

Global Insight

A Journal of Critical Human Science and Culture

Reflected Worlds

Winter 2024

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Volume 4

Winter 2024

Global Insight: A Journal of Critical Human Science and Culture is now accepting submissions for Fall 2024. Contributors must be undergraduate students from any college at The University of Texas at Arlington. Submissions will be subject to double-blind peer review. The journal will be available to a wide, international audience in an online platform via academic hosts and vendors as well as a limited print run.

Global Insight aims at firing the imagination of up-and-coming scholars by providing a venue for critical thinking and independent research. Our endeavor is to cultivate the capacity of undergraduate students for subtle and nuanced reasoning as well as nurture a passion for ideas and an appreciation for the social, political, cultural, linguistic, ethical, environmental, and historical dimensions of important issues facing our global society today. Contributors should use liberal arts approaches such as inquiry, dialogue, and analysis to address the issues of politics and culture, science and technology, or related fields. Topics may range from industrialization and urbanization to agriculture and energy; health and health risks to international relations and foreign policy; international trade, finance, capitalism, globalization, and migration; or public issues such as race, class, gender, and labor, etc. Topics should be explored within their respective global contexts.

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From the Editor

Sean Woodard

In today's fast-paced world, it can be difficult to focus on what's important. Whether we're reeling from news of human tragedy, combating misinformation on social media, or letting a car merge in front of us on the freeway, we are tasked with determining how to spend our energies. Even the most mundane tasks take a toll on us, mentally and physically. In choosing what's important to us, we make a conscious decision to allow ourselves some grace. Grace to take a breather. Grace to treat ourselves to an ice cream. Grace to grow as people.

To grow as a person takes time and effort. It involves no less than the will to educate yourself and the personal resolve to improve yourself. Informing both of these aspects is that of imagination.

Speaking with UTA President Jennifer Cowley for the 2023-2024 Maverick Speaker Series, former *Reading Rainbow* host and literacy advocate LeVar Burton described imagination as a superpower that allows anyone to see themselves at any point in time—past, present, and future. Such is the power of imagination that it helps us understand who we are and our place in the world.

Once we imagine where we stand, we can also extend some of the grace we grant ourselves to others. This often manifests through expressing compassion and empathy. It's more than simply imagining ourselves in other people's shoes. It's a form of humility that asks us how we can better understand and help one another.

Growing up, I watched a lot of PBS programming including *Reading Rainbow*, but primarily *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. The late Fred Rogers helped me—as well as countless other children from multiple generations—feel seen and better understand how to navigate the emotions I had growing up. We may not understand everything as children, but Rogers' patience with us, even from behind a television screen, showed how dedicated he was to reaching us. From everyday occurrences like getting a haircut or learning how to process anger, Rogers was there for us. He also contextualized world events in a way that helped us understand things while reminding us that there is hope and beauty in the world.

Granted, it is common to over-sentimentalize the impact of LeVar Burton or Fred Rogers in today's culture. But the hope, beauty, and grace they embodied continue to inspire us to be helpers in the world. These human qualities reflect more profoundly than instances of discord and hate that bombard us in an attempt to make us despair or forego connection with others.

The unifying theme for this Winter 2024 issue of *Global Insight* is "Reflected Worlds." Although there is much to criticize in the present, there is also much to be thankful for and to champion. Each of the contributors in this volume explore how these previously mentioned qualities appear in their research and extend beyond the academy to impact our understanding of the various issues in contemporary society.

When I joined the *Global Insight* editorial board in Fall 2023, the journal was in a state of transition. In many cases, we had to pool our resources together and build from scratch. But this process resulted in such wonderful collaborations that produced an issue I am very happy to share with readers.

I would like to thank the following people who helped make this issue a reality:

- Editor-in-Chief Dr. Lonny Harrison and Digital Publishing Librarian Vanessa Garrett for their insight and guidance in preparing this issue.
- *Global Insight*'s group of peer-reviewers—many of whom are UTA graduate students, alumni, and staff—for devoting their time to provide constructive feedback on student submissions.
- Drs. Amy Hodges and Timothy Ponce of the Department of English for fielding my technical questions relating to Adobe InDesign.
- All contributors in this issue, whose dedication to knowledge and improving the world will not only benefit them in their future respective fields, but also in being informed and compassionate global citizens.
- Our readers, whose support fuels our mission and shares our passion at *Global Insight*.

We are all the helpers who Fred Rogers instructs to look for in the world—by reflecting compassion, empathy, and grace in order to restore hope and beauty in a world we imagine for ourselves and future generations.

—Sean Woodard, Assistant Editor

Foreword

Katherine M. Hamilton

Throughout my life, I have always been different. I found connecting with people to be extremely difficult, as if I were always on the other side of a glass wall. Then in high school, I found my way into an American Sign Language (ASL) classroom and my world changed forever. Not only had I found people, like my teacher Ms. VanTrease, who understood and made an effort to connect with me, I found an amazing language that made more sense to me than spoken words.

As a first-generation college student, I had no idea what I was doing when I graduated from Sam Houston High. I decided to test the waters at Tarrant County College in the interpreting program, until I met Dr. Kathy Quesenbury, who introduced me to rhetoric and the passion of teaching. I realized I could use my writing skills to communicate with the hearing world and tell them about the wonders and joys of Deaf Culture and ASL. Then I wrote my first collegiate research paper on that topic. When I began looking at universities to transfer to for an English BA, I was saddened to find out most do not recognize ASL as a language acceptable for an English degree's requirements. UTA is unique in that aspect and embraces ASL, so I transferred here without a second thought.

At UTA, I met Dr. Lisalee Egbert, a Deaf professor. Many programs actually offering ASL and Deaf Culture do so without Deaf faculty; UTA is again unique in this way. I had been accepted into the McNair program, so I shared my research ideas with Dr. Egbert and she became my mentor. With the McNair program's funding, I was able to conduct a study in the Deaf Community to understand more about misrepresentation in mass film media. This research has already influenced the hearing world, just by introducing Deaf Culture to those who were previously unaware it existed.

Being part of a campus and community that accepts and validates all languages and cultures has been vital to my success. As a hearing person privileged enough to work for the Deaf Community, I understand the importance of cross-c/Cultural collaboration. Collaboration benefits every party involved; the sharing of c/Culture opens worlds of knowledge, friendship, and possibilities.

Thank you to the Deaf Community for allowing me to write about your Culture, and thank you to *Global Insight* for sharing this information with the world.

—Katherine M. Hamilton, Winter 2024

The Misrepresentation of American Sign Language and Deaf Culture in Mainstream Film Media: A Call for Inclusive Representation

Katherine M. Hamilton and Dr. Lisalee Egbert

Mass film media has the power to shape popular culture and influence public opinions and perceptions; thus, properly portraying Deaf characters, the correct linguistic model of American Sign Language (ASL), and Deaf Culture in this powerful medium is crucial. This research examines the misrepresentation of Deaf Culture and ASL in film and its impact on real-world interactions between Deaf and hearing c/Communities. By analyzing historical film trends, bringing modern trends to light, and creating educational tools, this study aims to create measurable change in media practice. The study uses online questionnaires and interviews with ASL-fluent participants from the Deaf Community who have film media experience to highlight the Deaf American's perspective and understand what values are priority. Accurate Deaf life portrayal in storylines, abandoning archetypal Deaf characters, and intentional character composition emerge as key factors; findings demonstrate high value placed on accurate representation and vehement support for projects aligned with these values. The results of this study are intended to impact Deaf and hearing c/Communities by educating production companies on the realities of working with Deaf actors and crew, strategizing methods to do so, and educating consumers.

Note: The capitalization of “Deaf,” “Community,” and “Culture” is important to indicate the pride the Deaf Community has in their Culture. “Deaf” and “deaf” are two separate terms which cannot be used interchangeably.

Keywords: Deaf Culture, American Sign Language, media literacy, mass film media, Deaf Studies, television and movies

History and Modern Trends

History of Deaf Culture and ASL in Film

In the 1800s, as American culture grew and flourished, Deaf Americans were left to their own devices to create and preserve their own separate culture and history within the hearing world. Deaf Culture and American Sign Language (ASL) was misunderstood and vastly uncredited nationwide. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Milan Conference of 1880 played a pivotal role in discrediting sign language, leading to a massive wave of anti-Deaf Culture in America (Moores par. 1). At this conference, educators declared that sign language hindered the development of spoken language and pushed for its eradication from educational settings. The most powerful anti-Deaf Culture rhetoric spewed at the Milan Conference is notable in the English translated excerpt provided by Donald F. Moores in the *American Annals of the Deaf*,

(1) Given the incontestable superiority of speech over signs in restoring deaf-mutes to society, and in giving them a more perfect knowledge of language that the oral method ought to be preferred to signs; and (2) considering that the simultaneous use of speech and signs has the disadvantage of injuring speech, lipreading, and precision of ideas, that the pure oral method ought to be preferred. (par. 2)

As noted by most scholars in Deaf Studies, no Deaf people were invited to attend this historical whiplashing of their language and Culture. Consequently, many Deaf individuals were forced to abandon their natural mode of communication and learn to speak and lip-read, often at the expense of their linguistic and cultural identity. As sign language continued to be discredited and the oral method was promoted, the gap between the Deaf and hearing world grew deeper by each passing day.

Then came the era of silent films. John S. Schuchman, a former academic advisor at Gallaudet University, described this time as the “Golden Era” for the Deaf Community (231). Between the years of 1893 and 1929, Deaf people nationwide felt they had equal access and opportunity in the film industry (231). In this short period, the hopes that the Deaf could be represented in mainstream media seemed plausible for the first time in American history. For efficient contrast, note the near past when the Deaf were sent away to boarding homes and the use of sign was punished; when oralism thrived in the hearts of the oppressive (232). However, this golden era of inclusivity was short lived, as all technological advances are sure to be followed by another bigger, better invention with shorter intervals between innovations. Soon after the silent film boom came the so-called “Talkies.” While the Deaf had previously thrived in the film industry with their natural talent for exuberant facial expressions and telling body language, the Deaf Community was now excluded completely from film as sound was introduced. Since the Deaf were involved so heavily in the film industry prior to the use of sound, naturally directors continued to use sign language roles in talkies, yet they excluded those who were fluent in the language. Schuchman brings to light the example of the actress Jane Wyman, a hearing woman, who won an Oscar for her portrayal of a Deaf woman in 1948 (235). Schuchman explains the language was now depicted as “wooden” and lacking in emotion because the people presenting were not part of the Deaf community in any way (235). Following this event, the abhorrent misuse and misrepresentation of ASL and Deaf Culture in film and media can be clearly marked as beginning. A good example of the continuation of this issue is the 2016 film, *Hush*. A simple search of the cast will reveal although the main character was Deaf and the plot of the film revolved around her Identity, neither the main actress nor any of the cast or crew themselves were Deaf.

Modern Trends

The 2016 film, *Hush* is a clear example of the modern continuation of this issue. A simple search of the cast will reveal although the main character was Deaf and the plot of the film revolved around her Deaf Identity, neither the main actress nor any of the cast or crew themselves were Deaf. Despite this, the film went on to amass a 93% audience approval rating on popular film critique website, Rotten Tomatoes (“*Hush*”). Clearly, the hearing world enjoys viewing content featuring ASL and Deaf Culture, yet most people are unaware of the negative trend they are participating in by absorbing this misrepresentative content. Many mainstream pieces of mass film media enjoy highlighting ASL, but fail to do so without executing their ideas in an exploitative manner. While the hearing world functions under the belief that ASL is a visual substitute for English, the Deaf Community struggles to communicate how wrong this belief is. The syntax, parameters, and descriptive linguistics are vastly different to the English lexicon. While signs can be linked back to English words and used to form a somewhat coherent sentence, lacking a full understanding of the complexity of the language can lead to a Cultural trainwreck. Pierre Schmitt, a social science researcher based in Paris, focuses on the ASL interpretation of the National Anthem at the 2014 Super Bowl. He goes in depth, speculating that while Amber Zion, a Deaf performer, gracefully showcased her rendition of the anthem, she was a “prisoner of the bubble” on screen (131). Hearing people thought she was merely interpreting the lyrics to our national anthem, when in reality, she was presenting it in her own language as a visual poem. Schmitt goes on to scold the decision to trap her in a small section of the screen as if she were nothing but a glorified captioning system, stating this action “promotes the perception of sign language as an accommodation for a minority who have a handicap as opposed to a full-fledged language of artistic expression” (132). As examples like this indicate, what mainstream film media continually fails to understand is that the Deaf Community does not view ASL as a way to catch onto the coattails of the English language.

ASL as Its Own Language

Contrary to spoken languages, the Community views signing as its own separate entity with its own rules and cultural significance. In a research article on syntactic priming by use of psycholinguistic studies, Matthew Hall et al. is passionate about the topic:

These analyses find many syntactic devices that are familiar from spoken language research (e.g. hierarchical phrase structure, constituent order, movement operations, anaphora, embedding, etc.), but there are other syntactic devices that make use of the unique affordances of the manual modality to accomplish grammatical functions e.g. facial marking for topics and interrogatives, spatial marking for verb agreement, etc.). (2)

By downplaying Zion's rendition of the anthem and treating it as a mere way to "catch up" with the hearing world or as a simple substitute for English, Deaf culture itself was downplayed across all of America and further set back in the minds of hearing people due to the lack of understanding by mainstream hearing media. In this era where technology is second nature, turning on sub-titles is no feat for anyone. American sign language is a visual language, which means that facial expressions are translated as tonality. Because those who are fluent in the language must articulate their meanings through their expressions, they gain a skill for executing flawless facial character, a skill that is easily transferable to acting work. When imagining a favorite film, people most likely envision a film with expressive actors. Casting producers may make the argument that the hearing audience will not be able to get the full effect of the emotion of the script without hearing the tone of voice. However, when looking at communication using ASL, arguably the emotion of the words is more perceivable than relying on the tonality of voice itself. Ronnie B. Wilbur, a linguistic researcher at Purdue University, states,

A unique aspect of signed languages is the systematic grammatical use of facial expressions and head or body positions. The nonmanual markers (NMs) comprise a number of independent channels (our current count is 14): the head, the shoulders, the torso, the eyebrows, the eyeballs (gaze), the eyelids, the nose, the mouth (upper lip, lower lip, mid-lip, lip corners), the tongue, the cheeks, and the chin. Each of these is capable of independent articulation and, with layering, complex combinations can be produced. (247)

American sign language should not be held from the screen for fear of lack of understanding; instead, it should be held in high esteem in an industry where expression is so highly regarded.

