Slurs Reclaimed: A Reparatory Solution to the Problem of Ambiguity

A Research Master's Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Philosophy
Utrecht University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Research Master's Degree
by
Sophie Cohen
Utrecht, The Netherlands
June 2024

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the philosophy department at Utrecht University for providing me with the academic opportunities that led to the production of this thesis. I would like to specifically thank Michael De, my supervisor. Thank you for all of your help throughout the past few months. This project would also not have been possible without my friends and family. Thank you to my family for constant love and support, thank you, Lauren Ashwell, for your insightful comments and conversations, and finally, thank you, Elli, for always being there for me.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I discuss the linguistic process of slur reclamation. In general, philosophical theories on slurs focus on why slurs offend. I question whether these accounts adequately explain cases of slur reclamation. When faced with the question of why some uses of slurs are derogatory and some are not, content-based accounts turn towards positing ambiguity. This leads to a serious problem. If it is ambiguous whether or not a slur is being used derogatorily, then we have no way of explaining why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. Positing ambiguity does not account for why only members of an in-group have access to the non-derogatory use of a slur, leaving open the possibility for out-group access. Scholars have put forth various solutions in response to these problems. In conversation with these accounts, I provide my own critique of ambiguity and a novel answer to the question of why certain slurs are, and should be, restricted to in-group members. I put forward a re-evaluative framework of slur reclamation inspired by the philosophical discourse on Black reparations for slavery. I argue that investigating a defense of reparations for past injustices—a defense of Black reparations for slavery—is a fruitful way of contextualizing the problem of ambiguity. If we recognize the use of reclaimed slurs as a kind of reparation for injustice, and we look at the reasons why individuals are due reparations for past harms, then we can not only understand why certain slurs are restricted to certain users, but why they should be.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone can agree that slurs are offensive. Slurs are words that derogate targeted individuals. They are a kind of pejorative language; language that expresses contempt and functions as a linguistic vehicle for offense.[1] In general, theorists agree with the claim that slurs function as facilitators of harm. This gives rise to an important question. By virtue of what features does a slur offend or cause harm? Debate on this question can be roughly divided into two different camps: semantic and pragmatic accounts. According to semantic accounts, slurs are offensive because they have distinctive meanings which cause harm. Pragmatic accounts claim that the offensiveness of slurs derives not from the meaning of the slur itself, but rather by the context in which it is used. David Sosa (2018) highlights this distinction by explaining that "according to fully non-semantic accounts, slurs don't insult people, people do; according to semantic accounts (as with guns and killing) there's a good sense in which the slur itself insults."[2]

Another important distinction to note between semantic and pragmatic accounts of slurs deals with the slurs' neutral counterparts. Semantic accounts claim that the offensiveness of pejoratives is explained by the difference in meaning between pejoratives and their non-pejorative counterparts. Pragmatic accounts, on the other hand, have no difference in meaning between pejoratives and their non-pejorative counterparts. For example, a semantic theory, like that of Hom and May (2013), states that there is a difference in meaning between terms like 'k*' and 'Jew.' A pragmatic theory, like the expressivist view of Sennet and Copp (2014), does not indicate a distinction in meaning between 'k*' and 'Jew.' In other words, a semantic theory would consider the statement "Jews are k*" to be false, while the pragmatic theory would consider it true. The pragmatic perspective claims the identical truth conditionality of a pejorative and its neutral counterpart to show that there is "some further kind of non-truth-conditional content that distinguishes pejorative terms from their counterpart terms."[3]

There are extensive debates in the literature which take into consideration the advantages one account may have over another. I do not go into the details of the arguments here, but rather, I follow Katherine Ritchie's (2017) lead in generalizing these views as "content-based views," since "almost all theorists agree that slurs have derogatory content of kind, sort or other, whether semantic or pragmatic."[4] I do this because my aim here is to examine how these theories account for the significance and complexity of reclamation

[1] This is emphasized by understanding the distinction between slurs as nouns and as verbs. When slurs are uttered as a noun, they are used to refer to and subsequently derogate and offend their target. Slurs used as verbs, however, need not necessarily be uttered. Instead, they can be explained as a king of paralinguistic behavior, such as performing an offensive gesture, or utilizing offensive imagery. While this thesis will focus mainly on slurs in the form of nouns, I believe it to be critical that any theory of slurs adequately accounts for both verbal and nonverbal uses of slurs. See DiFranco's (2007) discussion on NVPs, or non-verbal pejoratives.
[2] David Sosa, ed. Bad words: Philosophical perspectives on slurs., 2018, 2.
[3] Christopher Hom, and Robert May. "Moral and semantic innocence." (2013), 303.
[4] Katherine Ritchie, "Social identity, indexicality, and the appropriation of slurs." (2017), 156.

processes; processes which seem largely at odds with typical considerations of slurs as vehicles for offense. As Ritchie explains, truth-conditional content views, such as that of Hom and May, hold that a slur and its neutral counterpart are not truth-conditionally equivalent, "as the latter includes a (perhaps complex) derogatory component."[5] On expressivist content views, such as that of Sennet and Copp, a slur and its neutral counterpart are truth-conditionally equivalent, "but an additional expressive element or content is also conveyed." Both semantic and pragmatic accounts assume some kind of derogatory component. Taking into consideration processes of reclamation and the non-derogatory use of slurs, it then becomes unclear under these content-based views whether a slur is being used in a derogatory or non-derogatory manner.

Reclamation occurs when members of a target group appropriate a slur once used to derogate them based on their identity. Often, slurs are reclaimed to foster a sense of pride, solidarity, and positivity. Not only does this reasoning seem antithetical to the general discourse on slurs as dehumanizing or demeaning, but it also requires a re-evaluation of slurs as not merely mechanisms for offense, but also as vehicles for positive linguistic transformation. I aim to give more space to the importance of slur reclamation, and to provide readers with a framework which reconciles both the negative and positive potential of slurs.

The first part of this paper will be devoted to investigating the following questions: what is reclamation and what is involved in the process of slur reclamation? I focus on the complex power structures within these processes and provide an alternative framework to deal with problems faced by existing theories in accounting for uses of non-derogatory (or reclaimed) slurs. I question whether the ways in which slur reclamation has been theorized give rise to the imminent struggles targeted individuals and marginalized communities may face when attempting to engage in various processes of reclamation. In examining some content-based theories on slurs and their respective takes on reclamation, I show that a re-evaluation of current perspectives can help to effectively address imminent problems these theories face.

Some might question the shift in focus I am encouraging—from the negative potential of slurs to the positive. It could be argued that only by focusing on offence can we then come to understand reclamation. Doesn't a slur have to exist in the derogatory before it can exist in the reclaimed? Isn't offence that which makes reclamation possible? I would agree. However, we can also agree with this while also agreeing to the move towards more representation of reclamation. Insofar as we already have a solid foundation served by existing theories of offence from which we can draw from, I see it fruitful to center the process of reclamation in our conversations on slurs. This way, we can come to understand reclamation as involving more than just a change in language, but as a complex web of social, linguistic, and epistemic transformations of power. These are central to addressing existing problems faced by content-based theories.

[5] Ritchie, 160.

The second part of my paper focuses specifically on the problem of ambiguity. When theories posit ambiguity in distinguishing between derogatory and non-derogatory uses of slurs, this leads to a plethora of unanswered questions. Insofar as existing theories claim that it is ambiguous whether a slur expresses a derogatory or non-derogatory content, they do not give us enough to answer the important question of why certain language is restricted to certain users. Content-based theories, according to Ritchie, explain that "slurs that are not appropriated have univocal derogatory contents while appropriated slurs are ambiguous (or polysemous) between a derogatory and a non-derogatory content".[6] In other words, when asked why some slurs are derogatory and some are not, these content-based theories would say that because the content of the slur has changed, it becomes ambiguous to distinguish between whether a slur is derogatory or not.

Some concerns have been raised in response to this claim of ambiguity. An important question asks how theories positing ambiguity—in defining the distinction between derogatory and non-derogatory content—can answer why some slurs are restricted to certain users. If this distinction cannot be made, can these content-based views account for a successful process of reclamation?

Before jumping into the arguments which challenge ambiguity, it is important to develop a comprehensive understanding of reclamation more generally. To do this, I examine the views of Robin Jeshion (2017). Jeshion provides an argument which deals with the following questions: "[what] are the linguistic conventions governing the slur post-reclamation and how are they related to the conventions governing it pre-reclamation? What mechanisms engender the shift?"[7] I focus on these questions in particular, as I take it important to develop a solid understanding of the process of reclamation before diving into the question of ambiguity. Jeshion puts forward an account which challenges the typical single model account of slur reclamation and argues for two different varieties of slur reclamation—pride and insular reclamation. In understanding the difference between these two varieties of reclamation, in terms of their complex properties, we gain insight into the social dynamics at play. Although Jeshion's work can be analyzed as a potential answer to the problem of ambiguity, I choose to focus more on the structural explanation that supports the claim, as it offers a fruitful basis for understanding reclamation more generally. I explore this view in the aim of grounding a representative theory of reclamation. Jeshion's account reveals the linguistic, social, and political features involved in reclamation.

After setting a general foundation on reclamation, Part 2 specifically investigates the problem of ambiguity. Various scholars have contributed to the conversation on how to deal with the fact that some slurs are restricted to certain users while avoiding ambiguity. These include but are not limited to the views of Claudia Bianchi (2014), Luvell Anderson (2018), Katherine Ritchie (2017), and Bianca Cepollaro (2017). The ambiguity thesis is employed by many content-based views when distinguishing the difference

[6] Ritchie, 156.
[7] Robin Jeshion, "Pride and prejudiced: On the reclamation of slurs." (2020), 106.

between derogatory and non-derogatory use of slurs. Consequently, theories which posit ambiguity are unable to explain "why it is that only certain speakers can access the lexical entry or semantic interpretation that employs the appropriated sense".[8] Jeshion says in-group restriction is a matter of positionality and respect, Bianchi says it is a matter of irony and dissociative attitude, and Anderson says in-group restriction is a matter of speech communities and communities of practice. Ritchie goes on to say that in-group restriction is a matter of indexical semantics, and Cepollaro points to social relations and authoritativeness. Following a detailed analysis of these views, I express some concerns about the ways in which these views explain the restricted use of reclaimed slurs. Essentially, I show that whereas these views emphasize the boundaries that surround group membership and slur use, they do not explain why such distinctions are necessary in the first place.

I then provide my own solution to the problem of ambiguity in Part 3. In conversation with these accounts, I put forward a comprehensive explanation as to why certain slurs are and should be restricted to certain users. Simply put, I think there is more to the story of reclamation than that which is being discussed. I believe that explicating these analyses, while simultaneously investigating the complexity of slur reclamation processes and the powers involved, will shed light on a new and fruitful way of understanding slur reclamation and will account for why certain uses of slurs should be restricted to certain users.

To avoid the problem of ambiguity—to provide an explanation as to why certain slurs are and should be restricted to certain users—I propose a framework that contextualises slur reclamation in the context of Black reparations for slavery. I turn to the historical, social, and epistemological discourse on Black reparations. Through an investigation of the concept of reparation and its relevant features, I highlight the striking similarities between this phenomenon and slur reclamation and argue for the contextualization of the right to reclaimed slurs as a right to reparations for past injustices.

It is necessary to provide a general background on the philosophical discourse on Black reparations. As noted by philosopher Janna Thompson (2005), when discussing reparations, philosophers tend to have the understanding that "[reparation] is owed by the perpetrators of injustice to their victims, and ideally, it is supposed to return these victims to the situation they were in before the injustice occurred."[9] The enslavement of Black populations—the perpetrated injustice, broadly speaking— requires some kind of repair, whether this be financial or psychological, material or immaterial.

There are many important ethical problems that arise for those who defend reparations for Black Americans. Firstly, is it even possible to 'make up' for the violence of enslavement or genocide? Can the victim ever truly return to the situation they were in before the injustice occurred? Secondly, who is

[8] Luvell Anderson, "Calling, addressing, and appropriation." Bad words: Philosophical perspectives on slurs (2018), 10.
[9] Janna Thompson. "Repairing the Past: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery, Genocide, & Caste.", 2.

responsible for providing reparations, especially in an historical context where individuals who make up oppressive institutions change over time? Lastly, just as defenders of reparations are faced with the question of who owes reparations, they are also faced with the question of to whom the reparations are owed. It is not necessarily the case that critics of those who defend reclamation take the process itself to be a problem, but instead, the crux of such critiques revolves around the debate about whether present day Black Americans have rights to reparations for injustices done unto their ancestors.

These worries have been addressed in two ways: via the harm argument and the inheritance argument. The harm argument claims that since the transgressions of slavery harm present day Black Americans, they have rights to reparations against those who committed those transgressions. The inheritance argument claims that present day Black Americans "have inherited the rights to reparation that was owed their enslaved ancestors and was never paid."[10] Many objections have been raised in response to these arguments, which I address in Part 3.

The discourse on Black reparations shows us that injustices have been perpetrated and need to be effectively addressed in order to restore some level of justice. I want to weave into this understanding the concept of slur reclamation. I take there to be a common thread between these processes. In cases of both reparation and reclamation, there is a crucial change in power. In the case of reclamation, a target group takes back control of the use of a word that was once used to derogate them and in the case of reparation, a victim or descendant of a victim of an injustice expresses a right to inherit or take back control of their ancestor's fundamental rights that were violated in the past. Secondly, I argue that processes of reclamation and reparation also similarly involve a backward-looking approach in their defenses of restricted uses of reclaimed slurs and Black reparations.

An injustice done unto Black communities necessarily involves acknowledgment and reparation in the aim of restoring justice. A defense of reparations calls for a restoration of justice for the harms experienced. I argue that reclamation fits clearly into this framework. In defending the right to reparations for past injustices, we are similarly defending the right for certain slurs to be restricted to certain users.

In summary, this paper takes the following steps to show that reclamation in the context of reparations can provide a solution to the problem of ambiguity and an explanation as to why certain slurs should be restricted to certain users. In Part 1, I investigate the literature which sets the foundation for our discussions on slur reclamation. I begin with an outline of slur theory more generally, shedding light on the different theories that make up the discourse. I then move toward a focus on slur reclamation, and analyze problems faced by existing theories in accounting for processes of reclamation. I then introduce the debate on the problem of ambiguity. I explore existing solutions to the problem of ambiguity and examine the

[10] Bernard Boxill and J. Angelo Corlett, "Black Reparations," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* (2022).

ways in which these views explain the restrictions surrounding the use of reclaimed slurs. In conversation with these views, I then turn to proposing my own solution to the problem of ambiguity.

Finally, I trace out the structural and argumentative similarities between processes of reclamation and reparation, spelling out the relevant transgressions of power, roles of responsibility, and transformations of justice. By recognizing reclamation as a kind of reparation for past injustices, we can gain deeper insight into the oppressive history of slurring acts and the essential processes involved in restoring justice. I conclude by presenting some objections that my view could encounter, specifically concerns related to the connective framework that I draw between processes of reclamation and reparations, as well as concerns surrounding my analysis of slur reclamation more generally.

Preliminary Remarks

Before delving into the existing literature on slurs and their respective takes on reclamation, some preliminary remarks are in order. If slurs are so offensive, how should I go about mentioning them in this paper on slurs, if at all?

Most scholars begin their discussion with a trigger warning, before going on to mention slurs. Elizabeth Camp (2018) prefaces her discussion on slurs by clarifying that she will mention slurs because she takes it to be "important to keep slurs' complex visceral, affective, and cognitive powers clearly in focus while engaged in abstract theorizing." But she makes clear that she tokens "these expressions in the awareness that even reading rightly makes many people deeply uncomfortable, and with an acknowledgment that [she incurs] an obligation to compensate with commensurate insight".[11] Warnings such as these speak to yet another important debate within the discourse on slurs—the distinction of use and mention. Prefaces such as Camp's are often implemented to highlight this distinction. More specifically, Camp is trying to make clear that she is not using slurs outright or in a derogatory manner but is instead mentioning the slur (using quotations) to emphasise just how harmful they are, hopefully without offending anybody in the process.

I wonder if this is a productive move to make. It does not seem to me that providing a disclaimer stops any harm or offence from occurring. But to where do we turn? Do we abolish the mention of slurs altogether? Many authors have made observations regarding this question, including Paul Saka (2007) and Timothy Williamson (2009), amongst others. The observation is that turning to the abolition of all mentions of slurs in literature rules out the possibility of innocent semantic investigation. Without quoted mentions of slurs, our words result in serious harm, and we cannot effectively engage with the matter at hand. Saka puts forward a theory of quotation which "appears to offer non-equivocal explanations for a broad variety of uses of quotation marks".[12] Williamson puts forward the worry that if one does not use quotations, "one is in danger of using [a slur], not just mentioning it, and thereby of committing oneself to the abuse".[13]

However, Anderson and Lepore (2013) put forward an objection to this idea. They argue that even under quotation, slurs offend. They do this in the effort to support their prohibitionist account on slurs. In a nutshell, Anderson and Lepore critique the argument that if slurs indeed had some derogatory content, then putting a slur in quotation would render this content inert, so mention of a quoted slur would not be offensive. In objecting to the arguments describing the necessary utility of quotation marks in slur literature,

[11] Camp, Elisabeth. "A dual act analysis of slurs." (2018), 31.
[12] Paul Saka., How to think about meaning. Vol. 109. Springer Science & Business Media, 2007, 215.
[13] Timothy Williamson. "Reference, inference and the semantics of pejoratives." (2009), 142.

