About TRiO Programs

TRiO refers to six programs funded by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The original Title IV TRiO programs are Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services. Even though more programs were added to the grant, the name TRiO has been retained. The additional programs include Educational Opportunity Centers, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and a training program for TRiO staff. In general, TRiO programs are focused on providing educational opportunities to first-generation college students who come from low-income families and students with disabilities.

About Ronald E. McNair

Ronald Erwin McNair was born October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina. He attended North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, where he graduated magna cum laude in 1971 with a Bachelor of Science in physics. He continued his education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning his PhD in 1976. He went on to become a recognized expert in the field of laser technology with the Hughes Laboratory. In 1978, McNair realized his dream of becoming an astronaut. Selected from a pool of 10,000 applicants for the space shuttle program, McNair became the second African American to fly in space. After his death aboard the space shuttle Challenger in 1986, Congress approved funding for the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program, which is dedicated to the support and promotion of the high standards of achievement exemplified by McNair. Those who knew McNair characterized him as fearless, determined, and accustomed to applying all available resources to resolving any problem he faced.

The Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program State University of New York College at Brockport

Designed for first-generation and low income students as well as students from groups underrepresented at the doctoral level, the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program at SUNY College at Brockport encourages talented students to pursue a doctoral degree.

The program promotes graduate studies by providing participants with seminars and workshops germane to the pursuit of graduate education, a mentored summer research experience, and opportunities to present this research at professional conferences.
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Dear Readers:

I am pleased to introduce you to the 11th volume of the Ronald E. McNair Summer Research Journal. This journal is a compilation of the work our scholars complete each summer as they learn to conduct research in their chosen field.

Under the guidance of dedicated faculty members, McNair scholars design and implement projects that teach them the fundamentals of creating and using knowledge, and provides them with their first taste of the graduate and professional world they are preparing to enter.

The Summer Research Program takes our students beyond the average undergraduate experience, setting them apart from their peers as it elevates their education to a level not usually available to students pursuing a bachelor’s degree. I am sincerely grateful to the 45 faculty members who invest so much of themselves in moving our students forward. The expertise and encouragement they provide is critical to the success of our McNair scholars, not only during their undergraduate years, but most importantly when they enter the competitive world of graduate school. The fact that 168 of our 465 McNair alumni have successfully earned master’s degrees, 15 JD’s, three MD’s, and 24 doctoral degrees is a tribute to the quality of the work our mentors expect and elicit from their students. Those involved in nurturing our future professionals in this manner deserve to be highly recommended.

I look forward to seeing our scholars enter the ranks of academia and continue the process of personally investing in future generations, passing on what they have received through the dedication of our mentors, program staff and campus community.

Acknowledgements

The McNair staff would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. John Halstead, Dr. Michael Fox, and Dr. Susan Stites-Doe who have assisted in strengthening our program this past year. Although the Office of Academic Affairs administers the program, the support base represents a university-wide commitment to achieving our program goals. The United States Department of Education, other TRIO Programs, the Research Foundation and the entire institution collectively lend their efforts to the program’s success.
This research aims to discover differences on college students’ expectations of instructor’s immediacy, clarity, and confirmation. The project focuses on a cross-cultural educational study. This study is important due to the growing diversity in the classroom atmosphere. Teachers must understand the cultural dynamics in the classroom as well as the dynamics of other cultures in order to make the proper accommodations. Since there many Hispanic students in the United States and there is easy access to a Hispanic university, this research project seeks to understand how American and Hispanic students’ expectations of instructors differ.

The three basic elements being explored in this research are teacher immediacy, clarity, and confirmation. According to Ann Bainbridge Frymier and Benjamin Weser, authors of “The Role of Student Predispositions on Student Expectations for Instructor Communication Behavior,” immediacy is defined as the perception of physical or psychological closeness. We have a sense of how close others are to us based on expressions of nonverbal behavior. The next element is clarity, which is the instructor’s ability to present knowledge in a way that the student can understand. Clarity is the extent to which the student receives the exact intended meaning of the message the instructor wishes to convey. The last element of this research study is confirmation. Confirmation is the student’s view of the instructor’s acknowledgement of their presence and comfort levels of nonverbal behavior used by the instructor. For example, a confirming instructor would answer a student’s question enthusiastically and be sure the question was answered adequately whereas a disconfirming instructor would give an insignificant response and move on the next topic quickly.

To better understand the differences between the American and Hispanic educational cultures, a survey will be administered to classrooms at SUNY Brockport through Dr. Joseph Chesebro, Communication Department Chair, and at the Universidad de Piura through Guillermo Cangahuala Allain, Director of the Lima Campus. The results will then be analyzed using a variety of statistical methods.

The results will address the question on how American and Hispanic students differ in terms of their expectations of their instructor’s immediacy, clarity, and confirmation. It is anticipated that this research study will encourage other cross-cultural studies because it will allow teachers to better understand and reveal areas in which the American and Hispanic system can benefit from one another. We must continue other cross-cultural studies as well because in our diverse society, we are constantly interacting with each other. Therefore it is important to be aware of the differences and similarities among the American culture and the variety of other cultures in the United States. This research study will be extremely useful for teachers working in classrooms of diverse cultures.
For nineteen centuries Jewish people have prayed to be permitted to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple. In 1948 the United Nations voted to partition Palestine. Thus the State of Israel was resurrected from a 1,900 year old tomb. Since 1948, multitudes of Jewish persons have moved to Israel. Most new arrivals in Israel came from either Eastern Europe, or the region of the former Soviet Union. Another large population shift to Israel occurred during 1948-1949 when many Islamic countries expelled their Jewish communities. Israeli government statistics, however, indicate that only tiny percentages have moved from the USA. World Jewry population numbers about 13 million in 2003. Five million now live in Israel while about six million still live in the United States. Why do Jewish-Americans choose to stay when so many others from other countries have immigrated in such massive numbers?

This research aims to understand the reasons Jewish-Americans give in choosing to remain in the greater Rochester Area. Strategically placed questionnaires in Monroe County will help identify the characteristics common to those choosing not to immigrate. Questions will include demographic data. Zip codes will be used to locate respondents geographically while maintaining anonymity. Respondents may also choose from a list of possible reasons for choosing not to immigrate. The survey instruments will be available at the Jewish Community Federation, the Jewish Community Center, and other sites so as to broaden the variability of the population sample. Originally, the study was to be completed in August.

Changes in this research project were necessitated by the Hezbollah missile strikes on Israel cities in the summer of 2006. First, the study was upgraded by the SUNY Brockport Institutional Research Board due to the increased possibility that asking people about moving to Israel during the missile strikes would entail greater risk than asking the same questions during relatively peaceful times.

The data from the survey will be examined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The full results of this research will be presented at the State University of New York at Brockport’s Scholar’s Day 2007. The research will also be presented at the McNair National Undergraduate Research Conference to be held at the University of Maryland, College Park, in March of 2007. Statistical results are expected to indicate that Jewish persons in the greater Rochester metropolitan area choose to remain here for a number of reasons. Such reasons may include: maintaining greater physical safety; remaining in homes near to extended family; keeping access to better job and career prospects; and continuing to live in a community where English is the primary language. The results of this statistical analysis of the survey data will delineate a more accurate view into how some Jewish-Americans view life in the greater Rochester metropolitan area.

What Do Jewish People in Monroe County Think about Moving to Israel?
Understanding how manipulating task parameters affects behavior is critical for designing studies to assess the effects of pharmacological and toxicological agents in humans. For example, the use of a combination of contingencies following behavior such as punishing incorrect responses and reinforcing correct responses enhances task performance to greater degree than when either contingency is used alone. Time outs following an incorrect response are widely used in animal research, but their applicability in human research has not been extensively explored.

In the current study, sixty-four participants (four groups of sixteen participants each) between eighteen and twenty-one years of age were required to master a color shape discrimination task. Before the task participants were shown an instructional video on a television monitor on how to play the game. The video did not reveal the correct response for any of the color shape stimuli. At the beginning of a trial one of eight stimuli (a white X on a blue background, a white horizontal bar on a green background, a white triangle on a red background, a white plus sign on a yellow background, a white circle on a green background, a red background, a white square on a blue background, or a white vertical bar on a yellow background) was presented on a center press-plate. After the participant pressed the center press-plate, the stimulus was darkened and the two side press-plates were illuminated white. For half of the stimuli the right press-plate was the correct response, and for the other half the left was correct. Correct responses were reinforced with a nickel and incorrect responses were punished with a timeout, (0, 5, 10, or 20 seconds depending upon group assignment).

The results of this study indicate that time out following incorrect responses enhanced acquisition on this visual discrimination task; however, the effectiveness was dependent upon the duration of the time out. Specifically, the 10 and 20 second time out groups demonstrated significantly enhanced acquisition for most of the blocks later in the session. In addition, more participants from the 10 and 20 second time out groups exhibited learning on this task earlier in the session than in the other time out groups and the three groups with longer time out durations (5, 10, and 20 second) had more participant who learned the task compared to the 0 second time out group by the end of the session. This is particularly interesting given that all of the participants received a nickel for each correct response. Response latencies for all groups decreased at about the same rate across the session.

An implication of this study is that time outs do affect task acquisition in humans and may have relevance for tasks in which the effects of pharmacological and toxicological agents are studied. Furthermore maximizing contingencies in human research can increases both the generalizability to animal research and the utility of animal models in human research.