The Deaf Community in the Context of the Hearing World

A good example of brilliant expressiveness is Nyle DiMarco, a Deaf activist become actor and model, who stated in an MTV interview that his modeling career is made simple because he is used to communicating without words (par. 6). Yet, DiMarco is also a prime example of perceptions of the Deaf Community in the context of the hearing world. DiMarco graduated from Gallaudet University, an esteemed Deaf college, with a degree in mathematics (The Harold, par. 3). Despite his amazing work on *In the Can* (2013), a movie entirely in ASL with no audio, he was only noted as being an "actor" by the hearing world after picking up a role in popular, mainstream television show, *Switched at Birth*. DiMarco used his new popularity in the hearing world to further his activism. He was discovered by *America's Next Top Model*, and won as the first and only Deaf contestant, as well as winning *Dancing with the Stars*. After winning these two primarily hearing contests, he started the Nyle DiMarco Foundation – Parent's Corner which spreads Deaf awareness as well as provides grants to Deaf students to further their education. Alongside this prestigious foundation, he is the lead spokesperson for Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD K). Both of these are significant pillars in the Deaf Community. However, despite his outspoken fight for equality, when searching his name all that is found is "HOTTEST MEN ON INSTAGRAM" or "WOW! DEAF MAN CAN DANCE?" While researching this topic, a common trend emerged. His interviews in mainstream media are centered around his looks, a disbelief that a Deaf person can be a model or an actor, and other repetitive, insignificant topics. Publicity such as this clearly transcribes how even when Deaf actors break through the barrier to entry, they are impeded by stereotypes and held in a lower esteem than other actors who have achieved significantly less. DiMarco is only one such person dealing with this discriminative trend as a Deaf man who broke into mainstream film media, but the same trends are found with most, if not all, Deaf Community members in his situation. While most hearing audience members are not inundated with malicious intent, their lack of education in the topic at hand simply stems from the media they consume. Viewing popular films in the hearing world showcasing Deaf Culture and/or ASL improperly leads to this very real impact on the Deaf Community's real-world perceptions; thus leading to negative interactions and the furthered separation of the Deaf and hearing worlds.

The Divide Between Deaf and Hearing Media

As Hollywood and media outlets deflect criticism by the Deaf Community, the Community has not been stagnant. Many movies *for* Deaf people *by* Deaf people exist, but the divide between Deaf and hearing media is vast. Many attempts at bridging this divide fall into a hearing-centric narrative, whether intentionally or unintentionally. To show the difference between a hearing-centric project and a more carefully constructed, intentionally representative narrative, look at the films *Through Deaf Eyes* (2007) and *Audism Unveiled* (2008). Both films are documentaries, published around the same time, and attempt to capture the real-world experiences of the Deaf Community. *Through Deaf Eyes* goes through the entirety of Deaf Americans' struggles to form their own Culture and expands on the Community that has now settled into the roots of our nation. Lawrence R. Hott, a hearing producer who aided in the production of the film, asks viewers to bear these thoughts in mind before watching:

How does a Deaf person relate to hearing professors, employers, lovers, or their own hearing children? What is it like to read lips—or try to? How is it to raise a Deaf child, if you are hearing, or how does it change your world to have an electronic device surgically implanted in your ear and hear language instead of seeing it? Hollywood has had a hard time understanding any of this, especially the reality of reading lips. (140)

The film was a huge success in sign language classes as basic curriculum to introduce hearing students with no experience with Deaf Culture to the Community. This film focuses on the faux lip reading superpower perpetuated by Hollywood; in too many depictions of Deaf folks in movies and television shows, the roles are played by hearing people who feign an ability to read lips. While reading lips is a possible skill, it should not be the default skill characters in media assume, though most Deaf characters in mainstream media seem to possess this skill. These stereotypes portrayed on screen permeate our society and lead to misunderstandings between the Deaf and hearing world. Even experts in the field, such as Hott, feel a need to make a change in the media industry; yet this documentary faces criticism for appealing to a hearing audience by selective narratives to present that align mostly with the idea of Deaf folks hearing people already have. An example of this is the so-called “trauma-porn” aspect of these narratives, allowing the hearing audience to infantilize the cast for the dramatic feeling of success and pride at the ending. *Audism Unveiled* is a project made by students at Gallaudet University in an attempt to “unveil” the realities behind audism, a term coined by Tom Humphries to describe “how Deaf people are often the victims of discrimination and bias shown by their hearing families, teachers, and communities” (Benedict, Sass-Lehrer 6). This documentary goes in depth about the emotional damage and isolation Deaf folks feel when they are isolated from the Deaf Community and forced to live in a hearing-centric world. *Audism Unveiled* specifically wants its hearing audience to feel uncomfortable watching this film, creating an environment conducive for empathy and growth. However, this documentary, though coming out at the same time and covering the same topic from a more empathy-driven level, saw much less success than *Through Deaf Eyes*, as *Audism Unveiled* was not marketed with the intention of allowing its hearing audience to come away with feel-good emotions.

Hearing people consume media *for* hearing people and do not seek out Deaf films intentionally unless they have had experiences, in some way, with the Deaf Community. Yet, most Deaf films suffer from inaccessibility; popular streaming platforms such as Netflix or Hulu fail to appreciate many Deaf films and make them accessible to the general hearing audience. For example, the movie *SuperDeafy* (2013) is hugely popular in the Deaf Community, yet the movie is incredibly hard to find. Streaming platforms Amazon Video and Vudu have the title listed, if specifically searched for, but neither place actually provides access to the film; instead, the notice “This Title is Not Currently Available” appears. The same issue occurs for many other staples in Deaf film. In lieu of access to films illustrating proper representation, the general hearing audience consumes popular media. While some popular shows and movies attempt inclusivity, such as *Switched at Birth* which Columbia University professor Saljooq M. Asif claims to “upend expectations, confront differences, and challenge the meaning of normality,” even that endearing drama series did not cast their main Deaf character with a Deaf actress (37). Katie LeClerc, the actress playing the character the show centers around (along with her hearing counterpart, Bay) has publicly stated she does not identify as Deaf, but has “fluctuating hearing loss” and puts on a “deaf accent” for the show (abilitymagazine.com/katie-leclerc-abc-family-star-on-menieres-disease). While this show is often paraded around as the token show for inclusivity due to the casting of many real Deaf actors, the fact the main actress puts on, in her own words, a

“Deaf accent” provides evidence of the harmful stereotyping and perpetuating misrepresentation of Deaf Culture in popular media. The film *CODA* (2021) took the first step attempting to bridge the divide between Deaf and hearing film worlds, yet even that film had flaws. In an attempt to make this film marketable to hearing audiences, the plot seemed to devolve into a “hearing-centric” narrative. An article in *The New York Times* titled “Representation or Stereotype? Deaf Viewers Are Torn Over ‘CODA’” mentions the term “hearing gaze,” referring to “scenes that may resonate with hearing viewers but fall flat with Deaf viewers or even upset them” (par 2). The actress playing the Child of a Deaf Adult (CODA) was not a CODA herself, so much of her interpretations of scenes (her facial expressions, her body language, her general attitude) has been criticized for coming across as wrong and condescending. The technical aspect of the film also showed a strong favor for its hearing audience as the camera angles cut off signs, forcing viewers to rely on closed captions despite the signer being in full view of the camera. While much of the Deaf Community is hesitant to heavily criticize this movie because of its strides towards progress, this film should not be seen as the gold-star standard for films demonstrating Deaf Culture in an inclusive manner. *CODA* also sits behind the paywall of AppleTV, an exclusive stream platform, not readily accessible. While, yes, television shows and movies exist with the *right* representation, only characters and storylines presented in widely-accessible mainstream media will have an impact on the hearing world. This problem must be presented to the mainstream Hollywood industry itself, an industry and community that lacks education or understanding about the Deaf Community and how the film media directly impacts it. Accessible, popular mass film media *must* do the work to represent the real Community they wish to portray.

The Deaf American Community’s Perspective

Methodology

Through QuestionPro, a numerical study was employed to gain insight into the values of the Deaf Community. The survey questions on ASL and Deaf Culture representation in mainstream media were carefully crafted in written English to ensure clarity and inclusivity; additionally, to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for the Deaf Community, an ASL interpretation video was provided alongside each written question. These videos featured a Deaf, certified ASL interpreter presenting each question in American Sign Language, ensuring that Deaf participants could fully understand and engage with the survey in their preferred language. The language used in the questions aimed to be neutral and unbiased, encouraging participants to share their honest perceptions and experiences.

The survey on the perception of ASL and Deaf Culture representation in mainstream media garnered responses from a diverse range of participants across the Deaf Community nationwide. Through various recruitment channels, including social media platforms, Deaf Community organizations, and specialized online forums, 30 individuals contributed their valuable insights. Participants were asked to rate their opinions on a numerical scale of 1 to 10 for different aspects of ASL and Deaf Culture representation in popular/mainstream television shows and movies. They were specifically prompted to assess the accuracy of ASL portrayal, the level of representation of Deaf characters, the extent to which Deaf Culture was adequately represented, and the inclusivity of linguistic and cultural diversity within the Deaf community in mainstream media. Upon completion of the survey, a comprehensive data analysis was conducted, utilizing the ratio scale through data analysis tool HubSpot to determine average scores and overall trends in perception. The qualitative data obtained from the optional detailed responses provided by some participants were meticulously analyzed to identify recurring themes in the participants’ viewpoints.

After completing the numerical study, participants were invited to take part in one-on-one interviews to provide more in-depth insights and personal experiences regarding Deaf Culture and ASL representation in popular television shows and movies. The interviews aimed to delve deeper into their feelings, perceptions, and the impact of media portrayals on their daily lives and real-world interactions. Participants were asked to describe their first encounter with Deaf Culture and ASL in a popular television show or movie and to share their initial emotional response to it. They were then asked to recall the worst representation of Deaf Culture or ASL they had seen in mainstream media and how it made them feel emotionally. Conversely, participants were encouraged to recall the best representation of ASL or Deaf Culture they had encountered in a popular television show or movie and the positive emotions this portrayal evoked.

To understand the impact of media representation on their daily lives, participants were asked if they had ever felt that

the portrayal of ASL or Deaf Culture in popular television shows or movies had affected them either positively or negatively, and to provide specific examples. Participants were prompted to express their thoughts on whether they believed popular television shows or movies perpetuate negative stereotypes towards ASL and/or Deaf Culture, and to explain their views. The interviewees were invited to offer their suggestions on how popular film media could improve the positive representation of ASL and Deaf Culture, fostering a more accurate and inclusive depiction. Lastly, participants were given the opportunity to address casting companies and directors directly, sharing their thoughts and messages regarding the portrayal of Deaf characters in popular television shows and movies. Through these one-on-one interviews, this study aimed to capture the nuanced perspectives and personal experiences of the participants, further contributing to the broader discussion on the representation of Deaf Culture and ASL in mainstream media. The interview responses provided valuable qualitative data that complemented the quantitative findings of the initial survey, allowing for a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the Community's perspectives and aspirations for better representation.

Survey Results

For the accuracy of ASL portrayal, responses were varied, with some participants giving low ratings of 1 to 3, while others found it relatively accurate, giving ratings of 6 to 8, resulting in a mean rating of 4.733. Similarly, views on the representation of Deaf characters spanned the scale, with a mean rating of 4.767, indicating diverse opinions but with a strong lean towards >5. Regarding the showcasing of linguistic and cultural diversity, participants were in agreement with the low standards in Hollywood, presenting a mean rating of 4.067. Participants' assessments of the representation of Deaf Culture itself leaned towards low scores but still varied, with ratings ranging from 53.33% being less than 5, 26.67% being greater than 5, and 20% being 5, resulting in a mean rating of 4.233. The variation likely stems from the range of media consumption, with some viewers selecting only films with higher accuracy in representation and others being less selective in their viewing choices. However, a prominent trend emerged in the importance of including more accurate Deaf characters and storylines, as the majority gave high ratings of 8 to 10, leading to a substantial mean rating of 8.933. The representation of lived experiences and challenges elicited a strong response as well, with a mean rating of 3.833. As this is one of the lowest scores, clearly participants value the reflection of lived experiences of Deaf life greatly. On the positive side, participants acknowledged some improvement in the representation of ASL and Deaf Culture in mainstream media over the years, with a mean rating of 6.533. Finally, there was a resounding trend in supporting movies with authentic representation, as the majority rated it a high 9 to 10, leading to an impressive mean rating of 9.433. These trends underscore the importance of accurate and inclusive

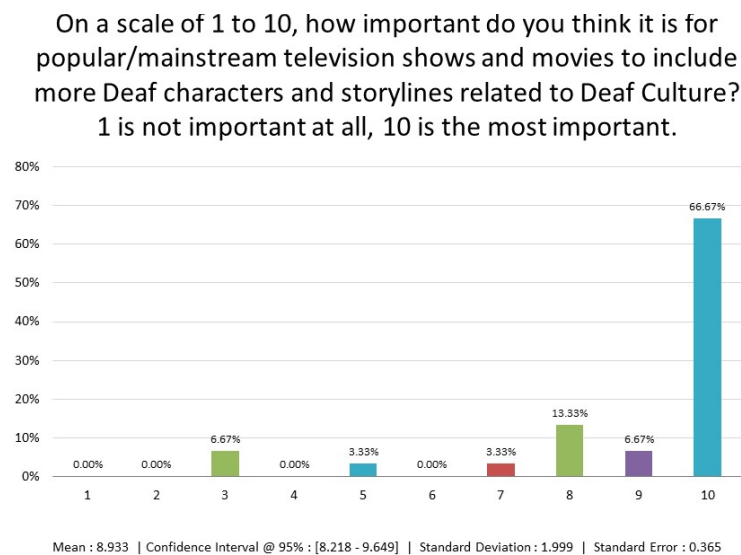


Figure 1

Interview Results

All interviews were conducted in ASL and transcribed by a certified interpreter. The stories presented by the Deaf Community participants provided valuable qualitative data. Despite these interviews being one-on-one with Community members across the country and having never met each other, many participants gave the same answers. In response to the question: “What was the best representation of ASL or Deaf Culture you’ve seen in a popular television show or movie?” all participants remarked on the movie *Children of a Lesser God*, a 1986 film directed by Randa Heins and starring Deaf actress Marlee Matlin. Marlee Matlin plays a multifaceted Deaf character in this romance movie, portraying herself as a strong and independent woman whose allure is irresistible to her hearing love interest. Many participants had personal stories about this movie being a revelation to them; to see a Deaf character signing fluently and accurately without the burden of archetypal narratives written into the script. Participant C noted that even though ASL has been featured in many films and television shows since *Children of a Lesser God*, they have failed to be as impactful. Participant C also mentioned the movie *CODA* as a movie with good ASL representation, but felt the plot was “bland and forgettable,” wishing another movie would come along with good representation but also an interesting plot. Participant D recalled seeing with a romantic partner *Children of a Lesser God* before having much experience with ASL themselves. Participant D looked into space for a moment, remembering the story: “My first partner had a hearing aid, and we were watching the movie. I was asking questions, I was picking up a little bit of baby signing, asking a lot of questions. I asked my boyfriend why don’t you sign? Then I asked the babysitter, why don’t they sign?” This precipitated more conversations in Participant D’s real life about Deaf Culture and ASL.

