

ACTION RESEARCH

**QUILTED NARRATIVES SHINING LIGHT ON SOCIAL INJUSTICES
IN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC SETTINGS**

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Prologue

The current social and political climate has drawn significant attention to issues concerning ethnic groups, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and other demographics. Headlines regarding various social injustices are now becoming commonplace. Having been raised in a small town within a homogenous white society, I admit that I was relatively insulated from these issues that have greatly impacted others' daily lives. It was not until I continued to further my education through my interest in the liberal arts and art education that these issues began to stand out as extremely significant. Appropriately, as these issues have come to light through my study of art, I hope to incorporate art as I further explore social injustice as it pertains to educational institutions and public settings.

As I have acquired more knowledge of the social injustices that occur in the United States, I intend to share these stories with the public through the creation and exhibition of a story quilt. For hundreds of years, quilts have been used as a craft to reconstruct African American women's experiences (Cash, 1995, p. 30). I have used this same quilt making craft to portray the hardships of social injustice on survivors.

Introduction to the Study: Quilted Narratives Shining Light on Social Injustices

In this arts-based research study, I've explored the adverse effects of social injustice, gathered through stories from survivors who have been denied opportunities that every human being needs and desires. In this action research, I used a questionnaire to examine and analyze stories collected from four research participants, and from different environments such as the workplace, educational settings, and in public. The questionnaire focused on social injustice

experiences in various settings such as the workplace and educational institutions. Through the responses, I gained a better understanding of the adverse effects of social injustice. Subsequently, I constructed a visual narrative that will allow the beholder to view stories of injustice while forming connections and transcending differences. During this study, I used symbolism to expose harsh realities of people who have encountered social injustice. My framework emerged through a creative process divulged from my recognition of the violation of others' economic, sociocultural, political, civil, and human rights. The symbols I utilize in the quilt represent the stories I gathered during the research interviews.

As Weinraub and Zaleski (2006) state: "Quilting ... cuts across racial, economic, geographic and other lines" (p. 1). Echoing that sentiment, I designed a quilt with illustrations to display stories told by people who have experienced various forms of social injustice. For generations, artists (most commonly, women) have created quilts in an attempt to document current events for future reference. While a quilt is a functional cloth used to protect from the cold or decorate a room, it is also a tangible form of history.

If women were not allowed or encouraged to speak their stories and felt nameless, it comes as no surprise that they would find another way—something tangible and durable, something made with their own hands, like a quilt—that could record their life and be passed from generation to generation. (Kort, 2008, para. 6)

The quilt has interlocked stories of people that individuals can view for years to come.

Background and Context to the Study: Inter-social Discrimination

The Black Lives Matter Movement, which began in 2013 (Turan, 2020), shines a light on the consistent racially motivated violence worldwide. This particular movement motivated me

to look at other forms of oppression. As sociologist Charles E. Hurst (2016) explains, the awareness of social injustices is evident: “Following the Great Recession of 2008-2010, the public has been increasingly aware of growing levels of economic inequality and pernicious inequalities surrounding issues of race, gender, sexuality, gender expression, and disability” (p. XI). The impact that social injustice has on society is destructive.

Several factors contribute to social injustices in our society. Differences in possessions and wealth, experiences, race and gender, religion, the physical body, and power attribute to social injustice. While social inequality impacts social conditions in the United States, it is important to recognize that social inequality affects people’s personal lives. Considering the emotional effects that social injustice has on an individual, it is a step towards encouraging society to practice social justice so residents can work toward a society where they no longer experience discrimination. In this study, I focus on the adverse effects of social injustice and discrimination through illustrations I have drawn based on others' experiences.

Inter-social treatment involves a group or single person that experiences oppression based on personally-held biases or prejudices (Hambrecht, 2018). Common sociological categories of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, education, and mental or physical ability are identity categories in which social policies and practices organize privilege and oppression. Inter-social treatment enforces the unfair treatment of people, which often is unintentional, yet based on assumptions and conventions toward sociological categories. People experience oppression due to evaluative assumptions related to sociological categories, which distort social reality and complexity of histories and lived experiences. According to a study by Dodman et. al. (2016), “oppression refers to systematic constraints on groups that are not

necessarily the result of the intentions of a tyrant. Oppression in this sense is structural, rather than the result of a few peoples' choices or policies.” (p. 85)

To experience discrimination is to experience social injustice. Discrimination is not tolerated in the United States and is considered to be illegal. “These laws prohibit discrimination in employment, availability of housing, rates of pay, right to promotion, educational opportunity, civil rights, and use of facilities based on race, nationality, creed, color, age, sex, or sexual orientation” (Niravita, 2005, p. 164). Therefore, the continuation of discrimination is immoral and unlawful and must come to an end. While there is a regulation to deter injustice, people prejudge, the government practices injustice when dealing with people. Niravita (2005) defines *unequal government regulation* as “purposefully or otherwise creat[ing] conditions that obstruct, limit, or dent a group(s) access to the same opportunities and resources, relative to the rest of society” (p. 163). Discrimination can occur in various settings, such as in educational settings and institutions.

Niravita (2020) defines *social justice* as “a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. The explicit and tacit terms measure [social justice] for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity, and social privileges”-(p. 163). Niravita expands upon the idea of social justice as she describes where it is necessary. Niravita (2020) states: “Social justice assigns rights and duties in the institutions of society, which enables people to receive the basic benefits and burdens of social co-operation” (p. 164). Although the majority might agree that everyone is deserving of equal privileges, the reality is that unjust inequality is identified and perceived regularly, particularly by those who experience inequality. Social injustices occur on both small and global scales. Whether it is unequal pay in the workplace or lack of resources in a school, social injustice occurs everywhere.