The Effects of Timeouts on Task Acquisition in Adults
Introduction

In 2003, approximately 1.3 million Americans were diagnosed with invasive cancer. Racial/ethnic minorities accounted for a disproportionate number of these cancers. For example, compared to whites, African Americans had a 10 percent higher incidence rate and a 30 percent higher death rate from all cancers combined. It was estimated that 132,700 new cases of cancer and 63,100 deaths occurred among African Americans in the year 2003. Colorectal cancer in African American males was the third most common cancer and cause of cancer death. In 2003, the incidence rate for colorectal cancer among African American males was 69.0 compared to 65.0 among white American males and the mortality rate for African American males was 34.4 compared to 25.8 among white Americans. African Americans carried the highest cancer burden among US racial and ethnic groups.

Method

The purposes of this study were to: (1) assess the possible reasons why African Americans have higher rates of colorectal cancer; (2) review the literature and conduct interviews with experts in the field on colorectal cancer prevention and treatment to establish ideas on how to increase screening rates for middle-age African American males; and (3) apply the constructs of the Social Cognitive Theory to create an educational plan aimed at increasing colorectal cancer screening rates among African American males.

Results

Results of this study demonstrated that health care systems presented barriers to African American males that contributed to low rates of colorectal cancer screening behaviors. For example, complicated insurance procedures, difficulty in accessing health facilities, lack of health promotion and disease prevention activities, difficulty in procuring appointments, high cost of health care and poor quality of care negatively affected screening behaviors among African Americans. In addition, lifestyle risk factors such poor diets and lack of exercise contributed to higher rates of cancer and a greater need for screening.

In response to these problems, this study developed a plan to increase colorectal cancer screening rates among African American males by addressing personal knowledge and beliefs that influence decisions to seek cancer screening. Using the Social Cognitive Theory as a theoretical framework, this study recommended that an educational program designed to increase screening rates among African American males should include strategies that address symbolism, forethought, and vicarious learning in the at-risk population. For example, the method symbolism was used to help African American males to value and visualize cancer screening as significant behavior to perform in their lives.

Conclusion

African American males have higher rates of colorectal cancer and lower rates of cancer screening behaviors. Characteristics of health care systems and individual beliefs have negatively influence behaviors to seek colorectal cancer among African American males. Educational interventions that increase awareness of screening and address behavioral constructs such as symbolism should increase the intent to seek screening. Also, changing unhealthy life style should reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.
Few colleges address transfer students’ needs. In fact, students’ transitioning from one college environment to another has only been vaguely studied. Most transfer students underestimate the difficulties encountered during their transitional process, resulting in ‘transfer shock.’ This study addresses the aforementioned concerns by exploring transfer students at SUNY Brockport and their experiences with ‘transfer shock.’ For this study, students agreeing or disagreeing with the following statement measured transfer shock: The College provides sufficient help for a smooth transition to a four-year college.

A non-random sample of 253 students responded to a 23-item survey. Surprisingly, 49% (n=124) were transfer students. Other characteristics defined the sample as predominantly female (63%), Caucasian (80%), young adults (M = 23 years; 18-52 age range), full-time students (93%), worked part-time (52%; 35% were not employed), and lived off campus (57%). Only 20% of the sample had any affiliations with supportive services (i.e. McNair, C-STEP, SSSP, & EOP).

Once transfer status was considered, there were more males among transfer students (TS) than native students (NS) (43% and 33%, respectively). Approximately 81% of both TS and NS were Caucasians. More NS (96%) were 24 years old or younger compared to TS (61%). Although 91% of both TS and NS were full-time students, more NS worked part-time (61%) while more TS worked either full-time (18%) or not at all (39%). A 69% of TS lived off campus while slightly more than half of NS lived on-campus. Meanwhile, 24% of TS were affiliated with support services compared to only 14% of NS.

In reference to transfer shock, 80% of the respondents agreed that the college provided a smooth transition. However, 27% of TS disagreed (in shocked) compared to only 14% of NS. A closer look at those transfer students that were in shock (TS-S) in comparison to natives students in shock (NS-S) and the general sample in shock (GS-S), revealed that TS-S had more females (33%), more ethnic minorities (29%), a higher age mean (M = 25.3), a higher full-time course load (28%), a greater unemployment rate (35.4%), and affiliated more with supportive services (29%) than the NS-S and GS-S students. Unexpectedly, more TS-S lived on campus (29%) compared to NS-S (12%) and GS-S (17%).

Approximately 90% of the respondents had positive experiences with their Brockport e-mail accounts or the Angel system. At least 16% of TS did not have a positive experience compared to 5% of NS. Once transfer shock was factored in, 30% TS-S had difficulties with both emails and Angel systems compared to less than 5% of NS-S.

Transfer students, a diverse group, do reach out to supportive services. It is not clear however, if these services are designed with TS in mind. These programs should benefit from their captured audience and listen to their stories through focus group sessions. Support services deliverers must acknowledge their key position and voice TS concerns to college administrators. In fact, support services should be recognized as the ‘institutional buffers’ to our TS in shock.
My long term goal is to be a medical examiner. Summer research allowed me to learn and practice laboratory techniques that can be used in biology research laboratories everywhere. The opportunity to work full time and side-by-side with experienced scientists gave a new perspective on the structure and happenings of a research laboratory. Working on a basic research project allowed me to plan and execute original experiments. When experiments failed I learned to troubleshoot, revise, and repeat the experiment.

Transcription factors regulate gene expression in response to environmental stimuli, allowing the organism to adapt. Serum response factor (SRF) is a transcription factor that influences the growth and differentiation of skeletal, cardiac, and smooth muscle cells. The zebrafish, Danio rerio, is a vertebrate model organism that is genetically similar to humans, and is developing into an important model system for human disease. SRF has been identified in zebrafish, but expression was reported to be restricted to skeletal muscle. This result contrasts with SRF expression in humans. It is possible that the zebrafish SRF ortholog is also expressed in cardiac and smooth muscle similar to the mouse. It is also possible that a second zebrafish SRF ortholog is expressed in cardiac and smooth muscles because the zebrafish genome contains many duplicated mammalian genes. An understanding of the role for SRF in zebrafish may provide important clues to better understand the role of SRF and human skeletal, cardiac, and smooth muscle development.

Experiments were performed to specifically test for SRF expression in zebrafish cardiac muscle and smooth muscle using immunohistochemical techniques. Using bioinformatic techniques a second potential SRF gene (SRF2) was identified from nucleotide sequences determined by the zebrafish genome project. The Central Dogma of biology states that DNA is transcribed into messenger RNA (mRNA) which is translated into protein. Therefore experiments were performed to determine the presence of mRNA coding for SRF1 and SRF2 and for SRF protein. Polymerase chain reaction successfully amplified the predicted sequence for the SRF2 gene from zebrafish tissues. These results identified a second SRF ortholog, SRF2 expressed in the zebrafish. SRF1 expression at the protein level was observed in adult zebrafish skeletal, cardiac, and smooth muscle from gastrointestinal and vascular tissues.

These data are consistent with the hypothesis that SRF influences growth and differentiation in cardiac and smooth muscles. A second SRF gene was identified, but the function and expression pattern were not explored. Paralogues typically have restricted function when compared to the original gene. For example, SRF1 and SRF2 may be expressed at different time points during development, at different levels in different tissues, or may activate different genes. In-situ hybridization experiments are planned to determine tissue expression patterns for each SRF gene as a first step towards understanding their function in this teleost.
Complementary and Alternative Medicine [CAM] is on the rise in the United States and has the potential to significantly impact the future of conventional medicine. Primary care physicians [PCP] have to decide whether to use only conventional medicine, support the use of CAM without taking an active role, or practice integrated medicine [IM], the combination of conventional medicine and CAM, coordinated by a PCP to care for an individual’s physical, emotional and spiritual health.

This study evaluates the origins and current status of CAM and traditional medicine, their advantages and disadvantages, and patterns of usage. The study uses a comprehensive literature review to examine whether or not PCP’s are currently providing their patients with IM and why.

CAM has been practiced for thousands of years in Asia. In the U.S., CAM practices are divided into five domains: alternative medical systems, mind body interventions, biological based therapies, manipulative and body based methods, and energy therapies. CAM emphasizes the study of all aspects of a person’s health, including their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and nutritional health, where balance of all components is necessary for overall wellness.

Conventional medicine focuses primarily on the physical cause of an illness in contrast to CAM’s whole body approach. Although this form of medicine has only been practiced for a few hundred years, the empirical research-based approach to treatment, safety and effectiveness regulations, and licensing requirements have made it widely accepted as the primary means of medical care in the U.S.

Physicians practicing IM report that they do so because there are distinct benefits to using CAM, they are responding to a high demand by patients, or they have exhausted all of the options within traditional medicine. Physicians are most willing to refer patients to massage therapy, chiropractic care and acupuncture because evidence-based research supports their effectiveness and safety. Medical universities are aware that CAM has become more prominent and have incorporated CAM courses into their curriculum; As a result, younger physicians are more likely to practice IM.

PCPs who do not refer their patients to CAM report that there is no evidence to support the effectiveness, there are more risks than benefits, or they are not experts in CAM therefore do not want to be held liable for their referral. Most physicians agree that the types of CAM of greatest concern are the biological-based therapies not regulated by the FDA.

