Performing an Embodied Feminist Aesthetics: A Critical Performance Ethnography of the Equestrian Sport Culture

Dawn Marie D. McIntosh
University of Denver

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PERFORMING AN EMBODIED FEMINIST AESTHETICS:
A CRITICAL PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY
OF THE EQUESTRIAN SPORT CULTURE

A Dissertation
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by
Dawn Marie D. McIntosh
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Advisor: Dr. Bernadette Marie Calafell
Author: Dawn Marie McIntosh  
Title: PERFORMING AN EMBODIED FEMINIST AESTHETICS: A CRITICAL PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE EQUESTRIAN SPORT CULTURE  
Advisor: Dr. Bernadette Marie Calafell  
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Abstract

While this research appears to be about horses and riding, it is really a project about the conditions of White women, White femininity, and feminist futurities. Driven by my investment in imagining possibilities of dismantling Whiteness and heteropatriarchy, this research begins to mark the dominant performances of White femininity and those fleeting moments of disruption by White women. My intentions for this project were to stage performances of feminist futurities that imagine feminist aesthetics as relational probabilities towards feminist alliances.

The research was drawn from a six month critical performance ethnography of a local Hunter/Jumper barn. This critical performance ethnography was also informed by co-performative interviews, embodied cultural memory of my life long experiences within this community, and critical rhetorical analysis of vernacular discourses within the site to speak to and enlighten my ethnographic findings. My analysis was informed by my conceptualization of affective intersectionality.

The research findings expose how White-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy is served by White women and the possibilities within their performative disruptions of normative politics. The analysis reveals how the performance of class maintains affective qualities that discipline White femininity into serving White heteropatriarchy but these performances of White feminine elitist classism break the relational possibilities between
horse and rider. The research locates the doings and undoings of White feminine civility when White women’s bodies serve or disrupt normativity.

Next, the relational aspects of the performance of riding render lessons in affective reasoning that reveals an embodied-communicative-performative space to deconstruct White femininity. Affective reasoning frames new forms of communication that are not beyond Whiteness but actually allots White women new means to negotiate the performance of White femininity. These potential feminist performatives challenges White capitalist heteropatriarchal binds on White women’s bodies in order to engage with others.

Finally, embodied feminist aesthetics best weaves these two analytical findings together to picture a culminating view of feminist futurities that stretch towards a horizon of feminist alliances. Embodying feminist aesthetics allots normative framings of power to become reshaped and perhaps remade. Feminist aesthetics stages utopian performatives that White women both can and should performatively engage in order to foster feminist futurities.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation represents the culmination of my graduate studies and the many people that have supported and guided me through it. Every word on every page is influenced by someone. For that reason, my hope for these words on this page is to give back to them the many wonders they have poured into my heart.

I begin with my mentor Dr. Bernadette Marie Calafell. What a journey! Although I look in retrospect, I still feel as though I am sitting in your office for the very first time. Bringing my mind to that moment passes me through a flood of memories that are bittersweet for me – some bitter and some sweet but each imperative for my growth as a scholar. I cherish each class, each conference, each lunch, each phone call, each email, each laugh, each tear knowing full well that these were the very experiences that have brought me to the place I am today. Thank you for being the mentor that cared more about my growth than anything else. I only wish I understood that sooner.

Likewise, I hold my committee members, Drs. Kate Willink and Darrin Hicks in great regard. You both molded my mind in powerful ways and expanded my views of Communication. Your support for my vision sincerely brought this dissertation to new light and enabled me to write from my heart. Thank you for sharing your brilliance with me.

Writing is so much more than finishing. It is about surviving, and to that end, I acknowledge those that prevent me from sinking into the abyss. Through prayer and a strong hand, my mother, Gaylene, is the very reason I am the person I am today. Thank you mom for raising me to be a unique individual that loves people and preservers for what I believe. My father, William Dennis, instilled in me a work ethic to push through any hardship I ever encounter. Thank you dad for never giving up and showing me how to hold on just a little bit longer. My partner, Jason, is the reason I have balance in my life. You are the only person that has sincerely seen me each day – both on the good days and those rough ones – of this entire writing endeavor. Thank you for your patience with me and always showing me reasons to smile. My dearest friend, Biz, thank you for the long phone calls and the relentless hours of editing, beyond that our lives together with our horses is so monumental to this project. Michelle Watanabe and Huntington Farms you are the reason I love horses and your finger prints are within my dearest riding memories.

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CHAPTER ONE

Get Yer’ Boots On and Saddle Up:

Equestrian, White Femininity, and Animal-Others

All the “riders” that have ever felt misplaced.
Lost in translation of belonging.

All the “horses” that have taught and teach me about life.
Love begins between two bodies desiring and giving trust.

All the people living for social justice.
May we embody the affective sensitivities of horses.

To all envisioning feminist futurities,
Picture a world dominated by feminist aesthetics.

The world of Equestrian within the United States is a huge community of 91,000 official members (United State Equestrian Foundation USEF usef.org). This membership does not account for participants within the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA), the horseracing industry, or the plethora of people that simply have horses for pleasure, ranching, and/or non-competitive riding. The magnitude of the Equestrian community denotes the lifestyle influence horses have within the United States and the popularity of Equestrian sports. Interestingly, Equestrian sports stay seemly removed from mediated coverage with its primarily mainstream television exposure only within horseracing.
The world of Equestrian remains to those outside of its community an unexamined mystery. The obscurity of the sport has served to conceal the rich cultural lessons to be had. Female athletes’ bodies represent the contested past of patriarchy and also the untidy history of feminism. A paramount space to represent these tangled webs of femininity is the hunter/jumper equestrian rider. The hidden nature of the sport of Equestrian ensures the social workings of heteronormativity\(^1\) to remain intact. In addition, Equestrian serves as a pivotal cultural space where bodies meet these ideological constructs in means that can both be resistant and recentering. The Equestrian athlete allots cultural lessons to be had that can unearth particular understandings of heteronormativity, embodied emotive desire, and potentials\(^2\) for solidarity.

As an Equestrian athlete myself, this research implicitly speaks from and to my heart. I have been a part of the Equestrian community for my entire life; thus my life is a reflection of these deep-rooted connections as well. Like so many equestrian athletes, horses remain a constant lifeline to my survival in the world. Lochlan, my first horse, was my first companion in life and in his passing remains to this day a feeling of loss. His friendship with me nurtured the deep passion I have for horses. My love for horses moved from companionship to competitiveness when I began horseshowing at local ____________________________

\(^1\) I use the term heteronormativity interchangeably with normativity as representative of the power associated with such ideological constructs as sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism. Following Gus Yup’s articulation, “Heteronormativity makes heterosexuality hegemonic through the process of normalization” (18). For these reasons, I find heteronormativity to better extrapolate my articulations of dominant ideologies.

\(^2\) Brian Massumi problematizes the conception of “possibility” as remaining already fixed in its path by being “implicit in what a thing can be said to be when it is on target” (9). Following this framing, I utilize his articulation of “potential” as being “the immanence of a thing to its still indeterminate variation, under way” (9). My research seeks to remain unprescripted.
Hunter/Jumper shows at the young age of seven. By ten I supported my expensive riding addiction by working at barns. Riding brought me to college as a scholarship-supported NCAA equestrian team athlete. By graduate school, riding provided me a means of income to support my schooling habit. It is safe to claim that my dear friend Lochlan has immensely influenced my entire life by introducing me to the Equestrian culture.

As my graduate education interwove with my riding career, cultural implications of embodied politics began to press against my body. I became more culturally aware of my positionalities and how they were not only implemented by this sport, but more importantly, worked within it too. Riding shapes my life in many ways and most certainly brought me to this research project. My desire for this project is to unfold the cultural implications of this sport in order to engage a heightened cultural awareness of my intersecting positionalities and also open doors of empowering possibilities of relational alliances.

Along that vein, the equestrian community reflects my embodied realities of heteronormativity and my learned manners of being. Flowing in a median between rider and scholar requires that I maintain a tensive balance between my interpellation within the culture and a reflexive awareness as researcher. Olympic gold medalist, United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) distinguished judge, and recent recipient of the USEF lifetime achievement award, Joe Fargis, states, “The horse is going to reflect you” (qtd. in Oliynyk 44). This statement is so telling of this research project and serves as a pivotal conceptualization of my fluidity as researcher and rider. Just as the horse reflects you, your way of being, your intersecting positionalities in relation to power, your affectivity, your embodied realities, so too does this research project reflect me. My White hetero-
feminine body comfortably molds into this sport as many of my visible positionalities match those within this sporting community. A tensional relationship exists between my visible positionalities and my performative positionalities placing my body at a performative seam of belonging and non-belonging. It is this paradoxical seam that intrigues me and calls me towards a critical engagement of my body to understand the performance of White femininity in relation to an animal-Other.

This critical performance ethnography of the Hunter/Jumper Equestrian sport situates itself within a critical humanist research paradigm that serves to extend our current understandings of Communication for purposes of locating cultural workings of marginalization and coalitional possibilities. My method of critical performance ethnography works with a critical rhetorical position in that I examine and analyze my findings at the intersections of performance and critical rhetoric. What makes this study so unique is the horse. The horse places this research into new spaces of understanding identity politics and negotiations of relationality in affective norms of being. Therefore, as research conducted on the communication aspects of humans and cyborgs (Haraway), humans and animals (Haraway; Grandin and Johnson *Animals in Translation; Animals Make Us Human*), and overall feminist relationalities of difference (Anzaldúa “(Un)Natural Bridges;” “Making Alliances;” *Borderlands*; Moraga; Carrillo Rowe) this research offers possible bridges for these previous works by examining the cultural politics of Equestrian performed and inflicted on White women’s bodies. These performances also expand our understandings of relationalities by exposing the connectivity of being between horse and rider as a means to recognize potential embodied and performative alliances between different bodies. In order to arrive at
alliance possibilities, I must begin by reflexively examining the power dynamics exhibited and embodied by this sport’s culture.

Recent research on sport does not interrogate the performance of Whiteness and never approaches it through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw; Hill Collins; Calafell). Therefore, this project utilizes the theory of intersectionality and affective theory as its theoretical lens to outline the political workings of power laden within the cultural performances of this sport. I propose a molding of these theories, “affective intersectionality,” as a means to extend the current understandings of intersectionality. Utilizing affective intersectionality, this project intends to fill the existing gaps within sport research by explicating the negotiated performance of White femininity and the performance of embodied feminist aesthetics denoted within the sport of Equestrian. These research foci lead us to understand how the performance of class and classism are inflicted on and projected through White women’s bodies as a means to recenter White heteropatriarchy. What the feminized sport of Equestrian begins to unveil is the fragility of White masculinity and the cultural strains manifested to negotiate and manage this sporting equilibrium. Therefore White heteropatriarchal classism is inflicted on and by White female bodies to heteronormatively recenter White heteropatriarchy.

Building on these cultural implications, I return to what remains at the center of this sporting community – the body in relationship to an animal body. The cultural makeup of this sport is significant in understanding the political binds affectively related within riding. We must begin by teasing out the cultural politics of power organized and re-perpetuated by this sport in order to articulate the breaks within feminist potentialities. I desire to move beyond critical deconstructive ends and press towards the probabilities
of feminist empowerments and feminist alliances. Here is where the intrinsic question of the innate bond between rider and horse lends us new directions and possible avenues beyond deconstructive critique. The horse-human relationship suggests a centering of feminist aesthetic embodiments and the possibilities that are available from this centering. Theories of intersectionality and affect are utilized in order to locate, articulate, and understand the embodied poetic performance negotiated between horse and rider. This relationship organizes the cultural workings within the sport but also operates to propose potentials to exceed beyond heteronormative cultural realities. The purpose of my dissertation is to tease out the embodied relational implications of power present within this sport and the possibilities of feminist aesthetic performance Hunter/Jumper riding engenders.

The purpose of this chapter is to substantiate studying the sport of Hunter/Jumper and to provide a contextual background of this research project. The sport of Hunter/Jumper has slowly become dominated by women and more specifically is a space heavily infiltrated by Whiteness, heteropatriarchy, and classism. The dominance of White femininity within the sport of Hunter/Jumper provides a wonderful site to research cultural workings of simultaneously privileged and marginalized bodies. But more importantly, conceptualizing sport as a cultural institution moves this project into the larger socio-cultural understandings of embodied politics. Not surprisingly there is no research on the sport of Hunter/Jumper substantiating this research space as an authoritative site for marking the all too often invisible norms of heteropatriarchal Whiteness. Therefore, this chapter serves to provide a literature review of sport and communication and also situates the contextual conversation of my research in order to
clearly outline the current gaps existing that my project offers to fill. The chapter is organized into three primary sections: Sport and Communication, Marking White Femininity, and Humans in Relation to Animal-Others. These sections are the primary research premises within this research project and are teased apart to justify the value and contributions of this research project. Allow me to begin with the first extrapolation of Sport and Communication.

**Literature Review**

*Sport and Communication*

Research of sport is generally housed within Sociology but has recently found its way into the Communication field. On the other hand, feminist scholars have a long history within the study of sport and demonstrate the foundation of critical sport research. By reviewing both the Communication scholarship and the feminist research on sport, I am able to conceptualize sport, demarcate feminism and sport, and locate the present breaks within larger Communication scholarship specific to my research project. Finally, I provide a contextual conversation of how research on the Equestrian sport Hunter/Jumper fills these present gaps.

*Sport as Cultural Institution*

While not a new area of research in-and-of itself, the study of sport is just now making a distinction within the field of Communication. In their foundational essay, Kassing et al. explains, “Communication is the vehicle by which community members participate in the enactment, (re)production, consumption, and organizing of sport” (28).
Communication plays a foundational role within sport which justifies why sport should be examined through the field of Communication research. The connection between sport and Communication is through the notion of sport as community. As defined by Kassing et al., the sport community holds four distinctive characteristics: it is restricted and enhanced by social characteristics (Delgado), complex and multilayered (Mean; Kassing et al.), influential of social constructions (Trujillo; Trujillo and Krizek), and pervasive (Mean). The pervasive and social nature of sport influences participants, spectators, and fans identities (Mean and Kassing; Trujillo and Krizek). Identities are so intricately wrapped within sports that its influence webs out into the larger global economy. The study of sport is certainly a powerful space to research culture and identity politics.

Where I enter this conversation is by contextualizing the notion of sport as community and expanding it outward into a wider social framework. While I do recognize sport as/is community, I find sport functions as a dominant institution deserving examination. Sport is a dominant institution because its workings are located in many other social systems. Sport is infiltrated within the government (with political decisions navigating the sporting world – e.g., Title IX), educational systems (all levels of education infiltrate some form of sport – e.g., physical education, sport teams), and media (movies dedicated to sport stories and entire television networks devoted to sport – e.g., ESPN) to name a few. The interconnected nature of sport with all social institutions demonstrates the elaborate power of the institution of sport.

Sport as an institution demonstrates the necessity for a critical cultural lens to outline the hegemonic workings within/through the culture of sport. Sport serves as a primary site “of enactment for White male hegemony” where heterosexism, patriarchy,
classism, ageism, and racism run rampant (Kassing et al. 381; Whitson; Hall, “Knowledge and Gender”). As Ann Hall explains, “Sport is an ideological institution with enormous symbolic significance that contributes to and perpetuates cultural hegemony” (“Knowledge and Gender” 38). Viewing sport from a critical cultural context reveals the research gaps existing within the study of sport and communication.

Still few in nature compared to studies on gender and sport, there is research on race\(^3\) and sport that explicates the racism present within the entire institution of sport (Halone; Wonsek; Eastman and Billings; Billings and Eastman; Long and Hylton). Most race research examines the commentary of sports broadcasts. These studies expose how the discourse of announcers tends to allot cognitive qualities to White athletes and physical qualities to Black athletes (Rada). Other research on Olympic and collegiate basketball broadcasters attribute White athletes’ success to their commitment to the sport whereas Black athletes’ achievement was credited to their innate athletic ability (Billings and Eastman; Eastman and Billings). While this research calls attention to the racism perpetuated through sport, the primary focus of these research projects concentrates on African Americans and White athletes perpetuating the U.S. White/black binary and excluding many other people of color. In addition to this, much of the traditional race research does explicate Whiteness as privileged but falls short of deconstructing the normalized performance of Whiteness.

\(^3\) For purposes of this essay, race is used to signify both race and ethnicity. My use of the term race as opposed to ethnicity in order to pull attention to the politics of body. While ethnicity eludes connections to the body, race directly refers to the body.
White privilege is evident within the institution of sport where White athletes benefit from their race whether it is acknowledged or not. Following Peggy McIntosh’s indicators of White privilege, Jonathan Long and Kevin Hylton suggest ten parallels in which White people find themselves in sport. They state, “These largely unseen facets of Whiteness illustrate the commonplace world of White privilege that reinforces difference and ‘race’ at the same time as normalizing this advantaged position for White people in sport” (92). Like all social institutions, White privilege resides within sport and serves as another site to locate the performance of Whiteness. Rachel Griffin and Bernadette Calafell’s work examines the historical and contemporary manifestations of White supremacy within sport as a form of popular culture as reifying Whiteness. Their piece stands as the only Communication research that focuses on and explicates the performance of Whiteness within sport. Therefore, Whiteness generally remains unmarked within sport which as Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek explain harmfully recenters Whiteness and places research on race and sport as only implicated by and on bodies of color. Along these lines, ideologies of classism are rarely a primary focus with sport and communication.

Pierre Bourdieu’s foundational piece, “Sport and Social Class” calls us to examine the cultural consequences of sport commodification. Most sport research articulates sport’s power of/through commodity but rarely teases out the class implications perpetuated through sport. While some research does nod towards classism and the consumption of sport (Wenner), rarely does this research examine the athletes and the athletic culture as classed. Judith Hamer has begun the conversation of commodification and sport through her finding of dance culture as cultural capital, where
she expands Bourdieu’s consuming distinctions (“All the Discomforts;” *Dancing Communities*). Hamera exposes how athletes’ parents articulate the capital gain from the sport which is directly linked to their class status (“All the Discomforts”). What remains absent are the athletes’ voices with regards to the athlete, the sport, and the performance of class as cultural capital within sport. The gaps within sport and communication with regards to race and class expose the need for a critical approach to sport research and the research crevices this project fills. Primarily, there is a need for a critical cultural examination of identity politics within the area of sport and Communication through the conceptualization of sport as cultural institution. Feminists have begun this critical examination of women and sport which provides an initial map of hegemony and sport.

*Feminism and Sport*

The history of women and sport is long and traversed with marginalization. Feminist research of sport has begun the journey of marking hegemony within the institution of sport with the cornerstone within feminist sport studies focusing on hegemonic masculinity. This general feminist research project stems from sports long history of gender division between men and women’s athletics. The workings of patriarchy within sport outlines the marginalizing cultural practices sport enacts. Feminist research on women and sport traces the history of sexism and sport.

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4 This work recognizes that gender is more intricate than a simple binary between male and female. The use of this problematic binary division is simply to follow the present and problematic division manifested within the institution of sport.
Historically women were not allowed to participate in sport in fear that their bodies where too fragile for the athletic intensity sport required (Carpenter 80). The era of Darwinism’s “survival of the fittest” pressed the concept of women’s health as a necessity for women’s exercise, which started the physical education wheel into motion for women (Hargreaves 44-50). Female sport and physical education were most supported by women earning the right to education. As Jennifer Hargreaves points out, “The developments in female education during the last third of the nineteenth century probably did more to legitimate more active forms of sport and exercise for women than any other factor” (55-56). Sport remained articulated as masculine and forms of exercise were justified only for women on the grounds of health (66). With the passing of Title IX, women had finally gained governmental acknowledgement for equality within education.

The original writing of Title IX in 1972 actually never directly pertained to women’s athletics. Primarily the amendment dealt with sex discrimination in all defined forms of education stating, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Title 20 U.S.C Section 1681 [a] Department of Labor). The Education Amendment is a three-part clause that pertains to a) Prohibition against discrimination, b) Preferential or disparate treatment because of imbalance in participation or receipt of Federal benefits, and c) Defining what are educational institutions (Title 20 U.S.C. Section 1681-1688). Athletics makes its connection to Title IX through sport participation opportunities, scholarship funding, and other benefits of athletic provisions.
Women’s sports did not reap much benefit from Title IX until the late eighties, and to this day, athletic departments continue to find ways to dodge compliances. Athletic departments, many athletes, fans and coaches – primarily within male athletics-, find Title IX as threatening to male athletics and causing the closure of many male sport programs due to the equitable funding clause. Many proponents for Title IX claim these negative narratives against the amendment do more harms than good for female athletics. These protests to Title IX demonstrate the ideology of discrimination that continues to remain with women and sport. An ideology of White hetero-masculine hegemony within sport continues to perpetuate material consequences for women’s athletics revealing that governmental mandates cannot remove marginalization within sport (Will). Tracing the history of sport and physical exercise allotted to women demonstrates the fundamental gender marginalization within the field of sport.

With the ideology of sport “so thoroughly masculinized,” female sports remain inevitably at a loss and it “seems unlikely that it can be reclaimed to serve women’s interests” (Bryson 48). Female athletes remain marginalized through the fundamental anxiety “that men and women have to be continuously differentiated” with “male preserves continuously guaranteed” (Willis 35). Female sport resides locked within a masculine hegemonic paradigm through strategies that trivialize female athletics (Messer, Duncan, Jensen; Willis), sexualize female athletes (Shugart; Mean and Kassing; Christopherson, Janning and McConnel; Eastman and Billings; Billings; Halone), and finally ignores women’s sports and athletic accomplishments (Bryson; Billings; Messner, Duncan, and Jensen). What surfaces from this research is the fragility of masculinity
manifested through femininity within female athletics causing heteropatriarchy to constantly reinstate and reinscribe male domination.

This masculine paradigm is derivative of the juxtaposition of female athletics. In other words, masculine sports gain their dominance through a binary opposition of their counterpart: female sports. Lois Bryson points out, “Sport is a powerful institution through which male hegemony is constructed and reconstructed and it is only through understanding and confronting these processes that we can hope to break this domination” (47). Tracing the history of women and sport marks large strides feminist research has made to indicate gender discrimination. The development of feminist research in sport has begun the project of chipping away patriarchal domination.

Feminist research with regards to sport focuses on the gendered history of sport, individual sport stories, influences and frustrations with Title IX, and gender discrimination within athletic programs. Most research on gender and sport within the field of Communication has principally focused on mediated representations of women’s athletics and female athletes’ bodies (Butterworth; Harrison and Fredrickson). These projects approach sport research through a conceptualization of sport as popular culture and derive their findings through rhetorical analysis and discourse analysis. There surfaces a need for a humanist-embodied research approach toward feminist sport research.

Still few in nature, recent research within women’s sport and Communication has begun to intermingle within the conversations of feminism and sport (Mean and Kassing; Mean). These studies challenge scholars to “move beyond mere indications of participation in sport by women” and more towards an understanding of female athletes’
constructions of identity and “the degrees to which these constructions reflect traditional male hegemony or substantive changes within the community of sport” (Mean and Kassing 127). These moves toward identity in feminist sport research demonstrate a need for an intersectional lens within women and sport research.

Feminist research recognizes that work within “women in sport must be seen against a backdrop of other social forces” but continues to remain solely focused on issues of gender (Hall “From Pre-To Postfeminism” 48-49). Consequently, multiple fissures remain within feminist research on women and sport. Although I do recognize the value of current feminist and sport research, they only focus on issues of gender when that “is not the only oppression” (Anzaldúa Borderlands 231). Much feminist sport research does infiltrate criticism of heterosexism, female athletes’ sexuality, and lesbianism. But this research simply exemplifies how often gender and sexuality become conflated into one performative social location. By maintaining this gender/sexuality bias, Whiteness remains unmarked, and female athletes of color are asked to “leave their race at the door” (231). A gaping hole remains within feminist sport research that tackles women athletes’ race, sexuality, and class dynamics with regards to sport.

Like all social institutions, sport research necessitates an intersectional theorizing. The lack of intersectional approaches to feminist sport research analysis has not gone unrecognized. As M. Ann Hall notes, “In sport-related research there has been much more emphasis placed on sexual difference and only some account taken of differences among women” (“Feminism and Sporting Bodies” 43). However, this recognition has not surfaced any changes and White, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied women’s experiences in sport remain the universalized representation within the female sports
world (Dewar). Following Mohanty, feminist communication research in sport needs to identify difference not on the grounds of “an enforced commonality of oppression” but rather through “the politics of solidarity” (7). The politics of solidarity recognize institutionalized racism, heteronormativity, sexism, classism, and ageism as working on/through all people differently. For this reason feminist sport scholars must operate reflexively to recognize the multiple oppressions and privileges experienced within sports by our bodies. In doing so, we open the door of possibilities within feminist and sport research and begin filling the holes that presently exist.

*Articulating Hunter/Jumper as Sport*

This section explores the history and current research within the area of Equestrian sport in order to further establish an argument for the Hunter/Jumper sport as an ample site to fill the current gaps within the fields of Communication and sport, feminism and sport, and also extend our understandings of performances of embodied feminist aesthetics. Equestrian as an unknown sport requires me to begin with a brief description of the Hunter/Jumper sport in order to establish it as a significant women’s sport. Following this description, I will tease out the current research on Equestrian sports that reveals its feminine domination and the implications and/or possibilities of this feminine centered sport. Next, I explore the research on Equestrian as denoting the site of Hunter/Jumper riding as a premier space to examine the performance of wealthy White femininity. The final section examines the unique component of horse as teammate that the Equestrian sports offers and the areas of research possibility this unique relationship unveils.
The focal point of this sport revolves around the integration of the horse into understandings of relations. As Joe Fargis explains, horses today are “mainly used for sport rather than for farming or military purposes” (ix). The Equestrian sports tradition is a multifaceted array of different forms of riding disciplines. Typically this world is separated into three primary camps: Driving, Western, and English, with the largest participation within Western and English riding. The Driving disciplines relates to the historical “horse-drawn carriage” customs. Today, Driving is not used for transportation but has evolved into an entire sport. The Western disciplines of riding typically pertain to connections with “the Old West” and cowboying. The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) hosts events such as calf roping, team roping, bronc riding, bull riding, bareback riding, and barrel racing. These forms of riding branch from the traditional riding necessary for ranching and has grown into “arenas of masculinity wherein male prowess is tested in events focused on strength, equestrian mastery and ability to perform” (Shield and Coughlin 198). In fact, women are not permitted to participate in most rodeo events except for barrel racing and some team roping. Other forms of Western riding have teased out from the rodeo into disciplines such as Reigning, Western Horsemanship, and Reigning Cowhorse. These forms of Western riding are open to women’s participation but remain fairly dominated by men.

Historically English riding generated from Fox Hunting in England and France. Fox Hunting is a sport where people ride on horseback and steeple chase over brush and fences in pursuit of a fox and, more commonly in the United States, a coyote. Heavy western saddles with horns hinder the horse from jumping and galloping long distances. They also prevent the rider from leaning forward with the horse’s jumping motion over
the logs, fence lines and brush piles. Therefore, the English riding saddle is specifically
designed for jumping and galloping long distances on horses. Fox Hunting was and
continues to be a social activity for the upper class which requires certain attire and
maintains an emphasized elite “gentlemen’s” style (Howe). This clothing style and
prestigious class status still lives within the entire English riding sport today.

The sport expanded from Fox Hunting to Hunters, where jumps similar to what
would be encountered on a hunt were placed inside an enclosed arena. Horses and riders
were then judged on their ability and style over a pattern of eight to ten jumps. These
competitions grew into multiple different forms of Hunter Seat “classes” where riders and
horses are judged on their performance and ability of riding over fences and “on the flat.”
A “flat class” refers to riders and horses that are judged as they the walk, trot, and canter
around the arena both directions and demonstrate different horsemanship [sic]
navigations that do not involve jumping.

The sport of Hunters is primarily focused on the form and style of the horse.
Horses are judged on their obedience, alertness, responsiveness, and movement (USEF
Rulebook). From the sport of Hunters came other forms of horse showing known as Hunt
Seat Equitation and Jumpers. Equitation focuses on the position of the rider where the
jumping and flat classes involve more challenging maneuvers to test the riders’ ability.
Jumpers is a timed event in which the fastest horse and rider team to jump a series of
unfamiliar obstacles wins. In order to be more challenging, Jumpers’ fences do not
simulate natural settings found on the hunt. Instead these fences are brightly colored and
extensively decorated. These are the types of jumps and courses one would see in the
Olympics. Each of these forms of competition has its own division, set of rules, and championships within the USEF.

Despite its veiled nature, the sport of Equestrian has taken this nation by storm and shows no signs of fading. Oftentimes Equestrian is categorized as a hobby and not a sport. From an inexperienced viewers’ gaze, riding horses over fences does look simple. Keri Brandt explains, “Horsepeople often say the best riders and horses are the ones who can go around the ring and make it look effortless” (312). But from an experienced eye, there are hundreds of small intricate movements and skills being practiced to successfully jump a horse over a fence. Like all athletic skills most Hunter/Jumper riders will agree, your ride is never perfected but in a constant process of improvement. The process of learning to ride is a life-long project of studying the horse and embodying these messages.

Generally the misconception of riding as easy and un-sport-like derives out of the fact that virtually any person can ride horses leisurely. Many may have participated in the occasional trail riding at some point in their life. But galloping a horse and getting her to jump over twelve to sixteen obstacles in perfect unison is definitely not a component of the “leisurely” ride. In fact, it requires that both the rider and horse put their lives in danger to accomplish this act. Here is where I locate equestrian – specifically Hunter/Jumper – as a sport. The skill, mental discipline, and physical stamina to negotiate a 1200-2000lb animal over any obstacle with only the use of your balance, eyes, hands, legs, and seat is the sport of Hunter/Jumper.
*Hunter/Jumper a Feminized Sport*

Within the United States today, the sport of hunter/jumper has become a sport of feminine domination. As Neal Santelmann stated in his reflections of his week-long crash course in English riding, “Beyond the Western (style of riding) set, horseback riding in the U.S. is a decidedly female domain, with women riders outnumbering men by something like four-to-one” (68). Tracing the practice and history of Hunter/Jumper reveals this feminine overtake.

Hunter/Jumper riding has evolved from its military training, hunting, gentlemen’s club past into a nationally and internationally recognized feminine sport. Although riding was once an all-male activity, elite upper-class women in history gained entrance into the riding world. Originally, women were only allowed to ride side-saddle where both of their legs remain on one side of the horse so they could continue to wear flowing dresses while riding. Women were not permitted to ride astride (or have the legs apart) as this was seen as being provocative and symbolizing sexual abandonment (Hargreaves 89). It was believed that if young unmarried women were to ride astride or split-legged there were risks of breaking the hymen, “signaling the loss of virginity and rendering her less marriageable” (89). Nonetheless, bourgeois female riders found it impossible to enjoy galloping at fences and with the hounds side-saddle, which began the slow process of altering the regulations placed on female riders. As these rules to riding slowly changed, so too, did the sport of Hunter/Jumper with the permeation of women and riding (Weil “Men and Horses;” “Purebreds and Amazons”). Kari Weil states, “The rise of the Sunday and woman rider feminized a domain that was once dominated by men and brought new fears of a world of women on top” (“Men and Horses” 88). These fears expose the
instability of race, class, ability, sexuality, and gender that reside within the sport of riding.

Hunter/Jumper riding is a pivotal sport for critical feminist and sport Communication research. As Hall claims, “Historians of women’s experiences acknowledge that women’s sporting experiences is a vastly under researched area” (“Feminism and Sporting” 38). With the sport of Hunter/Jumper a predominately women’s sport, it is not surprising there is scarce scholarly research in its area. Although there are hundreds of “how-to” books on equestrian riding, veterinary and horse care manuscripts, and even more fiction and nonfiction literature on horses, women, and the sport of riding, there is diminutive critical work on Equestrian. In the area of sport and Communication there is only one piece on Rodeo Queens (Shields and Coughlin). There is much to be learned by examining a feminized sport and the identities that surface around a feminine sport culture. With the sport of Hunter/Jumper a feminized sport dominated by female athletes and holding no male/masculinized counterpart, we are able to locate the implications of what defines a feminine sport and also how this sport possibly represent cultural performances of femininity outside of a masculine/patriarchal discursive sport paradigm.

The Hunter/Jumper sport evolved from a foundation of White wealthy men and these dominant social locations are recentered through the sport today. The sport of riding is grounded in Whiteness through the White women’s body and exposes the history of White women’s performance of class, sexuality, gender, and race. In the early 1900s French literary analogies between thoroughbreds (the prestigious breed of horse in that era and still today) and humans were linked to denote a women’s family propriety (Weil
“Men and Horses;” “Purebreds and Amazons”). Like horses’ breeding lines, human’s bloodlines signified their privilege. Cultural scholar Stuart Hall notes that race serves as a “floating discursive” signifier. Here we are able to locate the racist history of connecting race with physical attributes through the signifier of White women’s and horses’ bodies.

These connections ground racism and reveal how White women riders in this era within France were “in general the guardians of race: they are the born, not made, thoroughbreds of French [and I would add ‘Western’] society” (Weil “Men and Horses 104). To this day, the emphasis shift to “bodies on horses as spectacle” perpetuates cultural heteronormativity perpetuating White upper-class heterosexist gender bias in the selection and success of riders. The subjective judging system⁵ within the world of equestrian privileges the ideal White woman’s body. The culture of the Hunter/Jumper sport perpetuates racism, classism, heteronormativity, and sexism.

Vickie Shields and Colleen Coughlin’s piece “Performing Rodeo Queen Culture: Competition, Athleticism, and Excessive Feminine Masquerade” certainly begins the important cultural examination of Equestrian culture revealing riding as a possibility for female empowerment. They do speak to the politics of gender and provide a marginal nod towards issues of class. Yet they follow the historical feminism downfall of not examining issues of race or really theorizing class. The sport of Equestrian in the United States is dominated by Femininity, wealth and Whiteness. Scholastic work in the area of riding continues to leave race and the performance of Whiteness unmarked. With its

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⁵ There is much to be said with regards to the judging of Equestrian specifically Hunter/Jumper riding. The judges/trainers in the U.S. in the past and still today are generally White men. The subjectivity of the judging system reveals the complexity of identity politics within the sport. The judging system and judges are referenced and represented throughout this project.
history and majority of riders being White women of middle but mostly upper class, the
sport of Hunter/Jumper is a key site to theorize and critically examine White women’s
femininity. In order to understand the cultural workings of White women’s femininity
within this sport we must first comprehend how White patriarchy and classism has
framed our current performances of White femininity.

Marking White Femininity

I have established the sport of hunter/jumper to be an ample cultural space to
research the cultural workings of White femininity based on its historical and current
cultural dominance of White bourgeois femininity. This section will justify the
importance of researching White femininity through a review of feminist scholarship and
how my research speaks to and with this work done. To do so, I begin with a historical
discussion of feminism to expose the past and still present gap in feminist scholarship to
extrapolate the workings of Whiteness. Building on this lack of recognition of White
privilege within feminism by White feminists, I next make an argument for examining
Whiteness in relation to White femininity. Finally, I articulate five White feminine
archetypes in order to mark the historical and cultural framings of White femininity.
These archetypes serve to justify my research of the performative aspects of White
femininity and also begin to outline performative pictures of intersectional politics on and
by White femininity.

Fundamental Flaws within Feminism

Feminists today recognize that we enjoy the fruits of many feminists’ labors that
preceded us. The fact that many people overlook these advantages as intrinsically

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feminist in nature denotes the hegemonic strains to dismantle feminism. As a social movement, feminism is perhaps the most successful of all time. However, not all persons reap sole benefits from feminism. Many women continue to be excluded and oppressed by feminism and feminist theory. The untidy past of feminism reflects where feminist theory must go in order to achieve the political goal of solidarity. Feminism’s past is intrinsically exclusive. Listening to the voices of women of color paints a picture of feminism’s disjuncture and how possibilities for solidarity lie within the recognition of difference.

Throughout the years, feminism has never fallen neatly into one particular group which has led to categorizing feminism into three waves. First wave feminism took place in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and primarily arose to secure women the right to vote. This suffrage movement centered on the conception of equal opportunities directing both the liberal women’s right movement and early socialist feminism (Krolokke and Sorensen 1). What resounds so clearly within the women’s social movement is a faux solidarity through gender. bell hooks describes the nineteenth century women’s movement as a privileged White middle-class women’s movement (‘Ain’t I a Woman” 122-48). With the dominant members White and middle-class women the political goals of the suffragist movement reflected only politics of gender causing grave division amongst women. As hooks points out the movement simply secured racist and classist divisions between women (147). The efforts of women of color were hardly acknowledged or given a voice in which the topic was women’s emancipation (136-41).
The discord residing within first wave feminism bled into the second wave and engorged the entire movement. Second wave feminism “is the feminism many people think about when they hear the term feminist today” (Foss 152). Second wave feminism often refers to the radical feminism of the women’s liberation movement that took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Krolokke and Sorensen 7). Influenced by the rise of leftist movements and anti-war protests, feminist protests challenged (gender) oppression and female objectification. White patriarchal conservatives utilized these protests to discursively categorize feminists and feminism as “crazy, extremist, man-hating women” (Wood 66). But laced deeper within this discourse is how feminism became categorized as a White bourgeois women’s group. Dominant discourse constructed feminism as “crazy, extremist, and man-hating” and pictured them as White bourgeois young college women. While conservative news coverage of these protests served to perpetuate the exclusionary nature of feminism, these protests also awakened new perceptions of (White-wealthy) women as “victims of a patriarchal, commercialized, and oppressive beauty culture” (Krolokke and Sorensen 8 my emphasis). This victim mentality signals another downfall within feminism’s past.

Political solidarity within feminism is again dismantled through victimization ideology because it is built on terms set by dominant patriarchy. As bell hooks notes, “Identifying themselves as 'victims', they (White women) could abdicate responsibility for their role in the maintenance and perpetuation of sexism, racism, and classism, which they did by insisting that only men were the enemy” (“Sisterhood” 128). Recognition of multiple oppressions remained muted within feminism and continues to harm women of color to this day (Alexander and Mohanty xv). By unreflexively focusing on personal
victimization, the White bourgeois feminist leaders perpetuated the partition within feminism, marginalizing many poor and lesbians and women of color or any mixture of these social locations. Victim ideologies constructed a binary of oppression as either oppressed or oppressor. Victim ideologies also allowed for a linear philosophy of oppression that removed White wealthy women from being implicated as oppressors themselves.

The victim ideology climaxed “when advocates for Women’s Liberation began to compare themselves to Blacks in the 1960s” (Zack “Can Third Wave” 195). This comparison was not to Black women’s realities but to Blacks as an androgynous group which outraged both Black men and women (195). The agenda of second wave feminists served to “symbolically erase black women’s existence as women” (Zack 195 my emphases). The invisibility of women of color is enunciated within second wave feminism by not recognizing the value of difference within groups. What surfaces from this discourse was an outcry by women of color that challenged the essentialist second wave conception of women as only White bourgeois females.

Sojourner Truth’s pivotal nineteenth-century political locution “Ain’t I a Woman” exposed the complexity of identities by challenging the definition of women through her own personal experiences. Truth’s narrative is quite possibly the first work of intersectionality (Brah and Phoenix). Her body and her narrative weaves together to demonstrate the complex nature of positionalities exposing the crisis that has reverberated within feminism since its beginning. Truth’s speech “fundamentally challenges all ahisotropic or essentialist notions of ‘woman,’” (Brah and Phoenix 76; Haraway). Feminists of color reverberate Truth’s articulations and are not silent about the
insults and problems within feminism (Combahee River Collective; Moraga and Anzaldúa; hooks *Ain’t I a Woman*; and many other indigenous and/or women of color not allocated publication). Women of color demonstrated that patriarchy was not solely an oppression of sexism but also an oppression of racism, classism, ageism, and heterosexism. They challenged the second wave modes of feminism as being exclusionary and hegemonic by furthering oppressions of many “Other” women. Feminism could no longer claim that “all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women” (Lorde 95). The challenges expressed by women of color debunked the essentialist nature of feminism and began a deconstructionist discourse that embraced difference as a starting point for solidarity. Feminism will never achieve solidarity or a project of empowerment outside of the recognition of difference within groups and furthermore within bodies.

Political projects such as the Combahee River Collective challenged the notion of a single dimensional identity politics and advocated for a commitment “to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression” (65). The voices of U.S. women of color united in the principal book *This Bridge Called My Back*, which was a compilation of political writings. In their 1981 “Introduction,” Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa claim “*This Bridge Called My Back* intends to reflect an uncompromised definition of feminism by women of color in the US” (liii). The work of feminists of color demonstrates the experiences of women of color, challenges White feminism, and exposes identity as a multiplication of social locations rather than simply gender.

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Women of color built a feminism that is grounded in an ideology of difference that enables the body to be *the* central component of knowledge. An ideology of difference centers on recognizing the multiple social locations situated within one body and the multiplicity of oppression experienced within one body. Just as gender is not our only social location it is also not the only oppression (Anzaldúa “*Borderlands*” 230-31). Anzaldúa presses us away from the White feminist victim ideology that is “blacked out and blinded out about our multiple oppressions” and challenges us to *see* and *respect* the dynamics of culture (231). A focus on difference alters how identity is conceptualized.

While many have termed the work of these feminists of color as third wave feminism, I resist this categorization. These women argued against categorization as a patriarchal mechanism that created division and essentialist ideologies. Moraga challenges the notion of her work as being the “third wave.” She claims this conceptualizing places hers and the work of many other women of color in conversation with other social movements that have been systematically dismantled, unrecognized, and exclusionary (*Loving* 179). Women of color expose that notions of identity must be viewed “as part of a more complex system” which resists categorizing because these politics of exclusion “diminishes our humanness” (Anzaldúa “*(Un)natural Bridges*” 2). Moraga and Anzaldúa exposes the harms of feminism’s past and the motives to rebuild a more productive future by resisting categorization and continuing to acknowledge difference. Women of color moved feminism into a space of anti-essentialism by contesting the homogeny within feminism and resisting categorizing.

Recognizing differences amongst women is an imperative move within feminism to disempower patriarchy. The hegemonic value of “divide and conquer” is re-envisioned
by feminists of color as “define and empower” (Lorde 112). Women of color, lesbians of color, third world women explicate their differences and demand these differences be recognized as contingent within the larger social and cultural powers. Defining differences and empowering them, these are goals we must embrace as feminists in order to break the racist, sexist, classist binds that confine feminism from experiencing solidarity and empowerment. Through an acknowledgement of the body, we are able to see and value the intricate differences of women that “define us and empower us.” Understanding difference is the primary component to explicating a theoretical landscape for inclusive feminism.

Listening carefully to these women of color, I recognize the grave depravity in feminism’s lack of consciousness for difference. I remain committed to building feminist alliances and recognize that this is only accomplished by, first, recognizing difference and, furthermore, taking up the all too often silenced conversation of race within feminism by White women. Women of color began and continue the pivotal work within feminism to rebuild its disjunctured past by calling for an interrogation of privileged positionalities within feminism, specifically White feminism. Aimee Carrillo Rowe defines the intersections of privileged positionalities within White femininity as the paradox of White femininity, explaining that “White women must negotiate between gender oppression, on the one hand, and racial privilege on the other” (“Paradox of White Femininity” 68). This paradox is difficult to asses “without falling into merely creating a hierarchy of oppression” which demonstrates the extreme value and necessity for White women to take up issues of race within White femininity in order to no longer place gender as the only component of discrimination.
Despite its implicit value for feminism, there remains a lack of engagement by White feminist to interrogate White femininity. This general disregard removes White feminists possibilities for feminist alliances but also places their bodies as working agents to further the workings of Whiteness towards slippery-invisible universality (Nakayama and Krizek). For possibilities of coalitions to actually exist women, especially White women, must first recognize that U.S. feminism is historically built on racism, classism, and sexism (hooks “Ain’t I a Woman”).

