it is extremely important to unpack why news outlets found it acceptable to use the term “refugee” to represent American citizens. To do so, I argue that the designation and use of the label “refugee” was due to the “media’s perception of a lack of control [within New Orleans], both at the individual and governmental level.”⁵⁵ If we look at media representation of victims and IDPs as refugees chronologically from August 29th, 2005 through mid-September of that year, we can see that media labels changed from “evacuees” to “refugees” early on. Furthermore, at no point is the label “IDP” used to represent American survivors and victims of Katrina. The news media used the term “evacuees” to describe displaced New Orleans residents while the Hurricane aftermath had not escalated and the federal government still maintained control over the city. The term “refugees” began to be used when the situation became more chaotic, generally due to lack of food and water, the subsequent public health epidemic, looting, and lack of aid and government assistance. Specifically, in the days following Hurricane Katrina, *The New York Times* “did not immediately use refugee as a news actor label in its reports;” instead they used “evacuee:” “entry into the dome stadium was difficult, with ‘long lines of evacuees... waiting in the rain,’ and other ‘residents’ found ‘refuge’ in the city’s hotels.”⁵⁶ However, shortly thereafter, the atmosphere and connotations connected to titles and word usages within news broadcasts and newspaper

54 Furthermore, pointedly at news media and journalists, what determined whether an individual was an “evacuee” or a “refugee” in this natural disaster? In this case, which I will discuss later in this section, there seemed to be serious racial and classist undertones to such terminology.

55 Peter R. Petrucci and Michael Head, “Hurricane Katrina’s Lexical Storm: The Use of *Refugee* as a Label for American Citizens,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 25, no. 2 (2006): 23.

56 *Ibid.*, 29.

articles began to shift to a more hierarchal and “othering” style. Two days after Hurricane Katrina initially hit, *The New York Times* “saw its first use of refugee as a representation for people in New Orleans—primarily those stranded at the Superdome—as water poured into the city.”⁵⁷ In another article published by *The New York Times*, individuals seeking shelter and protection at the Superdome, a location clearly outlined by the New Orleans mayor as a space of safety, were described in a more hopeless manner: “officials began planning for the evacuation of the Superdome, where about 10,000 refugees huddled in increasingly grim conditions as water and food were running out.”⁵⁸ This usage directly coincides with the reality of the situation on the ground in New Orleans. As flooding increased, food and water shortages increased, deaths increased, and with the federal government still observing the situation from a removed position, the labels used to describe those directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina began to worsen. *The New York Times* article “New Orleans Mayor Says Hurricane May Have Killed Thousands” reveals this point. “Towards the beginning of the article, [the] people [who] remained in New Orleans after the storm are represented as evacuees,” but, as the article slowly works to explain the planned mass exodus from the New Orleans Superdome—which had lost sections of its roof in the storm—to the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, the labels slowly began to change.⁵⁹ Later in the article, the term “refugee” is used to describe the same set of people previously described: “Authorities planned to move at least 25,000 New Orleans storm refugees to the Astrodome.”⁶⁰ The first implementation of the term “evacuees” within *The New York Times* article

is used when there is some semblance of order, some official control over the situation [in New Orleans]... The other extract [usage of “refugees”], by contrast, describe[s] situations of little or no control... reports of lawlessness in the streets and of overcrowding, heat, unsanitary facilities, and a lack of food and water in the Superdome.⁶¹

57 Ibid, 29.

58 Joseph B. Treaster and N. R. Kleinfield, “New Orleans is Inundated as 2 Levees Fail,” *The New York Times*, August 31, 2005, 1.

59 Petrucci and Head, 23.

60 *The New York Times*, “New Orleans Mayor Says Hurricane May Have Killed Thousands,” August 31, 2005.

61 *The New York Times*, “New Orleans Mayor Says Hurricane May Have Killed Thousands,” 29.