Indications are that IM can be beneficial and is practiced with greater frequency than in the past. However, to ensure safety and more frequent and effective use recommendations include: Educating patients on the importance of disclosing all information regarding CAM to their PCP; familiarizing PCPs with CAM research and highlighting the significance of CAM courses available at medical institutions; and making structural changes within CAM disciplines such as developing extensive research, providing evidence of safety and effectiveness, and requiring licensing of their practitioners. The demand for CAM continues to increase and with it the need for IM which can help to ensure the safety and best health outcomes for patients.
People’s beliefs and attitudes about themselves and others are shaped and constrained by the multiple ideologies concerning race and racism that circulate in our society. It is through education that we can ensure that those beliefs and attitudes are based on truth and not preconceived stereotypes or master myths, which are perpetuated in our society. The legacy of slavery has had fundamental affects on this nation; many of those effects are invisible to those in a position of privilege. White privilege and passive racism are ideas that few people use in their discussions concerning the implications of race on the classroom, nevertheless are of great importance. Unfortunately, in American society we do not engage in enough constructive discourse concerning race related issues and problems in the classroom. Without having an open forum for these types of discussions, individuals may unknowingly perpetuate passive racism. This is especially significant to the classroom due to the fact that sixty percent of the nation’s elementary and secondary teachers come from white middle class backgrounds, while the student demographics are far more diverse.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to uncover the beliefs and attitudes of SUNY Brockport undergraduate pre-service teachers regarding race, racism, white privilege, passive racism, and the implications of those beliefs on children, families, and teachers. The hypothesis of this study is that white pre-service teachers who work with minority students are not aware of subconscious actions that may be racist or biased in nature.

The data will be derived from qualitative research as well as a literature review. A small number of students will be selected from the SUNY Brockport Teacher Certification Program to participate in this investigation by completing an anonymous questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section consists of demographic information such as age, gender, education, financial status, and sex. This first section was designed specifically to analyze the data in terms of demographic characteristics. The second section consists of questions pertaining to a short vignette which students will view prior to answering questions. This second section was developed in order to receive authentic responses from white pre-service teachers concerning the implications of race in the classroom.

Through this study I expect to find that the pre-service teachers will be unaware of the role that race plays in the classroom. I expect that many of the participants will be unfamiliar with terms such as passive racism and white privilege. I hope participants will be made aware of ideas that they may not have given thought to prior to this study. I also hope to find that the participants will embrace this knowledge and will apply it to their experiences in the classroom.
Our society has recognized English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies among other academic school subjects, as the most important ones within the education system. Given their relevance, parents, teachers, and administrators agree that these school subjects are not only essential in a school setting but should also be mandatory. On the other hand, Physical Education (PE) lacks recognition, support, and attention in both the education system and society at large. Some individuals do value PE, yet the majority does not acknowledge the importance of this school subject by allowing budget cuts and mocking PE as an illegitimate school subject. Despite its neglect, PE is very important in order to offer students a complete education. Society should understand the significance and value of PE.

The purpose of this research is therefore to enlighten society on the significant impact that PE has for today’s youth and prove why it deserves the same recognition and attention that the four major subjects enjoy. A comprehensive literature review revealed that PE develops a healthy lifestyle, constructs social interactions between students, and helps our youth experience life span involvement by allowing them to learn an activity or sport that they will enjoy and use everyday to improve their overall health. PE also helps students become aware of health risk factors that include inactivity which may lead to heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stress, smoking or drug abuse.

The PE curriculum is established through the three major domains of behavior in a movement setting: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The cognitive domain is learned with instilling knowledge and understanding of rules, concepts, and strategies. The affective domain teaches students to work as part of a team to accomplish goals cooperatively. The psychomotor domain promotes physical fitness and develops motor skills. Research has shown that through these domains today’s youth gain the fundamentals required to maintain or improve a healthy lifestyle.

In the United States, each state has different requirements regarding the duration of PE within a school year. New York State requires students from kindergarten to third grade to have daily PE. Conversely, those in seventh through twelfth grade are required to have PE only three days a week for one semester and two days a week for the following semester during a school year. Illinois is the only state that requires all grade levels to participate in daily PE. Hopefully, in the near future, all states will consider requiring daily PE as Illinois has already implemented to further reinforce overall wellness and life long enjoyment in physical activity.

Investigating the relevance of PE as a school subject is not intended simply to advertise it, but rather to present this school subject as an important topic that improves the overall education of our youth. PE allows our youth to learn how to exercise, acquire the fundamentals of sports, and make positive nutrition choices among other important goals. Although more recognition and support is given to the four major school subjects in our education field, the same acknowledgment should be given to PE so students can fully experience all the education system has to offer.
Multilingualism involves the ability to use several languages. This ability or gift, as some view it, has been sought after by people of various ethnicities and cultures, and for a multitude of reasons. Yet, attaining it is not necessarily a simple undertaking. Some diligent individuals have accomplished this goal by means of many university level courses. Others have acquired new languages by being immersed in a culture in which a different language is spoken. Those who have benefited most have been exposed to both of these aspects of language acquisition. The Jamaican population living in Costa Rica is an example of such accomplishment. This study addresses the issue of language education and the means by which it is best presented and attained.

This research was conducted in Limón, Costa Rica. Limón is known for its large Jamaican population, a culture which exists in contrast to the mainstream culture of Costa Rica. The specific target area used for the interviews was a town called Puerto Viejo, which is a tourist town located on the Caribbean Ocean. This area was chosen in hopes of conducting interviews with individuals who may be more open to curious outsiders than those in other areas of the region. Fortunately, the residents in Puerto Viejo were willing to participate.

Those interviewed were from a wide range of ages. Several elementary school children were interviewed, as well as middle and high school students. Working adults were interviewed at their places of employment. Also, some retired individuals were interviewed. All of those interviewed are residents of Puerto Viejo. All are either directly from Jamaica or descendants of Jamaicans and are of African descent.

Notably, all participants of the survey speak three or more languages. The one most noticeable is a language called Patois, which is the Jamaican dialect of the English language. Participants also speak Spanish, which at times seemed to reflect some influence of the English language. In addition, all speak English. Some participants reported that they speak additional languages.

The interviews show that older adults became multilingual as a result of their being immersed in a different country and culture at an early age. They also went to schools where they were educated in this new language, Spanish. The new language was spoken in school and, at times, it was used on the streets among friends. In addition, their native language was still being spoken at home. In all cases, both Patois and English were spoken at home. Therefore, from a young age, all were exposed to at least three languages on a regular basis.

Younger interviewees are experiencing similar conditions. They too attend schools where they are taught in both Spanish and English. At home, they are exposed to Patois, English, and Spanish. Today, Spanish is spoken more at home because parents have had the opportunity to learn and use it in school and on the streets.

In summary, the Limón region in Costa Rica provides an environment which is conducive to the acquisition of more than one language.
Effective training procedures are critical to use with persons with developmental disabilities to ensure their maximal learning. Developmental disability is defined as any condition that results in impairment of both general intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. A developmental disability is manifested before a person reaches the age of twenty two. Examples of types of disabilities include mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism or other neurological conditions. People with disabilities, particularly mental retardation, have many deficits in adaptive behavior. Interspersal training and preference-based teaching are two training methods used to develop skills in people with such disabilities.

Interspersal training involves the alternation of known items such as picking up a block and unknown training items such as turning a musical toy on. An interspersal approach has been found to be effective in teaching skills such as picture names (Rowen & Pear, 1985) and math (Monterello & Martens, 2005). The interspersal training approach may facilitate learning by providing a high rate of positive reinforcement to the individual for correct responding or, possibly, through a behavioral momentum effect (i.e., once correct responding is occurring, the probability of additional correct responses is increased).

Preference-based teaching is a more recently developed approach (Reid & Green, 2005) which involves presentation of highly preferred activities such as a game, food or music prior to, during and following five minute intervals where training trials are presented. These preferred activities are inserted to increase the reinforcement associated with training. Some research indicates that preference-based training decreases resistance to training and increases indices of happiness during training (Foster-Johnson, Ferro, & Dunlap, 1994). There is a dearth of past research comparing the effectiveness of these two teaching techniques.

Using a multielement research design we have been comparing the effectiveness of the interpersonal training procedure to preference-based teaching. Our main goal is to identify which condition participants learn best and most prefer. Two children from the New York State School for The Blind, located in Batavia, New York are participating in this research. The children in the study are blind and have severe multiple developmental disabilities. During training in each condition, we have been teaching simple skills, such as pushing switches, touching objects. Although the study is ongoing, preliminary results have found that one of the participants has learned a simple skill during the interpersonal training conditions. However, additional training must be conducted before conclusions can be made. We must also test the participant’s retention of the learned skill. We will continue testing and collecting data to evaluate the effectiveness of the two training procedures. I believe that we will see significant results utilizing the preference-based teaching technique.
The Anti-rape movement, birthed out of the feminist movement, began in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. Small groups of women around the country began a collective effort, demanding a better response to sexual assault; the ideology behind this collective movement being that sexual assault is a reflection of the existing gendered social structures (Fried, 1994). Examination of the gendered social structures revealed that “rape isn’t about sex, it’s about power” (Brownmiller, 1999), a notion that has been the basis of research on sexual assault ever since.