Defining White Femininity

I locate my research on Whiteness from a feminist perspective which holds tightly to not only the ideological workings but also the embodied realities of these intricacies. Katey Davy specifies the value in this specific framework which I find important to quote at length to justify the reasoning for only examining White womanhood. She explains,

White womanhood needs to be theorized as an institution in the service of White control and supremacy in the same way that heterosexuality has been used as an institution in the service of patriarchy… Like any institution White womanhood is not a totalizing force but one that shifts and changes in response to historical conditions. (213)

Seeing White femininity as a cultural institution explicates its power and complexities. While it is imperative to first define White femininity in order to begin the project of deconstructing it, this in and of itself is very difficult due to White femininity’s intrinsic tie with Whiteness. Communication scholars have noted the workings of Whiteness as slippery, unmarkable, and both an embodied engagement and a discursive practice linked to White bodies and skin in order to remain universal and powerful (Moon “White Enculturation;” Martin and Nakayama “Thinking Dialogically;” Nakayama and Krizek;
Shome “Politics of Location”). Whiteness situates White femininity beyond forms of particular bodies but on an ideological level moving us more towards an understanding of White femininity as an institutional construction of privilege through performative aspects by particular natures linked to White-embodied-norms.

In doing so, I am articulating White femininity similar to how Ruth Frenkenberg did in her work on White femininity as particular performances that are naturalized as an institutionalized privilege through dominant cultural power. bell hooks terms this form of power as “White-supremacist capitalist patriarchy,” in order to frame who is served (capitalism and White men), differentiate White bodies from the ideology of White-supremacy, and finally the term defines the dominant cultural center (Feminism is for Everybody). In following her, I believe that White femininity is placed in relation to White-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy in order to define, organize, and reproduce it.

Most of the work that examines White femininity is done by feminists of color; their work frames White femininity from a perspective of what White femininity is not rather than defining what it is (Anzaldúa; Moraga; Anzaldúa and Moraga; hooks; Hill Collins; Shome; Calafell “When will we matter;” Carrillo Rowe “Belonging;” Power Lines; “Locating Feminism’s Subject”). My project hopes to enter into this conversation with these women from the alternative direction by defining what White femininity is. As a White heterosexual woman defining the performative aspects of White femininity is a generative process that answers the call by so many women of color to take seriously the work of racism within feminism. Dreama Moon (“White Enculturation”) and Ruth Frankenberg are White feminist scholars that have started this project. Moon challenges
As the often-silent benefactors of both White supremacy and legal protections that were made possible by civil rights movements led by people of color, White women in particular have a moral and ethical responsibility to place the abolition of White supremacy at the forefront of their personal and political agendas. (196)

Responding to her ethical call, my project works to examine the embodied performances of White femininity inflicted on, expected of, and privileged to White women’s bodies.

However, I agree with Aimee Carrillo Rowe that both these works focus on White femininity but extend their findings to a more general theorization of Whiteness and lose the focus of the intersection between Whiteness and femininity (“Paradox of White Femininity” 68). I hope to continue this conversation by remaining focused on outlining the articulations of White femininity’s performatives but also moving beyond characterizations of White femininity towards probabilities of feminist alliances. Carrillo Rowe’s work (more in her earlier work than her most recent projects) attempts to do these same goals but falls short because she simply pits White women against women of color. Patrice Bussanell critiques Carrillo Rowe’s use of binary categories (White women versus women of color) as “misrepresenting the varied experiences and shifting identities of White women and women of color and divides all women into two seemingly impenetrable camps” which in the end removes the relational possibilities that can bring people together against White privilege (83). While I agree with Bussanell’s critique and imploring challenge to move away from either-or language, I also find that White women and women of color do have differing cultural realities because of U.S. historical realities.

Perhaps, one way to move here is towards the performative rather than just the discursive. When we do so we see bodies which are contextual, complex, shifting,
socially constructed, and negotiable. Bodies in history provide us understandings for the performative natures in which we negotiate race, class, gender, and sexuality currently. Therefore, I find it necessary to plot the historical accounts of women’s bodies in relation to each other in order to trace the performative aspects of White femininity that were historically negotiated to pivot White women against women of color to grant power to White capitalist heteropatriarchy.

*Archetypes of White Femininity*

Many feminists of color have argued that defining femininity and feminism must always be placed against the historical account in which it was built (Collins *Black Feminist Thought, Black Sexual Politics*; hooks *Ain’t I a Woman* 119-120; Frankenberg 10). Women in the U.S. have been socialized by a particular framing of American history “to uphold and maintain racial imperialism in the form of White supremacy and sexual imperialism in the form of patriarchy” (hooks 120). Gloria Anzaldúa explains that archetypes of Chicana women are organized into dichotomies in order to culturally frame particular behaviors of Chicana women. Anzaldúa denotes how women are not only categorically situated but also pivoted into dichotomies in order to harmfully navigate the politics of those bodies into particular social marginalizations (*Borderlands* 53). Therefore, in order to trace the performative realities and disciplinings of White femininity, one must begin by organizing her (White) body against those historical framings of women of color because this juxtaposition is the cultural articulations organized to maintain White capitalist heteropatriarchy.
Historically, the U.S. has reified a Black/White dichotomy in order to exclude the bodies of many other persons of color. Understanding these hierarchical natures of femininity were constructed into such dichotomies in order to serve White capitalist heteropatriarchy, I will trace the archetypes of Black women extrapolated by Patricia Hill Collins to articulate the unmarked-dichotomist-other (White) female body. While Hill Collins writes of the categorizations of Black women’s bodies, there are clear connections to these archetypes with other women of color. These dichotomist framings outline the historical accounts of White femininity which I organize through the term “White feminine civility.” I employ the word civility with intention. Bernadette Calafell extrapolates White women’s bodies and performance of femininity is intricately tied to power and privilege (“When Will We All Matter”). The term civility here links the privileges of White women’s bodies with their performance of femininity. I follow Tracy Owens Patton’s definition of civility. She states, “Civility is inextricably bound with power because it precludes overt or covert challenge to White supremacist hegemonic order” (68). Thus, White feminine civility refers to not only the unmarked Whiteness within White femininity but the performative attributes of White femininity that are both socialized by White women and also disciplined onto their bodies.

Patricia Hill Collins explains that controlling images of Black women are utilized in justifying ideological oppressions (*Black Feminist Thought*). These controlling images work from a historical account of women of color to marginalize them. Hill Collins extrapolates five particular controlling archetypes of black women: the jezebel, the mammy, the Black matriarch, the welfare mother, and the Black lady (72-81). I find that each of these images is understood and created in relation to their White female
counterpart. Understanding that the controlling images outlined by Hill Collins always
tell us something about the other, I look to these five archetypes of Black females to
demarcate particular constructions of White femininity. I recognize that not all White
women fall into one of these archetypes. Generally, White women performatively fall
into complex interstitials of them. Denoting how White women’s bodies are afforded the
privilege of more performative complexity than constricting categorizations placed on
bodies of women of color.

Just as women of color have controlling images projected to marginalize their
femininity, the five dichotomies White female controlling images I articulate work to
discipline White femininity into particular performatives in order to serve White
capitalist heteropatriarchy. In addition, I recognize the problematic White/Black binary
constructed by only looking to Black female archetypes. Although these negative images
are categorized by Black females, I see them as projected onto all women of color to
some extent or another. Therefore, I ask the reader to see each framing of Black females
as also serving to frame all women of color along some marginalizing continuum. My
claim is that, in order to mark the harmful essence of Whiteness within performances of
White femininity, we must first outline the unmarked but always present controlling
archetypes of White femininity.

At the core of these dichotomies between women of color and White women is
the virgin/whore dichotomy (Anzaldúa Borderlands; Moraga). The virgin/whore
dichotomy in connection to women of color is controlled, as Hill Collins explains in
terms of Black women, by images of the jezelbel, whore, or “hoochie” (Black Feminist
Thought 81). On the other hand, White women serve as the representation of purity (81).
This dichotomy arises from the historical roots of slavery and serves as the foundation of Whiteness within White femininity. Thus, the White female body is always framed to serve heteropatriarchy by exemplifying the norms of heterosexuality to serve the White man, whereas women of color are placed against the “White virgin” as hyper-sexualized and sexually deviant as “whores.”

The White virgin archetype exonerates particular forms of idealized beauty, obligating all forms of femininity to fall into these blonde hair, blue eyes, straight White teeth, thin, large breasts, White-skinned but also tan body types to acquire access to beauty privileges. However, most importantly the White virgin displays herself in modest fashion alluding to sexual purity. The White virgin projects the victim ideology by being innocent, helpless, and victimized assuring the necessity of White heteropatriarchy protects the White virgin through racism, sexism, and classism. Here lies the critical foundation of White feminine superiority that not only differentiates White women from women of color but obligates White women to also protect themselves from any association with women of color in fear that they will become categorized as “whores.” Negative sexual framings remove White women from White privilege since at the core of White capitalistic patriarchy is sexism placing White women as servants to produce pure White offspring that secure White male privilege. The virgin/whore dichotomy serves as the centerfold for White female civility to maintain and represent perfectionism, which is best exemplified by the “Good White female Employer.”

Opposite of the asexual, faithful and obedient domestic servant, “the mammy,” is the “Good White female Employer.” The Good White female Employer denies her glorified sexuality and is allotted the privilege to gain economic achievements. Since
domestic labor is provided for her and situated below her employment options, the Good White female Employer is allotted a more economical (not to exceed the White male) employment status. What we come to see is that the dichotomous other, the Good White female Employer is granted status for her achievements through hard work and success in education. A manner of perfectionism becomes underlined here as Good White female Employers must project an attitude of complete submission to rules, over exert themselves within school work to ensure actual recognized success, are hyper-sensitive to perpetuate the expectation of mothering within the workplace, and maintain complacent mannerisms towards White heteropatriarchal authority to secure their success. The Good White female Employer demonstrates the foundation of Whiteness within embodied norms of White femininity to which I term the White feminine civility complex.

Norms of White feminine civility are developed from this White female archetype allotting those mannerisms that do not serve White capitalist heteropatriarchy as defined and punished by their difference. For example, those White female employers that do not exemplify this White feminine civility differ themselves from the “Good White female Employer.” These women are disciplined as asexual, and/or too assertive, a threat to other White women, and exerting an excess of independence because they threaten White male employment/success and overall the Whiteness of White femininity serving to center White capitalist heteropatriarchy. White feminine civility is utilized for the purposes of deconstructing the productivity of feminism and overall work to enforce the assimilation of White femininity.

The overly aggressive, unfeminine, Black matriarch typifies the bad Black mother image that emasculates their lovers and husbands and is responsible for the raising of bad
Black families that lead to the social problems within Black civil society. This matriarchal image obligates the dichotomist White feminine Other as the “Pure White Mother.” In order for this dichotomy to exist, White Women are expected to perform as “Pure White Mothers” by embodying the virgin complex, centering their homes on their White husbands, and raising conforming White children that exonerate the performance of elitist Whiteness in public. This particular White female image largely serves the ideals of the “American Dream complex,” where the White family sits at the dinner table and eats a meal prepared by the White mother who not only works a service-oriented job, but also handles everything with the children. They live in White middle-class suburbia with a White picket fence, a dog, and attend church on Sunday. What the pure White Mother offers White feminine civility is the nature of proper homemaking and motherhood as core values for White women, representing both the privilege of these things but also the obligation to fulfill them.

The next controlling image that Hill Collins outlines is the Black welfare mother. The poor working-class Black welfare mother is the commonly media represented lazy Black mother that undeservingly collects social welfare benefits. This particular image is heavily interconnected with drug abuse and prostitution, exposing the Black welfare mother as teaching her children these poor work ethics that directly contradict U.S. economic stability (79). Interestingly enough, I find this Black female controlling image to begin to share many commonalities with her dichotomist White female other, “White Trash.” The controlling counterpart White Trash females exemplify the White American poor. She is represented as lazy and stupid and typically from the South. These images connect this form of White femininity as the failed White woman who does not explicate
any form of White civility. In fact, she represents the opposite of White civility for White women and hence is doomed to a life of poverty due to her poor representation of herself (unclean and ragged), her overall lack of work ethic, her flamboyant hyper-aggressive attitude, and overall crass nature towards White men.

What is interesting about this dichotomy is that they work together to re-perpetuate divisions within feminist alliances. While the class orientation overlap harmfully represents both images, racist norms are also exaggerated with the White Trash Woman in order for these White women to maintain some elitist entitlement over anOther. White Trash Women further justify excessive racism by Southern White women of all classes and also differentiate those “enlightened” U.S. bureaucratic White women. These racist framings of White Trash Women extinguish the only probable overlap of alliance relations within capitalist harms, furthering the harmful Whiteness embedded within White femininity and ensuring that alliances between women are not formed. By situating the White Trash Woman as hyper-racist, White capitalist heteropatriarchy manifests the elitist White females as “colorblind” and thus not racist. Since White feminine civility condemns White Trash Women’s racist representations, it clearly organizes these behaviors as the only form of racism. White feminine civility is “enlightened” through education and its class superiority over poor White women. So, while the White Trash Woman is a negative image for White femininity, she plays an imperative role in forming the racist foundations of Whiteness within White femininity by exonerating White feminine civility.

Moving within class orientation but remaining as controlling images, Hill Collins explains that opposite of the welfare mother/queen is the “Black Lady” (80). She explains
that these Black female images may not appear to be controlling because they stayed in school, worked hard, and have achieved much but in actuality are constructed as the modern day mammy (80-81). These Black ladies are often conceptualized as asexual and/or too assertive to maintain a relationship. However, I would add that these forms of Black femininity often serve the performance of Whiteness by performing White feminine civility in order be read as non-threatening to White females. Black Ladies are familiar with White feminine civility and always/already at an advantage to it. We must not forget that White feminine civility is constructed as White and for White female bodies. Therefore, the Black Lady’s performance of White civility is “less” threatening to White capitalist heteropatriarchy.

Juxtaposed to the Black Lady, who is expected to earn her accomplishments, is the hyper-entitled White Lady who exemplifies White elitist feminine civility. The White Lady is generally born into wealth and granted paramount opportunities to education and success. However, she must present herself always as the essence of bourgeois classism in extremely expensive clothing and jewelry. Her hair and makeup is always done, while her body is expected to undergo any and all plastic surgeries to assure that she represents the idealized White female norms of beauty (e.g., the Elitist White virgin). The White Lady is never expected to work which also involves raising her children with a nanny (re-perpetuating the historical norms of slavery). This form of White femininity is placed at the center of privilege within U.S. culture. The White Lady is enthroned as the queen of White feminine civility and maintains her power by emanating her entitlement onto others constantly, to everyone, even other “White Ladies” but especially those of lower class status.
These White archetypes frame the performative practices of White femininity but more implicitly they define one another in terms of power. Thus the White Lady is afforded more access to performative power and negotiates to maintain this power in her relation to White feminine civility over other White women that do not execute this White feminine civility performance. Placing these performative practices at the intersection of the archetypes of women of color and White-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy supports my argument that White femininity must work for and within White-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. Raka Shome best explains this relational dynamic. She writes,

White femininity outside of White national patriarchy has no meaning, since its meaning arises only through its constructed *relationality* with White patriarchy. The subject of White femininity emerges in, and through, its subjectification in White patriarchy. It is because of this that familial domesticity ends up being one of the central dramas in the performance of White femininity. (“White Femininity” 328)

What I would add here is that familial domesticity is simply one composite of White femininity which is why I have broadened the term to White feminine civility. Women of color have acknowledged White feminine civility as: “this polite timidity is killing us” (Moraga and Anzaldúa 34). Moon adds to this that civility in discursive terms is *hyperpoliteness* which supports colorblindness and White silence around issues of race.

What is missing in her conversation is the production of this civility beyond simply conversations around race, but an overall intersectional White feminist performance that manifests this particular notion of civility.

My conceptualization of White feminine civility’s implicit linkage to Whiteness and heteropatriarchy through a particular feminine performance afforded to White
women’s bodies attempts to work intersectionally. It exposes the fragility of White femininity in a heteropatriarchal Whiteness context. Owens Patton explains the performative power of civility is so thoroughly mucked within White supremacist heteronormativity that we no longer see “issues of incivility [as] thinly veiled as civility” (81). She goes on to explain, “Through the daily choices we as individuals make, we determine the limits of true “civility” (81). Calafell adds that White women are allotted the privilege to normative framings of civility through avoidance and/or allotted more authoritative power within the classroom through these same performances of White feminine civility.

Therefore, White feminine civility works both from the performative framings of White heteronormative civility but also is privileged to define it. Which begs the question and challenges us “to consider ways in which the construct of White femininity can be wrested from such a linkage and imagined as a location where White women can exist without being written by White femininity” (Shome “White Femininity” 333). Does this begin with a White woman taking seriously this linkage and working to locate the performative aspects of it? I am not sure. But I am invested in feminist alliances and this cannot begin until this linkage of White femininity to White-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy is disentangled from White women’s consciousness and embodied performances.

**Humans in Relation to Animal-Others**

The purpose of this section is to develop my claim that horses are a significant site of research for Communication. I must begin by stating that I recognize the differences between a relationship with an animal other and a human Other. I am in no
way trying to make some connection between horses as humans or relating humans, specifically those marginalized bodies, as horses. However, I do believe that in our difference we can learn imperative lessons on otherness and negotiating the politics of belonging that connect not only humans with animals but more importantly humans with humans. Scholars such as Donna Haraway (Simions, Cybros and Women) and David Gunkel have made similar articulations with regards to cyborgs and their saturation with humans and the political consequences we learn from interrogating the relationships between humanity and cyborgs.

My claim is that the science of the horse will demonstrate the connected natures of their bodies with humanity. From there, I can articulate the enculturation of the horse as inherently connected to the politics of femininity. Hence this section begins by articulating the science of the horse to first establish the connective natures of horses and humans to lay the foundation of the connectivity between horses’ naturecultures\(^6\) with humanity. Next, I extrapolated the affective relationality of riding, and finally, I make the argument that women and horses have a “significant otherness” that reveals powerful understandings of ways of being.

The Science of the Horse

The best form of science to establish the natural connection between horses and humans is to compare the two brains. Horses’ minds in many ways are quite similar to

\(^6\) Here I am utilizing a term defined by Haraway that connects the science of evolution and also the cultural politics of evolution that drastically influences the relationships between animals and humans and furthermore manipulates both our bodies.
humans’ brains. The largest difference between animal brains and human brains is the neocortex. This is the composite of the brain where higher cognitive functions are located (Grandin and Johnson *Animals in Translation* 52). Despite this difference, human and animal brains are divided into three separates brains which are connected by nerves but are entirely independent of the others. While the general rule is that the more intelligent the animal species the bigger the neocortex, no part of the brain controls the other which means that “we humans probably really do have an animal nature that’s separate and distinct from our human nature” (54). This exposes two important points: horses and humans actually have much in common and because our brains are different we experience the world in different ways. These innate similarities demonstrate that horses and humans *can* relate to the other and through this relation we are brought to understand how our different experiences with the world can inform each other.

Since animals function less with their frontal lobes and more from their lower-level structures which are the seat of emotions and life support functions (in both people and animals), animals experience and interact with the world with an “extreme perception” (Grandin and Johnson *Animals in Translation* and *Animals Make Us Human*). Extreme perception enables animals an astonishing ability of perception. Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson explain, “Their sensory worlds are so much

7 Temple Grandin is a professor at Colorado State University and a specialist on the workings of the human brain, animal behavior and cognition, and autism. As an autistic person, Grandin provides a unique look into animals’ minds. Animals’ brains are “the default position for people” and autistic persons’ frontal lobes generally do not function properly. Autistic persons, like her, are super-perceptive which enable them to experience the world like animals do. Grandin’s work begins the conversation of outlining the super-perception of animals and where humans fall short. I denote her in my direct reference to her research out of respect for the politics of her Autism.
richer than ours it’s almost as if we’re deaf and blind” (*Animals in Translation* 57). Genetically animals have different organs that allow them to see, hear, and smell things humans cannot. However, the key difference that removes humans heightened sensitivity to perception is the different way we process our sense neurons. Research has shown that the manners in which humans have mutated in such a way that our “pheromone signaling pathway” does not work anymore (62). Our extreme lack to utilize our sense neurons demonstrates the difficulty we have to clearly articulate effectively and recognize the affective natures of our being. But theoretically, “we could have extreme perceptions the way animals do if we figured out how to use the sensory processing cells in our brains the way animals do” (63). By understanding animals’ extreme perceptions we are able to gain a deeper consciousness of heightened sensitivity ourselves.

It is important to recognize that animal extreme perception is connected to emotional energies and feelings. Unfortunately, many people do not believe animals have emotions but that is scientifically not true. In fact, animals’ “emotional biology is so close to ours that most of the research on the neurology of emotions –or affective neuroscience–is done with animals” (Grandin and Johnson *Animals in Translation* 89). Grandin and Johnson explain that research has identified animals as having four core emotions (rage, prey chase drive, fear, and curiosity/interest/anticipation) and four primary social emotions (sexual attraction and lust, separation distress, social attachment, and play) (93-94). So our interactions with animals do have emotional connectivity and experience emotional interface.

The manner in which animals and humans experience and express their emotions is premised on a few key differences. First, animals, for the most part, do not experience
mixed emotions. Unlike humans who can love and hate someone at the same time, animals generally will switch from one core emotion to another (Grandin and Johnson *Animals in Translation*). Although, they technically can experience curiosity and fear simultaneously, generally these emotions will have a moment where they switch (like when two dogs are playing and then clearly are fighting). Another key difference in emotional negotiations is that animals do not have repression mechanisms. For example, animals will not compress their actual emotion in order to project a more socially accepted one.

The lack of repression mechanisms removes the existence of denial, displacement, and projection leaving simply pure representations of their emotions. Humans muddle our emotive communication to such extents that we no longer actually understand what we are sensing from another because their words will often differ from their actual affective neurosciences. Animals, on the other hand, are perfect examples of raw emotion or perhaps clear affective communication. So in order to augment our affective perception, we should begin with animals rather than humans. However, the trick here is to be able to properly interpret animals’ mannerisms and affectivity as expressions of their emotions.

*Why Affect? Why Horses?*

I find to be the most significant difference and furthermore another prominent contribution this research site offers is the intimate relationship with an animal other necessary for success within the Hunter/Jumper sport. This relationship between horse and human is best experienced-captured-learned-taught-understood through riding the horse. Riding requires humans and horses to come to a new sense of understanding for
and with each other that requires both the mind and the body. As William Steinkraus explains, “For me rational riding is riding that depends on thought as well as feeling, on the brain as well as the body” (1). Riding requires Equestrian athletes lean on innate affective readings/sensing of horses and bodily sensing/communicating with horses. Therefore, riding is an art of engaging and (re)teaching a person to sense the presence of affects but also to learn how these affects transmit from one to another.

If we are only left understanding that we can mark performances of White femininity within and through the sport of Hunter/Jumper, we are still left in an implicit loss of segregated feminism. My investment in feminist alliances locates me at a reflexive intersection of challenging myself to understand and demark my privilege in order to fully embrace my desire for feminist alliances. Like Carrillo Rowe, I believe “whom we love is who we are becoming, that the duo power/knowledge must also account for the politics of love” (Power Lines 3). Carrillo Rowe desires to move beyond notions of strategic and temporary coalitions and towards sustained feminist alliances. These forms of alliances are built on a politics of relation which is dependent and organized around the notions of belonging.

In love we locate whom we desire and where we wish to belong. Therefore, in order to foster feminist alliances we must first understand that “alliances are affectively charged sites of connection in which intimacy and power become entwined” (Carrillo Rowe Power Lines 4). Affectivity is sensuous, invisible yet completely embodied,
dependent on relationality, and intrinsically experienced in motion\(^8\) (Massumi; Manning; Brennan). Extrapolating affectively charged sites would enable feminist alliances but is seemingly difficult because of its extremely unmarkable natures. Carrillo Rowe remarks, “This connection, between intimacy and power, is one that is so subtle that we tend to overlook it. Yet it is precisely within sites of intimate connection where the big work gets done, where the important decisions get made, where power is transmitted” (4). My question is, if we can step back and develop an affective consciousness, are we then more capable of cultivating these affectively charged moments? I am not claiming that these moments of affectivity between women do not already exist but I am arguing that they are clearly not nurtured in manners to foster more productive alliance. I am engaging with this work to add a composite of understanding that perhaps may allot new avenues of feminist alliance production because we can desire to love another but not understand the affectively charged politics embodied between difference that provide probabilities of sustained feminist alliances.

One possible space to demarcate affectivity can begin with a close examination to the relational and (e)motional feminist aesthetic performance of riding. Riding involves two seemingly different bodies in relations to each other, in constant intentional and unintentional motion, completely dependent on contextual surroundings, and always negotiated through tensions of power dynamics. If we can paint a clear understanding of this form of sensing between horse and rider, then perhaps we can better relate to the

\(^8\) Chapter Two will extrapolate my articulation of affect and how affectivity informs my project, as well as, how my project extends our understandings of affect.
sensing necessary for feminist alliance relations. The art of riding is laden in negotiating a power dynamic that is unspoken and seemingly contradictory. On the surface it appears that massive powerful animals submit to small framed women. But dissecting this relational aspect of (e)motion we are brought to understand a relationship that exists outside of hierarchical negations and framings. This leads to the question: can we articulate this affective relationship to possibilities of feminist alliances that challenge and exist beyond hierarchies of cultural powers? Before I can answer these questions, I must first demonstrate the value of horses as a significant site of research for relating to women and relationality.

Riding an Embodied Feminist Aesthetic Performance

In her book “The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness,” Donna Haraway asks, “How might an ethics and politics committed to the flourishing of significant otherness be learned from taking dog-human relationships seriously?” (3). Like Haraway, I find questions of feminist relationality and the body to be learned from taking horse-human relationships seriously. Haraway goes on to demonstrate that this understanding is first acknowledged by recognizing “that history matters in naturecultures” (3). Following in her footsteps, I believe to clearly demonstrate riding as an implicit performance of embodied feminist aesthetic is through extrapolating the evolutionary relationship between horses and humans.

The evolution of horses and humans exposes the magnetic force that has pulled women and horses together. Their histories manifest a story of its own revealing that horses truly are companion species that innately commune with women. History speaks a
story of hunting, domesticating, breeding, riding, and slaughtering. It is in this historical tracing where women and horses meet. The evolution of equines is complex and is marked significantly by its domestication. Indicating the equines’ history of taming opens the door to the complex past between horses and humans. Ethnoarchaeological and archaeozoological research has found that the domestication of the horse is a very difficult saga to map (Levine). However, what is imperative to note within this history is that horses were not originally sought for taming. They were hunted for food and their skins (Levine). Interestingly, the process of breaking a horse has never removed this predator-relational past from the horse. Grandin’s work reminds us that animals have a keen sense of memory and pass these cultural memories down to each generation of offspring (Animals in Translation). All horses are born “untamed” and generally fear humans.

This fear of humans has historically managed the relationship between humans and horses. In the past, men⁹ believed that all horses must be taught to submit to humans. Because horses do not exhibit the learned mannerisms of dependence on humans like dogs do, men believed horses must learn the hierarchical nature between man and animal. This “learning” is the process of taming. Today, there are many different methods and philosophies to “breaking” or domesticating a horse. But the past paints a clear picture of the harsh realities horses endured to “learn” domestication with/under humans.

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⁹ I am using the gendered term “men” intentionally here because in the past, only men were allowed to ride horses or train them. While Whiteness is implicit here, it is a wrong assumption that only White male cowboys were those men taming horses.
Historical European diaries of Native Americans taming methods have been recorded, which describe the process of lassoing the horse’s neck and cutting off her airway until she falls down. Then a halter is wrapped around the horse’s head and hobbles are placed on her two front feet preventing her from being able to get up off the ground. What is interesting here is following the discourse describing the taming process. As the horse is hobbled and tethered to the ground she would struggle relentlessly and fear would scream from her eyes. Eventually the horse would stop resisting “and see a friend instead of a foe in its captor; and this compromise being effected, the captor is seen stroking down and otherwise caressing it” (Catlin qtd. in Levine 109-110).

The taming or “breaking” processes of today follow these past practices and also new philosophies. Yet the primary premise remains the same, the horse must submit to its captor. Perhaps women’s history of oppression is not much different than that of the horse. We too are hunted, bound, hobbled, seen as breeding stock, and relentlessly struggle to no avail for freedom. Anzaldúa makes this connection to the embodied silencing of women of color and the hegemonic nature of language. She asks, “How do you tame a wild tongue, train it to be quiet, how do you bridle and saddle it? How do you make it lie down? (Borderlands 75). Many of us, women, become well tamed. Others continue to struggle. As Anzaldúa goes on to point, “Wild tongues cannot be tamed they can only be cut out” (76). In the end women are never tamed. We are silenced, oppressed, and removed. We all at some degree understand the evolution of domestication as a

10 Again the gendering referencing of “her” here is intentional to build on the connection between horses’ pasts with women’s past.
White patriarchal heteronormative disciplining. The politics of domestication is branded onto our skin just like horses.

I am not the first to make this connection. Linda Kalof, Amy Fitzgerald, Lori Baralta claim that many popular culture representations assimilate hunting and animals with sex and women. All women are not born in submission to White patriarchal power, this is a taming process. The culmination of this “learning” is when we come to love our tamers – we must love White supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. But like many horses, some women simply cannot be domesticated. My purpose in examining and correlating these histories is not to simulate women to, or as, horses but to reveal the common past we share.

Women’s and horses’ inter-relational history is significant. This past exposes women’s innate connection with the embodied understanding of horse communication. This past reveals our significant otherness as companion species (Haraway Companion Species). I find this past to expose that women dominate the world of Equestrian sport. White patriarchal politics react to this female majority in particular ways to trivialize the sport and discipline it by commodifying female athletes’ bodies. But in the end women continue to flock to the sport. Nothing can remove the magnetic pull within the embodied past that binds horses and women. Riding is an ideal space to locate, discuss, and understand the performance of embodied feminist aesthetics. I am left to questioning: do we crave the relational connectivity we experience in glimpses when we ride? And does riding teach us how to foster relational connectivity?

Answering these questions would be at a loss if I did not connect them to the larger cultural political realities jarring alliance possibilities. I recognize the history
between women and horses does not live in a vacuum. Hegemonic powers of racism, classism, and sexism tangle the ever magnetic bond between femininity and horses. White women dominate this world of riding but that does not mean that the gripping connection does not exist to all women. In fact, women of color experience the painful past of domestication far more than privileged White women. Haraway challenges, 

I believe that all ethical relating, within or between species, is knit from the silk-strong thread of ongoing alertness to otherness-in-relation. We are not one, and being depends on getting on together. The obligation is to ask who are present and who are emergent. (Companion Species 50)

With this said, I come to wonder if this project provides a possible avenue for White women to learn “alertness to otherness-in-relation?”

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So, I invite you on a journey with me to explore the rich lessons within the sport of Hunter/Jumper, to explain to me and through me, the workings of White femininity in relation to class and the affective qualities these performances have on our bodies and our understandings of feminist relationships. Manifested in desires for feminist alliance probabilities, I search through this cultural community for where relational connectivity is exhibited in order to expose the possibilities engendered through an embodiment of feminist aesthetics. This exploration is divided into six chapters. I begin the journey by articulating my theoretical framework of affective intersectionality (Chapter Two) that informs my understandings of both my body within this community and the politics of power exhibited by it. Chapter Three extends this theoretical conversation by walking through my methodology and my utilization of critical performance ethnography working with co-performative interviews and critical rhetoric.
With my theoretical and methodological frameworks outlined, I am ready to begin the difficult climb through my analysis of my research. Chapter Four begins this conversation by teasing apart the workings of classism organized by the sport to serve White capitalist heteropatriarchy. This allows me, then, to articulate the performances of White femininity in relation to classism demonstrated within this cultural space. Chapter Five begins the difficult work of understanding the sport’s lessons of relationality by articulating riding as a site of affective consciousness and affective reasoning. Chapter Five lays the foundation for bridging the politics of power organized by this sport and the relational possibilities learned through riding, which is exactly the purpose of Chapter Six. Through an articulation of embodied feminist aesthetics, Chapter Six connects the two seemingly different avenues within this research: the cultural politics of power within the sport and the feminist embodied empowerment and relationality exhibited by riding. Chapter Six is perhaps the climatic chapter of my journey where we come to see the feminist alliance possibilities. Descending from these analysis chapters, Chapter Seven serves as the conclusion to reflect on the lessons learned within this dissertation and attempts to tie together these multiple lessons.

I write each chapter exposing the interweaving of my body in relation to this project and this community in relation to the cultural lessons rendered in order “to create an affective experience on the page” (Calafell “When Will We All Matter” 347). I write in this way in order to reveal the theory-body overlap not as personal narrative but as cultural experiences pulled from and offered to my body informed by theory but also serving as theory. I utilize the metaphor of a journey to organize my chapter preview. But I ask you, as readers, to understand that journeys may seem linear on the page but in
reality they are filled with complex trajectories. Thus, we traverse through page by page but please know that these lessons are more multiplex-blends of lived lessons of life’s journey where one lesson necessitates the other but does not supersede it.
CHAPTER TWO

There Is More to Riding than Meets the Eye:

Theorizing the Politics of Power on/within the Performing Body

Audre Lorde claims that the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. Her words ring in my ears as I write this theoretical chapter. She reminds me to always question the patriarchal and ethnocentrism within my work. I hear the words of Lorde and ask you to understand that I embrace theory despite its history within the academy as White, heteronormative, and patriarchal. Like D. Soyini Madison, I find theory to make the embodied moments of my life meaningful and understandable (“Critical Ethnography;” “Performing Theory”). I must note here that Madison speaks from a theoretical position that moved away from the immaterial, disembodied composites of theory, towards a performative theory that centered on, and in, the body. Performance theory demonstrates, Mary Blanchard claims, that the master’s tools can be our tools as well. Performance theory is a wonderful example of how the master’s tools were reshaped to become ours as well. The tools of theory within the academy may be shaped in ways to fit a White masculine hand, but feminists have shown how these tools can also be held by us and used to deconstruct the harms against us.

56
This chapter is a feminist project in which my goals are to articulate the theoretical lenses I carry with me throughout my research in order to understand and dismantle White supremacist heteropatriarchy laden on women’s bodies, in order to re-build possibilities for feminist alliances. Listening to the voices of feminists of color, inclusive feminism begins through an intersectional perspective that holds tightly to the understanding that bodies and power are multifaceted. This theoretical paradigm implicates our bodies and spirals out into a political practice that opens possibilities to gain solidarity against hegemony. Therefore, I look to critical theoretical conceptions that connect embodied realities to politics of power. Maintaining a foundation within performance theory that grounds itself within the fleshy home of bodies, I conceptualize intersectionality as shedding light on the politics of power woven on and through our bodies within culture. This project is situated within performance studies and some may ask why take theoretical trajectories like intersectionality and affect? While I believe that performance theories do speak to and within conceptions of intersectionality and affectivity, my purpose is to extrapolate how each of these theories speaks to each other in order to extend conceptions of performance theory.

Performance scholars have constituted performance in many different manners, but most importantly they have skillfully shown that “performance happens all around us” (Dolan 6). Jill Dolan demonstrates how performance theory no longer only accounts for staged performance; rather, life is performance. I conceptualize performance as mundane everyday embodied cultural acts/interactions. From this perspective, the body’s experiences are theoretically validated and understood. Performance theory offers me a
means to articulate and understand the body as a significant site of knowing and furthermore doing. Since I see theory and method as speaking to each other and virtually one in the same, I will reserve my complete articulation of performance theory for my methods chapter. This chapter, however, will take an intimate look at intersectionality and affect in order to convey the theoretical lenses I utilize to understand the embodied cultural workings within this research project.

What I would like to add to performance theories are critical cultural understandings of the politics of bodies in order to better understand lived realities of bodies in relation to others and in relation to the cultural dynamics of power. Intersectionality brings forth a theoretical lens for denoting and articulating the complex workings of the body in relation to power, yet representing intersectionality on the page pivots clumsily between material realities of bodies and postmodern conceptualizations of power. It is difficult for intersectionality to purely work within and with performance because all too often performance scholars use of intersectionality mistakenly situate it back into a grid-like fixity that women of color critiqued and tried to amend in previous discussions of intersectionality. This fixity binds the politics of the body outside of motion, relation, or contextual realities. I find affect provides a theoretical bridging between this material and disembodied stumble.

This chapter extrapolates my proposed conceptualization of intersectionality that utilizes affective theory in order to offer a theoretical language for these moments of performative betweenness that are simultaneously material and immaterial. My suggestion is not that intersectionality frames bodies into being a projection of binding
social locations but that language limits our capacities to represent the fluidity of identity politics that do and must shift in relation to others and different spaces. Intersectionality serves as my theoretical backbone. My use of affect is not to alter intersectionality. Rather my desire is to build onto the present conversations of intersectionality and offer ideas to return intersectionality back to the theoretical vicinity feminists of color originally framed. Perhaps this homecoming will restore performance scholars to the languages of aesthetics in relation to context and the possibilities this provides embodied politics. In order to make these theoretical links, this chapter is divided into two primary sections. First, a conceptualization of intersectionality that defines it, demonstrates its theoretical mapping of power in relation to the body, and finally outlines the present harms within intersectional theory.¹ The second section extrapolates my proposed resolutions to the current critiques of intersectionality by what I frame affective intersectionality.² For purposes of demonstrating both my theoretical trajectory and also as explanation of it, I have interwoven pieces of ethnographic narrative into this chapter.

¹ When I use the term “current” here, I am referring to what present feminists of color have articulated as problematic within the use of intersectionality in recent years. These critiques echo their mothers before them. Again I ask the reader to see my framings of “resolve” to these critiques as not seeing intersectionality as faulty but simply offering new trajectories to understand intersectionality and representations of it on the page.

² My ordering of affect and intersectionality is not to be read intentional or in a linear fashion. My use of affect in conjunction with intersectionality is place first to express my use of affect as an adjective to intersectionality. However, this word ordering is used interchangeably throughout the dissertation to challenge language and writing’s linear organization.
Some Theoretical Context: An Intersectional/Affective Story

As my hand ran along the chestnut horse’s strong shoulder, I checked his girth one last time, looked over his tack, pulled his mane over onto the correct side, and finally put on his bridle. Moon was a special horse to me for no apparent reason other than I simply took a liking to him over all the other horses I rode for the McFees. Moon had a kind heart despite the incredibly rough treatment he endured from his owner’s riding abilities. The McFees were a wealthy White middle-aged couple that rode Fox Hunting as a weekend hobby. While they really enjoyed the thrill of the chase, I was always convinced their taking to the sport had more to do with the performance of wealth. Their generally grim demeanor would illuminate as they enacted with their bourgeois acquaintances at the post-hunt parties.

They were always pretty good to me when it came to paying for my work. But Mrs. McFee would constantly check over my logged hours, follow-up on their horses’ improvement, and relentlessly request I spend more time on their horses’ backs – since that really was “what they were paying me to do.” These scoldings purposefully overlooked the fact that, in reality, I had to manage everything else in the barn myself as well – something I was not paid to do. Mrs. McFee once told me, “We won’t ever hire a Mexican again to manage our barn. I mean, Mexicans, are constantly trying to take our money with half-ass work done. That’s why a good poor student like you is perfect for

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3 I remind readers that this name is a pseudo name given. All identifying information has been removed in order to protect the privacy of my ethnography participants.
our barn.” She laughed thinking that her tone in her statement demonstrated just how
	lucky I was to work there. The McFees were proud of their money and with their money.

Mrs. McFee had her racism and many other issues that made my skin crawl. But it was Mr. McFee that I could barely tolerate. Moon was Mr. McFee’s horse. If it was not my pure endearment for this horse, I most likely would never have taught the horse to jump leaving Mr. McFee the doom-filled challenge to get his horse through the Hunt.

Wind ripped through the barn bringing my thoughts back to the present.

I slowly turned Moon from the crossties and led him over to Mr. McFee waiting with his acquaintance on the mounting block. Mrs. McFee had informed me earlier that day that they would be having company. The horses needed to be tacked and brought out to them around 1:00 p.m.. Nearly past 2:00 p.m. they finally stumbled down to the barn. Mr. McFee in his drunken babble called from outside the barn for his horse. As I led Moon to the mounting block he curtly said, “Allen this is our help. She will have your horse brought to you next.” His glazed eyes skimmed the top of my head as he reached for the reins to mount his horse.

My eyes narrowed as I made eye contact with Allen and, although my heart was pounding with rage, my lips remained sealed. I simply bowed my head and returned to get the other mount. “I wasn’t even introduced by my name, nonetheless completely disregarded for what I actually do here! I train these horses for them and if it wasn’t for me, Moon would never jump for you!” My thoughts tore through my mind like the wind picking up around the barn.
My heart pounded as I reached to untie Raider. His eyes widened, neck raised in the air and he began to express extreme signs of nervousness by stamping his feet and snorting. *Instantly. My thoughts cleared, my attention became centered on Raider. My heart settled.* Poor horse, even he hates them. He should be terrified. I am sure that Allen guy probably has no idea how to actually ride. Even worse, jump! I gently ran my hand down his neck. “Easy…. Whoa….Easy… There you are. Ahtta Boy.” He finally took a deep breath as I slowly untied him and brought him towards Allen.

“He is a bit frisky, today” I said waringly.

“Yeah, I heard that commotion in there. What the hell are you doing to my horses? Raider never acts like that!” Mr. McFee retorted sharply. *Immediately.* Moon’s head rose as he hollowed his back. *My attention moved from Raider to Moon.*

“The weather must be changing, Mr. McFee. They both seem on edge. They were fine for me, yesterday.”

“Oh, is that it. It’s the weather!” He smirked. “Whatever. Com’ on, Allen.” And with that, they trotted away to return, hours later, with sweat-lathered terrified horses.

Back to work. Fixing these horses will take at least a week. *Trust takes Time.*

**Conceptualizing Intersectionality**

*Theorizing Difference within the Body*

The theoretical groundwork for intersectionality was established by women of color. Many feminists of color allude to intersectional theory within their claims of how different social locations work within their lives (Combahee River Collective; Lorde;
hooks *Ain't I a Woman; This Bridge; Anzaldúa Borderlands; Moraga*. These feminists of color expose the junctures of multiple identity politics. What the theory of intersectionality does is provide a means for demarcating difference and the material effects of these differences within notions of identity politics. First coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is utilized to recognize the workings of identity politics. Crenshaw claims that the problems with identity politics is not the recognition of difference but the ignoring of difference *within* groups. Crenshaw uses intersectionality as a methodology for tracing the intersections of race and gender within Black women’s realities. She reveals that the places where race and gender intersect in the lives of Black women shape structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against them (1244). Consequently, Crenshaw claims these identities intersect in political manners that marginalized women of color both through racism and sexism. Proposing intersectionality in this way forces a consciousness of multiple social locations working at the same time within a politics of power.

