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Engaging F-words to create change: Rape, representation, and performance

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This essay, inspired by feminism, examines a program of engaged public anthropology through student-led theater that uses what is often considered to be 'bad language' in U.S. colleges and universities. We suggest that the appropriation of taboo language varieties and taboo words in plays written by student-playwrights and performed by professional actors in front of professors, administrators and student peers creates a powerful context for breaking the silence surrounding rape that then puts students at risk. Critical attention to the student-playwrights' use of the f-word in the public production of Seeing Rape suggests there is a place for it on campus.

Keywords sexualized violence, campus rape prevention, taboo, theater, African American English, languages other than English

> As we think about worlds that might one day become thinkable, sayable, legible, the opening up of the foreclosed and the saying of the unspeakable become part of the very "offense" that must be committed in order to expand the domain of linguistic survival. The resignification of speech requires opening new contexts, and hence producing legitimation in the new and future forms. (Butler 1997, 41)

Introduction

In the spring of 2017, we proudly walked into the office of the president of John Jay College with one of our star students, Jasmine García. Jasmine García had earned her own entry and ours into this inner circle of elegance, complete with white tablecloths, floral arrangements, beverages, and hors d'oeuvres, because the editors of the college's student journal, *John Jay's Finest*, deemed a play that she had written worthy of publication. Parents and family members of the other dozen or so students who had also earned recognition with their exceptional writing attended. And so did their professors, the people who submitted their pieces, as we had, for consideration by *John Jay's Finest*. At this beautiful event hosted by President Jeremy Travis were also other colleagues, staff members, and the journal's editors.

We were proud to be Jasmine García's professors, because when she first read her play, *Jubilee*, in class, it knocked our socks off. It was, without a doubt, one of the best pieces of writing that we had ever heard. And we were not the only people to think so. For reasons we will get into below, by the time we arrived at the president's reception, *Jubilee* had been performed just weeks before three nights in a row to audiences totaling more than 1,600 people. And each time, the audience made it

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clear through positive vocal reactions that they loved this monologue. Throughout the piece, written in Latinx English, youthful slang of a Spanish-English code-switching variety, the audience responded with finger snaps, hollers, and words of affirmation such as "Yeah!," "You know it!," and "Uh-huh!" At each performance, as the actors reached the crescendo, it seemed the entire theater, made up mostly of García's classmates, had swelled with love, cheer, and praise for this play. So there was no doubt: *Jubilee* was an extraordinarily great piece of writing.

Yet, at that reception, when President Travis asked students to read from part of their submission to share their creativity and genius with the group, Shonna Trinch remembers that her beaming pride gave way to a gripping, visceral anxiety. García's play had all kinds of words in both Spanish and in English that were highly inappropriate for the context of the president's office, in front of parents, other students, and colleagues. Trinch sat, half-listening to the other students' readings, trying to conjure in her head the "bad" words García would utter aloud: "cunt," "pussy," "cabrona," "chingona" popped up. Leaning toward García, who looked very calm, Trinch whispered, "What part are you going to read?" And without missing a beat, García replied, "The end." Trinch thought, "Oh dear! She is going to read where the character says, 'Fuck my father … Fuck my mother …' in front of all these parents."

And then Trinch was immediately ashamed of herself. Ashamed for feeling shame about what was an outstanding piece of writing, just because it had some "bad" words in it. Trinch also felt ashamed of herself for worrying about a couple of swear words when the brilliance of García's play was carried by the poetry she wrote in Black/Latinx English and Spanish, a necessary dramatic departure from the Standard American English (SAE) normally required of students at college. Trinch knew that García's play had the power to give and claim authority to and for speakers in linguistic varieties that rarely got to take center stage at the college. Yet, as Trinch tells it, her heart raced and her brow began to sweat, and she could not allay the feelings of stress produced by the anticipation of the explicitly "bad" words that García was about to utter in this public space.

Trinch's colleague and co-instructor, Barbara Cassidy also had strong feelings welling up in her body. Very aware of the "ceremony" that was unfolding, she felt the scene and the setting to be stuffy, maybe even a little boring in its all-too-common setup and design. But when she thought about García taking the floor, the discomfort she felt gave way to a kind of exhilaration, as she too knew that García would read something different from the other students. The prospect did not frighten her. In fact, it rather thrilled her. She could not wait for the other students to finish reading their research and essays. Cassidy was dying for García to rock the house with something that was revolutionary, as great poets and writers can do.

When it was her turn, García stood up with a copy of the journal turned to the pages where her play appeared, and she began to read with great aplomb. She started easily enough:

> When did we become women so comfortable with the bare minimum?
> Starving for love
> so we accept the scraps they give us.
> Begging for attention.
> Begging for love from a boy who doesn't love women in the first place.

Then it started: "You like how I make your dick feel, babe, but you don't love me?" Interspersed between insightful passages about personal growth despite oppressive patriarchy at every turn, the poignantly placed "bad" words appeared and led directly to the lines "Fuck my father for making me think at least was enough" and "Fuck my mother for not knowing better."

As the readings came to an end and the mingling commenced, Trinch awkwardly said to President Travis, "Well, I bet those words were never uttered in this office by a student before." And we all laughed as he said, "Yes, probably not by a student." What we had encouraged our students to do—to write whatever they wanted, however they wanted to write it, without regard for standard English, without care for the prescriptive rules of writing, and without concern for offending—might have been both exactly what had freed Jasmine García to write such a powerful anti-rape piece as well as exactly what had the power to make us (Barbara Cassidy) feel excited and (Shonna Trinch) feel both excited and overcome with anxiety in the president's office that day. It was our assignment, and yet in that place and among those people, even as a linguist, Trinch felt both like she wanted to run away from it and, as Cassidy did, as if she wanted to follow Jasmine García into many spaces like it. It seemed that through language alone García was managing to undo something very powerful. Was it patriarchy? Was it white supremacy? What exactly is served by the sociolinguistic constraints against obscenity, nonstandard English, languages other than English, the topic of rape, and the anger that all of it produces? What else would or could be undone by those words and ideas spoken in places where they were likely never to have been spoken by students like Jasmine García before?