In the spring of 2006, I interned at a Rape Crisis Service (RCS) center, hoping to participate in and learn from the political efforts of contemporary feminists. Much to my dismay, individuals in the medical field and law enforcement were still treating survivors of sexual assault with the same disrespect that feminists 40 years ago were fighting. The lack of response from the Rape Crisis counselors and volunteers was particularly disappointing. I entered the organization with the perception that RCS is a political organization, continuing the social change work that our feminist mothers initiated; I left questioning what happened. Subsequent research reveals that I am not the first to question whether current RCS centers maintain the same commitment to challenging the abhorrent response to sexual assault.

According to Amy Fried (1994), scholars and activists who analyze the position of Rape Crisis Centers within the feminist social movement have differing views as to whether today’s centers continue to carry the same feminist dialogue as the original centers. “For some, rape crisis centers are social-movement organizations, dedicated to creating broad social change. Others see them as highly co-opted social service organizations, which are not particularly feminist in nature” (Fried, 1994). The present research study seeks to explore the current structure of RCS based on individual perceptions of RCS as an organization within the anti-rape movement.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine participants who either work in or volunteer for an organization within the anti-rape movement. Four main themes were developed and used to draw on the participant’s knowledge of both RCS and the anti-rape movement. First, do they know the history of the anti-rape movement? Second, do they know the history of RCS and its relation to the anti-rape movement? Third, what is their level of internal accountability or commitment to the organization and the movement? Fourth, do they have a basic understanding of the feminist ideology backing the social movement?

Previous research on the co-optation of the RCS in the Rochester region indicates that it leans more toward the “co-opted social service organization” that was briefly mentioned above. With that, it seems reasonable to predict that the participants who do not work in or volunteer for RCS will be more politically motivated or proactive, with social change on the agenda. It is also expected that the participants who do work in or volunteer for RCS will have less historical knowledge of both RCS and the anti-rape movement and less internal accountability to both the organization and the movement.
The baby boom generation is one of the largest cohorts in the United States. Within the next thirty years this group will move past the age of sixty-five increasing needed expenditures on senior citizens. The cost of caring for our seniors is high while economic funds are limited. However, many of these seniors are able-bodied retirees looking to do something meaningful in their retirement. Volunteering by seniors offers personal fulfillment while meeting the needs of the baby boom population.

Volunteering by older adults is beneficial for themselves and for the older adults they serve. Volunteering by older adults helps them to maintain social ties, such as friendship ties. These friendship ties can lead to feelings of happiness and feelings of satisfaction. It also leads to self fulfillment, and promotes better physical and mental health. Retirement can cause a loss of identity, which can be filled by the volunteer role. Thus, volunteers feel more useful when their skills are put to work in a volunteer program. Physically volunteering helps to keep seniors active, resulting in the slowed or prevented loss of mobility. The tasks done when volunteering help to keep seniors minds sharp and maintain cognitive performance. Older adults receiving services also benefit. In addition to the service being provided, they enjoy expanded social ties.

In this project, I propose a volunteer care system among older adults. Seniors receiving help will benefit, while volunteer’s can bank points for time spent volunteering. These points can then be exchanged for help when they need it later. The system could easily be put into place to reduce the cost of social services for seniors. This program may possibly be established in a senior residential center in Rochester, NY. The program will only consist of two positions, because it will make the start up process easy. These positions would be the recruiter and system organizer. The recruiter could target places such as local pharmacies, newsletters, senior recreation centers and other senior facilities. The system organizer will keep track of the volunteers’ banked points and will match qualified volunteers with service needs of other seniors.
The plight of African American adolescent males’ performance in math and science is of monumental significance. Research suggests that many of these males are in danger of being overlooked as their marginalized status pushes them towards the periphery. The existing data pertaining to this subject points to an urgent reality that elicits concern. This research aims to extract the root causes of the disparities that exist amongst African American male adolescents that inhibit their successful performance and to offer concrete, effective alternatives.

Methodology
Due to the overwhelming volumes of data that already highlight the performance of African American adolescent males, this project compared the existing data of African American adolescent males’ performance in math and science to those of Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian and Native Americans adolescent males. In addition to this cross-reference, data was compiled and surveyed locally, statewide and nationally. Factors such as economic background, household composition, geographical location, educational institution dynamics, community support systems, parental involvement and sources of male bonding were studied. Also, African American adolescent males who perform above average and who share these same attributes were examined as well. To allow for an unbiased result it was imperative that a thesis or a theory not be drawn upon prior to the commencement of this project.

Results
Many variables contribute to the present condition of African American adolescent males, which necessitates a multi-faceted approach to produce a substantial reversal in this current trend.

There is a huge gap in the performance of African American adolescent males as opposed to other ethnicities, despite the attention thrust upon this dilemma. The ramifications are both staggering and alarming. Continuing on the present course could lead to a path equaled to that of genocide at worst, and at best a subculture void of any meaningful substance. Possible results are: higher numbers of incarceration, erosion of the family unit, loss of economic viability within the African American community, higher mortality rates, loss of a gifted natural resource and non-factors in the constructive participation of society. In a society that is so prescribed on competing on a global economic scale/continuum, where math and science play such a prominent component; the inadequacies of African American adolescent males exposes them as non-players. Statistics estimate that without a drastic intervention, the cycle of hopelessness will continue to repeat itself.

Recommendations
It is possible to reverse this trend through innovative strategies that implement a high degree of concern, compassion and optimism. Through analyzing established data, cross-referencing strategies that are proving successful, and searching for the missing links between them, models for effective alternatives can and must become attainable. Further research should focus on the sharing of ideas, proposals and experiments to merge into a unified systematic network. Clearly, it will take multiple, open-ended approaches to affect the outcome.
Pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) is described as a condition that is associated with severe emotional and physical problems that are linked closely to a woman’s menstrual cycle. This health-related problem is not just a myth or one’s perception; it is a legitimate medical condition that affects as many as 75 percent of menstruating women. Both PMDD and Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) share common symptoms that include depression, anxiety, tension, irritability, and moodiness. The difference between is two is the severity of symptoms, with PMDD causing the most significant symptomology. Although PMDD, like PMS may include physical symptoms, PMDD always involves a worsening of mood that interferes significantly with the woman’s quality of life. Research has shown that in the days before menses, a woman with PMDD may experience moodiness or anger that seems out of control to her. These symptoms may cause her to avoid her friends, family, and work.

Most researchers consider PMDD a type of mood disorder associated with the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle. The uniformed person may think that when a woman is experiencing menstrual symptoms, it is her fault that she is acting inappropriately. However, it is the mood disorder that they are experiencing and not a woman’s fault at all.

It might be a new way of thinking to some that PMDD does not appear to be caused simply by an imbalance of female ovarian hormones. Researchers measuring estrogen and progesterone levels across the menstrual cycle found no difference between women with PMDD and those without the disorder. However, hormones must play some role because PMDD symptoms disappear if the ovaries are removed or are not functioning properly. For example, a woman who has experienced menopause will not show these symptoms.

In addition to physical symptoms, menstrual symptoms may have far-reaching implications for other health behaviors, including alcohol consumptions. Women who experience high premenstrual symptom severity exhibit greater frequency of alcohol use. It is evident that PMDD has many implications for women.

The proposal for this research project is to assess current experiences of participants in relation to their menstrual symptoms and to investigate how medical professionals like nurses, doctors, and health educators could better communicate with patients. Additionally, I plan for to determine which type of health care participants might want when it comes to receiving information and treatment for PMDD and PMS.

I will submit a proposal to collect data during the fall semester, and after IRB approval, I will administer a short survey to participants. The sample will consist of 100 (N=100) 18-34 year old undergraduate female students at Brockport. I will be recruiting from health science classes and other student populations on campus. A short 10 item questionnaire will be developed by the researcher and administered to the sample. The results will provide descriptive qualitative and quantitative data, which will be analyzed and presented in a poster presentation during Scholars Day 2007.
During my two years living in a public housing unit that was predominantly African-American as well as my extensive experience working with Puerto Rican children and adults in the city of Rochester, I have observed that traditional forms of literacy (specifically the act of reading and writing) are often negatively associated with the power structure of Caucasian America. This observation, combined with my own personal experience that the act of writing and reading can alleviate hopelessness and empower the individual, led me to the following research question: when at-risk, minority secondary students who are reluctant to read and write come in contact with literature that addresses themes of marginalization and uses language as a tool of empowerment, will they begin to see the written word as a valued and personally important mode of expression?

Population
During the course of the study, I worked with twenty-four students ranging in age from fifteen to eighteen years old. There were fourteen boys (10 African American, 4 Latino) and ten girls (7 African American, 2 Latina, 1 Caucasian). The students were recruited through a local community agency. They were deemed academically at-risk because each was taking at least one summer school course, indicating that they had failed the year before. In addition to being academically at-risk, some of the students faced additional challenges. Two of the girls were pregnant, one was living in a group foster home, and one of the boys had an eight-month-old daughter.

Implementation
The students were divided into two single-sex groups and asked to participate in six, one-hour writing workshops over the course of two weeks. It was important to establish an environment of trust, honesty and respect. Appropriate text selection was also imperative. I sought to choose pieces of literature that address themes of identity, specifically the identity of the marginalized individual in conflict with society. In each example, the narrator uses the written word (a mode the students have identified with the power structure of society) as a means of legitimizing his devalued experience by rendering it with his own language and sensibility. The students and I generally spent the first thirty to forty minutes of the session reading a story or poem which we used as a model or starting point for original writing. The students typically wrote for ten to fifteen minutes followed by a session where volunteers could share what they had written.