Despite articulating intersectionality as method, Crenshaw began the conversation of how to theoretically complicate identity politics to reflect the social and cultural power that resonates within the body. She did not see intersectionality “as some new, totalizing theory of identity” and called for scholars to expand this work into other intersections “such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color” (1244-245). Many scholars, such as Leslie McCall, have furthered Crenshaw’s project by intricately expanding a purely methodological means for studying intersectionality. This work, and others like it, tends to follow a more social scientific and quantitative endeavor. As a
performance scholar, I see theory as method, and I also recognize a distinction between the two within the field of intersectionality research. This division represents more of a quantitative and qualitative divide than a theory/method division.

Furthermore, the research that explores intersectionality as method is problematic because it focuses on measuring defined intersections, which is essentialist in nature and moves away from the premise of the body my conceptualization of intersectionality embraces. Rather than attempting to categorize and quantify intersectional identity politics, I follow in the footsteps of Patricia Hill Collins who finds these forms of research dismantling (*Black Feminist Thought*). Intersectionality, for me, is not justification for methodologically measuring difference. Instead, intersectionality serves to ideologically frame difference within the body and the politics of these intersections in conjunction with cultural dynamics of power.

Recognizing differences amongst women is an imperative move within feminism to disempower White heteropatriarchy, and intersectionality provides an ideological framing to understand, analyze, and embrace difference. The hegemonic value of “divide and conquer” is re-envisioned by intersectionality as “define and empower” (Lorde 112). Women of color reveal identity categories fall short of ever defining who they are because their race influences their sexuality, their class, and their gender (*Anzaldúa Borderlands*; Moraga; *This Bridge; This Bridge We Call Home*). Anzaldúa reveals a new
consciousness of identity – a new mestiza\textsuperscript{4} consciousness (\textit{Borderlands}). The mestiza consciousness breaks down the dualistic binaries placed on women’s bodies. Her Chicana lesbian theory deconstructs languages’ nature of creating divides within bodies of male/female, straight/lesbian, White/brown. Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness beautifully demonstrates an intersectional approach to identity politics that breaks apart the essentialist binds of women by placing the queer mestiza as being \textit{both/and} and residing within the border. The queer mestiza consciousness exhibits the ideologies of difference and justifies the reasoning for intersectional theory’s connection to the body.

Anzaldúa challenges, “In this millennium we are called to renew and birth a more inclusive feminism, one committed to basic human rights, equality, respect for all people and creatures, and for the earth” (“Forward” xxxix). This inclusive feminism is within/through the theory of intersectionality. For feminist work to be empowering, we no longer can approach identity research from a singular or essentialist understanding – although many still do. \textit{Mrs. McFee, we look alike but we are not similar}. The queer mestiza represents the body as the location of difference and the empowering possibilities of this disruption (Moreman and McIntosh). Centering theory on the body serves as a means to deconstruct binary understandings of identity. Intersectionality is a theory of the body that accounts for difference and also provides avenues for alliance possibilities.

\textsuperscript{4} Following the suggestion of Shane Moreman, this project rejects italicizing non-English words finding this to simply manifest a binary between English language and Other languages.
Intersectionality envisions identity as a multiplicity within one body that intersects at infinite points. The intersections of identities are grounded in our embodied social locations and directed by social and cultural politics. Intersectionality moves identity away from the challenge of categories and into a productive manner of locating “the site where categories intersect” (Crenshaw 1299). Understanding intersectionality in this way presses us to see the politics of identity from a social interactional model, rather than simply a categorical project. In turn, intersectionality recognizes the problem of seeing social locations as exclusive or separable. It provides a more productive means to articulate and understand the workings of identity politics.

Intersectionality presents a theoretical mapping of how differences exist within particular bodies. Locating these intersections and the politics of them provides feminists a means to understand the hegemonic manners of identity politics in a way that resides within a body rather than within a categorical imperative. Many scholars have utilized this theoretical means of intersectionality to explicate the hegemonic workings of identity politics (Hill Collins *Black Feminist Thought; Black Sexual Politics*; Cohen; Dow; Moreman and McIntosh; Moreman; Calafell “When Will We All Matter;” Martinez; Moon and Flores; Parker and Lynn; Lindio-McGovern and Wallimann; Nakayama). These scholars demonstrate the importance of an intersectional approach to identity work and also the politics of power intersectionality theory reveals. In order to understand how bodies meet the politics of power, I must first articulate the intersectional nature of power.
Matrix of Domination and Intersectionality

Intersectionality provides a theoretical landscape of the body as multiple and overlapping. It also articulates a multiplex conception of power in relationship to the body. No longer is someone simply a marginalized subject. We come to see power as working in intersectional ways that often interact with bodies on a continuum of privilege and marginalization. Since intersectionality is never understood outside the backdrop of hegemony, it theoretically complicates oppression as multifaceted calling us to perceive domination through an intersectional lens as well. If oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, then all bodies maintain multiple intersections of “isms.” The complexity here is how to conceptualize the multiplicity of identity politics against the arrays of domination. Patricia Hill Collins responds with her theorization of the matrix of domination. The matrix of domination denotes how systems of power work intersectionally to marginalize bodies that differ from the dominant norm (“Black Feminist Thought” 18). The matrix of power articulates how oppression works intersectionally to systematically affect all bodies in multiple ways. All social locations are either empowered or marginalized by the matrix of domination. Intersectionality reveals that most bodies are a combination of the two.

I particularly embrace Hill Collins’ specific framing of cultural power as “systems.” This framing exposes how power has a function, needs multiple people for it to work, and builds on itself to create and recreate it. The matrix of domination pictures a system of power that is complex and multilayered. Hill Collins articulates this complexity by breaking the matrix of domination into “four interrelated domains of power, namely,
the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains” (Hill Collins 276). Each of these domains serves particular purposes that interconnect to organize/manage/justify/induce oppressions on bodies. Hill Collins explains, “The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues” (276). The matrix of domination exposes the how sexism, racism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, and the multiple other manners of oppression work within macro and micro systems of power.

The matrix of domination brings us to see power as not simply an institutional working but also manifested and (re)created through our lived experiences of our day-to-day lives. Power works intricately through the macro-level of social institutions and the micro-level of lived experiences within these social institutions. The matrix of domination reveals the intersectional nature of oppression and also how systems of power interconnect through macro and micro levels of social institutions to impact bodies in various ways.

*My Whiteness allows for the McFees to feel comfortable hiring me. My educational status threatens Mr. McFee. He constantly distinguishes his power over me through a performance of White heteropatriarchal classism.*

*I need the job. My class positions me to labor for them.*
Intersectionality and Feminist Alliance Possibilities

Another key attribute of the matrix of domination is that it forces us to walk away from a hierarchical understanding of marginalization. The matrix of domination does not function on a ladder of power where depending on your positionalities you are either on step one or step five. Rather the matrix of domination demonstrates that oppression intersects at different points of social locations in order to maintain hegemony. Lorde, Anzaldúa, Moraga, Crenshaw, Calafell (“When Will We All Matter;” “She Ain’t No Diva”) and many other women of color demonstrate their traversing social locations as intersectional oppressions of racism, classism, sexism, and any other ism.

Intersectionality and the matrix of domination dismantle the rankings of oppression by showing differences amongst bodies manifesting diverse intersections of oppressions and privileges. Women of color not only experience sexism but also racism. These oppressions are not experienced separately – as to denote a ranking of “more oppressions” – but simultaneously. Bodies are always gendered, aged, classed, sexualized, and raced at all times. One cannot parcel out oppressions as experienced because of their race and another due to their gender, class, age, ability, religion, nationality, etc. Social locations function intersectionally through a matrix of domination to produce oppressive experiences.

Dismantling a hierarchical notion of oppressions implicates all bodies to understand their relationship with power in new ways. The matrix of domination complicates the binary notion of oppressor and oppressed (Calafell “When Will We Matter” 346). An intersectional approach to identities understands bodies are not
structured into binaries as always/only oppressed or oppressors. Instead, a milieu of oppressions and privileges exist within one body prompting that a matrix of domination “contains few pure victims or oppressors” (Hill Collins *Black Feminist Thought* 287). Hill Collins explains, “Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives” (Hill Collins 287). Cathy Cohen recognizes the daunting process of highlighting intersectionality because so much of our “political consciousness has been built around simple dichotomies such as powerful/powerless; oppressor/victim; enemy/comrade” (45). An intersectional understanding breaks binary modes of knowing by acknowledging that all bodies experience privilege and marginalization.

Intersectionality provides an awareness of our social locations and power as multiplex which creates possibility for alliances. Crenshaw claims, “Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics” (1299). As we all find spaces of political power and oppression within our bodies, intersectionality challenges researchers to reflexively locate their bodies as sites of knowing, as implicated within our work, and influenced by influential to others. The awareness of our privileged/oppressed embodiment provides windows for different bodies to find connections of political understandings.

Through a conception of matrix of dominations, intersectionality moves away from problematic binary binds and into possibilities of solidarity. Interestingly when articulating the interpersonal domain of power Hill Collins notes,
Although most individuals have little difficulty identifying their own victimization within some major system of oppression – whether it be by race, social class, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or gender – they typically fail to see how their thoughts or actions uphold someone else’s subordination. (287)

Hill Collins echoes the voices of many feminists of color that have challenged White straight women and straight men of color to see their oppression as “filled with such contradictions” (287). The matrix of domination requires we recognize there are few pure victims or oppressors. This is the work that Cathy Cohen challenges us to do. She states, “An understanding of the ways in which power informs and constitutes privilege and marginalized subjects on both sides of this dichotomy has been left unexamined” (22).

Cohen articulates the imperative nature of doing this “intersectional analysis that recognizes how numerous systems of oppression interact to regulate and police the lives of most people” (25). Intersectionality begins this re-negotiation of power dynamic.

The possibility for political alliances between bodies is made evident through intersectionality. Anzaldúa claims, “A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle” but one that brings much hope to end violence (Borderlands 102). In order to generate solidarity amongst groups we must break binaries by valuing difference and diversity (Mohanty 7). Intersectionality provides the theoretical complexity necessary for this dualistic consciousness. Building on Hill Collins, I suggest that our multiple social locations are simultaneously empowered and marginalized within the matrix of domination. What I would add here is that intersectionality informs understandings of the matrix of domination by revealing most social locations are contextually a complex combination of
the two. Therefore approaching power intersectionally renders coalitional possibilities where different bodies can meet.

Explicating how this oppressor and oppressed interconnection works within one body and locating how and where these intersections meet is one place I would like to stretch intersectionality. Although much recognition is given to context within identity scholarship, more intersectionality work needs to develop the intricacies of context in relation to the multiplicities of social locations in order to provide a more fluid notion of identity.

Context and Intersectionality

*Mr. McFeas and Allen’s presence at the barn called forth different intersectional politics. The barn altered with his presence from a space of comfort to a place of noted difference.*

The most current intersectionality work is missing a deep articulation of the role context plays within identity politics. Cohen’s project to articulate the dynamic intersectional natures of power on queer bodies within queer activism as contradictory in particular normative spaces is perhaps the foundational example of the necessary role context plays within intersectionality. A few other scholars have undergone this context and intersectionality project in their examinations of bodies in relation to particular spaces (Moreman and McIntosh; Calafell “She Ain’t No Diva,” “Mentoring and Love”). While these projects begin the conversation of representing the dynamics of power on/through/by bodies in relation to normative and non-normative spaces, an argument for context’s role within and for intersectionality is necessary.
Following Linda Alcoff, I find “identities need to be contextualized” (Visible Identities 85). Context situates bodies in particular spaces. The sites of bodies play a pivotal role in the matrix of domination and the intersectional politics bodies’ experience. bell hooks acknowledges the importance of the relationship between context and bodies. Through her notion of homeplace, hooks demonstrates how particular spaces provide sites of resistance and liberation for marginalized bodies (“Homeplace” 449; “Talking Back;” “Yearning”). Other scholars demonstrate the role of certain contexts as providing locations of liberation and others as spaces of harm (Madison “That was My Occupation;” Calafell “Mentoring and Love”). Bodies transform spaces and context influences the intersectional workings of identity politics. An acknowledgement of context provides a means for identity politics to become locationally conscious.

Context plays a pertinent role in negotiating intersectionality because power is contextually laden. The politics of the body alter depending on the contextual influences. On the other hand intersections of domination and marginalization are driven by context. No matter what your social locations are all bodies understand privilege in particular contexts and marginalization in others. Bonnie Dow claims, “Another, and I think more productive, way to make my social location meaningful is to view it as a rhetorical problem that differs with the situations and contexts within which I speak” (249). Context is not apolitical. It is ridden with hegemonic markings and perhaps is, in itself, a means of domination. Context returns researchers to the temporality of intersectionality by showing the intersections of privilege and marginalization within bodies as always shifting depending on the politics of the site. Researchers cannot possibly understand,
deconstruct, or articulate the intersections of marginalization and privilege outside of context. Context allows for a more fluid understanding of identity and further promotes the possibilities for solidarity.

In order to properly create a politics of alliance and empower both women of color and White women from multiple walks of sexuality, class, ability, and nationality, we must hold present in our minds an intersectional understanding of our privilege and our marginalization as dependent on the contextual workings on/through the body. A multiplex consciousness of intersectionality that includes a move towards context dismantles the master’s binary tools. A theoretical recognition of context allows for identities to remain in flux. As Cohen suggests, “…it is the multiplicity and interconnectedness of our identities that provide the most promising avenue for the destabilization and radical politicalization” (45 emphases in original). By understanding our experiences through an intersectional consciousness and a contextual awareness the personal becomes political, not the political, as Dow warns. A vision of politics forms our political comrades through a relation to power as opposed to some homogenized identity group (Cohen). Crenshaw reminds us,

This (move of consciousness) takes a great deal of energy and arouses intense anxiety. The most one could expect is that we will dare to speak against internal exclusions and marginalizations, that we might call attention to how the identity of “the group” has been centered on the intersectional identities of a few. (1299)

Intersectionality is a theoretical possibility to dismantle hegemony. Through an intersectional theory of the body, researchers are brought to see our bodies as both privileged and oppressed in conjunction with the politics of cultural spaces.
The dualistic consciousness of intersectionality provides the possibility of solidarity. But complex intersectionality work that involves examining the workings of context, as well as, intense reflexivity is required to actually achieve some frame of solidarity. Intersectionality theory locates the body as the site of knowledge but remains cognizant of the workings of context within the matrix of domination. This conceptualization of intersectionality allows for identities to remain in a fluid space of multiplicity. The imperative weaving of context into intersectionality demonstrates the difficult nature of extrapolating context in relation to bodies. Context exposes the fluctuation of bodies and exposes the anti-essentialist critique that has troubled the balancing of embodied realities within a postmodernist era.

**The Crisis of Essentialism and Postmodernism**

Through their experiences and their scholarship, feminists of color challenged the essentialist framing of identity politics. Intersectionality grows out of a post positivist ideology and expanded within a postmodern discourse. Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix claim, “The key feature of feminist analysis of ‘intersectionality’ is that they are concerned with ‘decentering’ of the ‘normative subject’ of feminism” (78). Brah and Phoenix not only expose the post positivist ideology laden within intersectionality here but also simply within their writing style demonstrate the postmodern discursive moves by placing connotative terms within quotations alluding or challenging their signifying processes. Intersectionality does embrace these theoretical moves, as Hill Collins claims, “Oppression is not simply understood in the mind—it is felt in the body in myriad ways”
(Black Feminist Thought 274). The politics of a body is not simply raced, classed, sexualized, and gendered. But that same body is also defined by age, religion, family size, nationality, demographics, ability, and a multiplex of other denoting features that explicate the experiences and politics of that body. The possibilities of the denoting process within identity politics are endless. Once theorists come to recognize the problems with essentialist notions of identity, we fall into the eternal downward spiral of signification. Intersectionality acknowledges difference and can also walk researchers down a problematic road of deconstruction.

The project of deconstructing “women” and “womanhood” led feminism down this dangerous path. Within the era of postmodernism, the voices of women of color were heard but skewed. Feminist theories recognized essentialist notions of feminism and “women” as problematic and demonstrating the social constructive power laden within language. However, the crisis of essentialism hit feminism hard by removing all possibilities for solidarity through the postmodern critique of the discursive signifying of “woman” (Butler Bodies that Matter, but more addressed in Undoing Gender). It becomes evident that identity categories are never descriptive. Rather, as Butler claims, are they are “always normative, and as such, exclusionary” (Bodies that Matter 15). Butler asserts that identity politics “deemed necessary to mobilize feminism… simultaneously work to limit and constrain in advance the very cultural possibilities that feminism is supposed to open up” (“Gender Trouble” 187). The crisis of essentialism and the ambiguity of discursive signification places intersectionality into a complex bind. Deconstruction removed the ability to define groups which made locating intersections of
identity politics linguistically impossible without falling into essentialist criticisms or critiques of navel gazing (Calafell and Moreman “Envisioning an Academic Readership”).

The anti-essentialist project seems to embrace the same mission of valuing difference that intersectionality was originally developed to do. In fact, Trina Grillo places anti-essentialism and intersectionality side-by-side as projects that should mirror each other. What is called into question is the thin, conceivably even illusive, line between deconstruction of categories and the recognition of a category at all. Deconstruction brought intersectionality into a complicated relationship with identity politics. Chantal Mouffe finds resolve in debunking the conflation between postmodernism and poststructuralism (370). On the contrary, I find this does little for the anti-essentialism crisis found within intersectionality. If the category “women” cannot discursively denote any particular body without forming a universal exclusive signification, than we cannot reference any social locations at all within language. How do we locate intersections of identity politics if all social locations are discursively essentializing?

Under the veil of anti-essentialism additional problems within intersectionality arise. Naomi Zack critiques intersectionality for its ontological indeterminacy (“Can Third Wave” 199). Zack notes, “Theoretical endorsements of intersectionality as an intellectual project can impose no limits on the numbers of kinds of possible intersected identities” (199). With no universal understanding of identity politics, we cannot ever come to a full picture of intersectional identity for ourselves and certainly not for others.
On that same point, intersectionality becomes an inexhaustible task of locating intersections of identity and power. Zack adds, “But as a theory of women’s identity, intersectionality is not inclusive insofar as members of specific intersections of race and class can create only their own feminisms” (“Inclusive Feminism” 2). Zack points out that the project of intersectionality is to demonstrate the intricacies of marginalization and privilege falls into the problem of infinite possibilities of intersections. Therefore, no one body will have the same intersectional realities with another, leaving the possibilities for relational alliances pretty bleak.

Following this line of thinking intersectionality, then, could simply create more divisions between people because of the limitless nature of identity politics (Yuval-Davis; Harding). Nira Yuval-Davis claims intersectionality actually does the opposite of what it was created to do. In turn, what takes place is “actually fragmentation and multiplication of the wider categorical identities rather than more dynamic, shifting and multiplex constructions of intersectionality” (195). Intersectionality actually divides us because it can only be articulated on individualized terms. Postmodernism contests marking identity politics leaving intersectionality beaten and bruised by deconstructionist critiques.

Framed in this manner the work of intersectionality sits comfortably within a deconstructionist discourse of identity categories. Postmodernism challenged intersectionality work as recreating damaging categories and harming the possibilities of solidarity. Listening carefully to the voices of women of color, we must also recognize that denying the realities of identities is harmful as well. Thus, intersectionality becomes
pulled in opposing directions of infinite intersectional identities and no material realities of identity. These critiques of intersectionality are valid and timely regarding where feminist work is going and the possibilities for feminist alliances in the future. The questions we are left with are how to articulate the body and social locations without harmfully essentializing the realities of all women through discourse? And furthermore, how can we represent bodies in relation to context, other bodies, and in fluidity without falling into a postmodern black hole that completely removes the material realities of bodies? The following section extrapolates my theoretical mixing of positionality and affective theory into intersectionality to resolve these questions.

**Resolving the Postmodern Critique: Affective Intersectionality**

*Positionality Reworking Postmodernism*

The crisis of essentialism and the deconstructionist critique of intersectionality are both valid. Nevertheless I am a proponent of deconstruction and postmodernism. I embrace an anti-essentialist mentality in my work/body/soul. But I would suggest that too much of a good thing can be problematic. Linda Alcoff acknowledges the snowballing effects of postmodernism. She notes, “If identity has become suspect, identity politics has been prosecuted, tried, and sentenced to death” (*Visible Identities* 14). Postmodern discourse left the starting gates and ran rapidly out of control wiping out much of the work in its path. Some of this destruction/deconstruction is productive and powerful but some of it is also painful.
A lesson from history is that it repeats itself unless we consciously work to prevent it from doing so. As I listen to the current critiques of intersectionality, I hear a language driven by a motive of inclusiveness that, in actuality, is very silencing. The politics of my White straight feminine body also murk these waters when articulating these critiques. Listen carefully. Do you hear the reverberations of first wave feminism all over again? Am I repeating the same harmful past of erasing difference through these critiques of intersectionality? Postmodern discourse was utilized to emphasize difference by feminist of color but it has now harmfully spiraled out of their brown lesbian feminist hands and into White patriarchal discourse that has removed the conception of identity politics altogether. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty point out,

Postmodernist discourse attempts to move beyond essentialism by pluralizing and dissolving the stability and analytic utility of the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This strategy often forecloses any valid recuperation of these categories or the social relations through which they are constituted. If we dissolve the category of race, for instance, it becomes difficult to claim the experience of racism. (xvii)

No matter how you utilize deconstruction, the materiality of lived marginalization cannot be placed under erasure. Oppression and hegemony are present. These harms manifest within the lived realities of all bodies. Postmodern discourse removes the material reality of the body, which makes extreme deconstructionist work problematic within intersectionality.

We need to “rein” postmodernism in a “bit” with “Theories of the Flesh” that hold our tongues back from unraveling reality and remind ourselves that “the physical realities of our lives all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (Moraga and Anzaldúa 21).
Feminism’s drive towards anti-essentialism spirals away from the body and into a postmodern discourse that erases the flesh altogether. Grillo reminds us that “essentialism is not always a bad thing… the question is whether the essentialism, which is sometimes unavoidable, is explicit, is considered temporary, and is contingent” (21). Intersectionality cannot work within extreme notions of anti-essentialism or postmodernism.

The materiality of the body represents the formation of identity politics as laden within the flesh of our bodies and the experiences we live. Madison softly explains, “Theories of the flesh means that the cultural, geopolitical, and economic circumstances of our lives engender particular experiences and epistemologies that provide philosophies about reality different from those available to other groups” (“That was my Occupation” 213-14). Bodies interact with other bodies and within this social interaction we locate and/or generate political implications on our bodies. A return to the material reality of the body reveals the relational level of one’s politics. In her later work Butler recognizes the relational effects of the body. She claims it is “through the body that gender and sexuality become exposed to others, implicated in social processes, inscribed by cultural norms, and apprehended in their social meanings” (Undoing Gender 20). I would expand her claim to include that all our social location are exposed, implicated, inscribed, and apprehended through our body not just gender and sexuality.

Conflating social constitutions of our identities with our body drums the sounds of controversies over social constructionist and essentialist ideologies. Anzaldúa suggests another way to conceptualize our identity is through the history behind it (“Making
Alliances” 307). Approaching identity from a historical context displaces a simplistic binary between social construction and essentialism because suddenly the social is the personal at the same time and located in a moment of time within the ever changing systems of power. Intersecting oppressions are historically specific and “change in response to human actions – racial segregation persists, but not in the forms that it took in prior historical eras – so the shape of domination itself changes” (Hill Collins Black Feminist Thought 228). Not surprisingly, we are brought back to the value of context within intersectionality.

By including a contextual awareness we begin to resolve the deconstructionist and social constructionist critiques of intersectionality. Contemplations over identity must consider the exposure of the body to others as working through the historical constructions of power. Through contextual awareness the body becomes a location of agency because individuals are not socially bound but historically influenced. The best means to conceptualize social locations within context is through positionality.

“Positionality” is intrinsically bonded with the conception of intersectionality “with its multiple placed “i’s;”” (Carrillo Rowe Power Lines 27).

I define positionality as: a way of operationalizing social locations from a non-essentialized philosophy, grounded in recognition of the politics of history and contextually laden (Alcoff Visible Identities 144-49). Positionality brings identity politics back to a material reality of historical and contextual experiences by viewing identity as located through the positions we hold in the world. Moving social locations into a conceptualization of positionality resolves the limitlessness notions of intersectionality
and the division this brings. By combining identity politics with a conception of positionality intersectionality can “conceive of the subject as non-essentialized and emergent from historical experience and yet objectively located in describable social structures and relations” (Alcoff Visible Identities 147). Positionality brings context into the conceptualization of identity by placing the focus away from internal characteristics and located more relationally to the external context within which a body is situated (148).

Positionality fosters a relational understanding of identities and allows for intersectionality to implicate the realities of the body. Aimee Carrillo Rowe claims that “alliances are the interface between intimacy and institutionality” (Power Lines 2). The work of intersectionality suggests a relational connection to politics. The focus of alliance becomes drawn away from identity politics of categorical connections and towards the personal connections with external-contextual politics. In doing so, Zack agrees that “…defining women relationally avoids all of the problems of substantialism, as well as the old essentialisms” (“Can Third Wave” 204). Positionality allows for intersectionality to shift and meet the always changing context and the social implications of interacting with other bodies (Alcoff Visible Identities 148). It also provides intersectionality theoretical agency within cultural and political institutions.

Positionality brings agency back to bodies and allows for us to reveal our positional perspective rather than be “a locus of an already determined set of values” (148). Therefore, positionality allows for intersectionality to remain fluid but also materially grounded. Intersectionality directs our eyes to these contextual implications
and allows for alliances to begin. Positionality provides a resolve for the anti-essentialist critiques of social locations. However, positionality does not resolve the grid-like nature of intersectionality in regards to discursive representations and articulations of bodies in relation. These listings of positionaities as a means to extrapolate identities at work within research (e.g., young, White, straight, working-class woman) removes the possibilities of fluidity within context and relationality. Here is where affect meets these theoretical trajectories by providing a discursive means of articulating fluidity, relationality, and contextual motion of bodies.

*Conceptualizing Affective Theory*

While it is imperative to recognize the material reality of the body, we – as researchers of the social – meet a tension between material and abstract nature of the body. Intersectional positionality provides a means for bodies to be accounted for within a contextual level and also begins to walk towards agency for bodies with the goals of changing the normative. Yet at the very same time intersectional positionality leaves the ideologies of identity still pre-defined for us in regards to our particular matching on the intersectional outlining. In the end, our multiple positionalities are predetermined for us based on the normative-ideological characteristics of our identities. In other words because I date men, I am straight. Now this critique of identity understanding is more framed for performative positionalities (sexuality, class, religion) but as Butler has shown gender is a complicated meshing of performative natures and material natures. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Shane Moreman ("Hybrid Performativity") built on this to demonstrate that while race is clearly marked on our skin it too is performative in nature. Arguably all
 positionalities can fall into a bind when we situate our identities purely into categorical namings. Intersectional positionality framework is inevitably “subtracting movement from the picture” and only researching “the body in cultural freeze-frame” further removing agency for change or disruption of the normative because in the end, “movement is entirely subordinated to the positions it connects” (Massumi 3). Brian Massumi challenges,  

How does the body perform its way out of a definitional framework that is not only responsive for its very “construction,” but seems to prescript every possible signifying and counternsignifying move as a selection from a repertoire of possible permutations on a limited set of predetermined terms. (3)  

My desire is to reimagine identity, not simply account for its realities. For us to break away from the dominant intersectional positionalities disciplining the body we must utilize a theory of the body that allows for this. My suggestion is that introducing affect into the theoretical conceptualization of intersectionality allows for movement and possibility to exist.  

Affect grants a language and theoretical conceptualization of embodied-emotive understandings. I recognize that performance studies has long theorized the link between the material realities of the body in relation to hegemonic power. As a performance scholar myself, I am drawn to the performance paradigms deep rooted connection to the body and the inherent possibilities allotted by privileging the body as a site of knowing and doing. Performance theory serves as both a method and theoretical landscape within my work. But performance theory often leaves me at a loss when attempting to theoretically explicate between the material realities of bodies and the illusive
probabilities of power. Often performance studies refers to this immaterial link as
aesthetics which I come to understand generally if not mostly overlaps with definitive
properties of affect. It would follow then that performance theory already accounts for
affect. I find this to be true.

However the relationships between aesthetics and the body within performance
theories are often stumped with multiple possibilities of aesthetic nature especially in
regards to the interacting audience. Hence, I find affect provides performance theory a
different theoretical composition to account for aesthetics that stretches the performance
paradigm. I have yet to find performance theory explicate the conception that so many
performance scholars allude to with regards to the power of performance. This “power”
or “intensity” is generally noted as, “You simply had to be there to understand.” Intensity
breaches language’s capacity. These aesthetic properties of performance generate
questions as how to extend the conversation within performance theory to better
articulate aesthetics in order to provide words to articulate the powers of performance.

The question of “why affect” arises within performance studies. In articulating
what affect offers intersectionality, my hope is that I explicated why affect is important to
acknowledge and integrate into performance theory as well. While intersectionality is
imperative for performance scholars to ethically engage cultural notions of power, affect
brings us back to the immaterial yet totally embodied aesthetics. Affect brings
performance scholars to the performative significance of aesthetics by providing words
and a theoretical lens for the aesthetics of the body that are felt not emotive, sensed not
said, motional not static, and contextual not universal. Like performance theory, affect allots agency to the body because it is complexly connected to causality.

Affect requires us to view causality on the body as existing simultaneously to both sides of the causal relationship. Affects, as Michael Hardt, explains “illuminate both our powers to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers” (viii). Affects’ concurrent relationships within the body, within the world, and between the body and the world bring a resolve to the broken theoretical complexity between materialism and postmodernism. Affectivity situates the body as simultaneously both by conceptualizing the body as “continuous with the environment – as thoroughly social yet stubbornly material,” which allows for a “fluidity of embodiment” conceptualization of the body “rethinking the matter of the body as dynamic” (Wissinger 231). Elizabeth Wissinger refers to affectivity as moving beyond “a strictly social constructionist account of the body towards a ‘mattering’ of the body, where agency arises not only from subjectivity but from other forms of energy, coursing below the level of conscious subject identity” (231). Conceptualizing fluidity within and through the body in relationship to others and the world breaks the dualistic mind/body binary.

Affects reside in the straddling points of “betweenness:” between mind and body, between actions and passion, between bodies (Massumi; Manning), between bodies and environment (Massumi; Manning), between bodily forces and conscious knowledge (Massumi; Wissinger), between bodies and technology (Wissinger), between bodies and
animal bodies\(^5\), “between the mind’s power to think and the body’s power to act, between the power to act and the power to be affected” (Hardt xi), and a multiplex of “betweenness” of each of these. Massumi alludes to affects’ ability and intrinsic need to straddle “betweenness” in his conversation over the problematic divide between nature and culture when really affect proves that they are more intricately woven together than present understandings. Teresa Brennan builds on this line of thinking in her pivotal work on the transmissions of affect that beautifully demonstrates the connectivity of lives that is best understood when we approach research from a blend of science and cultures. Finally the “betweenness” of affectivity denotes its contingent connection with movement.

Movement according to Erin Manning is “the qualitative multiplicity that folds, bends, extends the body-becoming toward a potential future that will always remain not-yet” (17). Movement brings an ideology of identity in to a space of possible agency because instead of situating our bodies into relations of fixed definitions we come to understand our identities as in a process of becoming. Movement reminds us that events influence the shifts of our bodies. These events remind our bodies that affects are both public feelings and also “the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of” (Stewart). Just as “movement takes time” Manning explains that “movement also makes time” (17). Hence time, space, events and bodies are complexly molded together and apart by

\(^5\) This connection is yet to be made which is the project within Chapter Five of this work.
movement and require us to understand that they are always in a state of moving, becoming, defining, and redefining – what Manning terms the interval.

Acknowledging movement is imperative when studying affect and bodies because it “provides a glimpse into the ways in which movement creates the potential for unthinking dichotomies that populate our worlds…movement allows us to approach them from another perspective: a shifting one” (Manning 14-15). Along these same lines, movement is relational, always placed between two bodies in time and space, bring them together-apart, towards-away, within-without. Affect sits on the dashes between these “moving” words under girding the relational affects of the movement. Once we acknowledge movement as relational, we are able to understand how bodies are in a constant state of becoming. Manning explains that “to move is to engage the potential inherent in the preacceleration that embodies you” (13). Relational movement brings forth an understanding of where affects meet the body and how bodies negotiate affects both to affect and also be affected.

While I am meagerly attempting to articulate affect in composition to relationality, I am not attempting to define this relationship. Defining relational movement is impossible because that implies a sense of fixity which affect implicitly is not. Conceptualizing affectivity’s natures is difficult to do in words because “there is no cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect” (Massumi 27). In fact, affectivity must resist definition because the autonomy of affect must exceed signification where our entire vocabulary remains wedded to structure “even across irreconcilable differences” (Massumi 27). Massumi paints a picture of affect as premised within a feedback, feed-
forward, feed-through and feed-betweenness. In other words affect is relational and movement laying on the dashes that bridge these movement/connectivity words.

Relationality exposes the value of understanding affectivity and the probabilities of breaking negative affectivity historically laden *between* particular bodies that relationally move towards-away, with-against each other. Manning explains this becoming-relational-betweenness process when she extrapolates the potential of actualization. She writes,

Preacceleration is tapped into by the interval, actualized not in the displacement as such but in the potential of its actualization. Preacceleration is like the breath that releases speech, the gathering-toward that leaps our bodies into a future unknowable. It goes something like this: preacceleration-relation-intensification-actualization-extension-displacement-preacceleration. Simultaneity of experience creates sensing bodies in movement creates shifting space-time of experience. (25)

The potential of bodies in relational motion allow for an understanding of identity that is no longer fixed but also not disregarding the material realities of bodies in relation to normativity. In essence, affects challenge a recognition of both the being which is “ontologically different from becoming” (Massumi 10) and the becoming which owns the potential for altering the normative. Theoretically approaching identity from relational movement calls forth possibilities articulating the “being” between two culturally broken bonds and demonstrating the relational motion of desiring a “becoming” that is different. Within these relations of movement exists the power to affect and/or be affected which
are experienced both consciously and nonconsciously.\textsuperscript{6} While the probabilities of this are yet to clearly be emergent my hope for feminist alliances must begin within the affective reality of being/becoming that resides in the relational betweenness of bodies in motion.

I align this desire with Aimee Carrillo Rowe’s work that theorizes a politics of relation contingent on the recognition of “the sites of affective investment in which power is distributed, transmitted, between and among those who are constituted through belonging” (3). Carrillo Rowe unpacks belonging as this being/becoming bridge that gains traction on power through desire. By recognizing the sites of our belonging, we “constitute how we see the world, what we value, who we are becoming” (3). Carrillo Rowe’s work speaks closely to mine as her argument is centered on the desire to map possibilities for feminist alliances between feminists of color and White feminists. She theoretically explicates these coalitional possibilities through demarcating a politics of relation that moves subjectivity away from individualism “and in the direction of the inclination toward the other so that being is constituted not first through the atomized self, but through its own longings to be with” (27). Carrillo Rowe adds to affective theory suggesting that her conceptualization of belonging precedes being (27). Therefore, affects are suggested to be malleable in the relational motional body through a politics of desire

\textsuperscript{6} It is important to distinguish how I am conceptualizing non-conscious here because it is different from Freudian terms of unconscious. As Massumi explains, “Repression does not apply to non-conscious and also can arguably apply to nonorganic matter” (16). However, what I would add here is that my perception of non-conscious versus unconscious is centered on norms of intensity. Non-conscious is experienced but perhaps does not have links of intensions to it; be that intensions to suppress the experience or manifest it. One cannot actualize the intensity of a moment but still experience it.
which indicates that if we can denote our belonging than we possibly can remake it as well.

If the purpose of this work is to manifest probabilities of alliances between feminists then locating the institutional function of our belongings is the first step towards this process. However, this articulation of belongings is a more difficult task than simply outlining institutionalized heteronormativity because affectivity works on a level of unseen intensities that are felt. Carrillo Rowe explains, “The institutional function of our belongings is often difficult to detect precisely because we tend to experience these connections affectively – in our bodies and hearts” (2). Here lies the challenge and beautiful opportunity affective theory offers intersectionality. Clearly understanding affects allows for the probabilities of locating them and better understanding their functions within and through our bodies.

But this is no easy task as affects lie in evocative, performative, embodied intensities that pulsate within and through us and motivate us beyond our own recognition. Where we stumble is the historical break between mind and body that remove the sensing of affects altogether resulting in language unable to represent, articulate, or recognize affects in our lives. Affects are a composition of both completely materially real while at the same time completely abstract in essence to us. Often affects are folded into emotions but Massumi claims affects are more closely related to intensity than emotion and if so than emotions and affect “follow different logics and pertain to different orders” (27). Along these lines Massumi explains intensity as “embodied in purely autonomic reactions… at its interface with things” which while totally
experienced in the body is at the very same time “a nonconscious, never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder” that pulls carefully simultaneously between head and heart registering a felt state existing beyond narrative continuity (25).

Teresa Brennan’s work enters this conversation in recognition that affects maintain power not only within us but within the transmission of them. Affects are independent of the individual experiencing them. The shift in focus on the transmission of affects distinguishes feelings/emotions from affects. While emotions are basically synonymous with affects, the transmissions of affect call us to see affects as “material, physiological things,” that have “an energetic dimension” (5-6). Affects are distinguished because what I feel is different from what makes me feel. Thus as Brennan notes, “these affects come from the other, but we deny them. Or they come from us, but we pretend (habitually) that they come from the other” (13). She explicates that certain affects exist within one body and our bodies either expunge the affects from others or absorb them – often at an unhealthy faulty level.

Understanding Brennan’s articulation of affects outlines the pressing need to be able to account for “the energetic level at which we are not separate from others – the level at which my affect enters you and yours, me” (14). If affects have the power to enhance or deplete, then this distinguishable feature is where power is located in the transmission and understanding of transmissions of affects for purposes of noting the future of historically separated bodies (i.e., women of color and White antiracist women) to be affectively dis-relational. Patricia Ticineto Clough connects to this implementations of culturally norms of power in noting that “some bodies or bodily capacities are
derogated, making their affectivity super exploitable or exhaustible unto death, while other bodies or body capacities collect the value produced through this derogation and exploitation” (25). My claim here is that affects are materially markable but humans over time have systematically removed our abilities to recognize them. Yet there is opportunity in the notion that affect can be distinguished and quite possibly manipulated.

Many have critiqued the deconstructionist move of anti-essentialism that places us in an infinite hole of identity possibilities. My proposal of affective-intersectionality could situate itself comfortably within this camp as well. However, affect moves intersectional thinking into a “fluidity of embodiment” existing as both completely material and entirely social (Wissinger 231). Affective theory allows for new understandings of ideological framings of power that prepare windows of possibilities for reshaping hegemony if we would simply begin to recognize the emergence of the window frame. I find Massumi best exemplifies this affective movement. He claims,

Affect holds a key to rethinking postmodern power after ideology. For although ideology is still very much with us, often in the most virulent of forms, it is no longer encompassing. It is no longer defines the global mode of functioning of power. It is now one mode of power in a larger field that is not defined, overall by ideology. This makes it all the more pressing to connect ideology to its real conditions of emergence. For these are now manifest, mimed by men of power. (42)

Power is in constant movement and fluidity in order to maintain hegemony but at the very same time power is a physical reality on bodies. Thus intersectionality must account for power on and through our bodies by re-conceptualizing the emergence of power through affect. We can – and must – recognize the possibilities of our personal agency when we see ourselves as complex beings incapable of pure “definition” but not outside
the cultural realities of our bodies. For me, affective intersectionality that conceptualizes identity politics through a notion of positionality allows for this fluidity to take place.

*My heart settled. My attention turns towards Raider.*

*Intimacy in a hand stroke.*

*Rewriting the politics of relation in my moment of becoming through being with him and outside of his owners affective dumping.* Recognizing the intersectional positionalities rubbing together and against each other in this moment, within me, through me, between Mr. McFee and me. Whiteness clashes within my class, age, and gender.

*“Institutional being” knots my tongue.*

*Motion. Hooves clash onto the ground.*

*Released by Raider.*

*“Another” recalls my belonging but I do not reflexively forget my positional place.*

**Final Thoughts**

While I am inspired by present notions of intersectionality, I recognize the critiques that exist of it as valuable to extend the theory further. Expanding intersectionality beyond identity politics bound by hard framed categories established by dominant culture (race, class, gender, and sexuality) is important for theoretical understandings of alliance work. I question what would/could intersectionality provide if we press the theoretical complexity of identity politics beyond these hard framed dominant categories? Could we perhaps come to a more inclusive feminism? Are we, then, finally allotted a space of extrapolating identity politics that fluidly move within the dominant categories of race, class, sexuality, and gender but also extrapolate the emotive
levels of our being? Or am I as a White woman simply re-perpetuating these dominations in this suggestion?

Theoretical and methodological uses of intersectionality have risen in popularity and remain a strong point within feminist research today. Intersectionality is a feminist project housed within feminist philosophy and feminist theory. It is a feminist theory necessitated from the past that projects the possibilities for solidarity in the future. Like many critical theories, intersectionality provides us a means to understand power and our bodies in new ways that is imperative to deconstructing the dominant White capitalistic heteropatriarchy. Yet, like all good theories, intersectionality does have some strong critiques that outline its shortcomings. Blanchard reminds me not to disregard intersectionality because of these critiques but rather to build onto it.

I contend that intersectionality is an imperative starting point to demarcate the multiplicities of power, the multifaceted notions of identities, and the intersectional natures of these dominant socio-cultural politics inflicted on bodies. I find intersectionality presently stumbles of coalitional possibilities because of its discursive fixity and infinite trajectories. I contend that interweaving affective theory to intersectionality provides resolution by attending to relational movement of bodies. What affective theory affords us is a means to conceptualize intersectional fluidity that removes intersectionality from the confines of a grid-like structuring, relocates power within an emergence state, locates context in relation to bodies, and moves towards a relational-motional composition.
Affects bring a new understanding of identity that is contextually rich but more importantly embodied through a motional relationality. Intersectionality demonstrates the construction of particular positionalities that – while always contextually shifting – are situated simultaneously between privilege and marginality. Where affect, specifically the transmission of affects, brings us is to recognize that the hegemonic positioning of social locations “depends on projecting outside of ourselves unwanted affects such as anxiety and depression in a process commonly known as “othering” (Brennan 12). Brennan adds, “To be effective, the construction of self-containment also depends on another person (usually the mother, or in later life, a woman, or a pliable man, or a subjugated race) accepting those unwanted affects for us” (12).

Once a person is brought to discern these transmissions of affects, we come to recognize that in order to really foster alliances we must understand the powers of these transmitted affects and attempt to relationally negotiate them. I agree with Brennan that there is no reason, once a person recognizes this affective “othering” and its historical makings, “why one person’s repression could not be another man or woman’s burden, just as the aggression of the one can be the anxiety of another” (12). Affective intersectionality presses different articulations of oppression as probable towards change if we can actually account for the affective transmissions of them. If we desire to shift power we must first recognize how it shifts within and through us in relation to Others.

I find the interweaving of affectivity into intersectionality underlined by performance studies imperatives to resolve the critiques some have accounted of intersectionality. Where affect brings us is a means to move analysis of the body beyond
social construction but to also account “for an analysis of dynamism of the body’s matter, such that the body is thought as a center of action and reaction, a site of energy flows and changes in intensity” (Wissinger 232). This affective turn suggests “new political possibilities… opening up avenues for political organizing and collective practices of refusal and liberation” (Hardt xii). My intension in this research project is to demonstrate a conceptualization of affective intersectionality that bolsters our present understandings of intersectionality. Can I position the reader to feel the intensity? Can we recognize the relational movement? In desiring to represent this, I come to a deeper understanding of identity and fluidity connotations of ideological power, as well. Writing is a learning process but can this learning also be embodied by the reader?