In this essay, we will discuss how feminist anthropology has influenced and guided us in creating a college class in which various forms of language, often designated by universities and dominant culture to be *bad language,* play a central role in the development, success, and troubles associated with a student-led theater program called Seeing Rape that originates in an engaged anthropology course of the same name. In addition to describing the program and the trials and tribulations it faces using notes we have taken over the years to document our work, we will examine the scripts that student playwrights produce for a public performance for linguistic data that can shed light on why the plays might produce hesitation at the college when we propose that they become the centerpiece of our campus rape-prevention program at the same time they are overwhelmingly popular with audiences, most of whom are students. García's reading in the president's office and its differential effect on us, her professors, in that context suggests that the (bad) language in the plays is a key to understanding this disconnect.

We will define "bad language" using sociolinguistic theory, and then provide a linguistic analysis of the word "fuck" as it appeared in the plays staged in a public performance. We choose to analyze the use of the word "fuck" for two reasons. First, of all the obscenities students incorporated in these plays, "fuck" is the one they used most frequently, and second, Anglophone linguists (Hobbs 2013, 151) argue it is the most obscene word in the English language. Hobbs finds "fuck" especially offensive because she argues that it is "really" a metaphor for rape or male sexually aggressive penetration. In this paper, we ask: If, in fact, "fuck" is "really" a metaphor for male sexual aggression, how can it be that students, after a semester-long study of rape, would use it so often in an anti-rape performance? We situate this question in the ethnographic context of a large, publicly funded, urban college as we endeavor to understand what student playwrights mean when they use the word "fuck" through a detailed sociolinguistic analysis of where it appears in the 2017 show. Additionally, we will theorize how standard language ideologies and proscriptions against obscenity function to uphold patriarchy and white supremacy. And by way of contrast, we will suggest these "bad language" forms may, in fact, function to dismantle gendered and racial oppressions as student playwrights appropriate these uses in what have been seen traditionally as inappropriate contexts for such speech.

Toward Seeing Rape on Campus

Seeing Rape is an interdisciplinary course that we (Trinch, a linguistic anthropologist/sociolinguist, and Cassidy, a playwright) co-teach each fall to undergraduates at John Jay College. In our course, which enrolls seventy-plus students in two sections, we read about sexual violence across the disciplines and do low-stakes journal writing guided by prompts such as "Write a letter to someone that you will never send" or "Discuss how the concept of virginity might be dangerous to women." Students see several films, ranging from *Saturday Night Fever* and *12 Years a Slave* to documentaries such as *The Central Park Five* and *India's Daughter*, and they attend a play in Manhattan.[1]

The course is taught from a feminist perspective with the idea that it will drive toward an instance of engaged public anthropology that can be best defined in Davis's (2013, 27) words as an anthropology that is "drawing on methodological strategies that embrace the everyday experiences of people, especially those forced to live on the margins, as epistemologically valid." From a linguistic standpoint, we interpret this as meaning we need to be talking about the unspeakable and speaking in new ways from the college's center stage. Our course readings in anthropology and sociolinguistics (Ehrlich 2012; Mookherjee 2006; Mulla 2014; Trinch 2003) and law and social science (Lamb 1999; Levine 2005), as well as our feminist anthropological reading of memoir (Gay 2017; Sebold 2002) and plays (Bradshaw 2007; Nottage 2010; Vogel 1998), provide research and data that suggest that people the world over see rape in only limited ways. The most frequent instances of rape, it becomes clear, are obscured from our view and understanding through rape myths and cultural proscriptions on women's sexuality. With analysis of Ken Burns's film *The Central Park Five*, rape is seen as a tool not only of patriarchy but also of white supremacy, where black men are too easily seen as the perpetrators of sexualized violence against white womanhood.

Thus, our first goal is to make rape visible, and to do so, we begin with three radical ideas: (1) women have sexual desires; (2) sexualized victimization affects everyone and thus should be of public concern; and (3) students can use every *representational resource* in their linguistic repertoires to create their rape play.

To approach our first radical idea, we attempt to disrupt conventional notions of heteronormative sex. As Nicola Gavey (2005) explains, normative ideas of sex construct men as having uncontrollable sexual desire that leads them to act on women. At the same time, these normative ideas construct women as rarely wanting to have sex, and thus merely needing to acquiesce to their partners' sexual desires some of the time. The rest of the time, "naturally" nonsexual women must either control their partners' sexual urges or fight them off. Anderson and Doherty (2008) suggest that because of this, most rape "passes" for consensual sex because normative notions of female sexuality are devoid of women's erotic desires. By problematizing female sexual passivity and male sexual aggressiveness through discussions of "affirmative consent," "the myth of the hymen," and "the myth of vaginal tightness," the class can begin to see rape in places they have not before.

To approach our second radical idea, that rape is a public, not private, concern (Mardrorossian 2002), we attempt to teach Seeing Rape with the idea that people who have been victimized by rape are students in the class.[2] In part, by examining rape in various aspects of society and by pairing it with other cultural categories and concepts such as rape in the family, rape and race, and rape and the nation-state, students come to understand how shame functions to keep victims silent and to keep rape hidden, as well as how ideas of rape get deployed in culture to maintain cultural hierarchies that privilege certain genders, races, ethnicities, ages, religions, etc.

Following the ideas of Katie Byron (2017) when she was an undergraduate at Brown, we try to operate with the idea that there are students in our class who have been victimized by sexualized violence, and to consider them the norm, as opposed to the exception. This way, we attempt always to:

1) Provide physical and intellectual space to people commonly perceived as other than the assumed norm of nontraumatized students.
2) Shift the burden of absorbing violence and being preoccupied with it from those victimized to the collective, with an insistence that the collective can no longer "remain indifferent to the legacies of violence that are playing out all around them" (Byron 2017, 120).
3) Bring trauma and vulnerability out of the private spaces to which they have been relegated and into the public sphere of the university, because whether we see them or not, they are variables in our world-making exercises

As Byron (2017, 122) states,

> Under neoliberalism, vulnerability is a failure to demonstrate personal responsibility, which also highlights a way in which systems fail people. Publicizing trauma turns victimization into a social phenomenon rather than a private struggle. This may provide space for individuals to resist shame, and it underscores the ways in which violence affects whole communities and the roles these communities can play in promoting healing.