Anderson and Lepore put forward the example of the "widespread preference for 'the N-word'…which describes or names a slur without using or mentioning it".[14]

My intuitions follow the initial concerns of Anderson and Lepore. It does not seem plausible to me that quotation marks function as a linguistic power that somehow neutralizes the derogatory content of a slur. I acknowledge the roles that quotations serve in everyday uses of language, but when it comes to slurs, the content seems too powerful to be muted by a simple mark of quotation, especially when looking at the influential social impacts the use of such a word inspires. Authors such as Stefan Rinner and Alexander Hieke (2022) have pushed back on Anderson and Lepore's worry, arguing that "although quoted slurs can cause offense and alarm, the degree of offensiveness is generally seriously diminished".[15]

While Anderson and Lepore's example of the 'n-word' seems to me a more fruitful and inclusive way of discussing slurs, insofar as the speaker or writer does not have to worry about any use-mention confusion or expressing any abuse, Rinner and Hieke's claim of diminished offence sheds light on some other very important questions. How do we measure offence, and in what ways does stating 'the N-word' in the context of slurs offend less than stating the slur itself, quoted or unquoted, if at all? The use of abbreviated forms of a slur, such as 'the n-word' avoids the explicit utterance of the slur itself, therefore avoiding any offence. However, to what extent is this really the case? The key point here is that abbreviated uses of slurs may not always function to rid the slur of its derogatory content. Spelling out a slur or referring to a slur with another name still involves the risk of offence and needs to be approached with care.

Another question that may arise within these conversations has to do with why I feel okay mentioning certain slurs over other slurs? Why is it that I have less of a problem when using the slur 'bitch' over the 'n-word'? These concerns are reiterations of my central research question and speak to a critical objection faced by reclamation advocates. Why is, and why should the word 'bitch' be restricted to certain users, including myself? And, if the slur is reclaimed, how do we avoid the risk of tokenization? Part of the answer to this lies in my personal identity as a woman who has been targeted by the slur and has engaged with the slur's relevant processes of reclamation.

In any case, I seem to end up following Camp's lead in prefacing any of my utterances of slurs. However, I differ from this approach insofar as I make sure not to spell out any slurs I do not personally reclaim, even in quotes. Instead, I refer to slurs by their first letter, followed by an asterisk. If my readers cannot figure out what slur it is I am referring to, even alongside its neutral counterpart, I do not see this to be much of an issue. In any case, I am exploring the transformation of slurs from the derogatory to the non-derogatory realm, and doing so does not require spelling anything out.

[14] Luvell Anderson, and Ernie Lepore. "Slurring words." (2013), 37.
[15] Stefan Rinner, and Alexander Hieke. "Slurs under quotation." (2022), 1484.

PART 1. SLUR RECLAMATION

Part 1 is devoted to developing a detailed picture of slur theory and reclamation. Some important questions that will be addressed here are: what are slurs, how can we characterize the general debate on slurs, what is reclamation, and in what way do these theories frame reclamation? I first provide a general background on the debate between semantic and pragmatic theories of slurs. I show that despite differing perspectives on what makes a slur offensive, both sides of the debate generally agree that in cases of reclamation, there is some kind of change in content—a change from the expression of derogatory to non-derogatory content. I follow Ritchie's lead in generalizing these views as content-based views of slur reclamation.

After laying out the central perspectives within slur theory and their respective conceptualizations of reclamation, I turn to a more detailed outline of slur reclamation, that of Jeshion, and specifically focus on illustrating the structural and procedural features involved in cases of reclamation. I conclude Part 1 by raising some critiques that arise in response to Jeshion's structural framework of reclamation. Specifically, I question the ways in which positing a particular diachronic structure of reclamation furthers the problem of ambiguity. By positing an "end" to reclamation, views such as Jeshion's risk undermining the violence that continues to be expressed by derogatory uses of the slur, and further ambiguates non-derogatory uses of slurs.

1.1 Background on Slur Theory

Slurs are offensive, not just because they offend, but because the offense is targeted toward an individual specifically based on their race, gender, nationality, and so on. Cepollaro (2015) gives a concise explanation of this particularly targeting feature. Unlike other insults, like 'jerk', or 'asshole', "what characterizes slurs is that they derogate people on the account of their belonging to a certain target group."[16] Consider statements (1) and (2), inspired by Cepollaro's discussion, where X is the name of a woman.

1. X is an asshole.
2. X is a bitch.

What we can see here is that both (1) and (2) may offend X, but that (2) offends specifically on account of her identity as a woman. Importantly, not only does the slur offend on the basis of X's identity as an individual, but it also "derogates a whole class of people", namely those who identify as women."[17]

Another linguistic peculiarity of slurs is the viability of their conveyed offense. Cepollaro explains that the offensive content of slurs "tends to scope out of semantic embeddings like negations, conditionals,

[16] Bianca Cepollaro. "In defence of a presuppositional account of slurs." (2015), 2.
[17] Ibid.

modals, or questions."[18] For example, when the content of an insult is negated, the offense dissipates. Consider the statements (1) and (2) to statements (3) and (4).

3. X is not an asshole.
4. X is not a bitch.

As noted, (1) and (2) both convey a degree of offense towards the target, where (2) offends on the basis of her identity as a woman. Again, (2) offends the target, but also offends an entire class of people, namely women. So, when considering statement (3) in comparison to (1), its clear that by introducing semantic embeddings such as negation, the term 'asshole' no longer conveys any kind of offense. On the other hand, statement (4) still does. Even though X may not experience the imminent offense when hearing (4) in comparison to (2), the derogatory content of the term remains in place. Even though the content of the slur is negated, it is still a bad thing, on account of one's identity as a woman, to be considered a bitch. Thus, unlike the dissipation of offense from (1) to (3), the offense from (2) to (4) remains intact.

Everyone can agree that slurs are offensive. However, an underlying question remains. By virtue of what features does a slur offend? In other words, is a slur offensive because of what it means, or because of the context in which it is used? This leads us into the semantic and pragmatic debate on slurs, also known as the debate on truth-conditionality. The conversation between semantic strategist Hom (2008) and pragmatic strategist Cepollaro (2015) encompasses the critical points of divergence in accounting for the offensiveness of slurs. According to semantic accounts, slurs are offensive because they have distinctive meanings which cause harm.[19] Pragmatic accounts claim that the offensiveness of slurs derives not from the meaning of the slur itself, but rather by the context in which it is used.[20]

Let us begin with an overview of Hom's semantic strategy. On this view, the offensiveness of slurs, or their derogatory content, is "fundamentally part of their literal meaning, and thus gets expressed in every context of utterance."[21] Hom's view speaks to the intuitions discussed above, that slurs convey offense even within different semantic embeddings. In other words, Hom says that slurs are offensive "regardless of how they are used."[22] He specifically promotes a semantic account of slurs which he calls combinatorial externalism (CE). This account posits a semantic strategy, claiming that the meanings of words are "in part dependent on the external, social practices of the speaker's linguistic community."[23] Thus, Hom defends a

[18] Cepollaro, 2.
[19] See Hom (2008) and Hom and May (2013) for defense of a semantic account of slurs. See Sennet and Copp (2014) for a critique of this view.
[20] See Cepollaro (2015) for a defense of a presuppositional (pragmatic) account of slurs.
[21] Christopher Hom. "The semantics of racial epithets." (2008), 416.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 430.

semantic theory of slurs which accounts for the ways in which slurs "express derogatory semantic content in every context" without claiming that slurs actively derogate their targets in every context.[24]

Cepollaro, on the other hand, speaks to the pragmatic side of the debate, insofar as she defends a presuppositional account of slurs. On this account, Cepollaro considers the intuitions we've discussed on semantic embedding—that a slur derogates in any context— and critiques semantic views like that of Hom. Specifically, Cepollaro says that Hom's strategy in explaining why slurs do not offend across every context is "quite counter-intuitive" since Hom basically explains the scoping out phenomenon—the idea that slurs are offensive even if semantically embedded—by claiming that there is no scoping out at all.

Thus, some problems arise for semantic views such as that of Hom when considering a slur as expressing derogatory content, but as not actively derogating a target. As Cepollaro notes, scholars turn towards a different account of offense, a pragmatic strategy which solves the scoping-out problem by claiming that "the derogatory content of a slur, i.e. the content that scopes out, is not part of its truth-conditional meaning."[25] While the semantic view says there is a difference in meaning between a slur and its neutral counterpart, the pragmatic accounts say that the proposed difference between a slur and its neutral counterpart is a matter of pragmatic context, not of semantic meaning. Thus, Cepollaro puts forward a presuppositional account on slurs that re-evaluates the notion of cancellability and argues that the best explanation for understanding how a slur offends is to say that "a slur is a lexical item that conventionally triggers a presupposition…that expresses the speaker's derogatory attitude toward the target group."[26]

While it is not my goal here to speak in favor of one view over another, I take these perspectives to be rather fruitful in highlighting the crux of the debate on slurs. It is clear that despite their differing tactics, both sides agree that the central question at hand is concerned with explaining a slur's offense. However, this leaves a different, yet crucial feature of slur theory up in the air—uses of slurs which do not function to offend. The paradigmatic example of non-offensive slurs includes slurs that have been involved in processes of reclamation. One place to start is to look at how the views of Hom and Cepollaro account for slur reclamation, if at all.

In setting a foundation for his view, Hom reviews some "uncontroversial features" of how slurs function.[27] These features involve derogatory force, derogatory variation, and appropriation, amongst others. I want to focus on how Hom characterizes appropriation according to his view. Hom puts forward the following explanation:

---

[24] Hom, 432.
[25] Cepollaro, 5.
[26] Presuppositions are usually characterized as having a feature of cancellability. Cepollaro explains that "according to the cancellability requirement, presuppositions should be cancellable, for example by conditionalization." This is problematic for the presuppositional account because the derogatory content of slurs is not cancellable. Thus, the derogatory content of slurs cannot be considered a presupposition. Cepollaro, 15.
[27] Hom, 426.

"Appropriation: Targeted groups often appropriate uses of their own epithets to alter their meanings for non-derogatory purposes. CE provides a natural explanation for this complex and more rapid form of semantic evolution. Appropriated uses are the result of severing the external, causal link between the meaning of an epithet from its racist institution…Counter-institutions seek to turn racist uses of epithets on their head. The point is not to wipe away derogatory force, but rather to defuse it, and to put it to alternative uses that produce political and social effects in favor of the targeted group."[28]

It seems here that Hom's semantic strategy nicely explains cases of non-offensive or reclaimed slurs. Hom takes there to be a difference in meaning between a slur and its neutral counterpart, and argues that some kind of meaning change, involving the severance from racist institutions, is similarly involved in cases of reclamation. Pragmatic strategies, such as Cepollaro's presuppositional account, face some extra challenges. A strong objection that Cepollaro deals with is the cancellability requirement, namely that because a presupposition must be cancellable, and the derogatory content of a slur is not cancellable, the derogatory content of a slur cannot be considered a presupposition. In challenging this objection, Cepollaro puts forward examples of cancellable derogatory content—reclaimed slurs. Cepollaro writes,

"An appropriated use of a slur is a case in which a target group member addresses another in-group with a slur, without being derogatory but conveying on the contrary a feeling of solidarity with the target group…for example, it is very common among African Americans to use [the n-word] in a non-derogatory way. Brontsema (2004) calls this phenomenon 'linguistic reclamation' or 'counter-appropriation' and analyzes the on-going process of appropriation that involves the slur 'queer'."[29]

Cepollaro concludes by explaining that the "non-cancellability of slurs' derogatory content is at least not as obvious as it is often taken to be."[30] What is important to take away here, is that both views—semantic and pragmatic—take reclamation as a given feature of any theory on slurs. This being said, however, any mention of reclamation is minimal, and simply used as a case study. Because the semantic/pragmatic debate describes the nature of a slur's offense, formulations of such descriptions consequently show little interest in spelling out the features of a non-offensive slur.

Despite their differing perspectives, we can gather from this that both Hom and Cepollaro accept reclamation as most likely involving a change in content. Using this point of agreement, I generally refer to any semantic or pragmatic view that considers the derogatory content of a slur as content-based theories. I do this in the effort to narrow down the discussion on slurs to that of slur reclamation. I follow Ritchie's lead in generalizing these views as content-based views since "almost all theorists agree that slurs have derogatory content of of some sort or other."[31]

[28] Hom, 438.
[29] Cepollaro, 9.
[30] Ibid., 10.
[31] Ritchie, 156.

Since these views are focused on explaining the derogatory content expressed by a slur, when faced with the question of why some slurs are derogatory and some are not, they ultimately run into a serious problem. The following discussion briefly explains this problem and will set up a foundation for an answer by exploring in detail the structural and procedural features of reclamation processes and non-derogatory use of slurs.

1.2 Jeshion on Slur Reclamation

When faced with the question of how to distinguish between derogatory and non-derogatory use of slurs, content-based theories respond by positing ambiguity. On these views, as clearly described by Ritchie, "slurs that are not appropriated have univocal derogatory contents while appropriated slurs are ambiguous (or polysemous) between a derogatory and a non-derogatory content."[32] In positing ambiguity, content-based theories claim that it is ambiguous whether a slur has a derogatory or non-derogatory content. Thus, they do not provide a clear distinction between derogatory and non-derogatory slur use. Neglecting the differences between derogatory and non-derogatory uses of slurs leaves open the possibility for any speaker to use slurs "non-offensively." I take it to be extremely important to provide a distinction between derogatory and non-derogatory uses of slurs in order to reserve the right to use particular slurs to certain users. For example, if we posit ambiguity, then slurs such as the n-word would be open to any user, specifically, non-Black users. This worry is nicely defined by Ritchie as the Appropriation Worry.

"Appropriation Worry: Content-based views that posit an ambiguity to account for appropriation cannot account for why only members in the target group (and perhaps others with 'insider' status) can use an appropriated slur to express a non-offensive/positive meaning." [33]

A detailed discussion of the problem of ambiguity, or what Ritchie calls the appropriation worry, is reserved for Part 2. Some preliminary steps must be taken in order to understand exactly why it is so important to address this problem in the first place. As noted in our discussion on existing slur theories, any mention of reclamation processes, and reclaimed slurs is minimal. Thus, it is important to delve into existing discourse on reclamation specifically. Developing a clear picture of reclamation helps to provide a novel solution to the problem of ambiguity.

Let us look at the views of Robin Jeshion on the reclamation of slurs. Jeshion deals with a plethora of crucial linguistic and social questions. For example, Jeshion asks, "[what] are the linguistic conventions governing the slur post-reclamation…what mechanisms engender the shift?" And "why do a slur's targets

[32] Ritchie, 156.
[33] Ibid., 157.

have a special privilege in initiating its reclamation…is there a systematic explanation why prohibitions on out-group use of reclaimed slurs vary from slur to slur?"[34]

These questions speak to two different ways of characterizing reclamation, in terms of the process itself, and in terms of the outcome and relevant consequences. Jeshion concisely describes these methods of characterizing reclamation as dealing with the outcome and process problems. She defines them as follows:

"The Outcome Problem: What are slurs' semantic, pragmatic, or sociolinguistic properties pre-reclamation as well as post-reclamation, where pre-reclamation properties are canonically derogatory, and post-reclamation properties are non-derogatory?

The Process Problem: How are slurs' semantic, pragmatic, or socio-linguistic properties transformed pre-reclamation to post-reclamation, i.e., how do persons engaged in the reclamation process employ the reclamation slur to generate its post-reclamation semantic, pragmatic, and social-linguistic properties?"[35]

Distinguishing between the outcome and the process of reclamation seems like a fruitful way of structuring our overall discussion on reclamation. The Outcome Problem asks theories of reclamation to explain the properties of slur before and after reclamation, something that content-based theories have not satisfactorily described. It focuses "only on the specification of the linguistic conventions governing a slur's preliminary state and end result." The Process Problem, on the other hand, asks theories of reclamation to explain how such properties of slurs are transformed in the first place. It focuses on the mechanisms involved in acts of reclamation, such as "linguistic creativity and innovation [and] the social interpretation of and response to [reclaimed slurs] in the form of further acts of imitation…"[36] Jeshion takes on the task of providing an account of reclamation that answers both of these questions.

Jeshion defines reclamation as acts which "aim to undermine the expression's conventional function as a weapon of derogation and dehumanization by hijacking it, using it as their own word, and in a way that reverses and eventually neutralizes the slur's pejoration." [37] By focusing on the reversal and neutralization of a slur, we can explain the properties of a slur before and after reclamation. By focusing on the ways in which targets undermine, hijack, and use the slur as "their own word," we can explain the mechanisms involved in reclamation. In other words, by looking at how reclamation is structured, and the relevant mechanisms involved in the process, we can put together a clear picture of reclamation as a powerful and complex phenomenon deserving of more attention.

[34] Jeshion, 106.
[35] Ibid., 109.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 111.

Additionally, Jeshion puts forward a dual-perspective account of reclamation, which distinguishes between pride reclamation, as invoked in the case of the term 'queer,' and insular reclamation, as invoked in the case of the 'n-word'.[38] She distinguishes between pride and insular reclamation in order to address concerns dealing with the problem of ambiguity. More specifically, Jeshion aims to answer why reclamation is only ignited by the target group, and why pride, but not insularly reclaimed slurs, become open to our group use.

Looking at the ways in which Jeshion describes the diachronic structure of slur reclamation can show us how she addresses the questions of outcome. As most other kinds of linguistic change, reclamation can be characterized as occurring through four stages:

"(I) Preliminary state: the word is governed by linguistic conventions C regarding its meaning, pragmatic use, primary associations.

(II) Acts of linguistic creativity and innovation: speakers use the word in novel ways, departing from C, sometimes with the deliberate aim to effect change, sometimes not.

(III) Acts of imitation and diffusion: speakers imitate the novel uses or key aspects of them.

(IV) End result: the word has come to be governed by new linguistic conventions C'=/C; the word may still retain its former conventions C, becoming polysemous, or C may be supplanted by C."

We can summarize these four stages as the preliminary, initial, progressive, and final stages of reclamation. Understanding the diachronic structure of reclamation in this way helps to emphasize the various other factors that are necessarily involved in cases of reclamation. For example, consider the use of the 'n-word' before, during, and after engaging in the reclamation process.