Intersectionality must remain in a tensive relationship between material reality of bodies and the postmodern body. I have suggested that intersectionality on the page often falls short of theoretically engaging this balance. Furthermore, intersectionality must account for contextual awareness and a conceptualization of identity politics through positionality. Clough claims that to theorize the social one must account for affect (2). Following her suggestion, I contend that in order to actually provide agency to the body, we should account for relational movement as located in affectivity. In doing so we are then capable to utilize intersectionality to theoretically depict the institutional being -how all performative bodies through systems of power are in some way contextually implicated as both oppressor and oppressed. But bodies shift, they alter contexts, which moves their relational movement. Power shifts. From “trusted trainer” inside the barn to “hired help,” intersectionality work must account for this shift.
Affective acknowledgement of movement allots for theoretical complications of bodies towards new probabilities. I am suggesting to rearticulate intersectionality into a space that allows for slippage in betweenness. Where I move intersectionality is complex and perhaps in a space of contention. Crenshaw alludes to this move by claiming that her own proposal of intersectionality is a linking of “contemporary politics with postmodern theory” (1244). A feminist “liquid modernity” if you will that cannot align with hard core modernity any more that it can fully embrace the postmodern project (Bauman).

Affective intersectionality swims… fluidly sliding between and within both at the same time in movement contingently linked to the contextual spaces we experience together while we relate.

    * * * *

While my body does not change my understanding of it does constantly.

    Events alter my positionalities.

These events swing affective transmissions. We must recognize these transmissions.

    When the McFees hired the young brown man to move hay I suddenly became introduced as “Dawn.”

    Different bodies: Similar experience

“Identities need to be contextualized and processes of identity formation need to be historicized” (Alcoff *Visible Identities* 85). In this moment of time, the performance of Whiteness trumps performance of class. I recognize this affective intersectional shift.

Now, how do we re-write it? *My eyes glaze past Mrs. McFee’s to his.* Intimacy.
“Everyday life is life lived on the level of surging affects, impacts suffered or barely avoided. It takes everything we have” (Steward 9). I ask his name. His name is John.
CHAPTER THREE
The Methods to Entering the Arena by Exposing the Rider I Am:
Bridging Critical Performance Ethnography and Critical Rhetoric

I have been riding for twenty-two years now. I’ve been an ethnographer for five. I suppose it is justifiable that one seems to override the other often in my brain, especially when I am at a barn. One has existed there longer. It is virtually impossible to separate myself as a researcher from the research. In essence I AM the research.

I AM White
I AM a Woman
I AM a Hunter/Jumper Rider.
    BUT
I am NOT affluent.

**Separation>Me<Difference**

Remember: this research is not centered on me; it is centered on a community that I am a part of.

    Holding tightly to my pen and small notebook, I know what I am supposed to do.

Walk about the horse show, look, listen, smell, taste, talk: write. My attention is brought to a White little girl that rides by me on her pristine White pony. Her blonde hair is separated into two small braids with light blue bows. Her body mirrors mine when I was
her age. We make eye contact. I smile. Her eyes gaze over my body and then quickly looks forward casting her nose in the air. She trots off. Memories...

“We just don’t have the money to horse show, honey. If you want to do it then you will have to get a job.” – “but I’m seven years old! Where?”

“Dawn, you poor thing, you are such a great rider. You deserve a horse that will win for you.” Wiping dirt from my face embarrassment yet again. Sure that trainer was trying to be nice but all she did was mark my difference. Oh, how I envied those kids I rode against. They never had horses that stopped. Dropped them in the dirt.

“You rode great, but the horse that won is a 50-thousand-dollar horse. You just can’t compete with that.” Do I write this down? Or do I simply note the little girl...

Separate<Me>Research. Distinguish my Difference?

My methods training in my mind slowly shifts me back as I walk towards the show grounds. Rather than intricate researcher-lens “newness,” I was suddenly immersed in intricate personal memories. Feelings of insignificance wash over my body as memories of non-belonging fill my mind. I reach the barn I am conducting my critical performance ethnography with and became struck by their careless horse show set-up. No posh curtains hanging from the horse show barn walls. No dramatic front presentation with sod, flourishing flower pots, and paintings of pristine horse art. No large sign campaigning the particular barn and trainer. Each stall was not plastered with the barn
name and logo over the place. Nothing: just a small black oval sign nailed into the ground reading “Meadow View Farms.”¹ Memories...

My best friend and I spent hours setting up for the horse show. Hours. We watered and raked the entire barn aisle. We hung the heavy cumbersome canvas curtains and a borrowed painting of a bay horse. We carefully placed flower boxes filled with borrowed flowers to frame our front décor. We wanted to hang our trainers sign but she adamantly refused to have it hung. Why? Was she embarrassed of our arrangement? We hung stall boards with chipped paint and mismatching old nameplates. But they still revealed our barn’s logo. Borrowed leather halters from years past adorned the top stall doors. Leather halters that we never used; they were only for display.

Exhausted we sat prideful in the front of our barn and watched as other barns began to arrive. We came early in the morning knowing the time it would take our small bodies to accomplish such a large task. Brown men jumped from large rigs and quickly set up their boss’ barns. What took us hours took them moments. They began to clean their stalls out removing the manure in small muck buckets. My trainer laughed, “Funny we feed our horses with our muck buckets.” Her statement said it all.

I paused in front of my new barn. The nonchalant manner of the set up invoked a confused emotion between me. I had the chance to erase my past. No one knew me here. I could belong. Perhaps this barn was a good fit for me since they seemed to reject the

¹ I remind the reader that all demarking aspects within this ethnography have been changed for privacy purposes.
pressing need of prestigious presentation. I remembered that presentation follows beyond the framing of the barn but onto the rider’s body. If I had the right clothes, the right tack, the right horse… either way sitting on my horse’s back equalized me. In that moment, I had the opportunity to win my belonging. No! My purpose here was not about that. I am researching… <i>Perhaps my research would finally locate my belonging…</i>

<i>Memories call forth Similarities-Differences</i>

My own insecurities often conflate within my research. My personal disjunction of belonging and misbelonging constantly rose to the forefront of my mind. At first this frustrated me because I realized how difficult marking the performance of White femininity would be for me as a White woman. The more I attempted to make the sport distant to me the more I became lost within it. I struggled with my field notes. Oftentimes I found myself journaling about frustrations that had burned inside of me for many years – both in and outside of the arena. Other times, I felt completely detached and later found nothing of value within those words. My attempt to remove myself was premised on the false belief that I could objectively enter this space. Objectivity is a scientific falsity I reject as a researcher but feel compelled to enact within this very personal research space that involves my body so intricately.

From the scholarly direction, my research questions within this site are premised on my desires to understand the intersectional nature of simultaneously privileged and marginalized positionalities. I also wonder how positionalities slip and crash into each other as our bodies perform in-between others and different places. But in reality these questions are no different than my conflicting desires within this space. My hope for
feminist alliances surfaces from my own broken belonging. I believe that coalitional probabilities lay hidden within these intersectional performative understandings. I desire feminist alliances and recognize that this must begin with my grasping the performance of White femininity. But recognizing a performance I so easily embody was an extremely difficult performance to distinguish within this site.

Here lies the crux of my research dilemma. I constantly felt that my misbelonging within notions of class and classism hindered my perception of Whiteness. But then I realized this performative belonging and misbelonging shuffle me back towards my research question. This juncture is where I meet this conversation. Reflexivity challenges us to locate ourselves within the research to see where my story surfaces at the interface of these cultural realities. Not autoethnography, *ethical* critical performance ethnography. But this was not my only research tear.

For my research to be ethical, I must embody my methodological philosophy not cater it to meet my research. One possible resolve to this ethical compilation was to include a rhetorical analysis of historical and present discursive components within the site to augment my ethnographic findings. My research training is grounded in both the areas of performance studies/ethnography and rhetoric. Thus as a researcher, I find myself betwixt rhetorical analysis and performance studies praxis. While I do not believe these two methods are inevitably separate, I do find they necessitate a conversational/methodological bridge. My bridging of critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric desires to not conflate two histories into one but instead suggest a meta-methodology that opens new possibilities to see both methods accenting research.
For me personally, this meta-methodology allows for my research to gain scope within a cultural site that is very close to my ethnographic I’s/eyes (Spry). It allots me places to rhetorically analyze discourse within of my personal belonging. Rhetorical analysis is not objective in nature but is a means to understand a community from another trajectory.

I began this chapter by painting a picture of my body as a researcher within this cultural space in order to exemplify my methodological process, philosophy, and desires. The remaining purpose of this chapter is to justify and extrapolate my proposed meta-method by placing critical performance ethnography and critical rhetorical analysis into conversation with each other to demonstrate a humanistic methodology utilized within the research project. While many performance scholars and rhetoricians have practiced this meta-method, there remains a present justification gap that extrapolates the specific intersections these two methods have premising a claim for a blending of them. These intersections reveal the philosophies and practices these methods share and the purpose for mixing them within a research project.

I begin with an epistemological argument for humanistic research because here lies the backbone, the primordial connection, between how I operationalize rhetoric and performance. Centering my articulation of this meta-method in a humanist methodology reveals not only the reasoning for it but also the politics laden within my methodological choices. Next, I articulate how I conceptualize critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric. Following this, I explicate their interstitial mappings and the practices of this methodological traversing. Finally, I argue for a bridging of these methods rather then a blending of them. Once I articulate my reasoning for this meta-method I delve into
what exactly this meta-methodology looks like by explaining my research design. Here I will extrapolate my data collection process and the analysis process. These conversations demonstrate what each different method rendered this research project. Allow me to begin by expounding what a humanist epistemology is to this research.

**Methodology**

*Humanistic Paradigm*

Methodology serves a primary foundation within research and maintains the ideological centerpiece to the ontological and epistemological positioning of any researcher. For this purpose, methodology should be taken seriously. One should always begin her research by first situating the ideology of her methodology in order to ethically understand her approach to her research. I am a humanist researcher centered on the quandaries and ethics of representation and power.

The hazards to interpretive research following social scientific epistemology are located in how the research is conducted, explicated, and represented. In privileging a social scientific epistemology, ideological approaches to humanity become folded into “objective language.” I am reminded of core values within critical performance ethnography that view objectivity as a crime. As D. Soyini Madison claims: “researchers who do not take responsibility for their biases, who refuse to recognize their inherent subjectivity and their ingrained power over the data (a power that always trails the ethnographic project)” are committing a crime of false objectivity within their research (Madison “Narrative Poetics” 393). Madison underlines here is the primary problem with social scientific epistemology.
The politics of hegemony are intrinsic within all research. Therefore research can never be “objective.” Discursive objectivity perpetuates harmful affects of representation where researchers speak for Others (Alcoff “Problem of Speaking”). The politics of positionalities cannot be removed from research, be that the social locations of the researcher or the research participants. Bonnie Dow explains “because all social locations are not equal, because some are attended by privilege and others by marginalization, they have political implications” (247). These political implications are inherent within all research. Social scientific approaches to research deny these realities and perpetuate a dangerous discourse that silences marginalized voices. On the other hand, humanistic research centers around these politics through a focus on a critical ideology.

The critical turn responds to Linda Alcoff’s call within representation, for “anyone who speaks for others should only do so out of a concrete analysis of the particular power relations and discursive effects involved” (“Problem of Speaking” 24). Humanistic work centers on the politics of power as the research foci, methodology, and representation. As Dwight Conquergood eloquently denotes, “Critical theory politicized science and knowledge,” which is why I locate a humanistic approach to research in and through a critical ideology (“Rethinking Ethnography” 179). I must note that critical approaches to research share methodological and epistemological assumptions with the interpretive paradigm. However, the goal of critical research is to “identify sources of oppression and work for systemic change” (Davis et al. 533-534). The way I position the humanist paradigm slightly differs from how Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama define it (“Thinking Dialectically”). I agree with their ideological background that
configures a critical paradigm as noting “culture as site of struggle where various communication meanings are contested” (8). However, I find they lack representing how this paradigm resists epistemological confines of social scientific approaches to research through their ideological goals.

In response to this, I locate critical ideology as a humanist approach to research that works to resist dominant social scientific ‘objective’ discourse. A humanist epistemology is best demonstrated through an emphasis on the lived experiences of bodies by means of aesthetic representations. Upholding the feminist philosophy that the personal is/as political, I (re)center personal experience of Other’s and myself through an ethics of love which “suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge of validation process” (Hill Collins 263). An ethics of love not only exemplifies a humanist approach but also legitimizes the reasoning for this approach to knowledge. The humanistic paradigm endorses the voices and experiences of the personal and brings methodological approaches to research back to the politics of the body. From a humanistic research paradigm, I am able to locate my research ideologies within critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric.

*Critical Performance Ethnography*

If we look to the history of interpretive research methodologies such as ethnography, we can locate the social scientific ideologies that it had to work within and through in order to receive academic validation. In the past, ethnographers were “trained in the latest analytic techniques and modes of scientific explanation (Clifford “On Ethnographic Authority” 124 my emphasis). Ethnography became validated through
scientific sophistication. James Clifford explains, “Interpretive social scientists have recently come to view good ethnographies as “true fictions”” (“Introduction” 6). Here Clifford demonstrates the methodological strain ethnographers must answer to in order to justify their findings and qualify their work as academic. Ethnographers become hindered within the social scientific ontologies of “truths,” and these truths are defined historically within the academy solely from a White masculine heteronormative perspective.

I find the best humanist research evolves out of critical performance ethnography. As Conquergood eloquently points out, “Ethnographers try to surrender themselves to the centripetal pulls of culture, to get close to the face of humanity where life is not always pretty” (“Performing as a Moral Act” 2). Allow me to begin by teasing out the defining points of the “critical” in regards to ethnography. Critical ethnography is exactly what its name blends: a political purpose with an ethnographic approach. The critical turn within ethnography grew from ethnographers turning away from objective (or social scientific) approaches of researcher and embracing a means of interrogating the subjective (Goodall). I locate my working definition of critical ethnography from Madison. She claims,

The critical ethnographer feels a moral obligation to make a contribution toward changing those conditions toward greater freedom and equity… this means the critical ethnographer contributes to emancipatory knowledge and discourses of social justice. (Critical Ethnography 5)

Critical ethnography is grounded in the ideology that theory and method maintain a tensive and complimentary relationship that cannot be separated (12-13). The beauty of critical ethnography is that it meshes theory with praxis. It recognizes “the importance of
theories that inform a critical approach to methodology” (Madison “Narrative Poetics” 392). Theory may aid in how I understand the world but methodology is how I actually interact with it (Madison Critical Ethnography 12-3). Critical ethnography is “critical theory in action” which carefully ties my work to challenging regimes of power and engaging with politics of social justice through my method that is informed by critical theory (Madison Critical Ethnography 13 emphasis in original).

The goal and ethics that arise out of critical ethnography’s tight relationship with social justice exposes reflexivity as a necessity. Critical ethnography and performance studies meet at this common ground of reflexivity. Conquergood suggests that one means to genuinely understand Others and escape the moral dilemmas within research is through the dialogical performative (“Performance as a Moral Act” 9). A dialogical performative stance is primarily aimed “to bring self and other together so that they can question, debate, and challenge one another” (9). Bringing self and other together resists conclusions but more importantly resists the objective White patriarchal gazing of traditional ethnography (Conquergood “Beyond Text;” “Rethinking Ethnography;” “Performance Studies”).

Madison challenges us to understand reflexivity as “the ethnographer not only contemplates her/his own actions (reflective), but s/he turns inward to contemplate how s/he is contemplating her actions (reflective)” (“Dialogic Performative” 321). The reflexivity centers the body and reveals the power of performance within ethnography by returning our methodological research to our positionalities as researchers. The beauty of reflexivity is that it is reciprocal. We are undone when we take a vulnerable stance within
our research. We place our bodies on the line along with the bodies of Others and come to a new understanding only when we turn inward to contemplate how our positionalities informs our research.

These notions of representation, reflexivity, and the body are where I find “critical” ethnography overlaps with “performance” ethnography. Many scholars would likely agree that critical ethnography and performance ethnography place themselves within the same camp. However if you look to the past, performance ethnography grew out of critical ethnography. The poststructuralist move brought critical ethnographers into a space of performance where many have referred to this move as “the performance turn” (Denzin “Interpretive Interactionism”). Post positivism made a critical turn within the academy and allowed the body to (re)enter the focus of methodological approaches. Performance studies informs critical ethnography through the emotive aesthetics of the body.

Critical performance ethnography blends these philosophies of critical ethnography and performance ethnography. Most of Conquergood’s work alludes to this bridge which suggests that a blending has always existed between the two ethnographic approaches. A term coined by Madison, “critical performance ethnography” is “animated by the dynamics interacting between power, politics, and poetics” (“Narrative Poetics” 392). Critical performance ethnography grew from the roots of critical performance

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2 My separation here is not to compartmentalize these two framings of ethnography as inherently separate. Rather, I am attempting to articulate what each term (critical and performance) offer my research project as a “critical performance ethnography.”
pedagogy (Pineau; Denzin “Performance Ethnography”). The primary goals of critical performance pedagogy are “centered in the active body doing; the active mind knowing; and an active civic responsibility that collectivizes and promotes democracy and human rights” (Alexander 426). There is not much leap between critical performance pedagogy and critical performance ethnography. Critical performance ethnography is

…determined to reach and write in ways that recognize the importance of theories that inform a critical approach to methodology – a critical approach that is guided by political theory that matters on the ground but at the same time believing in the power and beauty of cultural expression. (Madison “Narrative Poetics” 392)

Through the aesthetics and emotive poetic nature of writing and performing the critical performance ethnographer situates her research contextually as always political, always purposeful, and always embodied.

By returning to the body, critical performance ethnographers were able to locate an ethical means to (re)present Others. Performance studies has “undergone a small revolution” within the academy. Moving away from “anti-theatrical” prejudices towards performance brought ethnography into a space of intention and purposeful messages. As Madison and Judith Hamer explain, “For many of us performance has evolved into ways of comprehending how human beings fundamentally make culture, affect power, and reinvent their ways of being in the world” (xii). I locate the performance turn within research to be the space where research can and does practice an embodied ethics.

Performance studies calls bodies into the forefront of our minds and places our bodies – our positionalities – into conversation creating a politically powerful message. Within critical performance ethnography, the body is a site of knowing and a place of
doing. The emphasis of the body demonstrates “the processes of communication that constitute the “doing” of ethnography: speaking, listening, and acting together” (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography” 181). Critical performance ethnographers place the body as a site of knowledge, utilizing the “sensory apparatus of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell” (Bell 109). A return to the body brings “a shared temporality, bodies on the line, soundscapes of power, dialogic interanimation, political action, and matters of the heart” back to the center of research (Madison “Co-Performative Witnessing” 827). One cannot truly be reflexive, a co-performative witness, a dialogic performer without first engaging the research site with/in her body.

The material reality of oppression begins at the politics of our bodies. Bernadette Calafell and Shane Moreman demonstrate how materiality of the body is situated politically and is either “interrupted by us or interrupts us in our everyday lives” (“Iterative Hesitancies” 10). Perhaps Madison says it best, “If the embodied practices and borderlands are the hallmarks of ethnography inquiry then performance becomes both a method and an ethical principle” (“Narrative Poetics” 349). To reflexively engage the body, we must hold the critical humanistic politics of representation, privilege, and marginalization at the forefront of our minds.

Understanding the body as a central point of communication and a powerful means to represent these messages, critical performance ethnographers maintain that there are not finalized intelligible conclusions but materialized realities of lived experiences to make sense of. Della Pollock asks, “Now that we are unknown and deprived of knowingness, unlearned and learning, what are we going to do about it?”
(“Performing Writing” 328). Critical performance ethnography centers on this question because it transforms research goals from knowing to experiencing and through experience we can then, and only then, enter into a pure humanistic methodology ideology.

Critical Rhetoric

The history within rhetoric paints a similar positivist-interpretive picture of White patriarchal privileging. If we look to the study of rhetoric, we find a method of analysis founded within Aristotelian values that ostracize and critique all other forms of expression. Rhetoric’s history is grounded in ethnocentrism and objectivist projections that have silenced those from the early Sophists to any non-normative group (Conquergood “Ethnography, Rhetoric”). Early rhetoricians and many to this day focus analysis on discourses of privileged voices (Ono and Sloop “Vernacular Discourse”). From ancient Greek to current American speeches of today, those that are given the privilege to speak generally do not culturally embody or speak with the marginalized and silenced voices.

Calafell explains that the rhetorical tradition is founded on a writing of rhetorical criticism that removes the voices of marginalized Others (“Rhetorics of Possibility” 32). Therefore, some rhetoricians re-perpetuate a hegemonic ideology by studying voices of those already privileged to speak. Rhetoricians’ past is also founded in a methodological ideology that separates researcher from analysis, which retrospectively serves to follow the objectivist language grounded within the academy. Calafell points out that a primary fault with traditional rhetoric is “the norm of the field for the critic’s voice or illusion to
self-hood to be relatively absent and criticism disembodied” (35). What she notes here is how traditional rhetoric both methodologically and aesthetically ignores questions of subjectivity or positionality (36).

The infiltration of feminist and cultural studies scholarship into the field began a long and valuable critique of traditional rhetorical scholarship’s “methods of discovery, artifacts of study, and criteria for the assessment of scholarship” (Foss, Foss and Griffin 1). Rhetorical studies has always been grounded in an interpretive paradigm but the infiltration of feminism revealed the problems existing within the tradition. Carole Blair, Julie Brown, and Leslie Baxter criticize the overall nature within the communication discipline as privileging the masculinist disciplinary ideology and disciplining those that operate from an interdisciplinary background (often women). Olga Davis adds that traditional rhetoric lacks attention to the theoretical significance of everyday life.

Rhetorical studies is where the foundational history of critical cultural scholarship in communication finds its roots. However, the broad field of rhetorical studies tells a story of a large road that split into many different directions. These directions are the scholarly trends which have led traditional rhetoric away from its patriarchal and ethnocentric binds into a more inclusive world of cultural critique. Critical rhetoric is one of these “different roads” that moved traditional rhetoric into what I find to be a humanistic methodology. Here is where I locate Raymie McKerrow’s *critical rhetoric* entering the scholarly conversation and manifesting a new trajectory of rhetorical studies. McKerrow challenges “traditional” rhetoric as trivializing analysis because of its foundational goal to formulate universal roles. He discredits these Platonic implications
by articulating a concept of *critical rhetoric*. Through critical rhetoric McKerrow places value in a critical ideology by demonstrating that universalism is minor in comparison to the analysis of power working within and through discourse.

McKerrow explains four generic features of critical rhetoric. First, it follows the same “critical spirit” of Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas, and Foucault (92). In other words, critical ideology is intricately interwoven into social reality and bodies play an imperative role in sculpting these forms of power. Second, in recognizing that social power orients itself through discourse, critical rhetoric works to uncover this dense web of social power by “demonstrating the silent and often non-deliberate ways in which rhetoric conceals as much as it reveals through its relationship with power/knowledge” (92). Third, a critical rhetorician acknowledges her/his role within her critique. McKerrow notes that critical rhetoric “is not detached and impersonal; it has as its object something which it is “against”” (92). Therefore we, as critics, must recognize that there is not a universal detachment but a complex relationship we have within our criticism.

Kent Ono and John Slook explicate a commitment to telos, which is seen as a form of praxis that recognizes positionality, the politics of one’s positionality, the role positionality plays in her critique, and serves to materially represent these critiques through writing (“Commitment to *Telos*”). A telos as a form of praxis repositions communities of critique or study from “they” to “we,” because the critic is in fact part of the community – or should choose forms of research in which they are to some degree (54). Through critical rhetoric, rhetoricians must locate themselves within their scholarship and the politics of these locations.
Finally, a critical rhetorician’s main purpose does something beyond simply critique. Critical rhetoric must either establish social judgment as to what needs to be done, expose the need for change and how to change, and/or identify the possibilities of future action available to the participants (McKerrow 92). Critical rhetoric moves away from the universal, focuses on the politics of power, and presses analysis towards a critical praxis. Critical rhetoric recognizes the inherent demise of traditional rhetoric as privileging the “universal audience” and challenges rhetoricians to expose the intrinsic power located within this history. Ono and Sloop specifically speak to this call and expand the purpose of critical rhetoric to include a cultural approach to marginalized rhetoric or what they term “vernacular discourses” (“Vernacular Discourse”). They disagree with McKerrow’s emphasis on public address and reveal the value of marginalized discourses.

Ono and Sloop demonstrate how rhetoric’s past focuses solely on the popular public addresses of the powerful. They note that these messages are important to examine critically in order to locate how power controls. But holding the focus to only these messages is “missing out on and writing out of history,” important texts that “influence local cultures first and then affect, through the sheer number of local communities, cultures at large” (19). Here is the key critical cultural turn within critical rhetoric, the recognition and validation of marginalized cultural communities.

Scholars such as Maurice Charland and Dana Cloud have challenged critical rhetoric’s tendency to fall into an endless route of deconstruction (Charland) and redefine discourses as a materiality which shows potential political consequences of idealism and
realism (Cloud). These criticisms have not gone without notice nor have they removed the imperative initiative critical rhetoric created. Critical rhetoric moved the rhetorical tradition into a space where marginalized voices could locate themselves and be heard. Calafell and Fernando Delgado demonstrate the value of a critical rhetorical ideology and the importance of interrogation of vernacular discourses for marginalized communities. Critical rhetoric is the primary way to study culture within the field of communication and rhetoric. Through its interrogation of privilege, power, and positionality, critical rhetoric moves rhetorical studies into a humanistic methodology that feminist and cultural scholars can engage.

**Intersections of Performance Studies and Rhetorical Studies**

Up to this point, the essay speaks of methodological rationales for a humanistic approach to research and discusses two different avenues of research methods that work within a humanistic ideology. Critical performance ethnography is a method of ethnography that fixates on the body as a site of knowledge, social justice, and the politics of power through both one’s doing of research and also the writing/representing of research. Critical rhetoric is a rhetorical trend that examines the politics of power laden within all forms of discourse through a backdrop of identity politics that values the praxis of positionality and vernacular discourses. What is missing from the current conversation is how these two methods speak to each other in such a way to suggest a meta-bridged methodology. Outlining the trajectories of these two methods exposes the innate intersections between them.
At their heart, performance studies and rhetorical studies\(^3\) share a strong overlap with cultural studies. As the study of performance expanded beyond the stage, the discipline of performance studies came to be seen as “an inherent part of the customs, rituals and practices of culture” (Striff 1). In the end, one cannot research performance without an understanding of culture. Rhetorical studies shares this same cultural studies companion, where discourse cannot be defined outside a landscape of cultural understandings (Rosteek). These bordered disciplines meet together at a cultural context, which exposes their point of connection within the larger Communication field.

The bridging of rhetorical studies with performance studies is not new to the area of communication, but the infantile nature surrounding this connecting requires attention. Therefore, I will tease out the juncture points between critical rhetoric and critical performance ethnography and the purposes these connections serve the larger field of Communication. Exploring the methodological epistemologies within these two disciplines reveals three junctures between critical rhetoric and critical performance ethnography. Following the performance heritage of alliterative lists, I title these interstitial spaces: performativity, positionality and performative writing. The theory of performativity is where I locate the foundational blending between performance and rhetoric.

\(^3\) Critical rhetoric is how I have operationalized my use of rhetorical analysis, rhetorical studies, and rhetorical criticism. From this point forward, any use of the phrasing or term “rhetoric” is pulling from a critical rhetoric conceptualization.
Performativity situates discourse as performance and performance as discourse. Through John L. Austin’s speech act theory, the philosophy of language came to see performatives as discourses that actually do something within the world. Austinian performativity explains language as acting on our lives. Judith Butler’s use of performativity feeds from a Derridian notion of discourse and expands our understanding of performativity as disciplining our bodies into heteronormative terms of identity (“Performative Acts;” Bodies). Speech act theory grew into performativity when Butler expanded issues of language to complexities of the body, specifically gender (Butler Bodies; Gender Trouble; Undoing Gender). Jonathan Inda adds to Butler’s conceptions of performativity by carefully explicating the historical foundation of performativity in regard to the raced body and discourse. Moreman extends the theory of performativity into cultural performances of racially hybrid bodies and the performative complexities that derive from hybrid bodies. Speech acts are carefully connected to the body through a social grounding in hegemonic history and an embodied connection to discourse. Butler, Inda, and Moreman’s connection to the body as “doing,” demonstrates how discourse works through identity politics. Performativity is not only speech acts but also bodily acts which literally denotes where the scholarship of rhetoric meets performance and performance scholarship encounters rhetoric (Butler Undoing Gender 198-99).

Rhetorical theory serves an imperative purpose to locate these discursive workings and provide a theoretical language to discus and understand them. Specifically, performativity offered a theoretical lens for the body as discourse in the larger social constructions of everyday life. Performance scholars’ understandings of the politics of the
body and the manifestations of the body within the everyday clarify the material work-ings of performativity. The materiality of the body as discursively read generates the debate over whether the body controls discourse or discourse controls the body (Salih 56). Agency is stolen from the body when we focus exclusively on performative knowledge of the body.

Following the suggestion of E. Patrick Johnson, I find resolution in theorizing the body through both performativity and performance. This theoretical partnership allows for the body to expose and also reclaim the material reality it performatively performs. Johnson suggests,

The performance of self is not only a performance/construction of identity for/toward an “out there” or merely an attachment of “taking up” of predetermined, discursively contingent identity. It is also a performance of self for the self in a moment of self-reflexivity that has the potential to transform one’s view of self in relation to the world. (“Quare” 11)

Therefore, the body is not simply implicated in a matrix of domination where its actions are raced, sexualized, classed, aged, and gendered but also has agency to perform for the self. Madison and Hamera succinctly expose the possibility of accenting performativity with performance through “subversive performativity.” They explain that “subversive performativity can disrupt the very citations that hegemonic performativity enacts” (Madison and Hamera xix). Subversive performatives are one example of how performance and performativity interpenetrate to re-interpret, re-present, and re-construct dominant cultural norms.

Performance scholars have utilized performativity to examine performative moments that engender politics of identity (Calafell and Moreman “Iterative
Hesitancies;” Moreman; Johnson “Quare Studies;” Langlier; Bennet). I locate performativity as an intersection that links performance studies and rhetorical studies, but performativity does not serve to show them as in and of the same thing. They work separately to more colorfully demonstrate the workings and complexities of performativity. Performativity clearly links the discursive workings on the body demonstrating how both critical rhetoric and critical performance ethnography are informed and accented by it.

Positionality is the second intersection located between rhetoric and performance. I define positionality as: a way of operationalizing social locations from a non-essentialized philosophy, grounded in recognition of the politics of history and contextually laden (Alcoff Visible Identities 144-49). Positionality brings identity politics back to a materiality of historical and contextual experiences that all bodies experience. Critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric value identity within research, recognizing that the social locations of the researcher heavily influence the research. Critical rhetoric complicates the role of the critic in rhetorical criticism by placing a primary component of critical rhetoric as being self-reflexive (Ono and Sloop “Commitment to Telos;” McKerrow). Michelle Hollings and Calafell explain the powerful nature in filtrating the critic’s voice into criticism as providing a recovery for those lost marginalized voices and bring those voices the larger public discourses. Perhaps most powerfully they note that situating the positionality of the critic within rhetorical work “concomitantly bring[s] those discursive voices to the fore to examine their machinations and implications” (in press). This call for reflexivity challenges
critical rhetoricians to return to the social locations of the researcher. However, interrogating these interpretations as representative of our positionality is a primary pitfall within traditional rhetoric.

The intersection of positionality may be an entry point that critical rhetoric and critical performance ethnography share but it is certainly not a practice that both methodologies apply equally. Regardless of critical rhetoric’s challenge, there remains a grave gap within rhetorical work to interrogate the positionalities of the researcher. When positionalities are explicated within critical rhetorical work, they are often offered as a listing that situates the researcher but never critically engaged within the work. In the end, the voice of the researcher and her intricate subjective role within the research is removed. Generally when the personal voice does enter rhetorical work it is referred to as auto-ethnography which is problematic on multiple levels (Calafell and Moreman “Envisioning an Academic Readership”). Craig Gingrich-Philbrook challenged us to move away from practices of justifying the use of aesthetics and personal voice under the label of auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography is categorized as a heightened method of self-reflexivity but in these cases the ethical practice of self-reflexivity is not correctly employed.

Here we locate a wonderful attribute that performance studies offers a critical rhetorician in regard to reflexively engaging positionality in research. Performance scholars exemplify engaging positionality within their work through an ethical practice of reflexivity (Conquergood “Performance as a Moral Act;” Madison “Staging Fieldwork;” “Performance, Personal Narratives;” Calafell Latina/o Communication; “Pro-Reclaiming
Loss;” Pollock “Telling Stories” Guillemin and Gillam). Positionality is not an entrance point to connect these two fields of research but certainly a location where the fields meet and are accented by the other. The challenge of self-reflexivity exposed the ethical complexities loaded in research. Closely related to this was a major ethical contention within the performance paradigm around textual authority in the academy which brings me to the third intersection: performative writing.

Conquergood claims Geertz’s theory of “culture-is-text metaphor” re-centers ethnocentrism (“Beyond Text). Conquergood notes this mode of knowing manifests a researcher as detached, superior, and displaced into the ivory tower of the academy and not engaged, located, and in solidarity with one’s research (27-28). In addition to approaching lived reality as “text,” Conquergood also claims that “beholding something in a text means holding it down, fixing it in place” (“Beyond Text” 30). He dares us to see “tradition needs to be problematized, particularly in a postcolonial world characterized by dislocation, discontinuity, and diaspora communities” (32). Clearly the rhetorical tradition becomes disputed here and is urged to look for a humanistic approach that is located through the body as opposed to the text. While the value of text should not be discarded, the performance paradigm challenges research to look for “what gets lost and muted in texts” (33). Performance studies began this conversation and exemplified a means of bringing the stage to the page.

Conquergood always located his performance ideology within the field of communication, positioning fieldwork as a site of interaction between bodies, talking, touching, and listening. His challenge to rhetorical scholars is to move beyond a
privileging of the text and question how to place the embodied experiences and lessons onto the page. He states,

Ethnography on the page constrains and shapes performance in the field. But it is also true, I believe, that experiential performance sometimes resists, exceeds, and overwhelms the constraints and structures of writing. It is the task of rhetorical critics to seek out these sites of tension, displacement, and contradiction between the Being There of performed experience and the Being Here of written texts. (“Rethinking Ethnography” 193)

In essence, Conquergood does not want to displace the textual paradigm but desires to situate the performance paradigm alongside the textual paradigm. Communication scholars responded to Conquergood’s challenge by placing embodied performances onto the page by means of descriptive performance scripts as scholarly manuscripts in order to open the performance messages to a larger audience.

Although the actual live performances are much more emotive and powerful, these written scripts are great to demonstrate the reflexive nature of the performance as well. Communication scholars in performance often use the page to tease out the performative intentions, the political workings, and the embodied intricacies. Scholars such as Madison (“Staging Fieldwork;” “Performing Theory”), Amira De La Garza, Shannon Jackson, Johnson (“Strange Fruit;” “Sweet Tea”), Ellen Gil Gomez and Ragan Fox write their performances onto the page and demonstrate through a reflexive scholarly script the political functions of their performances. What these writings reveal is the embodied way of knowing and experiencing through a means of textual representation.

Performative writing works aesthetically to (re)present bodies and lived realities onto the page. Tami Spry explains performative writing as “the text becoming a diaspora
of dialogic engagement between disparate moments and movements of meanings” (342). Unhinged from a linear narrative, words are able to paint pictures in the readers’ mind by “fragments of lived experience colliding and realigning with one another” (342). Texts become discursive pictures of performative intentions that work theoretically and purposively. Pollock explains, “Performative writing seems one way not only to make meaning but to make writing meaningful” (“Performative Writing” 97). Performative writing becomes meaningful because it emotively works to capture the everyday lived realities of bodies.

Performative writing brings the poetics of discourse within the contextual elements of the body onto the page. Critical rhetoricians are given a methodological avenue to represent the rhetorics of the body. Performative writing serves as a bridge for scholars located within the world of discourse to enter the lived everyday reality of embodied politics. Performative writing is truly where theory and the body are united within the page. Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs remind us that performance-oriented analysis is founded on testing “our own conceptions of language and our own scholarly practices as it attempts to comprehend the role of language and poetics in the social life of the world’s cultures” (80). While performative writing remains a practice found within primarily performance studies, Bauman and Briggs demonstrate the intricate connection performative writing maintains with rhetorical analysis. Performative writing, while placing the politics of the body onto the page, must always remain cognizant of the linguistic – or rather rhetorical – politics that manifest.
Bridging not Blending

I once was told by another seasoned ethnographer that I write like a rhetorician and my ethnographies read that way. At first, this comment confused me. Did my piece read like I was making a textual analysis? But years later I realize that this rhetorician comment simply denotes my communication and humanistic foundations. The intersections between performance studies and rhetorical studies have always conceptually existed but remain “galvanized by an opposition to foundationalist thought” (Conquergood “Ethnography, Rhetoric” 80). As bodies perform, we speak and, in our speaking, we perform. The relationship between rhetoric and the body have always been present with both performance studies analysis and rhetorical criticism. I am certainly not inventing a new wheel in regard to proposing overlapping intersections between critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric. The complex junctures between these two methodologies meet through their humanistic epistemology. Holding hands, both methods maintain the same desire to expose the intricate workings of hegemony.

I conjoin these two methods through a humanist epistemology that maintains a critical foundation located in historical and contextual accounts of power. Both critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric serve as methodological points to analyze and understand how cultural performances, discourse, and identity politics function through power within cultural spaces. Current work that denotes this blend of rhetoric and performance demonstrate the three interstitial spaces of performativity, positionality and performative writing through innovative conceptualizations of the body. In these pieces, we come to see the body’s discursive politics (Brouwer; Butterworth), the body as128
cultural discourses (Pezzullo; Calafell and Delgado; Bauman and Feaster), and the body as discourse (Hawhee; Conquergood “Ethnography, Rhetoric;” Pollock “Memory, Remembering;” “Performative Writing”). These principal pieces reveal the possibilities with which a blend of rhetoric and performance provide the larger Communication discipline.

Critical rhetoric is a valuable tool to locate discourses and how these discourses work within the larger social world. Most importantly, critical rhetoric provides ethnography a way to remove itself from “the pretensions of objectivist detachment, and to acknowledge that their fieldwork is centered in complex face-to-face communication processes” (Conquergood “Ethnography, Rhetoric” 85). Rhetoric brings ethnography’s focus away from a social scientific foundation and rather to a homecoming of a communicative and discursive focus between bodies. In the end, a blend of rhetoric and performance ethnography is nomenclature for a methodological practice that many Communication scholars have been carrying on for many years. Calafell suggests a meta-method blend by beginning an ethnography with a critical rhetorical analysis of the texts within that cultural space. This form of a blend promotes a historical and critical background for the ethnographer within her site.

This chapter revealed the juncture points between rhetoric and performance that alludes to the fact that another possible meta-method blend would be to analyze ethnographic findings as discursive interactions through a critical rhetorical lens. In addition to this, one might find that this analysis blend is constantly placed within a fringe position and articulated best through a performative lens. The purpose of this
chapter is to outline the intersections between critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric in order to denote the values each method brings when conjoined within a research project. Furthermore, these intersections demonstrate the multiplex manners to bridge these two methods for research. Each method serves to assist the other in specific ways. But they are certainly different in both methodological practices and analysis of research, demonstrating a key point that these methods should be bridged to enhance each other through a meta-methods approach not conflated into a new method.

When writing this methodological blending, I was reminded of the movie *Sweet Home Alabama*. In the finale wedding scene, Mel is about to marry her wealthy aristocrat fiancé and finds out that she is still married to her hometown hillbilly sweetheart. Her father turns to her and says in his southern drawl, “Well, sweet pea, you can’t ride two horses with one ass.” This line always brings a smile to my face and reminds me of the inability to mesh two lovers into one. Along these same lines, critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric cannot be meshed into one methodology. We, as Communication scholars, must always remember that we desire these two methods for different reasons. While both methods share similar traits, they are different and cannot be conflated.

Pollock acknowledges that performance has done much for ethnography (“Marking New Directions”). She demonstrates how these methodologies slip comfortably between each other with an unrecognizable blink. As my intentions look to clarifying the relationship between rhetoric and performance, I see a need for a more balanced bond where both bring complimentary attributes to the other but remain
separate. As I read work articulated as rhetoric and performance, I was surprised by the all to amalgamate nature that seems to allude these two methodologies are one-in-the-same. I am reminded by rhetorical scholars concerns with conflating rhetorical and cultural studies and see performance and rhetoric rolling down a similar slippery slope.

Performance studies and rhetorical studies share a fragility of their interdisciplinary natures. Thomas Rosteck cautions us that how cultural and rhetorical studies unite requires the politics of the academy and how each discipline must differentiate itself in order to maintain their scholarly role (3). What ties into this terrain would be an imperative moment of defining what it means to name one’s work as rhetorical analysis or performance ethnography. With the driving forces of the academic market, if these two disciplines conflate together one might loose its identity altogether. Sloop and Mark Olson claim, “When rhetoric is articulated with, or replaced by, culture (even partially), there is an obvious danger that both rhetorical studies and cultural studies will lose something important” (249). Broadening the fields of performance studies and rhetorical studies problematically serves to weaken the offerings their analysis brings interdisciplinary conversations (Sloop and Olson 249). While they share many overlapping features and beautifully compliment each other, both methodologies must strain to distinguish themselves from the other in order to constantly expose their purpose in the scholarly conversation.

With this in mind, as Communication scholars we must hold tight to both methods as powerful means to enable our research but always remember that the use of these methods serve as a bridge towards a more humanistic methodology, not a blending or
mixing of one-in-the same. Following the suggestion of Calafell, I believe discursive text should be critically engaged in order to map the cultural history that lines a particular research project (“Rhetorics of Possibility”). Critical performance ethnographic work is essential to return researchers to the politics of power that reside in and through representation of the body. In the end, this bridging must remain along a methodological fringe where critical rhetoric and performance ethnographic ideologies constantly rub against and influence the other (“Rhetorics of Possibility”). Conquergood reminds me that as a Communication scholar all my performance ethnography research in some way begins or reflects a rhetorical message. But an acknowledgement and value of both methods moves my analysis beyond this simplistic reflective confine into new areas of analysis and possibility.

**Research Design**

*Critical Performance Ethnography*

This project utilizes a meta-method of critical performance ethnography and critical rhetoric. First and foremost, the research is a critical performance ethnography. The critical performance ethnography spanned over a period of six months though my life experiences being involved in the sport were always present. Following the criteria of that method, I went to two somewhat local barns and took riding lessons. These lessons allowed me to get a sense of the barn’s community and overall competitive mission. This provided a contextual means to select one primary barn to become a co-participant. As a co-participant, I would visit the barn generally once a week for a lesson which provided
me time to dialogically engage within the community. When the barn was at the local spring and summer horse show series, I would attend the horse show grounds rather than go to their barn. Generally, I would go to the horse shows with my horse for lessons weekly. But I would go to the horse show multiple times a week without my horse. At one point, I even competed for one week of the Spring horse show series. Maintaining a present sensitivity to the body as a site of knowledge, I remained cognizant of my body’s reaction to particular spaces, interactions with others, and generally emotive responses to contextual events.