As their final project, students write their own short rape plays, which they stage for their classmates. When the class is over, we select from among those plays submitted about ten to bring to the stage with professional actors. During almost every spring semester since 2013, we have brought a new and different student-generated performance (for a total of six so far) to the stage for an audience that now totals more than 4,000 people. To date, we have facilitated the performance of fifty-six unique plays that were either written or cowritten by a total of seventy-two student playwrights. We mentor students through rewrites of their work, discuss possible casting options with them, and raise money to pay professional actors to come to the college to rehearse and to hear from the playwrights about their work. Student playwrights are involved in every aspect of the production, from jumping into a rehearsal to read parts when actors cannot be there to publicizing the show. After each performance, we hold a talk-back where student playwrights appear on a panel with law enforcement professionals, social service providers, academic experts on sexualized violence, actors, and artists.

Our third radical idea begins with Dell Hymes's (1974) finding that different groups of people have different *cultural norms and ways of speaking*. We discuss the creative choices writers use to represent social reality, the characters they develop, and the tales they spin. We talk about Black English in Toni Morrison's novels *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, the use of nonstandard English dialects in films such as *Saturday Night Fever,* and the use of Spanish in Barbara Cassidy's 2006 play *Interim*. John Jay College is a very diverse place (44 percent of the more than 14,000 students are of Hispanic backgrounds, 21 percent identify as white, 22 as African American, 12 percent as Asian, representing more than 130 different nationalities).[3] So we suggest to students that if they speak a language other than English or command a dialect other than the Standard American English variety typically used in college classrooms, they consider writing in any linguistic forms that are germane to the world they are creating in their work.

We are prepared for students to resist these suggestions. Urciuoli (1996) discusses how Puerto Rican Spanish speakers in New York are policed and reprimanded by teachers for using Spanish in the classroom and by just about anyone else in any other public place. Urciuoli explains how the Spanish spoken by Puerto Ricans in the United States becomes a racialized, as opposed to an ethnicized, language, and points out that racialized people are considered unassimilated nonproducers whose language maintenance is seen as an obstacle to their success and as a destabilizing element to social order. Analogously, Rebecca Moorehead Howard (1996) also writes a telling account of how she and her students abandoned a plan to spend one class period speaking only African-American English. Howard (1996, 270) explains,

> AAVE has no public life in American society. It is a private language of one group, and neither the members of that group nor any other group feel comfortable with it as a public language… Code-switching *to* AAVE is profoundly constrained.

Knowing these social constraints are at work and that a certain adherence to them has perhaps contributed to students' successful entrée into the academy, we recognize that for our students we offer a risky proposition from our position as white women who are their professors.

Toward Seeing Rape Center Stage at the College

Keeping in mind Marcyliena Morgan's (2007, 121) plea to develop a method of "analysis that represents social and cultural context, includes most women's experience and desire, does not favor western middle-class women, and critiques patriarchy and social class biases," we stress with all of the students that writers make creative choices, and that when writers possess such an array of what we refer to as *representational resources*, they can choose from them to their advantage. As the students become playwrights, some of the nonstandard and non-English oral and written language practices they possess become not the barriers to their success that much conventional wisdom still holds in the United States, but the tools of representation that create compelling scenes and scripts.

When professional actors honor their work by responding with the types of questions and queries that actors have of playwrights, and by noticing how easy it is for the actors to assume the characters' roles, the students can begin to see themselves as writers. Actors have commented that the students write "authentic dialogue," which suggests to us that the actors find the students' writing to be an example of what John Jackson (2005) would characterize as sincere performances of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and age that makes their jobs easier.

As we work with the playwrights to get their pieces ready for the stage, we also talk about casting. Our small budget limits us to a finite group of about nine professionals who might need to play twenty to twenty-five different roles on the stage. Conversations about race, ethnicity, gender, and dialect are necessary to have, as we want students to tell us who to hire. Students' requests vary, from those who insist that they do not care what race, gender, or ethnicity an actor is to others who have requested the following for the roles they write: "a black person," "a Latino who speaks Spanish," "a plus-sized woman of color," "anyone but a white man," "a cisgender man/woman," and/or "a gender non-conforming person."

The result is a performance that resonates with theatergoers who are challenged to think beyond rape and gender mythologies, question their own belief systems, and maybe even see themselves as part of a culture that supports gender-based violence. In addition to anecdotal evidence of the play's success, audience members responded anonymously to a program evaluation that was

inserted in their playbill after the 2019 Main Stage performance and after an abridged summer stage performance. More than 800 people attended the 2019 Main Stage performance, and 35 percent of them (N = 276) evaluated the performance. The overwhelming majority (N = 242) indicated that they would definitely recommend *Seeing Rape* to a friend, and many took the time to write positive comments like those below:

- "I really enjoyed all the pieces and the actors. This is a great way to get college students engaged with a difficult topic …"
- "It was a great play with different playwrights from different situations to open the issue of rape to college students."
- "It is very great that John Jay offers opportunities like this to students."
- "This is a really good play. I think the talk about rape, domestic violence should be talked about at an early age. Awareness and prevention is important."

Program evaluations after the summer stage performance paralleled those above, except the response rate was much higher at 83 percent, or fifty-three of the sixty-four people present. Thirty-eight respondents said they would "definitely recommend to a friend," and twelve said they would "maybe recommend to a friend." Thirty-two generously left positive feedback on their forms, such as:

- "The first half of the play was extremely powerful. Due to my own biases, I had a difficult time coming to terms with the fact that the domestic relationship involved two women, but I'm glad that this was the case."
- "Definitely opened my eyes on different forms of rape than what I initially thought."
- "This was very powerful and very relevant to today's society. It is not only thought-provoking, but also very clear insight to how these situations pan out."
- "A play that all students at the John Jay College community should see."
- "I thought that these plays were eye-opening, raw, and a reality for many people … I am grateful to have witnessed these plays and to share what I have learned from these narratives. I now know how important consent is and how the conversation needs to be held within relationships."

But audiences filled with mostly students are not the only ones with high praise for the performance. We also hear from social service providers and law enforcement that the shows are important anti-rape tools. Additionally, the actors consistently report that *Seeing Rape* is some of the most powerful political theater in New York City because of its boldness in and commitment to representing a variety of sexualized violence and the great diversity of languages, dialects, and cultures of New York City. Our long-term goal is to make the production the centerpiece of John Jay's campus rape-prevention program.

