

ABSTRACT

Societal Pressure on Self-Image, Particularly as it Relates to Black Americans

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Society puts a lot of pressure on its members, much of which the members of society do not even consciously realize is being placed upon them. There is simultaneously pressure to conform to the things society deems acceptable and pressure to express one's "true self" within the ways that society finds it all right for people to be different. These two pressures can be especially difficult to reconcile in cases where society either does not accept a particular sort of self-expression as valid or when it is impossible for a person to make the sort of changes that would be necessary to fully conform. In this thesis, I will look at the pressure that society can put on individuals' self-image, particularly as it affects Black Americans. To accomplish this, I will analyze sections of Carl Elliott's *Better than Well*, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, and Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Sexual Politics*.

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SOCIETAL PRESSURE ON SELF IMAGE, PARTICULARLY AS IT RELATES TO BLACK
AMERICANS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	1
CHAPTER TWO: Societal Pressure on Accents	12
CHAPTER THREE: Societal Pressure on Black Americans as Demonstrated in <i>The Bluest Eye</i>	18
CHAPTER FOUR: Societal Pressure on Black Americans as Discussed in <i>Black Sexual Politics</i>	31
FOOTNOTES	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

What do a middle-aged man who wants to amputate a leg, a Southern man who dislikes his accent and would like to change it, and a young Black girl who, more than anything, wishes she could have blue eyes have in common? All three of these people are affected strongly by society in both their desires and their reactions to these desires. In this thesis, I will examine the effects of societal pressure on self-image, particularly as it relates to the Black ethnicity. In order to do this, I will first look at the chapter of Carl Elliott's *Better than Well* entitled "Amputees By Choice" in order to examine a unique mental illness called apotemnophilia and determine why it is that societal pressure wants to give them the opposite of what they would want. Second, I will look at the chapter in *Better than Well* called "The Perfect Voice" in order to look at the pressure that seems to push people toward sounding like Midwesterners. Third, I will look at the depiction of characters in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in order to examine how societal pressure that some of the characters can't quite name or identify make a huge difference in their life trajectories and question what the results could be possibly if this were possible to make black people more like the white ideal that is presented as what black people should want. Finally, I will look at Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Sexual Politics* for some of the ways in which the existing power structure has used images of sexuality in order to justify viewing black people in a racist manner and how this exerts pressure on black people.

An Introduction to Apotemnophilia

Apotemnophilia is a mental disorder that is primarily characterized by the desire to become an amputee. Even though there were a few documented cases of apotemnophilia before then, it was never truly in the public eye until the year 2000 when a Scottish surgeon named Robert Smith was denied permission to perform an amputation of a person's healthy leg. The hospital at which Smith asked to perform the amputation had, under a different board of directors, previously allowed him to perform amputations of two healthy people's legs. When news of this reached the media, people were outraged, even though the patients Smith had amputated had sought out Smith and requested the amputations, undergone evaluation by at least two psychiatrists and one psychologist each, been referred back to Smith with the report that psychotherapy and behavior modification treatment were unlikely to do any good for the patients, and reported being happier than ever following the procedures.¹

It may still be surprising that Smith, a man whose career is dedicated to healing people (or at the very least not harming them), would participate in cutting off the limbs of people even though there was no medical need to do so. However, after Smith considered all the factors, he believed that the emotional turmoil of the two patients who he agreed to amputate outweighed the physical harm that amputation would inflict on them. After performing the amputations, Smith called them "the most satisfying operations that [he had] ever performed".²

Surgeons in Smith's position cannot really be blamed for their uncertainty in a situation in which apotemnophiles approach them and request surgical removal of healthy limbs; this situation is completely unthought-of to the majority of people. However, in

order to determine what qualifies as appropriate medical treatment for an illness, particularly in cases of mental illness (because of the question of competence), we must first determine exactly what sort of illness it is. I will outline some of the thoughts of exactly what sort of illness apotemnophilia is so that we can then determine whether elective amputation would seem to be supported as an acceptable treatment for apotemnophilia.

A Brief History of Apotemnophilia

There is not much in the medical literature about apotemnophilia. This is believed to be because people who suffer from apotemnophilia realize that their desire will be seen as a perversion and therefore few people actually come forward and report this mental illness. The term “apotemnophilia” was coined in an article by John Money and Gregg Furth (himself an apotemnophile). They reported two case studies. Each of the men under consideration wanted an amputation of his leg, and each had at least some sexual motivation for his desire. Therefore, apotemnophilia was classified as a paraphilia (which is defined as a pattern of recurring sexually arousing mental imagery or behavior that involves unusual and especially socially unacceptable sexual practices).³

Much more is known about apotemnophilia today than when Money and Furth published the case study. Today, apotemnophilia is no longer viewed as an illness with primarily erotic motives, as many sufferers have been identified whose sexual thoughts concerning amputation are considered to be “normal” by medical standards. More than anything, most apotemnophiles report feeling as though the limbs that they want amputated are not a part of them. As one sufferer puts it, “It is a desire to see myself, be myself, as I ‘know’ or ‘feel’ myself to be.”⁴

Many apotemnophiles trace the desire to be amputees back to a childhood event in which they saw an amputee. This is sometimes coupled with some sort of childhood trauma. Therefore, many apotemnophiles feel as though they should be amputees by the age of six or seven. However, since they realize that their desires are unusual, they generally do not mention them to anyone until much later in life. Also, since apotemnophiles realize that it is nearly impossible to get a surgeon to consent to removing their limbs, some of them resort to extreme measures in order to ensure that their limbs must be amputated. These have included such acts as lying on railroad tracks in order to be run over by trains, completely freezing their legs through, applying tourniquets, and attempted infections with gangrene, among other things.⁵

Current Viewpoints on Apotemnophilia

Currently, there are several views on what sort of mental illness apotemnophilia is. The following are the four most common competing viewpoints of apotemnophilia: (1) apotemnophilia as an extreme variant of Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD), (2) apotemnophilia as an analog of gender identity disorder (GID; also called transsexualism), (3) apotemnophilia as a factitious disorder, and (4) apotemnophilia as a neurological disease.

(1) Apotemnophilia as an extreme variant of Body Dysmorphic Disorder.

Apotemnophilia is believed by some to be an extreme of BDD, a disorder in which a person is excessively concerned or preoccupied with an imagined physical defect or minor anomaly in appearance. Most often people suffering from BDD are obsessed with changing facial features, but they could theoretically fixate on any feature (including

limbs). Though some patients who have BDD do speak with psychiatrists and therefore undergo drug or behavioral modification treatment, many seek out cosmetic surgeons or dermatologists and get the medical treatment needed to change their appearances. Unfortunately, most of the patients who receive surgical intervention end up dissatisfied with their treatment. More research is needed in order to determine with more certainty whether surgical treatment makes sense for those with BDD.