Some of these ethnographic sites were chosen by me and others simply organically grew from interacting with the local barn. However, each ethnographic space specifically spoke to my research questions and goals. While in some spaces I was a casual observer, in others, I was an active participant. Both positions offered me the ability to richly engage within the sport at different levels and also establish myself as a co-performative witness to those within the sport. I would argue that time and also participation is essential to ethically establish yourself within a critical performance ethnography specific to sporting cultures.

Following the ethical techniques of ethnographic work, I began the research by explaining my project to each co-participant I interacted with and made my intentions clear at the beginning so each person involved within the study was informed. I established a co-performative position within the group of riders really quickly because of my riding experience and also simply because my personality really fit the particular barn I settled on to conduct my research. It was a competitive barn but definitely differed
from the normative prestigious and bourgeois undertones so commonly associated with Hunter barns. My taking to this and also the reality of this “difference” plays a key role in my overall ethnographic findings.

Over the period of six months, I was able to spend time at two different barns, rode in a riding clinic with a world-renowned Olympic medalist, went to horse shows, and even sat ring side with a judge. Through each of these different events, I kept a small notepad on me to jot down specific statements and experiences. While my notepad was used for jotting ethnographic notes, my primary ethnography journal was conducted at my house after returning home from the site. It was in these moments that my personal voice engaged as memories would flood my mind in reaction to the present day’s events. These memories, events, evocative reactions and interactions have all been recorded and presented within my analysis through performative writing.

I find taking time to reflect and type these experiences out allows for my examinations to melt with my thoughts in a more reflexive manner when written outside of the space. My journaling is an engagement of the dialogic performance in which I am called to be reflexive. A dialogic performance is both engaged through my performance stance at the site but also through my journaling. Conquergood explains this ethical connection as “The sensuous immediacy and empathic leap demanded by performance is an occasion for orchestrating two voices, for bringing together two sensibilities” (“Dialogic Performative” 10). My journaling was a time that I wrote out my experiences, embodied realities within the site for that day, but also performatively written to engage
multiple voices on the page; because the voices of my co-participants met me on the page through my journaling.

As noted earlier the largest hardship I encountered within this research was holding an ethnographic view and making the mundane important. Before thoroughly engaging within my research I believed that the newness of a different state would help make the mundane seem new. However, I later came to realize the similarities within the sport instead triggered memories of home and childhood riding within me. Overall, my lifelong experience within this culture brings a deep personal connection that not only maintains an ethical accountability but also allows for my personal voice to weave with the participants as a co-performative witness (Madison “Co-Performative Witnessing;” Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography;” “Performance as a Moral Act”). This builds beyond autoethnography by utilizing an integration of self in relation to others and the community. While my voice and personal experience is very central to this research it is not the center of this research project.

Co-Performative Interviews

Holding tightly to the ethics of dialogic performative witnessing within my work, I conducted three ethnographic interviews with a variety of persons from my ethnographic research. Important to this study is a melding of different methodological means into one project noting that where there is separation there is also folding back into each other. There is very little difference between a narrative within an ethnographic site and an interview. However, I do find that instigating an intimate conversation with another person with the present knowledge that I want them to be the center, as what an
interview would frame, is important to richly engage the community’s realities within my ethnographic research. Therefore, I maintain that all good ethnographies involve conducting co-performative interviews to provide voice to the community.

Ethnographic interviews is pivotal for the ethnographic research process and differs greatly from survey interviews because interviewees in qualitative research play an active role in the work not a passive one (Rubin and Rubin). Constructing an interview from this perspective is grounded on deeper truths than “the need for verifiable facts and information” (Madison Critical Ethnography 26). Kate Willink contends that interviews can and should be dialogic performances, which entail the researcher to “listening carefully, witnessing fully, and speaking back to the telling conversation” (2). As a co-performative witness within this research project, conducting dialogic performative interviews weave the realities of another’s lives with mine and further press us both to come to new collective belongings. Madison explains, “The interview is a window to the individual subjectivity and collective belonging: I am because we are and we are because I am” (Critical Ethnography 26 emphasis in original). All of my interviews began with an informed consent form that follows the criteria of the International Review Board, in addition to a formal request to digitally record the interviews (See Appendix A, B, and C). Following these formalities, I explained the purpose and motivations I have for the interview as being centered on what the interviewee believes to be the centerfolds of the
Equestrian sport. Then we began to cultivate our dialogic performative interview through my pre-written questions.4

As suggested by Fran Peavey, my co-performative interviews were grounded on questions that respect the person, create movement and are empowering. Questions that are organized to instigate movement recall persons to become engaged within the research and rather than manipulate the Other are empowered by locating their personal role within the community’s dynamics. For example, each co-performative interviewee was asked such questions as “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about this sport what would it be?” Followed by questions that would ask them why they would change these things and what we could do together to change them? Framing my questions in this way challenged me to check my assumptions first within each question and not to assume that my perceptions within the sport were the entire community’s thoughts as well.

Madison suggests that there are three forms of ethnographic interviewing: oral history, personal narrative and topical interview. My questions followed more of a compilation between personal narrative and topical interviewing (Madison Critical Ethnography). While these interviews had guiding questions, they remained unstructured and in order to encourage narratives around the specific research foci. My interviews were each framed for the specific interviewee but also held centered as an open conversation. Thus framing my interview conversations from a co-performative

4 Not all questions were attended to and often other questions would arise as the interview unfolded.
witnessing stance pressed me to move beyond a conceptualization of interview but as a negotiation of personal betweenness. If I had approached each as an interview, I would have failed. The interviewees actually played the primary role in creating the meaning while I simply worked to guide the conversation with questions I wrote tailored to each individual interviewee. The beauty to this form of interviewing is the prospects it allows to unveil memory, collective strivings, social history and political possibility (Madison Critical Ethnography 26).

Kate Willink explains that analyzing interviews as dialogic performances combines personal narrative (Langellier “Personal Narrative;” Storytelling) and critical performance ethnography (Madison “Narrative Poetics”). Accessing my interviews from this framework provides a rich space to exemplify and extrapolate the process of co-performative witnessing. Pollock (Telling Bodies) and Willink substantiate personal narratives as thresholds of betweenness: between self and other, between spoken and silence, between the social and intimately personal, between the constructed and the re-constructed. What this requires of me as the interviewer is “to hear and count as meaningful that which exceeds [my] existing framework” which was often not recognized immediately within the interviews (Willink 8) but later realized when carefully transcribing and re-listening to them. In these moments, I can denote the moments of silence and performative shifts and tangles as significantly being without saying. Willink reminds me “to not give meaning to this excess immediately, or dismiss this excess as the personal fault of an incoherent interviewee” (4). Transcription plays a
pivotal role in the analyzing process of interviews which I contend should always be done by the interviewer.

Each interview was recorded with a digital voice recorder. Recording the interviews provided me with the opportunity to repetitively listen to them and pull the theoretical themes that surfaced. However, more importantly, these moments within the interview were then personally transcribed and placed into a poetic transcription format (Madison “Performance, Personal Narratives;” “That was my Occupation;” “Story, History, and Performance;” Calafell *Latina/o Communication Studies;* Stewart *A Space on the Side*). Madison explains that poetic transcription “places words on the page in a way that resembles the rhythm of the human voice” drawing the transcription closer to the social-historical performance of the speaker (“That Was My Occupation” 217). I chose this form of transcription because it does not divorce “language or words from their embodied nature” (Calafell “Disrupting the Dichotomy” 179). Kathleen Stewart represents a form of poetic transcription in her book *A Space on the Side of the Road.* I looked to her presentation of dialogue as an example set forth within this project. Thus, when I cite the interviews in length I utilize a poetic transcription to help display the rhythm and emphasis of the conversations by the speakers.

Each of my interview participants were and are very dear to me. I have developed a personal relationship with each of them on different levels of intensity. For privacy issues I have altered their names and removed all identifiable information of them from the research analysis. My first interview was conducted with an Olympic medalist and clinician that I have named Bobby Wright. We have known each other for many years
now and I selected him because of his extensive international and U.S. experience within the sport, and because he maintains and overall critical perspective of it. Next, I interviewed the primary trainer I worked with over the summer, Tina Kennedy. She maintains a strong status within the sport here in the States for many years as a rider, a trainer, and a judge. Kennedy both represents the sport but also strategically resists its performative expectations.

I also conducted an interview with a middle-aged White woman who is not involved in the sport of Hunter/Jumper but has ridden for pleasure for many years now. I was never told her last name so in this ethnography I ended up referring to her simply as Eve. While she is not involved specifically with the sport that does not mean she is not familiar with it or the sport’s community as many barns blend these different riding disciplines. She offers an interesting perspective of the Hunter/Jumper community by existing outside of it, yet remaining intricately tied to the larger horse community. Their voices along with mine weave intricately together and apart. Carol Stack perhaps said it best when she stated, “But my voice today is in part a voice taught to me by the Carolinians who told me their stories; they and I conspired to understand and communicate their experience” (xix). With their voices and mine we conspired to understand White femininity, Equestrian sport, affective nature-cultures between animal and human, and the beauty of learning in betweenness and collaborative belonging.

**Critical Rhetorical Analysis**

Following the interviews, I stopped collecting data and proceeded to analyzing it. I began by reading and re-reading my journaling, listening to my interviews continuously,
reading magazines and books on the Hunter/Jumper community and locating places that speak to my research foci. The different themes that derived were pulled and separated into piles and analyzed following the theoretical complexities outlined in Chapter Two. Here is where my blended meta-method becomes most apparent. Critical rhetoric informs my reading of my interviews, books, magazine articles and field notes. This meta-method analysis presses me to recognize the theoretical complexities of power laden within the performative/discursive moments. This research agenda remains within a methodological fringe where critical rhetoric and critical performance ethnographic ideologies constantly rub against and influence the other (Calafell “Rhetorics of Possibility”). While I locate these analysis moments existing within a methodological fringe, I also have specific documents that I collected for purposes of critical rhetorical analysis.

There are two primary rhetorical data selected to augment this research project along with the critical performance ethnography. While the data is not necessarily “vernacular discourses” of specifically marginalized voices, they are not mainstream popular cultural discursive prints. Following the critical rhetorical tradition, I am interested in examining the only Hunter/Jumper magazine in print within the U.S. entitled “Practical Horsemen.” In order to narrow this research scope, I have limited the documents to the time span of when I was conducting my ethnography. I have also read a collection of Hunter/Jumper books on judging, performance, and relationships with horses in order to augment my ethnographic findings. This range provides an arrayed perspective of the sports history.
The magazines provide discursive texts that discuss such things as: “What the Equestrian Judge is looking for?” and many articles on the capstone clinician of the sporting community, George Morris. He is a well recognized judge and trainer around the world. Morris has written many books and thousands of articles about the sport of Hunter/Jumper in addition to traveling around the world giving clinics and serving as one of the U.S. Equestrian Team’s trainers. I was able to audit his clinic when he was here in Colorado. This is a beautiful example of ethnographic data folding into discursive texts and folding out of them. The discursive texts will be analyzed from the same theoretical lens but pulled on to better understand the themes rendered by the critical performance ethnography and co-performative interviews. Critical rhetoric challenges us to see our positionalities in relation to the texts. I would press this further to see not only our own positionalities but also the relational movement of these discursive texts in conjunction to the bodies within, in, and reading them. My hope is that the meta-method suggested in this chapter begins this research process and lends towards a more methodological fringe position.

Tying the Reins Together

Words jump from the page at me.
Words ring in my ears.
WORDS
Bodies jump from the page at me.
Bodies speak in my ears.
BODIES

Words <ME>Bodies

Researching must always tie us back to bodies. What is often lost in words is found in bodies. I look back to the words to find what might be lost and found again. Bodies

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demonstrate this research to me. But the words highlight meanings once lost but found again.

I am not separated from it.

My body is this research.
CHAPTER FOUR

Horse$ Co$t More Than Some Hou$hold$:

White Femininity and Classism => Affective Consequences

White femininity is a difficult performance for me to trace because I have been culturally trained to ignore its presences as having particularities. Richard Dyer and many other Whiteness scholars have exposed how Whiteness secures its power by remaining in absence or nothing in particular. Thus, we cannot begin to break White hegemony until we name it characteristics, in essence, as Dyer states, “Whiteness needs to be made strange” (24). As a White woman, I hear these words and continue to stumble. What Dyer implicitly misses is the intersectional working of sexuality, gender and class caving into the markings of Whiteness. White women are culturally taught to avoid performances of “strangeness.” Strangeness is dangerous because White women’s anomalous actions disrupt hegemony. Our performances of femininity, sexuality, and class must work to frame perfection, purity, propriety…White heteropatriarchy. Dominant cultural norms necessitate White women to serve Whiteness, patriarchy, and heterosexuality in order to secure their workings as normative. These are the lessons of civility White women learn in order to function within Western cultural politics. And let’s face it “making strange” is inundated with uncivil landmines. Through her performance of White Noise, Shannon
Jackson explains White middle class women are “raised to avoid conflict… and by
extension, explosion” (52). My difficulty in this writing of White femininity becomes
riddled with “landmines” of chaotic cultural explosions.

Fortunately for me, other White women have begun this explosive work of
disrupting White feminine civility through the theoretical lens of Whiteness (Jackson;
Frankenberg; Moon). Long before these women, feminist scholars of color have blatantly
offset the volatile norms of White femininity through an intersectional reading of
Whiteness, patriarchy, and heterosexuality (Anzaldúa and Keating; Moraga and
Anzaldúa; Moraga; Calafell “When Will We All Matter;” Carrillo Rowe). I hold hands
with these feminist scholars before me and awkwardly stumble in my own unstable
disruption of Whiteness through an affective intersectional lens that calls forth
particularities of White femininity that have yet to be unveiled. In this chapter, I walk
through the performance of class called forth by White women, interpolated onto White
women, and disrupted by White women.

My personal investment in understanding cultural implications of identities and
the body’s performative agency to disrupt hegemony lead me to researching the
performance of class by White women. Class is one positionality where the performance
of it constantly remains in a liminal space. Little research has been done to properly
understand class in relation to the intersectional body. bell hooks challenges,

Class is still often kept separate from race. And while race is often linked with
gender, we still lack an ongoing collective public discourse that puts the three
together in ways that illuminate for everyone how our nation is organized and
what our class politics really are. (8)
My desire for this chapter is to sketch both the intersectional natures of Whiteness, patriarchy, heterosexuality, and capitalism on White women’s bodies and multiplex performances of class performed by White femininity. What I mean by intersectional natures is recognizing that when we look at a particular body (White straight feminine woman) and explicate her performances as also representative of class we come to understand where class weaves into hegemony by and through White straight women.

Class most certainly is intricately linked to Whiteness. Gregory Mantsios explains that U.S. culture avoids conversations around class to such a degree that the discourses around class remain “associated with the language of the rhetorical fringe” (33). Discursive slippage within class exposes its unmarkable nature and absence, sounding remarkably similar to the rhetorical powers of Whiteness. Reverberations of heteropatriarchy ring into this melody too. The value of women’s bodies and how their sexuality is read is implicitly linked with their performance of class. Whiteness and heterosexuality and patriarchy need White women’s bodies to secure their power but class becomes an under-girded necessity to establish these powers. Therefore, I focus on White women’s performances in relations to class but never lose sight of how these performances are specific to their positionalities as women, as straight, as White.

But class is not only an intersectional composite of a body’s positionalities it is also maintains a multiplex of performative qualities. While class, like race or gender, maintains material effects on the body, there remains an illusive performative mystery to class. Unlike Whiteness, those that are both privileged by financial security and those not more often than not can and do performatively slip into the undefined U.S. “middle
class.” Recognizing class as both entirely embodied but also entirely performative stretches our present articulations of intersectionality and challenges us to also denote the performative qualities of class and the possibilities these performative qualities expose to break normative binds. Thus this chapter is organized by articulating the intersectional natures of class in relation to White heteropatriarchies. Next, I articulate three different performances of class by White straight women to expose the performative qualities of class. Finally, I connect how the intersectional body and the multiplex performances of class to reveal the affective consequences of class performances.

**White Heteropatriarchy Necessitating Classism**

Equestrian sports in general are very expensive. Unlike many sports where all one only really needs is a ball, possibly a racket, and someone to play with you, Equestrian sports require costly equipment like saddles, bridles, proper riding boots, helmets, and a variety of different brushes for the horse to name the bare minimum. Where Equestrian fiscally exceeds sports like Ice Hockey is the fact that your “someone to play with” is an animal that costs, as one prominent trainer stated to me, “more money than people have to spend on their whole family!” (Kennedy¹). But this again is still the bare minimum of the costs within the sport because to actually compete within this sport at “Horse Shows” is an astronomical addition to these costs.

¹ I remind the reader that all identifying information has been changed in order to secure the privacy of my co-performative witnesses.
Horse showing today will generally cost an owner a minimum of a thousand dollars per week per horse but is generally far more than that with additional costs of braiding, training, injections for the horse and so forth (Kennedy). Certainly there are ways to cut costs by working at the barns, as many less financially endowed do, but as all of the women I interviewed attested, the possibility to work your way through the costs is virtually impossible now (Kennedy and Eve). For example, in the summer of 2010, I paid seven hundred dollars to horse show for three days and I cut every cost other then the classes and entry fees. What must be also recognized is the price of time to work these costs off also demonstrates a financial privilege that many actually need to cover livelihood costs and family care giving.

The notion of expense within the sport lays at the centerfold of many critiques of it and remains a predominant conversation within the sporting community. Magazine articles and readers’ responses within this community consistently generate around complaints, critiques, and defenses of the sports costs (Willford; Genzemer; Norred-Kazynski; Bacha; McCoy). Even those that can afford the sport nod to its excessive costs. For instance in response to my reasoning for not showing at the Fall 2010 series due to the costs, a thin White elderly woman riding with the same trainer as me complained that she did not think she would be able to show that following week because the costs were just too astronomical. Her response surprised me since she competed every week during the Summer show circuit with two different horses. She went on to tell to me that her primary reason for not showing was justifying these expenses to her husband. Ironically, the following Show series came and she was there but only with one horse. The point is
the competitive sport of Hunter/Jumper has become a sport of excess that is only truly available to wealthy individuals with disposable incomes.

Many question how the sport has reached this place of such financial exclusion. When asked what the one thing they would change regarding the sport, every person I interviewed stated they would change the exclusionary costs that eliminate many talented riders from ever even riding. However, when pressed why these costs were there each gave different answers that basically entailed long pauses and inconclusive answers. I would claim this exclusiveness reaches far beyond the fiscal norms but originates from the sport’s foundation within White patriarchal classism. The costly expenses frame particular cultural performances within the sport in order to serve White heteropatriarchy as elitist classism.

Thumb through any Equitation or Hunter book and the general themes that jump out at you are concepts of form, attractiveness, presentation, and style for both the horse and the rider (Morris; White-Mullins; Steinkraus). Prominent trainer, clinician and highly ranked judge Geoff Teall says it best. He states, the Equitation division “showcases the elements of its [the English riding] foundation: style, discipline, pride, and respect” (Teall 32). What is interesting about all of these concepts is while there are prescriptive elements to achieving “form” such as learning the proper riding position or “presentation” by knowing what color hunt coat one is to wear in an Equitation class, each of these concepts are also discursively subjective. Therefore the questions follow: Who gets to decide what is attractive? Or what entails a proper presentation? Or what exactly is a winning style? Here lies the cusp of White patriarchal classism within the
sport and how White femininity becomes disciplined by it in order to center White 
heteropatriarchy as elitist classism.

The highly subjective system of judging Equitation and Hunter riding works from 
heteropatriarchal Whiteness by allotting particular bodies as working within the system 
and others as outside the system. Whiteness harmfully infiltrates this sport by disciplining 
“difference.” As Geoff Teall explains, “Your job in Equitation is to get your horse to do 
his job, while becoming effortless and invisible on him” (35). He goes on to state that 
when he is judging he is “processing everything, but what pops out are the things I don’t 
like” (Geoff Teall 37). George Morris frames Whiteness in this way,

All in all, a rider entering a show ring should appear elegant in an understated, 
conventional way. No part of his riding attire should draw attention to itself and 
under no circumstance should there be any flashiness. Imagination can enter in 
subtly tailoring clothing to the rider’s build and in coordinating colors with the 
horse. (Morris Hunter Seat Equitation 155)

Words such as “invisible” and “conventional” are common when explicating the 
presentation of self within the show ring. While these White men are not directly 
speaking to the person’s body it is not much leap to say that bodies of color would “pop 
out” amongst a sea of White feminine bodies within a show ring. Their framing of 
invisibility lends itself nicely to the domination of Whiteness by desiring to appear 
unnoticeable. The “winning style” then is a particular body that matches comfortably 
within White patriarchal heteronormativity.

Where Whiteness collapses with heteropatriarchy is the structuring of bodies on 
display disciplined to conform into particular “styles” and “confirmations” organized 
historically by White men. Despite that riders are to “become effortless and invisible” on
their horses, this sport remains fixated on judging the body. I would suggest that this fixation of the body under surveillance of another plays a large part into why so many women are drawn to the sport and so many men are deterred from it. Many men also claim that the attire of the Hunter/Jumper sport is unsuitable for masculinity. Here again we see White heteropatriarchy framing masculinity and femininity in particular ways that gravely influence the performance of which bodies are normatively accepted within this sport. White feminine bodies are the bodies accepted for White heteropatriarchal gaze.

At first glance everyone in the show ring looks the same. Each rider wears a hunt coat and under the jacket riders typically wear a soft White shirt or soft colored shirt depending on the particular class they are competing. Women wear chokers that have a high collar that covers their neck. Men are required to wear business shirts with ties. All riders wear tight fitting breeches and tall black leather boots that snugly fit the calves. Every riders’ clothing must be well fitted “or a sloppy presentation will result” (Morris *Hunter Seat Equitation* 154). While the attire of riders seemingly matches within the ring, their bodies pictured by the form fitting clothing become the centerfold of difference. Those bodies that differentiate from the ideal thin figure “pop out” and draw attention away from the horse. Therefore, White women’s bodies are constantly disciplined within this sport to obtain the “winning look.” Or perhaps White women are drawn to this sport because they work comfortably within this disciplining.

This ideal body begins by what works best for the sport but then spirals dramatically out towards a disciplining of all feminine bodies. The conceptualization of idealized White femininity is often seen within a monthly column written by George
Morris in *Practical Horsemen* magazine entitled “Jumping Clinic with George Morris.” This column is a popular part of the magazine in which riders send in jumping pictures of themselves for Morris to critique and comment. George Morris, or best known in the English riding worlds as “King George,” is quite possibly the most prominent U.S. clinician, trainer, and judge for many years as still to this day. Morris’ column has run for as long as I could first read and most likely long before that as well. In general, he will pick out jumping pictures that all represent a particular riding flaw in common and will extrapolate from the photo what the riders must to do fix these problems. The column generally has four different pictures that Morris critiques under common themes such as “Stirrup Length Problems.” At the end of each picture column, Morris will comment on the horse and rider combination’s “look.”

In the October 2010 issue, Morris begins his explanation on the second picture by stating, “Our second rider is blessed with perfect conformation for riding” (“Focusing on “Picky” Adjustments” 25). Here he is both directing attention to the rider’s ability to do such things as flex her ankle in her iron\(^2\) but also denotes the reality of an ideal body for riding. This is just one out of million examples Morris has given over the years, both blatantly “You need to loose some weight! This is an athletic sport!”\(^3\) or indirectly like the illustration previously stated, that allude to the specifics of an ideal thin White

\(^2\) Iron refers to the stirrup that English riders put their feet in when riding.

\(^3\) This reference is a citation from my field notes. I audited a clinic given by George Morris here in Colorado at the barn where I previously used to work. Since I could still claim to be an employee there, I could afford to audit his clinic.
feminine body type for English riding success. Fixation on the ideal is where White heteropatriarchy frames White femininity as the normative. White femininity works within these framings by serving the normative and thus (re)perpetuating Whiteness and heteropatriarchy. Need another White woman send a picture in for this White elderly man to critique to prove my point?

Whiteness and heteropatriarchy crash together within this sport creating an ideal White feminine body that is unmarkable because it is unattainable. An internet site, similar to an “Ann Landers” but is hosted by an “R” rated judge Sandy Sternberg entitled “Ask Sandy,” displays the awareness of unattainable White femininity. Riders write the judge asking Equitation questions. A woman named Caitlin writes in to explain that she is 6’2 and 230 pounds and that “everyone sez [sic] I should stick with basketball and leave horse riding (especially jumping) to those skinny, short people but I don’t want to. Do you think there is too much of me to quit my hearts desire?” (March 25, 2000). Another woman writes Sandy to ask if “in Big Eq. (Equitation) classes does a rider’s build play a role in the final score?” (April 3, 2000). She goes on to ask if a size two is preferred over a size six or eight explaining she was a size seven, with no fat just muscle, but wondered if she “should lose weight to pin better in the Equitation” (April 3, 2000). She concluded by explaining that she recognized that larger sizes pin lower and was wondering if it was because “skinner people’s mistakes are more easily covered up than not so skinny people –this is what someone told me” (April 2, 2000). Finally, another anonymous person wrote in and asked if “if the Equitation judges will even give me a second look because I am so petite?” at five foot four and one hundred and five pounds
(March 28, 2000). It is interesting to note that it is not solely thinness that molds this perfect rider but an entire body structure of White hetero-patriarchal unmarkable, unattainable perfection.

All of these riders express an understanding of the winning picture and an awareness of the parts of their bodies that do not mold to this conception of the perfect equitation rider. These women no matter what their body type have found a flaw that holds them from perfection whether it is their height, length of their arms, weight, or even being too thin. Therefore, a rider’s body type no longer matters because the sport frames idealism outside the attainable. These unattainable framings establish White femininity as a constant state of lack. And this state of lack denotes the stronghold Whiteness, heterosexism, and patriarchy hold over White femininity in order to necessitate the performance of White femininity serve White heteropatriarchy.

I can remember when I first went to Fresno State, during one of our grueling practices my coach explained to me. “Dawn, you have a really long leg from your hip to your knee. This places your knee over the front of many collegiate saddles. So, you will have to make-up for this flaw by riding with your stirrups a bit long.” There is absolutely nothing I could do to shorten my femur bone. I remember my face flushing as I looked down at my thigh. Suddenly all my eyes saw was a leg “too long from hip to knee.” To this day, I continue to ride with a slightly too long stirrup; I cannot balance any other way. Constant critique of the body within this sport situates the performance of White femininity in servitude to White heteropatriarchy.
The norms of unattainable White femininity within this sport are where we locate the performance of classism. The sports subjectivity lends itself nicely to serve Whiteness and heteropatriarchy but the essential element for these two hegemonic powers to work through White feminine performances is within this context is classism. The sport manifests intricate connections of classism laden within the framing of Whiteness and heteropatriarchy by designating White feminine bodies as normative by interpellative framings of elite class as “elegance,” “pride,” and “respect.” Classism is the foundation of creating a sport only allotted to particular bodies that perform White heteronormativity. While there are actual physical proofs of this fact, there are also hegemonic cultural realities of it as well. The subjective nature of such concepts as “style” and “form” are culturally framed through and by the performance of class.

Beyond this, White femininity must perform and project classism in order to properly “fit” within White heteropatriarchy. Thus the foundation of classism is framed by Whiteness and heteropatriarchy but White heteropatriarchy relies on the performances of class by White women to secure its cultural power.

Along this vein, power is attained by those White female bodies that properly perform classism that serves White heteropatriarchy. hooks explains bodies maintain “a lust for affluence that can never be satisfied and that was artificially created by consumer culture in the first place” (hooks 126). Classism provides the foundation of exclusion within this sport but cannot work outside of Whiteness and patriarchy. Those White women that properly perform classism are awarded acceptance within this sport. And perhaps even worse, they are granted cultural power of dominance over another by
performatively embodying the elements of classism. Each of the subjective concepts that frame the “winning look:” style, respect, conformation, discipline, pride, respect, presentation. These terms are intrinsically connected to the performance of White patriarchal bourgeois class—classism. These terms also are exchangeable with the disciplining norms of White women’s femininity.

On the surface, we see the costs of the sport of Hunter/Jumper excluding many bodies. But if we squint and take a hard look at the discursive framings within the sport we come to see the interpellation of Whiteness and heteropatriarchy working to performatively situate elitist classes as a White heteropatriarchal normative. These performatives are best suited by and through the performance of White femininity. The sport of Hunter/Jumper serves White feminine bodies by discursively establishing these bodies as representative of heteronormativity. We come to see the intersectional natures of White feminine bodies as discursively disciplined to assist the cultural politics of power. Interestingly the sport’s connection with class intricately links Whiteness and heteropatriarchy with the performance of class by these White feminine bodies. This section exposes the sport’s discourse as privileging and disciplining certain bodies to (re)center White capitalist heteropatriarchy. We also come to see that the sport provides a window to view how class works within the matrix of domination on and through these White women’s performance of it. Class performance pivots on these White feminine bodies exposing how classism necessitates a performance of elitist class in order to center White capitalist heteropatriarchy. The following section examines different performances of class by White women. The rest of the chapter examines the cultural ramifications
these performances manifest, the performative qualities of class, and the possibilities in
its undoing.

**White Women Performing Class**

As I walk onto the show grounds my body fills with familiar nerves. Alone. I stroll
towards the show ring to find my trainer. My eyes glance down at my show clothes. My
body was dressed with the most prestigious riding clothes I owned but self-doubt flooded
over me. Based on what I had seen the previous weeks, my attire was old, worn, and very
outdated. No matter how hard I try to “perform the part” I always remain outside the
center. My awareness of this is both a purposeful separation and an inflicted one. I
approach my trainer as she leans on the arena fence smoking. As I draw near, her eyes
slowly skip down my body from my helmet down to my boots. My eyes fixate on her
determined to read her reaction. She looks up past me towards the warm up ring. Out of
the side of her mouth smoke escapes as she says, “Nice shirt.”

*Brief approval?*

*Or quick humor?*

She turned and walked away leaving me standing there to decide. My decision
* pivots on my performance of class.*

What sets the positionality of class apart from other performative positionalities
like sexuality, nationality and religion is its fluidity and multiplicity. Sexuality,
nationality, and even religion have clear performative scriptings outlined and mediated
for them despite the actual fluid realities. The performance of class cannot be neatly
performatively categorized. While cultural norms especially denoted through the media articulate binary norms of “wealthy” and “poor” more than likely most individuals no matter how closely their lived realities resemble the binaries of either can denote a performance of the ever large and illusive norm of “middle class.” Gregory Mantsios points out that “the middle class” is articulated for purposes of including all individuals at some level in order to “mute class differences” and “avoid any suggestion of conflict or exploitation” (131-2). Classism then is more a performance of perpetuation of White capitalist heteropatriarchy then it really is about establishing ones wealth. Thus the performance of class proposes a magnificent performative avenue to deconstruct hegemony. I find extrapolating these complicated trajectories of the performative positionality of class opens doors to understand the body relationally, the body contextually and the body’s intersectional agency.

Treking through the evolution of excess within this sport exposes three distinct categories of riders: the horse possessors, the horse workers, and the horse lovers. These three categories were evident to me but also explicated by my all of my co-performative witnesses. Together we dialogically demonstrate the evolved cultural performances within the sport and the complex intersectional nature of bodies politically situated between their embodied positionalities –clearly visible and detrimental to their lived realities- and their performative positionalities that alter contextually but shift always in conjunction to their visible positionalities. Not surprisingly, the primary problem of classism within the sport surfaces the major difference between these three groups of riders. These three different categories of riders all demonstrate different cultural
performances of class. Teasing these different categories out extrapolates different natures of the performative positionality of class in relation to embodied positionalities of White women exposing the affective consequences of particular performances of class on specifically White women’s bodies.

*Horse Possessors / Performing Affluent Classism*

I begin with the most affluent performance of class. The *horse possessors* are the elitist wealthy people that view horse ownership as an aristocratic symbol. These are the types of riders that arrive at the barn and expect their horses to be tacked, trained for them, and basically pay others for the general care and management of their horses. Since they remove themselves from all care taking aspects with horses, they are not invested in bonding with their horses, but simply view “the horses [as] just a vehicle for recreation” (Wright). Obviously, their involvement in the sport of Hunter/Jumper riding is premised on the performance of elitist classism. This form of class performance discursively frames horses as “an ultimate symbol of [*their*] status” by projecting extreme manners of enlightenment (Kennedy). Horse possessors perform class in particular ways that coincide with their particular bodies to feed White capitalist heteropatriarchy.

*This last Fall I attended a riding clinic with Bobby Wright*⁴; *because of his clinician status but also affordable pricing he draws a variety of different types of riders.*

⁴ I remind the reader that for purposes of privacy I have provided pseudo names for all the participants within this study.
On the first day, a young thinly framed White woman with flawless White teeth, thick black hair and crystal blue eyes waltzed into the arena on her giant blood bay branded warmblood gelding. The combination was nicely matched with expensive tack and fashionable attire. As he traditionally does, Wright called all the riders into the center of the group and asked what they do with their horses. This White woman jumped at beginning the introductions by explaining her experience showing 3’6 Equitation with much success. And then went on to talk specifically about a show she recently went to and her winnings there. In our interview, Wright explained to me that during this time of introductions he rarely listens to what the people say but gauges the way the horse reacts to him, the way the owner presents herself, and pulls a general personality sense of the two together. His reaction to her elongated and conceited explanation revealed this personality assessing practice.

As the day progressed, this woman began to struggle with her horse and eventually her horse jumped nothing for her. A bad combination of loss of confidence, over indulgence in ability, and frustration resulted in her standing in the middle of the arena crying while Wright gently prompted her to pull herself together and come tomorrow to ride in the lower group. This “lower group” happened to be the group I was riding in and I felt a tinge of both nervousness and smugness knowing she would be joining us the following day.

The next morning, I arrived early to feed and care for my horse and watch the clinic. I noticed the woman’s horse was stabled next to mine. He paced nervously as every other horse in the barn was fed and watered except for him. Worried, I tossed the
horse a small serving of hay and filled one of his water buckets. Not surprisingly, the woman arrived an hour before our riding time. As I prepared to go ride, I watched as the woman’s trainer cleaned her horse’s stall and quickly attempted to clean the horse up for the young woman. I eventually offered to help the trainer to which she declined. Instead she scurried along disgruntled. As difficult as this is for me to watch it did not surprise me in any way. This poor horse and trainer carried the brunt of blame for her unsuccessful ride. I was, however, shocked at the woman’s overt confidence and snobbery she displayed as she introduced herself to her new group.

My eyes gazed on my horse’s neck. I played with my reins and his mane as I listened, holding back my emotions of anger, distain, and annoyance. I wondered if this woman actually believed no one saw her awful riding the pervious day. I suppose it did not matter; she was establishing her superiority over the less performative affluent collaboration of riders within this group. Our White feminine bodies all matched within the group. There was even a wealthy elderly White woman but she did not accentuate her affluence. I do not know how this young woman’s performance was received by the others. In one moment, the elderly woman made eye contact with me and somewhat rolled her eyes. I sat indignant knowing yet again my “place” and wishing I could switch groups too. This young White woman differentiated herself by her performative positionality of class and denoted all the qualities of horse possessors.

I tell this narrative from my ethnographic notes for the purpose of performatively exposing the performative qualities of class demonstrated by horse possessors. Financial status is not necessarily the fundamental quality of horse possessors but it is a
prerequisite to establish an appropriate performance of class necessitated for them. I have encountered a handful of White wealthy women within the sport that do not accentuate their classism over their pure love for riding. Thus, *horse possessors* expose that performing affluent classism is not premised on one’s financial status. Rather, affluent classism is about acquiring power purely by performative means.

Furthermore, the performative qualities of affluent classism are rooted in entitlement. This White woman performatively situated her positionality of class through entitlement. This performative entitlement takes different directions of power. For example, her entitlement of attention was revealed through her elongated snobbish introduction within both groups. Her entitlement to success dripped through her discursive disregard for her previous day’s riding which removed her responsibility in the riding mishap and placed the problem entirely on her horse. Her complete distain for her horse exposed her entitlement to be served expecting her trainer to care and manage her horse. Overall, this White woman denoted her classism status through a general entitlement to be successful, to have the best horse, and to do nothing accept ride to achieve these things.

In the end, riding, for these individuals, has little to do with their relationship with their horse. Alternatively the performance of affluent classism tears these relational qualities through their investment in performing entitlement. Power is present within these performances of classism. It pulsates through their performative manners and discourse and is absorbed in particular ways depending on the positionality of the bodies present. In this sense, my body was left feeling insignificant, insecure, and angry. On the
other hand, Wright is afforded the White masculine and clinician status to disregard it. The consequence of performative entitlement is a broken relational bond between horse and rider. These performances of class are exuded through riders’ selective removal from the emotive norms of care for their animal. Kennedy referred to this detachment as viewing neglecting their horse no different than leaving “their bike out in the rain.” Instead of loving affection for another, these White women soak up normative avenues of cultural power-over Others.

Horse Lovers / Rejecting Affluent Classism

Probably the best relationship, which was also the best horse I’ve ever rode—

I think that’s a coincidence, honestly. Was a horse my mother bought at auction for six hundred dollars because he was going to slaughter. And he literally tried to die for two full days on her. I mean he laid down and did not get up for two full days. But when the time finally came, my mother finally persuaded me to try him out. So I tacked this thing up. And it was the sweetest horse. He was just, all over me.

And you know,

Licking me and sniffing in my pockets.
And this thing’s been abused. He had a terrible life.
And he was so sweet.
And I thought, “mmmokay, I kina like him.”
And then I roe him, and he was amazing to ride.
And years went by and he won everything there was to win.
I mean I turned down bagillions of dollars bagillions of times for that horse.
Because you know what,
Six hundred dollars and half dead later
This thing doesn’t owe anybody a pay check!
And I knew I would always keep him.

And he lives in my backyard now. He’s twenty-two years old. And he will always live in my backyard. (Kennedy)
On the other side of the pendulum are those riders entirely embedded within the relationship with their horse—the horse lovers. Horse lovers are truly fascinated by horses. These individuals, for the most part, are not wealthy. Horse lovers are the types of riders that are purely drawn to the sport because of their love and fascination with horses and what riding offers them to learn. According to Kennedy this group of people that simply like horses is growing smaller and smaller within the sport today. However, Wright referred to this group as “the masses that do it because they love the relationship with the horse.” These masses never see the inside of a horse show ring and for the most part never really care to. Wright explains the horse lovers as involving themselves in the sport because they “love the relationship with the horse; they love the process of learning.” He goes on to claim,

They don’t even go to horse shows.
But they actually, they do it for the,
They do it for the... the love of the whole thing.
They love being around the other people.
They love being around the horses.
They love the process of learning.
Those are the cool people.

Why Wright sees these people as the masses and Kennedy views them as a disintegrating group speaks entirely to the foundation of class. Wright has the financial ability but also makes the financial sacrifice to cater his clinics to this group. In contrast Kennedy is a local trainer cannot afford to be selective of her cliental in this manner. While not interviewed together they both speak to the hardships and desires to provide training to this horse lovers group. One is an Olympic medalist and lives abroad to finance his riding career choice. The other is a White woman that cannot uproot her family but remains here
in the states and explains her job as “married to these people that have that disposable income that they don’t necessarily have to bond with the sport or the horse.” The primary difference between Wright and Kennedy lies at the heart of the *horse workers* dilemma but also because Wright does not work within the horse show industry in the States where Kennedy must.

Horse shows truly segregate this group of horse lovers out. Kennedy explains when she first started as a professional “a majority of the people that I helped, were in that situation. I mean they had to really –really give up things in order to make it work. And they still probably didn’t have a very expensive horse.” She went on to explain that those types of riders just cannot make it in the horse show world today. What is telling about Wright’s explanation of this group is that, while many believe the segregation is entirely a financial one, he claims that these riders actually do not desire to compete. Horse lovers really center their riding on the relationship with their horse and what that teaches them.

Wright’s explanation of horse lovers is very telling in simply the reoccurring word that is used to describe this group that is not used in any of the other groups –*love.* He notes a clear draw towards these types of riders because they actually have to budget to be there. Wright claims the reason he enjoys teaching these people is “because they are making a sacrifice to be at my clinics.” Horse lovers do make financial sacrifices that in general do economically hinder them more than those affluent riders, but they are still at a class privilege to be involved within this sport. However, their class performance is not centered or utilized as a means to acquire a performative entitlement. The premise of
horse lovers remains in the love for the horse. This love draws them into relationships with their horse, with other people, with themselves.

_Around the age of eight, I outgrew the pony I was given to horse show. Due to my financial strain, the only horse I could afford to ride now was Lochlan. Lochlan was the fifteen-three hand Arabian horse my parents bought years prior for trail riding. Now he had to become my Hunter/Jumper show horse. Despite that Lochlan was much too large for me and had absolutely no idea how to jump, he was truly my first love. After months of practice the time came when I could actually take Lochlan to a horse show, if I wanted. My trainer sat me down and clearly explained to me that Locklan was not the “correct” breed of horse to show at Hunter/Jumper horse shows. She went on to encourage me that she would be happy to take him and me to the rated show. But, she emphasized, I must understand that he would not place well, no matter how good I rode. Silence fell between us._

_My eyes starred hard at the arena dirt as my heart wretched. I began to twist my reins and play with Locklan’s long copper mane thinking about people unfairly judging us because of his breed. I hurt inside because I did not see him that way and to know others did… all this time… how unfair. In the end, I went to that rated show. I did not place well. Other riders did tease me about my horse. One young girl in long blonde pigtails snickered at us and then said, “I think you might be at the wrong show.” But every night I would wrap my arms around his big Chestnut neck and smile. I knew that they were missing what I had… the greatest friend in the world. In that summer, I learned a lot about myself, others, and relationships._
What is necessitated, then, by horse lovers is a complete rejection of the performance of affluent classism. While I do not find any of these groups mutually exclusive, I will argue that there is no way a person can embody a performative positionality of affluent classism and embody the performative positionality of rejecting classism. Horse lovers’ performance of White femininity within the horse show world is often scrutinized because it does not serve White patriarchy’s need to establish power through classism. What is established rather is a disruption of this power by valuing the relationship.

_Horse Workers / Serving Affluent Classism_

The group of riders I have termed _horse workers_ are the people involved in the horse industry for purposes of making a living. This group can range from barn owners, horse traders, professional riders and/or trainers, barn managers, horse show managers, and judges. Of course this group is much larger as many people work at barns as stall cleaners/feeders or veterinarians or farriers. They all make livings from horses but I am specifically organizing this category into the range of those individuals that ride horses for a living or directly impact others ability to ride horses. In general, horse workers are those that began with the affective pulls between horse and person but were then later pulled into the business side of the sport in order to survive within the industry.

Wright explains that for the most part professional riders/trainers begin with the passionate relationship with a horse or with the sport as a kid and decide it is something that they would like to do for the rest of their lives. This decision generally requires them
to drop out of school and purely pursue this career. But once they actually arrive within the industry, he claims, “Probably five years later, they realize that they don’t really want to do it, but don’t have the education to do anything else. So they are stuck with this profession.” Once riding becomes a job all the things they love about it go away, which requires them to become detached by purely recognizing this as a means to earn a living.