Shortly thereafter, the label “refugee” became an umbrella term used by *The New York Times* to describe those displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Within a few days of the storm hitting New Orleans, headlines were published reading, “Refugees from New Orleans arrived Thursday at the Houston Astrodome,” and a week later, *The New York Times* continued their reporting with inclusion of the term “refugee” in providing the number of people in shelters throughout neighboring states.⁶² These articles showcase the news media’s implementation of labels that had the effect of separating and “othering” the victims of the natural disaster from American society. Specifically, the use of the label “refugee” had a direct correlation to the changes in control over the situation in New Orleans and was used to describe American citizens. We know from the legal definition of “refugee” that it was not the correct label to describe the victims of Hurricane Katrina as they had not crossed an internationally recognized border; “IDP” would have been a better fit.

But while *The New York Times* is perhaps the most useful source to analyze in relation to the usage of the label “refugee” within news media during Hurricane Katrina, specifically in relation to order and chaos, it was not the only media outlet that inaccurately “othered” those impacted by the storm. The following examples are taken from various newspapers and broadcasts that used rhetorical styles similar to those of *The New York Times*, employing various animalistic, helpless connotations around the labels they used. In one article that described New Orleans five days after the storm hit, the author portrays the city and its inhabitants as distraught and hopeless:

On some of the few roads that were still passable, people waved at passing cars with empty water jugs, begging for relief. Hundreds of people appeared to have spent the night on a crippled highway. In one east New Orleans neighborhood, refugees were loaded onto the backs of moving vans like cattle...⁶³

This “othering” worked to further the ideas associated with labels such as “refugee.” Once this label became widely used to represent the victims of Hurricane Katrina, the adversity, damage, and destruction that people in New Orleans were facing became marked as an image of despair and of people in need of

62 *The New York Times*, “New Orleans Mayor Says Hurricane May Have Killed Thousands,” 32.

63 *The New York Times*, “New Orleans Mayor Says Hurricane May Have Killed Thousands.”

aid—“something that Americans often associate with refugees from or in other countries.”⁶⁴ The image of helplessness that is tied to American understanding of the label “refugee” was also furthered by news media outlets describing refugees who were lined outside of The Superdome, the city’s airport, and at various highway overpasses, waiting for help.⁶⁵ These examples of the usage of the label “refugee” to represent American citizens in a demeaning manner demonstrates how the news media “othered” the victims of Hurricane Katrina. They also allow us to understand the problems attached to “othered” subjectivities, and how such labels can perpetuate racist and classist structures.

Labels within news media are extremely important as they help represent certain messages and ideas to their audience; as a result, it is important that the labels employed are being used in the correct context. Within coverage of Hurricane Katrina, the labels used by newspapers and news media outlets worked to send a message of disaster and destruction, yet they simultaneously distanced the issue from their audiences by using labels that did not accurately portray the situation. According to the term’s legal definition, a “refugee” is someone who has crossed an internationally recognized border. The people in New Orleans who were impacted by Katrina and were seeking shelter, perhaps attempting to seek this shelter in a neighboring state, were migrating domestically, not internationally. Understanding this, we know that the term “refugee” is not the correct label for these displaced people. However, news outlets continued their usage of this term in their articles and coverage of the event as it helped to perpetuate and build the image that they were working to create. The term has an incredibly negative connotation of an often involuntary, sizable movement of individuals in dire need of aid, shelter, and safety. Such images that portray these types of situations are usually included in international news coverage as existing outside of the United States. As a result, in using the term “refugee,” news outlets created an atmosphere that surrounded the domestic situation and marked it as distant. There is debate that news media outlets, knowing the legal definition of the term “refugee,” used the Merriam-Webster’s New World College Dictionary definition of “refugee” that defines the term as a “person who flees from home or country to seek refuge elsewhere, as in a time of war

64 Petrucci and Head, 31.

65 Ibid, 32.

or of political or religious persecution.”⁶⁶ This definition is incorrect, and assisted the news media with their portrayal of Hurricane Katrina by conveniently leaving out the important legal requirement of a “refugee” crossing an international border. The Merriam-Webster definition does not match the legal term of “refugee” and leaves loopholes for interpretation. A better label, if news media outlets felt the need to use labels other than “victims” and “people,” would have been “internally displaced person.”