In the preliminary stage, in which reclamation has not yet occurred, the slur is governed by racist linguistic conventions and ideologies. Returning back to the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the early seventeenth century, enslaved Black people were referred to by the slur, which is rooted in "the idea that African people aren't really human beings."[39] The initial stage of reclamation, in which Black speakers use the word in novel ways, involves the use of the slur as departing from its dehumanizing origin. As described by race expert Dr. Jacqui Stanford, Black enslaved people have historically created a language for themselves, "often using the framework and actual words of their enslavers."[40] The progressive stage of

[38] Pride reclamation is defined as "the reclamation of a pejorative representation through processes in which the representation is accompanies by expressions of pride for being in the group or the targeted object, and the representation is presented publicly as an apt way to reference the group." Insular reclamation is defined as "the reclamation of a pejorative representation through processes in which use of the representation dominantly functions to express and elicit camaraderie among target members in the face of and to insulate from oppression, and the representation is not presented publicly as an apt way for out-group members to reference target group members." Jeshion, 107.
[39] Cherry Wilson. "N-Word: The Troubled History of the Racial Slur." 2020.
[40] Wilson, 2020.

slur reclamation occurs when Black individuals "imitate the novel uses or key aspects" of the 'n-word.' This stage of reclamation contributes to the spread of the reclaimed slur within the targeted community, aimed at fostering a sense of solidarity and camaraderie amongst target members. Consider the statement discussed by Anderson, "What's up my n*?" As Anderson describes, in this statement, "the force of [n*] is not typically interpreted as one of derogation, but instead as one of camaraderie."[41] The final stage of reclamation, according to Jeshion and others, represents the use of the reclaimed slur as being governed by new, non-racist linguistic conventions, while still possibly retaining old conventions.

By looking at slur reclamation as having a particular structure, with a beginning and an end, we can better understand the road slurs travel in reaching reclamation. Reclamation begins with acts of linguistic innovation and ends with a transformed word. But it is important to ask, what is involved in such a transformation? Now that we can roughly lay out the steps of reclamation, we will take a deeper look at the linguistic and social mechanisms involved in instantiating and encouraging acts of reclamation. In other words, as we have explored the structure of reclamation and its outcome, we will now explore the process of reclamation and the mechanisms involved.

Jeshion lays out some common initial-stage features of slur reclamation in pride and insular reclamation and takes these features to be essential to any theory of reclamation. These include Polarity Reversal, Weapons Control, and Identity Ownership. Jeshion describes these features as follows: "Polarity Reversal demarcates a minimal general requirement on the shift that occurs in reclamatory acts: speakers use representations that standardly have a negative polarity to communicate a positive polarity." Weapons Control describes when targets "group-self applying bigots' weapons with reverse polarity, take ownership of the word, and thereby diminish power in the bigots' hands." Identity Ownership describes "how speakers contribute to positively shaping the group's social identity."[42]

As noted earlier, by focusing on the reversal and neutralization of a slur, Jeshion speaks to the change in linguistic properties before and after reclamation. By focusing on the ways in which targets hijack and use a slur as "their own word," she explains the mechanisms within the process which engender the reclamatory transformation of a slur. According to the features laid out by Jeshion, any process of reclamation involves a shift in polarity. Specifically, when faced with the decision of choosing which word to reclaim, targets/reclaimers tend to utilize words with a particularly negative polarity.[43] Engaging with such negatively charged language and reversing its polarity sheds light on the intentionally disruptive capacities of reclamation and its enforcers.

[41] Anderson, 7.
[42] Jeshion, 122.
[43] I use the terms 'decision' and 'choice' very loosely here.

The feature of Weapons Control describes the ways in which targets take control over language. This involves taking control of the polarity of the word, but also taking control over the words that are specifically used as weapons against them. Thus, targets *take back* the word, and *take back* the power associated with it. Additionally, Jeshion puts forward the feature of Identity Ownership, which describes the ways in which targets positively contribute to shaping group identity, whether that involves developing an identity-label, challenging derogating social norms, or evoking camaraderie.

Lastly, Jeshion describes a feature of reclamation concerning the end stage which she calls Stabilized Neutralization. Stabilized Neturalization expresses that "via a process of reclamation, [a slur] comes to acquire a new linguistic convention on which its use does not communicate derogation."[44] Importantly, Jeshion makes sure to highlight the distinction between the linguistic conventions of a slur during and after the process of reclamation. The 'end result' involves a new linguistic convention which does not communicate any derogation. However, during the process of reclamation (steps II-III) Jeshion states that "slurs are polysemous, retaining as well linguistic conventions encoding derogation."[45]

Overall, the way in which Jeshion characterizes the structure of slur reclamation provides us with very useful information. We can now pinpoint the crucial turning points in the transformation of a derogatory term into a non-derogatory term and identify the mechanisms involved. Not only does Jeshion provide an explanation of common features of any kind of reclamation, but she also addresses the important distinctions between them. In summary, Jeshion takes the distinction between pride and insular reclamation as crucial to explaining facts about who can ignite reclamation and explaining when and why out-group uses of reclaimed slurs are permitted. In other words, Jeshion's dual-model of slur reclamation aims to address the question that content-based theories of slurs have trouble answering: why are certain reclaimed slurs restricted to in-group users?

Jeshion points out a pattern that emerges when considering the distinction between pride and insular reclamation: "in pride reclamation, out-group use becomes permissible; in insular reclamation, out-group use is generally prohibited."[46] The reasons for this emerge from the idea that out-group member use of a reclaimed slur is governed by a "chain of permissions or prohibitions parasitic on, and routed to, the original reclamatory acts of in-group users."[47] So, in the case of pride reclamation, in-group members permit out-group use of a reclaimed slur insofar as the in-group members present the initially derogatory slur as a group-adopted identity label or symbol."[48] In the case of insular reclamation, on the other hand, in-group members "do not group self-define" or present the slur "publicly as a group identity-label." Thus, out-group

[44] Jeshion, 123.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Jeshion, 128.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

use is not permitted.[49] On this view, reclaimed slurs such as 'queer', are permitted to out-group members on account of the group-adopted identity label. Reclaimed slurs such as the 'n-word," however, are never permitted to out-group members insofar as they are not presented publicly as a group-adopted identity label. This raises another question; is it not the case that in-group members refer to themselves and other in group members with the slur as well? Why aren't reclaimed slurs such as 'bitch' or the 'n-word' considered as a group-adopted identity label and thus open to out-group use?

Jeshion responds to this question by explaining that "it is no coincidence that the reclamations with persisting out-group restrictions transform slurs-as-vocatives into terms of endearment and solidarity, which are inherently positional."[50] Out-group restrictions to terms like 'bitch' and the 'n-word' follow other restrictions of common linguistic expressions, including the use of formal pronouns, nicknames, or personal terms of endearment. As noted by Ta-Nehesi Coates, "the reason why [the 'n-word'] as term of endearment is restricted to the in-group is the same as why only [someone's] wife can call [them] 'honey' to convey intimacy."[51] Besides other common linguistic restrictions, what is especially important to consider in explaining why the 'n-word' is restricted to Black individuals is because of the restriction itself. In-group members prohibit out-group use, making any out-group use a "sign of blatant disrespect." As Jeshion explains, "[it] is because the community issues and reinforces the prohibitions on out-group use that makes such a use a sign of disrespect."[52]

1.3 A Critique of Jeshion's Reclamatory Model

Now that we have laid out a theory of slur reclamation, let us look at the ways in which this account tries to answer our central research question: why are, and why should, certain slurs be restricted to particular users?[53] We can divide this general question into two sub-questions: why should in-group members have authority in permitting out-group use of reclaimed slurs, and why should out-group members adhere to the restriction of in-group use? By illuminating the distinction between pride and insular reclamation, Jeshion provides an explanation for out-group prohibitions on reclaimed slurs. In the case of pride reclamation, out-group use is permitted via target group authorization. Out-group use for insularly reclaimed slurs, however, is not permitted. This is because the use of reclaimed slurs is inherently positional, and any out-group use is a sign of blatant disrespect. Overall, Jeshion provides a clear and constructive analysis of slur reclamation.

[49] Jeshion, 129.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ta-Nehesi Coates in Jeshion, 130.
[52] Jeshion, 130.
[53] It is important to note first, however, that Jeshion does not explicitly provide a solution to the problem of ambiguity, but instead, provides a general framework of slur reclamation from which I draw from. I critique the ways in which her view deals with ambiguity, but necessarily keep in mind the intentions of her project.

Reclamation is structured in stages, where the preliminary and final stages explain the linguistic properties of slurs before, during, and after successful reclamation. Reclamation also involves distinct linguistic and social features— Polarity Reversal, Weapons Control, Identity Ownership, and Stabilized Neutralization— that explain the transformation of a slur throughout these stages.

Thus, Jeshion's dual-model of reclamation shows that reclaimed slurs—of which the speakers do not adopt as a group identity label—are restricted to in-group members only. Any out-group use of such slurs is offensive and disrespectful. This is not something I would disagree with. When faced with the problem of ambiguity, Jeshion seems to have an answer. However, I question whether the ways in which the structure of reclamation as a determinate process, one with a beginning and an end, contributes to the problem of ambiguity, thereby making it more challenging to put forward a convincing answer.

The core of my critique revolves around Jeshion's consideration of reclamation as a process with a distinct ending. According to Jeshion, reclamation of a slur ends when "the word has come to be governed by new linguistic conventions; the word may still retain its former conventions, becoming polysemous…"[54] This seems to me another way of positing ambiguity. If we follow the structural framework of reclamation provided here, then we are left with an open-ended answer in describing the outcome of reclamation: the slur is governed by new (positive) linguistic conventions but may also retain (negative) former conventions. If we understand the process of reclamation as ending in such a way, then we are left with no direct answer to the question of what distinguishes a derogatory slur use from non-derogatory slur use, thereby leaving open the question of why certain slurs are and should be restricted to particular users.

Additionally, Jeshion describes the feature of Stabilized Neutralization, which explains that at the end of reclamation, via processes of Polarity Reversal, Weapons Control, and Identity Ownership, a slur "comes to acquire a new linguistic convention on which its use does not communicate derogation." However, Jeshion follows this description with a statement clarifying that "[for] a significant time during the evolving reclamation process, slurs are polysemous, retaining as well linguistic conventions encoding derogation."[55] Again, we are left with a detailed structure of reclamation, but one that does not specifically account for the differences between derogatory and non-derogatory uses of slurs. If so, then what reasoning does Jeshion use to explain her claim on out-group restrictions? She distinguishes between pride and insular reclamation. In pride reclamation, out-group use is permitted via target group authorization. In insular reclamation, reclaimed slurs are inherently positional, and out-group use is a sign of disrespect. It seems that in positing an ambiguous end to the process of reclamation, Jeshion undermines her claims about out-group restrictions. If we do not know, by the end of the reclamation process, whether a slur retains derogatory conventions or not, then how is it possible to accurately distinguish between pride and insular

[54] Jeshion, 108.
[55] Ibid., 123.

reclamation? How can we explain when and why in-groups permit out-group use of reclaimed slurs if we take there to be an 'end' to reclamation, where that end posits ambiguity in distinguishing between derogatory and non-derogatory linguistic conventions?

Thus, my critique is two-fold. Firstly, I worry about the way in which Jeshion and others have relied on a temporally rigid structure of reclamation. Secondly, I worry that such a structural framework negatively impacts the distinction she aims to make. To speak to the first, I am skeptical of assigning any sort of time stamps to the moment in which reclamation is successful. Further, I am skeptical about using the term successful to define any outcome of reclaimed slurs. How is it possible to mark the instance in which reclamation has come to an end, especially considering the distinctive outcomes of pride and insular reclamation? The consideration of reclamation as having an end in general seems unrepresentative of the process. Language is in constant flux. How are we supposed to know when a word has in fact been reclaimed? Pressure to speak of reclamation as having come to an end undermines the often-violent experiences that are involved in engaging in such a process. Positing an end to reclamation seems to place an unnecessary burden on target groups insofar as they are expected to conform a specific timeline of reclamation, whether that involve successful provocation of pride or camaraderie.

The second part of my concern is about how Jeshion goes about marking the specific point of completion or success of reclamation. Assuming that the end goal of reclamation is the stage in which the slur has come to be governed by new linguistic conventions, while still possibly retaining former conventions, results in yet another kind of ambiguity—between reclaimed slurs with entirely new linguistic conventions, such as 'gay', or 'queer', and reclaimed slurs which still retain former offensive conventions, such as 'bitch', or, the 'n-word'.

Jeshion tries to clear up the ambiguity by distinguishing between pride and insular reclamation and saying that the difference in out-group restrictions between slurs such as 'queer' and 'bitch', for example, is a matter of in-group authority whether or not an in-group has adopted a group identity label. I question the clarity of this distinction, as it seems that insularly reclaimed slurs can also be adopted as a group identity-label. For example, consider the organizations which self-appropriate a slur by way of a registered trademarks, such as the 2003 San Francisco Women's Motorcycle Contingent "dykes on bikes."[56] This group adopts a slur as a public group identity label, yet the slur is not as open to out-group use as other pride-reclaimed terms like 'queer'.[57] Thus, it seems that relying on group-identity labels in distinguishing kinds of reclamation leaves the argument with little support.

Jeshion puts forward another reason that explains out-group restrictions: social relations. As noted earlier, slurs are "inherently positional" and out-group restrictions to terms like 'bitch' and the 'n-word'

[56] Vicki Huang. "Trademarks, Race and Slur-Appropriation: An Inter-Disciplinary and Empirical Study." 1611.
[57] Although this is still up for discussion as well.

follow other restrictions of common linguistic expressions, including the use of formal pronouns, nicknames, or personal terms of endearment. The problem here, is that there is more at stake when considering the social positionality of individuals involved in a slurring utterance than there is when considering the use of a nickname. For example, if a student addressed their professor using the term, 'girl,' this would most likely evoke a sense of disrespect on behalf of the professor. If a student addressed their professor with a slur term, this would most likely convey not only disrespect, but hate, contempt, and oppression. Drawing similarities between the positionality of individuals involved in slurring utterances with other common linguistic expressions undermines the uniquely detrimental harms of slurs.

In considering the problems Jeshion's dual-model of reclamation faces, the overall distinction between pride and insular reclamation doesn't seem to hold as strongly as she proposes. Firstly, I have described cases in which reclaimed slurs that are restricted to out-group users are adopted as group identity-labels. This contradicts Jeshion's initial distinction. Secondly, I have raised some concerns about representing slurring utterances as expressions that are parallel to other common linguistic expressions like nicknames. I argue that making such a comparison is harmful towards targets of a slur, insofar as it undermines their experience of oppression.

Jeshion's overall argument is that the distinction between pride and insular reclamation explains why reclamation is only ignited by the target group, and why pride, but not insular reclaimed slurs, become open to out-group use. Having pointed out some concerns with the ways in which reclamation is structured and how this distinction between insular and pride reclamation is framed, Jeshion's argument is left in a vulnerable position. Considering all the problems raised, on what grounds is it now possible to explain why certain slurs are restricted to certain individuals? It seems that in positing an "end" to reclamation, we undermine the violence that continues to be expressed by derogatory uses of the slur, and further ambiguiate the non-derogatory uses of slurs. If theories of reclamation commit to the structure of reclamation as one that assumes a particular end, we are left yet again, with a series of unanswered questions.

Why are some reclaimed slurs open to public use while others are not? How do we distinguish between slurs that undergo pride versus insular reclamation? Is there a risk involved in framing these kinds of reclamation under a common structure? Why is the word 'queer' open to out-group use while the 'n-word' is not? What is it about the reclaimed slur, 'queer', versus the 'n-word,' that permits out-group usage? And lastly, in assuming a finite structure of reclamation as ultimately ending in open out-group use, where 'queer' is the paradigmatic example, do we risk undermining the reasons why other reclaimed slurs, like the 'n-word,' are not open to out-group use?

We need a theory of reclamation that explicitly recognizes the continuously evolving structure of reclamation, not one that assumes a particular end. Such a theory will allow for a more comprehensive consideration of reclaimed slurs, providing a unified framework to account for the crucial discrepancies

between in and out-group uses of a slur. Before illustrating what a new account of slur reclamation would look like, we should first explore how others have tried to answer these pressing questions.

PART 2. THE AMBIGUITY PROBLEM

Now that we have an idea of the structural and procedural framework of reclamation, it is important for us to investigate accounts that specifically take on the problem of ambiguity.

This section will develop an analysis of single-model views of reclamation. I begin by looking at the views of Bianchi and Anderson. I explore the ways in which these views account for the complexities of reclamation and use this discussion as a starting point for the debate on ambiguity. Following this, I discuss the view of Ritchie and Cepollaro. Ritchie's account provides a more focused discussion on the worries that arise when ambiguity is posited in distinguishing between a derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur. Cepollaro, on the other hand, puts forward the claim that the problem of ambiguity is not actually a problem at all. Let us take a closer look at these views to see if they provide a solution to the problem of ambiguity that is representative of the structural and procedural complexities of slur reclamation.

2.1 An Echoic Account

Bianchi puts forward an echoic account of slurs to suggest a solution to the problem faced by content-based theories—the problem of ambiguous content. This solution avoids positing any sort of meaning change in the case of reclaimed slurs. Specifically, Bianchi proposes that "in-groups echo derogatory uses in ways and contexts that make manifest the dissociation from the offensive contents."[58] Overall, Bianchi's echoic view is designed to account for the fact that reclaimed slurs are "generally open only to in-groups…in-groups may use slurs against their own group…[and] appropriated uses can be extended also to out-groups – but only to selected speakers in highly regulated situations."[59]

The problem with content-based views, as I have already noted, is that insofar as they hold derogatory content as being part of the content conveyed, "they must explain by virtue of what reasons not every occurrence of a slur is offensive."[60] To overcome this, Bianchi provides a theory of appropriated slurs that avoids the ambiguity problem faced by semantic and pragmatic strategies.