The Trials and Tribulations of Seeing Rape

While we have steadily been gaining institutional support, a full-fledged endorsement to incorporate Seeing Rape into a cohesive campus rape-prevention plan has yet to occur. Some administrators are very enthusiastic about the program, while others are concerned about its potential to trigger students who have been victimized and/or offend students with talk that includes "bad language" about sex and sexualized violence. While we also take these concerns seriously,[4] we have tried to create spaces where students' representations of both erotic desires and their depictions of sexualized violence can be heard. In a segment for CUNY TV's *Criminal Justice Matters*,

journalist Stephen Handelman (2017) voiced some of the institutional concerns we have heard. Handelman asked two former students, Anna Giannicchi and Marell Ellis, whose plays appeared in the performances, if "adding the fear of rape and sexual assault [in a freshman or college-orientation program]" would be more complicating for their younger peers: "Wouldn't it be more troubling, traumatic for them?" And Giannicchi, whose play *Hippocratic Oath* appeared in the 2016 show, responded:

> I wish that there had been something like that for me. You know … I thought … this could have been helpful for me when I was sixteen or seventeen years old … This idea of rape is so scary for people, but what we are trying to, I guess, convey is that if you have had an experience, it's important to talk about it. It's okay to talk about it. That there shouldn't be things like shame or fear or guilt. And a lot of that is wrapped up in this idea of rape. And that's why the course … is so important.

To Handelman's question, Ellis, author of the 2017 play *Unintended*, added:

> I also think that we underestimate students and what they can deal with and what they are already dealing with. And I think the idea that maybe, you know, a first-year experience or a high schooler would be uncomfortable, well, um, they might have already been dealing with sexual situations.… And I think a lot of times we throw kids into situations where we don't give them all the information … it's great to give them the vocabulary by which to speak about … or acknowledge their own agency.

Ellis then went on: "Something that we definitely learned in the course is being comfortable with being uncomfortable and learning to sit in discomfort and recognizing that that's okay."

Given the statistics that 23 percent of all college women, 5 percent of college men, and 18 percent of gender-nonconforming students will experience sexualized violence—a full 50 percent of them in the first three months (September, October, and November) of the academic year (RAINN 2019)—"business as usual" on college campuses is not ameliorating the risk of sexualized violence. Both the subject matter and the linguistic forms in which the plays are written break with the conventional *norms and ways of (not) speaking* about sexualized violence and sex, for that matter, in the context of mixed collegiate company. This unabashed unsettling of custom seems to create new spaces where people are also inspired to think and to speak frankly.

The students' plays are great, but they are not nice. To explain what we mean by this, we follow *New York Times* writer Wesley Morris's (2019) criticism of "nice" race films like *Green Book* and *Driving Miss Daisy*. Morris notes that these types of "nice" films are racial reconciliation fantasies that have broad appeal because they portray people dealing with racism politely, in ways that leave viewers feeling good, as if they themselves need not do anything to eradicate racism except be "nice." These films make the system of racism an individual's problem and suggest that racism can be put to an end on a person-to-person basis with simple acts of friendship and kindness.

The plays students write for the shows are not rape reconciliation fantasies; they depict rape in un-nice ways, they use jarring and disturbing language and imagery, and they never allow viewers to think, "If only individuals would do X, Y or Z, we could all get along and be happy." The student playwrights do not leave their audience feeling better about rape; they confront their audience with what rape is. The endings do not portray a changing world, nor do they reconcile gender inequity with fantasies of gentle and politely patient people coming to terms with each other.

This exercise in engaged anthropology reveals how words matter. And while some administrators want to give *Seeing Rape* a chance at freshman orientation, others remain reluctant to buy in. The actors perform the pieces in a highly stylized reading, so there is very little movement. Using

direction, gaze, position, stance, their voices, and their eyes, the performers interpret the scripts. Most meaning, then, is carried largely through language alone. The "bad language," difficult topics, and maybe the fact that the plays do not reconcile oppression for viewers seem to be high hurdles to get over for full-fledged institutionalization, even though all evidence suggests the student plays create feelings in the audience that need to be urgently talked about, the kind of work that arguably seems relevant and befitting of a college campus.

Seeing Rape in "Bad Language"

Following sociolinguist Edwin Battistella's (2005) work on what is considered to be "bad language" in the United States, we conclude that *Seeing Rape* is indeed full of it. While from a linguistic perspective, obscenity and nonstandard English (or any language other than English) are not the same things, Battitsella suggests that racist and classist language ideologies tend to maintain that any speech not cast in Standard American English is indeed at risk of being considered "bad language" in the United States. As do Urciuoli (1996) with respect to Puerto Rican Spanish and Howard (1996) with Black English mentioned above, many sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have noted that languages other than English and nonstandard varieties of English are often maligned in the US. In the US, faculty and students alike struggle with notions that written work must be cast in prescriptive Standard American English, especially where many students are first generation college students and/or native speakers of languages other than English while many faculty members have PhDs and rarely need to speak or write in their non-native languages.

Playwriting, however, is more open to and even benefits from "writing like you speak." Therefore, from Black and US Latino English to Spanish and code-switching between English, Spanish, Arabic, and Jamaican Patois, to name but a few possibilities, the plays are written in linguistic varieties that typically are off-limits in US collegiate writing. In this way, the plays offer a space to showcase the communicative value of these linguistic forms, and they challenge those Americans who consider such varieties to be "just" bad language: lazy, defective, and inferior modes of communication that have the potential to create disunity and even social unrest. So while common beliefs about these linguistic varieties do not necessarily equate them with obscenity, Standard American English and English-only language ideologies pervade US academic and public spaces to the point where these other language types are deemed "matter-out-of-place" (Douglas 1966).

With respect to obscenity, Battistella (2005) explores the long Anglo tradition of a public standard of propriety with respect to the use of obscenities and vulgarities in the arts—from early modern theater in England up through the present-day United States with television and cable standards. He finds that early proscriptions deemed cursing to be perilous to women and children who might somehow be soiled by knowing the terms and becoming aware of their referents. References to the profane, blasphemes, and sexual and/or scatological bodily parts or acts were assumed to be acceptable in the private spheres of men, but they were seen as dangerous in public settings where women and children created "mixed company." Constraints against coarse words persist today (Battistella 2005, 82), even though in art there has been a preference for realistic, frank language use that often includes obscenities.

While there are likely many theatrical stages in New York City where one can hear offensive language, the *Seeing Rape* stage is special because it is situated on a college campus, where most work is presumed to be done in Standard American English. Some administrators have suggested the

plays were triggering even for them, and others suggested the college should work toward creating a climate of civility, and that the "bad" language in the plays could send confusing messages to students. The idea was that no student should ever have to walk through the halls of the college and be subjected to the type of conversations heard in the plays. But focusing on only the bad words and offensive topics makes it difficult to attend critically to what is being done with words (Austin 1962), and we argue that the plays can have a positive transformative impact precisely because through them students can see how the misogynistic terms used in everyday parlance constructs a culture in which sexualized violence both occurs and goes unseen. These un-nice rape plays drive home the idea that the things we do and say can create a situation in which we misidentify rape and our own roles in perpetuating mythologies about it.