Instead, the news media’s use of the label “refugee” not only created a certain image surrounding the natural disaster, but it also allowed for the perpetuation of societal hierarchies. Examples of this can be seen in the specific language and tones that journalists and reporters employed in their capturing of Hurricane Katrina and its destruction. In his report on the status of New Orleans, Mike Pesca states that the dynamic that he “witnessed was clearly of the dirty masses on one side and the soldiers and police on the other. There was justification for this separation because security was a concern in New Orleans and law enforcement was on edge.”⁶⁷ There are two interesting points in this section of his article that I argue assisted in Pesca’s “othering” of the victims: first, that Pesca makes a conscious point to describe the victims as “dirty masses,” and second, that these people were in stark opposition and contrast to the law enforcement on scene. These two points highlight the hierarchy that news media outlets created in their use of the term “refugee” between the victims, the federal government, and outsiders.

Such language and tone alongside the usage of the label “refugee” also worked to justify the government’s delayed response in providing aid and assistance to those stranded in New Orleans. Later in his article, Pesca continues to “other” the Hurricane’s victims, saying, “[i]f you watched this situation on television, you might not realize how dirty and foul-smelling these people were. There was a reluctance on the part of the rescuers to touch the people. There was a total unwillingness to walk among them.”⁶⁸ His choice to describe the victims as disgusting and as people that

66 Ibid, 24.

67 Mike Pesca, “Are Katrina’s Victims ‘Refugees’ or ‘Evacuees?’,” *NPR*, September 2005, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4833613>.

68 Mike Pesca, “Are Katrina’s Victims ‘Refugees’ or ‘Evacuees?’.”

you would not want to be around, as well as his recollection of legitimate avoidance on behalf of rescuers, tells the audience that they too should feel appalled by the state of the victims. Pesca's writing also justifies the delayed response by the federal government simply because those in New Orleans, who were facing a week of dirty water and a lack of food and shelter, were not particularly hygienic. Pesca locks in this message when he continues on to write that, "[t]heir reaction was understandable. Many of the people they were trying to help had swum through sewage water to get here, and no one was showering any time soon." Through the addition of these details within his description of the situation, Pesca further "others" the victims of Hurricane Katrina, plays into the images surrounding the label "refugee," justifies a hands-off approach to anyone reading his article, and perpetuates social hierarchies by marking those in New Orleans as inferior.



At the same time, it was not singularly the rhetorical style used by news article and broadcasts that worked to that further cement the ideas and subjectivities tied to the label of "refugee;" images were employed to do the same thing. In an online article published on the

Huffington Post days after the storm hit, Chris McGonigal curates a heart-wrenching collection of images taken in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Titled "These are the Forgotten Images of Hurricane Katrina," McGonigal's photographs range from dead bodies floating in flooded streets, to buildings ravished by the winds of the storm.⁶⁹ One image in particular stands out. The description of the image in the article describes the scene as "Navy helicopter drops boxes of food and bottled water onto the roof of a public school for a man in New Orleans; flooded 9th Ward on September 5, 2005."⁷⁰

However, looking at the image, it seems much more dramatic and distant, almost as though it was taken in a war-ridden country far from American soil. Briefly describing it, the image is captured from a low-lying stance and looks upward at the scene. Pictured is a shirtless black man wearing tethered white shorts who stands below and facing away from a helicopter. The man's arms are covered in dust and dirt, he holds four full water bottles, and through the window of the helicopter we see a member of the Navy. The helicopter stands in contrast to the blue skies, and the landscape that surrounds the man looks white, dry, and destroyed; the few buildings that litter the horizon line seem to be broken and abandoned. It looks like a dried-out desert or war zone.

The image, as well as its description in the article, are important examples of the power that news media has in projecting specific messages to audiences. While the description merely provides the reader with the actions and location of the image, how the image is constructed provides an entirely separate narrative. Before I go into how the image perpetuates the ideas and labels used throughout the climate catastrophe, there are two points that I wish to make note of: one, that the image was captured on September 5th, six days after the storm hit, when people were just receiving help from the federal government; and two, the 9th Ward, where the picture was taken, is a low-income, predominantly black neighborhood.