If apotemnophilia is eventually considered as a variant of BDD, then the question of whether apotemnophiles should be amputated would necessarily be tied in with the results of future studies on the effectiveness of surgical treatment for BDD. However, at this time, surgery would still seem to be an option under this model since it is what is done for other people with BDD.

(2) Apotemnophilia as an analog of Gender Identity Disorder.

Some people, notably Gregg Furth and Robert Smith, consider apotemnophilia an analog of Gender Identity Disorder (GID).⁶ They specifically do not consider it a variant of BDD because, as they say, “apotemnophiles do not believe that they have a defect in the limb or digit, for which they desire amputation. They are persons who need to have one or more healthy limbs or digits amputated to fit the way they see themselves.” In other words, the problem that the apotemnophile has is fundamentally different from that of the BDD sufferer because the apotemnophile is fully aware that his or her limb is normal but still desires a change to it, whereas the BDD sufferer sees a problem that no one else recognizes as a problem. Therefore, Furth and Smith say, apotemnophilia should be considered something more like GID, in which the affected individuals simply

identify more with the other gender rather than feeling as though there is some intrinsic problem with their bodies as they are.

If apotemnophilia is considered as an analog of GID, then, as with BDD, surgery would seem to be a legitimate response. Also, as with BDD, psychiatric treatment would also be a viable treatment option.

(3) Apotemnophilia as a factitious disorder.

Factitious disorders comprise a category of mental illness in which a person intentionally produces or pretends to have signs of illness so that they can be treated as sick people. This categorization specifically does not include malingering, which is defined as faking illness in order to get some external benefit (an example of this would be faking chronic back pain in order to be eligible for disability benefits). Richard L. Bruno, a psychologist at the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, believes that apotemnophilia ought to be considered Factitious Disability Disorder and that apotemnophiles' true motive for desiring amputation is their perception of the increased attention they will get as a result of the amputation.⁷

Currently, people with factitious disorders are referred to psychotherapy in order to resolve whatever underlying issues they may have. Family therapy is also often included so that the patient's family can have a better understanding of how to interact in such a way that is understanding to the patient but does not reward negative behavior. Clearly, if apotemnophilia is eventually considered a factitious disorder, then amputation will be out of the question because it would be viewed as encouraging negative behavior.

(4) Apotemnophilia as a neuropsychological disease.

There has been some preliminary evidence supporting the theory that apotemnophilia is actually due to a neurological problem. Those who support this viewpoint view apotemnophilia as the opposite of the “phantom limb” syndrome. Rather than having the feeling that a missing limb is present, apotemnophiles would by this description be not feeling the appropriate sensation in a limb that is present, which would contribute to their feeling that the limb should not be present.

If apotemnophilia were found to be a neuropsychological disease, it is unclear what a proper treatment for it could be. At the present time, there have been no medications developed, and conventional therapy has thus far proven ineffective. Taken together—the ambiguity of the diagnosis, the lack of medication, and the ineffectiveness of therapy—whether amputation would remain an option if apotemnophilia were found to be a neuropsychological disease is unclear.

A Case for Apotemnophilia as an Analog of GID

There are good reasons to be skeptical of diagnosing apotemnophilia as BDD, a factitious disorder, or a primarily neurological disease. First, it would seem that apotemnophilia does not line up well with BDD due to the differences between BDD sufferers’ images of themselves before therapy when compared to those of apotemnophiles. BDD sufferers view themselves as having some sort of flaw even when others try to tell them that none exists. On the other hand, apotemnophiles view themselves and their appendages as normal, but they still somehow feel as though they do not belong to them. If apotemnophilia were more like BDD, then it seems likely that apotemnophiles would view the limbs they want amputated as having some sort of (most

likely cosmetic) flaw that wasn't really there. However, apotemnophiles report no such perceived flaws when describing the limb they want removed. Therefore, apotemnophilia does not seem best described as a variant of BDD.

Second, it would seem that apotemnophilia is not particularly comparable with factitious disorders since one of the secondary effects of apotemnophilia is overachieving. This does not seem consistent with the general profile of people who have the factitious disorders, since their reason for wanting to be ill is in order is to assume the role of a patient. Generally, the vision of being a patient is being taken care of, not showing how much you really don't need to be taken care of.

Third, apotemnophilia could be neurological in origin. However, there is not enough evidence at this time in order to say with any degree of certainty whether it is or isn't. Additionally, there is no clear model of how apotemnophilia would be treated even if apotemnophiles had a common and diagnosable abnormal neurology. More research is needed in this area to determine if it is a plausible model as a causal mechanism for apotemnophilia.

At this time, it seems most plausible to consider apotemnophilia as an analog of GID. The characteristic that all apotemnophiles have in common is the feeling that one or more limbs just do not belong on their bodies. People with GID describe themselves as not being the anatomic sex they were born for essentially the same reason.

If we look at apotemnophilia as an analog of GID, then the obvious next step would be to consider whether the treatment process is similarly analogous to GID. Since we allow transgender surgery in cases in which psychotherapy is insufficient to help a patient, then we could theoretically allow elective amputation in situations when

psychotherapy is not enough for apotemnophiles (which is most of the time). It would seem that the process that we would follow would be to psychiatrically assess potential candidates for elective amputation, have them live for a certain amount of time as though they have had the amputation they desire (in situations when this is possible), and then make a decision on whether or not they should be granted the amputations they desire based on the evidence presented.

However, there is one primary difference between a transgender surgery and an elective amputation that is not addressed by this comparison is the fundamental difference between changing and permanently disabling someone. “Being a man or a woman is not a disability”.⁸ From some of the interviews that have been done, it would seem that there are most certainly apotemnophiles who report significantly increased happiness after having lost the limb they have for so long wanted to get rid of, just as there are transsexuals who report increased happiness from their sex changes. But if for some reason a transsexual is not satisfied and wants to revert back to his or her original gender, this is theoretically possible (given, there are some things that will never be the same, but it is possible). If a person amputates a limb, we do not by any means have the technology at this time to reattach that person’s limb at a later time. Therefore, even if apotemnophilia is considered a close analog to GID, the disabling effect of elective amputation as a treatment must be taken into account in a way that would not be considered in evaluating other treatments.

Societal Pressure on Apotemnophiles

If we view apotemnophilia as an analog of GID, we see that perhaps in some cases elective amputation would seem to be a reasonable treatment for apotemnophilia.