With all the examples given by participants, every person tied their experiences with film to real-world scenarios. Whether film translated into their life as conversations, curiosity, or pride, each experience was sincerely impactful. Participant B, a parent of Deaf children and a certified interpreter, stated that her children were used to seeing representative media because of Participant B’s ideology and belief that inclusive media is important for shaping self esteem. Because of this, most accurate representation does not phase their children as they see it as normal. However, an experience that happened only recently was mentioned: a cartoon character who was Deaf and signing appeared. The amount of joy this brought, Participant B remembers, was immense for their child. This cartoon, *Craig of the Creek*, can be considered a part of mainstream media and shows how important a child’s access to visible representation is. While Participant B is vigilant about their children’s access to media, more than 90% of Deaf children are born to hearing parents with little to no experience in the Deaf Community. Participant B recalled their first time as a child seeing ASL on television being *Sesame Street* and being in awe of the fact “these guys recognise ASL!” and the language extended past their Community.

More than half of the interview participants likened hearing actors portray Deaf life to a white actor portraying Black life and stressed the importance of Cultural understanding when creating a piece of media that could shape the minds and ideas of children and adults. Participant B highlighted a trend seen in most participants, the overwhelming consensus seems to agree: do not include a Deaf character simply to include a Deaf character. If a project chooses to include the Deaf Community, do so to add to the storyline, the plot. Do not add a Deaf character as a tool to show discrimination, or add some flippant “accessibility” narrative. Deaf people want to see Deaf characters in the way hearing people want to see hearing characters; see them fall in love, see them crack jokes and be funny, see them go through heartbreak and joy, and interact with other characters in a *normal* way. Not as Participant B puts it, “an attempt to have more minor interactions.”

The responses to the question “If you could send a message directly to casting companies and directors writing Deaf characters into popular television shows or movies, what would you say?” elicited several interesting viewpoints. Participant D stated, “Stop creating movies that show Deaf people as less-than, looked down upon. Show our experiences, yes, and yes when we’re oppressed. But show real experiences, not these exaggerated experiences of audism. Show how we live and experience life, authentically. So when I go to the store, and maybe there’s a hearing person that has no experience with Deaf people and oppresses me, yes that happens, but it’s not like I get pulled over and am immediately put into jail for being Deaf.” Participant B looked at the logistics of ASL in hearing-centric media, “Some directors need to better frame their camera in regards to placement of arm movements to make sure the signs are actually recorded, not just the edges of the words. For Closed Captioning, it’s also a problem, the captioning overlaps signing.” Participant A notes, “Involve the Deaf Community. We can help you learn different aspects that you could use here and overseas that translates to all Deaf people. Just because it’s easier or having Deaf people on set makes it more complicated, no, they need to learn the appropriate way how to access communication, how to learn, and to be educated. Every time a person comes up, you know you have to explain again and again. It’s easy for Hollywood to spread that information.”

Conclusion

Media portrayal has the power to shape real-world interactions, and inaccurate representations lead to negative perceptions and further the division between the Deaf and hearing worlds. The survey highlights the importance of accurate and inclusive portrayal of ASL, Deaf characters, and Deaf Culture in mainstream media. Participants stress the need for authentic representation that reflects their lived experiences, rather than reinforcing stereotypes. The interviews revealed that movies like *Children of a Lesser God* are exemplary in their accurate portrayal of ASL and Deaf Culture, leaving a lasting impact on the Deaf Community. However, access to such representative media remains limited, as popular streaming platforms often fail to make Deaf films readily available to the general hearing audience.

The Deaf Community calls on casting companies and directors to authentically represent Deaf characters, avoiding tokenism and exaggerated experiences of audism. Involving the Deaf Community during the production process is crucial for accurate representation and education on ASL and Deaf Culture. Continuously seeing mainstream film media damage the reputation of sign language on screen deteriorates the relationship between the Deaf and hearing c/Communities more so than it already has. Hearing people are uneducated in the language and Culture of the Deaf, and these misbeliefs are perpetuated by misrepresentation of the Community in film media. It not only affects the ability for the Deaf to function in the hearing world unimpeded by stereotypes and rude ideals, it prevents the hearing world from being able to understand a Culture that is rich in different perspectives and beneficial mannerisms.

As a first step, advocating for Deaf actors to be cast in Deaf roles is pertinent. Not completely blind to the lack of inclusivity Hollywood gives the Deaf Community, the film industry has a list of excuses to present. Casting staff and production managers ask, “If we hire a Deaf actor, how will we communicate with them easily?” Surprising to some, sign language interpreters are not a rare commodity. Some producers may state that the integrity of their movie is at risk when allowing an interpreter, who is an outsider, on set. Producers worry information about their work will be leaked, or the interpreter would be a distraction. Yet, why should interpreters be treated lesser than any other professional on the crew? According to the *American Annals of the Deaf*, a professional journal dedicated to Deaf Studies and Education, “ASL interpreters were recognized as professionals in the late 1960s and early 1970s following the establishment of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 1964” (335). ASL interpreters have a strict code of ethics they abide by, ethics which can even be found in Alaskan executive director of Judicial Conduct, Maria Greenstein’s paper in *Judge’s Journal* (par. 4). They, like everyone else on the film crew, are present in a professional manner and will under no circumstance compromise the integrity of the production. With an interpreter, communication becomes easy and would certainly be no more difficult than communicating with the common stubborn, entitled actress that has no interest in using her ears anyway. While laws mandating Deaf casting could increase Deaf actors’ hiring rate, more likely, the decrease of Deaf roles in films would be the end result. Instead, the change needed must be of the social aspect.

The first step to any significant change is awareness. Not only the Deaf Community, anyone vaguely aware of the problem should be vocal about it. Increasing traffic to Deaf journals and news platforms would result in a small change that could snowball into nationwide awareness. Social media platforms give the ability to share articles that would increase visibility of the problem to an audience likely unaware of it. If a hearing person watches a movie and recognizes a Deaf character or sign language on screen, the first instinct should be a quick internet search to look at the cast and crew to determine if the representation is accurate and appropriate. A viewer need not be immersed in Deaf Culture or even *know* sign language to hold production companies accountable by withholding their viewership to any production excluding the Deaf Community from production. As with any social reform, citizens must not be complacent and must stop generating revenue for companies who perpetuate the problem.

Mainstream media must take responsibility for accurate representation and inclusive storytelling to bridge the gap and foster understanding between the two c/Communities. Collaboration with the Deaf Community during production is vital for authentic portrayals that accurately reflect their lived experiences and cultural significance. By doing so, the media industry can contribute positively to the inclusion and appreciation of Deaf Culture in society.

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Social Hierarchy and Purity of Blood in New Spain

Paula Currie

Racial inequality, white superiority, and socialized economic poverty are issues currently affecting the world. These problems plaguing our nation seem hopeless with no apparent end in sight. All these issues have been repeated time and again throughout history. When the Spanish colonized the New World, they brought with them an ideology known as *limpieza de sangre* or purity of blood. This rigid ideology was based on the premise of White Spanish superiority, which was imposed upon the people of New Spain. *Limpieza de sangre* influenced nobility, socio-economic racial hierarchy, life, and art in New Spain. To fully understand the effects of this ideology, one must understand its origins and its effects on the interracial population of the New World. This study analyzes the research of leading scholars in Spanish art, colonial Latin American history, Spanish history, and religion to create an in-depth analysis of New Spain. Throughout this study, religious beliefs not only played a crucial role in Spanish ideology but also seemed to fuel notions of racial inequality and servitude. Art was also used to spread racial propaganda to further the concept of White Spanish superiority in New Spain. Consequently, Spanish art and ideology created lasting effects still evident in Latin America today.

Keywords: white supremacy, racial hierarchy, systemic racism, pure blood, colonization

Racial inequality and social hierarchy are problems that have been chronicled throughout history for thousands of years. In New Spain, racial inequality was documented not only in historical records but also visually in the form of art. Andrés de Islas' 1774 painting entitled, *De Español, y Negra; nace Mulata* (The Spaniard and Black Produce a *Mulata*) (see Fig. 1), is a perfect example of the types of systemic racism practiced in New Spain. This kitchen scene depicts a White Spaniard being attacked by his Black African wife as their child seemingly attempts to intervene. This painting, while imaginary in nature, offers insight into the *casta* (caste) system on which these paintings were based. The artist clearly meant to depict the Spaniard nobly based on his clean-cut and well-dressed disposition. Furthermore, even though he is a man, he is the one being victimized. His appearance may allude to his prestigious upbringing, hinting that he is not the aggressor in this situation. His wife is not only depicted as aggressive but is also dressed in common apparel, holding some type of kitchen utensil. Her overall dress, the kitchen setting, and her weapon of choice may also allude to life in the service industry. Their child, the *mulata*, is portrayed as a mix of both races with a creamy tan complexion. The look on her face is one of distress at the scene unfolding around her as she is shown pushing against her mother in an attempt to make her stop. While this scene is presumably fictional, it is heartbreaking and disturbing. The imagery depicted on panels much like this may have been meant to warn viewers, specifically the Spanish, of the "dangers" of marrying a lower *casta*. Paintings such as this one represents the skewed conceptualization of lower *castas* based simply on race and the absurd notion of "white supremacy" ingrained into the Spanish mentality.



Figure 1. Andrés de Islas, N.4, *De Español, y Negra; nace Mulata*, 1774, oil on canvas 75x54 cm. Museo de América, Madrid. CER.es (<http://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>). Photographed by Joaquín Otero Úbeda.

Casta paintings, like the one mentioned above, were part of a larger series and created a visual reference to the *casta* system, a form of social hierarchy based on race and the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* or purity of blood. *Casta* paintings, a genre of paintings that emerged in New Spain around 1720, have attracted much recent scholarly attention (*Imagining Identity* 48-50). Each series consisted of sixteen to twenty panels depicting a man, a woman, and the imagined offspring produced from their interracial relationship (“Locating Race” 43). Early *casta* paintings (see Fig. 2) were devoid of background and instead focused on the physical characteristics of the figures depicted (*Genealogical Fictions* 227). The *casta* series were sometimes numbered, and each painting included an inscription detailing the races portrayed in the image (*Genealogical Fictions* 231). After the mid-18th century, *casta* paintings became more elaborate (see Fig. 3), depicting full-length figures engaging in a multitude of activities and shown in a variety of locations and clothing styles specific to their social ranking (“Locating Race” 43).



Figure 2. Unknown Artist, *Las Castas*, c. 18th century, oil on canvas 40 7/8 in. (104 cm.), W: 58 1/4 in. (148 cm). Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlan, Mexico. Accessed October 25, 2023. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the *casta* paintings have a long and complicated story to tell. In reading the paintings from left to right, the top row of *casta* paintings focuses on Spanish relations with Indians, which by the third generation created more Spaniards. The next cluster of paintings (generally the second row) concentrates on Spanish and Black African unions. The last portion of the *casta* series emphasizes the unions of Black Africans and Indians (Katzew 49). The Spaniards are on the top tier of these paintings because Spanish Christian blood was considered to have redemptive qualities when mixed with Indian blood; however, mixing with Black blood was seen to corrupt the Spanish bloodline (*Genealogical Fictions* 235). *Casta* paintings were not only a pictorial representation of race, but they also served as a warning reflecting the visual consequence of introducing “tainted” blood into the family genealogy (Gutierrez and Ware 125). Some images of Spaniards and Africans also hint at dysfunction in the home through images of violence and discord as mentioned above concerning the painting by Islas, *De Español, y Negra; nace Mulata*.

Today, topics concerning race relations is still a burning issue in our society. To understand the present, one must look to the past. Issues of pure blood and racial inequality were common in New Spain. The ideology known as *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood, influenced New Spain’s social hierarchy, life, and art. Even though *limpieza de sangre* is no longer practiced, this ideology has had lasting consequences, which are still evident in Latin American countries.

| *Limpieza de Sangre*

What is pure blood? One might argue that someone of pure blood would be considered innocent and without sin or corruption. To others, the phrase “pure blood” conjures up references from the Bible. “Indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins” (*Lexham English Bible*, Heb. 9:22). Jesus’ blood was considered pure. According to the Bible, his sacrifice and the spilling of his pure blood brought redemption for the world’s sins. This ideology of “pure blood” can be traced back to scripture and would be used as a way to exert dominance over races the Spanish deemed as less superior.

