

MASCULINITY: UNDERSTANDING AUTHORITY  
ACROSS INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS AS SOCIAL  
CONTROL

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American Studies/Psychology  
May, 2017

Faculty Adviser: Dr. Christine Stevens

Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors,  
University of Washington, Tacoma

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## Abstract

Masculinity is observed here as it relates to authority, and as it functions within discourse surrounding the American penal and health care institutions. Understandings of race and gender are dictated by beliefs that masculinity can be “achieved,” or functions as a value within society. This piece works to stress that masculinity is instead a worldview, which assists in the distinguishing and perpetuation of dichotomy tied to plays of superiority and inferiority. It is for this reason, after recognizing masculinity within a capitalist global context that abolition becomes a necessary approach, when attempting to confront masculinized authority and institutions.

*Keywords:* Masculinity, Authority, Social Control, Incarceration, Health Care, Psychology, Obedience, American Studies, Bio-power, Capitalism, Abolition

As a way of perceiving and approaching the world, masculinity is rarely confronted. Timothy Beneke (2009) highlights how “the prevailing cultural notion [maintains] that masculinity is an achievement” (p. 155). Contemporary masculinity is understood by some as a useful application to personality across social and personal contexts, and is believed to appear as a quality with the ability to be possessed by and applied to individuals. For this reason, and due to its perceived value across societies, masculinity should be understood as being inherently tied to contemporary manifestations of authority. Masculinity is most truly the intangible and toxic quality utilized by authority figures and institutions, to emphasize institutional power and promote structures which work to limit the rights, freedoms, and creativity of all who are subjected to institutional influences.

Appearing consistently around power structures is authority, and this critical analysis recognizes masculinized perspective as influencing the course of discourse and limiting the scope and reach of disciplines (both academic and otherwise). Masculinity is the ideological *shape* authority takes in most instances, operating as an entity all must encounter. The shape of contemporary masculinity is narrow though, and must be understood for its limiting qualities, since beliefs about masculinity and how it should both appear and operate within the world to influence and constrain the beliefs and actions of the individuals they encounter.

This understanding of masculinity will be elaborated upon utilizing contexts of both incarceration and health care, and will be framed here by the concept of bio-power. This will be done in order to highlight how it is that the utilization of racialized and gendered foundations, functions to assist in efforts aimed ultimately at social control. Pulling from the discipline of psychology, authority will be utilized throughout this analysis as a general lens through which to

follow the presence and performance of masculinity, as it is argued here to influence institutional discourse and social participation.

### **Connecting Authority to a Desire to Control**

**Text 1: Socialization, Titles, and Consent.** Five texts served as the basis for observation while forming understandings of authority and masculinity throughout the processes of this critical analysis. The first of these texts is Stanley Milgram's (1975) *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*. The significance of Milgram's (1975) work, when relating it to this piece, is perhaps best echoed where it is stated: "this investigation deals with the obedience not of the oppressed, who are coerced by brutal punishment into compliance, but of those who willingly complied because society gives them a role and they are motivated to live up to its requirements" (p. 175). Such observations of authority highlight the capacity and capabilities of power and intent, but as they are transferred from and between individuals and institutions through the acquisition and distribution of ranks or titles.

Such practices are typecast here as masculine and especially notable as ranks and titles are attached to specific roles and contexts customarily maintained and occupied by men. Through processes such as socialization, the collective learn to either apply or strip value from the words and actions of others, but this is based on their perceived status within an institutional context. Under the guidance of those institutions authority figures are closest to, power is thus gained, once an understanding of roles and contexts are effectively established within the minds of those individuals operating under masculinized systems.

Milgram (1975) explains how institutions utilize processes of socialization to lead some individuals towards believing acts such as gruesome experiments or movements involving violence either wouldn't or couldn't be conducted successfully within their own *civilized* society:

thus allowing authority figures to pull from their populations consent, even in the absence of explicit intent (p. 143). Consent is thus revealed as a vital aspect and result of the socialization processes, with authority utilizing approaches understood to incorporate what may be understood as bio-power towards the sustaining of what this analysis understands and describes as masculinized agenda and institutions.

**Text 2: Socialization, Bio-power, and Morality.** The second text is an article entitled “*Agents of Care and Agents of the State: Bio-power and Nursing Practice*” by Perron, Fluet, and Holmes (2005). It works to call attention to how the strength of bio-power lies in its ability to reshape “individuals as moral and ethical beings, as their behaviors [are] aim[ed] to serve both collective and individual well-being” (p. 542). This is the ultimate aim of socialization as utilized by authority and its attached figures: subliminal control through moralistic guidance. Bio-power is observed throughout their article, principally, as it appears around the health care institutions, and as it is explained to be “characterized by the interconnection of two axes: the anatomo-political (discipline of the body) and bio-political (population management)” (Perron, Fluet, & Holmes, 2005, p. 536).