Bianchi turns to a detailed discussion on echoic uses of slurs in a Relevance Theory account. Drawing from the perspective of Relevance Theory, which "distinguishes between descriptive and attributive (interpretive) uses of language," Bianchi picks out a specific subset of attributive uses to focus on: echoic uses.[61] According to Bianchi, an attributive use of an utterance "meta-represents a state of

[58] Claudia Bianchi, "Slurs and appropriation: An echoic account", 35.
[59] Ibid., 36.
[60] Ibid., 37.
[61] Ibid., 39.

affairs…a standard example of an attributive use is free indirect speech and thought."[62] Echoic uses, specifically, are a subset of attributive uses where "the speaker not only reports an attributed utterance of thought, but also informs the hearer of her attitude to that utterance or thought." Consider the following example of echoic uses of language to ground this definition.

Consider a scenario in which Sophie tells her mother that she has just finished running a marathon without any training. Her mother could react in various ways—proudly, skeptically, or worriedly.

(1) You have run a marathon! I am so proud of you!

(2) You have run a marathon? I don't remember ever seeing you train.

(3) You have run a marathon. Are you feeling okay?

In (1), Sophie's mother has expressed an attitude of pride and acknowledgment with regard to the echoed content—that Sophie ran a marathon without any training. In (2), Sophie's mother has expressed an attitude of skepticism and confusion, refusing the echoed content. Lastly, in (3), Sophie's mother has expressed an attitude of fear and concern, questioning the echoed content. Bianchi further narrows down the kind of echoic use of utterances to the heart of the view by introducing a subset called ironical uses, which are defined as "a particular subset of echoic uses where the speaker expresses a dissociative attitude to an attributed utterance or though that she suggests is false, inadequate or irrelevant."[63] For example, consider the following statement:

(4) That marathon was easy! (Sophie says exhaustedly, after running a marathon without training)

This is an example of ironic use of an utterance because Sophie is not actually asserting that the marathon was indeed easy but is rather "expressing her reaction to an utterance to a thought she attributes to someone else… and which she suggests is false or inappropriate." She is ironically uttering the thought of someone who would have actually been asserting that the marathon was easy, likely because they had been training for months prior.

Bianchi introduces the notion of ironical uses in an effort to extend it to the conversation on slur appropriation. Understanding slur reclamation under an echoic account is inspired from the central idea that in many reclamatory contexts, "the effect is ironical (as Relevance Theory interprets it): the speaker attributes utterances or thoughts to other individuals, or people in general, in order to express a critical or mocking attitude."[64] Consider the following example posed by Bianchi which clarifies the relationship between echoic uses and reclamation and highlights the ways in which Bianchi's account provides a solution to the problem of ambiguity without positing any change of meaning.

[62] Bianchi, 39.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 40.

"Imagine two gay friends, Al and Bob, talking about a new colleague, Tom; Al utters, 'I'm sure Tom is a [f*].' With a non-derogatory use of the slur [f*], Al isn't echoing an attributed utterance or thought, but a representation with a conceptual content…the attitude expressed is dissociative (mockery, criticism, or rejection). Al is suggesting that the [conceptual content the echoes] is ludicrously false, inappropriate, or shameful."

Overall, Bianchi uses this example in accounting for why reclaimed slurs are "generally open only to in-groups… in-groups may use slurs against their own group…[and] appropriated uses can be extended also to out-groups – but only to selected speakers in highly regulated situations."[65] Firstly, reclaimed slurs are generally open only to in-groups because out-groups do not have any means of manifesting a dissociative attitude. Secondly, an echoic theory accounts for cases where in-groups use slurs against their own group because, as Bianchi describes, [when] slurring her own group, an in-group member must make manifest her (even temporary) endorsement of the derogatory content (expressed or implicitly conveyed) of the slur."[66] And lastly, an echoic account can explain when reclaimed slurs are extended to out-groups. This is the point I take most important to our discussion on ambiguity. Bianchi says that "highly controlled conditions and selected speakers create contexts making the out-groups' open and public disassociation from derogatory contents (expressed or conveyed) self-evident."[67]

By looking at slur reclamation as aligning with ironic uses of an utterance, where the content of the utterance is not asserted but echoed, we can find an alternative approach to that of the semantic and pragmatic views, avoiding the problem of ambiguity. Important objections to this view have been put forward by other scholars such as Jeshion (2017) and Anderson (2018). Investigating these objections sheds light on some of the problems with an echoic view in accounting for a representative and un-ambiguous account of slur reclamation.

Bianchi's idea is to model the linguistic aspects of reclamation as a use of a slur with ironic echoic mention of its derogatory contents. One objection to Bianchi's view, according to Jeshion, is that "because ironic echoic utterances of slurs leave intact slurs' weapon meanings, they do not enact any linguistic innovation…"[68] The echoic view only accounts for mentioning a slur and meta-communicating the slur's derogation. This leaves out cases in which reclaimers express positive attitudes with slurs. For example, "Queer Nation activists were not simply meta-communicating the slur's derogation" with statements such as 'we're here, we're queer,' "they were enacting positive identities in being queer."[69] Because the echoic view does not consider cases in which reclamation results in positive expressions of identity (as in the cases of insular and pride reclamation) insofar as it leaves intact a slur's derogatory meaning, there is no way to

[65] Bianchi, 36.
[66] Ibid. 43.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Jeshion, 134.
[69] Ibid., 133.

explain the use of a slur as entirely separate from its derogatory meaning. Consequently, we cannot explain why the use of terms like 'queer' are adopted as group identity-labels to foster pride, nor why the use of terms like the 'n-word' are adopted by in-group members in fostering camaraderie. This is an important critique to take into consideration because insofar as the echoic account attempts to explain away ambiguity, in simultaneously reinstates it. There is a positive expression of identity within the use of reclaimed slurs that is undermined by the meta-communication of the slur's derogatory content. This reinforces a theory of slurs, and particularly slur reclamation, that is again, problematically centered around the slurs' offense, rather than its capacity for positive change and empowerment.

Another objection that is important to consider comes from Anderson. Anderson similarly questions how well an echoic view explains the complexities of slurs that are only open to in-group use. His worry is that in-group use of slurs such as "n-word use within the African American in-group is too complex to be reduced to ironical uses."[70] Anderson critiques Bianchi's distinction between descriptive and attributive uses of utterances and says that "among the variety of uses some appear to be descriptive rather than attributive" and goes on to put forward an example from Geneva Smitherman to illustrate this worry. Smitherman states that "[generic] neutral reference to African Americans, 'The party was live, it was wall-to-wall [n*] there (52).'" As Anderson rightly points out, "these uses fit Bianchi's notion of a community use, i.e., a non-derogatory use in in-group contexts, yet are not echoic…the speaker does not tacitly attribute an utterance…nor does she express a dissociative attitude…[she] means to use it as a literal referential expression."[71] Bianchi does anticipate a similar objection and responds by claiming that an utterance need not be what is used echoically, but instead "it is possible to use a single word in an echoic and dissociative way."[72] However, Anderson does not take this answer to be satisfactory, because it still presumably requires the speaker "to have a particular type of intention, perhaps an intention to meta-represent in this way."[73] As it has already been shown, there are plenty of cases in which non-derogatory uses of slurs can be used as a literal referential expression, and because of this, Bianchi's view "is not broad enough to account for all of the data surrounding n-word use within the community."[74]

2.2 An Account of Speech Communities

Anderson puts forward an alternative view, which focuses on speech communities and communities of practice. This view provides another framework for slur reclamation and another solution to the problem of

[70] Anderson, 14.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Bianchi, 40.
[73] Anderson, 15.
[74] Ibid.

ambiguity. Overall, Anderson wants to find an answer to the following question: "[is] there a semantic or pragmatic story to tell that explains why Black use of the n-word can be non-derogatory?"[75] He is similarly concerned that by positing ambiguity, content-based theories struggle to explain why certain slurs are restricted to in-group use. Anderson goes about answering this question by introducing the concepts of speech community and community of practice.

In defining the notion of speech community, Anderson presents two different categories of speech community: a linguistic category and a linguistic plus category. The simply linguistic category defines speech communities as being identified according to a set of linguistic characteristics. A speech community that is based on linguistic characteristics, for example, would be a group of people that all speak the same language. The second category Anderson discusses is titled linguistic plus. In this category, speech communities are identified according to linguistic characteristics as well as extra-linguistic characteristics such as "social, cultural, political, racial/ethnic, etc." characteristics.[76] A speech community that is based on both linguistic and extra-linguistic characteristics, for example, would be a community that uses certain lexical items or speech patterns that are often intertwined with social status. Anderson promotes defining speech communities in terms of both its linguistic and extra-linguistic characteristics.

There are certain conditions that Anderson thinks a speech community should satisfy. Firstly, "speech communities must serve some kind of social function that determines, or at least influences conditions of appropriateness and interpretation."[77] The underlying reason for defining speech communities in the first place is to provide an answer to the question of why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. So, it follows that speech communities should play some kind of role in determining the level of out-group restriction. Secondly, Anderson says that a speech community must have "relatively clear criteria for determining membership within the group." It must be clear to both members in and out of the speech community to recognize whether or not they are part of it. Lastly, the notion of speech community must account for the "multiplicity of speech community memberships an individual speaker can inhabit."[78] Black women, for example, may be part of two (or more) speech communities, as organized according to gender and race.

Unsatisfied with existing definitions of speech communities, Anderson supplements the notion of speech communities with the concept of communities of practice. Drawn from the work of Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, communities of practice are defined as "[an] aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values,

[75] Anderson, 8.
[76] Ibid., 16.
[77] Ibid., 17.
[78] Ibid.

power relations…emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor."[79] Incorporating the notion of communities of practice in the discussion on speech communities sheds light on the ways in which we can explain in-group restriction of certain slurs. Anderson then turns to the African American speech community in particular, noting that the notion of a community of practice importantly "allows us more flexibility in accounting for heterogeneity among African American speakers concerning n-word usage."[80]

In offering a characterization of African American speech communities, Anderson draws from the description provided by Marcyliena Morgan, which states,

> "The African-American speech community operates according to an intricate integration of language norms and values associated with the symbolic and practical functions of AAE [African American English] and AE [American English]."[81]

In providing notions of speech communities and communities of practice, Anderson presents the claim that "within the African American speech community, a community or several communities of practice developed in which various illocutionary acts involving the n-word emerged."[82] In other words, that which explains why certain reclaimed slurs are restricted to in-group members is a speech community, or a group which influences conditions of interpretation, coupled with participation within a community of practice, or a group which continuously engages in some common endeavor.

In conclusion, Anderson goes on to describe the type of illocutionary act being performed when in-group members—Black Americans—engage in reclaimed use of a slur, the 'n-word.' To do this, Anderson points to the distinction between calling and addressing, as introduced by Smitherman, where calling "functions in a way that signals distance from the referential target" and addressing functions as a greeting, or close reference of the target. Additionally, calling someone a slur conveys contempt, but addressing requires at minimum a neutral attitude. Thus, Anderson arrives at his conclusion, that "addresses that make use of slurs require membership in a particular community of practice in order to be performed felicitously."[83]

According to this view, we can explain why certain reclaimed slurs are restricted to in-group members, thus providing some kind of answer to the problem of ambiguity. Illocutionary acts of addressing, such as use of the 'n-word,' are only available to members of the relevant community of practice. From our research so far, we can understand that there are certain conditions that need to be met by accounts which posit solutions to the problem of ambiguity. The central condition is that the view is able to explain why

[79] Eckert in Sosa, 19.
[80] Anderson, 19.
[81] Morgan & Alleyne (1994) in Anderson in Sosa, 20.
[82] Anderson, 20.
[83] Ibid., 26.

certain reclaimed slurs are restricted to in-group members only, as the central worry behind positing ambiguity is that it results in reclaimed slurs being open to out-group use.

On an echoic account of slurs, in-group restriction is explained by the fact that out-groups do not have any means of manifesting a dissociative attitude. On Anderson's community account of slurs, in-group restriction is explained by addressing membership in a particular community of practice. Both echoic and community-based accounts rely on an intuitive and integral distinction between in- and out-groups. Bianchi sheds light on this distinction by discussing the "highly controlled conditions" that create contexts which make "the out-groups' open and public disassociation from derogatory contents (expressed or conveyed) self-evident."[84] These "highly controlled conditions" are also explained by the concepts of speech communities and communities of practice, as emphasized by Anderson.

These views put forward several solutions to the problem of ambiguity. They do so by distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups. Certain reclaimed slurs are restricted to users in virtue of their users group membership. The establishment of such groups engenders the norms that govern slur use. However, what is involved in establishing group membership? What risks are involved in trespassing in-group restrictions and what is being done to prevent that? This is the crux of my concerns regarding existing explanations of slur reclamation. Although both Bianchi and Anderson explain that slurs are restricted to in-groups—in virtue of their lacking dissociative attitude and relevant speech community—these views do not explicitly address what is at stake in such cases. We can find a multitude of ways to explain in-group restriction but in aim of what? In aim of answering the problem of ambiguity? Avoiding ambiguity gives us an explanation of why certain slurs are restricted to certain users, but it does not reveal the crucial reasons for doing so. These concerns can be further fleshed out in another debate on the problem of ambiguity, specifically considering Ritchie's indexical account and Cepollaro's account of authoritativeness.

2.3 An Indexical Account

Katherine Ritchie puts forward an alternative solution to the problem of ambiguity that can be adopted by any content-based theory. To restate the problem at hand, content-based views tend to argue that the process of reclamation involves some kind of meaning change, specifically resulting in a slur becoming ambiguous. As Ritchie succinctly explains, "[on] this view, slurs that are not appropriated have univocal derogatory contents while appropriated slurs are ambiguous (or polysemous) between a derogatory and a non-derogatory content."[85] If the content of an appropriated slur is ambiguous, then these accounts consequently

[84] Bianchi, 43.
[85] Ritchie, 157.

fail to explain in-group restrictions. As noted by Anderson and Lepore, "[if] it were *just* a matter of distinct meanings, why can't a speaker opt to use a slur non-offensively?"[86]

Ritchie's view offers an answer to this concern, by introducing the semantics of plural first-person indexicals. Specifically, Ritchie goes on to argue that such indexical semantics can "account for why only target group members…can use appropriated slurs to express their positive contents."[87] Ritchie argues for a solution to the problems content-based theories run in to, rather than for a reason to reject any theories that posit ambiguity. Her argument begins with an exploration of data about the outcome and process of reclamation as well as the essential features of reclamation.

These features include the construction of group identity, promotion of group solidarity, remediation of power imbalances, and removal of weapons. Ritchie nicely emphasizes the notions of solidarity in explaining that "[appropriation] is part of a project that emphasizes that these are strengths of *ours*; this is how *we* dress, talk and act; *we* have persevered."[88] Features of remediation and weapon removal speak to the overall idea that reclamation "aims at refiguring power imbalances by laying claim on a tool of the oppressors." [89] In general, these essential features of reclamation can be likened to those as described by Jeshion—Polarity Reversal, Weapons Control, and Identity Ownership. Not only is there a reversal of the polarity of power, but also of the content. This reversal occurs by "laying claim" on the tools, or language, of the oppressors and concurrently engendering group identity and solidarity.

As described earlier, any proposed solution to the problem of ambiguity has to account for the distinction between in and out-group use. Ritchie defines this distinction as follows:

"*Outsider Usage*: For an appropriated slur S which targets group g, individuals outside of g cannot (or perhaps very rarely with 'insider' status) use S to express its appropriated content…

Insider Usage: Members of group g targeted by an appropriated slur S can use S to express its appropriated content or its original derogatory content."

Indexicals are defined as "expressions whose contents vary from context to context depending on, for instance, a speaker's location in space and time."[90] Ritchie specifically deals with first-person plural indexicals such as 'we' and 'us', arguing that it is the sensitivity of such indexicals to social space that places the restriction on speakers.

For example, consider the following examples of statements involving first-person pronouns, which clearly illustrate the spacial and temporal sensitivity of such indexicals:

[86] Anderson and Lepore in Ritchie, 157.
[87] Ritchie, 158.
[88] Ibid., 163.
[89] Ibid., 164.
[90] Ibid., 165.

1. [Said by a Muslim Congressperson] We are rare.
2. [Said by a woman] We get paid less than men for doing the same work.
3. [Said by a Transwoman] We are being murdered without prosecution or protection by hate crime laws.
4. [Said by someone Black] So many forces in American life are telling us that our lives don't matter, that our lives are expendable, that when we are killed when we're unarmed that we can't get justice for that.

These examples illustrate the use of the first-person pronouns in referring to certain social groups "specified in terms of some property (or properties)."[91] Additionally, a speaker is restricted in what they express by using 'we' or 'us.' A speaker's social roles and group memberships determine what is or is not expressed by the first-person pronoun. Consider the following statements:

(5) [Said by a woman] We get paid less than men for doing the same work.
(5') [Said by a man] We get paid less than men for doing the same work.
(5'') Women get paid less than men for doing the same work.

Statement (5) and (5'') are synonymous. However, (5') and (5'') are not. This shows that what a speaker can express with the use of first-person indexicals is restricted to their relevant group memberships. Thus, because the speaker in (5') is not part of the group that gets paid less than men for doing the same work, namely, women, he cannot express anything meaningful with the use of such indexicals. It simply does not make sense.

In providing a solution to the worries associated with positing ambiguity, Ritchie applies the specifics of indexicals to the context of appropriated slurs, specifically the term 'bitch.' Ritchie stresses the idea that use of a first-person pronoun "is motivated by the process and aims of appropriation…'[she] emphasizes that there is a group that is a subject rather than merely a group shaped and created by oppressors."[92] The use of such pronouns by a speaker denotes the particular group of which they are a member. Consider the following examples put forward by Ritchie. First consider a statement containing the slur 'bitch.'