In the Middle Ages, Jews, Muslims, and Christians were able to live in Spain and share a mutual religious tolerance; this period is referred to by modern day scholars as *Convivencia* (co-existence) (Poole 360). This time of tolerance soon ended when the Roman province of *Hispania* was overrun by African Berber armies, bringing about the start of the *Reconquista* War (Tyerman 285). The *Reconquista*, also known as the Spanish Crusade, began in 711 and ended on January 2, 1492. This war to expel the Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula lasted almost eight centuries (Roberts). The end of the *Reconquista* was followed by a spiritual reconquest headed by the Spanish Inquisition to expel the Jews and Moors from the Iberian Peninsula by royal edict (Roberts). This also led to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain that same year, bringing *Convivencia* to an end (Poole 361).

The ideology of *limpieza de sangre* emerged in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries creating racial divisions that would favor the Spanish. In 1455, Pope Nicholas V granted Portuguese the right to conquer and enslave African unbelievers (Tyerman 285). At the same time, distinctions were made between “Old Christians” and “New Christians” (those tainted with the conversion from Islam and Judaism) (Tyerman 360). Medieval and early modern Christian Europe considered Jews to be stained due to their ancestral involvement in the death of Christ or deicide (“The Black Blood” 484). Black Africans also could not be fully assimilated into the Spanish colonial society or into Spanish “Old Christian” blood due to their “biblical” association with the Curse of Ham and taint of slavery (“The Black Blood” 515). This concept of stained and tinted lineage would apply only to those of Jewish descent and Black Africans as the Spanish ideology of *limpieza de sangre* and slavery moved into the New World.

Limpieza de sangre was initially associated with notions of nobility. Later requirements were established in the 16th century in religious and secular institutions (*Genealogical Fictions* 25).¹ Spanish society became obsessed with genealogy, believing that lineage was a sign of loyalty to the faith. Descent and religion, or blood and faith, became the foundation behind the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (*Genealogical Fictions* 1). According to Martinez’s research, the offspring of Spaniards and Indians were considered redeemed through a “whitening” infusion of Spanish “Old Christian” blood, echoing the Christian notion that Christ took on the world’s sins to purify it (“The Black Blood” 485).

Spanish Nobility

As previously mentioned, the Spanish considered themselves superior to the races they conquered, often claiming nobility. Spanish were considered “pure-blooded” if they could trace their lineage to the *Reconquista* Wars. These wars were backed by a long line of Popes and therefore considered “Holy” (Roberts). Spanish who could trace their lineage to the *Reconquista* Wars in the Iberian Peninsula referred to themselves as *hijosdalgos* (sons of somebody or noble status), and their blood was considered pure of Jew or Muslim taint (Gutierrez and Ware 120). The Spanish took the claim of nobility and pure blood very seriously. Those found lying about their bloodline or lineage were brought before the Spanish Inquisition. The punishments included persecution, confiscation of property, executions, and burnings if found guilty (Burkholder and Johnson 195). Africans were often associated with the Islam practitioners of North Africa; as such, the Spanish were worried they would “taint” the blood of descendants, therefore, condemning their *casta* to never achieve *limpieza de sangre* (Gutierrez and Ware 120). Furthermore, through the ideology of *limpieza de sangre*, Black Africans’ blood was also seldom allowed the possibility of redemption due to their mythological link to the Curse of Ham (“The Black Blood” 485).

Biblical Curses and Slavery

The Curse of Ham was a biblical curse enacted by Noah on Canaan, the son of Ham (*New International Version*, Genesis 9:20-27).² The Bible is unclear as to what offense Ham committed that was worthy of such a curse, though theological scholars have several theories ranging from voyeurism to maternal incest (Bergsma and Hahn 25). The biblical Curse of Ham, also known as the Curse of Canaan, was responsible for spreading the idea that black skin can stain White people. While the Bible mentions Noah’s curse on Canaan involving slavery, it does not reference skin color or race (Fracchia 12).³ The Bible does, however, mention another curse that is often tied to skin color. According to Magali Carrera, black skin was considered a mark associated with Cain’s sin (*Imagining Identity* 12). In biblical texts (Genesis 4:15), Cain, the son of Adam, was cursed by God for killing his brother Abel. Cain was marked “so that no one who found him would kill him” (Goldenberg 178).⁴ The Curse of Cain has been linked to blackness in English, French, German, and Irish literature. Its earliest mention is in the “Animal Apocalypse” (1 Enoch 85-90), written in the 2nd century BCE, which describes Cain as a black bull (Goldenberg 179). The theory of the Curse of Cain being tied to black skin color does not, however, tie into the aspect of slavery unless Ham married a descendant of Cain, making Canaan’s descendants both Black and enslaved (Goldenberg 178). These biblical curses and their various interpretations within religion were a way to legitimize the social order through divine justification (Goldenberg 177).⁵ Goldenberg’s research discovered that Dominican Fray Francisco de la Cruz was influential in developing the attitudes towards black Africans in the New World. In 1575 he reported to the Inquisition that “[B]lack are justly captives by just sentence of God for the sins of their fathers, and that in sign thereof God gave them that color” (Goldenberg 177). With all this biblical “proof” associating Black Africans with slavery, the papacy justified the action on the basis that slaves could be converted to Christianity, even though Castilian Law classified slavery as an unnatural human condition (“The Black Blood” 488).⁶

Limpieza de Sangre and Life in New Spain

The conquest of Latin America began in the 15th century by Spanish and Portuguese *conquistadores* (male soldiers) from the Iberian Peninsula (Estes). Few *conquistadores* and settlers came from nobility; however, this didn’t stop them from claiming *hidalgo* (nobility) upon arriving in the New World and taking on the title of *don* (Burkholder and Johnson 192). The titles *don* and *dona* commanded a certain amount of respect, as these individuals were often recognized by their noble status and not by their race (Althouse 159). Spanish *conquistadores* viewed race as a means of dividing the spoils of the New World. They considered themselves *gente de razón* (people of reason), marked by Christian faith and capable of making rational decisions, whereas the Indigenous people were considered heathen (Vinson 2-3). In the 16th century, society in New Spain was perceived as divided and separate. The initial separation of New Spain into two republics, the *República de Españoles* (Republic of Spaniards) and the *República de Indios* (Republic of Indians), was due to the Indian population being considered “pagans” (*Imagining Identity* 34).⁷

The dual republic of New Spain was the Spanish attempt to transfer Old World hierarchies to the New World and was loosely based on the estate system practiced in medieval Spain (Vinson 3).⁸ The dual republic was also known for its spatial boundaries. When the Spanish conquered the Aztecs, Tenochtitlan became the new capital city. The Spanish developed the *traza* (city center) system to separate the Spanish population from the Indigenous population. The Spanish occupied the center of the city, which consisted of thirteen city blocks surrounding the *plaza* (square). The Indigenous population was assigned to live outside the city center in four *barrios* (neighborhoods) located at cardinal points of the *traza*. As with most civilizations, the wealthiest noble individuals were found in the very center of the city closest to key buildings, while “lesser” Spaniards were located on the edge of the *traza* (Vinson 3-4). This attempt to keep races separate did not last long and measures were taken to ensure Spanish superiority in the colonies. By the end of the 16th century, the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (pure blood) was deployed in the colonies through *probanzas de limpieza de sangre* (purity certifications) issued by the Spanish Inquisition and Franciscan Order (“The Black Blood” 483). These certifications were considered proof that a bloodline was unsullied or free from Jewish and Muslim ancestry (“The Black Blood” 483).

Between 1509 and 1539, Spanish women were in short supply, making up only five to six percent of the Spanish population in the New World. This placed stress on the Spanish republic causing many men to take Indian women as brides, sometimes by force; consequently, this led to interracial offspring (Vinson 6). The offspring of early unions between the Spaniards and Indians were considered Spaniards, but by 1530 this changed, and they began being labeled as *mestizos* (*Imagining Identity* 36). *Mestizos* could be either promoted to the Spanish group or demoted to the Indian group after two generations of consecutive marrying with either Spanish or Indians (Gutierrez and Ware 126). Over time, light-skinned *mestizos* were accepted into the Spanish *casta* due to a fear of being overrun by the African and Indian populations (Gutierrez and Ware 125). The mixing of Black African and Indigenous people was viewed negatively, though the Black Africans were seen as more of a stain on the lineage (“The Black Blood” 484). The early 17th century brought the rise of the transatlantic slave system, causing an increase in the population of Blacks and *mulattoes* (offspring of Spaniards and Black Africans) in the colonies (“The Black Blood” 514). Offspring of Black Africans were deemed free or unfree based on the mother’s status. As a result, the Spanish government tried to prevent the conception of Black African children to curb the rise of a population of free Black Africans in the colonies (“The Black Blood” 496).

Limpieza de Sangre and Social Hierarchy

The word “*casta*” is derived from the Latin word “*castus*,” implying that lineage must be kept pure (Estes). The society of *castas* was created due to the mixing of races, ethnicities, and cultures (Burkholder and Johnson 188). In New Spain, there were three original races: *Espanoles* (Spanish), *Indios* (Indigenous people), and *Negros* (Black Africans), which made up all the other racial *mestizaje* (cultural blending) in the *casta* (caste) system (Burkholder and Johnson 188). By the mid-16th century, the *sociedad de castas* (society of castes) was established to recognize the offspring of interracial marriages (*Imagining Identity* 36). In the 1540s, the *casta* system consisted of fourteen to twenty classes, ranked according to their percentage of Spanish, Indian, and Black blood (“Locating Race” 38). This separation of race and racial classifications given to the offspring of interracial unions was visualized in art (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Ignacio María Barreda, *Las Castas Mexicanas*, 1777, oil on canvas, 77 cm (30.3 in) x 49 cm (19.2 in). Real Academia Española de la Lengua, Madrid. Accessed October 25, 2023. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>.

The *casta* system dictated all aspects of life in New Spain, including education, occupation, residency, clothing style, taxes, and tribute payments (Estes). Within this system, only certain *castas* enjoyed educational opportunities, mainly the Spanish. While education was initially allowed among the Indian *castas*, they were later excluded from this privilege (Burkholder and Johnson 110). During the 18th century, the principle of gradation ranked beings according to their degree of perfection or wholeness. Higher status beings, in this case, the Spanish, were considered of greater worth than those of lower ranking (Hill 80). Lower *castas* soon realized the only way to be treated fairly was to accept Spanish rule and what it offered (Zelaya 17). Interracial marriages, especially among Indian women of the highest rank, occurred as a means for the Spanish to acquire land and influence (Burkholder and Johnson 193). In contrast, the goal of Indian interracial marriages with the Spanish was to move up the social ladder so they could eventually be considered Spaniards (Estes).

Employment and Clothing Restraints

Employment in New Spain was also influenced by blood purity and position in the *casta* system. Spain discouraged laziness and expected all people to be productive members of society (Zelaya 15). Early in New Spain, races were considered to have certain economic associations based on their respective *casta*. The Spaniards were often landowners and merchants, Indians were regarded as unskilled labor, and Black Africans were enslaved people or servants. As time went on and the races became intermixed economic associations shifted to include these new race classifications. Through the 18th century, *peninsulares* (Spaniards born on the Iberian Peninsula) and *criollos* (Spaniards born in the New World) were shop owners and merchants, *mestizos* (offspring of Spaniards and Indians) worked as artisans but were also known to be laborers and servants, and free *mulattoes* (offspring of Spaniards and Black Africans) were artisans and servants. In general, lower *castas* were likely to work in production or service jobs (*Imagining Identity* 41). The Spanish regularly employed Indigenous people, “Indians,” to live and work on their estates. Often, they were exploited and considered “free wage labor” (Burkholder and Johnson 135). Some Indigenous people were drawn to the cities, as they were more likely to acquire property and escape tribute payments than those who chose to remain in rural areas (Burkholder and Johnson 191).

Black Africans were employed or enslaved by the Spanish, though some free Africans had professions (Vinson 101). Even so, most members of the urban poor consisted of the offspring of Black Africans and Indians (Vinson 102).

The 18th-century Bourbon Reforms brought about the reorganization of the Spanish government while also making life in the colonies more rigid, such as dictating clothing styles in New Spain (Zelaya 14). In New Spain, the Crown allowed Indian leaders and nobility to distinguish themselves from the commoners by wearing more elaborate clothing. Regardless of nobility, they were still prohibited from imitating Spanish fashion. No women of Black African descent, including *mulattoes* (offspring of Spaniards and Africans), *negros*, freedwomen, or enslaved people, were allowed to wear woolen cloth, silk, lace, gold, silver, or black. These clothing restrictions were also depicted in the *casta* paintings (Fig. 1 and Fig. 4) as evident in comparing the dress style of the women in the paintings. The penalty for breaking this order included confiscation of the clothing, one hundred lashes, and/or exile (Burkholder and Johnson 250).

Limpieza de Sangre and Art in New Spain

Casta paintings were produced two centuries after the *casta* system had been established, primarily in 18th-century colonial Mexico (c.1711-1760) (Katzew 63). While these paintings depict scenes of life in New Spain, they should not be viewed as a documentary series of work. Ilona Katzew, a leading scholar in *casta* paintings, argues that these works were an idealized form of painting and should not be mistaken for realism (Katzew 8). Many Spanish artists were in the higher ranks of the *casta* system and therefore were highly influenced by Spanish ideology, such as racial purity (Zelaya 13). The artist guild in Mexico City governed artists in a hierarchal style. Often artists created multiple sets of *casta* paintings and were known to copy each other's work, which would account for the similarity among the work of multiple artists (Katzew 9). Several sets were commissioned by colonial officials, such as Spanish Viceroy (Imagining Identity 49). *Casta* sets were also created to be placed in the Madrid Royal Cabinet of Natural History, which Charles III founded in 1771 to display objects from all over the world (*Genealogical Fictions* 227). Katzew attests that the commission of *casta* paintings not only satisfied the curiosity of interracial unions in the colonies but also promoted an orderly image of the colonies to ease anxiety and reassure the Crown that the Spanish were in control (Imagining Identity 52).