The *anatomo-political sphere* could be argued as encompassing the *movements and perceptions of individuals* as they encounter or participate within institutions, while the *bio-political sphere* is concerned most with the *shape, movements, and perceptions of whole populations and their demographic identities* (Perron, Fluet, & Holmes, 2005, p. 538). To both clarify and emphasize the influences of the bio-political sphere as utilized by masculinized authority and institutions, incarceration will first serve as an observable context. The anatomo-political sphere will then be confronted in a similar manner for its utilization around contexts of health care, noting its masculine effect of creating and promoting gendered and racialized

discourses that sustain dichotomy of superiority and inferiority. The term neoliberal comes to mind here, as such label are thusly applied to figures and institutions who attempt to be explicit in their knowledge of such processes and effects, but fail to elude those capitalist goals believed to be necessary for the sustainment of their institutions, and especially within global-capitalist arena.

**Texts 3 & 4: Control, Capitalism, and Abolition.** The masculine quality of authority within institutional settings may be identifiable then, due to its proximity to a desire to control the behaviors of those subject to an authority's influence. The social problem becomes for the masculinized authority figure, the matter of how the mind and body are understood within and around the contexts and institutions they operate under. Most significant then is the question of how these aspects of the individual occupy time, and as well both public and private spaces, within a capitalist context. The third text is titled *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, a piece by Angela Y. Davis (2003) within which a discourse of abolitionism is explicitly connected to the topic of prisons, their emergence, ties to the practices of slavery, topics such as the new black codes, and global-capitalist practices as a whole (p. 28).

Prisons serve as one area around which to observe the exercise of bio-power and the techniques of the bio-political sphere as they utilize understandings and beliefs about masculinity. These beliefs are bent and warped for those who participate in politics and media, and often towards capitalist aims intended to produce profit for efforts which ultimately result in the suppression of knowledge, with the advancement of technology simultaneously held as an implied goal (i.e. progress). It is with this in mind, the fourth text, *Blood Sugar: Racial Pharmacology and Food Justice in Black America* by Anthony R. Hatch (2016), becomes better

understood as an attempt to observe both the meaning and structure of themes relating to race and medical knowledge, but as a study of the applications of bio-power (p. 14).

These texts each provide a chance for the concept of masculinity to be observed not only at institutional levels, but to also be understood within contexts of power as they are potentially tied to knowledge, technology, and even legality.

**Text 5: Oppression, Technology, and Abuse.** The final text as considered central to this essay was the book *Caught Up: Girls, Surveillance, and Wraparound Incarceration* by Jerry Flores (2016), which adds to the understandings of bio-power fostered within this piece, by depicting for readers how societies lead individuals to discipline and monitor themselves and others through institutional and technological means (p. 10). Connecting the institutions observed within Flores' (2016) work is what are termed "wrap-around services," with observations of their emergence utilized by the author to facilitate questioning around whether or not such institutional services and their attached technologies are in fact socially designed to punish those actions defined as deviant for young women in particular. This is, as opposed to assisting them along their paths to rehabilitation.

The question of whether incarceration serves, from an economic perspective, as a chance for the capitalist to utilize the latest technologies and to profit from the bodies which occupy the space, is pulled from the work of Flores in order to highlight how bodies become *disposable material* around which institutions and authority figures produce opportunities and establish regulation.

### **Individual Bravado**

A starting point to such observation should always be the individual, since they act as leverage points for power. Ideas are supported by communities, but the actions they spawn are

carried out and promoted first and last by individuals. Thomas Jefferson, as a former president and founding father of one of the world's most *powerful* nations, occupies a position of great historical influence. This individual claimed at one point though that "Blacks, whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites in the endowments of both body and mind" (Golash-Boza, 2015, p. 28). It is tragically around positions and roles such as this, that masculinity appears most consistently to be understood as a defining characteristic of contemporary-institutional authority. Often hidden, appearances of masculine ideas influence worldviews and beliefs which work to both promote and sustain a language of *the haves and have-nots*. This means that within a capitalist global system, such masculine perspectives contribute to social distinctions and categorizations (i.e. race and gender) which are ultimately economic in both their designs and functions.

Such designs should be understood as constructed and sustained solely for the purposes of social and population control, and it is within such matrix that authority becomes for power, a conductor, with the ability of drawing in and directing resources and manipulating accesses. Media and politics are perhaps two examples of arena which function within capitalist systems to assist in these economic processes, by sustaining within them social atmosphere where language may be formed around the desire to control and influence both individuals and the communities to which they are tied. The language of Michel Foucault respects these processes and functions for the rules they provide the critical observer, as they attempt to navigate through life.

Returning to Jefferson's statement though; it works to highlight how masculinity influences the *shape* of the beliefs one holds, and how institutional roles and those who occupy them contribute to the negative shapes and actions masculinity is narrowly forced to undertake across contemporary societies. Milgram (1975) clarifies "authority [as being] the perceived

source of social control within a specific context,” and while Jefferson’s statement held with it the gravity of both his position and reputation within not only the context of America but also the world at large, his masculinized disposition is reflected through his choice of language (p. 141). This masculinized disposition may be indicative of not only this figure, but as well other world leaders and any individuals who’d approach positions of authority with the intention of extending their own contextual power, and especially under a pretext of security. Understanding this, it should be seen then that actions tied to claims of security are often executed and maintained superfluously, in order to sustain some elevated position within the minds of those attached to the power or personal security *the bravado of masculinity* is believed to provide.

Factors such as position and reputation are further described by Milgram (1975) as being tied closely to individuals’ interpersonal relationships across contexts, their varied statuses within them, and the impression left by their behaviors and actions as they are either strengthened or weakened by subsequent interactions and their consequences (Milgram, 1975, p. 174). Again then, it is control: this desire is the characteristic indicative of contemporary masculinity across institutional settings, identifiable within the institutional context due to its seemingly symbiotic relationship with authority.