However, even though we are in a society with such precedents of people doing whatever they will with their bodies (sex changes, tattoos, extreme piercings, and all sorts of other things), when it was discovered that Dr. Smith had performed elective amputation, people were outraged. Why would this be? The reason why we do not outright accept elective amputation as a treatment for apotemnophilia is because it goes against our collective ideas about body image for a person to be missing limbs. In other words, our conception of body image is that of a person with all limbs still intact. Of course, if for some reason a person incidentally loses a limb, we do not object (there is no action to object to); instead, we feel sympathy that these people have to live without such an integral part of their bodies. We also often feel surprise when these people are not really limited much by not having the limb. However, it is simply inconceivable to us that a person could actually have a body image in which they wanted to part ways with something so precious as a limb. If it's a leg, won't they miss walking? If it's an arm, how will they fully dress themselves? Who would want to limit themselves in this way? We just cannot seem to make sense of this.

Of course, apotemnophiles realize that their body image does not match the rest of the society's. This is why so many of them never mention to anyone that they have a desire to be without a limb, even in some cases after they have already staged some sort of accident to lose the limb they wanted to be rid of. For those who do mention to someone close to them that they feel as though they should be without some limb, this is a huge act of trust because they know how unfathomable this is to the rest of society. This is most likely also why so many apotemnophiles also present with depression.

In conclusion, apotemnophiles have a very different body image than the rest of us. This also seems to affect the way they view themselves, such that they see their condition as something that is unfathomable to everyone else and therefore are a lot more likely to be depressed. I will turn, in chapter two, to another example that will further demonstrate how our self image is affected by societal pressures.

CHAPTER TWO

Societal Pressures on Accents

Accent Reduction Clinics

Lilli Ambro is a North Carolinian woman who runs The Perfect Voice, an “accent-reduction clinic”, a business that people come to in order to get help changing their accents. The business also offers speech-language therapy, voice therapy, body language, diction improvement, and professional communication skills, to name some of the other services.¹ Clearly, the purpose of the business is to change the way people present themselves to others, particularly in the business world. However, we will limit our discussion here to the accent-reduction aspect of her business.

Generally when one thinks of accents that people would go out of their way to change, one thinks of immigrants, who often cannot be understood because of their native accents. However, in some cases people who were born in America choose to have “accent reduction”, in which they try to reduce or eliminate the accent they have (and in so doing, pick up some other sort of accent).

In keeping with his focus on enhancement technology, Elliott focuses on Southerners who utilize accent reduction clinics rather than, for instance, foreigners who are far less likely to be understood when they speak than the Southerners who have spoken English all their lives.²

So why then would these people go through the trouble of accent reduction? Elliott suggests that American society places pressure on Southerners particularly because of the idea of status. (p. 10) Even though Americans generally consider their

“real selves” to be their inner selves, not the self they portray to the outer world, status still plays a large role in the way Americans act.

Elliott presents, as a contrast to a society in which the pursuit of status is very important, British society, in which class is a relatively immutable construct. (p. 10) Rather than people trying to move upward as they do in the American system, a person is expected to remain in their class or “be accused on class betrayal or, even worse, American-style social climbing”. (p. 11)

The Appeal of Accent Reduction

What distinguishes people who want to get accent reduction from those who don't? There don't seem to be any clear cut criteria that the people who Elliott writes about all seem to adhere to. Elliott says that most of the clients are people “who have to do a lot of public speaking” and white people. (p. 6) It is understandable that public speakers would be more likely to want accent reduction than those people who did not have to do public speaking simply because they generally have a lot less opportunity to become aware (and therefore self-conscious) of their voices. However, when it comes to the fact that most of the people who are choosing to go to accent reduction clinics are white, there doesn't seem to be any reason why this would be. Unless, of course, it is true that minorities have more pressing issues to deal with in terms of fitting in and being accepted, notably the kinds of things that are more difficult to change or hide (like skin color).

However, clearly these factors are insufficient in and of themselves to explain all of the southerners who choose to get accent reduction. Perhaps the people who want to change their accents also experience more anxiety as they speak period. Maybe a lot of it

just comes down to who knows accent reduction clinics even exist and, of those people, who has the money to pay to get their accents reduced. However, it seems doubtful that the question of who would want accent reduction would have nothing to do with status. If a person can achieve higher status (whether that is through more respect in the workplace or some other measure), there are certainly some people who will choose that option. The pursuit of status may be the link that makes both public speakers and white people more likely to want to change their accents.

There are clearly people for whom there is no appeal for accent reduction. Elliott gives two examples of people who most certainly did not want to change their accents. One is an assistant pastor who claimed that “the accent-reduction classes were changing his personality” and the other is a news reporter who, after going through a day of the classes, says that she thanks the Lord that “ ‘All of the accent reduction classes in America can’t take the Southern out of [her].’ ” Though on the surface these two comments after having had and rejected changing accents may be different, it would seem that they stem from the same thing: something inside of both of these individuals made them not want to “sell out” in spite of the advantages they could possibly get if they chose the accent reduction.

In the case of the assistant pastor, his senior pastor has told him that the congregation would not take him seriously with his accent. If this assistant would ever like to move up and take on a greater role in his church, then it would seem like the logical decision for him would be to modify his accent enough to be accepted (and perhaps even still talk the way he usually talks outside of the church business he must attend to). However, whatever his personality is, he finds in it sufficient reason to not go

through with changing his accent. In so acting, he directly stands up to the pressure that his senior puts on him. His senior, the congregation, and society all feed into one another and, each in its own way, encourages this man to change his accent through telling him how much easier life could be, but he still chooses to stay true to himself (for him, it seems that he needed his inner self to match the self he portrayed to the world on a daily basis). (p. 9)

As for the news reporter, her comment clearly states that she has no interest in altering her accent. However, from her profession (reporting), it is reasonable to assume that she would have more opportunities available to her in her career if she was able to go on the air in whatever location she may be offered a job. In order for that to happen, she would need to be able to speak without her southern accent. Again, with the reporter, there is something that is more important to her than the difference changing her accent could make in her life. Perhaps it is pride in her southern heritage and upbringing. Whatever her reasoning, she seems to feel strongly about not wanting to have her accent changed. (p. 8)

The Medical Language Surrounding Accent Reduction

Elliott makes an important point when he mentions the medicalization that has occurred with the description of accent reduction. The term “accent reduction clinic” has far more of a connotation of something that needs medical treatment than an “accent changing clinic” or even an “accent changing establishment”. Even though everyone has to have an accent of some type and there is no intrinsic value to having any one accent over another, it still seems to be implied that somehow some accents are superior to others. As Elliott writes, “Nobody explicitly teaches us this, but we somehow absorb the

lesson that north of the Mason-Dixon line a southern accents generally codes for stupidity or simplemindedness.” (p. 5) If one sort of accent is judged as superior to another and we have medicalized accents, it seems only natural to infer that the pressure to change or “reduce” certain types of accents may increase in the future, just as the societal pressure for many other sorts of things have been increased over the course of time. However, much of what society pressures its members into is not necessarily something that its members have given thought to. Perhaps society does not want all the accents other than the northern accent to be reduced into obscurity.