Workplace Settings

There are examples of organized institutions that carry the burden of social injustice, such as schools. As Dodman et al. (2014) describe: “Schools, as institutions, can be places of such structural oppression for both students and teachers” (p. 86). Institutions are the center for assumptions as social groups become victims of oppressive actions. Although the reasons behind oppression and social injustice are unjust, Hurst (2016) mentions that there may be justification for such mistreatment in stating: “since rewards provide motivation to do certain tasks, the structure of inequality is really an incentive system that helps the whole society survive” (p. 5). Potentially, this division between people is supposed to inspire people to work harder. However, instead, it creates animosity. The effects that social injustice has on mental health is highlighted by Patel (2015) as he states: “We should expect that interventions which successfully address structural determinants such as absolute and relative poverty or gender-based violence or conflict prevention will produce downstream beneficial effects on population mental health” (p. 44). He includes that the mental health of the oppressed will not improve unless this social injustice has ended. He states: “Public mental health must not only equip people and communities to better cope with the stressors created by a dysfunctional world but also target the very drivers of this dysfunction” (Patel, 2015, p. 44). Social injustice, a dysfunction of the United States, not only affects the mental and physical health of the people that live there, but it also works as a hindrance in allowing people to evolve as students.

I have explored and worked to expose the reality of social injustices that occur in professional settings such as educational settings and in public to raise people's consciousness towards injustice so that they may take action and eradicate social injustice. Through this research, I have developed a better understanding of my teaching and interaction with my students in the context of social injustice. There are physical and psychological consequences resulting from injustice in the educational setting, which will affect a student's success. I explore some of these consequences through this research.

Challenges for Immigrants in US Postsecondary Education

The opportunity for immigrants in the US to succeed in postsecondary education¹ is a challenge, as many immigrants experience barriers. According to Baum and Flores (2011):

Postsecondary attainment rates of young people who come from low-income households and, regardless of income or immigration status, whose parents have no college experience are low across the board. Exacerbating the financial constraints is the reality that low-income students and those whose parents have little education are frequently ill-prepared academically to succeed in college. (p. 171)

Although there is a rise in demand for immigrant students to obtain skilled labor and postsecondary education to improve their chances for hire, the opportunity for enrollment for postsecondary education and college is not transparent (Baum & Flores, 2011). Discrimination plays a factor in the low enrollment opportunities for immigrant students. While the application and financial aid process for college students is already considered a challenge, it is especially difficult for immigrants with minimum English language proficiency to comprehend. According

¹ Of or relating to education beyond high school

to Baum and Flores (2011): “Not surprisingly, greater English proficiency boosts educational attainment among immigrants” (p. 176). Immigrants’ opportunity to be successful in their educational endeavors is limited by the lack of effort by the United States to provide comprehensive avenues for its residents to further their education. In what follows, I describe another way in which racial discrimination happens in educational settings.

Racial Discrimination in Educational Settings

The Race Relations Act, enacted in 1976 (“The Commission For,” 1989) was designed to eliminate racial inequality in settings such as the educational one. However, in present times racial discrimination still exists. As mentioned previously, discrimination leads to psychological disturbances, especially for young, impressionable students, “social and psychological changes during adolescence take place in the context of interpersonal and institutional interactions and experiences across historical time and within individual development timing” (Hope et al., 2015, p. 84).

According to Nicolas et al. (2008), studies have shown that students of color experience an abundance of negative stereotypes that categorize them as dangerous and threatening to society. Their teachers perpetuate racial stereotypes against students of color as they experience inappropriate reprimand. Hope et al. (2015) found the following:

Black students report unfair or abusive verbal, psychological, and physical treatment by peers. Teachers have been reported to give lower grades and use harsher disciplinary practices with students of color than with White students. (p. 2015)

Discrimination against Black students has detrimental effects on their success in the future.

Students who have experienced discrimination from their teachers are less likely to perform well

academically, which will undoubtedly impact their potential for success in the future (Hope et al. 2015, p. 85). The racial climate of the school depends on the interactions amongst both the faculty and the students, while also relying heavily on the preconceived stereotypes made by teachers, “teachers are more likely to hold negative judgment for ethnic minority students than White students in terms of classroom behavior” (Hope et al., 2015, p. 94). Students are expected to become successful while the racial climate of their school threatens their educational success, and in turn, may affect their professional lives. Consequently, discrimination is carried on to teachers and other employees as well.

Workplace Injustices

Although it is unlawful to discriminate in the workplace, discrimination still occurs in various ways. An employee may experience discrimination due to their gender, ethnicity, religion, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, or political opinion. As a result, they may experience job refusal, or lose hours during their shifts, become excluded by their coworkers, or may not be paid the same as someone with the same position, experience, and education (Cox, 2017). According to Okechukwu et al. (2014), “The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC, 2011] protects workers from injustice based on age, disability, gender/sex, genetic information, national origin, pregnancy, race/color, or religion” (p. 547). Although the employee is protected by such commissions, discrimination and bullying still do occur in the workplace and as a result, employees are left traumatized. The traumatization from experiences of injustice in the workplace not only impacts the individual who is attacked, but it also affects their success in the workplace.

Different forms of injustice occur in the workplace, and all have negative effects on the victim. Okechukwu et al. (2014) define workplace discrimination as “actions of institutions and/or individuals within them, setting unfair terms and conditions that systematically impair the ability of members of a group to work” (p. 575). Institutional racism occurs as “structurally constructed differential access to societal opportunities, goods and services can be applied to the characterization of institutional workplace injustice” (Okechukwu, 2014, p. 574). While racism is an intentional form of injustice in the workplace, Okechukwu et al. (2014) explain there are unintentional forms of social injustice in the workplace as well, such as isolating an employee from other employees or insulting an employee with jokes that are related to one’s race or ethnicity. Studies have shown that there are negative physiological health outcomes for people who experience discrimination in the workplace.