The “endowments” aspect of Jefferson’s statement, while amusing when considered for its *phallic elements*, suggest from a position of authority (and more sinisterly perhaps) the presence of something(s) to be measured between conceptions “of the body and mind” (Golash-Boza, 2015, p. 28). “Status” is further stressed by Milgram (1975) to contribute to the stances and actions powerful actors take while participating within hierarchal social structures and settings, and ultimately works to influence and shape moralistic perceptions of the body and mind, creating figures that are thus transformed and act within the system as leverage points for

power (p. 89). This plays well with the image Beneke (2009) paints of “an authority with privileged access to theory, disseminating a view of the self which offers liberation through initiatory methods to be provided by the authority” (p, 156). Must one then become an authority to escape authority?

The hierarchal status and masculine characteristics of Jefferson’s statement and many like it have held with them the power to influence the lives of not only Americans, but most populations subject to the influence of authority figures and institutional systems: especially those systems which intend to control various aspects of the body and mind, through methods which promote almost exclusively binary distinctions and categories. Contemporary masculinity should be understood to assist in the perpetuation of ideas of inferiority and superiority, which ultimately work to limit the scope of creative vision both across and between areas of practice and study.

### **Incarceration and the Bio-Political**

**The Body as Property.** Within a context of incarceration, it is indeed as Davis (2003) describes: there will always remain the “question of how to treat those who violate the rights and bodies of others” (p. 113). This wording is particularly telling, considering most discourse around rehabilitation and healing within such institutional settings tends to focus more on the processes and practices of punishment than those of more restorative aims. Davis (2003) reports around this sentiment, that “male punishment was linked ideologically to penitence and reform” (p. 69). This critical analysis questions the legitimacy of such statements of intention, as they are believed to originate from institutional sources, but especially when considered for their appearance within a capitalist global climate. Davis (2003) also pulls from Cheryl Harris the understanding of how within such social climates “whiteness” holds the ability to operate for

some as “property” (p. 30). This distinction may assist in explaining how masculinity (an idea just as intangible as whiteness) might be “possessed” or sought after, and thus holds the ability to act both as property and an identifier within and around institutions that elevate masculinized qualities as their ideal.

**Defining and Targeting Bodies.** From here it is important to highlight how Davis (2003) stresses that “to assume that men's institutions constitute the norm and women's institutions are marginal is, in a sense, to participate in the very normalization of prisons that an abolitionist approach seeks to contest” (p. 61). This analysis assumes instead then, that the masculine qualities of institutions are inherent in the ways its authority figures operate: in whether or not social control is an aspect of the institutional agenda on any level. Institutions aren't masculine or even feminine based on the physical bodies which occupy them; rather, this is determined by the shape of the desire to control and how the bodies and minds of those involved are perceived and treated by others who hold positions of authority.

The area most riddled with authority figures is, perhaps, around contemporary ideations of work or the daily job. Wage labor in particular is described as having been historically gendered as male and racialized as white within the American social context, thus contributing to processes which simultaneously function to apply property value to ideas of masculinity (Davis, 2003, p. 45). What of those who deviate from these ideals or exist outside of them though? Institutions are constructed which employ the techniques of the bio-political sphere towards processes of social control, since the main goal of ideas originating from this sphere of understanding tend to focus on projects of population management. “Deviant men” have historically been perceived as criminal, while “deviant women” have been constructed as insane according to Davis (2003) (p. 66). These labels hold social ramifications on their own, but when

appreciated through a perspective which recognizes how they've assisted in processes such as the "racialization of crime" (described by Davis (2003) to have emerged as a result of the culture and history of white supremacy ignored or manipulated by its beneficiaries across the American context), they begin to reveal their value within societies which recognize particularly white-masculinity and its attached ideologies as desirable above all others (p. 30).

As stated earlier, techniques adopted from the bio-political sphere are intended to address factors such as the shape, movements, and perceptions of populations and their identities as they apply to individuals across varied, but connected contexts and institutions. An example of this may be found when questioning why authority figures such as Thomas Jefferson advised penal institutions to exclude Black-slaves in particular from incarceration, suggesting instead deportation as the suitable punishment for this demographic group (Davis, 2003, p. 28). Jefferson might have truly perceived these institutions to initially be spaces constructed for the betterment of free white males, within which resources could be poured to further what he believed to be civilized growth, but a capitalist atmosphere fostered something entirely different. As these institutions were twisted instead toward purposes aimed at eliminating from the national population those demographics labeled as deviant and criminal, they increasingly targeted the poor and disenfranchised towards the efforts of "reliev[ing] us from the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capital" (Davis, 2003, p.16).

It may then be some considered masculinity, when utilized by institutions and individuals within such capitalists contexts, as working to abuse knowledge stemming from the bio-political sphere, towards the effort of targeting whole groups of people for profit and termination. This is an observation based upon characteristics chosen by those holding positions of authority, and

those within and around the American *justice* system where the practices of execution, solitary confinement, and other inhuman forms of *rehabilitation* are justified by authority figures who ritualize their legality and tilt the scales in favor of their own cultural beliefs, practices, and language.