8. I'm going out with my bitches tonight.

Under any content-based theory (Ritchie uses possible contents for a conventional implicature view as an example), the utterance of 'bitches' is ambiguous between a derogatory and non-derogatory content. Ritchie

[91] Ritchie, 170.
[92] Ibid., 172.

emphasizes this by putting forward two different interpretations of 8 in terms of both truth-conditional (TC) and conventionally implicated (CI) content.

8'. TC: I'm going out with my women tonight.

CI: They are despicable or lesser than for being women.

8'': TC: I'm going out with my women tonight.

CI: We women are laudable for being women.

In the cases above, 8' conveys the slurs derogatory content, pre-reclamation. 8'' conveys the slur's non-derogatory content, post-reclamation. The important difference to note here is that 8' can be expressed by anyone uttering 8. The same cannot be said for 8''. 8'' can only be expressed by certain users, specifically users who maintain membership in a group denoted by a first-person plural pronoun. Thus, as Ritchie claims, the indexical in 8'' "captures why only some speakers can express the appropriated meaning of 'bitches' by uttering [8]."[93]

All in all, Ritchie puts forward an alternative framework of appropriated slurs that avoids the problem of ambiguity. In-group restriction and out-group prohibition is based on a speaker's social roles and group memberships via use of a plural first-person indexical. Overall, I take Ritchie's view to be effective insofar as it frames the problem of ambiguity in a serious manner—as a problem that cannot be ignored. This echoes my concerns about the existing views so far, specifically that existing views do a nice job of explaining the boundaries that surround slur-use, but do not point out what is at stake. However, there are also some critiques of Ritchie's view that require addressing, specifically highlighted by Cepollaro (2017). Cepollaro takes us in another direction, one which moves away from characterizing group membership.

2.4 An Authoritative Account

Cepollaro presents an interesting take on the worry of appropriation as described by Ritchie. Overall, she takes on three different tasks. Firstly, she argues that Ritchie's indexical semantics are not adequate. Secondly, she argues that the worry of appropriation, or the worries that arise from positing ambiguity, are not actually problematic. Lastly, she introduces the notion of 'authoritativeness', in the effort to put forward a parsimonious account of slur reclamation. The views we have looked at so far—Bianchi, Anderson, and Ritchie—take there to be some kind of problem when content-based theories on slurs say it is ambiguous whether the content of a slurring utterance is derogatory or not. Without an answer to whether or not a slur's content is derogatory, these views take there to be no rules which govern access to certain slurs, including

[93] Ritchie, 172.

reclaimed slurs, leaving use open to anybody. Cepollaro, however, shows that "the ambiguity between reclaimed and non-reclaimed slurs is not particular nor problematic", and goes on to provide a a critique and alternative to Ritchie's indexical semantics. Exploring Cepollaro's critiques of both Ritchie's way of addressing the appropriation worry and the worry itself is worth investigating.

Cepollaro begins by providing an example of other instances of ambiguity, in the effort to support the claim that "the ambiguity between reclaimed and non-reclaimed slurs is not particular nor problematic."[94] Consider the distinction between Italian formal and in-formal pronouns.

"In Italian 'lei' can be either the formal singular second-person pronouns or the formal/informal singular third-person pronoun.

(1) Lei gradisce del tè?

a. Would you [formal] like some tea?

b. Would she [informal/formal] like some tea?"

We can see from this example that it is ambiguous whether (1) is conveying a formal or informal use of the pronoun, since there is no distinction made between the formal second-person pronoun and the formal/informal third-person pronoun. However, Cepollaro argues that there is a distinction between the two, insofar as they present the relations between speaker and hearer, and social positionality. Cepollaro specifically explains that "only those speakers who are in an informal relation to the addressee can felicitously use (1) and be taken to say 'Would she like some tea?'; and only the speakers who are in a formal relation to the addressee can felicitously use (1) to mean (and be taken to mean) 'Would you like some tea?'"[95]

By illuminating the various other instances of linguistic ambiguity, Cepollaro suggests that the problem of ambiguity is not much of a problem after all. With this in consideration, Ritchie's indexical view does not help in explaining the ambiguity between reclaimed and non-reclaimed slurs. According to Cepollaro, this ambiguity is just another instance of "socially important information [determining] and [constraining] the sense in which terms can be used by speakers and interpreted by hearers."[96] Thus, Cepollaro introduces a more parsimonious answer to the worry voiced by others—one that explains in-group restriction not in terms of in- and out-groups, but in terms of 'authoritativeness.'

To understand what is meant by 'authoritativeness', consider the example put forward by Cepollaro.

"Take three men, John, Peter and Bob. They are gay. John is an activist and spent his entire life fighting homophobia. Peter, on the other hand, never felt like telling anyone that he is gay…and never participates to LGBTQ+ pride events. Suppose Bob is a close friend of both and knows they are gay…Bob hears them talking about a common friend being 'a [f*]'."

[94] Bianca Cepollaro. "Let's not worry about the Reclamation Worry." 185.
[95] Ibid., 186.
[96] Ibid., 187.

Cepollaro thinks that in this case, "John is somehow more entitled than Peter to use the slur 'f*' in a positive way." What this goes to show is that in-group membership is not the only factor that explains why certain slurs are restricted to certain individuals. It is not just about whether Peter is a member of the in-group, but it is also about the "authoritativeness that Peter is granted in a group."[97] Overall, Cepollaro provides some specific critiques of Ritchie's view. According to Cepollaro, Ritchie's view only accounts for a subset of data on reclaimed slurs and the indexical approach mistakenly classifies ambiguity as a problem. Ambiguity is not a problem for reclamation, as argued by Cepollaro, because ambiguity in language is just another example of how relevant information, such as one's social position, influences the ways in which certain terms are used.

Overall, there are some interesting similarities that can be drawn between some of these views. For example, it seems that both Jeshion and Cepollaro take there to be nothing too worrisome about having an explanation for distinguishing boundaries of slur use. As discussed earlier, Jeshion takes slurs to be "inherently positional", and in-group restrictions to terms like 'bitch' and the 'n-word' follow other restrictions of common linguistic expressions. Similarly, Cepollaro highlights other examples of linguistic ambiguity (formal/informal pronouns). According to Cepollaro, this ambiguity is just another instance of "socially important information [determining] and [constraining] the sense in which terms can be used by speakers and interpreted by hearers."[98] We can see from this that both Jeshion and Cepollaro take there to be no real problem when content-based theories posit ambiguity, insofar as ambiguity exists in many other instances as well, and the notions of social relations and positionality function to explain this ambiguity.

However, as I noted in Part 1, there is a harm involved in relying on these other cases of ambiguity as explanatory of cases involving slurring utterances. There is more at stake when considering the social positionality of individuals involved in a slurring utterance than there is when considering the use of a nickname. Consider the two following statements which compare the use of terms of endearment to the use of slurs.

1. [Student to professor] 'Hey girl, did you happen to grade those papers yet?'

2. [Student to professor] 'Hey bitch, did you happen to grade those papers yet?'

Jeshion and Cepollaro would agree that both (1) and (2) express some kind of ambiguity. In (1), it is ambiguous whether the student is close friends with the professor and kindly refers to her as such, or whether the student is being facetious and rude. Similarly, in (2), it is ambiguous whether the student's

[97] Cepollaro, 189.
[98] Ibid., 187.

slurring utterance, addressing the professor as 'bitch', conveys a derogatory or non-derogatory content. Equating the positionality of individuals involved in slurring utterances with other common linguistic expressions undermines the uniquely detrimental harms of slurs. In (1), there is a possibility that the student conveys—and the professor hears—something positive. She could genuinely have a close and reciprocated friendship with the professor that would warrant the use of a nickname like 'girl.' She could also be conveying something inappropriate in the effort to make the professor uncomfortable. This is the ambiguity. However, there is much more at stake in (2). There is a possibility that the student is uttering this slur in a reclamatory manner, perhaps because the student is an in-group member promoting a sense of camaraderie with her feminist professor. However, there is also the possibility that the student is uttering this slur derogatorily, out of hatred towards the professor. It is clear here that uttering a slur has the potential for more harm than using a term like 'girl.'

Arguments such as that of Jeshion and Cepollaro relate instances of common linguistic ambiguity to instances of slurring ambiguity in the effort to show that ambiguity in slurring utterances are not actually problematic. This undermines the violence expressed by a derogatory slur, and thus I argue, is indeed problematic. Nonetheless, Cepollaro puts forward the notion of authoritativeness to soothe this worry. Cepollaro wants to show that "the right direction to go in phrasing the Reclamation Worry is not in terms of in-groups and out-groups but in terms of 'believability' or 'authoritativeness' of the subject."[99] Consider again the example of John, Peter, and Bob, as alluded to earlier.

Importantly, Cepollaro adds here, "[my] intuition is that John is somehow more entitled than Peter to use the slur '[f*]' in a positive way." This is because if we understand the use of reclaimed slurs based only on the distinction between in-groups and out-groups, then we cannot account for cases like that of John, Peter, and Bob. This being said, I do think there are some important problems to address with this example. Firstly, Cepollaro claims that because of John's efforts as an activist fighting homophobia, he is more entitled to use the term 'f*' than Peter, who wasn't open about his sexuality and was never involved in pride events. However, I think other factors are deserving of consideration when attributing authoritativeness. For example, we have to consider the factors that lead to Peter's non-involvement and disassociation from the gay community. Perhaps he has experienced countless aggressions by others, targeted toward his sexuality, or perhaps he grew up in an extremely conservative household and never learned to express himself freely. Whatever the case may be, my point here is that I agree with Cepollaro insofar as there are problems with framing reclaimed uses of slurs strictly in terms of in-groups and out-groups, but I do not agree with framing reclaimed uses according to this notion of authoritativeness. It is too narrow of a framework and limits reclaimed uses to only a certain subset of oppressed individuals.

[99] Cepollaro, 188.

Let us look at the problems Cepollaro has with frameworks of reclaimed uses that rely on the distinction between in-group and out-group membership. Cepollaro says that we cannot account for cases like that of John, Peter, and Bob if we stick to the in-group/out-group schema. Putting our critique of authoritativeness to the side for a moment, we should understand why exactly it is important to account for cases like these. If we look at this case in terms of authoritativeness, since Peter has not engaged as much in gay culture and has not made much of an effort to promote solidarity and pride, "[it] is easier for Bob to recognize John's anti-homophobic intentions…while he would harbor doubts about whether…Peter's solidarity attitude with respect to the LGBTQ+ are truly genuine."[100] If we look at it in terms of group membership, since Peter and John are both gay, or members of the in-group, then there should not be a problem; they both are in-group members and thus have open access to use the group's reclaimed slurs. This is a problem for Cepollaro because then we cannot account for her intuition that someone who has openly expressed non-derogatory sentiments and fostered group solidarity is more entitled to the use of a slur than someone who has not done such things.

To me, it seems problematic to use the notion of authoritativeness in explaining use of reclaimed slurs. Again, it is unclear beyond the few details we are given, whether John has willingly made the decisions to not involve himself in the LGBTQ+ community. The ways in which authoritativeness measures entitlement to reclaimed uses needs to be further explained. It cannot simply rely on whether or not somebody has openly expressed support for the community. Without distinguishing between in-group and out-group, we would leave open the various avenues of offense. For example, say two friends are having a conversation, Amy, who is white, and Nina, who is Black. Amy is the president of student government, always ensuring that students who are members of marginalized communities receive enough support from the school, and actively promotes and engages with the Black Lives Matter movement. Nina is a much more reserved and private person, who does not involve herself with large crowds and protests and prefers to be on her own. What does this say about the authoritativeness that Amy is granted in a group versus Nina? Because others can recognize Amy's anti-racist intentions, does this grant her more authority to use slurs like the 'n-word?' This is clearly misguided. This example highlights the ways in which group membership critically distinguishes between those who maintain the right to use certain slurs versus those who do not. Contrary to Cepollaro's argument that we should avoid utilizing any in-group/out-group schema when explaining why certain slurs are restricted to certain users, the example of Amy and Nina emphasizes the relevant significance of acknowledging and respecting the boundaries implemented by such a schema.

[100] Cepollaro, 189.

Cepollaro's notion of authoritativeness does not seem adequate in explaining the restrictions governing the use of reclaimed slurs. It seems that framing reclaimed use according to the distinction between in and out-groups is the option we are left with. But as alluded to earlier, this still does not seem adequate. Let us return back to some of the other views we have discussed, and their takes on the in- and out-group schema. According to Anderson and Bianchi, reclaimed slurs are restricted to users in virtue of their users in/out group membership. The establishment of such groups engenders the norms that govern slur use. Bianchi explains that slurs are restricted to in-groups by virtue of their lacking dissociative attitude, and Anderson explains that slurs are restricted to in-groups based on their relevant speech communities. Their accounts come along with a few problems as well. Relying on a particular attitude or social position can help in distinguishing between whether or not someone is a member of a group. However, merely distinguishing between who is a member of what group does not reveal anything crucial about why such a distinction is necessary in the first place. We need a framework that explains not only why certain slurs are restricted to certain users but why they should be.

PART 3. RECLAMATION AS REPARATIONS

In this section, I propose an alternative solution to the problem of ambiguity. While existing accounts clearly lay out the dangers of positing ambiguity and provide unique ways of distinguishing between in and out-group access to slurs, not enough has been said about the reasons for upholding these distinctions. We learned from Anderson that certain slurs are restricted to in-group users based on their relevant speech communities and communities of practice. Ritchie says the restriction is due to the use of an indexical first-person plural pronoun. These views give us ways of categorizing in- and out-group members and whether it is based on a pragmatic or semantic feature of the view. We also learned from Jeshion and Cepollaro, about some reasons for these distinctions. As Jeshion argues, in-group members prohibit out-group use, making any out-group use a "sign of blatant disrespect."[101] As Cepollaro similarly notes, restriction of slur use can be explained by an individual's social position and recommends understanding slurs' ambiguity in the same way we understand other cases of linguistic ambiguities, such as the difference between use of formal and informal pronouns. Yet, I argue there is more that needs to be explained.

Existing accounts of slur reclamation that deal with the problem of ambiguity do not account enough for the reasons why clarifying the boundaries between in- and out-group members is so crucial. Thus, I argue for an alternative account of dealing with slur ambiguity, one that focuses specifically on why these distinctions are necessary and what exactly is at stake when we do not take these boundaries seriously. To ground my account, I turn to the context of reparative justice for Black Americans. More specifically, I explore perspectives which both uphold and resist the idea that present-day Black Americans have the right to reparations for wrongs done unto their ancestors. It is in this context, I think, that we can really get to the core of the problem of ambiguity, and the significance of providing a solution. I think that investigating why present-day Black Americans have a right to reparations for past injustices is a fruitful way of contextualizing the problem of ambiguity. If we recognize the use of certain slurs as a kind of reparatory process and we look at why certain individuals are deserving of reparations, then we can understand a new way of explaining why some slurs are restricted to certain users.

This account requires several preliminary steps. I begin this section by describing the general philosophical discourse on reparations for Black Americans. Reparations for past wrongs, by transgressors who no longer exist, is controversial to many, specifically in the context of injustice. I explore the debate between structural and historical theories of injustice, and their respective reparative considerations. Slavery is an historical injustice and defense of Black reparations is an example of a backward-looking approach to reparations. Although structural injustice theorists argue against reparations for historical injustice, I argue that these reparations are necessary, and that structural theories of injustice need not rule

[101] Jeshion, 130.

out the value of backward-looking reparations. I use Bernard Boxill's (2003) argument for present-day Black reparations, which draws from John Locke's view on reparations. I explore Boxill's argument in the effort to emphasize the value of backward-looking reparations for the historical injustice of slavery. Doing so results in a deeper understanding of why present-day Black Americans have the right to reparations for harms done unto their ancestors. It also speaks to the importance of taking seriously historical injustices as presently enduring harms.

I then turn to the first part of my alternative solution to the problem of slur ambiguity. I argue that we should understand the use of reclaimed slurs as an invocation of an individual's right to reparations. To support this claim, I compare the structural and procedural framework of slur reclamation—reclaimed uses of the 'n-word'— to that of Black American reparations for slavery. I compare the difficulties faced by both arguments for reclamation and reparation, specifically the difficulties they face in accounting for why certain individuals have a right to use a slur, and why certain individuals have a right to reparations for past harms. I explore how these arguments address certain problems and highlight the ways in which one framework can learn from the other.

Reparation for historical injustice and reclamation of derogatory slurs both focus on addressing past harms. In the case of reparations, the question is about how and why we should argue for reparations for present-day Black Americans. In the case of reclamation, the question is about how and why certain slurs are and should be restricted to particular users. I argue that Boxill's defense of Black reparations provides a comprehensive account of why present-day Black Americans have a right to reparations for their ancestors that were never paid. As the first two sections of this thesis point out, existing responses to the problem of slur ambiguity do not provide a satisfactory answer. Thus, if we understand reclamation as a kind of reparation for past harms, and we take into consideration the ways in which present-day reparations for Black Americans are defended, we can develop an explanation as to why certain slurs should be restricted to certain users.

3.1 Structural and Historical Injustice

Reparations for slavery are typically resisted for two reasons. Firstly, slavery is an historical injustice. This is reason to resist reparations for slavery, according to structural injustice theorists, because we ought to be focusing on contemporary injustices, not what has happened in the past. Secondly, reparations for slavery are resisted because they rely on the controversial assumption that present-day Black Americans have been harmed by the injustices associated with slavery. This assumption is also controversial because it assumes that present-day citizens are required to make those reparations. Let us look at the first reason.

Iris Marion Young (2010), who popularized the concept of structural injustice, explains that structural injustice points to the wider structures that foster the potential for harm and injustice. She uses the example of Sandy, a single mother of two children, to clarify the structural features involved in these cases of injustice. Sandy works in a mall and is facing eviction because her building is being turned into a condominium. Sandy finds few options for housing. She is worried about apartments being too expensive, she worries about danger in inner-city neighborhoods, and she worries about having to live somewhere where she needs to buy a car. She decides to buy a car, but then discovers that she needs a deposit for which she does not have the money. She finds herself on the brink of homelessness, through no fault of her own. Sandy is a victim of structural injustice, yet it is unclear who is responsible for generating the harms she experienced.