While *casta* paintings varied slightly depending on the artist, their overarching themes remained the same. One such theme is that blood controls not only traits but also status, which ties into the next theme that mixed blood is not irreversible. Returning to a status of pure blood is possible with the right racial unions. Finally, the *casta* paintings also depicted a theme of Spanish male superiority. Most unions show a Spanish male and a Black or Indian female. Martinez argues that this "promotes the notion that white men were in command of sexuality of all women and constructs a gendered image of New Spain's three main racial populations" (*Genealogical Fictions* 233). Racial and male superiority seemed to be the trend in colonial New Spain. In her book, Katzew refers to the *casta* system as a type of scientific racism in which blame was placed on the color of society for social-economic status rather than on the people who established this system. The ideas behind this system were meant to guarantee that each class would stay in their social position, that certain bloodlines could be purified through the act of mixing, and that mixing Black and Indian blood was dangerous to the Spanish social order (Katzew 51).

The themes and ideas mentioned by scholars are painfully apparent in two works by Francisco Clapera. His painting *De Mulato, y Espanola, Morisco* (see Fig. 4) once again portrays a scene of violence and dysfunction in the family. This time both parties seem to be active participants. The *mulato* (offspring of Spaniard and African) male, who is clearly agitated, is portrayed pushing his wife away from him. The Spanish woman, who appears elegantly dressed in noble fashion, can be seen pulling at her husband's coat with one hand and reaching for his hair with the other. Their son, whose complexion resembles his father's, is also actively participating by pulling on his mother's skirt with a look of determination. The room around them is in disarray, with food and clothing strewn about the floor, obviously resulting from the commotion. The painting again shows a person of mixed African descent surrounded by dysfunction, chaos, and violence, implying the association of these traits with lower *castas*.



Figure 4. Francisco Clapera, *De Mulato, y Espanola, Morisco*, c. 1775, oil on canvas 20% × 15% in. Denver Art Museum. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/?ref=openverse>). Photographed by profzucker.

The second painting by Clapera, entitled *De Genizaro, y Mulata, Gibaro* (see Fig. 5), this time shows a different theme that is equally troubling. This image seems to take place outside in an alley. The *genizaro* (detrribalized Indian) is shown raggedly dressed, passed out on the street, lying next to a puddle of his vomit. His wife, the *mulata* (offspring of Indian and African), is shown with clothing draped over her shoulder (presumably clothing for her husband), attempting to pull her husband up. Their son, who is equally dark-complected as his mother, is shown trying to help rouse his father from his drunken state. All members are shown poorly dressed, implying a sense of poverty that they may have been subjected to within the *casta* system. The theme, while not violent, hints at dysfunction among the lower *castas*, a trait that the “pure-blooded” Spanish would be wise to avoid. This painting may also have been created to warn Spaniards that wealth did not lie among the lower *castas*. The end of the *casta* painting genre in the 19th century was tied to the rejection of the social hierarchy or *sistema de castas* that was abolished following Mexico’s war of independence (Katzew 37). While no longer practiced, the *casta* system left its mark on New Spain, and the *casta* paintings remain a permanent reminder of the racial injustice endured by the lower *castas*.



Figure 5. Francisco Clapera, *De Genizaro, y Mulata, Gibaro*, c. 1775, oil on canvas 20% × 15% in. Denver Art Museum. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/?ref=openverse>). Photographed by profzucker.

Conclusion

After the Spanish War of Independence, the *casta* system was legally eliminated in 1822. However, it was still practiced into the early 20th century until it was replaced with a new method of “scientific” racism geared towards eradicating the Indigenous population. Since colonization in New Spain, the indigenous population has been subjected to structural poverty (Gutierrez and Ware 131). During the decades following the Spanish occupation of the New World, 97% of the Indigenous population died due to disease and warfare brought on by the Spanish (Phillips 762). Their population never fully recovered from Spanish colonization and the *casta* system. In 2000, the total Indian population equaled only 7.1% throughout the country. Furthermore, a study published in 2005 tested samples from nine self-identifying Indian groups and revealed that there are no “pure” Indian populations in Mexico (Phillips 133). This data and much of the research presented in this essay show the negative effects of the Spanish colonization of New Spain. While expansion isn’t intrinsically wrong, it carries dire consequences for the races subjected to an ideology based on an inherent superiority complex.

Racial inequality, social hierarchy, and white supremacy are unacceptable today, yet this system was a reality in New Spain. The ideology of *limpieza de sangre* influenced all life in colonial New Spain. While this concept is no longer openly practiced, the lasting influence is hard to ignore. Some Latin American countries still favor *mestizaje* (cultural blending) to increase or decrease the White population, depending on each country’s preference (Zelaya 17). Clearly, Spanish ideology, racial hierarchy, and white supremacy left a permanent imprint on the life and art of New Spain, causing a ripple effect that would influence Latin American countries to this day.

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Endnotes

1. Blood was believed to be the vehicle through which all characteristics were transmitted, including sins (*Genealogical Fictions* 25).
2. Genesis 9:20-27 (*New International Version*), “Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked. When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.” He also said, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend Japheth’s territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth.”
3. Fracchia’s research also found that in Spain, black Africans were stigmatized by their past and the assumptions associated with their race and color of their skin. This discrimination and the fact that manumissions were not common in Spain made life difficult for freedmen and freedwomen (Fracchia 12).
4. Genesis 4:15, “But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him” (Goldenberg 178).
5. It is important to note that the Curse of Ham became so widely accepted that it was even used by black Africans to enslave other black Africans. Ethiopians claimed they were descendants of Shem, thereby justifying their claim to enslave other Africans (Goldenberg 177).
6. Castilian Law were laws developed during the Reconquest of Spain and became accepted as the laws of Spain under the reign of Queen Isabella (Martinez 488).
7. The *República de Españoles* consisted of the Spanish and black African population and was governed by the Spanish Crown, while the *República de Indios* was initially governed at a distance by *caciques* (native nobles) who kept their authority even after colonization (*Imagining Identity* 34).
8. The estate system was also known as the Manorial System, which was the precursor to Feudalism (Vinson 3).

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Russian Political Warfare: What It Is, What It's Not, and Why It Isn't Working

Lance Bokinskie

This article defines Russia's multifaceted approach to political warfare and analyzes its effectiveness in achieving foreign policy objectives. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is an exemplary case study to define the aspects of 21st-century Russian political warfare and analyze its efficacy as an approach to foreign policy. This case study will lend meaningful support to the claim that the utility of Russian political warfare is severely limited by the adhococratic foreign policy encouraged by the Kremlin—specifically, the lack of an overarching proscriptive foreign policy strategy and a functioning bureaucracy to enforce the pursuit of outlined objectives, definitive organizational purviews, and operational synchronization in the security and intelligence services. The Kremlin's adhococracy generates so much internal friction as to render a holistic, whole of force approach to political warfare both unworkable in the short term and unlikely in the long term.

Keywords: Russian warfare, Putin, Ukraine, hacking, gas politics

A serious problem in planning against American doctrine is that the Americans do not read their manuals, nor do they feel any obligation to follow their own doctrine.—Steve Leonard

Although its actual provenance is unknown, this often-cited quote serves as a frame for analyzing distinctions between Soviet and Western political warfare during the Cold War and the evolution of the Russian approach to political warfare in the post-Cold War era. Soviet political warfare (*aktivnye meropriiatiia*) was the exclusive legerdemain of the KGB and GRU and was actively directed and managed by the Politburo. This holistic synchronization of forces with direct oversight enabled the coherent pursuit of foreign policy objectives, parsimony of resources in the face of Western advantages in economic power, and multi-domain exploitation of the open and transparent nature of Western institutions, notably information and media. In Russian eyes, this approach to political warfare also lost them the Cold War. The Russian Federation has deployed an updated, revised, and reinvigorated methodology of two different approaches to foreign policy aims in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The twinned approaches are determined by the echelon of conflict they are applied to. At the strategic and operational geopolitical level Russian power is projected using the hybrid warfare approach (*gibridnaya voina*). At the low operational and tactical levels, they utilize the doctrine of new-generation warfare.

Prior to the initial Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent occupations in Eastern Ukraine, a significant bloc of Western policy makers and academics believed that Ukrainian civil society and its military would prove totally ineffectual in stopping or affecting Russian designs on its territory and affairs. Professor Taras Kuzio of Kyiv Mohyla's National University took to the *Geopolitical Monitor* in 2022 to lambast this bloc for their initial hesitance to intervene in 2014 with meaningful economic sanctions, significant military and economic aid to Ukraine, and for advocating a Chamberlain-esque appeasement

approach to Putin's aggression (Kuzio). Experts believed that Russia's new-generation warfare approach at the low operational and tactical level, and its hybrid warfare methods deployed at the high operational and strategic echelons, would thoroughly outclass Ukrainian resistance and lead to a swift occupation and subjugation of the country. While Kuzio's objectivity could be called into question, he highlights a salient point: why was the West's perspective on the effectiveness of Russian agents of foreign policy so skewed and not representative of reality? Part of the answer lies in the muddled and politicized Western debate about what the doctrine of Russian political warfare in the 21st century is. Specifically, the distinction between its constituent elements of hybrid warfare and new-generation warfare, and the Western assessment of how interoperable the elements of these approaches are. To renovate this flawed Western perspective, definitions and distinctions must be made between hybrid warfare and new-generation warfare. These definitions will be supported by examples of their practical employment. Following that, an assessment must be conducted of how they have failed to operate in synchronicity during the Ukrainian conflict, to the detriment of the primary Russian foreign policy objective of reincorporating the Ukrainian aspect of the Russian empire.

The strategic and high operational approach to contemporary Russian political warfare is hybrid warfare, in Russian —*gibridnaya voina*. A useful definition of this tortured term is offered by Ofer Fridman in his work *Hybrid Warfare*: “The use of military and non-military tools in an integrated campaign designed to achieve surprise, seize the initiative, and gain psychological as well as physical advantages utilizing diplomatic means; sophisticated and rapid information, electronic and cyber operations; covert and occasionally overt military and intelligence action; and economic pressure” (ix). Fridman then links the tasks to the purposes with the Russian explanation of *gibridnaya voina*: “. . . means and methods that amplify political, ideological, economic and other social polarizations within an adversary's society, thus leading to its internal collapse” (96). This approach is the direct inheritor of the Soviet political warfare strategy, updated with new weapons for the globalized capitalist economy, information space, and diverse political climate without the prohibitive rules of engagement of socialist ideology. Russia has deployed these strategic echelon weapons with the intent of dividing and distracting the Western powers outside of its near abroad, confusing efforts at cohesive responses to Russian aggression, and exploiting targets of opportunity.

Examples of Russian hybrid warfare begin with disinformation operations targeting Western social divisions like leveraging “private” enterprises such as the Internet Research Agency to spread Kremlin-approved fake news stories in the social media space utilizing trolls, botnets, and paid sponsorships (Bergmann and Kenney). One of the most successful of these operations was the incitement of the “Stop the Islamization of Texas Rally” in 2016, where social media pages/accounts managed by IRA operators incited unknowing American demonstrators on the U.S. political left and the right to physically demonstrate against one another over the issue of a new Islamic Center in Houston (Michel 77-58).

Russian hybrid warfare operations against Western political and ideological targets have also generated some noteworthy examples. Privateer and FSB/GRU cyber operators have been linked to several high-profile hacks of Western political targets and subsequent leaks of the collected information to support the election of pro-Kremlin Western leaders, or leaders they believe will further their destabilizing efforts through their own means. In the former case, private operators and GRU hackers were linked to the 2017 hack of French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron's emails in an effort to bolster the French electorate's support for far-right candidate, and Kremlin connected, Marine Le Pen (Greenberg). In the latter case, GRU and FSB cyber operators were directly linked to the 2016 hacks of the DNC and Clinton presidential campaign chairman John Podesta during the hotly contested US presidential elections of the same year (Bergmann and Kenney; Geller). In both cases, Russian forces undertook offensive cyber operations designed to influence the election of candidates favorable in some manner to the Kremlin and exacerbate ideological divides in Western electorates.

Russia has weaponized its main economic advantage of hydrocarbon abundance into a flexible instrument of coercion at both the strategic and high operational levels. Strategically, the profits of Russian gas politics are used to capture and corrupt elites in Western Europe, notably in Germany and UK. These elites are then pressured to advance policy that deepens Western Europe's dependence on Russian gas supplies and discourage any organic measures aimed at decreasing this dependence or stemming the corrosive flow of Russian grey money in their nation's markets and politics. Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's championing of the Nord Stream 1 & 2 projects, and Italian far-right party Lega Nord's advocacy for Gazprom's planned South Stream project illustrate what Russian gas contracts and kickbacks can buy (Shekhovtsov). Operationally, gas politics are utilized to coerce dependent states within Russia's direct sphere of influence. In the Baltics, Latvia has been inundated with Russian energy investment seeking to fully capture its energy market. Lithuania has seen the

the price of Russian gas raised by over 450% from 2007-2014. Both cases represent offensive economic measures taken to weaken frontier NATO/EU member nations perceived as hostile actors by the Kremlin (Pomerantsev and Weiss 24-25).

The definition and key aspects of 21st-century Russian hybrid warfare are utilizing information operations, money, and coercive diplomacy to exploit or aggravate existing social, political, ideological, and economic divides in the target populace. The Kremlin deploys this strategy in the strategic and high operational echelons of conflict with Western powers to distract, divide, preclude cohesion, and exploit targets of opportunity. While covert and overt military force is one of the tools in the Russian hybrid warfare toolkit, it is more often utilized as a threat of violence to enhance the coercive capacity of the other tools of Russian hybrid warfare (Galeotti, *Russian Political War* 34-44). Thus, the key distinctions of hybrid warfare are the primacy of non-military weapons, its application at the highest levels of conflict with the West, and its use as a destabilizing smokescreen for other, more kinetic actions, taken against Russian perceived threats in their near domain.