The Idea of Self-Improvement in Accent Reduction

Also important in explaining the appeal of accent reduction in Americans is our relationship with the idea of self-improvement. (p. 13) America was founded with the ideal that everyone should have an opportunity to live life (for the most part) in whatever way they see fit. However, with an opportunity to succeed at what you want comes an opportunity to fail in those same endeavors. Therefore, Americans have generally viewed self-improvement as a great thing since it means that an individual is, in whatever way, taking charge of his or her own life and somehow increasing his or her own chances of living whatever that life is that they want. And, in the same vein, anything that can be viewed as a form of self-improvement has generally been accepted by Americans for these reasons.

The changing of one’s accent could be viewed as a form of self-improvement simply because it gives a person the opportunity to live life in a way more in accordance with what they may want. But the biggest way that altering an accent would be viewed as self-improvement would be through the very obvious increase in status a person gets

from reducing a strong southern accent more in favor of a more northern accent. Since status is a factor that society exerts so much pressure on people to increase, it would make sense that anything that is done to increase status, whether or not there is any intrinsic benefit to the act itself, would be likely to be viewed as an improvement over the prior state the person was in.

Relating this to Apotemnophilia

Just as we deal with in apotemnophilia, for those people who decide to undergo accent reduction, there is strong societal pressure at work, from the medicalization of the “problem” of having certain accents, to the view that self-improvement is something an American should not have any problems doing (and the idea inherent in this viewpoint that having a more preferred accent is actually improvement). However, this is one crucial difference between apotemnophiles and Southerners who want accent changes; the apotemnophile is under intense social pressure not to do something that is considered socially unacceptable, while the Southerner who wants to change his accent is under intense social pressure to do something that is considered, at the very least, socially acceptable (and may be considered almost necessary in some cases, for example for newscasters).

CHAPTER THREE

Societal Pressure on Black Americans as Demonstrated in *The Bluest Eye*

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* tells of a horrible act in just the second sentence: "Pecola was having her father's baby". We learn shortly thereafter that the speaker is Claudia MacTeer, a friend of Pecola's. Through Claudia's eyes, as well as those of each of the narrators Morrison elects to use at different points in her story, we can see the devastating effects that subscribing to a white ideal of beauty causes for the black community, as the White ideal is what makes the Breedlove family so dysfunctional and therefore, in a sense, creates the sort of situation in which Pecola's father could come to rape her. I will look at some of the characters in the text in order to determine some of the effects that specifically happen to them as a result of their belief in the idealness of the white way of life.

Pecola Breedlove

Pecola is the primary example of a character that possesses the white ideal for beauty. She loves Shirley Temple and the young girl on the wrapper of Mary Jane candies. Pecola is convinced of her ugliness, which she and her mother and brother have simply by virtue of being. (Her father, Cholly, is the exception; he is considered ugly because of his actions.) When Pecola has problems, she has two wishes. The first is that she could simply disappear when bad things happen. The second, and more unusual wish that she has, is that she could have blue eyes so that "nobody would want to do ugly things in front of her". Both of these wishes are linked to Pecola. In a scene in which

Pecola goes to a store owned by a white immigrant in order to buy penny candy, she realizes that “he does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see”. If not for Pecola’s own eyes, she may have had no sense that she had an existence at all, since there already were people who were incapable of actually seeing her. Additionally, Morrison has the omniscient narrator mention that “thrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty. She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people.” This implies that if Pecola was somehow able to actually get her blue eyes, it would affect not only the way she was seen in the world, but also what she would see. In Pecola’s case, the way she sees life has everything to do with the way she is seen. If we go back to the example of the store owner, if we assume that Pecola’s having blue eyes would allow him to recognize her, then Pecola would have never seen his indifference to her as she bought candy at his store. If that were the case, then it is possible that rather than thinking that the dandelions were ugly weeds, perhaps she could have retained her earlier thought that they were pretty. This is significant because, as I will discuss more in the character of Claudia, Pecola realizes that others around her think that the dandelions are ugly. If she had the strength to realize that beauty still exists outside of what others can appreciate, then perhaps she could have extended her definition of beauty to include people who did not fit the white standard of beauty. However, Pecola’s sight is so linked to the way she is seen, she has no way of seeing beauty outside of what is prescribed for her.

Pecola goes through life not knowing how to deal with her problems. She is continually bullied, ignored, and neglected. Eventually she is impregnated by Cholly and she ends up going to Soaphead Church, a so-called mystic, in order to ask for the blue

eyes she has for so long wanted. Soaphead leads her to believe that she will get the blue eyes that she desires, and it turns out, she does get the blue eyes she has wanted for so long. However, the issue is that in order to finally “have blue eyes”, which Soaphead cannot physically give her, she ends up losing her sanity.

Cholly Breedlove

Cholly is probably the most problematic of all the characters in *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison clearly portrays Cholly as a human being with his own past that contributes greatly to his choice to rape his daughter.

Throughout his lifetime, Cholly has been subjected to unthinkable abuses, from being left to die on a trash heap by his mother to losing the only person who took the time to care for him as a child. However, the act that probably shaped Cholly’s life in the strongest way was the time the white hunters intruded on his first lovemaking experience and forced him to continue while they watched. In the Afterword of the book, Morrison refers to the white men’s act as rape. Clearly this is, to her, in some ways just as horrid an act as the one he later performs on Pecola. It is made more terrible by the vivid description of relative normalcy Cholly’s story holds until that point. Though Cholly’s life before his rape was not the happiest life, he still managed to derive joy from it at times. Particularly, had the rape not happened, then perhaps his first sexual experience might have been included in the greatest moments of his life. Instead, it leads to his running away from home, finding and being rejected by his father, and his becoming a free man. Though it may sound like Cholly’s becoming a free man would be a good thing, it actually meant to Cholly that he was free to lead a life reacting to things “based on what he felt at the moment”. (p. 161) Though sometimes he wanted to do good things

(“be gentle when [a woman] was sick” or “live his fantasies”), there also were times that he wanted to do terrible things (“[kill] three white men” or rape his daughter while she did dishes).