One must possess an understanding of the intangible but recognizably white-supremacist masculinity if they are to, in some contexts, seek to acquire for themselves what might imperfectly be perceived as protection from those authority figures who view them as undesirable. Masculinity is thus perceived by the oppressive or masculinized authority as vital to the functioning of their ideal society: through the exercise of bio-political power, authority figures and institutions work to categorize and target whole populations deemed unworthy of participating in social processes and practices.

**Discourse and Labels.** The discourse around incarceration highlights women as “today’s fastest-growing prison demographic” (Davis, 2003, p. 65). The criminalization of Black and Latina women is explained to include persisting images of hyper-sexuality and deviance from the prescribed norm: perceptions which serve to justify sexual assault against them (both inside and outside of prison environments), while neglecting to address the trauma of their experiences (Davis, 2003, p. 79; Flores, 2016, p.95). With this in mind, masculinity could, even for feminized bodies, be understood and perceived as a useful or even desirable application to personality within some social and personal contexts. This is to be understood primarily as an adaptation to social conditions which are hostile to the identities of individuals who encounter and disrupt masculinized systems. Utilizing masculinity is perceived by the subjected individual, especially in times of need, as their only path of to social survival. Masculinity becomes desirable in that it functions as Davis (2003) described, like whiteness, which appears across discourse as

something to be possessed (p. 30). To possess the correct combination of masculinized qualities may then ensure survival both physically and psychologically, for a time. So, masculinity might then, as whiteness, appear to some to possess the function of providing a form of social protection, adapted or avoided in order to mitigate encounters and experiences with authority figures and the institutions to which they are attached.

**Social Programs and Capitalists.** Davis (2003) works at one point to highlight how, once they began to enter the prison system the relegation of white women back into the domestic sphere became the primary goal of incarceration for the feminine demographic (p. 45). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the hyper-sexualizing and criminalization of minoritized women contributes to their disproportionate appearances within such setting, and may even add to understandings of why there would exist a shift in goal orientation as more minoritized women were brought into such system. As authority figures became increasingly aware of the presence of Black and Latina women within such settings, the potential for institutions of incarceration to serve purposes aligned with masculine ideals (tied to social control of the mind and capitalist ideology tied to conceptions around property and the body) increases drastically. The goals and orientation of these institutions are instead directed from the social programs of rehabilitation and training, towards aims which intent to attract vast amounts of capital by exploiting vulnerable demographic populations (Davis, 2003, p. 12).

Davis (2003) further stresses that "paradoxically, demands for parity with men's prisons, instead of creating greater educational, vocational, and health opportunities for women prisoners, often have led to more repressive conditions for women" (Davis, 2003, p. 75). The paradox holds less depth though, when it is accepted how within a capitalist context, the prison system and institutions like it aren't truly interested in the rehabilitation or healing of wounded populations,

but are instead motivated and guided by economic incentive above all else, setting aside their moral and ethical consideration: and thus the capitalist mentality is formed.

Symbolic violence is essentially the perpetuation of traumatic or degrading imagery, aimed at particular demographics, to elevate of one group over another (Golash-Boza (2013), p. 226). Because the discourse surrounding incarceration holds such blatant desire to produce results with social ramifications utilizing such tactics as symbolic violence to control activity, the bio-political approach taken by such institutions is again understood to be shaped by masculine qualities. These are those things that produce acts of aggression from populations of the oppressed, stemming from their desire to survive within a hostile and masculinized environment. Intangible masculine symbols should be argued within the capitalist climate as contributing to branding processes employed by media and political authority especially, which constructing within their realms a language which ultimately assists in the stigmatization and criminalization of whole demographic groups.

**Sobriety and Encounters with Authority.** It is perhaps for that reason most government supported social program don't survive long, but especially within social contexts where the recognition of masculine qualities and ideology are utilized by authority figures to control and/or monitor populations (Davis, 2003, p. 11). The research of Flores stresses two points which help to support this sentiment. The first is that individuals considered as divergent from the norm, did not need to become "sober" in order to leave their "deviant" lifestyles (Flores, 2016). Davis (2003) promotes the importance of instead working within contexts of incarceration to foster "autonomy of the mind," as this may be a better approach when attempting to heal someone who might not have ever been afforded the opportunity to be truly healthy (p. 57). Even civil rights activists such as Malcolm X are painted as having "had to work against the prison regime," in

order to achieve what for himself what he felt was some measure of rehabilitation (Davis, 2003, p. 56). Masculinity assists authority figures in dictating what is or isn't acceptable/normal across the society and within its attached contexts as they are emphasized by institutions. If such institutions instead promote autonomy of the mind, then the masculinized expectations of society fall away and allow for understandings of deviance to be tied more positively to acts of creativity and expression, as opposed to defiance, nonconformity, and aggression.

Flores' second point is that "young women require as little contact as possible with the criminal justice system and wraparound supports, if they are to eventually escape the broader system" (Flores, 2016, p. 114). These support services adversely allowed for the information of individuals to be accessed by a variety of institutions and actors, as the young women are moved from one seemingly unconnected system into another. Such practices arguably allow for more punishments than assistance to enter the lives of adolescent girls caught within such systems, further complicating their development into healthy adults by increasing their interactions with authority figures and institutions built to control populations and individuals (Flores, 2016).