As another structural injustice theorist, Catherine Lu (2017), notes, "it is not possible to trace the liability of agents like states over time and it is not possible to identify victim-groups over time."[102] Young and Lu prefer a structural theory of injustice as it primarily focuses on giving "forward-looking considerations the most normative weight."[103] I, amongst others, question this focus. If we reject historical injustices merely because they have passed, we are met with a number of serious problems. The most obvious problem is that a strictly forward-looking approach to repairing injustice argues against reparations for historical injustices, and slavery is an historical injustice. It follows from this that a purely structural account of injustice argues against reparations for slavery. Maeve McKeown (2021) offers a great description of the problems that result from not taking historical injustice seriously. She explains that the "value of backward-looking reparations is that they ensure that historical perpetrators do not evade their reparative obligations and that affected communities are taken seriously."[104] Daniel Butt (2017) highlights the value of backward-looking reparations for historical injustices and suggests that current structural accounts can and should make room for past injustices. Without doing so, other problems arise. For example, if we use an approach to injustice that is grounded in concerns of only past wrongs that have continued into the present, as Butt explains, there is a sense in which such an approach "instrumentalizes the victims, who are employed as means, rather than as ends in their own right."[105]

Overall, I lay out these views to highlight the challenges facing certain considerations of reparative justice. Even though structural injustice theorists argue against backward-looking reparations for historical injustices, we can learn from those like McKeown and Butt that historical events play a large role in our

[102] Maeve McKeown. "Backward-looking reparations and structural injustice." (2021a), 10.
[103] Jennifer M. Page, "Reproducing (Historical) Structural Injustice: On and Beyond Alasia Nuti's Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress." 1155.
[104] Maeve McKeown. "Structural injustice." (2021b), 771.
[105] Daniel Butt. "What Structural Injustice Theory Leaves Out: For Symposium on Alasia Nuti, Injustice and the Reproduction of History.", 1175.

understanding of justice today and thus cannot be ignored. Slavery, as an historical injustice, cannot be excluded from our theorizations of injustice. Backward-looking reparations for historical injustices are necessary for any account of injustice and should be prioritized as much as contemporary injustices.

The second reason reparations for slavery are resisted is because they rely on the controversial assumption that present-day Black Americans have been harmed by the injustices associated with slavery. According to critics, this assumption is controversial because it assumes that present-day Black Americans are due reparations even though they were not present at the time of slavery and therefore not directly harmed by the injustices associated with it. This assumption is also controversial because it assumes that present-day citizens are required to make those reparations. As Boxill explains, "[the] argument that many challenge today is that present day U.S. [Black individuals] have rights to reparations from contemporary U.S. citizens or the U.S. government because generations ago the U.S. government permitted many U.S. citizens to enslave several [Black individuals]." In other words, claiming that present-day Black individuals are continuously harmed by the injustice of slavery is controversial because "[people] do not have rights to reparations for the wrongful harms others suffer." [106]

Analyzing Boxill's defense for Black reparations evokes a deeper understanding of why present-day Black Americans have the right to reparations for historical injustice, specifically reparations for slavery, and what problems a defense of backward-looking reparations may run into. Let us begin by looking at two arguments which claim that present day Black Americans have rights to reparation for the harms experienced by their enslaved ancestors—the harm argument and the inheritance argument—as well as the objections they face.

3.2 On Reparations

As Boxill explains, the harm argument for present-day Black reparations "relies on the idea that the transgressions of slavery initiated an unbroken chain of harms linked as cause and effect that began with the slaves and continues among U.S. [Black individuals] to the present day." [107] In describing the transgressions of slavery as an "unbroken chain of harms," the harm argument crucially depends on the claim that "slavery's transgressions against the slaves have harmed present day U.S. [Black individuals]."[108] However, it is this assumption that many critics challenge. The claim that present-day Black Americans are harmed by the transgressions of slavery, and thus are deserving of reparations is faced by three main objections. Firstly, there is no way to distinguish between harms. How can we know if a disadvantage

[106] Boxill and Corlett.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.

suffered by someone in the present is the result of the transgressions of slavery? Secondly, there is a challenge in assigning responsibility. Since the transgressions of slavery were committed in the past, the transgressors are not alive. Because of this, the responsibility for reparations seems to dissolve. Finally, we have to account for the non-identity objection, which highlights the existential limit of reparations. The objection says,

"If slavery had never occurred most of the ancestors of present-day African Americans would not exist. The argument for this claim depends crucially on the assumption that our identities depend on our genetic make up and consequently on the identities of our parents…how can the present black population seek reparation for harms caused by transgressions that helped cause their existence, when, had these transgressions not occurred, they would never have been conceived?"[109]

To avoid this problem, scholars such as Boxill have put forward an alternative approach, called the inheritance argument. The inheritance argument says that at the time of slavery, enslaved people were entitled to seek reparation from the U.S. government, yet never received any. Importantly, the inheritance argument acknowledges the fact that present day Black Americans are the heirs of their enslaved ancestors. Consequently, as Boxill explains, "supposing that they have inherited rights to whatever their [enslaved] ancestors were entitled to, it follows that they have rights to the reparation that the government owed its [enslaved] ancestors but never paid."[110] These rights are held against transgressors at the times of injustice as well as against the present-day state and federal governments. The inheritance argument avoids the nonidentity problem, unlike the harm argument, because it does not rely on the idea that slavery's transgressions against enslaved people have harmed present-day Black Americans.

Boxill uses the theory of reparations as described in John Locke's *The Second Treatise of Government* as a way of defending present-day Black reparations for slavery. He argues if John Locke were alive today, he would "support a case for reparation for African Americans based on the enslavement of their slave ancestors" and that his views on reparation show "how to correct, restate, and defend, the two main arguments for black reparations."[111] Boxill summarizes this Lockean consideration of reparations as according to the following points, where T is the transgressor and V is the harmed individual.

1. "To have a right to seek reparation from T, T must have committed a transgression and V must 'receive' damage from T's transgression, but it is apparently not necessary that T intended to transgress against V, or intended to cause damage to V,
2. "Reparation is not the same as punishment…reparation is to 'make satisfaction' for the harm that V suffered. In some cases it is impossible to make satisfaction to V for the harm that he suffered…As Locke says, 'no Reparation can compensate' for murder…This suggests that

[109] Bernard Boxill. "A Lockean argument for black reparations.", 67.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 63. For brevity, I will be focusing just on the inheritance argument, as it is also posed as an alternative approach to the counterfactual argument.

reparation must compensate the injured person for his harms. But reparation and compensation are not therefore the same thing."[112]

3. "If T commits a transgression and V is harmed as a result, V is entitled to seek reparation from T. It is unnecessary, and irrelevant that T get any profit or satisfaction from his transgression or from harming V."[113]

On a Lockean account, as Boxill argues, we can see that enslaved individuals were clearly entitled to "seek reparation from the slave holders for the slave holders committed serious transgressions that harmed the slave."[114] As iterated in the first point, Locke would say that enslaved people were clearly in their right to seek reparations from their slaveholders, or the U.S. government. Importantly, it is not necessary, on the Lockean view, that the transgressor intends to harm the affected individual. So, even if a slaveholder, or an influential political figure who upheld laws that supported the transatlantic slave trade at the time did not intend to cause any harm towards the enslaved person, the enslaved person still maintains the right to seek reparation from them.

The second point that Boxill uses to summarize the central claims of a Lockean theory of reparations is one that distinguishes between notions of reparation and compensation. It is especially important to distinguish between these terms to gain a clearer understanding of what is involved in the process of reparations specifically. Reparation differs from compensation, according to Boxill, because compensation "simply makes up for damage, harm or loss or lack whether or not it was caused by wrongdoing."[115] Reparation, however, always involves a prior wrongdoing. If a person has a right to compensation, they may still not have a right to reparation. If a person has a right to reparation, however, it is likely that they will have a right to compensation. As Boxill explains, this is because the person's "right to reparation is a right to satisfaction for the damages [they] suffered, and such satisfaction often requires that [they] be made no worse off than [they] would have been had [they] not suffered the loss."[116]

Another important distinction between compensation and reparation is the fact that someone can receive compensation for any harm, it doesn't have to involve a harm that is the result of another's transgressions. On the other hand, someone cannot receive reparations for any harm, it has to involve a harm that they suffer as a result of another's transgression. Importantly, someone can "be compensated by those who had nothing do" with the harm. However, someone can receive reparation "only from those whose transgressions harmed [them]."[117]

---

[112] Boxill, 64.
[113] Ibid., 65.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Boxill and Corlett.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Boxill, 64.

The last point Boxill highlights from a Lockean view on reparations deals with de-centralizing the role of the transgressor. Consider the example Boxill provides to emphasize that even if the transgressor is harmed by their own transgression, this does not affect the victims right to reparations. He says, "[if] I punch you and break your jaw, I am not left off the hook because I also broke my hand, more severely than I broke your jaw."[118] The reparations due to the harmed individual depends only on how much they have been harmed by the transgressor. Having now developed this general understanding of this view on reparations, it is important to appreciate how Boxill implements this view into a defense of reparations for present-day Black Americans.

It immediately appears as a challenging task to explain how a view such as Locke's can be used to defend present-day reparations, especially considering the second point as noted by Boxill, which states that someone can receive reparation "only from those whose transgressions harmed [them]."[119] How can we then successfully account for present-day Black Americans as individuals with rights to reparations, if the original transgressors no longer exist? To answer this question, Boxill proposes the inheritance argument. The inheritance argument "insists that the U.S. Government supported slavery, that slavery was unjust and harmed the slaves, and consequently that the slaves had rights to reparation from the U.S. Government."[120] Again, it avoids the problems faced by the harm argument, as it does not rely on the assumption that slavery has harmed the present Black population. It does, however, ensure the right to present-day reparations.

There are two critical objections to the inheritance argument. Firstly, the inheritance argument is critiqued for relying on the counterfactual claim that "the freed people and their descendants would have held on to their reparations had they received it." Secondly, the argument is criticized for the fact that it "demands that people make reparations for the injuries of a crime that they could not have committed."[121] The inheritance argument is criticized for assuming that if the reparations had been paid at the time of the injustice, the victim of the injustice would have successfully received those reparations. This is problematic because it undermines the relevant dominating power structures at the time in which reparations would have been paid, and the difficulties faced by enslaved people in pursuing liberation. The argument is also criticized for its conceptualization of responsibility for paying reparations. Insofar as the argument acknowledges present-day Black Americans as descendants of their enslaved ancestors who "have rights to the reparation that the government owed its [enslaved] ancestors but never paid," it requires a payment of reparations that was never paid in the past.[122] In other words, this critique is concerned with the idea that present day individuals need to provide reparations for past harms, which were not directly caused by them.

[118] Boxill, 65.
[119] Ibid., 64.
[120] Ibid., 68.
[121] Boxill and Corlett.
[122] Boxill, 67.

Boxill says that we can uphold the claim that people are entitled to seek reparation only from those whose transgressions harmed them while still arguing in favor of present-day reparations for slavery. The inheritance argument does this by recognizing not only the slaveholder as responsible for transgressing against an enslaved individual, but also the U.S. Government, as it is implicated in that wrongdoing. As Boxill explains, "[the] attempt to rope in the U.S. as a nation or the U.S. Government as the debtor…was an attempt to find something that was around when the transgressions that harmed the slaves were committed; something that was implicated in those transgressions; and something that is still around now."[123] It follows from this, that reparations need not be made by a singular transgressor, slavery is a systematic violence, of which many others, including the U.S. Government were responsible for at the same time.

This being said, however, a problem still remains. That is, the individuals who made up the U.S. Government at the time of slavery are not the same people who exist in the state and federal governments today. This is problematic because if they are not the same governments that supported the slave trade, "they could not have helped the slave holders commit their crimes, and consequently cannot be required to make reparation for the harms these crimes caused."[124] Boxill responds to this concern by distinguishing between the existence of a government and its members. The distinction to keep in mind here, is that the identities of "governments and nations exist for centuries" and "cannot depend on the identities of their members."[125] Membership identity and its change over time is separate from the governmental identity. But this is not enough, for it still does not specifically identify from whom present-day reparations are required. We are still left with no answer as to how to account for present-day reparations, specifically how we can argue that "present day U.S. citizens have duties" to pay for the harms of slavery.[126]

Taking this concern into consideration, Boxill continues to argue that the inheritance argument can still be salvaged, and that the claim of inheritance need not rule out present-day reparations as paid by present-day U.S. citizens. To do this, Boxill turns to Locke's considerations on reparative liability. Locke says that only those who "assisted, concurred, or consented" are liable for making reparations for damages caused.[127] In highlighting how a Lockean approach leads us to broadening the scope of responsibility, both in identity and action, Boxill paves the way for the inheritance argument. The inheritance argument makes room for present-day reparations as made by present-day citizens. It avoids the complications faced by the harm argument and provides a comprehensive argument in favor of backward-looking reparations.

---

[123] Boxill, 70.
[124] Ibid, 71.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*, section 179.

Overall, there are three important steps of the inheritance argument that Boxill makes clear. Firstly, the inheritance argument maintains that "slaves had titles to reparation against the assets of the entire white population, not just against the slave holders."[128] Because most white citizens "assisted, concurred, or consented" to slavery on the Lockean account, this makes them liable for repairing the damages. Secondly, the inheritance argument does not pay attention to the profit made by slave holders over slavery. As Boxill notes, "transgressors and their helpers do not have to make a profit from their transgressions in order to have to make reparation to their victims."[129] This point speaks to the first point insofar as it similarly emphasizes the role of white citizens in making reparations. Again, a transgressor need not be just a slaveholder, but rather involves anybody who has "assisted, concurred, or consented" to slavery. As Boxill clearly explains, "it is useless to repeat that many white owed nothing to slavery and made their money honestly."[130] Thirdly, the inheritance argument depends on "each white generation inheriting assets from the slave holding generations that were more than enough to pay the costs of making reparation to the slaves."[131] This point similarly emphasizes the role of responsibility that is assigned to white citizens, specifically if they have inherited assets from the transgressor. This speaks to another important feature of reparations that requires further investigation.

3.3 A Reparatory Account

In the case of the inheritance argument, reparations typically take a monetary form. This is reflected in the language used to describe reparative processes. As the inheritance argument states, it follows that descendants of enslaved individuals have "rights to the reparation that the government owed its [enslaved] ancestors but never paid."[132] This often leads to a prioritization of material losses in the context of reparations. Boxill does note that an injustice "may cause damages to its victim's self-respect and moral standing…" and that reparations for immaterial harms can include "an admission of wrongdoing from the wrongdoer, a plea for her forgiveness, and an apology."[133]

Nonetheless, other scholars, like Daniel Butt and Janna Thompson, have pointed out that the inheritance argument "seemingly narrows the range of cases of historic injustice that can be remedied to those in which there is an extant material dimension of misappropriated and wrongly retained property."[134] This is problematic considering the multitude of immaterial harms associated with slavery. Prioritization of

[128] Boxill, 77.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid, 78.
[132] Ibid., 67.
[133] Boxill and Corlett.
[134] Butt, 246-247.

material harms leaves no room for consideration of other serious harms, such as generational trauma, psychological harms, and the harms associated with the murder of enslaved ancestors. Even Locke would agree, that "no Reparation can compensate" for murder.[135]

Janna Thompson succinctly expresses the limits of the inheritance argument in terms of consideration for immaterial harms. She similarly worries about the limits the inheritance argument places on considerations of the immaterial dimension of injustice. She explains that the inheritance approach to reparations,

> "[Puts] limits on what kinds of injustice can be the subject of claims. Claims have to be confined to demands for restoration of, or compensation for, expropriated possessions. Descendants can claim nothing in reparation for the murder, torture, abduction, or maltreatment of their forebears, for the disrespect shown to them as persons, however large these injustices may loom in their thoughts about the past."[136]

I similarly take these kinds of reparations—reparations for immaterial harms—as crucial to any comprehensive account of reparations, especially when considering reparations for the harms associated with slavery. The focus on immaterial harms speaks in favor of an historical theory of injustice. Reparations in the form of money or property seem to reflect a structural and forward-looking reparative approach. Giving back colonized property and paying back money emphasize ready and current repair. It provides descendants of enslaved people material compensation for their experienced harms.

On the other hand, immaterial reparations such as apologies, statements of acknowledgement and explicit considerations of the severe historic injustices associated with slavery are largely backward-looking. There is a risk in relying on material reparations for slavery, and we can understand this by referring back to Butt's worry about structural accounts of injustice and its focus on contemporary harms. If we use an approach to injustice that is grounded in concerns of contemporary injustices, as Butt explains, there is a sense in which such an approach "instrumentalizes the victims, who are employed as means, rather than as ends in their own right."[137]

In many cases of reparation for injustice, material reparations such as wealth and estate are rightly due. However, prioritization of material reparations poses some risks in the same way that the structural injustice theorists' prioritization of contemporary over historical injustice does. What we can take away from Boxill's defense of Black reparations and McKeown's and Butt's respective views on supporting the consideration of historical events is that slavery, as an historical injustice, cannot be excluded from our theorizations of injustice. Backward-looking reparations for historical injustices such as slavery are necessary for any account of injustice and should be prioritized as much as contemporary injustices.

---

[135] Locke, 273, 274.
[136] Janna Thompson, *Taking Responsibility for the* Past, 108.
[137] Butt, 1175.

Correspondingly, immaterial reparations for historical injustices such as slavery are necessary for any account of injustice and should be prioritized as much as material reparations.