By lumping all "bad language" together as offensive, people miss what the student playwrights and their peers in the audience seem to understand: language is a tool that functions to achieve things in culture. No meaning is fixed, and a word's ability to do things is determined as much by the constraints violated when it is uttered and the context of the violations as by the speakers' intentions and listeners' interpretations. The very use of the f-word in this context may serve to bring the public secret of rape out of the cultural silencing that renders rape horrifying but unspeakable, and thus unexaminable (Taussig 1999). We use Judith Butler's (1997, 41) words in the epigraph that introduces this essay to theorize how saying that which is forbidden can actually change what is being said: "as we think about worlds … the opening up of the foreclosed and the saying of the unspeakable become part of the very 'offense' that must be committed in order to expand the domain of linguistic survival."

Uses and Functions of the F-word in *Seeing Rape*

To examine this phenomenon of disconnect, we studied the use and function of the word "fuck" and its derivations in the 2017 performance. We could have looked at other curse words, as many appear throughout the scripts, but in the spirit of this special issue, we focus on the f-word. We also chose the word "fuck" because with it we make the point that "original meanings" and/or "fixed meanings" are largely irrelevant in human language usage.

According to Hobbs (2013, 151), "fuck" is a metaphor for male sexual aggression, and for this reason, she calls it the most obscene word in the English language. Yet, in the 2017 *Seeing Rape* performance, not once is the word "fuck" used to refer to male sexual aggression against women. The 2017 show lasted approximately eighty-seven minutes, and it consisted of ten different short plays: *The Movement* (Denielle Baker), *A Modern Romance* (Irene Kontonicolas), *The Girl* (Mirnelly Fernandez), *Cycles End* (Lashea Haynes), *The Blind Reflection* (Carlos Rosado, Nelson Carillo, and Kevin Peña), *An Ordinary Day* (Abraham Tejeda Jr.), *La familia de papá* (Bianca Suazo, Yire Suárez, Vilmary Colon, and Eric Norales), *Unintended* (Marell Ellis), *Colorful Markers* (Adrian Simon and Angelica Moren), and *Jubilee* (Jasmine García).

A search for instances of "fuck" revealed seventy-three different tokens turning up in a total of eight of the plays. The students' frequent reliance on "fuck" in an anti-rape performance suggests that the word is no longer "really" a metaphor for male sexual aggression, and that if it ever was, it has now resignified in some significant way. In the remainder of this essay, after we examine how students use the word in the performance, we will discuss how "fuck" and the purposeful employment of youthful slang, nonstandard varieties of English, and languages other than English serve to socialize the consequences of rape and make a public space for both its discussion and the

rejection of individual shame.[5] We will then theorize how these linguistic choices, all of them taboo for the speakers in the context of the college, are what make *Seeing Rape* not only an interesting but also an impactful anti-rape experience. As students and their work occupy a space at the college where they can "achieve cultural control over their own representations and narrativizations" (Butler 1997, 132), they arguably become the type of subject that can employ censorship of linguistic resources in a way that undoes, if even momentarily, the "dominant power that seeks to control any challenges posed to its own legitimacy" (Butler 1997, 132).

Data Analysis

In only two of the 2017 plays, *The Movement* and *The Girl*, both written by women, was the word "fuck" absent. Gender, however, was not a determining factor for playwrights' preferences to use "fuck" in their work, as a total of five plays (*A Modern Romance, Cycles End, La familia de papá, Unintended,* and *Jubilee*) were written by women, and *Colorful Markers* was coauthored by a man and a woman.

The word "fuck" shows up as a noun (twelve times), a verb (twenty-three times), and an intensifier (thirty-seven times). An intensifier can be an adjective, an adverb, or an adverbial phrase that is employed to strengthen the meaning of and/or add emphasis to other expressions. Some common intensifiers in English are "so," "very," "really," "actually," and "literally." Below we list examples of how the word "fuck" appears in the plays as each part of speech.

Examples of "fuck" used as nouns:

1) *The Blind Reflection*, Yantzy: Who gives a <u>fuck</u> about the Clippers?
2) *Colorful Markers,* Mason: Yo you guys are legit <u>crazy fucks</u> you never answered who was the girl?
3) *Jubilee*, Unnamed character: I was the product of a third date <u>fuck</u>.

Examples of "fuck" used as verbs:

1) *Unspeakable Love,* Penelope: I don't want <u>to fuck</u> around either I am too old for this shit.
2) *La familia de papa*, Vilmary: Quítame esa música de amargura por favor. You know what? I'll do it before you put something sadder and <u>fuck up</u> my day.
3) *Colorful Markers,* Liam: Honestly I was already <u>fucked up</u>, so I was just trying not to throw up.

Examples of "fuck" used as an intensifier:

1) *Unspeakable Love*, Marina: Dude you should've <u>fucking</u> sprayed some windex
2) *Unintended,* Michelle: I mean, that wasn't sex right? That was some bullshit. I'm 22, not an idiot and that was not right. That was awkward, uncomfortable, <u>I-don't-know-how-to-get-the-fuck-out-of-this bullshit</u>. I mean, you tell me?
3) *Colorful Markers,* Mason: What the <u>fuck</u> was he doing at a high school party he's like 20

Hobbs (2013, 150) begins by asserting that an advertisement for a brand of vodka called Effen that reads "The best nights start with a little *Effen*" "seems to project a male point of view … pronouncing the product to be the makings of a pleasurable occasion, and thus providing an incentive for its purchase through an appeal that is based on the (not even thinly disguised assumption that men like 'to fuck.'" The historical and grammatical work that Hobbs undertakes is devoid of data produced by real language users, and perhaps this is what leads her to conclude that all uses of the word "fuck" are in fact grounded in the meaning "to sexually penetrate," even though she recognizes that, for many users, the metaphor of male sexual aggression is as dead

as the metaphor for homicide in a child's "My mom's going to kill me." Hobbs (2013, 150) argues that:

> "fuck" functions as a metaphor for male sexual aggression and that, notwithstanding its increased public use, enduring cultural models that inform our beliefs about the nature of sexuality and sexual acts preserve its status as a vile utterance that continues to inspire moral outrage.