*When I moved Colorado I left behind much more than my family and friends. I left behind my barn family. The kids I used to help with their riding; the trainer I worked under for my entire life; and the entire riding culture of this very small non-competitive barn. Off to begin my PhD life simultaneously placed me working at a very prestigious barn in Colorado. At first, I would rave to my riding family back home about the amazing horses, the beautiful facility, and the wonder of this riding opportunity. But over time, this initial thrill wore on me and the waves of loneliness and exhaustion washed over me. Each day I was required to ride three horses of the owners before I could ride my own. This generally would take four to five hours each day. The time required of me was really no different than what I would spend back in California but for some reason it felt longer.*

*The barn was lonely. I was generally the only person there riding. When the owner was there she had no interest in developing a relationship with me, much less, hold a conversation with me. We would ride side by side and never say a word to each other for hours. I longed for her to at least comment on her horses, my riding, the weather, something. But silence was all I heard. Silence made it impossible to gauge our relationship. I was left constantly feeling unacknowledged and for the most part insecure.*
I loved the horses I got to ride. But I couldn’t even develop a relationship with the horses. As soon as I would get attached to one, I was assigned to ride another or all of them would be shipped to California for horse showing. In the end, I began to dread riding, even my own horse. It became such a chore. I would constantly watch the clock on the arena wall as I rode. No relationships ever developed just simply time clocked on each horse’s back in return for my horse’s board. Eventually my horse became so misbehaved there I had to leave.

The owner completely understood when I explained due to school I would simply need to move my horse to another facility. I explained the stress to ride all those horses on my body and also finish my school work was becoming nearly impossible. I shook to hold back tears as I explained Orion’s behavior as representative of my poor time management and leaving him the last to ride each day. She told me I was welcome back anytime. This moment was the only time over my two years working there I ever felt appreciated, welcomed, or simply acknowledged.

Horse workers exemplify the deconstructive power of White capitalist patriarchy within the sport of Hunter/Jumper. These are individuals that began deeply invested in the relational aspects riding has to offer and become enslaved to serving White patriarchal classism in order to establish themselves and earn a living. In our interview, the trainer I worked with over the summer explained the riding culture has changed. The idea of working hard and you can make it does not exist anymore (Kennedy). Despite her distain for many of those White affluent women, who regard their horse as simply a belongings, Kennedy acknowledges that these are the very women that pay her bills. She
expresses a deep internal tear within her career. She claims, “I would love to be able to enable more people to be able to do this. But you know it’s a circle of life basically. I mean, it costs me so much. There are costs I have to cover.” Horse workers maintain an interesting relationship to affluent classism because although it does not exemplify their lived realities they must perform within White patriarchal classism in order to maintain a career within this industry.

What surfaces from this performance of “catering to classism” is a required detachment from the relationship between horse and rider. Horses simply become “a vehicle for… eating, drinking, and living. There’s not real emotional attachment” (Wright). Kennedy spoke to this detachment explaining that there are many horses she rides, she does not feel connected to at all and the few she does experience this bond with she never sells. Kennedy reveals that horse workers still do experience this relational affective pull but more in glimpses than each time they swing their leg over the saddle. The sport requires them to feed the performance of affluent classism by necessitating they ride for these people, train these people, and buy and sell horses for them. This performance of classism differs from a rejection of it or its performance for power. They perform the affluent class in a particular way to grant them access to those White women and men that gain power from their performance of bourgeois despite their inaccessibility within it. Trainers like we have seen from my experience at the horse clinic last Fall must work within and for White patriarchal classism in order to gain a living from this career.
A White elderly wealthy woman I met at a barn named Eve\(^5\) claimed professionals as the key element of change required within the sport because “engagement on a professional level makes riding so intense.” She categorizes herself as a “returning later in life pleasure rider.” But I would extend her experiences with her horse as one exemplified by *horse lovers*. From her perspective, riding for trainers “isn’t about partnership; it’s about winning.” She believes, “Trainers’ values are screwed up and they are only there to win and their not there to teach people about this wonderful thing they can get with loving a horse.” I find her positionality lending an interesting perspective here. She recognizes the detachment by trainers but does not realize that without winning, trainers cannot make a living. Her race and class positionalities remove the reality classism plays within the sport’s culture but it does not remove her perspective from her performative positionality of rejecting classism. Horse workers demonstrate that the performative positionality of class and the actual economic reality of class can differ within one’s lived experiences. This tensional difference reveals the power White patriarchal classism maintains over bodies and the relational consequences this performance has.

**The Slippage of Performing Class**

*My dearest friend and I excitedly plan our night to visit the National Western Stock show held in town. Our attendance solely involves attending the Gamblers Choice*  

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\(^5\) Again, this name is a pseudonym in order to honor the privacy of my co-performative interviewee.
Show Jumping Class. The Gamblers Choice is a long time favorite of mine and each year I fantasize about riding in it the following year. I always lean over to Elizabeth and explain that once we are done with our PhD’s we will finally have the job and the time to prepare for classes like this.

Leaving the general ticket office we cross paths with a few of Elizabeth’s past students walking into the coliseum. Dressed in his closest attempt to Western wear with worn Wranglers and a light brown Carhart jacket, the young man gestures over his shoulder to the nearest arena and asks us if we were heading to the Rodeo as well. Elizabeth’s eyes look first to me and then to him. She explains that we are going to the Gambler’s Choice. His confused look presses Elizabeth to explain. She points towards the opposite direction and tells him that we are going over to the other arena to watch the English Show Jumping. Suddenly, his eyes widen and scale each of our bodies as he says, “Wow Elizabeth, you are so posh!” I laugh. Her smile bids him goodbye. We look at each other with familiar memories in mind. Jokes follow as we walk from one event to the next knowing that we simultaneously belong to neither.

Parceling the different performances of class by White women situates us to see the affective qualities of our embodied performative positionalities. White feminine bodies can perform class in a multitude of ways but, from the brief sketching provided within this chapter, the different performances of classism gravely alter ones relational experiences not only with your horse but with others too. The performance of classism affectively frames the movement between bodies. Approaching the performative positionality of class as affectively charge reminds us that our body has both the ability to
affect the world around us through this performance but also be dramatically affected by the performance of class as well (Hardt viii). The performance of classism detrimentally removes the connectivity of our lives.

The performance of classism actually requires White women to disassociate with the affective ties with their animal other. This dissociation requires people to see their horse as purely a means to denote one’s performative positionality of elitism. When classism is performed in this way affective intensities shape the movement of belonging as entitlement. Embodied emotive movement of entitlement connotes intensities of hegemonic power-over rather than power-with or power-under. Thus, the performative positionality of affluent classism within the White feminine performance inescapably removes the heart and necessitates a mode of detachment from others.

Understanding class as affect is the tangible reality of these transmissions of affects the different performances of class display by and through bodies. This chapter has demonstrated the White femininity that serves White heteropatriarchal classism transmits a visible break between horse and rider. On the other end of the spectrum, those that reject the performance of classism are ostracized from the sport but receive the wonder of a relational experience between the horse and rider. Whereas the horse workers illuminate the affective realities of transitional movement that one can experience under the affective qualities of classism; they have embodied both relational ties and necessitate a performance of both for a means of survival. These relational ties and breaks are understood both through emotions but more importantly through actions/events/movements. Cultural understandings of power implicitly frame this
transmission of performative classism demonstrating how the performative positionality of class maintains intensities of becoming, unbecoming, and perhaps a rejection of the two.

On an affective level, this chapter has revealed the performance of class is derivative of events happening in particular ways that either performs affluent classism, rejects affluent classism, or serves affluent classism through White feminine bodies. These differing performances reveal the consequences of classism in relation to White femininity. White women’s bodies are called forth to serve White capitalist heteropatriarchy by and through the performance of classism as a derivative of their bodies within Whiteness, heteropatriarchy, and Western capitalism–neoliberalism. This cultural truth unveils why the sport is so dominated by not simply the bodies of White wealthy women but more importantly the performance of White heteropatriarchal capitalist femininity. This intersectional performance projects cultural powers within the sport that exclude particular bodies and embodied performances, discipline particular bodies and embodied performances, and empower particular bodies and embodied performances.

But to understand classism as only a composite of our intersectional identities is removing the powerful norms of performative natures integrated within it. The performative qualities of class denote the empowering possibilities to disrupt Whiteness, disrupt patriarchy, disrupt classism, disrupt heteronormativity, and provide agency to those marginalized performative positionalities that must do so. hooks suggests the possibility of class as a site of alliance work. She states, “Many of us use this bonding
through class across the boundary of race as a groundwork for the politics of solidarity that has stood the test of time” (hooks 119). My claim here is that class offers a multiplex of possible performances and these different performances of class reveal it maintains affective qualities.

Class has the ability to organize power lines or deconstruct power lines (Carrillo Rowe *Power Lines*). But no matter the performance, classism is always in motion, in the process of becoming and establishing. In these performative moments we experience the transitional norms class affectively plays on the body but more telling is how it affectively plays between bodies. Performatives of class can serve to unite particular bodies or separate them. Here is why, I believe understanding positionalities as performative reveals their affective qualities. They reside in the performative moment -in the essence of others and with others. Once we understand the affective natures of positionalities performatively we are better equipped to recognize the cultural powers innate to them as affective intensities that are both material but also continuous and malleable.

Therefore the performative positionality of class does allot possibilities of rejecting these hegemonic powers with wonderful rewards rendered. When bodies, especially White feminine bodies, perform our positionalities as rejecting cultural norms of White capitalist heteropatriarchy we can experience bodies becoming together. I am not saying this performance does not come without harms –specifically cultural harms from hegemonic power. White women that performatively reject Whiteness, heteropatriarchal, classist confines are removed from rendering within and/or gaining
from these cultural powers. We must be brave and hold tight to the desires of alliance possibilities. My desire is to locate probabilities of alliance building through our bodies. So I am suggesting here that we recognize our intersectional embodied positionalities and their performative qualities as relational and affectively charged as well as materially real. When we do so, we come to see the possibilities of alliances that already exist in our lived realities of being through performative possibilities that are entirely embodied and entirely performative.

Ending Thoughts of Doing Class and Undoing Class

My partner is a farrier. Sometimes I join him to work and help with the shoeing process. On a brisk early-Spring afternoon, we pulled into the most prestigious barn in our area to shoe a big Frisian dressage horse. While we were there young White girls came marching through the barn to retrieve their horses to ride. Each girl along with their mother completely disregarded us. We were the invisible help. Although they did greet the horse we were shoeing with high pitched baby-like tones of endearment.

This disregard came as no surprise to Jason or me. His career situates him at the service to those elite owners within the Hunter/Jumper community and a recipient to all the cultural politics of White heteropatriarchal classism laden within that placing. More often than not, the White rich horse owners have no trouble condescendingly placing Jason in his rightful place as “merely a poor horse-shoer.” On this day, my association with him positions me accordingly. I easily fall into the appropriate performance of class by standing with my head lowered as to avoid eye contact and respect the space of these
White women while they walk past me. Today, two young White girls brag about their riding to each other, just loud enough to ensure we can hear them. All along they remain completely oblivious to my own riding ability. Jason and I exchange quick glances with smug smiles.

But the end of this day came with a pleasant surprise. A very young White little girl dressed in pink cowgirl boots, jeans and a White long sleeve shirt walked up to us at the shoeing trailer. Her blonde hair was pulled back into a messy pony tail reminding me of how my mother used to style my hair at her age. “Hurry and tie her hair up while she will stand for it,” my mother would grumble. This little girl evoked the same carefree and strong willed nature.

In her hands she grasped a short-red-haired Cabbage Patch doll that matched her cowgirl outfit. She smiled largely at Jason and then me asking how we were doing today. As we responded, she turned her attention to our dog and mumbled a conversation with her as well. I smiled at her sweet disposition and said, “I love your doll. What is her name?”

To my surprise, she looked up at me with her bright blue eyes and corrected. “My doll is not a girl. My doll is a boy! And his name is Carlos.”

She looked from me to the Mexican barnhand feeding the horses and began waving and smiling at him. He returned with a large smile and exaggerated head nods. She, then, trotted into the barn at the heels of her mother, screaming back to us, “Adios!” Her bouncing blonde hair faded down the barn ale leaving me standing in silent wonder.

* * * *
The performative qualities of class expose both the agency and disciplinary nature of class on White women’s bodies. Carrillo Rowe reminds us that “interpellation may be read as a function of hegemonic belonging” (*Power Lines* 36). White capitalist heteropatriarchy interpellates White women’s bodies into performances of class as serving Whiteness, heterosexism, capitalism and patriarchy. These performatives are the qualities of class that situate White women in relation to White capitalist heteropatriarchy. Affective intersectionality challenges us to always understand the multiplex of our positionalities in relation. While all White women’s bodies within this sport are interpellated into hegemonic belonging, we can desire a different belonging for different relations. Our intentional class performances offer possibilities of this difference. We can envision a different interpellation of White femininity. We can perform this “strange performance of class and some horse lovers already “do.”

This chapter examines a cultural space that encompasses many sharing positionalities (e.g. White straight women) with different performances of class as offering a means to begin the difficult journey of articulating the workings of class and classism on White women’s bodies. Certainly these articulations of class are specific to these bodies but open conversations of larger class workings. Class definitely is an embodied reality but simultaneously maintains performative possibilities of difference. No matter one’s race, gender, or sexuality, class performance depends on those bodies that desire to gain hegemonic power, to serve hegemonic power, or those with the desire to reject it. These different performances of class are represented through the
Hunter/Jumper sport and serve to outline the trajectories of classism on and through White women’s bodies.

The sport of Hunter/Jumper taught me different performances of class that were available to my body and also those that were inflicted on my body. My White thin feminine body is accepted within the sport and can adapt, to some extent, the proper performance of White heteropatriarchal classism necessary to acquire jobs within this industry. Yet the material realities of my body place me at an interesting intersection of classism. My past painted the picture of what I write today. Lochlan helps type these words as do those many different White women I have worked for, ridden under, or ridden with. Through these lived lessons, I have learned that I look the part but cannot walk “the walk.” I have the White privilege to tangle within a slipping between classist confines and classist rejection. However, the reality is my performance of White femininity will never properly “fit” to serve White heteropatriarchal classism—both by choice and material realities of my class.

Class is very much a material reality for all people and different bodies encounter financial well being in a variety of ways. The reality of economic standings proves the fundamental truth that we live within a classed society that understands and experiences class socially as much as economically. The cultural actuality of class exposes that not all bodies experience normative powers of classism the same ways. Thus, understanding class culturally presses us to understand it as read and deeply rooted in race, gender, nationality, ability, and sexuality. Proving true that class is not only a material reality for all persons but is also embodied and performative.
Affective intersectionality exposes that all bodies are always “doing” class in their performance of self contextually. We must come to realize how classism is working in our performance and how this effects/affects our lived interactions with others. hooks explains, “I believe class warfare will be our nation’s fate if we do not collectively challenge classism…” (8). I stand in agreement. White women must learn how to “undo” classism. White heteropatriarchy necessitates classism in order to discipline White femininity in particular ways that bind the performative possibilities of feminist alliances. In addition, many bodies do performatively challenge classism. This chapter intends to outline what these probable performances look like and the possibilities they project. The sport of Equestrian provides a beautiful space to understand the workings of classism on and through the body. But it also exposes glimpses of little White blonde girls that love their horses more than ribbons or adorn their favorite doll with the name of their closest friend at the barn that no one else knows, cares or even regards. These are the moments of performative disruption that undo White-heteronormativity.
CHAPTER FIVE

Intrinsic Ties of Betweenness:

Life Lessons from the Horse’s Mouth

You look at the world differently,
When you process these lessons you’re learning from a horse,
Then it isn’t just a horse-person lesson;
   It’s a worldly lesson about my approach to problem solving and my daily life.
So, I think, I am so blessed everyday that this horse is in my life,
   And the community of the horse world that I have entered into,
      At this stage in my life… I am just amazed. (Eve).

In the last chapter, we walked through the cultural politics of Whiteness,
patriarchy, and feminine bodies inflicted on, by, for and within classism. While my
meager attempt to explicate these cultural performances was daunting as a person so fully
part of and so completely separated from the political realities of this sport. I suppose it
was also very healing to tease apart these cultural critiques with hopes of change and
perhaps better belonging for positionalities that match my own. However, I meet this
chapter with much trepidation and iterative hesitancy (Moreman and Calafell “Iterative
Hesitancies”) in part because this chapter must convey on the page what cannot be
expressed in words- the invisible yet tangible existence between two bodies. But more so
in knowing I must represent the relational aspects between horse and human that is so
close to my heart, my fingers pulse with its beat as I type. The actuality of my doing this
bluntly meets the requirements that I must do so but does not provide a mapping of how to do it.

Along these confessional lines, I must accept that this chapter will blend two seemingly separate composites of my life. One part so true to me I cannot see myself apart from it and the other so distant from me I truly never see myself being a part of it. Here comes the crux of this confession: I write this chapter with full belief it might never be accepted as “truth” or “viable” or “valuable,” because I know cherishing the relationship between a horse and a human is something “some people will never experience no matter how long they are around them” (Kennedy). Therefore, attempting to establish the value of such a relationship to a person or persons that has not and will never experience it is practically impossible.

Beyond that asking an academic community to value horse/human relationships is similar to believing the sciences will find value in the arts. It does happen but it is short lived and constantly qualified. Thus, this chapter is written without qualification. I hold tight to representing a community and their beliefs as imperative work for all critical ethnographers. So, this chapter is for those within the riding community that genuinely experience the relational bond between a horse and oneself. My hope is that those outside this community will too learn or experience through these words the lessons had by this relational bond and the possibilities they unveil.

Marking the workings of classism on and through White women’s bodies is imperative for the deconstructing of Whiteness and heteropatriarchy. However, to stop here, to end by marking the cultural politics of power within this sport would be a grave
depravity. At this end, we would be skipping over the rich life lessons of embodied affective reasoning learned through the relations with a horse. I desire to explicate into words the lessons this intrinsic bond provides and what probabilities these lessons offer. Lessons learned in riding do not stop when we leave the barn. These lessons overflow into our lives which is exactly why I believe examining the relationship between a horse and human provides us new understandings of the politics of our bodies and the negotiation of these politics. We are offered a space to explore not beyond the normative binds of power but the possibilities of negotiating within them.

The lessons I locate within this relation are deeply connected to those embodied politics of my being. I am fascinated by bodies. Bodies molded by and blended within spaces. Performance studies has drawn my awareness to the politics of my body in relation to others and my body in relation to contextual realities. However, nothing strikes me with such captivation as my body in relation to an animal other. How two seemingly different bodies relate by experiencing the beauty of communing with another in movement, by movement, and for a particular movement. *Jumping the fence.*

*Cantering through the meadow. Brushing his neck.* Purposeful movements with intention but never accomplished for my aim but only through a careful balance of understanding a molding of our intentions.

How our bodies are so affected by events that we shift and swivel our relating in multiple different manners. *A heard of elk jump out at us. The bell sounds and our jumping timer has begun. I sneeze and he spooks. We jump together for the first time and he thrusts his head down shaking and bouncing in excitement.* But perhaps what is so
enthralling about my body in relation to a horse is the sensitive power dance negotiated
between us. This is a dance learned only from listening to an animal other, listening with
our bodies, not our ears. The consistent rhythm of his breath counting our canter beats
relaxes me. I simply think slower and sit a bit heavier and we transition from canter to
trot. The rocking of both our bodies, up and down, while swiftly swishing forward in a
three beat count as we canter down to a jump. Embodied thoughts, embodied
movements, embodied relations signify the beauty of a horse human relationship. Yet
examining these embodied experiences through an intersectional affective lens positions
me to view the communicative lessons taught to and ready to be learned by the
relationship between horse and human.

Only particular riders experience this level of learning from their horse partner
that influences their bodies in larger socio-cultural realms. What I mean is that not all
riders learn powerful lessons of being within their relationship with their horse. Those
that do, they are those “horse lovers” that hold open hearts and critical minds. These
riders gain a heightened sense of embodied communication. What I have come to term
affective reasoning. These are not abilities innate to all riders. As a prominent hunter
trainer, Kennedy, explained to me,

The really good hunter riders
I think a majority of their ability
Is just ability.
You know, you can’t learn totally how to do “that.”

I mean a lot of it, is just kinda…. You just gotta be able to know
What it’s suppose to feel like.
And be able to feel what it looks like.
And that’s where those people have become really successful.
The questions arise: what defines those that experience this enhanced connectivity and those that do not? And furthermore what do these lessons from “the horse’s mouth” teach us beyond the betweenness of horse and rider? Before we can understand the embodied traits of those that experience this betweenness, we must take a step back and articulate the affective realities existing, transmitting, and altering between horse and rider. The challenge with identifying these lessons rendered by horses is the difficulty of “describing something that is not rational, not emotional and try[ing] to describe it in rational and emotional terms” (Wright). Sara Ahmed challenges that “we must consider how they [emotions] work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective” (“Affective Economies” 119). Thus this chapter embarks on a journey to picture “that” which is and is not emotional in words –best experienced in those brief moments of movements between horse and rider. I attempt to pin down, if just for a micro-second, the probabilities of affective reasoning taught by horses and finally what these meaningful lessons provide to the personal and larger cultural complexities. To do this, I begin by establishing riding as an imperative space to explore and learn affectivity and the negotiation of affects for relational connectivity. Next, I explain the natures of affective transmissions displayed by riding; this discussion leads to my overall explanation of affective reasoning. I conclude with where these lessons take us in regards to larger understandings of the dynamics of cultural power.
Riding: A Site of Affective Awareness

Since horses are prey animals their greatest natural defense mechanism is affective perception of danger. Temple Grandin’s work demonstrates that horses have an extreme perception of sounds, smells, and sights that are not only sensed by them but they also connect these experiences to memory (*Animals in Translation; Animals Make Us Human*¹). Horses utilize their affective sensing to negotiate their interactions with humans. Their extreme perceptions have provided horses the ability to commune with humans because as Donna Haraway explains survival for animals depends on their ability to read humans well (*Companion Species* 50). Horses also have social emotions that interconnect them with humans in particular ways. Horses’ social emotions connect them with humans because humans can recognize these expressions and relate to them. In the end, horses’ magnificent ability to affectively sense humans and emotionally relate these affective sensings have provided them with the tools to become significant *companion species*² (Haraway *Companion Species*).

Donna Haraway extends her research on cyborgs to dogs claiming that examining stories of “relating to significant otherness” teaches us about living well together “…through which the partners come to be who we are in flesh and sign” (*Companion Species* 25). Along these same lines taking horse-human relationships seriously teaches

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¹ These books were co-authored with Catherine Johnson as well.

² Here I am utilizing Haraway’s notion of companion species and leaning on her book as already foregrounding the argument that some animals are intrinsically connected to humans which make them companion species. Therefore, companion species differ from those animals in the wild displaying significant life in relation to humans.
us about the workings of affect by us, by others, and through ourselves on others in relation. These lessons are rendered through the relationship between horses and humans. Like dogs, horses hold an interesting relationship with humanity that requires a balancing of respect and trust. In every moment with a horse, humans truly hold a tense balance between humans trusting horses with all their massive size and strength to respect us. But at the very same time, this respect is built on horses trusting humans to keep them safe. Haraway beautifully extrapolates this relationship by explaining that “the goal is the oxymoron of disciplined spontaneity. Both dog and handler have to be able to take the initiative and to respond obediently to the other” (62). She goes on to expose the affective presence and awareness of affects by this relationship. She explains, “The task is to become coherent enough in an incoherent world to engage in a joint dance of being that breeds respect and response in the flesh” (62).

I believe the best space to denote the relational dance of coherent and incoherent is through the art of riding. Riding is an entirely embodied experience. As Keri Brandt explains,

The language of the horse operates through the body such that horses must use their bodies to communicate their subjective presence. Because humans cannot convey intentions to horses through spoken language, they too must use their bodies to generate a communication style to which the horse can respond. (301)

The language of riding exists through the body-to-animal-body touch and sensitivity. She explains that this communication style is innate to horses but must be learned by humans. Brandt’s article is the only work in the area of horse and human communication. Her piece demonstrates how riding un-privileges spoken language; where riders must learn to
use their bodies through an empathic basis to be able to have a shared experience of the other. What is interesting about Brandt’s research but not directly addressed by her is how all riders must learn to be sensitive to the body of her “horse-other.” Grandin and Johnson claim humans must learn to see the world the way horses experience it in order to truly understand them. When we do this we not only begin to recognize their affective consciousness but also what their social emotional expressions of these affective negotiations are trying to tell/teach us.

What is missing from Brandt’s and other research like hers is how riding demonstrates a unique embodied performance laden on embodied affectivity of touch, feeling, intuition, and movement. William Steinkraus, one of the most successful and most acclaimed riders in show jumping history, claims that his observation of half a century of great riders all have this in common: “A reliable mechanical technique that, under the pressures of competition, they put at the service of their feeling, instinct, and sometimes even inspiration” (2 my emphasis). Hunter/Jumper riding requires an affective consciousness and reasoning of it. Put bluntly, riding is a clear demonstration of affectivity. Hunter/jumper riding is poetry in motion, a poetry that exists outside of the confines of spoken language and only within the body. This art is located within the body but learned through the communion with an animal body. An artistic rhythm that is first performed by animal and then learned by human. As Jane Smiley so eloquently put it: “If humans have smarter brains, then horses have smarter bodies” (198). Therefore, learning to ride is about discovering these embodied lessons.
Haraway claims that “‘method’ is not what matters most among companion species; “communication” across irreducible difference is what matters” (*Companion Species* 49). Riding is about communication between the horse and rider. However, this communication is felt not heard, embodied not told. Sport psychology research on Equestrian exposes the power of affect present within the sport. While not termed “affects,” Grace M. H. Pretty explains that a horse’s state of anxiety or calmness can influence the rider’s ability in competition (242). This affective relationship is reciprocal as Pretty notes, “Horses are attentive to human signals of safety or harm. Obviously, horses will not be obedient or perform well if they are ‘told’ that they are in harm’s way” (244). The reason Pretty places the word told in quotes is because, riders do not verbally or physically demonstrate harm to horses. These are embodied communications transmitted to the horse through the riders own anxiety and fear. Riding demonstrates a space where an embodied approach to negotiating affectivity is practiced and necessary to successfully ride.

Affective awareness is intrinsically tied to the fleshy connectivity with the horse’s body. Riding is about both unexpected and purposeful movements from both horse and rider. Negotiating these unexpected movements and purposeful movements demonstrates the affective reality of riding. Bryan Massumi articulates that affect is “autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is” (35). Beautiful riding or successful jumping requires and exposes the purest sense of affective relationality by denoting that even in the slightest of movements embodied sensings of another escapes from confinement in the particular bodies of clear

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sensing interaction. Riding is bodies in motion by and with (e)motion. Erin Manning proposes that we move toward a notion of a becoming-body that is a sensing body in movement, a body that resists predefinition in terms of subjectivity or identity, a body that is involved in a reciprocal reaching-toward that in-gathers the world even as it worlds (6).

Riding provides a space to experience this sensing body in movement and resists predefinition in terms of subjectivity or identity in order to successfully achieve a the respect/trust balance necessary for riding to work. But mostly, riding is a movement of reciprocal reaching-toward the other as anyone who rides knows “horse-rider reactivity is reciprocal” (Pretty 242).

“Horses always have more to teach us” (Steinkraus XIV). I believe that for many years horses have been teaching us these wonders of affects. Beyond this, riding trains the human body of the “doings” of affects and the means to negotiate these “doings.” Certainly riding is a magnificent space to experience the richness of affective transmissions between bodies but also how to negotiate these transmissions in order to come to a better relational connectivity. These are the lessons of riding located deep within the sport beyond the “horse shows” and “learning to ride” – put your hands here, pull and push like this- and moving towards the deep connection of what riding really is for you as a person. My goal is to extrapolate these profound lessons of affective transmissions and affective negotiations into some composition of discourse in order to open possibilities for larger cultural lessons.
Hearing the Language of the Horse: Transmission of Affects

People always say to me,  
“If horses could talk!”
And I say,  
“They talk! You just don’t listen!”
All we have to do is understand the language. (Wright).

What makes a successful partnership between a horse and a human? 
I think listening. 
I mean wouldn’t you say that, Dawn? 
I mean listening in every way with your senses, to being tuned in.” 
(Eve).

Humanity’s deep rooted reliance on spoken language has manifested a break in our value, and more so, our actual ability to listen/hear/sense the embodied intensities passed between bodies. Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson claim, “Research shows that language suppresses visual memory. This is called verbal overshadowing and is a well-established phenomenon… Fact is words damage our visual perceptions” (Animals in Translation 261). Horses, however, must perceive these embodied intensities bouncing between bodies in order to survive. Grandin and Johnson go on to explain, “Compared to humans, animals have astonishing abilities to perceive things in the world. They have extreme perceptions” (57). These extreme perceptions are located in movement but movements that are so slight, so sensitive, humans cannot feel them but horses do (289).

To understand a horse’s communicative style requires humans to tap into these extreme perceptions but “their sensory worlds are so much richer than ours it’s almost as if we’re deaf and blind” (57). Kennedy claims horses communicate “all day long, every day…whether you pick that up or not… probably not.” We stand face-to-face with our animal Other and must recognize that until we stop listening for words and try sensing

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through their behavior, we will remain deaf and blind to and with them. The problem with simply “judging” their behavior as their mode of communication is we lack the ability to gauge between the rational and emotional of these behaviors.

Brian Massumi refers to this two-sidedness, “the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual” as affects. Affects escape the confinement of bodies in modes of interaction but our understanding of these affects is often conflated between the physicality of it and the emotiveness within it. Kennedy notes,

You know even things like when you girth them up and if they try to kick or bite you Does that mean that they are **cranky** that day? Or does that mean there is something actually **physically** wrong with them? …Who knows? But… You know, they are trying to tell you *something*.

Is this horse attempting to communicate a physical disparity or is she simply denoting the reality of an emotive state of being experienced in that moment with you? Discerning between these two actualities is honestly the baffling reality of understanding the affective entities of horses with humans. Are they talking? Yes. What are they saying? Well, the closest we come to understanding is still at best a guess.

Despite horses’ efforts to “tell” us, we cannot completely *sense* them. Teresa Brennan refers to humans overall lack of affective awareness to years of repression of it (18). However, this conscious↔unconscious communicative block is only one found within humans. Horses can read humans transmissions very successfully. Grandin and Johnson explained this truth through the horse Hans that would paw the ground with the exact number of times to the pictured number placed in front of him on the table. The
horse demonstrated the ability to read humans so slightly it appeared he could count. Hans verified that horses are more than simply “classically conditioned” but intricately enabled to read a different species incredibly well (*Animals in Translation* 289). Riding provides a beautiful model of horses’ clear affective *sense* of humans.

Wright explains that there are three ways a rider communicates with her or his horse. There are multiple ways riders physically touch a horse: the hands, legs, seat, and even the distribution of our weight. There is verbal communication by speaking calmly or firmly to a horse. Visually we communicate with horses like where we hold our hands on the reins. Since horses’ eyes are on the sides of their head, they simply can see where riders are looking and what riders are doing on their backs. I would suggest that the most communicative aspect of all is what Wright refers to as “the whole emotional confidence thing.” He explains,

Horses just sense…
They sense when a rider is confident or not. Or anxious or relaxed
Horses sense that.
And I can’t even say that’s something that is… It… it’s not…
It’s not conveyed telepathically or anything like that…
It’s… It’s very basic.

Horses are *very perceptive* to “*that*.” Because I believe horse are very *motivated* out of *emotion*. They are *very sensitive* to it.

Wright captures in words the complexity of horses’ amazing capacity to sense the unforeseen embodied emotive transmissions between horse and human.

Massumi would argue that Wright’s conception of “emotional confidence” is more of an embodied mode of performing an affective-ness –“affective, as opposed to emotional” (40). Massumi claims, “Confidence is the emotional translation of affect as
capturable life potential; it is a particular emotional expression and becoming-conscious of one’s sided-perceived sense of vitality” (41). However, Massumi’s conception of confidence is articulated and understood solely within the normative cultural realms of heteropatriarchal Whiteness. Horses expose that emotional confidence is not performed by simply asserting mannerisms of control. My hopes for the following chapter is to prove that emotional confidence is not only one clear sign of transmissions of affects but also a feminist means of negotiating being-with another different from oneself by locating common motivations-embodied feminist aesthetics.

The affective nature of “emotional confidence” denotes that it can only manifest between horse and rider in movement together. Unfortunately the means to tap into understanding and even embodying the appropriate mode of emotional confidence for that particular horse/rider combination is a highly complex and a nearly impossibly performance to master. More often than not, riders themselves are completely unaware of these affective transmissions being displaced onto or from their animal companion in their relational dance of riding. Wright touches on this idea when he challenges riders to identify the needs of their horse. He says,

Getting riders to recognize what a horse needs.
And it is actually a really really un-definable thing.
It’s something that you can’t teach a rider to do.
Like I had this girl, a beautiful looking rider.
But she had no idea what her horse actually needed from her.

Now that’s something I think is quite fascinating,
How do you learn to recognize that?
I don’t think anybody can
I think it is something that is innate to some people.
I do think that it is something if you really really study it….
Watch they **eyes** of the horse, and for me, look at the outside **ear** of your horse

But… I just don’t know if you can **teach** it.

Here his conception of “needs” is actually discerning the affects embodied by the horse and by the rider.

Brennan claims humans are highly unaware of our absorptions and dumpings of affects. But horses are always aware of and constantly exposing the transmissive features of affects and in retrospect extrapolating the very presence of affects within and between bodies. Wright explains,

I actually think, very much,

Horses **feed** on **emotion**.

They are **very emotional creatures**.

They are **not** rational creatures.

I do not think they are **manipulative** or **calculative at all**.

I think that they, very much, feed on the emotion of the rider.

Horses are affectively charged beings. But interestingly enough it becomes the rider’s burden to negotiate these affective moments. Horses are not going to rationally acknowledge these affective moments and negotiate through them. They are simply going to convey the negative affects or positive affects present and move/sense accordingly. For example, Kennedy describes,

You know horses have **mood swings**.

And they **definitely** try to **tell** you at times,

“Hey today’s just **not** the day for us to be doing this!”

But sometimes you **listen**

And you do something else.

And sometimes you **don’t listen**, And you end up lying on the **ground**.

Horses are affectively charged and like Ahmed explains “emotions **do things**” (“Affective Economies” 119). Here we see that if we do not **hear** the affective/emotive intensities of
the horse that swing and shift in relational movement by events, moments in time, and realities of being then we will end up on the ground.

Brennan’s theory of transmission of affects extrapolates these very truths that while our thoughts are purely individual, our energies are not self-contained (6). Ahmed adds that “emotions are not simply “within” or “without” but that they create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds” (“Affective Economies” 117). Massumi claims, “Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) experience of that capture –and of the fact that something has always and again escaped” (35). Following these articulations, I find affects to be completely physical entities and completely virtual energies experienced by all bodies but generated only between them. Thus horses’ interactions settle purely in affective qualities of relational movement best captured by words and metal understanding as “emotions.” Consequently to really have the ability to ride horses we must first recognize the affective transmission dancing between our bodies as we move through time and space together.

We trip and stumble every time we attempt to grasp hold of these transmitted energies, because as Brennan explains, we try to understand them in words/subjects/objects which clumsily slip away from the actual fleshy and immaterial energy of affects. She clarifies that the separation of the mind and body has brought the inability to “[bring] sensation together with reason in the understanding of transmission, extending consciousness into what is now unconscious” (18). Riding, however, calls forth a “consciousness in attending to and learning to work with sensation, learning how to realign word and affect in the process, increasing the precision of its feelings, and
uncovering the true joys of the flesh” (159). Those of us comfortable in understanding only by/within our body, comfortable in sensations that have no match for words, these are the riders that begin to ascend past “grasping” the transmissions of affects. Instead, we transcend to belong/become within our modes of “being with” to discern the affective transmissions taking place and surface the possibilities of resurrecting the body in reasoning both the affects absorbed and transmitted by us.

**Speaking the Horses’ Language: Affective Reasoning**

Brennan’s theoretical work on transmissions of affect begins the conversation of affective reasoning by demonstrating the life draining realities of negative affects on bodies and the possibilities allotted to us if we could simply learn to acknowledge their presence and re-direct their workings. This chapter holds hands with where Brennan ended and extends this conversation of transmission. Transmission is clearly displayed and embodied in riding but the wonder that becomes captured in the “learning” to ride – or as Eve puts it, the life lessons that breach beyond simply horse-person lessons to worldly lessons of problems solving in our daily life- is when we begin to acknowledge these transmissions. What I mean by acknowledgement here is a present and cognizant awareness of an embodied sensation. Where the body becomes the primary place of knowing through sensing and the mind can then negotiate these sensations/feelings in particular and intentional manners. This affective negotiation that is learned and performed between horse and human is what I have termed *affective reasoning.*
Affective reasoning begins by clearly discerning the affective energies pulsating within and between your body and your horse companion. Brennan suggested that discernment of affects requires “personal practice involving comparison, recollection and memory, and detachment” (126). However, the real goal of discernment is “not only [to] require their (affects) resistance, it requires their transformation… more accurately their resistance is their transformation” (129). For me, affective reasoning denotes these very properties of discernment, detachment, resistance, and transformation by requiring riders to distinguish negative affective transmissions relationally present between themselves and horses and transform them into productive life giving affective energies3. Wright touches on this when he discusses why he believes crying is a necessary part of developing as a rider. He tells me,

My job as a teacher, isn’t always about teaching people about

Push and pull
And leg yield this way
And do that sorta thing…

A lot of it is about,
Getting riders to understand how to get the most out of themselves too.
And because… most…
in struc tors…
Don’t even want to acknowledge that emotion is an aspect of a rider’s make-up.
They want emotion to be taken out of it entirely.
I think that’s just not possible.

I’d much rather talk about the emotions,
And see if we can somehow figure out how to re-channel it.

3 Again, it is important to reiterate here that not all persons that ride, experienced or inexperienced, actually practice/feel affective reasoning. The conclusion chapter will make suggestions to why this is so, but for the purposes of this chapter we will focus on those that do perform affective reasoning.
Crying often initiates these conversations.
I don’t know that you can *remove* the emotion from the combination.

I would say about twenty percent of people cry in my clinics…
And actually, I think the whole crying thing is a really *really* necessary part of it.
It’s actually the breaking down of the emotions,
That breaking down of that barrier,
That wall that exists.
Their suddenly exposing themselves
Making themselves more vulnerable
And we can talk about it then.

In order to re-channel emotion, riders often must first acknowledge these
sensations; Wright suggests this is done by crying out their frustration, disappointment,
and/or embarrassment. Ridding the body of negative affects first allows for an affective
negotiation to take place between horse and rider, between rider and instructor, and/or
between rider and themselves. In a riding situation, crying is much safer and healthier for
the horse than the rider to continue riding within their frustration, anger, embarrassment.
When riders do not stop and exhale these emotions they continue to transmit these
negative affects onto their horses generally through harmful/hurtful actions. Wright
understands that affects cannot be removed from the relational movement of
betweenness, but he does believe they can be re-channeled. Here acknowledgement is the
process of cognizantly recognizing affective presence by allowing the sensations to
completely pass through us.

I would suggest that affective reasoning is the learned ability to transform our
affective energies from negative to positive life giving experiences. Transformation is
done through acknowledgement of the affective energies present between the
horse/human combinations. We alter our personal motives towards motives *for* another
by shifting our learned re-actions to new-actions to match these new motives. And
performing this affective/emotive shift until it becomes an embodied mode of “emotional
confidence” –fully embodied and fully present in relational movement.

I find this process of affective reasoning taught to and by the relational movement
of riding beautifully exemplified by a narrative Eve told to me regarding her process of
learning to ride.

I had a bad spanking from my instructor a couple of weeks ago. When my horse was pulling and pushing,
I was reacting strongly and impatiently.
And she sat me down and said,
“Your horse is impatient. He has been trained to anticipate and so he doesn’t wait for you.
And you are an impatient person
And that is really not a good combination.
One of you has to be in charge and I hope it is not the horse.”

So I really had to look at what my goals were. What I wanted to accomplish and how.
And I realized, that at my age, I am in a hurry. Cause I think, “How many more years am I going to be able to ride?”
And I want to get this done. I want to compete, And I wanna do dressage tests,
And I wanna advance.

And I thought….
“OH you are so looking at the wrong thing!”
My horse isn’t going to be relaxed until I am relaxed.
And the last two weeks have been an entirely different experience.
Because I have changed my goals. I have changed my process.
And he’s relaxed.
Where a year ago, I didn’t have anything but reactions that were bad. Bad hand reaction.
I am riding very differently now. If I am quiet and calm and relaxed,
He stays quite, calm, and relaxed.
I do believe that you can modify your behavior, if the outcome you value enough.
Not because someone tells you.
That doesn’t matter. But if the **outcome** is to have Nick stay *relaxed* and *enjoy* him, And have him *happy* to see me. Then, I **need** to **modify** my behavior. Where I have learned so much to be *patient* and to get my senses elevated so that, I would **react** in the “right” way and the “right” time Instead of hauling on him and snarling. But you know what I mean Dawn Marie?

Eve surfaces so many evocative transmission moments within this story. She clearly denotes the fact that the negative affects of anxiety and impatience are experienced, sensed and mainly absorbed by her horse. Hence her acknowledgement of these negative affective qualities and discernment of their transmission motivates her to transform them into more life giving positive affects. Interestingly she distinctly notes that these “modifications” in her behavior is *only* rendered possible by her pure motivational love for the relations with her horse. What is important to recognize here is the presence of the transformation accomplished through an acknowledgement, detachment, and an embodied motivation of love for the relation with another. By virtually and actually altering her goals, she transformed the relational movement between herself and Nick, exemplifying that riding *can* teach certain persons the ability of affective reasoning.

Riding provides a clear outline of the transmissions of affective qualities that move between rider and horse as they move together through space. Perhaps the re-transmission of transforming affective transmissions located through the process of

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4 The connectivity and motivation of love is addressed in the next chapter.
affective reasoning is a practice of relational movement (Manning). Erin Manning explains relational moment as the following:

Relational movement means moving the relation. Moving the person will never result in grace. Intensity of movement can only be felt when the inbetween-the interval-created by movement-with takes hold. This interval is ephemeral, impossibly to grasp as such, yet essential to the intensive passage from a step to a graceful movement. (Manning 30)

Riding is a relational movement that is primarily charged by affective intensities because your partner within this dance is an animal so fully aware of the modes of affects present that they simply must acknowledge their presence. Perhaps a starting place of actually feeling the “intensity of movement” in the “inbetween-the interval-created by movement-with” that must take hold in the relational riding performance is affective discernment (Manning).

When we begin to understand these affective qualities by sensing or feeling the behaviors of the horse through the embodied-relational-motional partnership riding offers, we come to recognize the emotive levels of the horse in relation to ourselves in the moment of movement taking place. Wright claims, “People need to understand the personality of their horse and better understand how to relate to them. The way the horses interact with the riders.” What is really involved in negotiating the relational movement of riding with a horse is knowing that horse’s affective sensitivity and your personal affective sensitivity. Different horses need different emotive levels expressed by riders. In a conversation about creating successful horse and rider combinations Kennedy explains that producing these combinations depends on “the personality of the horse and its way of going.” She adds,
You know, If I ride a horse I could hopefully tell you whether that horse would work for you. I mean if it was a super sluggy horse With a bad mouth or something, I would say, “Dawn you would not like to ride this horse.” Or I mean if it was… You could deal with a horse that was sorta more emotional then a lot of people could.