Assessment
Three tools were used to assess the success of the workshop. The students were given an introductory assignment before beginning instruction. This was to judge their initial willingness to write. Throughout the implementation of the workshops, I made observational assessments of the degree of engagement and participation of the students. The poems and stories they wrote during our time together provided further evidence of the evolution of their attitudes. A series of exit interviews that explicitly addressed their attitudes about literacy provided a synthesis of their changing beliefs.

Conclusions
Over a relatively short period of time I noticed, and students reported, less of a reluctance to read and write. The boys seemed to respond to pieces written by African-American men (a set of poems by Etheridge Knight elicited much response and reflection). The girls responded most strongly to a poem called Forgiving My Father by Lucille Clifton. They wrote their own forgiveness poems to their fathers (several wrote letters to their fathers in prison) and their ex-boyfriends. The two girls who were pregnant wrote particularly moving forgiveness poems to the fathers of their babies. As the workshop progressed, students became more willing to share their writing with one another and the groundwork for an environment of safety and trust was established. I believe that more sessions over a longer period of time would have deepened the students' commitment to their own writing and the writing of their peers and have further engendered the belief that reading and writing can be acts of resistance and empowerment.
Abstract

The research is designed to test the knowledge of local law enforcement concerning elder abuse. This research shows a majority of law enforcement professionals neither received prior training for elder abuse nor suspected it. This research will be used to help evaluate and improve law enforcements' knowledge of elder abuse. Through a federal grant for “violence against women” a training grant provided education for all police officers and probation officers in Monroe County, New York State. The training was used to improve law enforcement professionals’ knowledge of elder abuse. A twenty-nine item instrument was designed to collect background information and evaluate participants’ knowledge of elder abuse. The survey was completed at the end of the training. Many of the participants in this research reported they were mostly adequately trained to recognize physical abuse rather than emotional and other types of abuse. This research shows how important education and training for elder abuse is in the future.

Introduction and Research Problem — Statement of the Problem

This research project evaluated the knowledge of law enforcement professionals at the conclusion of a six hour elder abuse training program. Studies indicate law enforcement professionals receive little training or education on recognizing signs of elder abuse and making official reports to investigators. Because law enforcement officers are often the first line of defense for victims of abuse and neglect, these professionals must be able to recognize the signs of mistreatment of the elderly. Officers whom are not properly trained may overlook life threatening signs of abuse. Through a federal violence against women grant, elder abuse education was provided for all police officers and probation officers in Monroe County, New York.

Literature Review

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse (2006), “Elder abuse is a term referring to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult”. While the following types of abuse definitions vary by state: the National Center on Elder Abuse defines the types of abuse as:

1. Physical Abuse: inflicting, or threatening to inflict, physical pain or injury on a vulnerable elder, or depriving them of a basic need.
2. Emotional Abuse: inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress on an elderly person through verbal or nonverbal acts.
3. Sexual Abuse: non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
4. Exploitation: illegally taking, misuse, or concealment of funds, property, or assets of a vulnerable elder.
5. Neglect: refusal or failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, health care or protection for a vulnerable elder.
6. Abandonment: the desertion of a vulnerable elder by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person.
7. Self neglect: refusal to care for self.

According to the Adult Protection Services (2004), self neglect was the leading type of abuse followed by financial abuse and physical abuse. The National Center on Elder Abuse collects, analyzes, and publishes statistics on abuse and neglect of older persons. A National Elder Abuse Incidence Study in 2001 suggested that more than 500,000 Americans aged 60 and over were victims of domestic abuse in 1996. This study also found that only 16 percent of the abuse situations are referred for help: 84 percent remain hidden from law enforcement professionals and service professionals. It has been estimated there were between 820,000 and 1,860,000 abused older people in the United States (Pavlik, V. Hyman, D. Festa, N. & Dyer, C., 2001). Since many cases go unreported the full extent of mistreatment is unknown.

As the elderly population increases, incidents are also expected to increase. With the increase in incidents, there will be a need for
more training to educate and prevent elder abuse. Elder abuse can be difficult to detect and challenging to prosecute. Because a large percentage of perpetrators are family members (NCEA, 2006) elderly victims sometimes are reluctant to have their offenders prosecuted. While these cases may be challenging these types of crimes warrant serious attention by law enforcement. Law enforcement officers are the first line of defense for victims of abuse and neglect. Law enforcement officers must be able to recognize the signs of mistreatment of the elderly. Officers whom are not properly trained may overlook life threatening signs of abuse. To avoid overlooking these signs, agencies must train their officers to recognize the warning signs of elder abuse. An increase in awareness would lead to an increase in reporting and better investigative techniques concerning elder abuse which would lead to a higher conviction rate for perpetrators. With proper training regarding basic gerontology and education of law enforcement professionals there is the potential to bring the awareness of elder abuse to the forefront.

Recently there has been a shift in law enforcement priorities to increase the awareness of elder abuse. The term elder abuse raises questions among law enforcement officers (Coker & Little, 1997). According to Balaswamy (2002) previous studies have shown law enforcement officials who lack training in elder abuse were more likely to have a poorer perception of the Adult Protection Services. Those professionals with the proper training were more inclined to be sensitive to the elderly population and their needs.

Results
A total of 1166 law enforcement professionals participated in the elder abuse training program. Police officers comprised 88% (n = 962) of the sample while probation officers comprised 11% (n = 120). Participants average age was 38(SD: 8.4) with a range from 20 years to 64 years. 86% (n = 943) were male participants while 14% were female participants. A majority of the participants were Caucasian (83%) followed by African American (7%), Latino (6%), and Asian American (1%). A majority of participants had an Bachelors Degree (41%) followed by Associates Degree (34%), High School Diplomas (14%), Masters degree (6%), and (3%) reported as other. Most officers reported working for Rochester City Police Department (45%) followed by Monroe County Sheriff (25%). A majority of participants worked in law enforcement 16 to 20 years (23%) followed by 11 to 15 years (20%), 6 to 10 years (20%), 1 to 5 years (16%), 6 to 30 years (6%), 0 to 6 months (1%), 31 to 35 years (1%), and 36 years or more (1%).

When asked, “Have you ever reported a case of elder abuse?”, 71% (n = 785) of participants reported no. A majority of participants 69% (n = 761) reported no to ever suspecting elder abuse, while 30% (n = 325) reported yes to suspecting elder abuse. Participants reported as 68% (n = 751) with no to prior elder abuse training, while 30% (n = 335) reported yes to prior training. The participants indicated the source of training as 13% (n = 138) received training outside the job (e.g., college courses, etc.). While 12% (n = 127) reported department in service training and 6% (n = 69) reported continuing education seminars as the source of training.

This section reports on the results of the 14 true or false knowledge questions. 93% (n = 1078) correctly agreed it is “true” that most victims of elder abuse are women over the age of 80. Most participants 88% (n = 1028) correctly agreed that spouses are not the most frequent abusers of the elderly. Nearly all participants 99% (n = 1152) correctly answered “false” that most cases of elder abuse do not occur in institutions. Of the participants 94% (n = 1093) correctly answered “false” that very few older adults are abused. Most of the participants 95% (n = 1104) correctly agreed that people who are abused will display certain types of behaviors. Of those surveyed, 94% (n = 1100) correctly recognized that when a family member responds for an elder it maybe a sign of elder abuse. A majority of the participants 92% (n = 1075) correctly answered “false” when asked if physical abuse is the fastest growing form of elder abuse. 89% (n = 1037) correctly answered “true” that self-neglect is the most frequently reported type of abuse amongst older adults. When asked to recognize if a caregiver refusal for visitors to see an elder alone constitutes possible abuse.

Methods — Training
The training was to improve law enforcement professionals' knowledge of elder abuse. The training targeted police and probation officers in Monroe County Sheriff, City of Rochester, and surrounding Townships in Monroe County, New York State. The training was a six hour training which occurred between January and March, 2006.

Instrument
A twenty-nine item instrument was designed to collect background information and evaluate participants' knowledge of elder abuse. Nine background questions related to gender, education level, length of time in field of law enforcement, and previous training in elder abuse. Fourteen of the questions were true and false followed by six elder abuse recognition questions, where participants related how adequately trained they were to recognize various forms of elder abuse. The instrument used for this research was completed at the end of the training.

Sample
As a part of the training program, all Monroe County based police and probation officers were required to participate in the training. This included all county sheriffs, Rochester City police and seven area townships with their own police departments, 1200 law enforcement professionals in all.
98% (n=1143) of respondents correctly answered “true”, while in contrast 18% (n=207) of participants incorrectly answered that caregiver stress is the primary cause of elder abuse. Most individuals surveyed 98% (n=1139) correctly agreed that most old people (age 70+) are not senile (have defective memory, are disoriented, or demented). Of those surveyed, 99% (n=1153) of participants correctly agreed that most people over the age of 70 do not live in long-stay institutions (i.e., nursing homes). When asked if there is a mandatory reporting law for elder abuse that covers all professional who deal with seniors in New York State, 93% (n=1081) correctly answered “false”. However 17% (n=194) of individuals surveyed agreed New York State, does not have a reporting agency for elder abuse (i.e., APS). The final component of the evaluation instrument included six questions in relation to how adequately trained participants felt concerned various types of elder abuse. Available Likert scale responses ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Average scores were calculated for each question and rank-ordered. Law enforcement professionals agreed they felt adequately trained to identify physical abuse (M=4.96, SD:.87), followed by self-neglect (M=4.81, SD:.90), caregiver neglect (M=4.64, SD:.92), sexual abuse (M=4.56, SD:.94), financial exploitation (M=4.55, SD:.98) and emotional abuse (M=4.49, SD: 93).