But much of Hobbs's analysis rests on the idea that "fuck" is the most offensive word in American English, and that even when used as a gerund of intensification as in "fucking," it derives its power for what she calls "non-users," who she argues have not divorced it from its original denotative meaning of male sexual aggression.

The students' plays, however, suggest that the word's function and meaning depend not on its nonusers per se but rather on the context of its users' usage. Our linguistic analysis of *Seeing Rape* suggests that if the plays are representative of how people talk, the word "fuck" is indeed in some cases used casually by some people, but also that those people do not use the word nearly as casually (or frequently) as Hobbs suggests. Register, that is, a collection of possible (and associated) linguistic forms that are appropriate for the meaning-making context at hand, serves to structure social relationships among people; those same people use language according to the social rules of the context, constituted as much by the people present as by the physical setting and the language they use. For example, for some parents and children, the parental relationship is in part, constituted by a no-swearing rule. Part of what it means to be someone's son or daughter is not to utter swear words in their parent's presence, even though they (and their parents) are regular, casual users of such words with some people in other settings.

So while we agree with Hobbs that "fuck" is a taboo word in certain contexts, we cannot concur that its taboo status remains because its "real" meaning is male sexual aggression for those who are offended by it. There is another category of people who recognize its taboo status, we argue, and it is comprised of those who will refrain from using the word in all settings. Additionally, we find it quite curious that in 2013, Hobbs suggests that "to fuck" means "male penetration," because in their work, the *Seeing Rape* playwrights employ the word to suggest that women can also fuck, and not only in the sense of doing metaphorical harm to someone. But Hobbs relies on Baker's (1974) grammatical analysis of reversibility of the gendered subjects of verbs to suggest that "fuck" and all of its synonymous dysphemisms require a male actor and a passive (female) recipient. Hobbs writes (2013, 164):

> Baker's analysis reveals that one feature of dysphemistic verbs for sexual intercourse (ball, bang, fuck, have, hump, lay, screw) is that they are semantically non-reversible ... requiring a male subject in active constructions and thus reducing the female to a passive participant (i.e., a sex object), while those that are not dysphemistic (do it with, make love to, sleep with) are semantically reversible.

To hammer the point home, she then cites the grammatical argument of transitivity in Pinker (2007, 354 as cited in Hobbs 2013), who includes most of the above words but adds the verbs "dick," "bonk," "shag," and "shtup." Hobbs then shares Pinker's contrasting euphemistic verbs ("have sex," "sleep together," "go to bed," etc.), many of which overlap with Baker's. Both Pinker and Baker claim that the euphemistic verbs can take either men or women as subjects. In the students' plays though, women seem to be actors in any kind of sex. That is, they are depicted as agents, fully engaged and even initiating or driving the act. There is no grammatical problem for a female gendered noun in the

subject position of the verbs "fuck," "screw," "hump," "bang," and "have," as in "she fucked him," "she screwed him," "she humped him," "she banged him," and "she had him." And indeed, in the plays we find female characters in the agentive position, who are doing the "fucking." We wonder why for Baker, Pinker, and Hobbs any of these verbs would have "male penetration" as their sole meaning.

There are a total of five instances in the plays where the word "fuck" refers to a sex act in which men and women are either equal participants (examples 3, 4, and 5 below) or where women are the actual agentive subjects (examples 1 and 2) doing the doing to a man:

1) *Unspeakable Love*, Penelope: I don't want to fuck around [with just anyone or a lot of different men] either, I am too old for this shit.
2) *La familia de papá*, Bianca: So these tips are how you paid for the car? Or did Eric give it to you after you fucked him?
3) *Unspeakable Love*, Helena: Like Bitch, where was that depression when we were talking or fucking, because it obviously wasn't there!
4) *Colorful Markers*, Liam: Everyone was already buzzed or drunk. There was so much going on. Keg stands in the kitchen. People smoking in the living room. People practically fucking while dancing.
5) *Jubilee*, Unnamed character: I'll replay the last time we fucked. It was so good, you cried and held onto my pussy to keep it close.

In example 1, Penelope uses "fuck" to say that she does not want to do "just" casual sex anymore. In example 2, one sister asks another if she has had sex with her boss by using "fuck." The three other instances where "fuck" is used as a verb take a compound subject where men and women are acting on and/or with one another. It is again worth mentioning that there is not a single instance where the word "fuck" is used as a verb with a male agent to refer to the rape of a woman.[6] This fact is telling, given that the entire performance is about rape, and not a single time is "fuck" used to mean "man rapes woman." García writes a character in the play *Jubilee*, with which we opened this essay, who sheds some light on the different variations in meaning that the word seems to have among John Jay College playwrights. She uses "fuck" three times to refer to sex in her play:

1) I met a guy who was funny and fucked me good most nights and had his own place.
2) I'll replay the last time we fucked. It was so good, you cried and held onto my pussy to keep it close.
3) My time is too precious to be wasted and my pussy is too bomb to be fucked and left out to dry.

In the first instance, the character suggests she likes the way her partner has sex with her; in the second, it's a mutual act that the character and her boyfriend did to each other. And in the third instance, she seems to be saying that she herself is too good for "just" sex. She wants more out of life than someone who comes around for good sex and then leaves her (for another woman).

This data-driven linguistic analysis of the way "fuck" appears in the plays reveals several important findings about how this word functions to create meaning. At the same time, it suggests how speaking taboos serves to reveal truths previously concealed by the power of the public secret, and functions to subvert the long-term power structures of patriarchy and racism.

Discussion of the Power of the F-word and Conclusion

It is important to note that, as college professors, we generally do not use the word "fuck" in the classroom on a regular basis. Along these lines, we rarely, if ever, hear students using the word in

our classes. Furthermore, there are significant amounts of talk before and after each performance, and never in the fourteen performances has a single person, to our memory, used the word "fuck" in the introduction to or talk-backs after the plays. In fact, just about everyone involved in the talk-backs participates in obscenity-free Standard American English. These linguistic facts suggest that constraints against using the word "fuck," other obscenities, and any languages or dialects other than standard English are firmly in place and abided by.