Kennedy denotes the need to ride the horse to actually sense the affective levels of that particular horse. But she also explains the need to understand the personality of the rider in order to “best” match horses with certain riders. Like humans some horses are more affectively charged by anxiety than others, which requires riders to acknowledge this affectively charge transmission being displaced. Then riders must negotiate the transmission in order to produce better rideablity with that horse in that moment for that movement. This also suggests that different relational connectivities work and others do not solely because of the affective make-up between two bodies.

Riders and horses make combinations that are specific to each of them relating together. But so often these combinations shift and alter depending on the particular interval of movement being experienced. The affective intensities are much different between Orion and me when we are walking through a meadow than when we are walking into the show ring. Beyond the actual contextual event of the movement, relational movement of riding also encapsulates the affective intensities brought to the interval proceeding that actual moment. For example Kennedy explains,

It’s hard to perfectly create good combinations Because people’s personalities change way more Than horses personalities change.

It doesn’t always work either way.
What works on Tuesday by next Saturday doesn’t
…and typically at no fault of the horse.
Cause horses don’t…
   Their lives don’t influence their moods as much.
People come out [to the barn] and
   “Ahhh! Well my husband lost his job today!”
And it’s like; well your horse didn’t fire your husband.
   So maybe you could not take it out on him.

Often riders utilize the relational moment with their horse as a means of affective
dumping.

   Disgruntled “reacting” as so many riders word it. They lash out at their horse.
Physically rip on their mouths. Hit and kick unnecessarily. Scream at them. All these
actions are for the sole purpose of affectively dumping those negative affects that are
bottled up from the previous events of the day or present frustrations experienced from
failure to ride perfectly. But these emotions too have a cultural history. The existence of
negative affects is clearly transmitted between rider and horse. However, in this
relationship, it is the rider’s responsibility to discern these negative transmissions and
detach from them in order to genuinely nurture a successful relational movement with
your horse. It is the rider’s responsibility because in this interval relation, the rider is the
body in power. Can riders actually learn to resist negative affects and transform that
which is transmitted? Eve suggests that behavior can be modified if we sincerely desire
our relationship with the horse. Riders can and must learn affective reasoning in order to
ever fully develop a relationship with their animal other.
Taking Horses into the “Real World”

Responsibility of affective transmission is one pivotal lesson rendered within this relationship. If humans expand this affective responsibility to our personal relationships we could possibly begin to move past relational breaks that exist. People generally state, “You make me feel…” If we hold the responsibility of affective transmissions, than these feelings are not simply displaced by another they are also very much our own. Therefore, we hold the duty to discern and negotiate these affects. We hold the possibility of affective negotiation in our hand in every relationship we engage. When we come to face the fact that affective relations is our task; new relations are enabled.

Within the horse world most learn it is our job to sense horses in order to nurture a relational way of being-with them. We try desperately hard to learn what they are “saying” and then to do what we can to foster a relational connectivity for their happiness and their well being and in turn our own. Kennedy speaks to humans role in relational connectivity. She details,

So… the day they walk out of their stall
And you are making them do something that they can’t or don’t want to do.
    That’s your fault.
It’s not their fault.
You’re the one that wanted him to do this,
    Maybe he can’t
    Maybe his leg hurts
    Maybe he just doesn’t want to anymore.
But you know, you made a commitment to take care of this horse,
    And you should continue to do that.
    Even if he or she doesn’t do what you want anymore.
And I know that people have a lot of money invested into these horses,
    But they lose sight of the fact that these horses didn’t volunteer;
    They were drafted.
Kennedy denotes the beauty of fostering the relationship first over the production of that relationship. She nods to the White heteropatriarchal capitalist norms of individualistic success over all else. But this normative way of being breaks the possibilities within the relation. Kennedy beautifully denotes that we must turn away from White heteropatriarchal capitalism and move towards a relational being-for another.

Kennedy recognizes the possible breaks in horse/human relationships and why horses alter their workmanship. But in the end the responsibility falls on the owner. A valuable lesson is to be had here. Riding teaches that relational connectivity is generally our personal responsibility and cannot be inflicted or enforced but predicated on a devotion to relational investment in another. If people truly rendered this lesson to be had we could begin to cultivate alliances between persons. White women could begin the difficult work of breaking the confines of White capitalist heteropatriarchy by realizing that relational connectivity with women of color depends on our affective reasonings with them. We would nurture a way of being that holds personal responsibility for another rather than oneself and in turn find affective relational connectivity cultivated.

In closing, I am invested in feminist alliances. Thus this chapter centers on these motivations. In order to foster feminist alliances we must first understand that “alliances are affectively charged sites of connection in which intimacy and power become entwined” (Carrillo Rowe 4). Affectivity is sensuous, invisible yet completely embodied, dependent on relationality, and intrinsically experienced in motion (Massumi; Manning; Brennan). Extrapolating affectively charged sites would enable feminist alliances but is very difficult because of its extremely unmarkorable nature. Perhaps if we could step back
and develop an affective consciousness and reasoning, we would then be more capable of cultivating these affectively charged moments. I am not claiming that these moments of affective reasoning between women do not already exist. But I am arguing that they are clearly not nurtured in manners to foster more productive alliance. I am engaging with this work to add a composite of understanding that perhaps may allot new avenues of feminist alliance production. We can desire to love anOther but not understand the affectively charged politics embodied between differences that provide probabilities of sustained feminist alliances.

Riding offers a mode of this learning but only to those riders that can actually learn affective reasoning. These are the riders that learn to resist negative affects and transform that which is transmitted into more live giving, productive affects. Eve suggests that behavior can be modified if we sincerely desire our relationships. Wright differentiates which affective relationships are malleable and which are not. He explains, “You can teach an overly sensitive person to be more aggressive. But the hardest thing is getting people with a temper to not have a temper. That is the hardest thing of ALL.” I am left wondering what performative embodiment is necessary to have the affective make-up to re-channel our emotions, to transform our affects, to deeply desire the relational connectivity with another over our own ambitions.

Wright exposes the difficulty in affective reasoning when he explains the experience of teaching people to negotiate their emotions when riding. He tells,

But… how do you get that emotion to stay in check? How do you actually change the emotion of a rider?

Really hard.
How do you actually get a timid rider to feel more aggressive…?

Well you can make them hit the horse.

You can change what a rider does, but you can’t change the way they feel. 
But you can hope that in time
They can start to recognize there is value in being aggressive.
Or value in showing the horse the right thing to do.
Rather than abusing it for doing the wrong thing.
Because they are angry or frustrated.

You can change what a rider does, but you can’t change the way they feel.

Managing emotions is a difficult task because normative culture centers our emotions as other peoples fault and problems. Social dynamics utilize emotions as a means of projection from others; rather than denoting emotions as our personal responsibility.

Riding teaches bodies the art of affective reasoning. Those bodies that deeply desire the relational connectivity over their own personal affective messiness are willing to accept responsibility of the affective interchange. Those bodies that are invested in the hard work of relation, not White heteropatriarchal individualization, those are the bodies that can embody an affective shift. Changing the way one feels, affective reasoning, resides purely in our hearts and our personal investment in the relation. The next chapter will explore how the performative natures that these affective reasoning bodies expose denote an embodied feminist aesthetics.
CHAPTER SIX

White Women, Horses, and Dirt:
Performing Embodied Feminist Aesthetics

Many years ago in the middle of a hot summer day where the ground and trees sagged from the California drought, I helped my trainer give Colleen—a relatively tall blonde White middle-aged woman—her first jumping lesson. Standing in the middle of the dusty arena, the hot air pulled energy from our bodies like a dry sponge. The woman had ridden with my trainer for about three months but today she would jump her horse for the very first time. As she finished her warm up, my trainer and I began to arrange the jumps. Anticipation filled the dry hot air. Colleen’s horse, Saint, seemed to feed on this excitement as his steps lighten despite his sun-baked body. Days prior I had ridden Saint for my trainer to ensure that he would jump successfully for his owner. So today, my participation seemed to involve me in this event with nervous expectation washing over my body as I helped my trainer assemble the grid of jumps.

These “riding firsts” are the moments that draw me back to my own childhood experiences of learning to ride and the wonders of those emotive happenings. After a brief prep talk from my trainer, Saint and his owner made their way down to the jumping grid. In the seconds to follow, Saint carefully and excitedly lifted himself and his rider from the ground in brief moments of complete flight. I know these sensations. Jumping is
perhaps the closest horse and rider comes to oneness. Free flight requires a poetic meshing of two bodies molding together in unison. The sound of Saint’s feet meeting the ground after the last fence brought my attention back to the present. My trainer and I stood in silence holding tightly to our affective memories of our own personal embodied riding experiences; the embodied intensities evoked from knowing the sensation of jumping a horse. Not all riders experience these ties of connectivity. Jumping brings you to face these possibilities but only certain bodies actually performatively engage within the movement. We have engaged. We wonder if Colleen will too.

Colleen brings Saint to a halt. Silence...

Suddenly, Colleen thrust forward wrapping her arms around Saints neck and squeals in excitement. Exhaling her breath she yells to us, “Oh my God! That is better than sex!”

My twelve-year-old face flushed red as did my trainer’s. We laugh. Jokes follow of my youth. Our bodies attempt to communicate that which is purely experienced in aesthetic movements of jumping. No need, Colleen engaged too.

For those riders engaged in the relational interval riding can offer, jumping is a climatic performative pleasure of relational connectivity only available to those bodies willing to embrace feminist aesthetics. Years later I sit at my computer and reflect on this event noting the entities of truth captured by Colleen’s comment. This event burns into my memories exposing the performative realities of riding’s intimate relational movement. Kathleen Stewart looks to events as building an “idiosyncratic map of connections between a series of singularities” (Ordinary Affects 5). Following her lead, I write this event and others like it to manifest the contact zones of feminist aesthetics in
order to picture and invite readers into the emotive experience of them. My writing of these moments is not an attempt to entirely pin feminist aesthetics down into descriptive discourse. Elizabeth Bell connects the feminine with performance as asserting those “othered” bodies within a libinamal economy (“Toward a Pleasure Centered Economy”). Feminine bodies can experience pleasurable performative moments when they vulnerably connect within themselves, with those watching, and those performing with us. Riding can be a beautiful example of performance’s vulnerable and relational interaction. Jumping a horse is an art compiled of communion, connectivity, vulnerability, and trust.

I have ridden horses for many years and within those years I have seen a multiplicity of riders. This experience renders me a vision of riding and denotes the fact that not all riders actually capture an embodied performance of relational connectivity. Many riders learn to jump but few experience the intimacy of relation laden within the jumping movement. I used to believe this loss was simply related to a level of riding ability, but now embarking on this scholastic journey, I am beginning to think differently. Turning a critical performance ethnographic eye towards this cultural space brought me to question what bodies are left out of this experience and lead me to one conclusion: Those bodies that beautifully connect with their horse and demonstrate relational movement in the most artistic finesse are those that embody feminist aesthetics.

This chapter dives into the performative qualities of feminist aesthetics denoted by the Equestrian culture. While this chapter cannot be understood outside of the previous two chapters, it serves as the climactic moment of blending the two primary trajectories I found within the sport of Equestrian: the cultural politics of White
femininity and the relational lessons rendered by/within riding. To this point, I have made different suggestions as to why women dominant this sport: 1) The normative framings of Whiteness and heteropatriarchy situate White women’s bodies into this cultural space, 2) And the communicative ties of affective betweenness are best negotiated by feminine beings. I have also articulated the lessons the culture of riding exposes for deconstructing White capitalist heteropatriarchy. This chapter dives into the rich principles of a feminine dominant space/sport. When we come to see riding as a feminine performance, new understandings are opened as to what constitutes feminist aesthetics. Thus, we can come to articulate the theoretical workings of feminist aesthetics.

Centring my gaze here is not outside of the politics of White capitalist heteropatriarchy, but rather, deeply investing my focus in understanding feminist examples of re-negotiations within/outside of normative cultural binds. In doing so, I hope to sketch performative probabilities and possibilities offered within this sport by White women that works outside of White classist heteropatriarchy while always existing within it. Fashioning these performatives of feminist aesthetics serves what José Estaban Muñoz terms “utopian functions.” I discuss these utopian functions/qualities of feminist aesthetics by first teasing out how they nurture relationality. Next, I contend that feminist aesthetics shift negotiations of power dynamics. I finish by making a case for feminist aesthetics fostering feminist alliances through humility.
An Embodied Performance of Feminist Aesthetics

I mean I don’t know…
Girls like horses
And boys like cars. (Kennedy)

Quite possibly what proceeds affective discernment and is necessitated for
affective reasoning to be learned and performed is the embodied performance of feminine
aesthetics. Fixed in the vulnerability of desire and love for the relationship, feminine
aesthetics are both an affective embodied politic as well as an affective performative
poetic. Learning the physical techniques of riding is only a partial element to really
learning to ride. The deeper composite of riding requires that affective quality to sense
and experience the connectivity of intimate relational movement captured and performed
by riding. Again, not all riders experience this relational bonding. Eve tells me,

My horse is very present and intelligent and has a sweetness about him
And I love that.
You know you are supposed to love your horse.
And I love him.
Some horses, I sense… and people too…don’t have this loving personality.
And you don’t get as connected.
It’s not attached as much as connected in a relationship.
And I have a wonderful connection with Nick.
He’s a good friend you know.
And I feel bad when I would get impatient with him.
Cause it is about me not him.

Eve speaks of the feminist aesthetic embodied by some riders but not all that is
predicated on relationality. Approaching riding from this perspective is centering the
riding experience on the relational connectivity between two beings rather than simply
the “sport” of getting a horse to obey you. When we begin to experience riding from this
motivational perspective we see that affective reasoning can take place because we are

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focused on sensing, experiencing, negotiating, and nurturing with another being. Riding is a beautiful example of an embodied feminist aesthetic that centers on the connectivity built through a relational sensing of another producing relational movement in time and space, always present and connected to both the contextual realities taking place, and the movement captured through two bodies.

Locating riding as a performance of feminist aesthetic presses us to understand affective reason as a feminine performance not directly linked to female bodies but those beings that truly embody and desire a feminine aesthetic. Certainly the politics of the body factor completely into one’s performative natures but to claim that only women’s bodies are capable of embodied feminist aesthetics is a presumption I am not comfortable making. My claim is that a feminist aesthetic is both; it is both an embodied politic and a performative choice. It would follow that the dominance of White women within the sport of Hunter/Jumper riding is directly connected to the imperative performance of an embodied feminist aesthetic. White women’s bodies are both disciplined to this performance but also have the privilege to choose particular feminist embodied acts. The sport requires a particular feminine body but also a particular feminine aesthetic performance.

While much can be said in regards to the articulation of feminist aesthetics I stand gingerly on a well-trodden road that many feminist theorists have walked, nurtured, and stomped on. I follow in their footsteps with my own concerns and thoughts that reflect my theoretical positioning as an intersectional feminist. I am grounded in ideological perspectives of feminism and the priority of an affective intersectional approach. These
feminist needs are located in a completely embodied reality and an affective complexity. 

Thus I agree with Hilde Hein that there is a “problem with the quest for a feminine aesthetic, a distinction that must be clarified” (283). Rather I align with the fact “there is no single, totalizing feminist aesthetic theory and none is sought” (286). However, I am not comfortable completely abandoning a form of feminist consciousness that directs an outline of a feminist aesthetic as Rita Felski does.

I agree denoting feminist consciousness as innately feminine and demonstrated by all feminine beings as a unit is essentialist in nature and normatively exclusionary (Felski 26-7). But I do rely on feminist theory’s roots in possibility that opens doors yet to be. Perhaps it is my desire for possibility that draws me to feminism to begin with but I must believe that feminist consciousness is and can be a developed thought projected by and through an embodied feminist reality. Elizabeth Bell provides me solitude in her “unwillingness to abandon the possibility of a feminist aesthetics of performance” (“Toward a Pleasure Centered Economy”100). Bell’s articulation of a feminist aesthetics is qualified by the “body fact” and the “performance act” (100). Performance studies reminds us that the body is both an entirely fleshy home of political realities but also a site of theoretical possibilities. Feminists of color have grasped to the truths of our bodies as political truths and performative possibilities. Thus, this feminist aesthetics is rooted in the body’s theoretical knowledge. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa’s term this knowing as “theories of the flesh.” They explain, “We are interested in pursuing a society that uses flesh and blood experiences to concretize a vision that can begin to heal” (23). Hence, my conceptualization of feminist aesthetics understands that bodily acts are never
read outside of our fleshy political realties and our bodies are never excluded from this consciousness in our acting.

Along this vein, performance provides possibilities to all bodies allotting us wonders of performance to frame and challenge normative particularities of our embodied cultural politics. There might be wiggle room to argue against a binary normative conception of a feminist aesthetic, but I do not find room to argue against its existence. bell hooks reminds me that “aesthetics then is more than a philosophy or theory of art and beauty; it is a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming” (yearning 104). Thus, the feminist aesthetic I am suggesting here is nestled in the betweenness of bodies where performance is both a desire to belong and an enactment of that belonging. This feminist aesthetic recognizes that bodies are culturally implicated but also entirely escapable in their betweenness of this performative becoming. When we ride horses the opportunity to inhabit this feminist aesthetics is always present waiting for the performative movement to take our bodies into a connective relational movement.

I find feminist aesthetic intricately connected to feminine beings, affectivity, and connectivity. This chapter outlines possible feminine performative qualities as love, desire, pleasure, and belonging. These feminine aesthetic qualities are not mutually exclusive as feminine or limited only to these qualities but normatively and non-normatively embodied and embraced as feminine. Conceptualizing feminine aesthetics in this manner positions us to recognize the nature of femininity as a space of betweenness negotiated out of a feminine mode of embodied action. Returning to the body and
centering on the feminine aesthetic positions theoretical recognitions of performance as a political economy (Bell “Toward a Pleasure-Centered Economy”100; This Bridge; Anzaldúa Borderlands; Moraga Loving in the War Years). The politics of our positionalities are read in our performance and arouse our consciousness in our modes of performance. I pull from Teresa Brennan’s term “feminine beings” which she explains are “those who carry the negative affects for the other” (15). She goes on to claim

These are most likely to be women, but the disposition of negative affects varies, especially when racism is a factor. By disposition, I mean the direction of negative affects such as aggression. The question should be: To whom is the affect directed? Because whoever that object is will be prone to anxiety and then depression. (15)

Brennan exposes the physicality of bodies as imbued with particular cultural norms such that feminine beings are most likely feminine and/or marginalized bodies because the embodied realities of this politic meets the performative conceptualization of affective transmission. Feminist aesthetic, then, is embedded in the bodies of those feminine – those bodies culturally framed as inferior to and serving to White capitalist heteropatriarchy. I would add here that feminine beings can manifest the disposition of negative affects but I would argue that they will more often than not be the absorbers of such.

Locating feminist aesthetics as complyed of feminine beings opens the possibility of other species to enact feminist aesthetics. This brings our conversation back to the horse and positions us to understand horses as feminine beings highly sensitive to affectivity, the carriers of negative affects, and completely dependent on the connectivity of intimate relational movement. Thus, those riders that experience this “relational bond”
engender this feminist aesthetics performance in order to relationally move with the animal other. This feminist aesthetics is a way of being with and a way of doing that exists outside the masculine manners of physical force and into realms of affective desire. Wright states,

The big strong guys that go out there and man handle a horse,
I don’t think,
I don’t know that it really works.
I think there needs to be a sensitivity there.
To be able to recognize this very very emotion driven being underneath you.
Independent thinking and feeling being underneath you.

Feminist aesthetics is an embodied performance of feminine beings, outside of aggression and force, nestled in a performance of connectivity.

This feminine aesthetics is both an embodied reality –actions of and doings- but more importantly an embodied consciousness. Theories of the flesh expose the values of understanding our bodies informed by and as theoretical complexities. Moraga explains, “Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place” (“La Güera” 29). Thus to envision a feminist aesthetics “doings” escaping the normative hierarchies on bodies, we must begin within ourselves and articulate the hard heartfelt longings of our be-longings and mis-belongings. Embodied feminist aesthetic means a feminine consciousness which evokes the workings and openings available through its performative acts as utopian futurities escaping normative binds.
I situate my interests in aesthetics here in order to understand embodied feminist aesthetics as both richly influenced by cultural politics of the body but also saturated in the performative agency by that body. I find affectivity, although constantly fleeting, present in-between moments of these embodied and performative evocations. Thus not all feminine bodies are imbued with a performative embodied feminist aesthetic. We can conclude that feminine beings, in both body (an embodied consciousness) and performance, encapsulate this feminist aesthetic which is affectively negotiated as both entirely material and completely performative. Therefore, feminist aesthetics is the performance of sensing within and by the body, through the political awareness of our embodied selves, as well as the affective consciousness of the transmissions richly flowing between bodies. Beautiful riding is this feminist aesthetics embodied in rich affective transmissions that carve a relational connection between two bodies in trust, vulnerability, and sensing. These performative movements enact an embodied feminist aesthetic; these are the moments that are “better than sex.”

**Relationality of Feminist Aesthetic**

Conceptualizing feminist aesthetic as an embodied performance of affective connectivity allows for certain aesthetics such as love to be articulated and enacted from a particular feminine means. I have established that White capitalist heteropatriarchy interpellates White women’s bodies into particular performances of White femininity. The cultural consequences of White women’s civility have jarred feminist relationality from the possibilities of a feminist aesthetics. In her powerful book *All about Love*, bell
hooks forefronts love as theoretically valuable. I follow her in this path and put forth that love is an imperative theoretical piece to the feminist aesthetics puzzle. The beauty, pleasure, and wonder of feminine aesthetics is so far removed from White women’s bodies we (White women) have almost lost sight of its affective qualities. The feminist aesthetics of love bring bodies that experience and performatively enact it towards relationality. Embodied love is a transformative force (hooks All about Love). White women’s interpellation into and for White heteronormative cultural politics has harmed feminine beings from these relational possibilities but there are spaces where White women re-learn an embodied feminist aesthetics.

The relationship between a horse and a rider is one space where embodied feminist aesthetics is necessitated, nurtured, and learned. Love, so far removed, must gently return to the body for White women to relationally engage with anOther in time and space.

Me: Can you describe the relationship with a horse? 
Kennedy: I mean I love love love my dogs, 
But it’s different.

My relationship with my horse is a different category. 
It’s sorta like a combination of how you feel about 
Your pet 
Your husband 
And your favorite co-worker 
All rolled into one.

Yeah, I don’t know. 
It’s really different.
I don’t know what it has to do with. 
The fact that when we ride them you have to have a certain bond with them.
I... I... Don’t know 
I... I... couldn’t describe it, I don’t think.
Guess I’m kinda letting you down on that question.
Relationally connecting with horses, or animal Others for that matter, requires a feminist aesthetic of love. This feminist aesthetic hinges on love but not the distorted normative cultural framing of love. Love in this manner is a feminist aesthetic comprised of a deep embodied understanding of respect and desire for another’s well being, being with, and being for. This love exists in an affective tone that Manning refers to as “inseparable from the modes that relations create and through which relations move” (40). This certain bond experienced by horses pivots on the very fact that our relational mode of being is experienced in riding. Riding positions two very different bodies in connection with each other necessitating a moving with, not a production of, movement. Embodying motivations are altered in the body-to-body connection in order to actually accomplish a relational bond. Thus riding calls forth and outlines for us such a convoluted connectivity that new realms of embodiment are extrapolated. Convoluted connectivity is a relational bond that riding engages that exists outside language.

I premise love here because it is the foundational connotation in Kennedy’s best description of relationality with horses. While she “love love loves her dogs” there is a different understanding of love experienced with a horse which she denotes to the connectivity learned in riding. The relationship with horses lays raw love’s complexity in the sense of experiencing the different realms of love (love with a partner, love with a pet, love with a co-worker) all at once. Compartmentalizing love is impossible here and rather we come to find an affective understanding of love. Love as multifaceted.

All love is ego driven in that we love in order to experience those beautiful attributes reflected off and from that to which we demonstrate love. Feminist aesthetics
love is no different. However, a feminist aesthetic composition of love demands that this
ego driven love work outside of a love shown by another for another but a love
necessitated and located at the intersection between two bodies experiencing the pleasure
of connectivity in relational movement. A feminist aesthetic of love is “performative
love” that must exist external to conceptualizations of animal/human norms of
“unconditional love.” Donna Haraway explains that unconditional love is both harmful
for dogs as it is for humans. The connectivity experienced between animals and humans
must be “about seeking to inhabit an inter-subjective world that is about meeting the
other in all the fleshly detail of a mortal relationship” (Companion Species 34).

Hence horse/human love or what I have come to articulate as feminist aesthetic
love is an affective means of sensing the desires and needs of another but more
importantly authentically desiring to sense these needs. Haraway goes as far to descend
from love by framing the good working relationship between dogs and humans as
demands of respect and trust, not love (39). I would challenge Haraway to see her entire
separation from love as incorrect because from my perspective feminist aesthetics is a
composition of all these qualities, including love. Love from this direction is not
predicated on “eating the Other” but serving the other out of a desire for connectivity and
motivation to transmit love (hooks Eating the Other). Eve speaks to this
conceptualization of feminist relationality when she describes the relationship between
horses and humans. She explains,

I love the horses that like me and want love on them.
My father was a horseman. And he didn’t love them the way I did.
But he needed them and needed to be around them.
He needed to raise them. He knew *everything* about horses.
   But you know, he wouldn’t throw his arms around a horse and give em a big hug.
   Because he thought they smelled good.
He looked at them more **detached**.
   It’s not the same with a woman.
A woman’s nurturing;
A woman’s caring;
A woman has reciprocity in that exchange.

It’s a **different** relationship **completely**.
   And the women are nurturing and they need love…
   They need *to* love.
   They need to get it back.
And women *love* their horses.

Eve beautifully exposes how love can be about simply offering love for the pleasure of connectivity. In extension, feminist aesthetics offer love as a means to relate for the pleasure of offering beyond our selves. The complexity of this form of love is circular in nature in the sense that she frames women locating connectivity on reciprocity of that exchange but it begins and ends with women: women => loving => horses <= loving <= women. The affective relations of performatively loving are the reciprocity experienced in this love economy between horse and rider. Eve’s articulation of attachment hinges on the feminist aesthetics of nurturing, caring and a reciprocity for that exchange. Her relational connectivity always begins and ends with women. Relationality:
woman=>horse predicated on a feminist aesthetic desire to performatively enact love.
Normative realms of ego driving motivation are dissembled. Love reassembled in means of personal desires for relationality rather than personal desires acquired from that relation. We learn here that feminist aesthetics is a performance of love predicated on anOther.
Her denotation of women needing to receive love back is premised on the beauty of the connectivity relationally experienced between a horse and person. Horses do not love in the sense of normative cultural framings of love. Getting love back from a horse is not reciprocal in the sense of saying I love you and waiting to hear them say it back. Horses love in a connective manner of being. The pleasure of performing love provides affective rewards. Horse lovers pour love onto another by deeply sensing the other’s needs and meeting these needs the best they can. This performative sensing and affective reasoning begins and ends with a personal responsibility to give love, not manipulatively receive it. A feminine aesthetic of love is quite possibly the best means to experience an affective release of negative affects by countering them with feminist nurturing. This form of love offers possibilities within that exchange. This form of love is learned. This form of love is earned. This form of love is not unconditional but a conscious desire to relearn love outside of normative mannerisms. This form of love is not mutually exclusive nor outside of hierarchical norms. On the contrary, feminine aesthetic love predicates alliance possibilities by framing a picture of love that is messy in power dynamics.

Eve “likes horses that want love on them.” I agree with Haraway that animals do not depend on “love” for survival or for defining their relationships. But I do believe a feminist aesthetics of love is necessary to truly experience relational connectivity between horses and humans. When narrating the best relationship they have ever experienced with a horse, each of my co-performative interviewees explained a relational connectivity experienced through a unique bond unlike anything. “I mean I really loved
this horse and he loved me. And he would do absolutely anything that I asked him to do”  
(Wright). “We just had some weird love connection” (Kennedy). These relationships were unique. Not all humans experience this form of connectivity with an animal other either. As Kennedy notes,

But certain people with certain horses, as you know,  
You have a relationship with that horse and you could not describe it.  
And you couldn’t tell anybody how you got to that point either.  
I’ve had that a few times.  
I had it with JJ. I have it with Lordie

But I ride an awful lot of horses and I don’t have that relationship with every horse.  
Wright refers to this as the relational aspect of a rider and horse team. He states, Really there are three components:  
The horse. The rider. And the chemistry between the two.  
And every relationship, horse/rider relationship, is different.  
But it’s like,  
You could put the best rider on the best horse  
And you don’t necessarily have the best chemistry or the best result.

What these descriptions tell me is the reciprocity of that relational connectivity is dependent on the affective transmissions. We may not experience this on every horse we ride but when one does experience that connection, that reciprocity of relational connectivity, it is life altering. Our bodies experience an affective bond that motivates us differently. Bodies in difference are bodies inspired towards change. We change willingly. The affective pleasures of relational connectivity encourage those that have experienced it to learn how to cultivate it through a non-normative performative love.

The reciprocity of relational connectivity is primarily, if not entirely, dependent on the affective transmissions between two beings. In turn, fostering relational connectivity is dependent on awareness of affective transmission and affective reasoning predicated on an embodied feminist aesthetic of love. Eve speaks of this “learned love”
that the horse teaches you. She says “...like all those ponies that I rode as a child. I learned so much from each of them. I had to learn how to deal with each pony and each different personality. And to love them all differently. Oh! It was such a great way to grow up.” Eve suggests we can learn what different affective bodies require and these different forms of love. Horses serve to teach these lessons of relationality. They teach us relational connectivity through a feminist aesthetics of love; a love through sensing of another and serving those needs through motivation for connectivity.

_Power-Dance: Feminine Aesthetics (Re)Negotiation of Hierarchy_

But with horses you have to _earn_ that love. And they are not as predictable as dogs,  
You have to be the alpha person in leadership.  
And when you are on their back,  
They have to rely on that. Or they are _dangerous_.  
Dogs aren’t as dangerous; it’s not like they are 2000 pounds! (Eve)

Visualize your body sitting on the back of an animal _so_ powerful that the might of modern machines are measured by their strength. _Horse Power_. Look down. Your eyes skim past the saddle and realize your knee points to her shoulder. A muscle larger than any muscle in your body, yet the shoulder muscle of a horse pales to any muscle that hugs their back or hip. Looking beyond your knee, your eyes dimensionally focus on the horse’s hoof denoting the actual distance your body is from the ground. A significant distance. You sit on her back knowing full well that this horse has complete control over the physical reality of where your body will go. Imagine the reality that while they exemplify this physical power, you are supposedly in control over them. What you have
pictured is the actual virtual power-dance negotiated by horse and rider. This power negotiation is very similar to the contradictory-complexities of the cultural politics embodied by White femininity—simultaneously privileged and marginalized.

Horses physically exemplify strength and fortitude. The fact is horses are stronger and more powerful than any human. I would argue that a person cannot physically force a horse to do anything. No matter what piece of equipment he has to his favor. Some horse persons might disagree with me claiming that whips, chains, and other devices can serve to denote dominion over the power of a horse. But I disagree. No matter what we physically do to a horse to force them under submission, horses in the end must choose to submit. When riding, the use of these devices remains feeble compared to the strength of a horse. Thus, it is the affective make-up of horses that allots humans the capability to establish a dominion partnership with them. Normative realms of power are founded on masculine framings of domination and physicality. Feminist aesthetics offers alternative approaches to hieratical negotiations of power that live exterior to dominion over but rather practice a “dominion with.” Examining the relational connectivity of horses and humans renders this (re)vision of power.

Riding is a feminist aesthetic power-dance. It extrapolates power relationality different than White heteropatriarchy power relations. Feminist aesthetic relationality is predicated on a performative love redirecting the normative understandings of hierarchies and power. Again, we cannot overlook the “the source of our own oppression” (Moraga “La Güera” 29). Power is present in both physicality and culturally within our flesh but the negotiation of feminine aesthetics power is counter to the normative framework of
hierarchies. Feminist power-dance is a mode of becoming and being that enables connectivity. Horses need hierarchies. But the hierarchies on which they rely look much different than our normative understandings of dominion. Contradictory to our understandings, their relation to chains of command remains in constant flux. Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson explain,

While they’re growing up, young colts learn that there is a give-and-take to social interactions. They also learn exactly how horses establish and maintain dominance hierarchy. All animals who live in groups-and that includes most mammals- form dominance hierarchies. *(Animals in Translation* 157)

Grandin and Johnson point out two critical conceptions here. Horses rely and live within social hierarchies. At the very same time, these hierarchies are much different than human’s understandings. These hierarchies are dependant on give-and-take to social interactions. Thus, the hieratical realm between horse and human remains a careful and constantly negotiated relation. Horses rely on dominion by the “emotionally confident” being for their safety. However, this is not the same hieratical dominion socially negotiated by humans. Humans rely on hierarchies socially to maintain dominance, power, and privilege. Horses rely on hierarchies to establish security from but more importantly for the group. In other words, it is not dominion over it is dominion with—a give and take. This power-dance is so astounding to me.

We see it when horses are in herds and one horse will physically bite and pin her ears at another. I used to think, “Wow, if I were that horse being picked on I would not be that bossy mare’s friend.” Counter to my friendship model, the submissive horse will actually nervously pace when that bossy mare is removed and whinnies for her to return.
to his side. Conversely you remove the submissive horse and generally that same overly confident mare will pace and whinny for his return. Add a third horse to this bunch and immediate renegotiations of dominance are established. There are numerous trajectories of relational happenings that occur in these moments. What remains constant is that the performative realms of dominance are always established, because they are always present.

What is not humanly “seen” are the subtle embodied negotiations this nervous and anxious horse desires and performatively demonstrates. Yet the bossy mare recognizes these negative affects through give-and-take negotiations and in turn performs “confidence” that appears in my eyes as “dominance.” In the end, at this moment in time between these two horses, one desires security and the other establishes it. This relationship affectively works and will change when the context or bodies in relation change—a new horse is introduced to the herd, a person enters the herd, a predator enters the herd. In any account, what is always first established and understood by horses is the definition of the relationship.

Between horses this power-dance is natural. Negotiating the power-dance between horse and human is everything but inherent, primarily because, for the relationship between horses and humans to work safely, humans must be the leader. Wright speaks to the power-dance and the necessity of relational defining between horses and humans. He states, These are not lap animals,
Not your Little Lilly\(^1\) we are talking about here. These animals can be very **very** dangerous animals. And you create this lap animal, This thing that you pick up and carry around when they are days old, That can end up being a very dangerous thing later on. From the very beginning you have to *define that relationship.*

When horses believe they are the body in power, it becomes their responsibility to continually establish dominion over you. Worse, this established relationship affectively positions the horse with the responsibility of power. Power is an affectively negotiated energy between horses and perhaps between all beings but most notable in the relationship between horse and rider. Different horses retain different levels of anxiety from the relational definition of power, but no matter what, all horses will become or are dangerous when the rider is not given or taking the performative role as leader.

Defining the relationship is so easily navigated between horses and so arduously negotiated between horses and humans. I believe this break centers on the horses extreme physical power matched entirely by their intense affective sensitivity. Humans and horses can commune together but the beauty of performatively negotiating this tension between horses’ physical extreme and emotive extreme causes much friction within the affective relationality. Wright touches on this complex performative power-dance. He states,

\[\text{--------------}\]

\(^1\) Here Wright is referring to my dog that is a tiny defenseless Toy Fox Terrier.
I’m always saying that the rider has to be a **benevolent dictator**. They **have** to tell the horse this is how it’s going to happen. And when that relationship is **clearly defined**, and the horse **submits** to that relationship, **Good things happen**. Then the rider doesn’t have to work so hard to make it happen. The horst **trusts** the rider.

Wright demonstrates this difficult power-dance of benevolent dictator which is concentrated on establishing and building trust. Submission from horses may come from a forced physical action but in the end it must be the horse’s choice to submit. Thus submission comes when the horse trusts that the power-dance holds her best interest in mind and is what the horse believes in doing. For example, a horse may fear jumping a certain jump and a rider might discipline the horse when he refuses to jump it. However, a rider can physically discipline a horse for hours and he never jump that fence. In the end, the horse must believe and trust in the defining power relation. What we learn here is feminist aesthetics must first define our power in relationships and then recognize the power present in the relation. When we do this a consciousness of connectivity can grow.

Wright went on to explain that defining this relationship and establishing the horse’s trust requires an acute awareness of the horse’s needs but is always best accomplished by “showing the horse how to do the right thing, rather than punishing it for doing the wrong thing.” Now the process of *showing* looks different depending on the horses’ sensitivity but is predicated on a consciousness passing from the horse to the rider and from the rider to the horse. This form of power performance is a clear representation of a feminist approach to power dynamics. Power in this relational dance is not originated on a physicality of forced “power over” but a feminist affective traversing of “power
with.” Aimee Carrillo Rowe speaks of the affective natures of power in her articulation of power lines as “manmade circuits through which people are joined and power is transmitted” (1). She asserts feminist alliances as mindful constructions of power lines that remake “power over” to “power with” and “power to.”

The power-dance experienced with horses is that of a “power with.” It is more than a mindful choice. It is a complete alteration of our innate affective tones. Lessons of affective reasoning learned by and through riding edify riders to negotiate affective power. Affective reasoning is where the crux of trust is fostered within this relationship. Trust is the foundational building block of all alliance possibilities. So in order to foster alliances, we must first understand how to promote trust in-between bodies. Trust is a primary factor that is broken in our traditional sense of hierarchies. When we come to see power in more collaborative tones, working with and for the other, we enable trust as the foundation of our power relationship.

At the beginning of defining a relationship often riders must learn the general form of affective transmitter they and their horses are. Affective reasoning is the process of learning to sense these affective transmissions and negotiate them according to the outcome they desire for the relational movement\(^2\). Trust is built through effective affective reasoning between horse and rider. At moments it is a “forced type of… a…” between both rider and horse. And they start to realize that they can do it. They start to

\[^2\] Affective reasoning was defined and examined in Chapter Five. Therefore, I will simply reference it in this chapter rather than re-articulate it.
trust themselves… and that relationship between themselves and themselves and their horses” (Wright). This forced type is detachment from our natural affective responses and negotiating a new form of affective means to accomplish relational connectivity. It is forcing an embodied feminist approach to power negotiation that is counter to normative means of control. Horses force us to open our eyes to new forms of power negotiations. Those comfortable within a feminist aesthetic performance are enabled with this form of power negotiation. Here is where we begin to see the interlacing of feminist aesthetics, affective reasoning and power tie together.

Affective reasoning cannot be accomplished outside of an embodied feminist aesthetic because one cannot performatively accomplish or even begin to understand this power dance outside the conscious and unconscious fixities of relational connectivity fostered through feminist aesthetic love. An embodied feminist aesthetic predisposes particular beings to an affective sensitivity to this non-normative cultural construction of hierarchy. This power-dance performance is a feminine approach to power that centers relational motives over our personal motive. Eve speaks to this idea. She explains,

If you come in and impose all your needs and all your… like you said, time frames.  It doesn’t work very well.
You gotta let go of the reins.
You gotta let the horse go,
You have to be at one with the horse.
And expand not just your riding but your control of yourself.
Letting Go and Listening to the horse rather than Forcing.
The horse is stronger than you so that will never really work.
I would say,
Developing another form of communication then just your hand to the mouth.
And that is,
Letting go of your need to control in your hand.
And having confidence that you can control from your other aids.

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Here Eve juxtaposes heteronormative³ framings of power with feminist aesthetic affective framings of power.

Heteronormative power is experienced and acquired through imposing all your needs, necessitated on control of oneself, others, and events. Horses do not function within this power-dance. Once again, horses are stronger than us; so we must learn to “let go” and have “confidence” in other forms of power negotiations that are fostered in “another form of communication” outside of physicality and inside the emotive/affective realms of *listening*. Power, rather, is experienced in the connectivity between two beings rather than power granted to one over another. This is the performative power within a feminist aesthetic.

This hierarchical difference is counterintuitive to White heteropatriarchy and thus premised on a feminist approach to negotiations of power. “Power with” is not outside of leadership or hierarchies but nurtured by first sensing the horse’s affective sensitivity. Highly sensitive horses need gentler relational negotiations where as dominant horses need more strong negotiations. I still sit a bit uncomfortably with the idea of endorsing a feminist approach to hierarchy and see this more as a non-hierarchical connection. But lessons rendered through this relationship expose that my views of hierarchy are so warped it contradicts within my mind to ever understand other forms of hierarchies. If we

³ I am using the term heteronormative rather than normative here in reference to the heterosexism and patriarchal undertones in dominant power relationships that are specifically counter to the feminist aesthetic power extrapolated in this context.
could, if just for a moment, entertain a conceptualization of hierarchies that actually serve
to empower rather than disenfranchise, we would picture the wonder of a power-dance
within feminine aesthetics. Manning explains this power dance as:

   Leader and follower are no longer individuals expressing their roles in a
   movement of steps: they are co-constituted by the very experience they are
   relationally creating. Concern is not concern for but concern with. (Manning 40)

Riding is a beautiful experience of this co-constituted expression of relational creating.
Leader and follower exist but the presence of this expression is invisible because rider
and horse must embody a concern with. As a rider, I assure readers this is not innate.
Inborn within humans is the need for control imbued by insecurity, pain, and fear when
control is taken from us. Riders must force ourselves to let go of our instinctive modes of
control from fear and learn a novel form of concern with. It begins when “we let go of the
reins” and it develops through the deep desire for relational connectivity. Suddenly in
moments of relational movement we experience an alternative hierarchy.

   Again this form of power is a give-in-take relational dance that shifts and alters by
events and beings changing. What remains constant is the fact that feminist aesthetic
power is premised on connectivity. Not power premised on domination. The reason our
defining of horse/human relationships is so difficult is primarily due to our very different
presumptions of hierarchies, and beyond this, our understandings of power. Our
underlining different grasp of the power-dance affectively sensed for purposes of filling a
need and for the community rather than for individual production. Hence, the affective
performance of this defining process is necessary but arduously traversed.

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This form of power works from an intersectional framework set forth by Patricia Hill Collins. Hill Collins organizes power into a matrix of domination that presses us to view our roles with power as both marginalized and empowered (Black Feminist Thought). Moraga adds, “The danger lies in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression” (“La Güera” 29). Feminist aesthetic power stretches us. White women must begin by understanding the specificities of ourselves as oppressed-oppressors. We must understand the harms White feminine bodies signify to women of color, and how our insecurities trigger particular feminist performances that do not allot constructive possibilities to define these relationships. Feminist aesthetics presses White women to see power intersectionally outside of normative-hieratical power, in brief moments of relational movement, exposing new realms of power negotiations. Feminist aesthetics remind White women that power can be negotiated outside of White heteropatriarchal frameworks. Heteronormative power is always present and thus hierarchies are inescapable and perhaps necessary. But this feminist aesthetics teach us power is not about regaining control of an event or person or imposing our needs on another. Feminist aesthetics power can be so much more beautiful.

Stepping out of the Iron: Humility Proceeds Alliance

After months of preparation and training I finally concluded I was ready to take Orion to a rated show in Colorado. So much went into this decision. A successful clinic with Wright, a ribbon filled non-rated show, and encouraging prompting from Kennedy

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boosted my confidence to finally make our Colorado debut. I knew my horse’s braids in his mane were not as perfect as those who paid for them. I knew my show clothes were not the cutting edge of fashion. I knew the price value of my horse and the money invested in training was no comparison to most. Swallowing these insecurities of classist confines, I convinced myself that a blue ribbon would prove my worthiness and rightful place at this show.