Prison serve as one space geared towards a "constant training of bodies [which] results in the 'control of activity'": the outcome is one form of what is termed as "docile bodies" (Perron, Fluet, & Holmes, 2005, p. 538). Understanding perceptions of masculinity clarifies this claim by pulling from observations of women, to characterize in a most dramatic sense how docile bodies (regardless of gender, and so long as they are caught under the authority of said context) are compelled within such context to measure themselves alongside a masculinized moral and ethical base, pulled from an atmosphere of white supremacy and its resulting legalities. Plays on masculinity assist in the production and reproduction of docile bodies, by providing for authority figures the opportunity to "generate huge profits from processes of social destruction," but only

after successfully controlling activity and directing public and private interests through tools such as politics or media, and around symbolisms connected to the body and/or mind (Davis, 2003, p. 88). In short, masculinity limits perspectives, which slows progression and development through life. As individuals encounter authority figures and institutions, they are expected to have been socialized into behaving within the prescribed parameters of the masculinized context: contexts they should innately perceive themselves to exist within after being successfully socialized. If they do not perceive themselves to be in alignment with the prescription, or are perceived by authoritative others as deviant, the result becomes a dehumanization which allows for authority figures, institutions, and their supporting populations to perceive individuals as disposable and exploitable docile bodies.

Prisons finally appear as a tool: one through which to exercise bio-political knowledge and exert masculinized authority, construct social demographics. These demographics thus function as points from which to draw blame, and then target for feelings of economic inferiority and failure. This is the unfortunate result of applying masculine perspective to social problems they don't apply: the opportunity is created for bias to interfere with the construction of institutions aimed truly at human development and growth.

### **Health Care and the Anatomic-political**

**Status, Authority, and Bodies.** In moving away from the penal system and on to systems of health care, nurses become recognizable as leverage points for authority. It was stated early on within the work of Flores that correctional officers were reluctant to contribute to the discourse. If prisoners are equated status-wise along the institutional ladder to patients though, then for their proximities to higher authority, nurses to some extent may reflect similar processes of influence upon the oppressed as those of prison guards. What may have deterred correctional

officers from contributing officially to the academic discourse of Flores, apart from individual economic concerns of course, might be their own awareness of the anatomo-political power they hold over the movements of individuals and perceptions of self, as subjected individuals move around the institutions and into other contexts, acting as leverage points for power and knowledge. This awareness would as well encompass the reality that they too are caught within this system, and if they wish to advance must appease a higher authority.

For this reason, it would be foolish to assume correctional officers aren't aware of the systems they perpetuate and participate in. Perron, Fluet, and Holmes (2005) stress the importance of "understanding nursing through the perspective of bio-power," since it "questions the taken for granted discourse that nurses always act in the best interests of individuals" (p. 543). Correctional officers and nurses are both limited by their masculinized authorities in different ways; still the techniques employed either indirectly threaten or explicitly present social ramifications as the consequence of individual failures to convince either patients or prisoners to submit to the practices of their specific social context.

And all this is expected to occur even in the absence of institutional actors. Hatch (2016) explains how it was "Foucault argued that the surveillance of the body was historically organized via a clinical gaze, a way of seeing and knowing the body and nature, that sought to rationalize the space time between life and death by classifying and organizing the body scientifically" (p. 13). Individuals are thus expected to have been socialized into understanding their existence as being bound by understandings of masculinity and femininity, but as they are applied to a *civilized* understanding of the world.

**Gendered Discourse and Inferiority in a Civilized World.** Within a health focused context, breastfeeding appears as one example of bio-political intervention pervasively pushed

across the *civilized* world, as “new mothers are subjected to great pressure in hospitals, clinics and community centres to adopt breastfeeding exclusively for their infants” (Perron, Fluet, & Holmes, 2005, p. 542). In the previous section bio-political interventions (or actions aimed at influencing individuals) were described to be found most prominently around techniques employed by contemporary media and political authorities. Within a capitalist medical climate, these interventions remain bio-political in their orientation though, since they intend to motivate individuals to participate in socialized rituals such as voting practices and market participations, and are used within masculinized discourse to either hint at or justify processes of social destruction. The masculinization of discourse thus serves a purpose of allowing for a space to be made available, wherein the categorizing of the body and the limiting of the mind work to assist the capitalist aim of establishing systems across societies, where profit can be generated from the activities and frustrations perpetuated by gendered discourse.

The anatomo-political sphere should be understood as residing closer to hierarchal authority and perceptions of how individual minds and bodies spend and experience time though (Perron, Fluet, & Holmes, 2005, p. 540). Approaches which utilize techniques adapted from the anatomo-political sphere focus less on populations (the bio-political axis), and instead more significantly on those individuals who encounter these systems, utilize their services, or are participants within them as institutional actors. Nursing, within the context of the American institution, became over time a field of predominantly feminized bodies who “serve[ed] as cogwheels within the health care apparatus,” according to Perron, Fluet, and Holmes (2005) (p. 543). This distinction being significant here in that it highlights how gendering appears as a technique or approach of authoritative oppressors, used not as Smith (1999) suggests where analysis of colonialism and supremacy are confronted explicitly throughout the process, but are

instead used to either complicate or over simplify the discourse: thus allowing for masculinity to apply gendered dynamics to the language, and shifting the intention of institutions towards the control and exploitation of demographic-populations and the cultures they produce (p.152).