Given these data from the plays, we suggest that we cannot say whether there are users and nonusers of the word "fuck." What we do know is that most people who use "fuck" do so in contextually specific and thus microsocially appropriate ways. Also, it seems from the play data that speakers, such as our students, who use the word "fuck" in some contexts are likely not to use it in others. So, the choice of whether to use "fuck" is not as simple as Hobbs (2013, 167) suggests, nor is it simply explained by what she calls the "extreme casualness with which many speakers now use a word that is still considered to be taboo to non-users." The data here suggest that users of "fuck" are not extremely casual at all; in fact, they seem extremely careful not to use it in many contexts. However, they also seem not to subscribe to the rape metaphor Hobbs ascribes to the word.

For Hobbs, "fuck" is not only an obscenity; it is also a misogynistic and heterosexist term that has male sexualized violence toward women, or rape, as one of its meanings. Though Hobbs does not suggest that "fuck" rises to the level of hate speech, she attempts to make the case that it at least metaphorically threatens male sexual aggression. But in *Seeing Rape* at John Jay College, the word "fuck" is enjoying a "slippage" between the signifier and the signified and fails to transmit power to the metaphorical denotation of male sexualized aggression in the students' plays.

Butler (1997) offers an account of how certain words can undergo such change by deconstructing and making more precise speech act theory. Inspired by Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw in *Words that Wound* (1993) and their innovative ideas for the adjudication of racist hate speech, Butler writes against the absolute conflation of words and acts. Though Butler agrees that words wound and that hate speech maintains systems of racism, she argues that saying something that hurts someone occurs not because the word is violence itself but because language is one of the elements in the creation and edification of the social structure of meanings through which words cause pain. Butler argues that no amount of linguistic proscription as ruled by law will change the meaning of hate speech and its power to wound. Instead, Butler (1997, 19-20) wonders:

> Can there be an enunciation that discontinues that structure, or one that subverts that structure through its repetition in speech? As an invocation, hate speech is an act that recalls prior acts, requiring a future repetition to endure. Is there a repetition that might disjoin the speech act from its supporting conventions such that its repetition confounds rather than consolidates its injurious efficacy?

Though Butler's argument may remain controversial where hate speech is concerned, it seems a plausible explanation for the resignification the word "fuck" is undergoing among some college students. The repetition of "fuck" in some settings seems to have contributed to its being separated from its historical, noxious, violent meanings and its contemporary meanings of male-dominated sexual pleasure and male-dominating sex. Now, both users and nonusers alike hear the word with confusion and surprise in mixed company, whether in a college president's office or on the stage at a student-led performance, as we all publicly see the word as "reproducible and resignifiable" over and over again in this context, so that "the conventional relation between word and wound

might become tenuous and even broken over time" (Butler 1997, 100). For Butler, then, speech and acts are not the same, but speech can be injurious so long as the historical apparatus and linguistic structures are in place to act as the mechanisms through which such words can be interpreted as harmful. She suggests that some radical and public misappropriation of terms can go a long way to diminishing the pain they cause, because if words can do anything, they can resignify.

Certainly, there is evidence that people belonging to oppressed groups have successfully resignified hate speech terms, at least in intergroup discourse (Rahman 2012). And while a word's ability to wound may in fact still be intact when used as slurs by nonmembers (and maybe even by some members), the resignification through reappropriation and new usages produces the kind of censorship that subverts dominant cultural dictates of who can say what to whom and for what purposes. This new state of affairs ascribes rights and privileges to utter such words only to in-group members (of say, African American and LGBTQ communities, or people with different abilities), leaving out-group members with no rights to such words for fear of being accused of racism, homophobia, ableism, etc.

Who is allowed to say what to whom, when, and under what circumstances is a common problem for linguists to discern when understanding the linguistic and, more importantly, the social rules that meticulously govern language use. Lately, we see that the conundrum has become particularly confusing to dominant cultural members, perhaps because they have been accustomed to enjoying free speech without consequence. Take, for example, scholars such as Lukianoff and Haidt (2019), who also endeavor to argue that words are not acts, and that therefore speech is not itself violence. They intend this message as guidance for those hurt by speech to calmly and rationally just not feel pain. Lukianoff and Haidt argue that American youth, particularly at elite universities on the coasts, have been coddled by their helicopter and bulldozer parents, and they are thus too fragile and ill-equipped to deal with adversity. They suggest that those aggrieved by language learn to take it all with a grain of salt, because, according to them, most microaggressions result from speakers' ignorance, misunderstandings, and faux pas. But, in a radical departure from Butler, Lukianoff and Haidt write as if the free marketplace of ideas has always existed for women, LGBTQ people, victims of sexualized violence, immigrants, African Americans, people with disabilities, and people and their ancestors who have survived genocide and slavery, Jim Crow laws, redlining, and mass incarceration. Their argument of equal access to this presumably neutral public sphere ignores not only the historical processes that have kept others out but also the ever-present discrimination of speakers whose linguistic varieties are gendered, classed, raced, and ethnicized. As long as the public sphere employs formal and informal mechanisms of linguistic discrimination, it will never be free to everyone. Yet Lukianoff and Haidt accuse students who protest to disinvite some controversial speakers from coming to campus as quashing free speech. Interestingly, these writers do not see students as exercising their own rights to free speech by stating who should and should not be allowed on their campuses. It seems Lukianoff and Haidt conceptualize the free marketplace of ideas as a disinterested space, free from the political constraints on institutional resources of money, space, time, and support. In a lecture at Case Western University, Haidt (2018) told the crowd:

> For example, I do not take any chances at NYU. I do not say anything controversial. I can be controversial with you, because you can't report me. You can't like do anything to me if I offend you. But if I'm like at NYU, there is a sign in every bathroom telling students what number to call or what email to send to report me, or anyone else, who says something that they think is offensive, so I just don't take chances at NYU.

For us, as professors who teach about controversial topics such as rape, race, class, sexuality, and culture in general, Haidt's comments raise the question: What kinds of controversies would he like to talk about in class that might get him reported? And why does he think himself and professors like him too fragile to withstand the report? In fairness, though, Haidt's argument at Case Western and in his 2019 book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, may ultimately be that people should have peaceful discourse about controversial topics, without resorting to physical violence as a justification for the emotional and psychological pain words inflict. But a major element missing in Lukianoff and Haidt's argument is how structural violence is embedded in the political and economic organization of the world in such a way that not only does harm but does so systematically and thus systemically. While no one wants to see violence on college campuses, or anywhere else for that matter, we are loath to agree that the unconstrained exchange of ideas is as simple, easy, or free as Lukianoff and Haidt suggest. And we attribute the violence we see today, just like the violence on campus and in the streets in the past, to people's struggles for political representation and economic resources, not too much coddling or tribalism, as they suggest.