Though Cholly’s body image is not mentioned as affected by the rape, his state of mind still is affected by what he expects his role as a man and a father to be. As he watches Pecola washing the dishes right before he rapes her, he wonders, “What could he do for her—ever?...What could a burned-out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter?” He has imbibed the image of an image of manhood and fatherhood that his status as a “free man” who has “no idea how to raise children” does not allow him to fulfill. He has had no one in his own life to teach him what being a father is, and so he simply “reacted to them...based on what he felt at the moment”. With this sort of approach to fatherhood, Cholly is not equipped to handle his unexpected feelings for Pecola in an acceptable way.

Pauline Breedlove

Pauline, Pecola’s mother, has felt like the damage that was done to her foot at the age of 2 by stepping on a nail has determined her life. However, the omniscient narrator that Morrison uses in the chapter about Pauline thinks otherwise, claiming that “the end of her lovely beginning was probably the cavity in one of her front teeth”. It is in losing this tooth that Pauline decides to “settle down to just being ugly”.

Before Pauline went to Lorain, her experience “was something hateful” with white people. She doesn’t elaborate about exactly what happened between her and those white people, but we begin to see what sort of relationships she has with white people and the power structure in general through her jobs as a housekeeper. At her first job,

Pauline does not at all understand the woman she works for. Though Black people have the reputation for being dirty (as evidenced by Geraldine's thoughts when she throws Pecola out of the house), Pauline sees that if she "left [her boss] on her own, she'd drown in dirt", yet her boss continually hangs around and tries to tell Pauline how to do her job (p. 119). Also, her boss is perpetually unhappy over what Pauline deems small things, thinking that "with a pretty house like that and all the money [her boss' family] could holt on to, they would enjoy one another". Rather than enjoying a lifestyle that, if nothing else, is far better than Pauline's, Pauline's boss is forever upset. However, when Cholly shows up to the woman's house drunk and wanting money, the woman refuses to allow Pauline to work for her anymore or to pay her the money she owes her unless Pauline agrees to leave Cholly.

This White woman is a different sort of White person other than who Pauline is used to encountering. Though she means well in wanting Pauline to leave Cholly, she doesn't seem to understand that Pauline may have her own reasons for not leaving. As Pauline reminisces, "it didn't seem none too bright for a black woman to leave a black man for a white woman." This woman does not seem to ever stop and consider Pauline's perspective. Then, in refusing to pay Pauline for the work she has done unless she leaves Cholly, this woman uses the privilege that her race provides her in order to manipulate Pauline. This woman was not "something hateful" like the white folks that Pauline had been used to from further south, but this woman still does not value Pauline as a person who is capable of making her own decisions.

In between the time that Pauline works for the first family that she worked for and the Fisher family, however, a lot of changes go on with her. It all begins because she

starts going to the movies. Although Pauline already is acquainted with the white ideal, her “education in the movies” (p. 122) reinforces this to her; afterward, “she was never able...to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty”. One day while Pauline is at the movies, “trying to look like Jean Harlow” (a white actress), she loses her tooth. (p. 123) At this point, she feels that she is hopeless; she no longer puts any effort into her appearance. Since Pauline has, in losing her tooth, managed to fail miserably in imitating the white standard of beauty, and since she has no other conception of beauty aside from that one, Pauline begins to view herself as ugly. Pauline’s view of herself as ugly transplants itself onto her children as well, and because of her viewing her children as ugly she seems to have an easier time neglecting them. Just like Pauline felt that she was hopeless and therefore gave up on keeping up her own appearance, and just as she felt that their home was hopeless and gave up on trying to keep it in good order, she felt that her kids were ugly and therefore hopeless. She gave up putting any effort into their upbringing.

The fact that Pauline is not properly teaching her children is clear when Pecola has her first menstrual period. Pecola has no idea what is going on with her body and begins to panic; however, Frieda MacTeer, who is a year younger than Pecola is, has already been told by her own mother what menstruation is and how a woman is to handle it. Though it is understandable that Pecola still may have been surprised to look down and find herself menstruating, if Pauline had taken the time to explain this to Pecola, then most likely Pecola would have never had to experience the terror she went through that day. However, clearly Pauline did not do her job as a mother in teaching Pecola about what womanhood entails, and in that particular case, it showed clearly.

The second white family that Pauline ends up going to work for, the Fisher family, does seem to truly appreciate what she does for them, even going so far as to call Pauline “the ideal servant” (p. 128). They allow Pauline autonomy in doing her work, and even go so far as to give her a nickname (Polly) which is something she has never had even as a child. Pauline, in coming to value this white family so much more than she does her own, ends up assigning “all the meaningfulness of her life” to her work with hardly a second thought to her own husband or children (Pecola calls her Mrs. Breedlove).

With the Fisher family, something strange has happened to Pauline. Even though Pauline has subscribed to the white ideal, found out from personal experience that she cannot meet it, and then moved on in the life she thought she was destined to have, Pauline ends up happening to find a white family that not only employs her, but also accepts and appreciates her. Since Pauline no longer assigns any value to herself, she gets all of her validation from the Fishers. Therefore, there is a sense in which it makes sense that Pauline has given herself fully over to her job. However, the reader cannot help but to get the feeling that there is something terrible about this when, after Pecola accidentally knocks over a cobbler that Pauline has made and scalds herself in the process, Pauline inflicts even more pain on Pecola, sends her out without so much as a single kind word, turns her attention to the small Fisher girl, and then refuses to tell the little girl that Pecola is her daughter.

It is clear to the reader that Pauline was better off without ever subscribing to the white ideal; it leads her to completely neglect her own family in favor of giving her all for a white family, who she very well may care for much more than she does her own

family. Pauline helps set the stage, through her neglect of her family, for Cholly to end up raping Pecola.

Claudia MacTeer

Claudia MacTeer is a particularly interesting character to look at in terms of how society's white ideal can affect self image because she intimates changes between her nine year old self, who was present during the events leading up to Pecola's rape, and the presumably grown self that she is as she actually relates the story to the reader.