**Masculinity's Effect.** The appearance of gendered dynamics across social institutions is indicative of masculinity's effect of establishing dichotomy of superiority and inferiority. Perron, Fluet, and Holmes (2005) explain "anatomy-politics aims to produce technologies that serve to exert a hold over others' bodies, 'not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may [also] operate as one wishes'" (p. 538). This is perhaps the major difference between the bio-political and anatomy-political spheres. The difference being the anatomy-political holds the potential to produce technologies of control and surveillance, especially when considered within a capitalist atmosphere which, using masculinity, perpetuates a language of *the haves and the have-not*. It may be around the health care institutions especially that the *phallic* distinctions of a masculinized discourse might become the most apparent, since clinical knowledge around the penis and other "endowments" of the body and mind are communicated from within this arena to hold particular social value: and especially as academic disciplines are formed around them in order to rationalize their physical shapes and functions.

One such area within which the rationalization of shape and function reflect the gendering effects of anatomy-political desires (desires already explained to be masculine in light of their proximity and subjectivity to acts of aggression, social control, and hierarchal social structures) is the metabolism. Foucault reminds us the sexuality of individuals is what is predominantly believed to have "served as the fundamental basis for power over life during the 17th and 18th centuries" (Perron, Fluet, & Holmes, 2005, p. 541). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup>, race, class, and nationality serve as the basis for power across most

social arena, but having been built upon a foundation of gendered approaches, are narrow in their creative scope.

The metabolism is an area of study described by Hatch as having been racialized within a capitalist context which pervasively utilizes these dichotomies of superiority and inferiority. Furthermore, the “metabolism [has become] a site for the kind of bio-politics that simultaneously manufacture[s] health problems and their remedies, deploys race as a way of concealing inequality, and construct[s] powerful ideas like metabolic syndrome to serve the relationship between body and society” (Hatch, 2016, p. 17). The previous claim of how, as a technique of discourse institutional processes and authority figures utilize the anatomo-political processes of institutions (more simply termed "bureaucracy") to distract and delay by unnecessarily complicating (and on some levels controlling) the issues at hand, becomes better understood for its capitalist application within the discourse surrounding metabolic deviations.

**Commodifying Health Problems.** In closing this section, the concept of a “metabolic syndrome” must then be addressed, but especially since it is the anchor for Hatch’s analysis of medical discourse surrounding the emergence of new technologies and academic disciplines. It was previously stressed how by complicating and controlling discourse, authority figures distract from systematic inequality and mask symbolic violence. Hatch (2016) elaborates on this by citing how it was “Foucault used the term ‘polyvalence’ to describe how discourses can be used as both the techniques and outcomes of power...structur[ing] the production and content of scientific knowledge” (p. 11).

With this in mind the metabolic syndrome (as explained by Hatch to have developed from within a context of capitalism where health problems are conceptualized and then attributed to demographic populations) is a construct of social design stemming from the same atmosphere

of white supremacy which fosters feelings of economic inferiority and failure, and as mentioned before around the contexts of prisons, media, and politics. This is done by effectively monetizing minoritized groups and capitalizing on the physical conditions imposed upon them, primarily by the decisions of authorities they may have or desire little contact with.

Luana Ross is mentioned by Davis (2003) as observing throughout her study of Native-American women incarcerated within a women's correctional center in Montana, how socially "prisons, as employed by the Euro-American system, operate to keep Native Americans in a colonial situation" (p. 79). For Black Americans the sentiment is similar, with reference to slavery, and it is through the monetization of conditions perpetuated by social influences that the capitalist sees opportunity in exploitation. Relating this to the emergence of a "metabolic syndrome" (which pulled human resources and knowledge about the body and mind from black communities, framed around the topics of nutrition and obesity), it could be similarly understood that within an atmosphere of white supremacy the capitalist utilizes academic disciplines and concepts such as the "metabolic syndrome," as sources from which to both find and create opportunity for economic gain (Hatch, 2016). The opportunity arose for authority figures to benefit from the presence of stigmatized demographic groups yet again, as in the case of incarceration.

Who becomes the target, as a result of the social atmosphere's larger plays of economic inferiority and its attached fears of failure? On the anatomo-political side, this effect is perhaps best understood when conceptualized alongside a masculinized authority, since the fragility of the masculine construct highlights a desire for social control geared toward the ultimate aim of elevating the "endowments" of one demographic group over another. The dehumanization of

black and brown bodies and minds, highlights the effects of masculinity upon not only bodies branded as white, but any bodies striving to exist outside of a masculinized system.

### **Discussion**

**Method and Bio-power.** This critical analysis has worked to show how the application of masculinity to social contexts either subtly or subliminally perpetuates a language of *the haves and have nots*. Masculinity has been described as it appears (to but a minor degree) around the areas of incarceration and health care, and is argued to be the crux of economic thinking, with race and gender both appearing across discourses to facilitate in the creation of dichotomy sustained by two poles: superiority and inferiority. Gifford (2011) stresses how “having an important stake in some organization is not compatible with adopting mitigating behavior” (p. 293). While appearing within a context of climate change, such statements compliment Milgram’s depictions and explanations of how the status of individuals within hierarchal structures allows for the limiting of their actions across contexts, as morality and ethics are reduced to a state where they are allowed to be measured against financial and other economically tied risks.