Honest and real discourse about rape on college campuses has been stifled for reasons of decorum, delicacy, and fear, and such proscriptions, in our opinion, facilitate and foster unsafe environments for students. While we are not equating hate speech with misogyny, sexist and misogynist language, commonplace sexual harassment, and microaggressions have created situations in which it is often impossible to interpret victimization of women. Talking about sex and rape in the same context and using frank language to do so sets the stage to subvert power structures by allowing those who have not had a chance to speak and define the world a chance to say what they think. We are convinced that the more pedestrian recipe of requiring "just" personal responsibility, politeness, and decorum as deployed in Standard American (academic) English is ineffective in creating change for women and people victimized by sexual violence in the same way that "nice race films" with their stories of lovely individuals making changes in their own lives do little to tear down racist systems that oppress African Americans. In the plays, the students seize sovereignty for themselves and their peers as their characters occupy a place at the college with their linguistic practices and representational resources that are usually marginalized in that space. The tying together of the two types of language (obscenity and any language or linguistic variety other than Standard American English) considered to be "bad" at most US colleges and universities both literally and metaphorically reveals not only the authority of the students' voices but also how their authority threatens the status quo. In other words, as awareness of the systems of speech that support and dismantle victimization increases, there is a chance that students will feel emboldened to call out, that is, to name aggressors and to ask for help.

These plays demonstrate many things, but chief among them is how women especially can claim sex and sexuality from the cultural stranglehold of taboo that has kept them silent and unable to express their own erotic desires in public. As the fictional female characters talk about fucking men and even being fucked by men on their own terms, they stake out powerful positions that women have been long denied. So, while Hobbs's analysis of the word "fuck" might be correct for the past, its employment in these plays suggests a present in which women enjoy claiming sexual space, the freedom to be sexual, and control over their own sexuality. The plays allow women characters this license through storyline but also metaphorically through language use that has been off-limits to them, and especially in cases where the language refers to the acts also denied them. In these plays, the performative use of the word "fuck"—as it both carries and defies the metaphor of sexual aggression—seems an antidote not to the wounding violence of words or of

rape but to the wounding silence imposed on women in universities and throughout other cultural spaces.

Sociolinguist Cala Ann Zubair (2015) provides similar evidence of women appropriating taboo speech to refer not to sex but to rape in a way that suggests their power to reclaim a sexual identity and call out violence in the context of a Sri Lankan university where references to women's sexuality are highly circumscribed, as are any references to the ragging culture to which the women belong. Throughout Sri Lanka, senior students, who are called "raggers," initiate freshers (or first years) into the university and into ragger culture through harsh hazing rituals, of which sexualized violence is a part. Zubair's study reveals that men refer to ritual rape euphemistically with words such as "taking a bath," "breaking a baby animal," "washing one's body," and "washing one's face" (Zubair 2015, 291). But the women with whom Zubair spoke used the taboo referents ("vaginally gang-raping someone," "anally gang-raping someone," "penis raper," "sperm raper"), clearly indicating rape. Zubair (2015, 296) explains:

> Returning to the notion of register as a reflection of social relationships (Agha 2007), the female sexual assault lexicon reframes males from Raggers who practice secretive rituals to rapists, and females from willing ragging participants to victims. The terms thus empower female subjects to report sexual violence that occurs during ragging, ultimately resisting the male rape register and community ideologies of rape acceptance and silence.
>
> It is also noteworthy that these females find empowerment by embracing verbal taboo … because of their potential for anxiety—an act of super-agency where discomfort in the minds of listeners draws wanted, rather than unwanted attention. Coded male-associated euphemisms have worked against female victims, but taboo language that promises to raise eyebrows, can hardly be ignored. The taboo terms … scream for attention and withheld advocacy…

While the Sri Lankan ragging case does not perfectly map onto John Jay College's *Seeing Rape*, there are striking similarities: from the silence that surrounds both rape and women's sexuality to the fact that the most sexually dangerous times for college women on campus are in the first three months of the first year of their studies. Also analogous to the Sri Lankan case is the fact that American students—through playwriting—create space where they can use taboo terms to distinguish between sex and rape in a very public forum. By allowing female characters a license to sexuality, playwrights disrupt normative conceptualizations of female sexual passivity and highlight it as nonconsent. At the same time, the contrast, drawn with frank, harsh, and resonant words, makes what has traditionally been interpreted as a "boys will be boys sowing of wild oats" into rape. The stark distinction between female sexual desire and female lack of consent confronts the audience with scenarios in which "normal looking behavior" can be reconceptualized outside of patriarchal constraints that have been supported by a public silence, often exacted from cultural rules of decorum and delicacy. Built on either guise or reason, proscriptions on speaking meant to "protect" women and children—sexual assault's most common victims—also function to produce silence and foster shame and ignorance. The playwrights assume a disruptive voice, and in so doing seem to displace the shame associated with victims and their bodies and encourage the audience to absorb it as part of their responsibility to eradicate it.

What also becomes clear, then, is that the f-word is not nearly as offensive as a culture that denies women their full humanity. So if it takes saying "fuck" to change the social relationships that produce and maintain a culture of victimization, then "bad" language in all of its forms (in terms of both explicit obscenity and all of the nonstandard varieties of English that exist as well as all of the

languages other than English that our students speak) certainly has a place in *John Jay's Finest,* in a college president's office, and on the college's center stage.

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Notes

1 Faculty-student engagement funds ensure that every student can participate.
2 We do not ask students if they have been victimized, but statistically, any professor at a college or university in the United States should assume that there are people in their courses who have been victimized by sexual violence.
3 Statistics last accessed June 31, 2020, at http://www. http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/fast-facts.
4 We are equally concerned about triggering students, and we read the literature and consult with experts at social service agencies such as NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault, Womankind, and the NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Gender-Based Violence. We are careful to frame the production as an anti-rape program, and we always make clear at the beginning of the performance, as well as in the playbill, where services and resources are available in New York City and at the college. We also have counselors on-site during each performance.
5 We would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this language.
6 In the play *Blind Reflection*, written by three men, about three sex offenders/rapists, one character uses the word "fuck" to suggest that another raped children, as in "He likes to fuck little kiddies because he's sad about his micro penis."

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