Evidence from cross-sectional studies suggests that workers who experience racial/ethnic discrimination in the workplace suffer a range of negative psychological health outcomes, such as more days of poor mental health, psychological distress, anxiety, and depression negative emotions and emotional trauma. (Okechukwu et al., 2014. p. 578)

To encourage employees in a workplace, they need to feel supported and important. According to Spell and Arnold (2007), the role of justice in relation to mental health is significant (p. 725). The perception of justice of the employees relies heavily on the interactions that take place amongst each other. According to Spell and Arnold (2007), “To understand the effects of justice climate, it is important to understand how feelings and beliefs of the individual could, in aggregation with other group members’ feelings and beliefs, explain variance in employee mental health beyond an individual-level measure” (p. 726). If multiple employees feel as though there is an unfairness in the workplace, whether that be due to race, gender, or any

other factor, the climate in the workplace will be poor and will lead to less successful, unmotivated, employees who do not feel appreciated or respected.

Design of the Study

This study consists of structured interviews. I recruited study participants through word-of-mouth based on their willingness to participate in an interview and their identification that they have experienced social injustice. The selection criteria for participants entailed first-hand experience(s) of discrimination. Accounts by participants were not included if they did not relay a first-hand story, if stories were based on hear-say, or if the participant's experience could have alternative explanations rather than discrimination. I have conducted this project in two phases. My research began, in phase one, with the documentation of oppression experienced in the professional world. This study required participants to have personally experienced social injustice that they could share during the interview and produce a symbol to represent their experience. I have gathered knowledge through interviews with people from different cultural backgrounds, asking the questions in Appendix A. In phase two, I started my art-making process with plans for a quilt installation comprised of the responses and stories told by the interviewees.

Phase One:

I designed a questionnaire to be used during telephone interviews. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ensure that the conversations remained focused on the participants' experiences and to capture all of the details to collect enough data to develop symbols for the

quilt design. I developed eight different questions that would allow for natural transitions throughout the interview (see Appendix A). As I created the questionnaire, I considered how the participant would interpret each question. The questions are concise and allow for the participant to respond elaborately if they chose to do so.

Once I received approval (see Appendix B) from Penn State's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began recruiting volunteers to participate in the interviews (see Appendix C0. I first developed a script to recruit potential participants, then I began contacting the potential participants to introduce the purpose of my study and inquire if they were interested in participating. After several people agreed to participate in the interview, it was my duty to become familiar with their backgrounds, such as the educational and medical workplaces to ensure that I understood their experiences to the best of my ability. I conducted several interviews in preparation for the project in the three-month timeframe; however, multiple participants' experiences did not meet the criteria for this study as outlined above. Four of eight participants interviewed (50%) were able to identify and describe a first-hand experience of injustice.

Phase Two:

I designed a quilt plan, after conducting interviews with symbols derived from the interviews (see Figure 5.) Due to time constraint, the creation of the quilt was beyond the scope of this study. In the future, I plan to utilize my quilt design to construct a quilt that will be submitted to a virtual or public gallery. Subsequently, I will develop and utilize a different questionnaire to collect feedback, from viewers, that I will analyze for future work.

Role of the Researcher

As I performed this arts-based research study, it was my responsibility to analyze the data provided through personal stories of research participants who have experienced oppression and injustice. While I explored the question, “how can I shine a light on social injustices to bring awareness to others?” I formulated my research question based on the following sub questions: (a) Do individuals experience social injustice in workplace or educational settings? (b) If so, is it feasible to illustrate the experiences of these individuals in such a way to shine light on and bring awareness to these experiences? and (c) Can I use what is learned through this research to apply to my own classroom to teach about social injustice? As an investigator, I carefully considered how I conducted each interview with the participants. I hoped to provide participants with refuge as they provided personal narratives of their oppression and injustice experienced. I was also mindful of the sensitive content that the participants shared with me as their stories potentially triggered negative emotions. I was respectful and quiet as I listened to their responses to the questionnaire while also remembering my role as an investigator to produce symbols for the project’s quilt-making phase.

As an investigator, it was my duty to listen carefully as the participants shared vivid details of their experiences. I asked participants before the interview for their permission to record our discussion to ensure accuracy in my notetaking. I took copious amounts of notes during the phone call. I referred back to the notes and recordings to maintain accurate information and portrayals in my written work and the symbols that I translated into the quilt design. I also maintained contact with each participant to ensure that the symbols appropriately signify their experiences as survivors.

Study Participants

I interviewed a total of eight participants, four of which met the research criteria and I included in this research. The research participants were both male and female from the Northern and Southern regions of the United States. The target population focused on professionals in the medical field, and professionals with roles in public relations. I presented potential participants with a recruitment and consent form that described the study's objective (see Appendix C). Participants who felt as though they could provide personal stories of oppression and injustice agreed to participate in an interview while also working with me to develop a symbol that I could include in the quilt design.

I have not identified the research participants in the study; however, I have anonymously represented their stories in my artwork. Participants voluntarily participated in the interview and were free to leave the interview at any moment. See Appendix B for the questionnaire and Appendix C to view the Letter of Invitation to participate in the research study.