Standing near the in-gate at the rated show these tangled emotions tore my mind as I memorized my course. I desperately attempted to block out of my consciousness of the current surroundings that manifested my misbelonging. In the middle of this rigorous mind war, the barn manager from the previous barn I used to ride and work walked up to Orion’s shoulder. I was never sure whether he was a shy man or simply a smug man; his way of being seemed to dance between these two mannerisms. He began to pet Orion’s shoulder as he examined my sub par braids.

“Wow!” He began, “Orion can really turn out.” I looked down at his White middle-aged body that appeared older than he really was because of his receding hairline and wondered what he really meant. His comment both made me smile and cringe. Pressure to prove myself.

“Thanks” I replied. “Hope he plans to behave himself.” We laugh.

Orion began to paw the ground hard with his right front hoof. Then he shifted to the left. His impatience reflected my insecurities. My past riding gig was wonderful but I never felt like I belonged there. Facetious comments in passing by this barn manager
seemed to always define my belonging. “Block it out.” I thought. “This is our chance Orion.”

We entered the ring. The course began beautifully. Confidence slowly crept through my body. I relaxed. And then in a moment, everything changed. Orion left the ground before I planned to jump. Instantaneously our bodies broke away from each other. As Orion’s feet hit the ground my body hung desperately clutched to the side of his neck. I knew my imbalance infuriated him. Seconds later Orion’s displeasure produced a massive buck. My grasp lost. My body hit the ground. My outdated show clothes now covered with dirt. I jumped to my feet in a last attempt to regain some dignity. All I wanted was to get the hell out of there and pretend no one saw.

But Orion had other plans.

For the next ten minutes which felt more like hours, Orion proceeded to gallop around the show ring. Whinnying. Rearing. Bucking. Cantering across the diagonal line switching leads. A one horse performance (note without rider) that demanded everyone’s attention. At that point, six to seven people were running around the area attempting to catch him. All the other adjacent show rings were stopped for safety reasons until this “wild beast” was caught. All Eyes on Us.

Winded and caught, Orion’s reins were handed to me. The minutes that followed were filled with reassuring comments from Kennedy and others of the difficulty of that sloped arena. Despondency overwhelmed my body. Staring at the ground I nodded my head as tears filled behind my eyes. Head hung I walked Orion away from the show ring desperately desiring to hide.
I almost walked smack into her: the young woman who now rides for my past barn. She, also, happens to be dating the barn manager. Of all the people to run into now, I thought. She had won the class I notably tumbled. Our eyes met. She smiled largely and looked from me to my horse. “Oh my God! Are you ok? I have never seen a horse buck that big before in my life!”

“Oh...yeah. That’s nothing. You should see his bad behavior.” I attempted to joke. Glancing at my watch I pretended to be running late and walked away. I looked over my shoulder at Orion. His bright eyes and ears perked. Playfully grabbing at the reins with his lips his head swung gallantly as we walked. In his mind, he had proudly made a statement to all. That wasn’t the debut I was hoping for but it certainly met all of his expectations. I couldn’t help but laugh.

Memories of all my past dirt filled failing rushed into my mind. I was the rider I am today because of these events. I am the person I am today because I of my willingness to embrace the humility within these moments with dirt-lined smiles.

My mode of becoming at this horse show was completely enveloped in accomplishment by White capitalist heteropatriarchal standards. My logic of relationalities became organized outside of the connectivity between Orion and me. When our intentions swing away from our becoming together horses always react, not immediately, but over a course of affective intensities. Horses show us who we really are. Our cultural dispositions diverge immensely from horses. Politics of White capitalist heteropatriarchal power chip at our bodies and form our modes of being and becoming all too often into individualistic desires. Certainly we cannot appropriate a feminist
aesthetics until we break these cultural binds. Riding cultivates a feminist aesthetic to those that earnestly desire the relational connectivity. While not all riders engender these lessons of relation those that do, they learn through humility.

Orion knew no significance in blue ribbons. He distinctly reminded me of this through dirt covered clothes, a hip and elbow bruise, and his one horse performance of joyful exhilaration. Values in life should always be placed on relations. I still smile remembering this humiliating event and submit to the jarring reminder of what I should really value. Feminist aesthetics are embedded in valuing beyond personal propriety. It is located only in those moments of vulnerable humility. In the end, lessons of feminist aesthetic are harbored within a desire for and all too often an enforcement of humility.

My investment in possibilities of feminist alliance is encouraged by the work of feminists of color that desire and outline the workings for coalitions (Anzaldúa “Making Alliances,”“(Un)natural Bridges;” Moraga and Anzaldúa; This Bridge Called My Back; Carrillo Rowe Power Lines). Horses and riding continuously teach me what it really means to foster relationality and renegotiate a feminist approach to belonging. We can learn from this horse/human relationship where feminist alliances must begin. I agree with Carrillo Rowe that “becoming other” requires us surrendering ourselves to those interstitial spaces, seeking “to reveal the secret that nonetheless eludes us, as we make face in those intimate encounters constitutive of our becoming” (197). Indeed.

But I believe more work is to be done before we can honestly sit at our kitchen tables and hold these conversations. Many feminists, specifically many White feminists, need to take a step back before we can walk forward together. We must first embody
happiness before we can affectively engage reflexive awareness of our intersectional privileges and marginalization. Humility is difficult to discover in oneself and more challenging to practice because it so counter to our Western cultural ways of being. A feminist aesthetic consciousness of humility is not “to be humbled” but rather to embrace “being humble.” To really embark on a new articulation of power we must “let go of the reins.” Hit the dirt willingly exposing our vulnerabilities.

For me, raw rich humility lays rightfully at the center of this feminist aesthetics power-dance. Riders that do not embrace an attitude of humility cannot and will never affectively embody a feminist negotiation of hieratical relationality. Wright explains, “The ideal rider, for me, would be very humble in their assessment of their own abilities. I always prefer those riders that understate and over deliver, just like a horse.” I found Wright’s connection with human’s approach to humility mirroring that of a horse interesting. Overlooking the virtues built within a bond between horse and rider would be such a loss. Animals expose the beauty of a relationality that can, although fleeting, exist outside of the barriers of cultural politics. Mirroring them we learn the affective possibilities of relational connectivity. Can we mirror the relational desires of a horse that manifest between beings and for relational connectivity? I believe we can and must. I believe riding jolts us out of our arrogant depravity. We learn to “let go” and listen differently often covered in dirt and blinded by tears.

Humility is complex and chaotic. I believe we have long overlooked the composites of what humility really is. We simply stop short of believing humility is about respect and embodying a modest performance of self. Humility is so much more. It is a
compilation of multiple affectively charged positive and negative affects signifying its frenzied complexity. Humility is certainly positive but it does not entirely feel positive. Thus humility requires one to open spaces in our being and becoming that we have socially learned to guard. White patriarchy trains us to protect those sites of vulnerability, of lack, of failures in order to better achieve success through a White capitalist heteropatriarchal standard. Normative cultural politics of power necessitate that we build such walls. But this feminist aesthetics humility requires that we break them down with our bare hands and lie exposed. When we embark on such a journey, so counter intuitive of our learned way of being, we stumble. We fail. Therefore, humility requires vulnerability but more importantly, it necessitates perseverance.

Can humility be learned? No. Humility can be practiced. In response to my asking “what type of person is drawn to horses?” Kennedy said to me:

Those that enjoy being around animals
And a lack of a frustratable personality
I don’t really know if that is a word at all but… (She begins to laugh)
You know, it’s a frustrating sport.

Those sort of people: “Oh well! We will just try it again”
Those kinda people are obviously more successful and stick with it longer.
It’s not an instant gratification kinda feel.

Riding is frustrating because it entails an embodied feminist aesthetic that fosters relational connectivity only through a practice of humility. Riding begins to separate those walls but it hurts and it takes a deep desire to persevere through the frustration and pain.

Many riders explain that “the horse humbles me on a daily basis” (Eve). A moving true story in a book for “horse lover’s souls” a young woman, Vikki Marshal,
writes of her relationship between herself and her horse. Within the story of relearning to
“live,” she states, “B.J. has taught me it isn’t about where you came from, but who you’re
determined to be, along with one of the hardest human emotions… humility” (Marshall
21 my emphasis). I stand in agreement with Vikki Marshall that humanity lacks humility.
In this deficit of humility, humanity has lost touch with its ability to connect. We become
so embedded in the heteronormative framings of power many of us cannot even picture
an affective connectivity nonetheless experience it. Horses incite humility. And humility
enables bodies to experience relational connectivity of belonging. We learn a new
negotiation of power that exists in the being, not the production, exerted out of a
motivation of a feminine aesthetics.

The beauty of humility is the fact that it necessitates vulnerability. Riding is a
process of breaking these cultural barriers and enabling a becoming of vulnerability
towards another. Horses expose us in many ways. They expose our fears and enforce us
to alter our natural manners of fear management. I believe this is the core of where riding
contracts humility from a rider. In a causal conversation Wright touches on the humbling
nature of riding. In joking he claims,

You know, one thing about people I always believe,
You wanna; you wanna find a person you want to marry. (Smiling)
Ask them to ride a horse.
Ask them to ride a horse
Because the person that they are will come out when they ride a horse.
The real personality will come out.
What they show you
When you are talking to them
Is a very controlled person of that person.
The horse will bring out the real person.
Horses have the ability to expose our vulnerabilities. More so, they show the deep inner
lackings of our being we constantly attempt to hide. They are very vulnerable creatures
by nature. Their openness of their vulnerability becomes affectively charged by our
insecurities. Those persons that cannot settle themselves outside of a mode of control –
White capitalist heteropatriarchal control- never experience relational connectivity.
Horses, however, generally persevere. They “remind” us of what is really important.
They “remind” us to listen carefully with all senses. And when we do not listen, as
Kennedy so poignantly put it, “We end up in the dirt.”

Horses are not motivated by malice to humble humans. In fact, one could argue
the motives of a horse are as pure as humans will ever experience. They are motivated by
survival. Survival requires trust. Trust begins through an embodied feminist aesthetics of
political love where motivations move towards relational connectivity. I cannot say the
same for humans. I am not sure we ever can truly move outside of individualistic
motivations but we can and do desire connectivity. Dominant cultural norms interpellate
my White feminine body into hegemonic belongings with and within Whiteness,
patriarchy, heterosexuality, elitist capitalist classism. These interpellations conflict with
my desired belongings of relational connectivity with feminists of color, with queers of
color, with Others like me and unlike me. However, performance agency offers us
pleasurable spaces outside of discursive signification to disrupt interpellation and move
toward new belongings through an embodied desire of difference. Carrillo Rowe claims
that feminist alliances begin by forging a politics of relations. I would suggest we step
back and re-learn a performative art of relating through an embodied feminist aesthetic that requires new negotiations of love and power through humility.

**Feminist Futurities of Feminist Aesthetics**

Feminist aesthetics are located in a feminine consciousness and the performative. It is the vulnerability of connecting with another for another. Feminist aesthetics is always in relation and nested in the betweenness of two or more beings. Embodying feminist aesthetics allows normative framings of power to become reshaped and perhaps remade. And when we embody a feminist aesthetics and experience its performative possibilities, we then experience and expose feminist aesthetics performative traits that open doors for new conversations of where feminist alliances can and should start.

I am not sure if I am comfortable summarizing the findings of this chapter in chance it might fix what I desire to remain fluid. I imagine painting an embodied consciousness of feminist aesthetics through these performative moments that reveals the beauty of that which is and yet to be between women of color and White women. Muñoz invited us to *Cruse Utopia* “to think about our lives and times differently, to look beyond a narrow version of the here and now on which so many around us who are bent on the normative count” (189). He explains utopia is “about an insistence on something else, something better something dawning… from shared critical dissatisfaction we arrive at collective potentiality” (189). My hope is that through these performative dialogues we can envision the potentials of an embodied feminist aesthetics that beautifully escape into relational connections of feminist futurities.
* * * *

Rather than conclude I end with the valuable words of Cherrie Morga:

“But it is not really difference the oppressor fears so much as similarity. He fears he will discover in himself the same aches, the same longings as those of the people he has shitted on. He fears the immobilization threatened by his own incipient guilt. He fears he will have to change his life once he has seen himself in the bodies of the people he has called different. He fears the hatred, anger, and vengeance of those he has hurt.

This is the oppressor’s nightmare, but it is not exclusive to him. We women have a similar nightmare, for each of us in some way has been both oppressed and the oppressor. We are afraid to look at how we have failed each other. We are afraid to see how we have taken the values of our oppressor into our hearts and turned them against ourselves and one another. We are afraid to admit how deeply “the man’s” words have been ingrained in us... The feminist movement must be a movement of such survivors, a movement with a future” -Cherrie Moraga “La Güera”
CHAPTER SEVEN

Unsaddling and Reflecting on the Ride

Many years ago at the very beginning of graduate school, I began my very first ethnographic project on the Equestrian sport. The Equestrian culture is both representative of my being but also a large part of my belonging. In essence, I researched a space like Equestrian that I could generally find belonging, for an entirely alternative space (graduate school), in which I feel so misplaced. Not surprisingly, I return to this research homecoming for my culminating dissertation project. This returning was not initially embraced by me but carefully encouraged by my adviser. Years ago I struggled with representing a culture so close to my heart. I grappled with how to expose the cultural complexities of identities while also remaining true to my desires. This was a struggle I was not interested in revisiting. Research manifests from desire. Desire to learn, desire for social justice, desire for people, but in the end, this desire is always nestled in where we as the researcher are within our research.

This research homecoming to Equestrian culture was similar but different in so many ways. I have grown as a scholar; thus, I assumed my desires within this research space would have changed as well. Before writing this conclusion I decided to revisit my original paper and reflect on the manifested desires exposed between the two projects.
What I realized then and struggled with again was that this research project appeared to have two seemingly different avenues of research: 1) The cultural politics of power engendered within this sport, and 2) the relational experiences performatively embodied within riding. What never changed was my desire to blend both a critical eye on the cultural politics but also expose the empowering possibilities within the performance of riding. In my previous project, I was advised to drop the relational aspects with the horse. And I as I stared into my current dissertation, field notes, and transcribed interviews; I realized how much was lost when I did so. I lost what I desired most: probabilities of feminist futurity.

These two trajectories within my research grow from my desire as a researcher to imagine feminist futurity. Feminists imagine possibilities by understanding the present as molded by our convoluted past. Accordingly we must explicate the cultural politics of power performatively engaged on and by bodies but to stop there removes our privilege to imagine the possibilities of change and progress. Research, for me, must be about deconstructing hegemonic realms within our present but also articulating the utopian performativity of our possible futures. I must believe “this potentiality is always in the horizon and, like performance, never completely disappears but, instead, lingers and serves as a conduit for knowing and feeling other people” (Muñoz Cruising Utopia 113). These are the bilateral knowings I hope for within my research that reveal feminist futurity by offering us connection to find belonging outside of hegemonic binds within a breaking of them.
As an ethnographer, I am comfortable in the unknown but was uneasy about the two relatively different trajectories within this ethnographic project I simply “hoped” would eventually overlap and speak to each other. I settled into this dis-ease holding tightly to the reality that in dropping one I lose the complete performative nuances of this cultural space. I began by delving into the hegemonic framings of the Hunter/Jumper sport, which pointed me to the intrinsic ties to and broken by White femininity’s performance of White heteropatriarchal classism. Following the guidance of Cherrie Moraga (“La Güera), I began by articulating the specificities of oppression and was brought to where these two separate research trajectories meet: within the relations for utopian feminist probabilities. In the end, I realized that the relation between a horse and human is not only a primary factor to this Equestrian community that must be addressed when speaking with them. But these relational lessons of affective betweenness experienced in the moments of the actual performance of riding is the key factor to understanding an embodied feminist aesthetics and probabilities of feminist futurities. Therefore in my meager attempt to properly represent this/my culture, I came to deeper social understandings of White femininity beyond White supremacists heteropatriarchy towards glimpses of feminist aesthetics relations.

My intentions for this project were to stage a performance of feminist futurities that imagines feminist aesthetics as relational probabilities towards feminist alliances. Sara Ahmed reminds me “The question of the future is an affective one; it is a question of hope for what we might yet be, as well as fear for what we could become” (Cultural Politics 183). Thus my desires for feminist futurities is not outside a reflexive awareness
of feminisms past because “hope involves a relationship to the present, and to the present as affected by its imperfect translation of the past” (183-4). Therefore, I cannot ethically embark on feminist alliances without first understanding the performances of White femininity as both bound by cultural politics and often working within them. But to end there removes the performative nuances of probabilities that envision a horizon of feminist aesthetics as relational connectivity.

The complexities of White femininity require I intricately paint a collage of embodied performances of lived everyday life informed by critical feminist theories. Thus, this dissertation appears jumbled but exposes that writing the intricacies of simultaneously privileged/marginalized performatives requires a juggling on the page. The complexity of the cultural nuances of White femininity must be intricately pulled apart because of language’s shortcomings to represent performative happenings. Perhaps the ordering of my pictures was incorrect and projected particular focuses. But I ask you as readers to scale your gaze out and begin to see the entire collage.

Envision: how we must picture the White Lady and this sport as a cultural space that evokes the politics of power on the performing body. Envision then: how the sport of Equestrian organizes White women to perform classism in particular ways in order to serve White capitalist heteropatriarchy. This allows for us to visualize the different performances of class exposed by White women within this sport and the affective qualities of these embodied performances. White women hold an interesting intersection of positionalities that offers us the ability to either gain power from our performance of class or develop relations by rejecting classist performances. We learn that performative

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positionalities offer spaces for deconstructing White heteropatriarchy and performative probabilities of affective relations. Envision the possibilities of hegemonic deconstruction when these performances are undone.

But to stop there does not envision the embodied “doings” within the performance of riding. Envision the relation between horse and human and the affective lessons rendered here. Only then can we come to the beautiful culminating picture that dismantles but also reconstructs a feminist aesthetics of performance possibilities. A feminist aesthetics that pictures “a world that should be, that could be, and that will be” (Muñoz Cruising Utopia 64). An embodied feminist aesthetics (re)imagines normative power into feminist framings of power. An embodied feminist aesthetics manifests a practice of humility that (re)imagines feminist alliances. Envisioning feminist aesthetics stages a utopian performative that White women both can and should performatively engage in order to foster feminist futurities with feminists of color. By holding tight to these two seemingly different trajectories I was brought far beyond articulating hegemonic binds on White women’s bodies but into aesthetic illuminations of feminist futurities of alliance probabilities.

So, this dissertation is a collaboration of different pictures situated into a complex performative collage. And while the performances are written linearly they are not staged in this manner and should not be envisioned that way. No component of the dissertation can supersede the other, yet at the very same time, none of these performances can be downplayed in order for the staging to exist. The lessons of riding are both a performance of the cultural politics of power and the feminist aesthetics empowered by it. Together
they denote what the sport does and what the sport offers to White women’s bodies simultaneously marginalized and privileged. The analysis chapters in this dissertation offer a beautiful space to understand the complexities of affective intersectionality through relations of the body, through relations of contexts, through relations between people. This conclusion serves to both summarize these different pictures and envision pictures that are still yet to be. I close by performatively explicating the intricate overlappings of this dissertation discovered by and through my body.

Reflecting on the Different Pictures

As an ethnographer, theory informs the lived intricacies which I locate and embody within my ethnographic sites. While my method serves as theory in many ways informing the cultural politics of bodies performing and performatively staged, this research is foreground within the theories of intersectionality and affect (Chapter Two). Intersectionality calls forth the body’s multifarious avenues. It provides a theoretical lens to understanding the cultural politics of the body’s performative ways of being, being with, and being understood. Intersectionality also informs the politics of power (Hill Collins Black Feminist Thought), which I would claim presses us to understand that most bodies depending on contextual realities are simultaneously marginalized and privileged.

Where this informs my project is centering the interstitial workings of power performatively negotiated by White women’s femininity. Affective-Intersectionality is an interweaving of affective theory to intersectionality that provides a language to the multiplex of power on/by/with bodies. Affect serves to extrapolate identities relational
movement, the natures of betweenness, and the belongings existing within these intervals.

My use of affect theory was chosen primarily because it offers myriad manners of explicating relationalities of bodies. Ahmed explains,

> Focusing on emotions as mediated rather than immediate reminds us that knowledge cannot be separated from the bodily world of feeling and sensation; knowing is bound up with what makes us sweat, shudder, tremble, all those feelings that are crucially felt on the bodily surface, the skin surface where we touch and are touched by the world. (*Cultural Politics* 171)

The blending of affect with intersectionality affords means to articulate intersectional fluidity within discourse, relocates power into a state of utopian emergence, locates context in relation to bodies, and moves us towards a relational-motional composition. While affect allots new means to understand performative intensities and relations between bodies, intersectionality remains at the center of my theoretical framework because we must always recognize the material workings of identities and power first.

Affective-Intersectional theory informed my method and exposes my methodology. At the center, this research is a critical performance ethnography that also utilizes co-performative interviews and critical rhetorical understandings of vernacular discourses within the site to speak to and enlighten my ethnographic findings (Chapter Three). Articulating the intersections between performance ethnography and critical rhetoric outlines both a practice of these methods but also justifies the reasoning for the utilization of both within one study. I glean this multi-methods idea from Bernadette Calafell. She uses auto-biographical performance, performance ethnography and textual analysis within her book *Latina/o Communication Studies: Theorizing Performance*. Calafell explains, “Each of these [method] choices is centered in my desire to open up the
ways we understand the study of performance in the field” (*Latina/o Communication Studies* 137). I echo her and add that these two method choices also allot me better understandings of the cultural politics of lived performances within my ethnographic site.

Reflecting on my multi-method process, I believe multi-methods works wonderfully when a significantly large ethnographic site is selected. The sport of Hunter/Jumper, while not mainstream in relation to the larger sports world, is still a significantly large group of people within the U.S. Thus, critical performance ethnography equips me with the intricacies of mundane embodied moments experienced within the sport. Co-performative interviews offer a means to harmonize with the voices of those within the sport. But critical rhetoric affords a picture of how these performative moments and participants voices are shaped within the larger cultural politics of the sport.

I began my contextual conversation with a literature review of sport and came to realize, somewhat disappointingly, that very little sport and communication research actually takes a critical ethnographic and performance approach (Chapter One). Thus, my research is organized by examining sport as a culturally nuanced space to understand the performance of White women’s identities. Calafell explains that she “situates performance not necessarily on a formal stage but on the stage we call our lives” (137). I too understand performance from this perspective to such an extent I cannot understand identities outside of the performative natures they exist by and within our being. Thus, the cultural realities of this sport reveal it to be a perfect space to demark performances of White femininity in their lived everyday experiences.
To stage the performance of White femininity, I began by articulating possible archetypes of White women’s femininity (Chapter One). I utilized Patricia Hill Collins archetypes of Black women to organize how I began marking the Whiteness of White women. The archetypes of White femininity I denote are in response to Hill Collins but also informed by many other feminists of color critiques of White women’s femininity. My framings of different White women’s performances of femininity was both informed by Hill Collins work but also the work of Bernadette Calafell (“When Will We Matter”), Tracey Owens Patton, Gloria Anzaldúa (Borderlands) to name a few. Therefore, my intention was not to not to re-center the problematic White-Black dichotomy. Rather, this work intends to begin a conversation of marking the multiple performances of White femininity informed by feminists of color. These feminists of color brought me to understand the exploitation of civility in relation to Whiteness and more specifically White women. The archetypes of White femininity begin to link White femininity to White-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy and extrapolate the imperative/illusory nature of class performance underlining these intrinsic connections. The rest of the dissertation leans on this finding of White femininity’s civility in relation to classism in an attempt to detangle the workings of power on and by White women’s bodies in order to manifest White women’s consciousness and perhaps picture an embodied performance that offers relational possibilities for feminist alliances.

The stage in which I locate these performance possibilities is through a sport dominated by White women: Hunter/Jumper Equestrian. In Chapter Four, a discussion of class performance by White women surfaces as an imperative space of entry into
understanding the performance of White women within the politics of Whiteness, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. The critical performance ethnography revealed that the majority of White women riders comfortably perform within but are also generally performatively seen as “White Ladies.” The sport both exposes how White-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy is served by White women performing elite classism but also the performative access to power White women receive by and through the performance of bourgeois classism. Affective intersectionality reveals that class maintains affective qualities that discipline White femininity into serving White heteropatriarchy but these performances of White feminine elitist classism break the relational possibilities between horse and rider. Thus we locate the doings and undoings of White feminine civility when White women’s bodies serve or disrupt class performance.

In the next chapter, I discuss the importance of taking the relationship between horse and humans seriously (Chapter Five). Originally, I did not see this focus as an imperative point within the research project. But as I conducted my ethnography, interviews and read multiple discourses from the community, I came to realize that to not research and speak of the relational bond between woman and horse would gravely misrepresent the values held within this community. The cornerstone to this sport and what marks its difference from other women-dominated-sports is the horse. I examined the performance of riding and found the relational aspects of this performance as rendering lessons in affective awareness, affective transmissions, and affective reasoning.

Here we begin to unravel the cultural politics bound on bodies but also negotiated by them. Riding pictures performative moments of relation that teach
bodies how to negotiate the politics of power present on bodies but entirely outside of the discursive realm. I looked to affective intersectionality to provide a language for these entirely embodied-communicative movements. Affect serves to theoretically organize an understanding of possibilities to re-grasp relationships. When we concentrate on these immaterial/material transmissions between bodies, affect is necessary to talk about what is going on and also the primary tool to connect these performative lessons to the cultural politics laden within the sport. Focusing on the relations between horse and rider teaches us about the embodied relations between beings that is powerfully understood by some riders and should be articulated and extended into conversations of the politics of relations between women. Perhaps Donna Haraway addresses this best when she states,

The task is to become coherent enough in an incoherent world to engage in a joint dance of being that breeds respect and response in the flesh, in the run of the course. And then remember how to live like that at every scale, with all the partners. (62)

What I love most about her explanation of the communicative relationality between animal and human here is how she extends these lessons to larger cultural understandings. Chapter Five is about extending the intersectional affective lessons experienced and learned in the betweenness of horse and rider to the negotiations of betweenness among women.

Relating to horses begins within the body and carefully dances this trust and respect line by (re)gaining our affective consciousness and then practicing affective
reasoning. Chapter Five demonstrates affective reasoning refers to some riders’ ability to sense the presence of affects and negotiate through these relations so completely influenced by cultural politics of power while remaining entirely outside of them at the very same time. More importantly these lessons of affective reasoning can and should be extended to living “with all partners.” While I recognize that horse-human relationships sit at much different political intersections than women-to-women interactions, looking to this unique relationship played out within this sport allots new and wonderful understandings of power dynamics that can be translated into larger communicative politics.

Chapter Five begins to outline what embodied practices must be present in order to properly engage and experience relational connectivity of affective reasoning. Affective reasoning opens doors of Communication studies into affect and how they lean towards each other in order to begin to understand new politics of relationships. These embodied performances exist within White capitalist heteropatriarchy but also reveal embodied negotiations that deconstruct and reconstruct new forms of communicative styles. Affective reasoning reveals an embodied-communicative-performative space to deconstruct White femininity. We begin to understand new forms of communication that are not beyond Whiteness but actually allow us new ways to negotiate the performance of White femininity. These potential feminist performatives challenges White capitalist heteropatriarchal binds on White women’s bodies in order to engage with others. Affective reasoning is both culturally reflexive but also affectively sensitive in ways that reveal relational movement with others in difference.
My final analysis chapter (Chapter Six) attempts to connect the lessons of embodied relations rendered within riding to the larger socio-cultural politics. I came to frame these affective-intersectional feminist embodied practices as embodied performances of feminist aesthetics engaged by feminine beings in order to foster feminist alliances. While no picture within this dissertation should proceed or supersede the other, I do believe Chapter Six on feminist aesthetics best weaves the analytical findings together to picture a rich culminating view of feminist futurities that stretch towards a horizon of feminist alliances between women of color and White women.

Holding tight to the politics of power present in the sport to inform the workings of embodied performances of riding; we come to picture the power, beauty, and possibilities of an embodied feminist aesthetics. In doing so, we open a discussion of new articulations of power and non-normative framings of hierarchical relationships. Off stage or on, in the show ring or simply riding, the rider and horse together control the performance with a partnership for mutuality. This mutual relational interval relies on an exchange of bodily communication predicated on a trust for and with another motivated by love outside of personal gain. A deep bond is built through this communicative process and a desire is born to continue this performance, “a performative urge that continues to arouse even as it satisfies” (Bell “Toward a Feminist Aesthetic” 111). Riding is a practice of embodied feminist aesthetics. Not long ago a mentor in my life who happens to be my first riding trainer was discussing her love for horses and how it is a life long project to develop and ascertain. In response to me asking what constantly re-inspires her to “the ride,” she said to me,
You have a teammate that you’re **risking** your life with that you have to communicate with in *other* ways. And I think that was the “big thing” that really drew me in because I really *liked*, and thought I was decently good at communicating that way. You know communicating with your **body**, Communication with your *emotion*.

Michelle’s passion for riding is premised on this communication without language: an embodied feminist aesthetics performance.

Reflecting on his week long experience of learning to ride, Neal Stantelmann writes of a conversation a woman rider had with him. “You know how men break horses?” asked the Bambi-eyed criminal investigator rider. “How they dominated horses and dominated women? I think we identify with horses because our spirits were broken too” (74). This woman beautifully denotes the politics of power historically laden on relational bodies, but I would venture to guess that since her race is not noted, this woman is White. Perhaps women have a unique bond with horses, a manner of relating, because of this unique history to domination. But the question that must follow is what privilege does this bond offer as well? Riding challenges some White women to see the world from a different perspective because it is a performance where domination and hierarchy must be re-understood in an alternatively feminine, non-White heteropatriarchal, performance: an embodied feminist aesthetics performance.

The feminist aesthetics I propose requires women to re-learn humility, what it is and how to embody it, in order to actually foster feminist alliance possibilities. Humility is required within all power relationships. But where humility is necessitated is within the interstitial relations of power and identities with power. As riding reveals, power is
dynamic and flows between each individual within a relation. Affective-intersectionality encourages me to sense and understand how power is inflicted on me and by/through my body onto another. Relationships that desire alliance requires us to humbly acknowledge our embodied points of privilege. We must risk ourselves emotionally and be willing to hurt with/hurt for/hurt by another in order to actually experience transformational relations. Like riding, we might not always fall off but we must always recognize it as a possibility; relational political-power pains are not always present but they are always a possibly between two bodies. The desire to relate is the connection an embodied feminist aesthetics exposes and the disruption it holds over Whiteness, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy is the feminist futurities it maintains.

Envisioning Possible Futures

I probably will never see clear conclusions within this dissertation because my eyes do not focus in that manner. I do not believe there really are endings to come to but rather thoughts to question and performative possibilities to practice. In riding, we never have a perfect ride. Riders learn instead to love the process of aspiring towards those “perfect moments.” There are many performative elements to this dissertation that reveal the possibilities of “perfect moments” yet to be. I love these productive openings that reveal performative provocation; “from shared critical dissatisfaction we arrive at collective potentiality” (Muñoz 189). I am satisfied by these openings with hope they ignite an invitation for dialogic engagements. I sit here in wonder. To think that I have come to an end of such a long journey of research, writing... learning. But like every
journey, I look back and think about the missing moments along the way. The generative beginnings the voyage revealed and the possible adventures to come.

There is more to be done to clearly understand White femininity and civility. While I touch on this conceptualization, I do not actually articulate performative civility between women and the relational harms present. I am inspired by the productive challenge to pursue this performative work further. I, also, believe the affective consequences of class are complex and tie into two imperative issues within White femininity that need to be further extrapolated. First, the intersectional nature of class and the multiplex performances of it in conjunction with White women’s bodies exposes interesting new avenues of understanding White femininity. While on the page these performances can and should be connected to perhaps mediated archetype representations of them and then complicate the performative agency both privileged and disciplined by and on White women’s bodies.

Secondly, I also find the connection of class and civility manifest an interesting intersection within White women’s performance of femininity. Teasing this out more through a staged performance of these multiple performances of class by my White straight feminine body may open engaging dialogues of Whiteness, heteropatriarchy, classism and cultural politics. I envision this performance engaging dialogues of my White co-performative interviewees with my personal narratives all along remaining informed by the feminists of color that organize my understandings of these embodied politics. In the end, the performance would reveal the politics of class and its intricate connections to the cultural power of civility on/by and through White femininity. In
marking this intersection through my body the performance reveals negotiations of White femininity yet to be. This performance could be a project that is performed on the stage and then the page.

While my analysis culminates with performatively engaging the dynamics and prospective offerings of an embodied feminist aesthetics, I remain fascinated and drawn to understanding the disabling-enabling performance of humility. Humility is not a new concept. Perhaps really all I am actually doing in my final analysis chapter is drawing attention to the age old lessons of our mothers and mothers before them. Nonetheless, performing feminist aesthetics in connection to humility and White women’s bodies is still important and needs to be better conceptualized as a feminine presence. Humility must be negotiated affectively both in its successes and failures. I would love to continue this composite of my dissertation further and explore what feminist aesthetics can offer us in regards to intersectional properties of power and identities in order to foster feminist alliances-feminist futurities.

In addition, I have laid the beginnings to a foundation of discursively marking the presence of affects, the transmissions of them, and possibilities of how to negotiate affects. Years ago when I first studied this sport of Equestrian, I utilized the theory of performativity to organize the social workings of the sport. Presently, I employed intersectionality and affect. The presence of affect in communication studies offers us a wonderful understanding and language to marking the embodied-emotive-movement of relational-betweenness that is certainly nestled at the center of Critical Cultural Communication Studies research and more specifically Hunter/Jumper riding.
Performance Studies work without doubt is fascinated with the negotiations and workings of aesthetics. Affect provides new realms to this fascination by exposing the material/immaterial means of emotive expressions existing between beings in moments where bodies crash into each other and learn to negotiate these collisions. Those performative moments relinquished to the expressions of “you just had to be there,” are offered explanations to our personal absorptions of embodied moments. Knowing that events are always compiled of circuits of affects performatively engaged, offer us a means to understand not only animals in translation to us but humans’ translations between each other. What I tried to do within this critical performance ethnography was take these complex theories and point to moments that represent their workings. Perform on the page for you the expression of complex cultural theory in our lives. I would love to continue forward with this project by performatively conveying more complete articulations of these theories in embodied moments of lived experiences as they inform each other and also inform these moments.

_Dusting the Dirt Off: Weaving My Life with Riding_

I remember the first time I met him: Lochlan, my first horse. He was much too big for me everyone would say. They told me I should ride a pony or start with a safer smaller horse for what I wanted to do. But this was the only horse I had access to and I loved him for that.
I remember the hours I spent struggling to put his halter on his head. My small frame versus his tall one. I wanted so badly to play with him. He seemed to laugh at me as I reached up and begged him to put his head into the halter. He would tease me and taunt me by lowering his head just long enough for my tiny hands to put the halter over his ears. And just as I began to attach it, his head and I would lift-off as the halter fell to the ground. These were the hours that I learned patience, perseverance, and relation take time. But in time a trust was fostered. A connectivity of relation I have yet to experience with any other being to this day.

I remember riding him. The enduring presence of relationality was very evident between us when I rode him. He would try very hard to do as I asked but it seemed he knew better than to simply jump. He knew if he just simply obeyed I would never learn. It was not I that trained him but he taught me. I learned to listen not with just my ears but my being, being with, and being for. In these moments, I learned to sense the presence and negotiations of affects. These are the moments of belonging in relation were found.

I remember falling. Up on his neck I went. His mane blurred my vision as I slowly slid down the side of his neck, off his shoulder and onto the ground. He tried to lift his head and hold me up there, but his efforts were to no avail. Tears filled my eyes and slowly traveled down my face leaving trails of clean skin. The pain I experienced was not physical. It was emotions of embarrassment, distain, and reflections of my being with. These tears were pure expressions of humility.

I remember learning to love. The hours I would spend cleaning his stall, perfecting his bedding, making sure he had a blanket when it was cold, scratching him on
his neck, talking to him, grooming him, defending him to others that snickered at his breeding. My hope in these actions was purely to ensure he knew how much I loved him. But in love are unexplainable pains.

I remember saying goodbye. Lifting his helpless head with my tiny hands, I stood in front him and pleaded with my eyes. “You get better.” But I knew I was saying goodbye. I knew because he told me. “But how will I ever survive?” I asked. He looked back at me… “Just go to the barn.” Weeks passed before I would go. I vowed to never love another.

Finally, heartbroken my mother dragged me to the barn where I was shown a horse I could ride, Savvy. As I was hoisted up on her back, I tentatively began to ride. I remember that moment. It was there in the ride that Lochlan found me. The lessons of feminist aesthetics experienced, embodied, and performed exist there in the ride. These are the lessons I carry with me to each composite of my life. These are the lessons that make me the person I am today.

* * * *

I have never made a life decision that did not involve how it would affect my horse/s and/or my ability to ride. While I have always fantasized about living in the heart of a metropolitan city that simply was never a lived reality or possibility for me because of my deep commitment to riding. Thus, when I choose which school to attend for my doctoral degree it is no surprise that the availability of riding played a huge part in where I would go. So when I decided on University of Denver, I chose to come here because I desired to study under my advisor. But it was also a place where I could afford to have
my horse and ride. What I was not aware of at the time was that these two seemingly different components to my doctoral choice, these two seemingly different trajectories, intricately interweave together. The journey to a Ph.D. is long and filled with failures, successes, and confusions. But perhaps what was so enriching and also difficult for me was learning the power lines of my feminine Whiteness in relation to working under a woman of color.

It was not until recently that I finally realized the politics of my Whiteness within this relation, despite her constant and careful guidance regarding these power lines. Certainly my advisor held the academic power but what I completely misunderstood were the daunting realities of my White body in relation to her. I began our relationship operating from a learned performance of White heteropatriarchal classism that required I hide my insecurities under a performance of confidence. In one poignant moment, she exposed to me the harms of this performance I was enacting both to her and myself. In that moment, I fell in the dirt. Tears streamed from my face as I stood before her bruised… humbled.

I knew this sensation. And I chose to engage. I chose to practice humility. I chose to embody feminist aesthetics. Feminist aesthetics requires the affective labor of recognizing the politics of power in relation between two bodies. But more importantly feminist aesthetics is the arduous process of humbling ourselves before another. Here lies the skeleton of my dissertation that intricately stitches the tissues of each separate chapter together. Our bodies learn normative performances of self that best serve Whiteness, heteropatriarchy, and classism. In an insecure and unfamiliar space, my body performed
“White Lady” – White feminine civility to the best of my ability. However, affective consciousness and affective reasoning is necessitated in these moments to negotiate the powers of emotions pulsating within and through the politics of power between two bodies.

Feminist aesthetics equips women with the emotional resilience and perseverance to endure the pains of humility required to renegotiate heteronormative politics. I still stumble and fall in the dirt. I still feel bruises from past and know that I will cause others bruises. I realize more bruises are yet to come for me. But I hold tight to the probabilities within those brief and fleeting moments of relational betweenness experienced within an embodied performance of my feminist aesthetics.

**Dreaming of Riding: Embodied Feminist Aesthetics as Envisioning Feminist Futurities**

In a recent article in *Practical Horseman*, Jim Wofford, a renowned five-time US National Champion, wrote about the lessons horses have taught him throughout his life in an article entitled “Our Horses, Our Teachers.” He challenges, “We need to stop occasionally and think about how much we learn from our horses, because the things we learn from them are the truly important parts of our relationship with these marvelous creatures” (16). Wofford recognizes that learning to ride is much more than learning the techniques of this sport. While his lessons are both similar to and different from those I have written of in this dissertation, we agree together that horses and riding is about learning imperative lessons of the heart.
While this research appears to be about horses, it is really a project about the conditions of women, femininity, and feminism. My investment in imagining possibilities of dismantling Whiteness and heteropatriarchy surfaces only when I can imagine new ways of being-with that sit outside of heteronormativity. These desires are what guided my critical performance ethnography and allowed my body to experience the performative possibilities that exist in fleeting moments and perhaps are also yet to be. My hope is that through a performative conversation I have sketched the probabilities of an embodied feminist aesthetic. Feminist aesthetics are located in feminine beings and the performative. They are the vulnerability of connecting with another for another. Feminist aesthetics are always in relation and nestled in the betweenness of two or more beings. Embodying feminist aesthetics allot normative framings of power to become reshaped and perhaps remade. And when we embody feminist aesthetics and experience their performative possibilities, we then experience and expose feminist aesthetics performative traits that opens doors for new conversations of where feminist alliances can and should start.

There are many windows built within this dissertation with the intent to leave them open. My intention for these openings serves to invite new conversations and critiques of what I have claimed but also offers me the possibility to continue further. Feminist of color before me have successfully torn down the ivory tower and exposed the rich soil that can foster a beautiful reconstruction. These women continue to gently teach me how to rebuild. And I realize now that I will be building on the findings of this project for my entire life because this dissertation is generative of my lived experiences, my

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intersecting identities, my body, my being, my belonging. So, I invite you to join me in envisioning feminist futurities that see something brighter, something richer, something better, something yet to be.

Riding is an exercise of mistake management.
Perfect is never going to happen.
But I think it’s just a reality. Too many variables.
If somebody is striving for perfection,
Every time something other than perfect happens,
They dwell on that imperfection.
They’re never going to go anywhere.
Take those little things that happen along the way,
And just keep moving forward.
Keep thinking about solving the problem.
Rather than worrying about the fact that there is a problem.
But that’s life too¹

¹ Said to me at the very end of our interview by Wright. Reference not written in text to provide more poetic possibilities.
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\footnote{Pseudo name not actual name of interviewee. For purposes of personal privacy for interviewees and under regulation by IRB Committee, the names of participants will not be published.}

\footnote{Pseudo name not actual name of interviewee. For purposes of personal privacy for interviewees and under regulation by IRB Committee, the names of participants will not be published.}

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

“Performing Feminist Aesthetics: A Critical Performance Ethnography of the Sport of Equestrian”

You are invited to participate in a study that will examine your experiences within the Hunter/Jumper sport. This study is being conducted to explore the culture of the Equestrian sport and the performance of riding. The primary researcher, Dawn Marie McIntosh, is a doctoral student at the University of Denver in Communication Studies. She can be reached at 408-499-7675 or dawnmarie.mcintosh@du.edu. This project is supervised by her adviser Dr. Bernadette Calafell, Department of Communication University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, 303-871-4322, Bernadette.Calafell@du.edu.

Interviews should take approximately an hour of your time. Participation will involve responding to questions regarding your participation within the hunter/jumper sport and different identity politics that derive from the sport. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and confidential. In addition, should you choose, you can request a follow-up interview with the primary researcher at any time over the duration of the study. At no time will you be requested to associate your name with your answers. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although the research does not address the following: suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning these topics that it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

The benefits of being involved in this research include becoming more aware of your own experiences as an equestrian athlete/participant and making a strong contribution to existing research on identity politics. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. I respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel

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uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Signature Page

Informed Consent Form

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called “The Performance of Equestrian Riders: A Critical Performance Ethnography of the Sport of Equestrian.” I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

________________________
Participant Name

________________________
Participant Signature  
________________________
Date
Appendix C: Informed Consent Digital Recording Signature Page

In addition, I agree to be audio-recorded with the understanding that these audio-recordings will be used for the purposes of this research study and transcribed using pseudonyms to protect my confidentiality.

___ I agree to be audio-recorded.

___ I do not agree to be audio-recorded

________________________________________
Participant Name

________________________________________  __________
Participant Signature                        Date