69 Chris McGonigal, "These are the Forgotten Images of Hurricane Katrina," *Huffington Post*, August 27, 2015, https://huffingtonpost.com/entry/forgotten-images-from-hurricane-katrina_us_55d36f19e4b0ab468d9e90c4; Corey Sipkin, *Getty Images* https://huffingtonpost.com/entry/forgotten-images-from-hurricane-katrina_us_55d36f19e4b0ab468d9e90c4.

70 McGonigal, "These are the Forgotten Images of Hurricane Katrina."

The narrative that this particular image creates perpetuates the ideas tied to the label “refugee,” insofar that the image simply does not look American. The scene does not look as though it is taking place domestically, and while the description would provide the viewer with such context, images are visual objects and this image may be seen without attention to the descriptive details. This image connects back to my previous statement that the plight of those in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina was painted as an image of despair outside of America. It is extremely effective in our understanding that the media’s response to the lack of control in New Orleans was to mark the situation as “a scene out of another country.”⁷¹ This image looks as though it was captured in a war zone, and even positions the Navy as a savior figure. Consequently, the man in the image is projected as a person in need of help and is captured at angles that mark him as frail and malnourished—in need of food and water. This “forgotten image” is a perfect example of how media representation during Hurricane Katrina perpetuated the ideas and stereotypes created by the labels used as un-American.

The distance that such images created and relayed to its viewers was also perpetuated through language. This language, similar to the function of the label “refugee,” and similarly to how images were used to portray the natural disaster as occurring internationally, worked to separate those impacted by the storm from those who were not. Returning to Mike Pesca’s article, he explains that “if you looked at the armed men in fatigues on one side of metal barricades, and thousands of grieving people in tattered clothes on the other, you couldn’t help but think of Haiti or Kosovo.”⁷² Not only does this sentence exemplify the notion that the problem of “refugees” only exists outside of the United States, it also separates those impacted from those attempting to provide aid. Furthermore, Pesca deepens and contributes to the hierarchy he perpetuates through the adjectives he uses to describe these two “sides,” such as tattered clothing and armed men.

Ultimately, the media’s representation of those directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina as “refugees” is a prime example of how CRT and ideological hierarchies exist and function within climate catastrophes—centering whiteness and relegating people of color as inferior.

71 Alessandra Stanley, “Cameras Captured a Disaster but Now Focus on Suffering,” *The New York Times*, September 2, 2005, 21.
72 Pesca, “Are Katrina’s Victims ‘Refugees’ or ‘Evacuees?’”

Overall, my paper works to research, theorize, critique, and expand current conversations regarding racial and classist hierarchies that have existed within American society historically and bring them into the realm of natural disasters. In doing so, I have discredited the idea that natural disasters are unbiased—that they touch and impact everyone equally regardless of racial or socioeconomic status. I have shown the implications of being an individual of color and/or of lower socioeconomic status in America, particularly in the overlooked area of how natural disasters impact these communities to a significantly larger degree than their white or wealthy counterparts. To do so, I have analyzed how Critical Race Theory exists today, how it persisted through Hurricane Katrina, and how the federal government functions in such situations to perpetuate unequal and unjust conditions that benefit dominant white communities. My research and primary and secondary sources have highlighted specific issues and examples through which my argument that people of color and of lower socioeconomic status faced the brunt of risk, damage, chaos, and death before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina can be seen.