Definitions / Limitations

Several factors contributed to the limitations of this study. My study was time-sensitive; therefore, the number of stories that I collected were also limited to how many interviews I was able to accommodate during a three-month period. Four people were included in the study due to the limited amount of time available to solicit participants for the study. This low number of participants impacted the study results and my ability to successfully display a variety of symbols of injustices that may be represented in the artwork. Upon completion of the interviews with the four participants, I discovered that their stories were not based on their experiences in institutions and workplaces as I had expected they would be. I originally focused on experiences

that may have occurred in places such as educational institutions, medical institutions, or other workplaces. Instead, several of the experiences took place outside of the workplace and were not experienced in public or educational institutions. Because some experiences by participants did not fit the criteria of the research, I recruited four additional participants.

It was important for me to consider the accessibility of technology for the research participants. To allow participants to take part in the interviews, I conducted interviews over the telephone. Interviews over the telephone limited the potential for me and the participant to connect through facial expressions that could normally be shown in a video conference call. Technical issues such as audio volume during telephone conversations was a reoccurring issue throughout all interviews. It was also not uncommon to reschedule an interview which led to future time constraints.

Interviews

To capture various experiences of injustice, I was able to gather personal experiences of oppression that would be used to develop intricate and personalized symbols that I incorporated into a quilt design. I included four interviews in my study. I recorded the telephone conversations and collected additional data such as notes to refer to as I began designing the symbols with more detail for the quilt. Referring to the audio recordings provided me with greater insight into participants' experiences. When I referred to the recordings later, I was able to identify changes in the participant's voices as they described sensitive subjects and I was able to decipher details that were not originally recorded in my written notes.

To capture various experiences of injustice, I conducted four interviews and recorded the conversations which I analyzed to develop the symbols for the quilt design. While I conducted

the interviews, I also recorded the conversation and took written notes to ensure accurate information regarding the participant's stories.

The participant's stories are unique to themselves and provide thorough details into their experiences of discrimination as well as their thoughts and feelings regarding their experiences. Participants thoughtfully orchestrated the symbols reflecting their personal experiences, which I included in my interview analysis.

Interview One:

Participant 1 identifies herself as a person of color as she described her experiences of racial injustice in the public setting. Participant 1 described her observation of white people who are against people who are of color. She began the interview by describing her professional background, working in the City of Pittsburgh in a predominantly white area, working amongst a majority of white people.

Before Participant 1 became a Nurse's Aide, she worked at a McDonald's Restaurant from the age of 16 until she was 18 years old. Therefore, Participant 1 was very familiar with the McDonald's protocol and was mindful of the complications that can occur when ordering from the menu outside of the restaurant in the drive-thru. Before her shift as a Nurse's Aide, she drove through the McDonald's drive-thru, carefully observed the order in which cars were in line to receive their orders and took note before moving forward in her vehicle to receive her order. Participant 1 noticed that a white female, close in age to herself located in a vehicle in the other ordering lane was becoming visibly upset for reasons that she could not identify. Participant 1 explained that she could see the female driver screaming from her car window. At first, Participant 1 thought there must be no way that the disgruntled female is yelling at her. Suddenly, the angry female driver leaves her vehicle to approach the window of Participant 1

who has remained inside of her vehicle. Participant 1 described the violent behavior of the female driver as she shouts at her window screaming “What’s wrong with you!?” Participant 1 described her confusion as the female driver uses a racial slur towards her.

Participant 1 shared the thoughts that began to race through her mind as she was violently being attacked with words by the female driver in the McDonald’s drive-thru. Her first reaction was to get angry with the female; but, she remembered that she was in her uniform and was aware of her surroundings. Participant 1 decided not to yell back although she wanted to do so. The last thing that Participant 1 stated she wanted was to be perceived as an angry Black girl in a predominantly White neighborhood. Instead of defending herself, Participant 1 stayed seated in her vehicle and waited until the angry driver returned to her vehicle.

Participant 1 stated that she continued with her day. Moreover, she indicated that altercations like this are normal to her. In fact, she described her experiences of receiving death threats and being called racial slurs as she protests during Black Lives Matter Movement actions in the City of Pittsburgh.

Participant 1 was exposed to racism as a child in her family. Her mother is white and her father is black. Participant 1 described the racial divide that occurred in her family as her grandmother did not welcome her half-black grandchildren into her life. It wasn’t until adulthood that Participant 1 and her sister chose to stand up for themselves against their racist family members who did not welcome them into their lives.

After Participant 1 described her experiences, she thanked me for putting myself in an uncomfortable position so that she should share her story. When I asked what symbol Participant 1 would like to use, she thought for a moment and then said she’d like to use a fist of a person of

color, clenched, resting on a table to symbolize her experience of racial discrimination (See Figure 1)

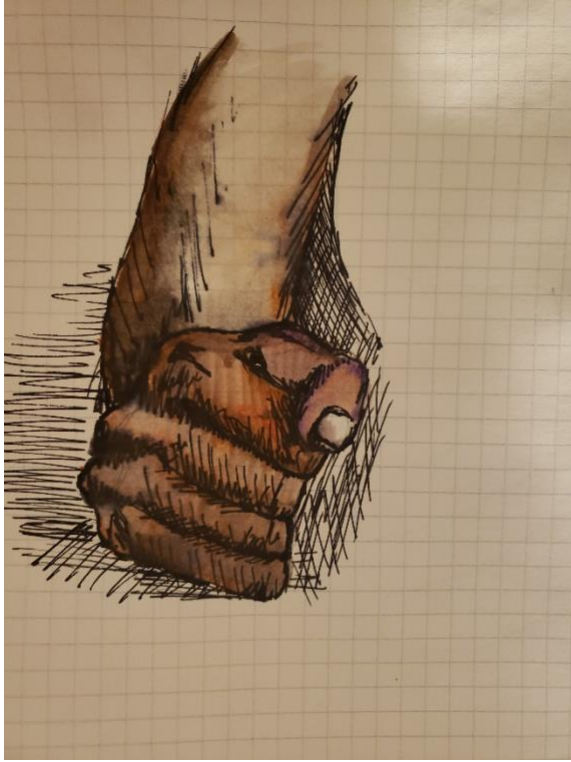


Figure 1. Illustration of symbol from first interview. Art Credit: Caroline Froebel (2020) 4" x 6".