At the low operational and tactical level, Russian political warfare is prosecuted using new-generation warfare. Quoting Fridman, "The theory of new-generation warfare is closely associated with the work of two Russian officers, Colonel (ret.) Sergey Chekinov and Lieutenant General (ret.) Sergey Bogdanov, both from the highly influential Centre for Military and Strategic Studies of the General Staff of the Russian Federation" (127). Chekinov and Bogdanov define their theory as, "A war, in which the leading role is taken by the information-psychological struggle, directed to achieve superiority in the sphere of command and control, as well as to suppress the morale of the military personnel and the population of the adversary" (Fridman). New-generation warfare is the distillation and adaptation of Russian hybrid warfare principles to the physical battlefield. Specifically, it leverages the same toolset of information operations, cyberattacks, and economic warfare, which are all conducted in concert to reduce the capability of the target populace to resist the inevitable kinetic military operations. New-generation warfare then extends and amplifies these effects by utilizing kinetic military force in the physical domain. This practice shifts the emphasis from indirect effects to tangible gains on the physical battlefield. The work of Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov shows a clear influence from the aforementioned theorists. In his frequently cited work, "The Value of Science in Prediction," Gerasimov extends the new-generation theory by making a case to reaffirm the integral part conventional forces play in exploiting the battlefield conditions set by indirect effects and maximizing their impact (qtd. in Galeotti, "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine'"). Further, he states that once these gains have been physically exploited and retained at the tactical level the impetus shifts again to strategic leaders. Specifically, with these conditions set, higher organs of state foreign policy or diplomacy are enabled to negotiate with the belligerent target from a position of marked advantage utilizing the means and methods of hybrid warfare (qtd. in "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine'"). A relevant example of the practical application of Russian new-generation warfare is found in the current conflict in Ukraine. This vehicle facilitates analysis of the events surrounding the first incursion into Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in 2014, with a focus on information operations, the role of the intelligence agencies and their criminal network proxies, and covert military special forces.

The Kremlin had been perfecting the art of the false flag for years prior to the 2014 occupation of Crimea. In "How to Manufacture a War," Brian Whitmore outlines the new light shed on the unrest in Eastern Ukraine prior to the Russian intervention and annexation of Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts by the public release of the Glazyev tapes and the Malofeyev strategy memo. The tapes outline alleged conversations between Kremlin aide Sergei Glazyev and contacts in Ukraine discussing financing, coordinating, and directing civil insurrections across Eastern Ukraine. These actors also outlined the goal of insurgent forces seizing the means of government and formally appealing to Russian forces for intervention and occupation of Ukrainian territory (Whitmore). While the Kremlin denied the authenticity of the recordings, the operations discussed within them are corroborated by the leaked Kremlin strategy memo attributed to individuals working under Kremlin insider and oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev. Prominent portions of the memo state, "Russian policy towards Ukraine must finally become pragmatic"; and, "In order to launch the process of 'pro-Russian drift' in Crimea and Eastern Ukrainian territories, events should be created ahead of time that can give this process political legitimacy and moral justification" (qtd. in Lipsky). These examples represent the low operational application of new-generation warfare tactics. These tactics are applied to information operations in order to generate "chaff" in the information space and grant plausible deniability to the application of covert and overt kinetic forces.

In the new-generation warfare context the intelligence services play a preparatory and secondary role to covert and overt military force. With that said, their non-kinetic actions and tactics are crucial to preparing the battle space for kinetic forces. They also mobilize covert kinetic forces of their own to support legitimate Russian military formations. Galeotti highlights their contributions to the Crimean campaign in *Russian Political War* noting that both FSB and GRU elements were crucial

in paralyzing Kyiv's ability to respond to the Russian infiltration. They accomplished this with an operational cocktail mixed with equal parts cyberattacks, suborning Ukrainian civil and military command structures, camouflaged terrorist attacks in the capital, and mobilizing paramilitary forces (88-90). They activated and organized Ukrainian-based gangsters with deep organizational ties to Russian-based criminal organizations, and subsequently Russian intelligence. The gangsters were used as rear echelon fifth columnists during the Russian intervention, seizing and occupying government buildings, manning access control points, and holding other key terrain by function of numbers, thus freeing Russian special forces to conduct their portion of the new-generation force continuum (Whitmore). The Russian intelligence forces act as the bridge between operational resources and tactical formations in new-generation warfare, facilitating unique capabilities and acting as force multipliers for traditional military units.

Outside of the security and intelligence services, Russian special forces and *Spetsnaz* formations have benefitted the most from Putin and the General Staff's perpetual program of reforms. This was reflected in their signature involvement with the operations in both the Donbas and Crimea. In the Donbas, Russian special forces took on a remarkably similar role to the Unconventional Warfare mission set of the USASOC Green Berets. They provided military training to militia and volunteer forces, aiding in operational planning, providing access to Russian air and fire support, and acted as a contact point for supplies and weapons. In Crimea, Russian special forces undertook a mission set much more focused on short duration/high intensity combat operations that included direct action raids on key personnel centers, sabotage, and seizing critical infrastructure to cripple the Ukrainian command and control network. Two of the key operations they undertook during the Crimean campaign was the seizure of the Internet Exchange Point in Simferopol, and the destruction of the submerged telecommunications cables linking the peninsula to the mainland (Galeotti, *Russian Political War* 76-77). The mission sets of Russian special forces represent the pure tactical application of kinetic force in the new-generation warfare context. Covert, deniable, and lethally effective, they are the primary effort in this context and are heavily supported by the non-military weapons maintained by the information operators, intelligence services, and their proxies.

Twenty-first century Russian new-generation warfare is defined as the primacy of covert or overt kinetic forces in seizing, consolidating, and holding ground on a battlefield systematically prepared for their operations by non-kinetic forces. The secondary non-kinetic forces play a crucial role in the stated purpose of new-generation warfare, that of degrading the will, morale, and capability of the enemy population and forces to resist kinetic action. They accomplish this primarily through offensive information operations, and traditional and non-traditional intelligence operations to include deniable acts of terrorism and cyberattacks, mobilization of paramilitary forces, and criminal networks.

While the previous examples highlight short term and singular battle successes, they must be evaluated holistically to assess their effectiveness in Russia's long term, overall geopolitical campaign strategy. In the theory of 21st-century Russian political war, new-generation warfare is meant to be used in conjunction with hybrid warfare to achieve foreign policy objectives. This synthesis blends non-kinetic hybrid warfare practitioners conducting strategic *maskirovka* or masking of actions against the West at large while the kinetic practitioners of new-generation warfare take, consolidate, and hold territory in the foreground. Both of these paradigms share the common, albeit vague, goal of returning Russia to great power status with its historic empire intact. In practice, Galeotti's metaphor of Putin's foreign policy arms as a many-headed hydra is incredibly apropos because it describes the dissonance between goals and outcomes. The heads of the Russian security and intelligence monster spend as much or more time fighting amongst themselves as they do against any foreign enemy ("Putin's Hydra" 1). Galeotti goes on to highlight the key points of failure for the practical application of Russian political warfare: the lack of clear strategic guidance and prescriptive foreign policy strategy, and the lack of an independent government oversight body dedicated to tasking and deconflicting the separate arms of the security, intelligence, and military services (3-13). This dearth of cohesiveness prevented Russian foreign policy makers and strategists from consolidating the gains of the 2014 incursion in an opportunistic fashion in 2020.

Similarly, Galeotti highlights the lack of a detailed and prescriptive foreign policy strategy. He states:

To some, this multi-vectored challenge represents an extraordinarily complex and disciplined campaign . . . And yet, it is clear that many, even most, individual initiatives [amongst the Russian security and intelligence services] are largely unconnected, often opportunistic . . . They connect only sometimes, and frequently clumsily. There appears to be no detailed masterplan, but rather a broad strategy of weakening the European Union (EU) and NATO, distancing Europe and the United States from each other, and generally creating a political and cultural environment more conducive for Moscow and its interests. (*Russian Political War* 58-59)

Galeotti goes on to support this statement with the example of the Kremlin capitalizing on the spread of the fake news narrative surrounding the “Lisa Case” (*Russian Political War* 59). However, one can also see the lack of strategic coordination in the events surrounding the DNC and Clinton campaign hacks in 2016. In this case the GRU, FSB, and SVR were, once again, all conducting separate cyber operations against the same target at the same time (CrowdStrike). The lack of interagency coordination and sloppy tradecraft led to the identification of Russian cyber operators from those agencies, linking them to the cyber exploits and subsequent leaks of proprietary data. In addition, it led to indictments for twelve Russian intelligence agents by the Department of Justice (*Netyksho, et al. Indictment*). The Kremlin and security services considered this operation a success because it stoked divisions amongst the American electorate, added fuel to an unproductive partisan debate, and weakened faith in American democratic institutions. Objectively, it could have been even more successful if the actions of the individual intelligence and security services had been coordinated in such manner as to maintain the plausible deniability of Russian state actors, achieving the objective of sowing discord in the West, and precluding Western security and intelligence services from addressing infrastructure insecurity and vectors in the information domain. This outcome was impossible for two reasons; one has been addressed in the lack of guiding foreign policy strategy that defines clear objectives and limits the power of the individual Russian foreign policy organs. The other is the lack of an institutional body dedicated to oversight of the security and intelligence services, specifically in the areas of deconflicting organizational purviews, vetting intelligence products as quality control, and synchronizing operations to achieve Russian geopolitical objectives.

Because there is no cogent strategy, there is no institutional body to ensure compliance. Rather, there is an adhoc and unofficial network that governs which intelligence agencies have access to Putin and his advisors. And what intelligence products are incorporated into their decision-making process. In “Putin’s Hydra,” Galeotti delineates the convoluted flow of Russian intelligence products. Specifically, how the intelligence and security agencies are played off against one another in an effort to provide the most appealing version of events for Putin’s consideration. These efforts are further obfuscated by the need to pass through informal gatekeepers in either the Security Council or the Presidential Administration team. An additional layer of confusion is added when intelligence agencies utilize informal channels based on personal rapport with Putin to bypass these internal checks and balances (9). This hopelessly convoluted system ensures that the intelligence products that do reach the president have been so adulterated and analytically spun so as not to remotely resemble the information that required analysis in the first place. Poor inputs guarantee poor outputs, and Galeotti points to the initial Donbas intervention as exemplifying this. The initial intervention appeared to be based on overly optimistic Russian intelligence estimates of the target. Primarily, that by occupying the Donbas regions the Ukrainian government would see the hopelessness of resisting Russian foreign policy aims and capitulate their governance to Putin’s whims (*Russian Political War* 83). It logically follows that this entropic system of intelligence analysis has only worsened in correlation with the degrading Russian position in Ukraine following the invasion in 2022.

There is no better example of the dysfunction of practically applied Russian political warfare than the missed opportunity of the US presidential election of 2020. The hybrid warfare target of opportunity that Russia exploited in the 2016 hacks, and subsequent disinformation operations, had exceeded any rational expectation in aggravating a significant populist minority. This group was absolutely convinced that the Democratic Party had stolen the presidential election and that President Biden had been fraudulently elected. The situation devolved into a media firestorm, months of civil unrest, and culminated in the Capitol Riots in January of 2021. The Kremlin could not have orchestrated a more opportune time to invade Ukraine: its hybrid warfare measures had been successful in stoking division and could continue to capitalize on unrest in the US; their new-generation warfare measures had prepared the battlefield for occupation in the Donbas and Crimea in 2014; and Russian conventional forces were massed on the Ukrainian border in an offensive posture. And yet, at the time when the West was so fractured by internal division and strife that it had no hope of supporting Ukraine in any way approaching the level or speed with which it actually did in 2022, Russia did not launch its invasion. They were not able to take advantage of this opportunity for several key reasons. Namely, without an institutionally defined foreign policy strategy, they did not have

an operational plan that could be taken off the shelf and applied quickly. Without a functioning and objective intelligence oversight committee, Russian strategic leaders did not have an accurate picture of how divided, distracted, and vulnerable the US in particular was, or more importantly for how long. And finally, because the Russian foreign policy establishment had been conditioned to reactionism under Putin's leadership, none could realistically present this course of action to the president. While this counterfactual scenario is revisionist, it highlights the key failures and weaknesses of the 21st-century Russian political war approach. In addition, while not seeking to take any measure of honor away from the Ukrainian armed forces and people, it is based on the reality that without timely Western military and civil aid, Ukraine would not have been able to resist Russian aggression as well as it has, and possibly not for any length of time.

To understand Russian 21st-century political war, a distinction must be made between the methods applied at different echelons of conflict. At the strategic and high operational level, the Kremlin applies the tactics, techniques, and procedures of hybrid warfare. This level is defined by its use of non-military means to achieve political, informational, and psychological objectives with a special emphasis on exploiting existing divisions in the target population. At the low operational and tactical level, the Kremlin employs the precepts of new-generational warfare. Conversely, this level is marked by the use of covert and overt military force supported by non-military assets to prepare the physical battlespace for occupation, and to set conditions favorable to Russian foreign policy. The "Cracks in the Kremlin Matrix" (Pomerantsev) appear when analyzing the level of cohesion between these two methods in the context of Russia's long term geopolitical aims. The effectiveness of Russian political war in application is limited by a lack of a prescriptive, specific, and defined geopolitical strategy, and the lack of an institutionally sound oversight body responsible for the conduct of the security and intelligence services. This analysis shows little to no cohesion between the two methods of conducting Russian political war, no synchronicity of operations, and an inability to achieve outside effects with parsimonious planning. These dysfunctions have been repeatedly seen during, and within the context of, the Ukrainian conflict, from the bungled hacks of 2016 to the missed opportunity in 2020, and the ongoing ineffectual "special military operation" launched in 2022.

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Regulating the Animal Testing Industry

Preston Gerst

Animal testing has been a customary practice in numerous civilizations throughout human history. Humanity tends to want to understand the true nature of our physiology as a whole, and animals have been beneficial to help satisfy this curiosity. Yet ethically speaking, scientists argue for the protection of the rights of humans, while many fail to do so for our natural counterparts, animals. Current standards of the industry bring up concern for the ethical treatment of animals; additionally, many of the standards that exist are outdated and not systematized throughout the scientific world. Furthermore, new scientific developments can possibly allow for the phasing out entirely of animal testing, with new computer modeling software. It can render many of the existing tests obsolete as this new software allows scientists to bypass some of the animal testing in drug trials. Due to many of the shortcomings in the industry, this has caused an inefficiency. This inefficiency can be described as an overall loss of time and money, which could instead be put towards developing new drugs or other studies. Although it is unlikely that animal testing will be removed entirely, it is necessary that new standards be put in place for the ethical treatment of animals.