As a young girl, Claudia refused to even entertain notions of white superiority. Though she sensed that others felt this way, she was able to still convince herself that this actually was not the case. When Claudia and her sister Frieda learn that Pecola is pregnant, they hear people continually talking about how ugly the child will be, with some people going on to say that the baby would be so ugly that "she [Pecola] be lucky if it don't live". (p. 189) Rather than absorbing everyone else's opinion of the baby's ugliness, Claudia forms a picture of it in her mind's eye. When she describes the child, she describes the baby in the following way:

I thought about the baby that everybody wanted dead, and I saw it very clearly. It was in a dark, wet place, its head covered with great O's of wool, the black face holding, like nickels, two clean black eyes, the flared nose, kissing-thick lips, and the living, breathing silk of black skin. No synthetic yellow bangs suspended over marble-blue eyes, no pinched nose and bowline mouth. (p. 190)

Though Claudia, just as Pecola, has grown up in this society that values white as more beautiful, she does not view whiteness as inherently better, even though everything seems to tell her that she should. Since Claudia doesn't quite understand what it is about whiteness that makes so many people view it as superior to blackness, she tries to figure it out in her own childlike ways. For instance, she destroyed the white baby dolls she got

as Christmas presents as a child because she wanted “to see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped [her], but apparently only [her].” When she would destroy these dolls, the adults would invariably get very angry. Claudia does not yet understand that the only reason that whiteness is considered more beautiful is because a racist society has placed value on being white. And since she can’t understand that, there really is no way that she can understand how or why the adults in her community have come to adopt this ideal as their own rather than appreciate their own beauty.

However, the Claudia that narrates the tale seems to have changed. For instance, at the beginning of the text when Pecola and Frieda are discussing “how cu-ute Shirley Temple was”, Claudia is thinking about how much she hates Shirley Temple. However, she goes on to mention that since she was “younger than both Frieda and Pecola, [she] *had not yet arrived* at the turning point in the development of [her] psyche which would allow [her] to love [Shirley]. What [she] felt at that time was unsullied hatred” (emphasis added). In this statement, it is clear that Claudia now views it as just a normal part of development that she should come to love Shirley Temple. Claudia “learned much later to worship [Shirley], just as [Claudia] learned to delight in cleanliness, knowing, even as [Claudia] learned, that the change was adjustment without improvement.” Claudia mentions that this change happened because she learned that her hatred of whiteness was not acceptable, and she felt she underwent a “conversion from pristine sadism to fabricated hatred, to fraudulent love” in order to cover up the shame she had from hating whiteness.

Throughout the novel, even though Frieda and Pecola are not that much older than Claudia is, the way Claudia thinks about life and the experiences she has are very different from those of Frieda and Pecola, which is what makes her narration so insightful. Though she is older and has come to experience the same things that Pecola and Frieda experience, she still can remember that she did not feel that way about things at the time.

Maureen Peal

Maureen Peal is a different sort of character in that she is never identified as Black, even though she is clearly a mixed (“high-yellow”) child. Maureen comes in and, even though some amount of Black evidently is in her:

She enchanted the entire school. When teachers called on her, they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn’t trip her in the halls; white boys didn’t stone her, white girls didn’t such their teeth when she was assigned to be their work partners; black girls stepped aside when she wanted to use the sink in the girls’ toilet, and their eyes genuflected under sliding lids.

By the way this description is given, it is pretty obvious that other young black girls are treated the exact opposite of the way Maureen is treated.

Even though she is treated extraordinarily well in comparison to how the other black girls are treated, there is no question that Maureen still is black. However, when Maureen begins picking on Pecola and Frieda and Claudia step up to defend Pecola, Maureen notably calls them “black e mos” and reminds them that, indeed, she *is* cute (with the strong implication that none of the rest of the girls are cute).

Maureen seems to be in complete denial that she is also partially black. Just as she is calling Pecola, Frieda, and Claudia “Black e mos”, conceivably one of the white children consider her an ugly “black e mo”. However, even though Maureen’s character

leaves a lot to be desired, she still is the one that everyone (children and adults alike) envy. They value someone who has no problem putting down someone darker in order to build up herself. And sadly, the white ideal is so strong that just because Maureen is noticeably part white, she benefits from that ideal, and can call others out for lacking that ideal just as she could if she were white. Though we get no updates on what happens to Maureen past this point, it cannot be good for Maureen to grow up with this warped idea of herself as somehow better than all the other black people in her community. Though she is lighter skinned than the other members of her community, she cannot fully measure up to the white ideal any more than Pecola can.

Tying it Together

There are a few things that must be noted about the text. First of all, simply by virtue of being born black, none of these characters will ever measure up to the White ideal that society holds in front of them. Even if Pecola gets her blue eyes, she is not white. Even though Maureen is treated far better than any of the darker skinned black girls at school, she is not white either.

Additionally, the Breedlove family is very deeply dysfunctional, almost to the point of being an unrealistic family. However, it was important for Morrison's purpose to put all these particular people together in order to show the harm that black people embracing the white ideal of life could do. A reasonable example of a family is the MacTeer family. Though Claudia, from her child's perspective, may not always understand the motives her parents have, we see that they are hugely protective of their daughters when they learn that Mr. Henry, the man who had been renting a room from the family, touched Frieda inappropriately. (p. 100) Conversely, after Pecola had been

raped by Cholly (her own father; clearly he is not doing his job of protecting), rather than believing her daughter about it, Pauline comes in and beats Pecola so badly that Pecola was “lucky to be alive”. (p. 189)

Finally, it is important to note that Maureen is in a highly enviable position. She is allowed to have terrible character and still be someone who everyone loves, simply because of the color of her skin. If Maureen had the same skin color that everyone else had, then not only would she have been not admired, she most likely would have been actively disliked or censured because of her behavior.

What if it were possible, with a few months of working at it, for any black person who desired a lighter skin color (this definitely would have been most of the characters in the book) to get it? Or what if it simply became possible to manipulate DNA so that black children would instead come out white? It seems unreasonable to think that anyone wants Maureen to retain the advantage that her skin color permits her, and it seems reasonable to think that the effect might be diluted if there were more people who looked like her. However, when something like skin color exits the realm of things that are incidental about a person and becomes something that can be controlled, then it becomes subject to that American ethic of self-improvement that was discussed in the second chapter. It does not take too large a leap of the imagination to think it possible that anyone who did not initially avail themselves of the option to lighten either their own skin or that of their kids would increasingly face pressure when others did participate in this.

Of course, it is also possible that, as in the case of apotemnophilia, even though it would be possible to change skin color through some sort of technological means, it

would be highly socially unacceptable for one to alter their skin color. In that case, I do not think that it would be too surprising a stretch to see the phenomenon of “passing” but among people who had undergone whatever the procedure was to change skin color rather than those who were just born with the skin color that would allow them to do so.

CHAPTER FOUR

Societal Pressure on Black Americans as Discussed in *Black Sexual Politics*

In her book *Black Sexual Politics*, Patricia Hill Collins discusses how the power structure that has been set up in the world at the expense of Black people has much to do with perceptions of sexuality. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the ways in which sexuality is differentiated between white people and black people. Additionally, I will identify some of the ways that this puts pressure on black people and some of the ways they react to this pressure.