Interview Two:

When Participant 2 first moved from New York City to Buffalo, New York, she was seeking a place to live. Participant 2 was already familiar with Upstate New York, she had lived in Fredonia and Jamestown, New York before moving to Buffalo. However, Jamestown and Fredonia were considered to be rural, college towns. She was looking forward to settling down in an atmosphere that was familiar to her, a city. Participant 2 began her search for an apartment on craigslist. She made sure to respond to potential roommates in hopes that she would find a place to live. Much to her surprise, Participant 2 described her shock when she read the response “Even though we’re on the West Side, no spics”. She began to laugh during the interview as she informed me that it had been years since she was called a “spic”. She never imagined that she would hear that name, especially not in 2010. Participant 2 was not successful in finding an

apartment to reside in while in Buffalo, New York, to obtain her Master's Degree. Instead, she had to move into a small, three-bedroom house in the city with five other girls who had already been living together. Participant 2 explained that she did not fit in the apartment with the other girls.

Participant 2 continued to explain that it wasn't until her friend from New York City moved to Buffalo and applied to the same apartments that she had applied to did she realize that she had experienced racial discrimination, a form of injustice. Participant 2 explained that her friend's name sounded more "white." While Participant 2 was declined every opportunity that she had applied for to live in Buffalo, her friend received calls to live there.

Participant 2 felt alone without any of her "minority" background friends. She described how overwhelmed she was attending graduate school and working two jobs. There was nobody that she could share her story with besides her biracial roommate. Her roommate, a biracial Puerto Rican friend was brought to tears. Participant 2 explained that her friend informed her that Buffalo was a welcoming place; but, it still had a while to go.

Participant 2 shared another experience that she had while attending school in Upstate New York. She described herself as a "fair-skinned minority, or a fair-skinned person of color." She explained that due to her light skin tone, she received a lot of push back from other "minority" communities. Although she identifies as a "minority," she has experienced the flip side of discrimination from her community.

As Diversity Chair at a university, Vice President of the Black Student Union, and the Events Coordinator for the Hispanic Student Union, she felt hostility from the members. She described students telling her that she couldn't possibly understand what it feels like to be a real

woman of color because she was “too white for that” and was not a “real” woman of color.

Participant 2 explained that students wanted to vote her out of her position.

Participant 2 said that she felt discriminated against. She said that she never thought she would experience this sort of discrimination since moving away from New York City.

Participant 2 said she wasn’t black enough, and she wasn’t Hispanic enough.

While attending college, she explained that she had been interviewed to be a Resident Assistant. To her surprise, she was rejected twice. Participant 2 was suspicious as to why she would be rejected twice after her interviews. She described her experience as a child, attending a private Catholic school. She said that as a student she received scholarships and was in the top 9 percent of her class. Participant 2 attended a Saturday School and was trained to become an expert in job etiquette. At 15 years old, she was prepared for interviews. She asked herself how she could be denied with so much experience. When she asked the Resident Advisor why she was denied the position, she was told that she had too much “oomph, I’m ghetto from the Bronx” in her personality. Participant 2 explained to me that when the Resident Advisor said this to her, she used a thick, accent to sound as though she were from the Bronx. Another reason that she was denied the position was because they didn’t think that Participant 2 would be respected by the students.

After attending school, Participant 2 entered the workforce with a Master’s Degree and five years of nonprofit work experience. She was denied the position that she had applied for and discovered that the position had been filled by two white females that had no work experience. She also learned that they were offered \$10,000 more for the same position she had applied. Participant 2 chose to work for the company under a different position, when she had learned of the discrimination that was against her, she quit after explaining to the company that they were

being racist. The company responded that racism was not their intention. She was told that the reason she was not receiving equal or greater pay to the two recent hires was that she did not work enough.

Participant 2 describes her journey as a battle from both sides. She explains that she does not feel accepted whether it be because she is a Hispanic Women, or because she is a Hispanic Woman trying to do right for her community; but, is not appreciated by her community due to the fairness of her skin. Participant 2 went on to say that she knows that she is privileged because of her pale skin; however, that doesn't mean that her experiences don't matter as a person of color.

Because of what is happening in current events, Participant 2 explains that injustice is becoming exposed. She admitted that she limits her exposure to social media due to the ignorant, racist comments made by her friends. She explained during the interview that for many years she felt down about herself. For several years she felt as though something was wrong with her based on the reactions from her peers. Participant 2 said that she felt like she was the scum of the earth and trash. It wasn't until she was older than she realized this negative view of herself was wrong; her existence is not the problem.

When I asked what symbol Participant 2 would like to use, she said that she would like to use the coqui frog, a national symbol of Puerto Rico (Pethick, 2018). Legend says that a beautiful goddess fell in love with Coqui, the chef's son. He was taken away by an evil being and the goddess would never see him again. The goddess could not live without her coqui, so she created a tiny frog and called him "co-kee, co-kee". The coqui frog is native to Puerto Rico and is loud and vocal (Pethick, 2018). Participant 2 explained that she would like to use the traditional coqui symbol, but urbanize it to reflect herself, a native of New York City. We

discussed incorporating graffiti designs into the inside of the coqui frog to reflect her. I chose to incorporate the Puerto Rican flag to represent Participant 2's nationality as well as colorful, blocky designs that represent the style of street art (See Figure 2)



Figure 2. Illustration of symbol from second interview. Art Credit: Caroline Froebel (2020) 3" x 5".