73 Petrucci and Head, 33.

Conclusion

Overall, my paper works to research, theorize, critique, and expand current conversations regarding racial and classist hierarchies that have existed within American society historically and bring them into the realm of natural disasters. In doing so, I have discredited the idea that natural disasters are unbiased—that they touch and impact everyone equally regardless of racial or socioeconomic status. I have shown the implications of being an individual of color and/or of lower socioeconomic status in America, particularly in the overlooked area of how natural disasters impact these communities to a significantly larger degree than their white or wealthy counterparts. To do so, I have analyzed how Critical Race Theory exists today, how it persisted through Hurricane Katrina, and how the federal government functions in such situations to perpetuate unequal and unjust conditions that benefit dominant white communities. My research and primary and secondary sources have highlighted specific issues and examples through which my argument that people of color and of lower socioeconomic status faced the brunt of risk, damage, chaos, and death before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina can be seen.

73 Petrucci and Head, 33.

The examples I have used have also showcased the progression of labels by news media, such as “refugee,” and the narratives they helped create. Furthermore, knowing that the victims of Hurricane Katrina were displaced domestically, as well as knowing that the legal definition of “refugee” requires an individual to cross an internationally recognized border, I have pointed out the contradiction created by media outlets in their coverage of Katrina. The victims of Hurricane Katrina were not “refugees;” they were evacuees. If a legal term was necessary to use to represent these individuals, news media should have used the term “internally displaced person.” I have also contested that the federal government’s delayed response to Hurricane Katrina, one of the costliest natural disasters in American history, mirrors the way American authorities have historically responded to climate catastrophes in New Orleans. This delayed response has marginalized and relegated the damage and impact of storms such as Katrina to individuals of color and lower income. The federal government’s delayed response was rationalized by the news media and social documentarian’s labeling of the victims as “refugees,” a rhetorical choice that othered the victims and situated them away from immediate relief. In all, I have shown that the labels used by the news media during and after Hurricane Katrina to represent the victims of the storm, as well as the delayed response by the federal government, perpetuate racist and classist structural and ideological hierarchies by designating the impact and risk to individuals of color and lower class to a significantly larger degree than their white or wealthy counterparts.

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The League of Nations: A Battle Between Internationalism and Isolationism

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The League of Nations was drafted as a part of the Treaty of Versailles for the purpose of putting an end to World War One, concluding in a victory for the Allied powers. The major powers of the world sought to prevent further conflict by creating a world forum in which problems would not be solved through violence, but through compromise and diplomacy. Within the parameters of the Treaty of Versailles, this world forum was drafted through the League of Nations. The League of Nations was spelled out in a charter ratified by almost all states wishing to enter a new era of peace through international collaboration. The United States, however, never joined the League of Nations, and the causes for the rejection of the covenant have become a hot topic of debate for historians.

The story begins when President Woodrow Wilson took his Progressive policy onto an international scale, believing it to be necessary in order to fix the issue of international wars. In his mind, he would have to solve the root of the problem: foreign relations. He wrote, “[i]t is the power of the United Moral forces of the world, and in the Covenant of the League of Nations the moral forces of the world are mobilized...Membership of the League of Nations will include all great fighting Nations as well as the lesser ones.”¹ The League of Nations became Wilson’s plan to create stable world peace through an international organization bound by both moral and legal obligation. He crusaded in favor of the controversial Covenant of the League of Nations, arguing for the polarizing Article Ten, which “provide[d] that every member of the League of Nations Covenant respect and preserve territorial integrity and existing political independence of every other member of the League as against external aggression.”² Under Wilson’s Progressive approach, the United States would potentially waive its right to declare war in order to prevent future wars by adopting the Covenant’s legislature.

¹ Elizabeth Cobbs and Jon Gjerde, *Major Problems in American History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2002), 139.

² *Ibid*, 138.