Discussion — Conclusions

This study found that a majority of law enforcement professionals neither received prior training for elder abuse nor suspected it. It is likely that a lack of previous elder abuse education may explain this finding. Most performed well on the true/false section of the evaluation, except for the questions related to caregiver stress as a cause of elder abuse and New York State lacking a formal reporting agency for elder abuse. Recent studies have shown that perpetrators dependency is more often a cause of elder abuse rather that the previous “stressed caregiver” theory. This has implication for how law enforcement professionals investigate elder abuse cases (i.e., potentially overlooking indications of dependent behavior).

Because a large percentage of participants incorrectly reported New York State does not have a formal reporting agency for elder abuse reveals one of two things. Either participants did not properly acquire this information from training or there was a measurement error. The item prior to the “reporting agency” question asked if New York State has a mandatory reporting law for community based professionals, 93% correctly answered “false” because the subsequent question was similar respondents may have interpreted the item incorrectly.

Participants reported they were mostly adequately trained to recognize physical abuse rather than emotional and other types of abuse. Based on the nature of law enforcement activities, experience with physical violence is often more noticeable than the other types of abuse. In contrast signs of emotional abuse are not easily recognizable and law enforcement professionals may need more training in this area.

This training represents an important step preparing law enforcement professionals to recognize and in investigating elder abuse. Results of this training may result in an increase of elder abuse reports and subsequent investigations, though more research is needed to make this determination. Future training should focus on different types of abuse and whether they are more challenging to recognize (i.e., emotional abuse, physical abuse, etc.).

Limitations/ Recommendations for future research

The post-test only design does not capture participants’ knowledge of elder abuse at the start of the training, thus it can not determine how much individuals learned as a result of the training program. Future studies should include more rigorous research designs to determine training effectiveness. Further evaluations should also track reports of elder abuse from law enforcement professionals as an indicator of increased recognition skills before and after training.

Reference:


In a defining moment in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, Celie speaks up in defiance of her abusive husband, vocalizing a lifetime’s worth of oppression:

Mr. ____ start up from his seat, look at Shug, plop back down again. He look over at me. I thought you was finally happy, he say. What wrong now?

You a lowdown dog is what’s wrong, I say. It’s time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need. (181)

This is a highly significant passage in the text for a number of reasons. It marks a turning point in the storyline, showing Celie’s defiance of the gender stereotypes that have silenced and oppressed her for so long. Most importantly, this passage shows that Celie has finally found her voice, and has thus defied her status as a marginalized character. It is only after Celie finds her voice in this way that she is able to leave her husband, who epitomizes tradition and rural black southern life that her spirit truly emerges.

A survey of major African American twentieth century novels reveals that this theme of voice is a consistent one. Voice, for the terms of this research, can be defined as one’s ability to speak and be heard, and in relation to marginality, therefore lends the capacity to overcome one’s oppressive circumstances. This paper will examine five representative examples of the multiple rhetorical strategies used by authors to demonstrate the connection between the issue of voice and marginality. The failure to find one’s voice, as will be shown in Wright’s *Native Son* and Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, results in madness or death, making a strong societal statement. It is this concept of finding one’s voice that presents the most important challenge to marginalized characters in African American Literature.

One significant question raised by this issue of voice is the matter of how it is discovered, if at all. The way in which the issue is addressed depends upon the rhetorical strategy employed by the author. In the case of Walker, as readers glimpse in the aforementioned excerpt, Celie finally finds the courage to defy her husband. Celie’s newfound confidence is due largely to the presence of Shug Avery, her lover and confidante. Shug teaches Celie how to love, and eventually how to forgive, and in the process, Celie’s voice begins to blossom and grow. Readers can note a thematic consistency in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Upon the death of her controlling, abusive husband, Janie begins to feel the lightness of her own freedom. She begins seeing a much younger man called Tea Cake and elopes with him, only to return alone and contented, no longer caring how she appears to those who have gossiped about her. It is in this freedom that she has found her voice, and is able to transcend the small-mindedness of the world that she has lived in. Thus she has defied her status as a marginalized character.

Other twentieth-century novels by African American writers offer rather different perspectives. For example, there is a very different approach in Ishmael Reed’s *Flight to Canada*. The story is presented in satirical format. Reed deals with issues of slavery but simultaneously employs anachronisms, lending the entirety of the story a sense of absurdity. Raven Quickskill, the main character, has run away from slavery and published poems about his experience, yet continues to live in fear of being captured by his former master. The sarcastic voice encountered here is quite intentional: Reed is able to show both sides of the controversial issue of slavery with humor, a departure from the darkness and horror that usually accompany slave narratives. The other side of the spectrum in terms of rhetorical strategy is present in Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* as well as Wright’s *Native Son*. Both of these texts reveal a darker side of marginality, demonstrating the consequences of failing to find one’s voice. In Wright’s text, Bigger Thomas feels intoxicated with the freedom of no longer caring what other people think, but only after he realizes that his execution is imminent, regardless of his actions. He embraces the
I don’t write to God no more, I write to you. What happen to God? ast Shug. Who that? I say” (Walker 175) This becomes even more apparent in later letters by Celie: Dear Nettie, I am so happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time. And you alive and be home soon. With our children. (193) Indeed, if Nettie is seen as a parallel to the character of Celie, then the letters show Celie beginning to assert her own voice and will even before her circumstances change (Hite 258). Around this point in Walker’s text, Celie begins to question her faith, and her belief in the white god that has seemed to perpetuate her own feelings of oppression: Well, us talk and talk about God, but I’m still adrift. Trying to chase that old white man out of my head. I been so busy thinking bout him I never truly notice nothing God made. Not a blade of corn (how it do that?) not the color purple (where it come from?). Not the little wildflowers. Nothing. (Walker 179) Redefining herself forces Celie to redefine her God, and as she does so she begins to realize that she has overlooked much of the Creation around her. This reevaluation helps Celie to define her voice with more conviction, thus defying her marginalized status. Also worthy of note is Celie’s sexuality. She makes it clear very early in the text that she is attracted to Shug Avery, the woman who later helps her to find herself. Indeed Celie, who has been a victim of emotional and physical abuse as well as incest, benefits considerably from the female bonding that she experiences with Shug. Her development as a woman as well as a character is possible as a result (Proudfit 13). Because of her intimacy with and desire for Shug, Celie can now be seen as triply oppressed: a woman of color who, in the rural south in the 1930’s also admits that she is not heterosexual. She is further marginalized as a result of this. Shug’s character fulfills a vital role in the text: Shug is another woman of color, who has lived her life in spite of, rather than in fear of people’s opinions of her. She loves Celie in spite of the conventions of their time, and this love helps Celie to come to terms with herself. Shug is never afraid to say what she thinks, and Celie becomes bolder and begins to express her own opinions as a result of this influence. Shug also helps Celie establish herself, as well as her business. In a time period where it was considered “proper” for women to wear only dresses, Celie’s business is making pants for men and women. Celie is questioning gender stereotypes in her work as well as in her sexuality. Walker’s The Color Purple continues to be an important literary work with respect to marginalized representation and has won
the Pulitzer Prize. Walker has given us a glimpse into rural black southern life of the 1930's, introducing the notion that all oppressed persons are capable of finding their voices.

Walker has also used her position and resources to help us find the posthumous voice of Zora Neale Hurston, whose work has been highly influential on Walker's own (Gates 243). There are many similarities between Celie in The Color Purple and the character of Janie in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, as may be observed through a close analysis of Hurston's text. A defining moment in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God occurs when Janie Crawford, upon the death of her husband, feels and embraces freedom for the first time:

She sent her face to Joe's funeral, and herself went rollicking with the springtime across the world...She saw no reason to rush at changing things around. She would have the rest of her life to do as she pleased. (88-89)

Janie has been oppressed and controlled first by her grandmother and then by her husbands, and when she realizes that she finally has a chance to live life on her own terms, she is euphoric. This passage marks a transitional point in the text, giving the reader a glimpse of Janie's emerging self as she begins to discover and develop her own voice.

The use of dialect in this work makes for a challenging read in some respects, as it requires strict attention to detail:

Y'all let dat stray darky tell y'all any ole lie! Uh colored man sittin up in uh post office!

And then, the response to this statement:

Us colored folks is too envious of one 'nother. Dat's how come us don't git no further that us do. Us talks about de white man keepin' us down! Shucks! He don't have tuh. Us keeps our own selves down. (Hurston 39)

At first glance it may seem that Hurston is perpetuating racial as well as southern stereotypes, but it becomes apparent that this stylistic choice is necessary because it allows the reader a more intimate look into the lives of the characters. Hurston's approach also gives the reader a clear idea about the values and world that the characters in Their Eyes live in.