Interview Three:

Participant 3 identifies himself as an Asian male. He described his experience of discrimination occurring during his Intern Year as a Medical Doctor. He recalled an experience with a patient's daughter. She was to receive information about her father's health status from the group of Asian doctors but refused to listen to anything they would say. She stopped them from speaking by saying "I don't interact with people like you." Participant 3 described the woman as very disrespectful towards himself and the other medical professionals. The patient's daughter explained that she didn't trust any of the doctors, (not even the Senior Resident who had the most experience in the field) because they were Asian.

To Participant 3's dismay, the woman would only listen to and look at the white, male medical student who had been in the room during their rounds while they were explaining to the

woman the status of her father's health. Patient 3 described how awkward he felt as the woman refused to face any of the doctors or make eye contact. Although he was surprised and felt awkward, he said that he was not offended. He said that the experience was some-what comical and ridiculous to witness. His main concern was for the Senior Resident, who he felt did not deserve to be disrespected with all of her experience and knowledge as a medical professional.

When we discussed the symbol that would represent his experience, we decided to incorporate the Aesculapius symbol² into his design for the quilt. The staff, which is incorporated in the Aesculapius symbol, would be broken in half, representing the broken trust between the patient's daughter and the medical professionals due to her ignorance (See Figure 3).

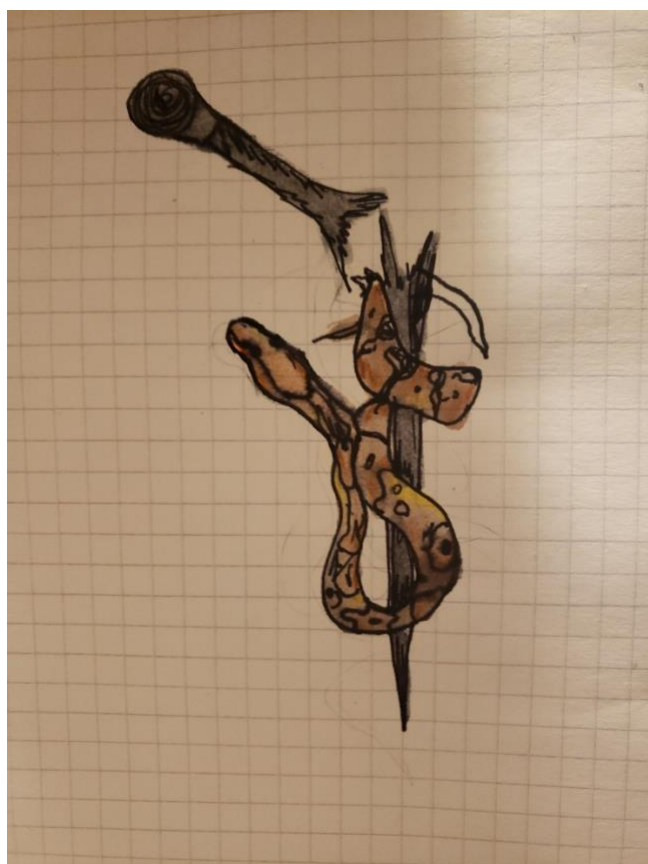


Figure 3. Illustration of symbol from third interview. Art Credit: Caroline Froebel (2020) 4" x 2".

² Aesculapius is the Roman name for the Greek healing god Asklepios (Oberhelman, 2012).

Interview Four:

Participant 4 identifies herself as a cis-gendered Asian female. She explained to me that she has experienced discrimination based on her race as well as her gender while working as a Medical Doctor.

She began to explain the common experiences that she would face while working with predominantly older, white male patients. Participant 4 is an United States Citizen who is of Vietnamese descent. Her patients often assume based on her appearance that she is not a United States born citizen. She is greeted with remarks such as “Your English is so good! How long have you been here?” Participant 4 explained that she is usually surprised by how forward her patients are with their assumptions; she has found herself awestruck and does not know how to respond to the patient.

Participant 4 described several other experiences that she has had with patients who have insulted her, such as “You look very pretty for a Vietnamese person.” She described her feelings of anger when the patient commented on her appearance. However, her anger reminded her that she must maintain professionalism and not let the rude comment get to her. She also described another interaction when a patient asked “what kind of Asian do you have in your blood?” Instead of responding seriously, Participant 4 chose to respond sarcastically and told the man her blood type instead of her racial/ethnic heritage.

Participant 4 explained to me during her interview that ignorant comments such as the aforementioned undercut her confidence as a health provider, not only when she experiences racial discrimination, but also when she experiences gender discrimination. She has learned as a female medical doctor that sometimes her role is not recognized or appreciated. It is not uncommon for Participant 4 to be asked where the doctor is, or for patients to assume that she is

a nurse. She explained that the experiences that she has faced are challenging, and it is tough to not let her experiences get to her.

When we discussed the symbol that would best represent Participant 4's experiences as a female, Vietnamese, medical professional, we decided to incorporate the Vietnamese Flag morphing into the "United States" Flag as it waves in the wind. Participant 4 is proud of her heritage but desires to be recognized as the "American Citizen" that she is (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Illustration of symbol from fourth interview. Art Credit: Caroline Froebel (2020) 5" x 3".