Keywords: animal testing, ethics, regulation, drug trials, computer modeling

Introduction

Animal testing affects millions of defenseless animals every year, a fact most do not tend to think about for more than a few minutes. Animal testing is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of testing, studies, or experimentation conducted on animals. This practice is used to evaluate the efficacy and safety of products, medicines, or clinical procedures. Animal testing also aids in understanding the anatomy and body structure of both humans and animals (Mason 2). In the United States alone, twenty-five million animals per year undergo a series of exams to the benefit of unethical corporations simply looking to earn more money. The US Department of Agriculture released a report that revealed that over 132,000 hamsters suffered pain in the year 2021 while they underwent animal testing (“Research Facility”). Animal testing in its current state should not be supported in any manner due to the unethical nature of the testing that is performed. Everyone is impacted by animal testing, due to its proliferation throughout the healthcare industry and the beauty industry. For that reason we should have much stricter regulations along with additional checks and balances. Millions of animals are harmed every year due to established systems, highlighting the urgent need for change. It is crucial to reform the current system to address the violation of animal rights and mitigate this widespread harm. This paper argues that the current standard of animal testing is flawed, because of the ethical responsibility to protect animal rights, the impractical science that is conducted, and the time wasted due to animal trials. Finally, it argues for new technologies to replace these archaic forms of testing.

A Brief History of Animal Testing

Historians can trace the existence of animal testing back to 500 BCE. In Ancient Greece, vivisections of animals were completed to better understand the mechanisms of life, muscles, bones, and other organs (Franco 3). From the 5th to the 18th centuries, if you wanted to become a physician or practicing doctor, it was necessary to experiment and understand the overall nature of animals. Vivisections were frequently conducted inside research institutions to educate and complete research in the field of biology. One example of this was the scientist William Harvey, who discovered the circulatory system in England in 1618. To this day, this research has continued to benefit humanity and is the backbone of many future studies, yet the methods of his research raise many ethical issues.

Although the practical use of animals, spanning thousands of years, has been deeply ingrained in human history, the concept of ethically treating animals emerged distinctly and separately during the Enlightenment period. Famous philosophers in France, such as Rousseau and Voltaire, began to debate and criticize the use of animals for vivisections around the time of the mid-17th century (Franco). These philosophers paved the way for animal ethics and facilitated the founding of multiple groups attempting to defend the ethics of animals such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and the National Anti-Vivisection Society in the UK. These groups openly opposed the practice of live vivisections of animals through protests organized from the 1800s to the present.

Arguments

In the scientific community, as testing continues on both humans and animals, many experts advocate for the ethical treatment of humans but often neglect to argue for the ethical treatment of animals. It is additionally important to argue for the protection of animals as they themselves are the ones undergoing experimentation. Although it is impossible to obtain consent from animals, this does not mean that we should violate their rights. Ethics are important to protect the rights and the health of any animal participants or human participants in many scientific experiments (Festing 526). Normally, participants in a study are informed and prepared by researchers, a process not possible for animals. This underscores the critical importance of protecting their ethical rights. As animals cannot consent, they are never aware of the dangers that could come from these experiments. Modern times have seen a significant increase in respect for the ethical treatment of animals during scientific experiments, it is important to note that the entire system is not perfect yet.

Another critical point about ethics is that it allows for research organizations to remain responsible for the animals along with maintaining a level of transparency that allows for the protection of animals and their ethical rights. This entails that proper documentation is kept throughout the research process, that risk is minimized for all participants, and that all data is collected in a reasonable as well as ethical manner (Festing 528). Finally, ethics protects the researcher from potential harm as well. Following an ethical set of rules will allow for the researcher to avoid potential lawsuits or future issues (Loew 185). Without these checks and balances, science could not be conducted in a way that is beneficial for all parties. Because the whole point of the scientific experiment is for the betterment of not only the animals but also humanity, it is absolutely necessary for researchers to conduct their experiments in an ethical manner.

In the field of animal testing, there are more failed than successful trials at a ratio of about 90% (Akhtar 49). Animal experimentation can be broken down into two different variations: behavioral testing and drug/cosmetic related testing. Across the spectrum, both methods continue to have consistent failures due to the nature of animal testing. Behavioral testing is usually ineffective in captive settings. This is due to the human interaction that takes place with the animals. Variables such as artificial lights, human made noise, and being frequently removed from cages can all increase the cortisol levels of animals (Akhtar 408). It has been observed that in mice, this can lead to intestinal leakage, inflammation, and other negative side effects that harm the animals and lead to false results in experimentation. A variety of other conditions can change the neurochemistry, genetic expression, and nerve regeneration in animals as well (Pippin 3). As expected, this can impede existing studies and may lead to false results or failed experiments. As for the drug related trials, there is an entirely different story. A large majority of the time, many of the drug trials that are successful in the animal stage, move on to the human stage just to fail. This can be attributed to the use of mice in drug trials and how different their physiology is. This inefficiency throughout the entire industry continues to this day. Due to the current nature of existing lab trials, there will be continued failure for the time being.

For the future of animal testing to continue, it is important to implement a standardized lab safety and protocol rule set. Protecting the welfare of animals is something that is imperative, in addition to protecting the validity of the experiments that are being undertaken throughout the world. Through fully understanding how to better take care of our animals, we will be able to improve our understanding of how our trials are failing and how we can make them successful in the future. Additionally, a standardized set of rules will aid scientists' ability to have more successful experiments as a whole and move on to the human trial with greater success. This will contribute to the overall benefit of human society as more drugs will be able to hopefully hit the open market with more success than some of their predecessors.

The existing nature of animal trials has also led to a loss of time. Through time lost due to failed trials or other mishaps, individuals who may be waiting on the medication to save their lives will never receive it due to the existing state of the animal testing field. It is suspected that the animal testing industry is also harming many humans as well. On average, a single drug can take up to ten years of trial testing, and millions of dollars. This wastes the resources of not only time, but also money that could be developing other actual beneficial solutions to many diseases that plague humanity today. This redirection of resources harms the entire industry as a whole because it leads away research that could be beneficial in other fields. The other major issue is that some drugs may be ineffective in animals but are actually effective in humans. This causes an abandonment of useful medical techniques that could have been used to save hundreds of lives. An example of this is how toxicology tests on animals do not always reflect the true nature of the toxicology tests in humans. An experiment using aspirin conducted on mice proved that it would not be harmful to the mice, but when replicated in humans using the same dosages, it ended up being toxic and led to the harm of multiple humans (Hartung 46). Without further implementation of failsafes and rules put into place, this trend could continue for the next century, if not checked. For these reasons, it is imperative that animal testing receive the critical eye it has been needing all along.

The practice of animal testing has been around since the fifth century BCE. Although it has been necessary to make many of the advances in sciences that we have today, it is now an outdated form of science. As science has advanced throughout the ages, we now possess greater technologies in order to replace the archaic form of testing. Even today, we have made such great advances through computer technology, along with in-vitro and cellular experimentation, that the use of animals may be avoidable altogether. Although all methods of animal testing are not going to be eradicated (specifically behavioral), it is now much easier to test many drugs on the market using computer models instead. These computer models predict how drugs are going to connect to binding sites in the body and therefore can understand the reactions and effects of the drug in question (Sonali 3). This approach leads to substantial cost savings for scientists, as it reduces the need for frequent animal purchases and related expenses (food, cages, and labor), offset by a one-time investment in the software (Sonali 3). Alternatively, there also exists in vitro testing. This involves culturing cells to grow into larger masses in order to test drugs on them. Specific organ cells can be used, such as liver, brain, heart, etc. (Sonali 2). This cell culture allows for the testing of drugs without harming animals. As with computer models, once the initial phases of the tests are completed, it is then possible to move on to animal testing to see the effects on a mammalian organism. With the rapid advancement of technology providing alternatives, the archaic nature of animal testing is highlighted, suggesting it should be further regulated or phased out entirely. Even though animal testing may not be completely eliminated from our practices, it remains essential to regulate scientific methods.

Two important critics who oppose the idea of phasing out animal testing in its entirety are deserving of mention. Silvio Garattini and Giuliano Grignaschi are pharmacology researchers and physicians. They state that animal testing specifically in vivo (testing on living organisms) is far superior to in vitro testing (testing on cell cultures). Some of the specific barriers that are overcome through in vivo are the blood-brain barrier, and the intestinal barrier, which they believe will offer statistics about the drug being tested as a whole. Additionally, they mention that one of the final obstacles to overcome is how the drug is metabolized by the animal's body. The metabolism of a drug is essential to understanding the risks because we can see how it reacts with the surrounding organisms and organs of the animal. They include, "not always have the animal results been translated into effective drugs but the failures themselves have helped to reformulate the model or the experimental conditions or the type of chemical" (Garattini and Grignaschi 1). Both critics understand the flaws that come along with animal testing, but they continue to support it due to their belief that it is still the best testing model to date. While I will concede a few points to Garattini and Grignaschi, I still believe they are not looking at the entire picture of animal testing. Though obstacles exist, they could be tackled further down the testing protocol of a specific drug. It is believed that many of the scientific advances existing nowadays, which can circumvent the negatives of animal testing, were not mentioned.

Therefore, by avoiding the main issue and instead viewing the industry from their perspective, they continue their own research. Instead of challenging the norms, they are trying to reinforce the existing norm.

Conclusion

As scientific research continues to march on, hopefully animal testing will begin to be phased out. Even in modern days, animal testing is becoming less of a necessity and less of an ordinary form of practice. With advancements in scientific methods, it is now possible to bypass many of the harmful aspects traditionally associated with animal testing. While animal testing will most likely never leave the scientific community, it is still important that there are rules and regulations in place to help protect animals in an ethical manner. In line with this, The stance advocated for is the enhancement of regulations governing animal testing, ensuring ethical treatment and protection for animals involved in these scientific processes. While it is agreed that there will be a necessity for testing before moving on to human trials, there is still an important ethical regulation that needs to be upheld for the benefit of humans and animals alike.

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Book Review

Da-Shiva Francois

***Teaching Performance Practices in Remote and Hybrid Spaces*, edited by Jeanmarie Higgins and Elisha Clark Halpin. Routledge, 2022. 230 pages. \$42.95. ISBN 978-1-0032-2905-6.**

The editors of *Teaching Performance Practices in Remote and Hybrid Spaces*, Jeanmarie Higgins, chair of the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance at the University of Texas at Arlington, and Elisha Clark Halpin, an Associate Professor in the School of Theatre at Pennsylvania State University, divide their book into four parts. They address topics on compassionate pedagogy, adaptation of dance and movement principles to an online space, doing theater online, and how educators can teach design and production by considering both tangible elements and the temporary aspects of the now. This review offers a condensed summary of each of the four sections. It starts with a brief overview based on the editors' introduction, then a more in-depth exploration of key elements in each section, and concludes with analysis and recommendations of the reviewer.

In Part I the focus is on adapting to online teaching (due to COVID-19), stressing a shift towards a caring pedagogy. It advocates for releasing rigid expectations of rigor and embracing a compassionate pedagogy. It further addresses issues such as academic ableism and navigating the challenges of teaching trauma, as well as the evolving nature of professionalism and the need for adaptability in response to students' and staff's mental health needs. Part II explores the unique challenges and advantages of teaching dance and movement online, with a central focus on the body. New teaching practices, inventive approaches to dance space, and a reimagining of traditional pedagogies like using social media and live streaming are examined. Part III advocates for the benefits of hybrid teaching in archival research, featuring experiences of new play dramaturgs, a director's adaptation to a disrupted production, and a playwright's perspective on virtual performance. Lastly, Part IV covers Michael Schweikardt's remote design pedagogy and discoveries in online teaching by costume design professor Charlene Gross. Next, with online stage management experience, lighting designer Christina Thanasoula demonstrates the adaptability of digital performance to online environments. The section concludes with a case study by Professor Meg Hanna-Tominaga, highlighting challenges and showing the importance of flexibility and clarity in managing the hybrid stage management classroom.

The editors' introduction sets the foundation for a new teaching approach in theater courses designed for non-arts majors, where students submit creative works and engage in discussions online, without traditional quizzes or exams. Departing from conventional assessment methods, instructors adopted a labor assessment approach, granting an A to students who completed all assignments. Their smooth transition to online learning during COVID-19 underscored the importance of prioritizing joy over rigor in education.

In Part I, Chapter 1, Jane Barnette, an Associate Professor at the University of Kansas, challenges the transactional models of educational practices, advocating for a shift from a rigorous to a *compassionate* teaching approach. She introduces the concept of "ungrading" as an alternative to traditional grading, aiming to alleviate students' learning anxiety. Barnette,

quoting digital pedagogy pioneer Jesse Stommel, writes, “most meanings of the word ‘rigor’ have no productive place in education, unless you believe school (and disciplinary culture) should be about policing, punishing, and gatekeeping—again with the effect of excluding already marginalized voices” (Barnette 11). She positions her argument as a manifesto against oppressive forces by using joy in teaching and learning, heightened in the face of collective trauma and challenges during the 45th presidency. Gwendolyn Walker defines the Alexander Technique (AT) as a method for letting go of harmful habits and fostering better habits through a meditation on release (Walker 85). While many dance and movement principles rely on live presence, Walker demonstrates that AT can be effectively taught online through kindness, imagination, and exploration. Using photos to aid posture comprehension, she encourages students to verbally reflect on their discoveries, promoting a concept of self-kindness involving the technique of noticing, celebrating, pausing (inhibition), and redirecting. Through this process, students gain confidence and engage in constructive self-criticism.

Part II focuses on applying dance and movement principles to an online space. Michele Dunleavy, for instance, found an interesting limitation to teaching online with tap dancing. She argues that the challenge of teaching tap dance remotely, particularly through platforms like Zoom, is difficult due to the inherent reliance on synchronous sound and movement, disrupted by latency issues. The absence of synchronized group dancing and the inability to hear students simultaneously hinders the sense of community and the teaching of musicality. Furthermore, she mindfully notes that, “zoom fatigue was not on the radar in these early days [of the COVID-19 era] . . . I had concerns over the amount of screen time . . . so I prioritized creating assignments that got them away from the computer and out of the house” (Dunleavy 103).