The marginalization of Janie's character can be inferred from the story's temporal setting. The book was published in the 1930's and unfolds in the Deep South at a time when racial tensions and ignorance were prevalent. All of Janie's experiences reflect her dual oppression: that is to say, both as a woman and as a person of color. Janie runs away in her youth with Joe Starks, who flatters and cajoles her with promises of a better life. He takes her to a newly developing town that consists entirely of people of color (likely based on Hurston's own hometown of Eatonville, Florida). His pocket heavy with life savings, he buys himself respect, power, and an affluent position in the community. Still Janie is denied love and affection. She is beaten by Joe and submits to his authority without question. He treats her poorly, insulting her in front of others and not allowing her to make friends. Finally, she realizes that she resents being tied to someone who won't even let her speak when she wants to. She becomes aware that she has been denied her own voice. Janie's developing understanding of her marginalized status marks a transitional period in the text, leading to the aforementioned defining moment.

Janie now retaliates by yelling back at Joe publicly. Humiliated, Joe refuses to speak with her for weeks, even when he falls sick and learns that he is dying. In his last moments, Janie goes to speak with him. She insists on saying her piece, despite his attempts to silence her. It is only after his death that Janie embraces her newfound freedom. This marks the arrival of Tea Cake, and, essentially, Janie's coming-of-age.

At this point Janie begins to make a space for herself in the world. Janie begins wearing overalls and leading a happy but simple life with Tea Cake. The symbolism of the pants is worthy of note. In Walker's text, Celie begins supporting herself by making pants. In both cases, pants are used to show defiance of gender stereotypes.

Tea Cake is far from an exemplary husband; eventually he beats Janie harshly to show everyone that she is his property. He even brags about it to a friend:

Ah didn't whup Janie 'cause she done nothin'. Ah beat her tuh show dem Turners who is boss. (Hurston 148)

Janie's newfound voice gives her the courage to return to Eatonville after she has shot and killed Tea Cake and has been exonerated. By the end of the novel, she has learned to love and accept herself as a woman, in spite of having been beaten and mistreated. However, Janie has always remained submissive to her man. Hence oppression and marginalization are still present, but have changed throughout the text as Janie has learned to find herself.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is described as a love story by many critics. Yet at a time when Janie should be blissfully in love she still suffers. Even with Tea Cake, the love of her life, Janie is still beaten, cheated on, and almost killed when he becomes crazy at the end of his life. In spite of all this, Janie walks back into the town where she has been scandalized, with her head held high, proudly wearing her overalls. The story ends with Janie feeling sleepy and peaceful. Although submission still largely defines her relationships with men, Janie has found her voice and has learned how to love.

Janie has transcended marginalization, albeit to a lesser degree than would seem sensible to a modern-day reader. But this seems to be Hurston's point: Women like Janie may overcome oppression but will still be submissive in relationships with men because this is what women did in Hurston's day. Hurston, who had anthropological training as well as being dually oppressed
herself, was in a unique position to speak from the margins and be heard by white audiences (Wald 80). Indeed, Their Eyes Were Watching God has been described as "an assertion of racial and sexual pride, and freedom and self-love for women, regardless of oppressive attitudes regarding race, sex and age" (Caputi 709). It is Hurston's awareness of her unique position that enables her writing to speak clearly to her audience.

Ishmael Reed takes a slightly different approach in Flight to Canada. The defining moment occurs when former slaves are elated with a feeling of freedom following the death of their master Arthur Swille:

I [Robin] deem it a pleasure to be so fortunate that god would ordain that I, a humble African, would be so privileged as to have a home in Virginia like this one. Why your Honor, it's like paradise down here. The sun just kinda lazily dropping in the evening sky. The lugubrious, voluptuous tropical afternoon make me swoon, Judge. Make me swoon. (167)

Uncle Robin, who in the presence of Mr. Swille is an obedient "model" slave, reveals to those close to him that he has amended his master's will, thus making himself the main beneficiary. In the above mentioned excerpt, he is speaking and acting with eloquence and humility, so as not to alert the rich whites surrounding him that he has used cunning to achieve control of the plantation. Mr. Swille, a white male unaccustomed to having his authority questioned, never would have expected such actions from a loyal servant such as Robin. Robin plays into Swille's ideals about the acceptability of slavery and ignorance of slaves. Indeed, Mr. Swille seems to need Robin's support to justify his actions. Robin realizes this, and plays along to appease his master:

Look at this childish race. Uncle Robin, don't you like it here? Why yessuh, Mr. Swille! I loves it here. Good something to eat when you wonts it. Color TV. Milk pail fulla toddy. Some whiskey and a little nookie from time to time. We gets whipped with a velvet whip, and there's free dental care and always a fiddler case your feet get restless. (Reed 37)

Robin thus makes himself an unlikely suspect to stand against his master. Indeed, it is through Robin's perpetuating Swille's ideal that Robin's actions go undetected, leading to Robin's triumph upon Swille's death. Robin has exerted his own will, manipulating the very system that has sought to oppress him.

Reed's use of anachronisms is highly entertaining. The idea of entertainment mediums such as television, long distance phone plans and such during the period of slavery is an interesting thought. It "forces us to acknowledge through [Reed's] allusions to jumbo jets, the electronic media, leisure suits, and the like, which compel the reader to project the tale out of its Civil War setting and into the present" (Weixlmann 42). Immediately obvious is that this is Reed's work of satire, and the idea of using this device to tell such a story is unique. Indeed, one critic describes it as a text that "shatters[s] the mold of traditional Black American fiction" (Weixlmann 41).

This rhetorical strategy enables the reader to see both sides of the story without bias, and through Reed's reliance on humor, readers can get a clear picture of the horrors that are actually being described. This approach yields a more attention-grabbing perspective on the issue at hand, enabling Reed to express the issues in an unsympathetic way, without compromising the poignancy of his message.

The theme of finding one's voice is present in Reed's work, as it has been in the other texts examined for the purposes of this research. The fact that protagonist Raven Quicksill has achieved certain fame from an anti-slavery poem clearly illustrates this. He has found his voice, and in a very literal sense, has run with it. Mr. Swille still seeks his former slave even after slavery has ended; again Swille's character is representative of the Southern mindset.

This story can be defined as a moral tale but not in the traditional sense. According to one critic, "The moral is not an aesthetic one—but then a statement is an undeniable force in art" (O'Neale 177).

The ending of the story is appropriate also. Robin's new position as house owner gives him financial means and he employs Quicksill to write his story. Indeed, Quicksill returns to Virginia under Robin's employ, but he too is on his own terms. Both men have found their voices, and broken away from the oppression and marginalization that have defined them.

The darker side of this issue of voice reveals what happens when a character is unable to overcome their marginalization and oppressive circumstances, as we see in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye as well as Richard Wright's Native Son. Morrison's book presents the tragic story of a little girl named Pecola Breedlove, who wants more than anything to have blue eyes. Pecola sees all the blond-haired, blue-eyed (read: white) children and thinks that they must have better lives than she does. There is much mention of white baby dolls in the book, and many chapters begin with sentences from the "Fun with Dick and Jane" stories that were popular during the time period. Interestingly, these stories, typically used in elementary schools to teach children reading, are presented without spaces. They are jumbled together, like madness, and reflect Pecola's growing obsession with blue eyes and the whiteness that they represent. Pecola's adoration of Mary Jane candies is significant, as she hopes to swallow the whiteness of the little girl on the wrappers:

She eats the candy, and its sweetness is good. To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane. (Morrison 50)

Upon close analysis of Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, it becomes apparent that there are actually two defining moments in the text. The first one occurs when Pecola is raped by her father. She faints and then awakens with her very angry mother standing
above her:

So when the child regained consciousness, she was lying on the kitchen floor under a heavy quilt, trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her. (163)

Pecola's spirit is broken by this violation and the subsequent beating from her mother leaves her in physical pain as well.

The second defining moment occurs after the rape when Pecola, not knowing where else to turn, seeks the counsel of spiritual healer Soaphead Church. Despite his pedophilia, Soaphead never touches Pecola physically. Instead he observes her ugliness and feels sorry for her. He sincerely wishes that he could change her eye color but is still revolted by the sight of her:

Here was an ugly little girl asking for beauty...A little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes (174).

Disturbed by her encounter with Soaphead, Pecola's longing for blue eyes becomes an obsession, and she begins the descent into madness. Pecola's marginalized status has caused her voice to be silenced. Madness becomes, for Pecola, a means of survival. At this point, Morrison's work diverges sharply from the other texts discussed here. Pecola never finds her voice and as a result she never overcomes her marginalized status. Indeed, the story isn't even told from Pecola's perspective, which essentially furthers the effect of putting her at the periphery of her own experiences.

Pecola walks hunched over throughout the entirety of the text, rarely smiles or laughs, and shuffles her feet, rarely speaking unless spoken to. Clearly this is a child whose spirit has been broken, thus enhancing her marginalized and oppressed status. One critical essay reveals, "Toni Morrison's gaze reveals to the reader that Pecola is a little girl who has always been on the periphery. She presents us with Pecola's innocence and tragedy. The authorial stance of The Bluest Eye is epitomized in the disingenuous voices of its narrators..." (Rosenberg 442). One of the saddest aspects of this text is that Pecola never triumphs in the end, as we have seen in both Walker's and Hurston's novels, as well as Reed's satirical look at slavery.