Interview Analysis

Since the beginning of my project I have asked myself the question, "how can I shine a light on social injustices to bring awareness to others?" Through this question, my research questions arose as outlined in the "Role of the Researcher" section. As I reflect on the

conversations that I had with survivors of discrimination, I learned many different things. For example, I learned that a majority of the people that I had interviewed expressed that it was challenging to maintain professionalism when they felt they were being disrespected and insulted during their encounters with racial and gender discrimination. They described the overwhelming feeling of frustration and irritation when patients or acquaintances became offensive, therefore inhibiting their full potential in the workplace. I also learned that the participants experienced feelings of lower self-esteem when they had experienced discrimination, and for some it took several years before they were able to rebuild their self-esteem and feel worthy again. Lastly, I learned that it did not matter when their experience of discrimination occurred, whether it was a recent occurrence or something that had happened years ago, the participants indicated that their experiences of injustice still affects them to this day.

I have been fortunate to connect with survivors of discrimination. Through this experience, I have been able to empathize with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds while also developing a greater understanding of how I can use this experience and apply it to my teaching. I can understand how deeply a person is affected by an experience of discrimination and that it can alter not only the way they interact with others in their personal and professional lives but it also negatively affects how a person views themselves. As an educator, I will strive to create an environment where students will not feel as though they are at an unfair advantage due to their race, gender, or sexuality. Through my teaching, I will be mindful of student and teacher interactions as well as interactions between students to prevent the spread of future injustices. I will inspire students to be mindful of each other as to not offend or discriminate against their peers.

Analyses of the Symbols

Participants' responses to the interviews provided me with insight into their experiences of discrimination. As I reviewed the notes and listened to the recordings of interviews between myself and the participants, I was able to actively listen to the tone of their voices and decipher the emotions that they had felt as they described their experiences. I was able to note the similarities and differences between participants as they planned and organized the symbols in which they believed would accurately depict their personal experiences of discrimination. Patterns evolved in the data collection and I was able to identify similarities between symbols such as including their ethnic backgrounds as a flag or native animal into their symbol design. Other participants recommended including smaller details such as graffiti to represent their urban background or by incorporating details like the color of their skin into their symbol.

As you will see in Figure 1, the participant chose a tightly clenched fist resting on a surface as her symbol. Participant 1 explained that she wanted the hand to be of color, like her own hand. There was no hesitation while Participant 1 developed her symbol, she knew exactly what it should look like as soon as I had asked how she would like to represent herself in her symbol. I used fine, dark lines to represent a swiftly clenched hand. I incorporated warm, brown tones of color to represent Participant 1's skin tone as well.

Figure 2 represents the coqui, a native frog of Puerto Rico. At first glance it may be identified as a frog, however it contains personalized details to represent Participant 2 that go beyond the natural, green pigment of the frog. I incorporated the waving Puerto Rican flag flying across its back followed by bold, black lines and bright colors to represent the street art which Participant 2 identifies with as a person who grew up surrounded by the street art in New York City.

Participant 3 and I collaborated on the development of Figure 3. Since the experiences that he shared were primarily based in hospital settings as a medical professional, I wanted to incorporate a symbol that could be recognized by an audience as medically related. I used the Aesculapius, which symbolizes healing. Participant 3 felt that the trust between patient and doctor was broken when his medical expertise was not received due to his appearance as an Asian male. The staff is visibly broken in half while the snake struggles to climb the shattered end.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the symbol represents the “American flag” morphing into the Vietnamese flag as it waves in motion. Participant 4 described her constant frustration as patients assumed that she was not an “United States of America” born citizen based on her appearance. Her symbol represents her status as an “American” who can also be prideful of her heritage as a Vietnamese woman. I also incorporated the same Aesculapius symbol into the staff of the flag to represent her medical background, which she expressed is a major part of her identity, and what she wishes was recognized by her patients.

Studio Process

My studio process includes configuring a quilt design that is inspired by the experiences collected through my interviews and the symbols that have been carefully devised by survivors of discrimination. My process exposes various injustices that have occurred in different people’s lives and presents their experiences as a visual narrative in the quilt-making process. In both the fashioning of the symbols and incorporating them on a piece of fabric, I am producing a visual narrative.

The sketches that I have drawn represent a collaboration of racial and gender injustices that have occurred in people’s lives. Before I planned the arrangement of the symbols on the

quilt, I decided to focus on the individual symbols first. I drew the symbols on separate sheets of paper before designing the quilt on graph paper. I focused on fine details that I discussed during the interview with the participants. It was important for me to address their experiences and the emotions that survivors had and incorporate them into their symbols. With a total of four symbols, I chose to create a quilt that incorporates all of the symbols in the center of the quilt, with a traditional quilt border around the entire design. I placed the symbols in the center of the quilt to represent the unity of the survivors and their desire to share their stories with a viewer. The perimeter of the quilt represents the knowledge that I have gained during this research project. The linked chains on the border of the quilt represent both the link between myself and the survivors and the links of oppression bound within their discriminatory experiences on which I intended to shine a light (see Figure 5). I hope that by including symbols of chains around the perimeter of the design, I am exposing experiences of discrimination and allowing for my participants and other survivors of discrimination to feel as though they are breaking through the chains of injustice. As it is stated in the title of my research, I am shining a light on social injustice. I include a burst of light to shine behind and beyond the symbols in the background so that they are brought out beyond the darkness for all to see.