Henry Cabot Lodge, a political opponent of Wilson in the United States Senate, led the country’s opposition to the United States’ membership in the League of Nations. He was not only a seasoned Senator from Massachusetts, but he was also the majority leader, and head of the Foreign relations committee. Lodge opposed the League of Nations due to his belief that United States membership would restrict the rights and sovereignty of the nation, thus removing the opportunity for the country to act unilaterally and in its own best interest. According to George Tindal and David Shi, Lodge “emerged as a pivotal figure in the protracted debate over the League. Lodge offered to support it, only if substantial revisions and key provisions were made, especially with Article Ten, which in his mind transferred from the Senate to the League of Nations the authority to wage war.”³ Lodge feared that the Covenant removed power from the Senate and transferred it to an organization led by foreigners. He thought membership in the League would force the United States to sacrifice a great deal without significant benefit. On February 28, 1919, Lodge presented to Congress his argument against the League of Nations. He argued that the League’s Covenant was so poorly written that every nation would and could interpret it differently and that nations would disagree on what the Covenant truly called for. Lodge highlighted the controversy of Article Ten of the Covenant, stating “[i]f you extend it to all the world, it ceases to exist, because it rests on nothing but the differentiation of the American Hemisphere from the rest of the world.”⁴ In this way, Europe could obtain the right to re-settle America as well as all American territories.

Lodge was not the only opponent of the United States’ membership in the League of Nations. Two opposing factions sprouted: the Irreconcilables and the Reservationists. The Irreconcilables believed that no matter what, even if amendments to the League Covenant were passed, the United States should not become a member of the League of Nations. This group consisted primarily of Western and Midwestern Progressives. Many of the Irreconcilables believed that membership in the League violated the Monroe Doctrine, as well as President Washington’s Farewell Address,

³ George Tindall and David Shi, *America: A Narrative History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), 575.

⁴ Michael Duffy, “Henry Cabot Lodge on the League of Nations, 12 August 1919,” *firstworldwar.com*, 2009, http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/lodge_leagueofnations.htm.

and thus violated the American Foreign Policy tradition. On the other hand, the Reservationists believed that US membership in the League of Nations could be beneficial for the country if amendments were made to the Covenant. They believed in limited participation in the League of Nations. Lodge proposed amendments to the League and presented them to the Senate. However, Wilson was opposed to amending the covenant, as Elizabeth Cobbs and Jon Gjerde note: “[w]hen Reporters asked if [Wilson] would entertain reservations on the treaty, he responded with ‘I shall consent to nothing.’ The Senate must take its medicine.”⁵

After the Treaty of Versailles had become public, propaganda began to emerge antagonizing the League of Nations. The public had been influenced to believe that Wilson was, in simplest terms, an idealist whose delusions of international high politics would ruin America (see appendix, image 1⁶). More propaganda emerged, emphasizing the Covenant’s contradiction with United States tradition (see appendix, images 2 and 3). The arguments against the League were gaining traction among the public.

Wilson addressed the negative stigma surrounding the League of Nations, blaming propaganda and the work of malevolent politicians: “There is organist propaganda against the League of Nations... which threatens this country with disloyalty. A man who carries a hyphen about with him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this republic.”⁷ Wilson emphasized that certain politicians—specifically Henry Cabot Lodge—were spreading false information about the League of Nations. He conveyed that these politicians were enemies to the public because they pursued personal gain rather than the good of the country and put themselves over the nation. However, Wilson’s tour was cut short after he suffered from a debilitating stroke. After this medical ailment, Wilson retreated from the public eye and remained silent on the issue of the League until the scheduled Senate vote on ratification of the treaty, including the controversial tenth article.

On March 19, the US Senate failed to ratify the League of Nations with a vote of 49-35, seven short of a two-thirds majority. In addition, the Senate passed a resolution drafted by Lodge advising Wilson to formally accept the defeat of the League of Nations. *The New York Times* reported on the vote at the time: “[t]he irreconcilables, who had won their victory and were not disposed to have it snatched from their grasp, also found the prospect of another vote not to their liking. Senators Borah and Brandegee pointed out that some senators had left the chamber, and some had even left Washington as soon as possible after the vote on the resolution of ratification.”⁸ The Senate finally dismissed the idea of membership in the League and to prevent any changes to this decision the Irreconcilable Senators fled Washington.