I argue that we can gather this information about reparations and apply it to the context of reclamation. I compare the theories of reparative justice and of reclamation as discussed in the previous two parts of this thesis and point out important similarities between frameworks. By looking at the ways in which theories of reclamation and reparation coincide, I take the use of language, particularly the restricted use of reclaimed slurs like the 'n-word,' as an immaterial kind of reparation. I argue that by understanding reclaimed uses of a slur—such as the 'n-word'—as a kind of immaterial reparation for historical injustice—such as slavery—we can gain insight into how to effectively address the problem of ambiguity in slur theory. Again, the problem of ambiguity shows that current theories of slurs do not specifically distinguish between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur, leading to the concern that if we posit such ambiguity, uses of insularly reclaimed slurs are open to out-group use. This is clearly problematic; a white person should not use the 'n-word'. It is by looking at the ways in which Black reparations are defended that we can find a way of explaining why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. Conversely, I show that the discourse on reparations can also learn from our discussion on existing slur theory. Specifically, I argue that not only can theories of reparative justice help to address the problem of ambiguity, but also that a temporal re-evaluation of the theoretical framework on slur reclamation can similarly be applied to the discussion on backwards-looking reparations, giving more reason to defend an historical account of injustice. Additionally, I show that processes of reparations are largely developed under a colonialized and transgressor-focused framework, while processes of reclamation are centered around the actions of the target group. By utilizing our discussions on the structural and procedural framework on slur reclamation, we can re-evaluate the ways in which successful reparations are measured, giving more space to the rights and actions of the oppressed groups rather than the actions of the transgressors.

Let us begin by taking a closer look at my first claim: reclamation as reparations. I argue that the restricted use of insularly reclaimed slurs, like the 'n-word,' can be recognized as a kind of reparation. The intuition that initially led to this claim is that both instances of slur reclamation and reparations involve a change in the direction of power. In the case of reclamation, a target group takes back control of the use of a word that was once used to derogate them and in the case of reparation, a victim or descendant of a victim of an injustice expresses a right to inherit or take back control of their ancestor's fundamental rights that were violated in the past. To better highlight this point of connection, consider again Jeshion's framework on slur reclamation.

Jeshion lays out some common initial-stage features of slur reclamation in pride and insular reclamation, including the feature she calls *Weapons Control. Weapons Control* describes when targets "group-self apply bigots' weapons with reverse polarity, take ownership of the word, and thereby diminish

power in the bigots' hands."[138] The feature of *Weapons Control* describes the ways in which targets take control over language. This involves taking control of the polarity of the word, but also taking control over the words that are specifically used as weapons against them. Thus, targets *take back* the word, and *take back* the power associated with it.

A similar feature can be recognized in Boxill's defense of Black reparations. As Boxill explains, "supposing that [present-day Black Americans] have inherited rights to whatever their [enslaved] ancestors were entitled to, it follows that they have rights to the reparation that the government owed its [enslaved] ancestors but never paid."[139] These rights are held against transgressors at the times of injustice as well as against the present-day state and federal governments. Invoking one's right to reparations reflects taking back the respect and fundamental rights that their ancestors were denied.[140]

The consideration of slavery as an historical injustice and the importance of backward-looking reparations can also be highlighted in the context of reclaimed slurs, specifically in Jeshion's distinction between pride and insular reclamation and the corresponding diachronic structure of these kinds of reclamation. As alluded to earlier, Jeshion defines pride reclamation as "the reclamation of a pejorative representation through processes in which the representation is accompanied by expressions of pride for being in the group or the targeted object, and the representation is presented publicly as an apt way to reference the group." Insular reclamation is defined as "the reclamation of a pejorative representation through processes in which use of the representation dominantly functions to express and elicit camaraderie among target members in the face of and to insulate from oppression, and the representation is not presented publicly as an apt way for out-group members to reference target group members."[141]

Jeshion distinguishes between pride and insular reclamation in order to address concerns dealing with the problem of ambiguity. More specifically, she aims to answer why reclamation is only ignited by the target group, and why pride, but not insular reclaimed slurs become open to out-group use. Despite this distinction, Jeshion puts forward a general diachronic structure of reclamation that is meant to account for both kinds of reclamation. On Jeshion's view, reclamation can be characterized as occurring through four stages:

"(I) Preliminary state: the word is governed by linguistic conventions C regarding its meaning, pragmatic use, primary associations.

(II) Acts of linguistic creativity and innovation: speakers use the word in novel ways, departing from C, sometimes with the deliberate aim to effect change, sometimes not.

[138] Jeshion, 122.
[139] Boxill, 67.
[140] In the case of material reparations, this could involve taking back the land that was once taken from them.
[141] Jeshion, 107.

(III) Acts of imitation and diffusion: speakers imitate the novel uses or key aspects of them.

(IV) End result: the word has come to be governed by new linguistic conventions C'=/C; the word may still retain its former conventions C, becoming polysemous, or C may be supplanted by C."

As Jeshion explains, the final stage of reclamation represents the use of the reclaimed slur as being governed by new, non-racist linguistic conventions, while still possibly retaining old conventions. As argued earlier, I take this to be problematic for numerous reasons. I worry about the temporal restrictions of such a structure of reclamation. In assuming an end to reclamation, where that end involves a word coming to be governed by new linguistic conventions, the important distinction Jeshion makes between insular and pride reclamation is blurred. Assuming an end also places unnecessary pressures on target groups to conform to a specific timeline of reclamation. What about slurs which are not open to out-group use, like the 'n-word?' Does this imply that the slur is not successfully reclaimed? If success in reclamation is not measured by the level of open out-group use, how then do we know when reclamation has successfully occurred? Implying that reclamation is successful only when out-group members have open use to the reclaimed slur undermines the experiences of targeted individuals who evoke and engage in processes of slur reclamation without the intention to open the use of the slur to out-group members.

The worry I emphasize here about Jeshion's structural framework on slur reclamation is that it is too forward-looking. Focusing on reclamation as having a temporally rigid structure emphasizes a conceptualization of reclamation that functions to completely dissolve the original derogatory content of a slur. This is problematic insofar as it leaves out consideration of reclaimed uses of slurs which are not entirely dissolved of their original derogatory content, such as the 'n-word.' It seems unfair to say that reclaimed uses of the 'n-word' are not successful. The goal should not be to rid a slur of its derogatory content, as this is the content that helps to explain why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. A framework which structures reclamation as involving an endpoint of some kind is forward-looking insofar as it ensures that successfully reclaimed slurs do not convey any kind of offense. As Jeshion explains, at the end of reclamation, a slur "comes to acquire a new linguistic convention on which its use does not communicate derogation." I argue that the goal of slur reclamation should not require the diffusion of the derogatory content of a slur but should require acknowledgment of the history of a slur before in its derogatory form.

As illustrated in my concern about positing an endpoint to the various processes of reclamation, a re-evaluation of the ways in which reclamation is diachronically structured is due. More specifically, I argue that processes of reclamation should not be focused only on minimizing the derogatory content of a slur via reclamation but should also take into consideration the historical context that underlies reclaimed uses of slurs, their derogatory origin, as it is this historical context that explains why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. There is a clear parallel here between the discourse on reparations and historical injustice. My

concerns about the diachronic structure of reclamation as emphasized in the theory echo the concerns of defenders of Black reparations and backward-looking approaches to injustice. A defense of Black reparations for slavery relies on the crucial consideration and repair of past injustices. Without focusing on past injustices, or the historical context that underlies present injustices, a theory of Black reparations for slavery cannot stand. Similarly, consideration of historical context is necessary when answering the question of why certain slurs are restricted to certain users.

As we can see so far, processes of reclamation and reparation reveal interesting similarities. Firstly, both processes involve a crucial change in power. In the case of reclamation, a target group takes back control of the use of a word that was once used to derogate them and in the case of reparation, a victim or descendant of a victim of an injustice expresses a right to inherit or take back control of their ancestor's fundamental rights that were violated in the past. Secondly, processes of reclamation and reparation also similarly involve a backward-looking approaches in their defenses of restricted uses of reclaimed slurs and Black reparations, or so I argue. Now that these similarities have been established, we can better understand why it makes sense to consider the right to use certain slurs as a right to reparations for past injustices. The next important step is to discuss how understanding reclamation as a kind of reparation for past harms helps provide a solution to the problem of ambiguity.

3.4 Reparations and the Problem of Ambiguity

The problem of ambiguity arises when content-based theories of slurs do not distinguish between a derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur. Positing ambiguity leads to a larger problem, nicely described by Ritchie as the Appropriation Worry, which states that "content-based views that posit an ambiguity to account for appropriation cannot account for why only members in the target group (and perhaps others with 'insider' status) can use an appropriated slur to express a non-offensive/positive meaning."[142] In other words, if it is ambiguous whether or not a reclaimed slur expresses derogatory or non-derogatory content, then we cannot explain why non-offensive uses of reclaimed slurs are restricted to only members in the target group. If we cannot explain this, then we allow the use of reclaimed slurs open to any out-group member. This problem requires us to put forward an answer as to why and how we can disambiguate the derogatory and non-derogatory uses of a reclaimed slur. We have to figure out why it is that certain reclaimed slurs, like the 'n-word,' are restricted to certain users, and why they should be. We can do this by referring back to a defense of Black reparations.

[142] Ritchie, 157.

When we ask why certain slurs are and should be restricted to certain users, we are seeking to find what distinguishes between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of slur, how to distinguish who can use a particular slur, and what is at stake when this distinction is not made clear.

As we have seen from the various perspectives in the field, most scholars rely on explaining this distinction as a matter of group membership. According to Anderson and Bianchi and Ritchie, reclaimed slurs are restricted to users in virtue of their users' group membership. Bianchi explains that slurs are restricted to in-groups in virtue of their lacking dissociative attitude, and Anderson explains that slurs are restricted to in-groups based on their relevant speech communities. Ritchie argues that the semantics of plural first-person indexicals can "account for why only target group members…can use appropriated slurs to express their positive contents."[143] Cepollaro moves away from basing the distinction on group membership and argues instead that it is a case of authoritativeness, but as we have seen, parts of this view are problematic for other reasons. Apart from Cepollaro, membership of the in-group, or target group authorizes non-derogatory uses of slurs. Distinguishing group membership is important in telling us who can use a particular slur. But it does not tell us anything about why these restrictions are important to acknowledge in the first place. It does not tell us why slurs like the 'n-word' *should* be restricted to Black users. Turning to a defense of Black reparations, while maintaining the idea of reclamation as a kind of reparation, can fill this gap.

Let us first look at how Black reparations for slavery are defended in the first place and then see how this defense applies to a defense of why certain slurs, like the 'n-word,' should be restricted to Black users. As Boxill explains, reparations for present-day Black Americans are defended according to the argument of inheritance, which states that the inheritance argument acknowledges the fact that present day Black Americans are the heirs of their enslaved ancestors and "supposing that they have inherited rights to whatever their [enslaved] ancestors were entitled to, it follows that they have rights to the reparation that the government owed its [enslaved] ancestors but never paid."[144] The inheritance argument shows us a number of things. Firstly, the inheritance argument acknowledges reparations as a right, not only of the individuals directly harmed by slavery, but also as a right that is inherited by their descendants. In other words, the inheritance argument tells us who has the right to reparations. Secondly, the inheritance argument shows us why present-day individuals have a right to reparations that were never paid to their ancestors, and what is at stake if this right is denied.

One of the major problems the inheritance argument runs into, according to critics, is that it "demands that people make reparations for the injuries of a crime that they could not have committed."[145]

[143] Ritchie, 158.
[144] Boxill, 67.
[145] Boxill and Corlett.

Insofar as the inheritance argument defends the right of present-day Black Americans to reparations for slavery, it requires present-day "payments" of reparations. The problem lies in assigning responsibility. If, according to Locke's theory of reparations, someone can receive reparation "only from those whose transgressions harmed [them]," then from whom do present-day descendants of enslaved people receive their reparations from? [146] The transgressors of the harms associated with slavery no longer exist, so who is responsible for repairing these harms? As Boxill suggests, the claim of inheritance need not rule out present-day reparations as paid by present-day U.S. citizens. It is not only the slaveholders who are categorized as transgressors of the harms of slavery. Included in this category is the U.S. state and federal governments. Thus, transgressions of harms associated with slavery are not restricted to obvious oppressors such as slaveholders but are also associated with other transgressors, who "assisted, concurred, or consented" to such harms.[147] As noted earlier, slavery is a series of systematic violences and anybody who assists, concurs, or consents to slavery and its relevant practices are responsible for providing reparations. So, how can we connect this problem and suggested solution to our conversation on reclamation?

As we already know, the major problem faced by an account of slur reclamation is the problem of ambiguity. How do we distinguish between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur? Without this distinction, the process of reclamation (particularly insular reclamation) is undermined. In other words, by failing to distinguish between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur such as the 'n-word,' we fail to acknowledge the fact that certain slurs are restricted to certain users. This leaves open access for out-group members, or white individuals, to use the 'n-word,' which most scholars would agree is wrong. A defense of slur reclamation necessarily involves consideration of insularly reclaimed slurs like the 'n-word.' Accordingly, this involves the consideration of out-group restrictions. As discussed earlier, failure to consider restricted uses of slurs encourages a misguided understanding of slur reclamation, one which characterizes successful reclamation as involving the minimization of any derogatory content. This is seen in cases of pride reclamation. The exclusive focus on reclamation as a process which disarms the derogation of a slur is problematic because doing so neglects the value of out-group use restrictions. We can better understand why out-group restrictions are valuable by contextualizing insular reclamation in the framework of Black reparations.

From this, we can see that both frameworks face certain challenges. In the case of reparations, the question is about how and why we should argue for reparations for present-day Black Americans. In the case of reclamation, the question is about how and why certain slurs are and should be restricted to particular users. More specifically, the discourse on reparations faces challenges in explaining why present-day Black Americans should receive reparations. Discourse on reclamation faces challenges in explaining why Black

[146] Boxill, 64.
[147] Locke, 179.

Americans should maintain exclusive access to reclaimed uses of the 'n-word.' But, as we see from Boxill's defense, present-day Black Americans have inherited the right to reparations that were never received by their ancestors. Let us now apply this conceptualization of reparations to the context of insularly reclaimed slurs.

According to the discourse on reparations, to provide reparations is to make satisfaction for past harms. In the case of reparations for Black Americans, the past harms are those associated with slavery. I argue that the acknowledgment and enforcement of out-group restrictions on slurs can be recognized as making satisfaction for past harms. It is important here to flesh out this point. As previously elucidated, there are various similarities between processes of reclamation and reparation, including the idea that both instances of reclamation and reparation involve a change in direction of power. Through reclamation, a target group takes back control of a word once used against them, and through reparations, a victim of injustice expresses a right to take back control of their ancestor's fundamental rights that were violated and never repaired. Additionally, insofar as a defense of reparations expresses the importance of historical injustices and backward-looking approaches to repairing those injustices, processes of reclamation can be recognized as doing the same.

On top of this, we can also understand slur reclamation—specifically insular reclamation—as a process in part devoted to making satisfaction for past harms. The past harms, in this case, would be the use of the slur with its previously derogatory content to derogate individuals on the basis of their identity. Prior to the development of reclaimed uses of the 'n-word' by Black individuals, the slur was explicitly used to derogate its targets. It is this derogation, and the various harms associated with the use of a derogatory slur that catalyze the process of reclamation. We can gather from this, that there are past harms involved within any case of slur reclamation. In order for a slur to become reclaimed in the first place, it must initially convey some kind of offense or derogation. The ways in which reclamation processes are structured, as we have discussed, do not make this clear enough. In positing an end to the reclamatory process, where that end is successful insofar as the derogatory content of a slur is minimized, the harms associated with previous uses of the slurs in their derogatory form are also undermined. Lessening the impact of the derogatory content of a slur through means of reclamation simultaneously minimizes the impact of the oppressions faced by the target group.

On this view, we can now understand slur reclamation as a way for targeted groups/individuals to evoke their right to reparations for past harms, specifically the harms that arise from use of derogatory slurs. Another important question to tackle deals with the individuals who are evoking this right to reparations. According to Locke, and as described by Boxill, reparations are due to those who have experienced harm from a particular transgression. He explains that "[to] have a right to seek reparation from *T* [the transgressor], *T* must have committed a transgression and *V* [the harmed individual] must 'receive' damage

from *T*'s transgression."[148] In the case of slur reclamation, the transgression, or the past harm, as already noted, is the use of slurs in their derogatory form to offend individuals on the basis of their identity. For example, slurs such as the 'n-word' can be traced back to an oppressive origin, namely, a history of slavery. The word is traced back to the first arrival of slaves into the United States when the African people were referred to "using the Spanish and Portuguese words for black." Professor Kehinde Andrews, of Birmingham City University, explains that the origin of the slur is "really tied into the idea that African people aren't really human beings."[149] It is clear that use of a slur, with such oppressive origins is seriously harmful, and that the word was originally designed to oppress and transgress.

Thus, it is clear that use of the 'n-word' by out-group members is a transgression against in-group members. Additionally, it is clear that the in-group members, in Locke's terms, take on the role of "*V*", the harmed individual. Following this framework allows us to distinguish the harmed individuals from the transgressors, and consequently provides us with a way to understand who has a right to use restricted slurs like the 'n-word.' A right to reclaimed uses of a slur reflects a right to reparations for past harms. More specifically, a right to use reclaimed uses of the 'n-word' are restricted to Black users because of the historical transgressions expressed by the use of the slur in its derogatory (unreclaimed) form by out-group members (non-Black users).

Providing a solution to the problem of ambiguity requires an explanation of why certain slurs are restricted to certain users, and understanding the right to reclamation as a right to reparations for past harms can do this. As investigated previously, various approaches to the problem of ambiguity have been raised, similarly positing an explanatory answer as to how we can distinguish between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur. Bianchi says it is a matter of irony, Anderson says it depends on membership in a particular speech community, and so forth. I argue that solving the problem of ambiguity, and distinguishing between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur is a matter of justice. Slavery is an historical injustice comprised of innumerable harms which require repair. Amongst these harms are out-group uses of the 'n-word.' Efforts to reclaim the 'n-word' are invocations of a right to reparations for these harms.