The White Standard (Hegemonic Masculinity and Femininity)

There are standards of masculinity and femininity. These standards seem to have a lot to do with race. Collins argues that these standards have always been a part of the justification of racism, even when what has been acceptable with racism has changed.

She writes that

...the core binary of normal/deviant becomes ground zero for justifying racism...For racism, the point of deviance is created by a *normalized White heterosexuality* that depends on a *deviant Black heterosexuality* to give it meaning.” (p. 97)¹

So, the most acceptable form of sexuality in the American culture would be White heterosexuality while any sort of sexuality Black people have would necessarily be lesser. But what features of White heterosexuality are those features that would differentiate it from this “deviant Black heterosexuality” that Collins mentions? Well, to get at that question, it is necessary to look at White masculinity and femininity separately.

White Masculinity

Many of Collins' features of White masculinity will seem like they are just features of masculinity in general. This is because White masculinity is the standard for masculinity overall in America. Here I will discuss some of the features of the hegemonic masculinity.

Collins points out that America is run by elite White men (p. 185). Therefore, in understanding what sorts of qualities define these men, one can understand what the ideals of masculinity are.

Exercise control. One of the primary characteristics is control. According to Collins, "'real' men exercise control not just over women but also over their own emotions, in leadership positions, and over all forms of violence." (p. 189) Common experience does seem to bear this out, with women often being considered as being run by their emotions and men generally considered more guided by reason. However, since White men are likely to have greater power than other men in American society, the scope of their control tends to be greater than that of most other men. For example, of the hundred members of the U. S. Senate, seventeen of them are women, and two are men who are not white.² That leaves eighty-one White male senators. Through their various responsibilities, whether it be drafting legislation, presiding over impeachment trials, or confirming presidential influence, these senators have a tremendous influence on the running of America. Additionally, most of the current senior officers in the military are White men. These officers are very much in a position of control over the usage or threat of violence, whether that is in armed conflict with other countries or, say, to help maintain order when the police are unable to such as during the LA race riots of 1992.

Maturity. Another important feature of masculinity is maturity. A “real man”, Collins says, is going to do things in such a way that is unquestionably mature.

...“real” men are not financially dependent on others, but instead support others. They take responsibility for their families by getting married and financially supporting their wives and children. They are neither sexual renegades running from one woman to another nor pimps and hustlers who expect women to support them...Unemployed and underemployed working-class and poor men who fail to meet these criteria of masculinity are depicted as irresponsible, and the number of children they father with their unmarried partners provides evidence for their sexual irresponsibility and refusal to grow up. (p. 192)

Although not all White men measure up to the standard in this regard, but with the power structure in America the way it is, White men are more likely to be financially independent simply by virtue of being more likely to be employed. Looking at the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ published unemployment rates for the fourth quarter of 2011, the unemployment rate for White people was lower than those of both Blacks and Hispanics (the only racial group listed that had a lower unemployment rate than that of White people was the Asian people).³

Requires subordinate forms of masculinity for its meaning. This goes for just about anything. Merriam-Webster defines hegemony as “the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group.” Implicit in the idea of there being a dominant group is the idea that there is at least one other group that is not dominant. If there is no subordinate form of masculinity to compare hegemonic masculinity to, then it would not be hegemonic masculinity. Instead, it would be either the only form of masculinity, or there would just be multiple equally acceptable forms of masculinity rather than one that is considered superior to the others.

White femininity

As is the case with White masculinity, White femininity is, here in America, the hegemonic femininity. White women tend to have certain features that other women either cannot have or are far less likely to have.

Physical appearance. An important part of femininity is physical appearance. The American ideal for beauty has long been “young women with milky White skin, long blond hair, and slim figures” (p. 194). However, as a whole the standard of beauty is first expanded to include all White women before it is expanded to women of other races. It is also important to note that, for this aspect of femininity, a woman can either naturally fall into these categories or they can fall into some other categories. It is not like the categories of masculinity, where men are supposed to go out and act a certain way in order to determine their masculinity. Though there are some things a woman can do to change her outward appearance (dyeing hair, exercising in order to lose weight), some bodies cannot be forced into becoming the ideal (for instance, there are many women whose physical shape does not support their ever becoming a size 0).

Behavior. Also, in order to be appropriately feminine, “women are expected to defer to men, and those women who project a submissive demeanor allegedly receive better treatment than those who do not.” (p. 196) Since men are expected to control, it seems reasonable that women would then be expected to submit to men. Just as a woman’s physical appearance is a relatively passive way of determining femininity, submissiveness just further reaffirms this passive ideal for women. In this same vein, it is easy to see why middle-to-upper class women are less likely to work outside the home. Working would be active, while staying at home is passive. However, Collins notes that

“the higher the status of a woman, the less likely she is to work, and the more likely she is to be married and have access to income generating property.” (p. 198) This effectively links a woman’s status to the man she ends up with (and decreases the likelihood that a woman who is single or who does not have a man who fits into the White male ideal will have a higher status than those women selected by the men who fit into the hegemonic masculinity).

Weak Man/Strong Woman (How Black People Do Not Measure Up to the Hegemonic Standard)

Due to the prevalence of the White standard and the ways that Black people do not meet them (Black men cannot seem as strong as the ideal and Black women cannot afford to be as submissive/dependent as White women), we get the weak man/strong woman hypothesis.

Black Masculinity

Maturity. If we define maturity in the terms that Collins has defined it in (financial independence and responsibility for a family), then it is far more difficult to Black men to be “mature”. If we look again at unemployment data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, then we will see that specifically for White men and Black men, there has been no month over the last ten years in which the unemployment rates for the two groups have been equal; in fact, generally the unemployment rate for Black men is about double that of White men. If a Black man is twice as likely to be unemployed as a White man is, then he is most certainly less likely to be financially independent. Even if a particular Black man has a job, stays with one woman and only has children with her,

the family as a whole is still more likely to need to also rely on income by the woman than a White family would be.

Exercising control. If we look back at what Collins says that hegemonic masculinity has males exercising control over (women, their emotions, leadership positions, and all forms of violence), we see that many of these are difficult, if not outright impossible, for Black men to have much control over. It is much more difficult for a man to control a woman when he is dependent on her. Additionally, as I discussed above, the leadership positions available to Black men are also much fewer than those for White men. If we return to the examples of the Senate and the military, there are no Black males on the Senate, and of the top officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, there was only one black man represented (Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army Lloyd J. Austin III). So, though Black men are certainly free to exercise control in whatever capacity they can, they generally do not have the same platform for leadership that White men do.