Historians have debated the underlying cause of the United States’ rejection of the League of Nations Covenant for decades. Some argue that the opposition to the League of Nations refused to accept the Covenant due to disagreements regarding Article Ten, which reads: “The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. The Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.”⁹ Walter LaFeber, author of *The American Age*, argues that both camps against Wilson (Reservationists and Irreconcilables) shared an extreme abhorrence of Article Ten. He writes, “[a]bove all Reservationists feared Article Ten...under Article Ten, the United States might support Japan’s control of Shantung against valid Chinese claims, and Congress would have to go along with this under moral obligation.”¹⁰ The moral obligation outlined in Article Ten was controversially binding in *conscience* and law, leaving no wiggle room from commitment. LaFeber cites historian William Widener’s statement on Article Ten, or in his words “the obstacle to ratification... due to the notion of the obligation assumed by member states.”¹¹ Along the same lines as LaFeber,

5 Elizabeth Cobbs and Jon Gjerde, 178.

6 *wordpress.com*, 2015, <https://ged12.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/league-nation-cartoon.jpg>.

7 Michael Duffy, “President Woodrow Wilson’s Address in Favour of the League of Nations, 25 September 1919,” *first-worldwar.com*, 2009, http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/wilsonspeech_league.htm.

8 *New York Times*, “Senate Defeats Treaty, Vote 49 to 35; Orders it Returned to the President,” 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0319.html#article>].

9 *The Avalon Project*, “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” 2015, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp.

10 Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 329.

11 *Ibid*, 329.

the United States Office of History writes, “Senate opposition was rooted in Article Ten, which dealt with collective security and the League of Nations.” Moreover, many historians argue that the League of Nations was rejected by the United States because of disagreements regarding articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations because neither Irreconcilables nor Reservationists desired that much commitment.

In agreement, Arthur Link writes: “[t]he American People were not prepared to support the covenant due to the covenant’s commitments and the fact it should not do so unless their vital disputes are involved in a dispute.”¹² Link writes of the dangerous implications of the Covenant and Article Ten, emphasizing that the United States would be giving up its decision making power in foreign policy. Link details this argument by stating that “participation in the Covenant will spell the end of American security in foreign affairs because it will be transferring over the power of decision making.” Link’s argument is similar to LaFeber’s; Link argues that the Covenant would restrict the United States’ ability to make unilateral and independent decisions on the international platform, which fueled opposition to the League.

On the other hand, historians have disagreed on the true motives of the man behind the League of Nations, Woodrow Wilson. Walter McDougall argues in his essay “The Egocentric Crusader” that Wilson’s stubbornness and religious devotion caused the Senate’s rejection of the League.¹³ McDougall details Wilson’s crusade for power and a long-lasting legacy. He emphasizes that Wilson was unwilling to compromise on the terms of the Covenant in order to take full credit for the League of Nations. McDougall writes, “Woodrow Wilson was surely the wrong messenger—not because he was too religious, but because his religion was too personal, sanctimonious, gnostic.”¹⁴ McDougall illuminates Wilson’s selfish reasons for pursuing peace. Wilson refused to compromise on the League of Nations because he wanted the League to maintain its integrity; “[h]ad Wilson been willing to swallow them, or even a milder package promoted

by some Senate Democrats, the Treaty of Versailles would have been ratified. But he was convinced that reservations would castrate the League.”¹⁵ Today, some historians argue that Wilson was an “ego-centric crusader,” sacrificing United States’ membership in the League of Nations for personal gain.¹⁶

Robert A. Pastor, however, argues that Wilson was a visionary. He highlights how Wilson facilitated a change in international relations through his ideological approach to the Treaty of Versailles. He writes “Wilson’s proposal, despite its Utopian Dress, was eminently practical to reduce the benefits and increase the cost of war by gaining universal agreement on a powerful idea, self-determination, and an institution to enforce it, the League of Nations.”¹⁷ In Pastor’s eyes, Wilson was a visionary, simply ahead of his time. In his text, Pastor explains the underlying motives for Wilson’s attempts to promote world peace: to make the world safe for democracy, and to prevent future wars. He argues that Wilson was not submerged in idealism or selfish motives, but that Wilson wanted to change the entire global political system in order to ensure that the Great War would be the last war.