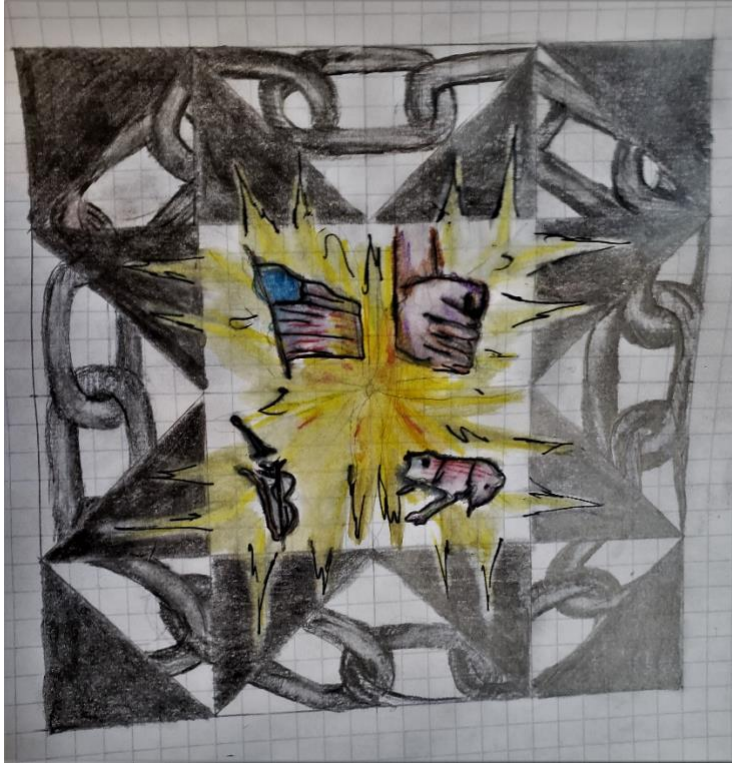


Figure 5. Illustration of symbol from first interview. Art Credit: Caroline Froebel (2020) 4" x 4".

Concluding Statement

Through my arts-based research project, I have shed light on the darkness of discrimination and social injustice through symbolic illustrations representing my research participants' personal experiences. This project has allowed me to immerse myself in experiences that I had been unfamiliar with before this research project. Moreover, I was able to develop relationships with people who were willing to share their personal stories of discrimination with me. Not only have I grown as a person in society, whose senses have heightened as I learned about the social injustices that occur all around me, I have also grown as an educator.

As an educator, it is my duty to bring this knowledge to the forefront of my classroom. People deserve to live in a socially justice world. I believe addressing this idea in the classroom to impressionable students is the first step to bringing change to our world. I believe in the power of numbers. It is my intention to also inspire more educators like myself to conduct research and bring awareness of injustice into their classrooms.

Just as women in history hundreds of years ago recorded their stories using quilts, my quilt will lend a voice to survivors of social injustice in the same fashion. Moreover, my intention for this arts-based research is to leave a meaningful impression on its viewers while also increasing my awareness of the flaws that exist in society. Through narration and design, I strived to bring strangers together to empathize with one another. I am responsible for taking on a role as an agent of change to inspire others to fight injustice and bring change to the world.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. Have you ever experienced discrimination because of race, gender, or sexuality?
2. What was your experience?
3. Where did you experience discrimination?
4. When did you experience discrimination?
5. How did you respond to the experience?
6. Describe how the experience made you feel. Describe the consequences of the experience.
7. If you could represent your experience of discrimination with a symbol, what would you use?
8. Why would you use this symbol?

APPENDIX B: IRB Approval Application



PennState

Office for Research Protections

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EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

Date: October 23, 2020

From: Michelle Covert,

To: Caroline Froebel

Type of Submission:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	QUILTED NARRATIVES SHINING LIGHT ON SOCIAL INJUSTICES IN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS
Principal Investigator:	Caroline Froebel
Study ID:	STUDY00016273
Submission ID:	STUDY00016273
Funding:	Not Applicable
Documents Approved:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRP-591 Protocol for Human Subject Research (2), Category: IRB Protocol • Questionnaire (1), Category: Data Collection Instrument

The Office for Research Protections determined that the proposed activity, as described in the above-referenced submission, does not require formal IRB review because the research met the criteria for exempt research according to the policies of this institution and the provisions of applicable federal regulations.

Continuing Progress Reports are **not** required for exempt research. Record of this research determined to be exempt will be maintained for five years from the date of this notification. If your research will continue beyond five years, please contact the Office for Research Protections closer to the determination end date.

Changes to exempt research only need to be submitted to the Office for Research Protections in limited circumstances described in the below-referenced Investigator Manual. If changes are being considered and there are questions about whether IRB review is needed, please contact the Office for Research Protections.

Penn State researchers are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual ([HRP-103](#)), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within CATS IRB (<http://irb.psu.edu>).

This correspondence should be maintained with your records.

We would like to know how the IRB Program can better serve you.
Please fill out our survey; it should take about a minute: <https://www.research.psu.edu/irb/feedback>.

ID27

Appendix C: Recruitment Script

Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research

QUILTED NARRATIVES SHINING LIGHT ON SOCIAL INJUSTICES IN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS: A SURVEY

Date: _____

Dear _____,

I invite you to participate in a research study conducted by myself, Caroline Froebel, an M.P.S Candidate in Art Education at the Pennsylvania State University. My committee chair is Dr. Wanda B. Knight, Associate Professor of Art Education, African American Studies, and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies and my major field member is Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd, Professor of Art Education & Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies.

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of social and racial injustice through stories from survivors who have been denied opportunities that every human being deserves. You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a person who has experienced racial, gender or sexuality discrimination or a combination of these forms of oppression. If you agree to be part of this study, I will ask you to respond via telephone to a series of questions that take approximately 20 minutes to answer. The questionnaire will be an open survey. Your identity will be protected and your responses will be kept confidential between me and my research committee.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to be part of this research, you may discontinue participation at any time and refrain from answering any survey questions that you do not wish to answer. Your completion of the questionnaire through phone call indicates your consent to participate in this study. Feel free to contact me at cgf43@psu.edu or 716-912-5082 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Caroline Froebel