If Black men do not measure up to hegemonic masculinity, what defines Black masculinity? The answer is simple. Black men are defined primarily by their bodies, and the measures of worth are bodily strength and sexual prowess. In order to justify the enslavement of Black men, the White power structure had to consider Black men as “big, strong, and stupid”. Additionally, White people had to view Black men as inherently wild and violent. Collins writes that “this combination of violence and sexuality made Black men inherently unsuitable for work until they were trained by White men and placed under their discipline and control. To explain these relations, White elites created the controlling image of the buck”. (p. 56) The White man, through this image of the

buck, made Black men out to be animals that could be partially domesticated by the White man's influence. This sort of viewpoint, in which "controlling images routinely applied to African American men all worked to deny Black men the work of the mind that routinely translates into wealth and power", can have only contributed to the idea that, after emancipation, the Black man was a danger to White women.

Black men were routinely considered as merely animals, or at best an inferior sort of man. He "has no intelligence" and the formal education system is often not friendly to him, so he does not develop his intellect even while free. Thus, he ends up buying into these stereotypes and believing that what should be important to him is his physical strength (whether that is for athletics or to be more protected on the streets) and his sexuality (since he is linked to animals, then animal sexuality makes sense to him).

All of these factors in Black men (the lack of financial independence, not staying with their families, and the low amount of control compared to the hegemonic masculinity) all lead to Black men's being labeled as weaker than white men.

Black femininity

Physical appearance. If the standard of beauty for women is "young women with milky White skin, long blond hair, and slim figures", and if there are some women who cannot force themselves into the American beauty standard, then Black women would certainly be included in those women who cannot make themselves into the standard. A Black woman can never become a White woman. Even if she dyes her hair blond and has a slim figure, she is not White and therefore she does not meet the standard. As Collins says, "reliance on these standards of beauty automatically render the majority of African American women at best as less beautiful, and at worst, ugly." (p. 195)

If physical appearance is a big part of our American definition of femininity, then Black women are already at a huge disadvantage over White women in terms of being considered feminine simply by virtue of not being White.

Behavior. Black women traditionally have not been able to engage in the sort of passive lifestyles that have defined hegemonic femininity. Generally speaking, most Black women in America have had to work. In times of slavery, women were not allowed to not work simply because they were women. Since slave owners did not have to pay the slaves for their labor, it would have been foolish from a business perspective to allow only the men to work when they still were responsible for the women. Once slavery was ended, Black women still did not have the same opportunities to not work because, as I mentioned earlier, Black men are twice as likely as White men are to be unemployed. Additionally, due to discriminatory policies that have occurred because of racism, Black women are also less likely than White women to have access to income-generating property that may have been passed down from prior generations. And in addition to all of this, Black women are more likely to be single parents because Black men's primary show of masculinity comes in physical strength and sexuality.

Cholly and Pauline in *The Bluest Eye* most certainly fit into these conceptions of Black masculinity and femininity. If they fit into the hegemonic conceptions of masculinity and femininity, then Cholly would have been the breadwinner of the family and Pauline would have been able to stay at home. Instead, these roles are reversed. We don't get enough insight into Cholly to understand why he is no longer employed; however, we see that Pauline takes the responsibility of being the breadwinner onto herself because Cholly is not doing so, since for much of the time while he did work she

did not. Also, Pauline is a far cry from the submissive woman that the hegemonic ideal calls for from a woman; she views Cholly as “a no-count man, whom God wanted her to punish”. (p. 42) Cholly, on the other hand, needs Pauline because she is something that “he could touch and therefore hurt.” (p. 42)

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have discussed portions of Carl Elliott’s *Better than Well*, Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, and Patricia Hill Collins’ *Black Sexual Politics* in order to see what these texts have to say on how societal pressure. We see that societal pressure can act both to cause people to act (accent reduction) and not to act (apotemnophilia). This same pressure can affect small things in people’s life (whether people find themselves beautiful) or the most major aspects of life (whether people find their own families worthy of their attention and effort). And essentially the same pressures can have a relatively small effect on one person (Claudia) while completely destroying another person (Pecola).

This is important because so much of the time, people go through life without giving much conscious thought to societal pressure. And without thinking about societal pressure, there is no questioning of those pressures. It is doubtful that many of the people who want to change their accents stop to wonder why society seems to think less of their accents, even when they do acknowledge that society’s general opinion on their accents is a major reason why they wish to change their accents. Similarly, though many black people do question why their society puts so many demands on them that they cannot meet (such as having lighter or white skin), many more do not question these demands

and simply try to meet them, taking upon themselves unnecessary disappointment when they inevitably do not meet these demands.

This is a problem for all of society. We do not want pressures that we cannot even name or explain to ourselves to determine the fates of so many people. Rather, we need to work on recognizing what these societal pressures are in order to give ourselves the best chance possible at producing effective ways to deal with them.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 1

1. Pennie Taylor, ““My Left Leg Was Not Part of Me,”” *The Guardian*, February 6, 2000.
2. Cherry Norton, “Disturbed Patients Have Healthy Limbs Amputated,” *The Independent*, February 1, 2000.
3. John Money, Russell Jobaris, and Gregg Furth, “Apotemnophilia: Two Cases of Self-Demand Amputation as a Paraphilia,” *The Journal of Sex Research* (May 1977).
4. Carl Elliott, *Better than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream*, (New York : W.W. Norton, 2003).
5. Elliott, *Better than Well*
6. Gregg Furth and Robert Smith, *Apotemnophilia: Information, Questions, Answers, and Recommendations About Self-Demand Amputation*, (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books, 2000).
7. Richard L. Bruno, “Devotees, Pretenders and Wannabes: Two Cases of Factitious Disability Disorder,” *Sexuality and Disability* (1997).
8. Jesse Ellison, “Cutting Desire,” *Newsweek* (October 28, 2011).

Chapter 2

1. Lilli Ambro, The Perfect Voice, <http://perfectvoice.net/index.htm>

2. This reference, as well as all the parenthetical references are from: Carl Elliott, *Better than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream*, (New York : W.W. Norton, 2003).

Chapter 3

1. This and all other parenthetical references are from: Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, (New York: Plume Book, 1994).

Chapter 4

1. This and all other parenthetical references are from: Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).
2. This information can be found on <http://www.senate.gov/>
3. This information can be found on <http://www.bls.gov/>
4. This information can be found on the following web sites:
<http://www.navy.mil/swf/index.asp>, <http://www.army.mil/>, <http://www.af.mil/>,
<http://www.marines.mil/Pages/Default.aspx>

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