Morrison's text includes several passages that deal explicitly with the molestation of little girls, but even this is significant in showing the marginalization of the black female child. In such passages, the black female child is always the object of the abuse. Indeed, this is the case with Pecola, who is raped by her father when she is eleven and subsequently becomes pregnant. Upon learning of the rape, Pecola's mother beats her severely, causing her to miscarry. Shortly after Pecola's encounter with Soaphead, she engages in a dialogue with either an invisible friend or her own reflection, in which she reveals that she knows that her eyes are blue but no one comments on this only because everyone is jealous. This shows Pecola's growing derangement:

Mrs. Breedlove look drop-eyed at you?

Yes. Now she does. Ever since I got my blue eyes, she look away from me all the time. Do you suppose she's jealous too?

And then later on, in the same conversation:

Everybody's jealous. Every time I look at somebody, they look off.

Is that why nobody has told you how pretty they are?

Sure it is. Can you imagine? Something like that happening to a person, and nobody but nobody saying anything about it? They all try to pretend they don't see them. Isn't that funny? (Morrison 195)

Pecola has endured abuse her entire life, at the hands of her mother, father and schoolmates. She is only able to survive because of her growing obsession with blue eyes, which she equates with whiteness and happiness. She does not become obsessed with the thought of running away, or leaving her parents, or any of the thoughts that may be expected of someone in her situation. Pecola merely accepts these mistreatments as the way that her life is. How could a child who has been silenced by abuse be heard if she were to speak against her parents and schoolmates? Pecola's story is an extreme example of the effect of having one's voice silenced. She has been made invisible by what has happened to her. Unlike Janie and Celie, Pecola never finds her voice or overcomes her marginalization, descending into madness instead.

This text is a sad one, racially charged at times, and boldly addressing some of the racial issues that the other texts did not choose to explore. There is so much to be said about this, and, even in the situation of Pecola, who never finds her voice, Morrison draws attention to some of the other issues prevalent to the African American experience, thus giving a voice to different types of marginalization and oppression.

The defining moment in Richard Wright's Native Son is a more controversial one, but it reveals the breaking point of someone who has been continuously oppressed and never heard:

He [Bigger Thomas] murdered Mary Dalton accidentally, without thinking, without conscious motive. But, after he murdered, he accepted the crime. And that's the important thing. It was the first full act of his life; it was the most meaningful, exciting and stirring thing that had ever happened to him. He accepted it because it made him free, gave him the possibility of choice, of action, the opportunity to act and to feel that his actions carried weight (396).

Wright successfully uses something as controversial as a black man's murder of a white woman to show that those who are oppressed can only be pushed so far before they snap. From the beginning of the text, Bigger is presented to the reader in this way.
Readers are introduced to Bigger Thomas as a man strung together so tightly that his forceful snap is inevitable. Indeed, in the first scenes of the novel, Bigger is shown disrespecting his mother and siblings and violently killing a rat by bashing in its head:

He [Bigger] kicked the splintered box out of the way and the flat black body of the rat lay exposed, its two long yellow tusks showing distinctly. Bigger took a shoe and pounded the rat's head, crushing it, cursing hysterically:

"You sonofabitch" (Wright 6).

This scene shows some of Bigger's less favorable qualities and foreshadows what he is likely to become. Bigger's struggle with his own internalized racism leads to his acting out on other people of color, particularly those who are most similar to him. Another violent scene early in the text involves Bigger's beating of Gus, one of Bigger's good friends. The author's intent was not to shock readers with the violent nature of Bigger's actions. Rather, Wright was trying to show the lengths to which an oppressed and marginalized character is capable of going for his own survival. Bigger Thomas' struggle to find his voice is present in this text, as was the case with Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison and Ishmael Reed. After Bigger is captured, he refuses to speak for three days. He demonstrates the only power he has by refusing to use his voice. Similarly, readers will recall that Celie took away the identity of her husband by not revealing his name in the first half of The Color Purple.

Significantly, after he has accidentally killed the white woman, Bigger feels a strong sense of euphoria and freedom:

He had murdered and created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own, and it was the first time in his life he had had anything that others could not take from him... His crime was an anchor weighing him safely in time; it added to him a certain confidence which his gun and knife did not.

(Wright 105).

Bigger has finally acted independently and stood up against his oppressors. He relishes exercising his own will. Interestingly, it is through a violent act that he achieves this independence. He immediately wants to kill again and does so, less than twenty-four hours later. This draws a contrast, for it is in this second killing of Bessie, a black woman, that Wright can clearly drive his point home. Bigger's trial reveals that the body of Bessie was found, but Bigger knows that he is not on trial for the murder of Bessie and that her dead body is only being used to show physical proof of his violent acts against the white woman. It is stated by Wright in the novel that police officers of this time period showed little concern for blacks killed by other blacks; the dead physical presence of Bessie illustrates this:

They were bringing Bessie's body in now to make the white men and women feel that nothing short of a quick blotting out if his life would make the city safe again. They were using his having killed Bessie to kill him for his having killed Mary, to cast him in a light that would sanction any action taken to destroy him. Though he had killed a black girl and a white girl, he knew that it would be for the death of the white girl that he would be punished. The black girl was merely 'evidence'. And under it all he knew that the white people did not really care about Bessie's being killed. White people never searched for Negroes who killed other Negroes. (Wright 31).

Clearly Wright intends Bigger's depravity as a message, and as a metaphor for the oppressed situations of persons of color in America. Bigger is to be feared and hated by whites because of what he has done. In addition to this, the prevalent mindset of the time period dehumanized African Americans by likening them to animals or savages. Bigger inspires fear because he seems to personify the "violent savage" that whites of the time period expect. His actions show his anger about his oppression and marginalization. Rather than accepting his lot, as blacks were expected to do, Bigger acts in defiance.

Significant also in relation to this text is the issue of rape. When Bigger suffocates Mary Dalton, it is because he is frozen in panic while helping her to bed by the entrance of her mother. Bigger understands that he is a black man, and if he is found alone with a white woman, he will be accused of rape and will lose his job. Bigger, forced to take the job from the Daltons to feed his family is terrified by this prospect, and pushes a pillow over Mary's face to silence her while her mother is present. He hadn't meant to hurt her, but afterwards realizes that he has killed her and takes action to cover up what he has done. Ironically, Bigger was terrified of being accused of rape, yet when Mary's bones are found, he is so accused, despite the impossibility of proof. A prevalent mindset in this time period held that black men were sexually predatory toward white women, and that this resulted in many white women being raped by black men. Therefore, in effect, Bigger's misguided attempt to save himself from such accusations eventually led to him being accused not only for the rape of Mary and Bessie, but also of the rape of several other white women in his area. There was no physical evidence of this, except in the case of Bessie, a black woman who had actually been raped by Bigger. However, ambivalent police and law enforcement left Bessie's circumstances out of the trial. Wright's message is very strong with respect to what is left out in the circumstances surrounding Bessie's rape and death.

Wright's novel epitomizes the marginalized experience: the story of an inner-city black man who really had little to lose by committing acts of depravity. Bigger is an exemplary character in this way. He shows little remorse for his actions. Yet when his lawyer finally asks him about himself, he begins to experience real
emotion and understand the deadly consequences that inevitably await him. Bigger, at this point in the novel, begins to finally see himself as human. Wright could have simply ended the story with a different verdict, yet by ending it with news of Bigger's execution and reaction, the message is much stronger.

Wright's intention is not to present the reader with a hope for the future, or for an end to racial tensions and inequality. Rather, he is making a strong societal statement about what the human race is capable of if hate and stereotyping continue to be perpetuated. Yet Native Son should not be categorized as a moral story, although there is a very strong message to be heard in the text.

This story gives a voice to one man, representative of so many, who has been pushed too far and has had too much dangled before him and taken away. Wright expresses the violence of Bigger's actions and the lack of remorse that he feels for them as a way to prove his point: what will happen if the American mindset fails to change? Bigger, when finally beginning to feel human in the presence of his white lawyer, begins to see this, yet accepts the fate of his own electrocution in the way of a man who cannot fight anymore because his spirit has long since been broken.

After a lifetime of being beaten down, accused and punished for crimes in his youth because of his skin color, and made to live in such extreme poverty, who can blame him for feeling defeated? Bigger Thomas seems to understand that the entirety of his life has been a marginalized experience, and that the oppression that has always defined him will only stop when he is liberated in death.

The issue of voice is a vital one in African-American literature. It leads to the defining moments of the characters and speaks considerably about the issue of marginalization. When one's voice is found, there is the capacity for triumph, and the possibility of happiness in spite of the oppression experienced by the characters. This is true in the cases of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, as well as in Ishmael Reed's satirical *Flight to Canada*.

However, as has been presented in the cases of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Richard Wright's *Native Son*, there is much tragedy in the characters whose voices are not found, thus perpetuating the marginalized experience and oppression of Pecola Breedlove and Bigger Thomas. These characters remain on the periphery and their experiences make strong societal statements, revealing the rhetorical strategies of Morrison and Wright. These strategies are effective in showing the reader the possibilities of what can happen to someone of color who has been failed by the system in American society. The circumstances of Pecola and Bigger seem extreme in terms of the horrors of their experiences but are successful in showing the reader the potentiality of an oppressed and voiceless experience, thus yielding to the perpetuation of marginalization.

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