However, the true underlying cause of the failure to join the League was neither because of a single article in the Covenant, nor because Woodrow Wilson’s motivations. The underlying causes of the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles were the different ideologies that influenced Wilson and Lodge’s respective goals for America’s future role in global politics. Wilson, inspired by Progressivism and Internationalism, pushed for the United States to become a global leader through diplomacy and collaboration. Lodge, valuing the United States’ Unilateralism and previous Isolationism, believed not only that the United States would lead the world by becoming the best it could be, uncorrupted by foreign values and affairs, but also that the League of Nations was an attack on their sovereignty. The League of Nations ultimately became a medium for debate on the future direction of the United States, with Wilson representing Internationalism and Lodge representing Isolationism.

Lodge believed that the world had not changed enough for the United States to change its policies.

12 Arthur Link, *Wilson, Volume II: The New Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 110.

13 Walter McDougall, “The Egocentric Crusader,” in *Major Problems in American History, Volume Two*, edited by Elizabeth Cobbs, Edward Blum and Jon Gjerde (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2002), 178-184.

14 Ibid, 179.

15 Elizabeth Cobbs and Jon Gjerde, 178.

16 Walter McDougall, “The Egocentric Crusader,” 178-184.

17 Elizabeth Cobbs and Jon Gjerde, 184.

Membership in the League would be a departure from the Monroe Doctrine and Washington's Farewell Address. In his work on political Isolationism, Bernard Fensterwald notes that "Isolationists have constantly adored that their policies embarked upon those of the Founding Fathers. Especially Washington and Jefferson took as their text on Foreign Policy the single gospel that the United States should have as little as possible to do with Europe."¹⁸ Isolationists believed American involvement in European affairs would cause costly entanglement and eventually damage the United States. This Isolationist dogma was the underlying motivation of Lodge's reservations with the League of Nations. Lodge supported the beliefs of remaining loyal to past foreign policy, stating "we must adhere to the policy of Washington and Hamilton, of Jefferson and Monroe, under which we have risen to our present greatness and prosperity."¹⁹ Lodge infamously stated "[w]e may set aside all this empty talk about isolation, nobody expects to isolate the US or make it a hermit nation which is sheer absurdity. Injury in the US would emerge from meddling in all the differences which may arise among any portion or fragment of humankind."²⁰

Wilson championed Internationalism. He felt confident that the United States' technological and scientific advancements helped the country gain a powerful reputation that would be aided by an Internationalist policy. Commercial relations and trade began to make Isolationism seem implausible and unpragmatic for the changing world. Wilson justified the departure from Isolationism, stating "[n]ot because we chose to go into the politics of the world but because by the sheer genius of this people and the growth of our power as a determining factor you cannot remain isolated."²¹ The emerging global economy rooted in trade, international cooperation, and technology had drawn the United States out of Isolationism, and onto the world stage.

The League of Nations became a platform on which Wilson and Lodge debated the direction

¹⁸ Bernard Fensterwald Jr., "The Anatomy of American 'Isolationism' and 'Expansionism,' Part I," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2, no. 2 (1958): 111.

¹⁹ David Shi and Holly Mayer, *For the Record: A Documentary History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018), 180.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

²¹ Michael Duffy, "President Woodrow Wilson's Address in Favour of the League of Nations, 25 September 1919."

of America's foreign policy. The United States had already embraced Internationalism, with the Roosevelt Corollary being the most prominent evidence for US involvement in international affairs. However, essential questions emerged: Should the United States play an active role in international politics? Should it promote its principles? Or should it abstain and concentrate on applying its principles internally? Despite Wilson's attempts to push Internationalism, the country decided to return to Isolationist normalcy: "[b]eneath the debate among Internationalists was a powerful postwar undercurrent tugging Americans home, back to 'normalcy,' fearful of Europe's wars."²² The Great War persuaded Americans to believe that involvement in European affairs would only cause destruction and death. This ultimately led to the election of president Herbert Hoover, a staunch Republican Isolationist who turned the country inward, back to the status, and away from international affairs.

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- ²² Elizabeth Cobbs and Jon Gjerde, 168.

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Appendix