Christopher J. Staley breaks down the notion of performers embodying both specificity and polysemy, pointing (deixis) at something and nothing simultaneously. Despite acknowledging limitations like floor-based exercises, the author maintains that remote instruction can still foster meaningful teacher–student connections. He notes the challenges and discoveries in adapting Suzuki’s method of actor training. Staley shows how the imaginative aspect of Suzuki training, particularly the actor’s need to imagine others on stage while performing alone, resonates with the isolation experienced in 2020–2021.

In Part III, the authors highlight the common perception of teachers being skeptical of students’ academic motivations. They respond to this issue in Chapter 11, “Building Trust Across Miles.” Kristin Leahey and Shelley Orr share a successful experience with compassionate pedagogy, in which they took a student-centered approach and valued the creative process over results. In the Fall of 2020, they noticed the emergence of Zoom theater and its ability to grant students agency, leading to women of color, queer women, and female playwrights to have more opportunities. They incorporated the “Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning Online” infographic developed by social workers to help with online teaching. Leahey discusses how they applied “Practice compassion by conveying warmth and support in your communications with students” from the infographic (Leahey 130). The dramaturgs could “dream” a palette that they could share and collaborate on with the entire artistic team and then share with the wider audience if the plays were eventually staged. By mentoring and advising the projects, she taught the importance of relationship building and unity in production. Dramaturgs took charge in adapting to remote teaching by attending more rehearsals, participating in production planning, and translating new works for online audiences.

Part IV of the book covers aspects of digital performance pedagogy that goes on backstage. To begin, Michael Schweikardt, a scenic designer, addresses the challenges of the shift to digital learning by creating a separate analog space to maintain a connection with materiality, utilizing drawings as a tangible record of artistic thoughts. Charlene Gross suggests improvements in teaching theatrical stage makeup by adopting a non-judgmental approach. She underscores anatomical features by decoupling methods from gender, aiming for inclusivity in the online learning environment. She presents five conundrums related to digital space and suggests positive reinforcement as a solution. She gives tips on overcoming this conundrum: recording sessions so students can go back and view; utilizing projects like the “drag transformation project” and “the gender reversal project” aimed at breaking gender binaries; fostering nuanced discussion about gender; and encouraging self-expression through persona creation, which broadens opportunities for guest participation (Gross 178).

Christina Thanasoula contributes to the field of lighting design, exploring the differences in designing for human and digital eyes. Her project, the opera *Juditha Triumphans*, exemplifies the interdisciplinary approach needed for both traditional and digital dramaturgy. Adaptations for online streaming, such as repainting surfaces to control light reflection, reveal challenges and opportunities in this evolving field. Meg Hannah-Tominaga discusses the adaptation of stage management to online spaces, using recordings and videos to help students apply techniques. She applies emotional intelligence to address the impact of students’ emotional states on management and utilizes Zoom as a tool for low-pressure assignments. She found

Zoom convenient because “there was no need to have the students go one at a time; students could rerecord if they made a mistake (or be fine with their mistakes), and I could grade at my convenience. This proved to be a very low-pressure, low-stakes way for students to gain experience and confidence” (Hannah-Tominaga 193). The students’ experience increased their confidence in calling shows and managing rehearsals remotely.

While well-constructed, the book’s arguments often rely on student testimony and empirical evidence, indicating findings rooted in exploration and imagination, which may not be universally replicable. Another topic that demands closer consideration is the limitations of online space, which pose challenges for many students, considering issues such as internet affordability, reliability, and digital fatigue. However, by embracing flexibility, as advocated by the authors in this volume, digital theater and other disciplines stand to benefit from hybrid and online pedagogy. Remote performance faces difficulties due to the inherent need for risk-taking and failure in artistic processes. The possibility of ungrading or adopting a no-grades approach is viable for creative disciplines that thrive on unhindered creativity. A potential reluctance to embrace this radical change may stem from a broader societal issue—namely, the importance often placed on education as a means for earning a living rather than uncovering truths and navigating the world with confidence.

Another notable departure in these essays is the absence of dissenting voices. The authors did highlight the limitations of online pedagogy, notably Christina Thanasoula’s concerns about costly technology, like lighting, and Michele Dunleavy’s challenges in teaching tap dancing online. However, a wider variety of opinions could make this a more comprehensive study. While it is beneficial when articles align in agreement, a more compelling and persuasive argument emerges when addressing opposing viewpoints.

In sum, this excellent volume is filled with valuable tips, guidelines, research, and experiences, which the authors offer to practitioners who are interested in enhancing their performance pedagogy techniques. Furthermore, other disciplines can also gain from adopting compassionate teaching practices in this post-COVID era.

Comics and the American West: An Interview with Dr. Christopher Conway

Sean Woodard

Dr. Christopher Conway, Professor of Spanish in the Department of Modern Languages, was interviewed by *Global Insight* Assistant Editor, Sean Woodard. Sean asked Dr. Conway about his research on Westerns and his recent donation of Mexican and Spanish comics to Special Collections at UT Arlington's Libraries.

Sean Woodard: Dr. Conway, can you share a little bit about your research in the past few years? How did your scholarship influence your decision to donate “The John and Magdalena Conway Comics Collection” to the UTA Libraries’ Special Collections?

Christopher Conway: I originally started collecting Mexican comics as a hobby, for pleasure. It wasn't until a few years into that hobby that I realized there were interesting questions to explore about Mexican comics. And so for a few years, I worked on a book, which became *Heroes of the Borderlands: The Western in Mexican Film, Comics, and Music*, which was published by the University of New Mexico Press in December 2019.

After completing that book, I realized that I had said most of what I wanted to say about Mexican comics, and that I would probably soon be ready to offer these comics to Special Collections at UT Arlington Libraries. I already had a longstanding relationship with Special Collections. In the spring of 2015, Special Collections did an exhibit of my comics called “Viva Mexico: The Comic Book History of Mexico.” That experience planted the seed in my mind about donating the collection to Special Collections.

SW: How did those initial conversations start?

CC: In fall of 2022 I started talking to the former Dean of Libraries Rebecca Bichel, who expressed interest. I was lucky enough to also have the support of Sam Haynes, director of the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies here on campus, who also lobbied the library to accept my collection. I delivered the donation in May of 2023.

SW: What are your hopes for the collection?

CC: Well, my hope is that professors on campus across the disciplines—including Political Science, History, English, Sociology, Anthropology, and Modern Languages—have occasion to use those comics when they bring students to special collections to do activities for their courses. The material is really vivid. It really pops. It's very provocative.

Another hope of mine is that graduate students at UTA and researchers in general will use the collection. There's a lot of potential there for someone who wants to do cutting edge work. For example, while my book *Heroes of the Borderlands* talks a little bit about immigration and Mexican comics, the collection is a great resource for developing new projects. I am confident others will be able to make different arguments that will be really appealing to multiple fields.

SW: I brought my literature students to Special Collections to view the collection, alongside other exhibits of historical writings and correspondence relating to the American West. At one large table were Western novels from my collection arranged alongside valuable texts from Special Collections—including a 1906 edition of *Moon-Face and Other Stories* by Jack London and a first edition of *Roughing It* by Mark Twain with original illustrations. The exhibit also included secondary sources paired with an array of Mexican comics from your donated collection. My students were very interested in the comics because that perspective is often overlooked or hardly covered when you think of the literary canon, or at least in terms of Western Literature of America.

CC: I'm lucky enough to have found a subject that people had not really mined in a significant way before I did. I stumbled onto it, even though Westerns are ubiquitous in Mexican culture and hiding in plain sight. Mexican Westerns have often been viewed as knockoffs of U.S. cultural products, causing many intellectuals, scholars, and cultural commentators to avoid valuing them. The argument of *Heroes of the Borderlands* is that Mexican Westerns really matter.

But I should also clarify that half of the donated collection is composed of Spanish materials—Spanish Westerns, in particular pulp fiction, dime novels, and comics. I would argue that that material is really exciting as well. There's one example of the relevance of the Spanish collection to Texas, which is that there's a vital Spanish tradition of pulp novels and paperbacks set in the American West. The most famous author of that cohort is a guy called Marcial Lafuente Estefanía, who wrote over 2500 Western novelettes from the 1940s to the early 1980s. Those novels have been published and republished continuously not only in Spain, but throughout the Spanish-speaking world—to the point that in the early 2000s, you could go to a Mexican supermarket or a Mexican bakery in North Texas and find novels by Marcial Lafuente Estefanía published fifty years earlier. The same thing can be said about Mexico. Estefanía's novels were sold everywhere from flea markets to street kiosks, as well as in South America and in the Caribbean. If you think about the cultural ecology of the reading experience in the Americas, this Spanish writer who never came to the United States was writing thousands of novels that were being read throughout North and South America.

SW: In a way, it reminds me of the cultural influence Karl May's Westerns had in his native Germany and around the world.

CC: Estefanía was certainly influenced by Karl May, in addition to James Fenimore Cooper and other American authors. But May was different from Estefanía. May was writing American Westerns with a very conspicuous German focus, whereas Estefanía was writing pastiche Westerns, where all the characters are Anglo-American. This is a very strong tradition—not only in Spanish Westerns, but also Mexican ones—where the Western does not necessarily have a conspicuous Mexican or Spanish character, they often have none. The books read as if they were American Westerns, but in a different language. In my scholarship, I've argued that such Westerns are always about the local; that is, even in a Western that is striving to be a pastiche Western, it is responding to its immediate historical and cultural environment. But we need different tools to tease out the meanings.

SW: Have you seen a recent shift regarding the reception of comics as a topic of interest and importance in academic scholarship, whereas in the past there might have been gatekeeping measures in place comparable to the contentious division between genre fiction and so-called “literary fiction”?

CC: I'm ambivalent. On the one hand, I think there's more acceptance. On the other hand, it seems that, up until very recently, the old prejudices against all comics and graphic fiction have been reinscribed within Comics Studies against works in the genre of comics that are not graphic novels. For example, the late 1990s and the early 2000s saw this tremendous shift toward the study of graphic fiction. I use the word “graphic” or the label “graphic fiction” intentionally because scholars were

using it to bracket it off from Archie Comics, superhero comics, Westerns, and other things that were considered to be, on some level, devoid of meaningful content. It wasn't until recently where we've begun to see some pushback against this idea that the only kinds of comics that have value are serious-minded graphic novels for adults or underground comics. Some are now arguing that we should be talking about Archie Comics, superhero comics, and things of that nature. I agree completely.

Superhero comics should be considered as their own category. This is because a lot of the scholarship that we still see in Comics Studies about superheroes is closely connected to fan service—fan service, in the sense that the scholarship is predicated on a scholar's identification with the material and their long-standing relationship to it as a fan. That is something I honestly don't practice myself. To me, comics are cultural artifacts of great historical and sociological value. This is material I approach the same way I would approach any other historical artifact—as strange or foreign to me as any other rare and vintage archival item.

SW: I like how you mentioned earlier the importance of region-specific meaning that is produced by these comics. That historical and local resonance reminds me of how musicologists might view the folk song tradition as a kind of living testament to the people who lived in that era or region, or even how that tradition continues to thrive, be rearranged, or speaks to new generations.

CC: Exactly. I think that's true. One of the things I found surprising about working on comics is how it's taught me how to work on other kinds of popular literature. So there are certain problems or challenges that you face when you work on comics that you inevitably have to deal with when you work with pulp fiction or serialized films. Those problems are, for example, corporate authorship, or anonymous authorship.

Oftentimes, when you work on the history of comics, in Latin America or Europe, you're dealing with material that does not have an identifiable author. As literary critics or people who are trained in in the discipline of English or Latin American literature, we are used to the figure of the author as a principle that confers meaning onto the text and which helps us frame the text.

Second is the issue of volume. As literary critics, we're not used to dealing with texts that have hundreds of thousands or millions of pages. To work on a comic series that has run for 30 years and that has thousands of issues can really be an impediment to your ability to command the material.

Third, there's the issue of formula. I think as literary and film critics we use an auteurist approach to the study of comics, graphic fiction, or graphic novels. But when you're dealing with formula in popular culture, you need to use a different approach, one based on market imperatives, precedents, and transmediality. So I think these three challenges—authorship, volume, and formula—are very salient when you work on comics. I've realized that I can use those same problematics to think through other kinds of popular culture.

SW: Do you think there is a tendency to reductively view these comics and novels as either solely perpetuating the myth of the American frontier—as John Ford and others arguably have done—or, instead, approaching Westerns in a revisionist manner?

CC: There are two things that bother me about how commentators sometimes talk about Westerns. The first is the idea that all Westerns are the same and they all mean the same thing. I find that frustrating. I think anyone who has studied Westerns or even just watched a few Westerns will realize that they are not all the same. There's still a prejudice against Westerns among scholars who are new to the study of Westerns, stemming from the assumption that all Westerns prior to the year 2015 are nationalistic, racist, patriarchal, juvenile, or retrograde. If you look at the history of Westerns from their inception as dime novels through to the so-called Golden Age of film and television in the 1950s and '60s, you're going to see an amazing diversity of Westerns, and also Westerns that are, in many ways, contradictory in terms of what they have to say. For example, I think a movie like *The Searchers* is definitely very mythical. But it's also iconoclastic and self-aware. We need to be able to

hold more than one idea in our heads at the same time when we think about a film like *The Searchers*, or a Western comic or novel.

SW: UTA Special Collections recently held a reception to showcase your donation. How do you think the exhibit was received?

CC: I really liked the event because it was basically a show-and-tell designed to promote awareness of the collection.

SW: Is there a particular work that is a favorite of yours in the collection?

CC: I'm tempted to use a quote that I recently learned from Ben Huseman, cartographic archivist at Special Collections: It's whichever comic I am holding in my hand when you ask me.

Contributors

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Katherine Hamilton is an English undergraduate at the University of Texas at Arlington with a focus in composition and rhetoric. Hamilton's personal and professional experiences have motivated her to research in the field of Deaf Studies. Her goal is to bridge the gap between Deaf and hearing worlds.

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Dr. Christopher Conway



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