By accepting how perspectives which hold ideals of masculinity function to influence the actions and beliefs of authority figures within social arena such as government politics and media production, it may become ever more clear to the conscious observer how desires to exercise social control are projected across institutions and through their employed and subjected individuals. These factors may be described as contributing to what is termed the “agentic state,” a mental state where actors and authority figures are expected to set aside morality (Milgram, 1975, p. 133). This piece has attempted to incorporate the concept of bio-power to help clarify how masculinity works as a worldview, pervasively applied to social contexts where morality

and ethical considerations are forsaken, to allow individuals easy entry into the agentic state upon receiving an authoritative role within hierarchal settings designed with social control in mind. The desire for social control need not be communicated explicitly from the institution or directly to its actors from higher authority figures though, because socialization ensures that within a *civilized* society such things aren't questioned.

Perron, Fluet, and Holmes's (2005) claim that, "knowledge accumulated by the state must be obtained directly from diverse populations if it is to be used appropriately. [And that] to this end, the compiled data becomes statistical information, irrefutable evidence of the level of performance of a society" becomes particularly problematic within a larger context of knowledge suppression though. This is because both the findings and solutions of research are naturally commodified within the capitalist climate (p. 541). Perron, Fluet, and Holmes (2005) do work throughout their article though to "suggest that the nursing profession is profoundly political and that nurses, through the use of their knowledge and conferred social mandate (care-giving) act as agents of the state" (p. 543). It is in accepting this stronger aspect of their argument, where tools such as politics and media are best understood to be utilized by authority figures towards the pulling of consent from those caught within the capitalist web. Furthermore, employing techniques of socialization works from the authority's position to support their own claims that what is observed is the natural state of affairs. These researchers' observation of nurses reveals what Flores early interactions with the correctional officers could not explicitly: it is dangerous to assume knowledge accumulated by the state will be used for strictly humanitarian aims.

**Limitations and Considerations.** Again though, "Foucault used the term polyvalence to describe how discourses can be used as both the techniques and outcomes of power... structur[ing] the production and content of scientific knowledge" (Hatch, 2016, p. 11). When

considering the methods of this analysis' approach, *Foucault's* theories must then be critiqued for their manifestation as a discipline itself, used within and around the academic realm to *discipline* and identify others as legitimately or illegitimately academic. As applied to a context of power and knowledge, the limitations of this approach are similar to that of contemporary feminist discourse as well, since once they become academic disciplines they begin to sustain and support the very systems perhaps most detrimental to their cause: especially when considered within a capitalist society whose masculine disposition propagates dichotomy of superiority and inferiority, and where dominance and submission become the social responses expected to occur around such system. But it is with the entering of aggression onto the scene that masculinity holds the potential to bring with it acts and images of violence...

It must also be stressed, by focusing instead on masculinity and not men, the aim of this piece wasn't to distract from those acts men across societies commit in violence. This research sides instead with the sentiment expressed by Beneke (2009), who stated "we need neither a new 'masculinity' nor an old one, but none whatsoever. Otherwise we will be endlessly pursuing a mirage generated by power/knowledge. Men certainly need to change, but not under the banner of masculinity." (p. 159). Rather, by focusing on masculinity as a worldview (or pervasively held perspective) and not a value or achievement, it may more fluidly apply to structures such as institutions and those influential figures who appear throughout our daily routines, regardless of gender and with respect to the constructed qualities and influences of masculinity upon discourse. The observations of Flores gain particular merit when the gendered experiences of the young women discussed are taken into consideration: one being that "women are more likely to engage in drug and chemical behavior when men are in their lives" (p. 25). Statements like the previous work to reveal how it is a proximity to masculinity, and not just men, that produces

adverse consequences for those who encounter masculinized systems without constructive social supports and knowledge. The intangible masculinity is like the title of feminism in that they both imply through their appearances within the language that “endowments,” whether phallic or feminine, exist to be measured, categorized, and critiqued. The difference between the two being though, that masculinity acts as a worldview while contemporary feminism performs as if confined by the boundaries of academic disciplines.

### **Conclusion**

This is the contribution of contemporary masculinity to discourse: the narrowing of creative vision across social arena. In closing this critical analysis it must be stated that the lack of discourse relating to abolition allows institutions to utilize gendered discourse to perpetuate and manipulate racial ideology and ideas about the shape and function of masculinity across societies, in order to consolidate power through the defining (i.e.: medial gaze) and confining of bodies (i.e.: incarceration/slavery). This level of observation builds on that of Davis, by highlighting within institutions a pervasive separation of work and responsibility, which is ultimately detrimental to individuals and their home communities as they move through interconnected systems, and are thus made vulnerable to opinions and beliefs pulled from social contexts which work against them. What then is the proposed course of action, if “the master’s tools” aren’t sufficient and the social systems in play produce effects adverse to the healthy development of both the individual and the environment (Lorde, 2007, p. 112)?

Davis (2003) presents undertakings of abolitionism as being tied explicitly to “the global movement contesting the supremacy of global capital...directly challeng[ing] the rule of the planet...by corporations that are primarily interested in the increased production and circulation of ever more profitable commodities” (p. 44). When discussing abolition, alternatives are a

necessary component of this discourse's logical path, as it warrants for solutions to be stated explicitly. Around the institutions of academia in particular, Davis (2003) suggests transforming schools into "vehicles for decarceration" and, more generally speaking, decriminalizing drugs (p. 108). Other approaches might even involve establishing within the social system a concept of "debtors," which would place "wrong-doers" into positions aimed at fostering feelings of individual responsibility towards the afflicted, in place of processes of legality which present as rituals of sacrifice to the white-supremacist's capitalist-pet (incarceration/practices of slavery) (Davis, 2003, p. 113).

**Power and Oppression.** Understanding present-day power relations as they encounter, create, and utilize institutional labels brings clarity to the variety of ways in which institutions work to influence both individuals' and populations' engagement and access across various contexts. With an emphasis on the usage of language as applied to knowledge of the body and mind within institutional settings, discourse has been observed and confirmed here as a potential source from which to both draw and exert power when leveraged by authority figures. And for the last time, Hatch (2016) explained, "Foucault used the term polyvalence to describe how discourses can be used as both the techniques and outcomes of power... structur[ing] the production and content of scientific knowledge" (p. 11). In conducting this critical analysis the ways in which scientific knowledge are tied to the performance of bio-power and social controls have been confronted, in order to assist in the identifying of those effects these techniques produce as outcomes of power.

*Power lies with those who have control over their own bodies, but authority results once power and influence are extended over the bodies of others.* Institutions are implicated within this formula since power can be said to also result from the ability to determine what goes into

and onto the body, while as well how the body and mind spend and experience time, and as they are used both as spaces for defining and establishing control.

Actions intended to sever these ties to the controller are often linked to masculine aggression, but should instead be understood as contesting the masculine authority by utilizing masculine techniques. These techniques which function to sustain both the desire to control (from the perspective of the oppressor) and the drive to be free of that control (from the perspective of the oppressed), paradoxically sustaining tensions within contemporary systems. It is for this reason as Milgram (1975) describes, how “every sign of tension, therefore, is evidence of the failure of authority to transform the person to an unalloyed state of agency” (p. 155). The failure of the authority results from its inability to completely control the movements and actions of individuals or opposing groups that occupy the contexts they hold some stake in. This leaves the authority figure or institution with the potential to develop inferiority complex, and increases the likelihood of participating in processes of social destruction in response to this letdown. Discourse is the method suggested to hold a most significant influence, since in the contemporary period it utilizes gender as a sort of proxy through which to establish binary indicators of superiority and inferiority in subtle or subliminal ways.

Again though, masculinity is identifiable due to its contemporary characteristic of carrying a desire to control the behaviors and movements of those subject to the authority's influence. Beneke (2009) stresses then that “to refer to any human quality as masculine or feminine is to perpetuate an artificial association between that quality and men and women,” and this is precisely the function of most institutions with economic interests, as highlighted earlier (p.160). The social problem becomes for the authority figure the matter of how the mind and body are understood within and around the contexts these and other institutional agents operate

under, as well as how those aspects of both the individual and group occupy time and public and/or private spaces. Masculinity limits creativity in the areas of politics and media and around social contexts, by narrowly focusing on the exercises and appearances of social deviance and by utilizing processes of destruction as techniques of control.

Further observations from this point might lie in confronting opponents to abolition, who may be argued as possessing masculinized qualities. One of these groups is those who cling to the promises of techno-salvation and other related ideology. Techno-salvation is the “belie[f] that technology alone (or nearly alone) can solve the problems associated with climate change,” and even socially and economically rooted issues such as racism or sexism (Gifford, 2011, p. 293). By ignoring the signs of their current social trajectory though, projected by their own social scientist, they fail to see how their own participation within the systems they value limits not only others, but also the self as it is subject to institutional structures that hinder communication between people, and suggest the discarding of moral and ethical concerns when confronted with “others”. Prisons are described by Davis as explicitly employing modern technology towards the aims of social control (Davis, 2003, p. 50). It is with this in mind that Thomas Jefferson’s statement from the start of this analysis must be confronted again, since modern advances in technology would lead such a statement to imply to the contemporary a search for “endowments” at even the genetic level, which would be misconstrued within a masculinized social climate, and aimed towards the destruction of categorically undesirable qualities, individuals, and communities. Observations of how masculinized ideologies influence worldviews may yield useful applications for understanding institutional perspectives, and when considering how ‘traditional’ gender roles and the roles of technology around institutions are constructed and maintained.

There exist paradox and contradictions pervasively around these systems which cannot simply be adjusted and allowed to remain in play across society, for their foundations are that of oppression rooted in plays of superiority and inferiority that ignore moral and ethical consideration towards the furthering of capitalist aims on a global playing field. Accepting this, one begins to realize the depth of Davis's depiction, of how it is "without the uniform, without the power of the state, [the strip search] would be sexual assault" (p. 83). While as well, Audre Lorde (2007) must be credited with famously stating that, "...the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," which reflects what Davis intended to highlight within the previous statement (p. 112). That is the sentiment that nothing is exempt from the gendered economy, so long as said economy is allowed to survive off of the carnage provide by the toxicity of masculinity. Violations of rights, freedoms, and creativity will continue so long as masculinity is allowed to limit individual and collective development.

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