Importantly, however, my proposed framework goes one step further than existing accounts in explaining how to deal with the problem of ambiguity, specifically shedding light on what is at stake if the right to restricted uses of slurs is denied or ignored. As discussed earlier, many existing accounts of slur reclamation take membership of the in-group, or target group as authorizing the non-derogatory use of slurs. Distinguishing group membership is important in telling us who can use a particular slur. But it does not tell us anything about why these restrictions are important to acknowledge in the first place. It does not tell us why slurs like the 'n-word' *should* be restricted to Black users. A framework that contextualizes

[148] Boxill, 64.
[149] Wilson (2020).

reclamation in the context of reparations, specifically reclamation of the 'n-word' in the context of Black reparations for slavery, better encapsulates exactly why the boundaries of in and out-group membership are crucial to establish and maintain. To highlight this more clearly, let us return to Boxill's defense of Black reparations and how such a defense emphasizes the problems that arise when reparations for slavery are denied. The ways in which a defense of reparations deals with these problems, I argue, can translate into the context of reclamation, and can help to elucidate the gravity of out-group use of reclaimed slurs.

Boxill's defense of Black reparations provides a number of reasons why reparations for present-day Black Americans are necessary. His argument avoids relying on the controversial assumption that present-day individuals are harmed by slavery as an historical event, yet still ensures the right to present-day reparations. [150] It is important to question the motive behind Boxill's argument. Why is it important to provide reparations for present-day Black individuals, what inspires the critiques of present-day reparations, and why are these critiques crucial to counter? In other words, it is important for us to investigate what is at stake if the right to present-day reparations for past injustices are denied.

According to critics, Black reparations for slavery are typically resisted for the following reasons. Firstly, it is argued that assuming present-day Black individuals are harmed by the historical injustice of slavery is problematic. This is due to concerns dealing with responsibility. They ask how we can hold people accountable for these harms and hold them accountable for repairing these harms, when they no longer exist? As Boxill points out, the difficulty with the argument that present day Black Americans have inherited the right to reparations from the US state and federal governments that were never paid unto their ancestors, is that "the U.S. federal and state governments during the period of slavery are not obviously the same governments that exist today… if the governments that now exist are not in relevant aspects the same governments at the time of slavery, they could not have helped the slave holders commit their crimes, and consequently cannot be required to make reparation for the harms these crimes caused."[151]

Boxill argues for present-day reparations, but avoids these so-called controversial claims, through his argument of inheritance. On this view, present-day reparations for Black Americans are defended on the basis of inheriting reparations from their enslaved ancestors that were never paid. Thus, his defense aims at two central objectives: defending present-day reparations for slavery and clarifying the agents responsible for providing those reparations. Despite the fact that Boxill outrightly sidesteps relying on the claim that present day Black individuals are harmed by the effects of slavery, his argument still makes room for this claim to stand. What is at stake, according to Boxill, is the unjust erasure of rights to reparations. If we do not take into consideration the fact that present-day individuals are due reparations that were never paid in

[150] It is entirely a different question whether this assumption is controversial in the first place, but the arguments that precede Boxill's account of inheritance take it to be so.
[151] Boxill, 70-71.

the past, then we may as well be saying that the harms associated with historical injustices like slavery do not make their way into the present, and that only contemporary injustices are to be taken seriously in the context of reparations. If a defense of present-day Black reparations is denied, we risk abandoning consideration of injustices not only faced by enslaved individuals, but also the ways in which such injustices manifest in the present. Neglect of present-day reparations for slavery is neglect of historical injustice. I argue that the risks associated with neglect of present-day reparations for slavery as an historical injustice—the erasure of a violent past and the ways in which such violences continue into the present—are reflected in our discourse on slur reclamation.

As discussed previously, reparations come in various forms. These forms include both material and immaterial reparations. Material reparations typically take the shape of money or property, while immaterial reparations take the shape of acknowledgment, apology, and awareness of past harms. The use of language, particularly the non-derogatory use of a reclaimed slur, I argue, is a kind of immaterial reparation. It is often more difficult to defend cases for immaterial reparations over material ones. This is because material injustices, like the colonial subjugation of land or embezzlement of funds, are tangible and more easily measurable than immaterial injustices. Accordingly, the reparations for material harms are more discernible. Simply put, the injustice of stealing money from a group of individuals requires paying those individuals back. Reparations for stolen materials requires returning such materials. If the commodities in question are not returned to their original owners, it is clear that reparations have not been paid.

The case is not as simple when considering immaterial harms, however. It is more difficult to quantify immaterial harms such as murder and psychological harms, and thus more difficult to repair such harms. This should not, however, detract from the value of immaterial reparations. Just because there is nothing physically present to return to its original owner does not mean that there is nothing to return at all. Again, I take the right to use reclaimed slurs as reflective of a right to immaterial reparations. It is widely acknowledged that the use of slurs in their derogatory forms are offensive. The consequent effects of the use of derogatory slurs are long-lasting and are catalysts for reclamatory movements. Minimization of the derogatory history of a slur not only undermines the violences experienced by target groups but also undermines the reasons why a slur is reclaimed in the first place. As recognized in existing temporal frameworks of reclamation, classification of reclamation as "successful" only when a slur's derogatory content is diminished—open to out-group members—contributes to this problematic minimization of a slur's offensive and violent history.

Thus, what is at stake in the case of reclamation reflects that which is at stake in the case of reparations. Denying the right to reparations for historical injustices such as slavery, risks simultaneously neglecting and reinforcing serious harms that have both occurred in the past and very well may have translated into the present. These risks are correspondingly salient in the context of slur reclamation.

Without the crucial distinction between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of slurs, specifically regarding who has access to the non-derogatory use of a slur, we cannot grasp the importance behind why these restrictions should be upheld in the first place. Failure to acknowledge the gravity of restricted uses of a slur is to simultaneously neglect and reinforce the respective oppressive history associated with that slur. In other words, failure to acknowledge why use of the 'n-word' should be restricted to Black users is a failure to acknowledge the historical injustice of slavery and the harms that stem from it.

OBJECTIONS

The last section of this thesis is devoted to exploring objections that arise both in response to the parallels I draw between processes of reclamation and reparations and to my considerations of reclamation more generally. I will begin by addressing a worry that may arise from my view, specifically concerning my contextualization of reclamation as a kind of reparation. I then turn to concerns dealing with the conceptualization of reclamation more generally. For example, I explore and respond to questions which ask why considerations of insularly reclaimed slur use are so important. Is it not it a central feature of reclamation to reduce the harms associated with derogatory use of slurs? Would it not be the least harmful route, so to say, of reclamation, be to completely dissolve the slur of its derogatory content via open use? This concern could also be pushed in the opposite direction. If slurs are so offensive, and since there are such serious harms involved in violating the existing restrictions that surround certain slurs, why do we not argue for the restriction of all slurs, period? In responding to these worries, I aim to emphasize the crucial features of slur reclamation that ensure a comprehensive account of why certain slurs should be restricted to certain users and to illustrate the ways in which the processes of reclamation and reparation contribute to one another.

Let us begin with the first set of objections which are concerned with the process of reclamation, apart from my proposed framework of reclamation as reparations. Firstly, it is important to address the worries that may arise from my critique of the prioritization of pride over insular reclamation. I take it problematic that scholars such as Jeshion understand successful reclamation as involving use of a reclaimed slur that is completely rid of its derogatory content. This is highlighted in a different feature of reclamation, which she calls Stabilized Neutralization. Stabilized Neutralization expresses that "via a process of reclamation, [a slur] comes to acquire a new linguistic convention on which its use does not communicate derogation."[152] The "end result" involves a "new" linguistic convention which does not communicate any derogation. However, during the process of reclamation, "slurs are polysemous, retaining as well linguistic conventions encoding derogation."[153] My concern here, is that current accounts of slur reclamation are problematically structured. By assuming a particular end to reclamation, one in which a slur is completely rid of its derogatory content and open to use by anyone, these theories undermine the indispensability of insular restrictions on slur use.

One could object to this concern and argue in favor of an account of slur reclamation that prioritizes pride reclamation over insular reclamation. One may argue that instances of reclamation which strive towards completely ridding a slur of its derogatory content, consequently opening up the use of the slur to

[152] Jeshion, 123.
[153] Ibid.

anyone, is the best direction to turn. Everyone can agree that slurs are offensive. This universal feature of slur use often incites discussions on how to prevent such offense. Included in these discussions are various accounts of slur reclamation. In this sense, reclamation is framed as a socio-linguistic mechanism designed to counteract the offensive nature of a slur. So, one could argue that opening up the use of reclaimed slurs to use of anybody is the best way to challenge a slur's offense; it is the best way to reduce harm. While this objection questions the need for restrictions on slur use, others may question the need for non-derogatory uses of slurs. One could agree with my claim that neglect or violation of in-group restrictions on slurs could lead to serious harms. If these harms are so serious, then why don't we eliminate the risk altogether?[154]

I will respond first to the proposal that we eliminate all restrictions on reclaimed slur use. I do not disagree with the positive effects that arise out pride-reclaimed slurs, such as the word 'gay.' There is no doubt—should the in-group authorize it—that opening up the use of a reclaimed slur increasingly diminishes the derogatory nature of the slur. However, this should not rule out cases in which reclaimed slurs are restricted to in-group members. As argued throughout this last section, a right to restricted use of reclaimed slurs is a right to reparations for past injustices. Failure to acknowledge the gravity of restricted uses of slurs is to simultaneously neglect and reinforce the respective oppressive history associated with that slur.

On top of this, prioritizing pride over insular reclamation—arguing for the dissolution of in-group restrictions—is in some ways contradicting. It seems to me that insular reclamation is a necessary part of pride reclamation. I want to be careful here and avoid assigning yet another diachronic structure to the process of reclamation. I do not seek to argue that insular reclamation occurs before pride reclamation, as this would contribute to the misleading idea that instances of pride reclamation as the desired endpoint of the process, and insular reclamation are just steps in getting there. What I do want to make clear, however, is that an argument in favor of eliminating the boundaries of slur restriction cannot rule out cases of insular reclamation; it is indeed constituted by cases of insular reclamation. There are differing features of reclamation—Polarity Reversal, Weapons Control, and Identity Ownership, for example—that illustrate the insular movements which incite stages of both insular and pride reclamation. These features all speak to a particular shift that is engendered by the targets of the slur. Polarity Reversal involves a shift in the slur's polarity. This shift is up to the target group. Similarly, Weapons Control describes targets as taking "ownership of the word, and thereby diminish[ing] power in the bigots' hands." [155] The point I want to make here is that insular reclamation and the relevant restrictions of use cannot be avoided.

[154] Sherryl Kleinman, Matthew B. Ezzell, and A. Corey Frost. "Reclaiming critical analysis: The social harms of 'bitch.'"
[155] Jeshion, 122.

We should not turn towards the opposite direction either—restricting the use of slurs altogether. Since it does not make sense to dissolve the restrictions surrounding reclaimed slurs, one may argue instead for a universal restriction on slurs. A universal restriction avoids the problem faced by the previous objection—that failure to acknowledge the gravity of restricted uses of slurs is to simultaneously neglect and reinforce the respective oppressive history associated with that slur. It upholds the importance of restrictions on slurs, but it argues for universal restriction, consequently undermining the value of slur restrictions and the challenges faced by target groups throughout the entire reclamatory process. I argue that certain slurs should be restricted to *certain* users. Not all users. It is the nature of in-group restriction itself—the clear distinction between who can use a slur and who cannot—that gives rise to the opportunities to repair past injustices. If we place restrictions on all uses of slurs, reclaimed or not, the injustices associated with the use of the slur stay buried. Generalization of the restrictions on slurs turns a blind eye to the historical injustices associated with those slurs and detracts from the exclusive perspectives of targeted individuals. Thus, if we apply no restrictions or restrictions upon all, we cannot adequately grasp the true value of slur reclamation. Exclusive restrictions of reclaimed slurs are required.

The next set of objections deal with my particular framework. The first one takes into question the connective framework I develop throughout my argument—between processes of reclamation and reparations. Specifically, concerns may arise with regard to my claim that the restricted use of insularly reclaimed slurs can be recognized as a kind of reparation for past harms. Indeed, both processes involve a change in direction of power. As I explain, in the case of reclamation, a target group *takes back* control of the use of a word that was once used to derogate them and in the case of reparation, a victim or descendant of a victim of an injustice expresses a right to inherit or *take back* control of their ancestor's fundamental rights that were violated in the past. Individuals who have a right to reparation and reclamation both take back some level of control, over the inheritance of rights and restriction of language, respectively. The problem, however, is that the agents involved in this change of power are not as easily translatable between the two processes. The misalignment between the two processes has to do with the ways in which reclamation and reparation are "successfully" measured. Reparations are successful once the transgressor pays, and provides repair for, past harms. Reclamation is successful once the target group transforms the derogatory content of a slur into its non-derogatory form. This should include cases of *both* insular and pride reclamation, as I argue.

Let us return back to Boxill's description of reparations to elucidate the positions of power involved in securing the right to reparations. As drawn from the central points within Locke's theory on reparations, Boxill explains that enslaved individuals were clearly entitled to "seek reparation from the slave holders," that reparations always involve a prior wrongdoing, and that the reparations due to the person who has been harmed depends only on how much they have been harmed by the transgressor. He says, "[if] I punch you

and break your jaw, I am not left off the hook because I also broke my hand, more severely than I broke your jaw." [156] As emphasized by these central features of reparations, the transgressor seems to play the most influential role in terms of whether or not reparations should be paid. Even though the last point, as described by Boxill, deals with de-centralizing the role of the transgressor; by focusing only on the harms experienced by the victim of the injustice, the framework is still largely governed by the role of the transgressor.

This does not seem as clear in the case of reclamation. Reclamation relies crucially on the role of the targeted individual. As described by Jeshion, some common features of slur reclamation involve features of Polarity Reversal, Weapons Control, and Identity Ownership. "Polarity Reversal demarcates a minimal general requirement on the shift that occurs in reclamatory acts: speakers use representations that standardly have a negative polarity to communicate a positive polarity." Weapons Control describes when targets "group-self applying bigots' weapons with reverse polarity, take ownership of the word, and thereby diminish power in the bigots' hands," and Identity Ownership describes "how speakers contribute to positively shaping the group's social identity."[157] Processes of reclamation crucially rely on the targeted group. Reversing the polarity of particular representations requires movement on behalf of the targeted group. Taking ownership, or control, of a word relies on the targeted group. Finally, the ability to positively shape the targeted group's social identity is in the hands of the group itself.

The agents who are responsible for, or are at the forefront of, processes of reparations are the transgressors, while those who direct processes of reclamation are the victims of past and presently existing transgressions. How then, can we reconcile the proposed reflective relationship between reparations and reclamation, considering these distinct positions of power?

I do think this concern is worthy of sincere consideration, as my project largely depends on the claim of reclamation as a kind of reparation. In response to the distinction made between a transgressor-focused approach to reparations and a target-focused approach to reclamation, I argue that these frameworks need not be considered antithetical nor incompatible towards one another, and that a re-evaluation of the colonialized framework of reparations is required in order to emphasize the argued connective framework between processes of reclamation and reparations. More specifically, I argue that the discourse on reparations, insofar as it concentrates on the role of the transgressor, should be restructured so that it adheres to a target, or victim-focused conceptualization of reparations, as processes of reclamation are centered around. Re-evaluating notions of reparations to account for the experiences of the targeted individuals can diffuse various objections faced by existing accounts, including the objection that reparations cannot be paid for past harms because the transgressors who committed those harms no longer exist.

---

[156] Boxill, 65.
[157] Jeshion, 122.

The focus here, on the experience of the transgressor, is seriously problematic. This objection holds that reparations for slavery cannot be paid and injustices cannot be repaired since the transgressors of those harms are dead. According to this, targets of injustice have no say in defining a "successful" process of reparations. Reparations are successful once the transgressor has taken the actions to pay them. This is problematic because not only does it assume a material form of reparation, but it also assumes that reparations are successfully paid once the transgressor does so. It does not take into account whether and how such reparations are received by the target group. Additionally, in the same sense as reclamation, it presupposes an unrepresentative endpoint to the process of reparations. The point I am making here is that processes of reparations should not be considered successful when the transgressors have paid, but rather, once the targets have received them.

Throughout this thesis, I have mainly illustrated the ways in which processes of reclamation can learn from those of reparations. I argue that understanding reclamation in the context of reparations provides solutions to serious problems faced by theories of reclamation, particularly the problem of ambiguity. In responding to this objection, on the other hand, I highlight the reverse. As described, the discourse on reparations is problematically focused on the actions of the transgressor. Reframing this focus in line with the target-based discourse on reclamation, is a fruitful way of addressing the problems that arise from a colonialized structure of reparations as well as the relevant misalignment between the two general frameworks.

The final objection I address asks how my proposed solution to the problem of ambiguity can be applied to different slurs and different target groups. I put forward an account of reclamation specifically focused on reclaimed uses of the 'n-word' and located in the context of reparations for past injustices rooted in slavery. Given this approach, one may question how this framework can apply to uses of other slurs amongst other targeted communities. Is it productive, or even possible to insert a different reclaimed slur into the same framework? Are there not risks in measuring and comparing the injustices experienced by different individuals? Another concern could be raised about my incorporation of Boxill's inheritance argument. The argument seems tailored to the inheritance of reparations for slavery. Can other target groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, for example, inherit the right to reparations of their ancestors? It does not seem as clear in that case, as ancestors of members of the LGBTQ+ community are not necessarily part of the same community.

In response to the first part of this objection, I argue that while this could be a problem, it is not necessarily a challenge for my view. Considering my recommended re-evaluations, I argue for a more inclusive account of both frameworks. By shifting towards a target-focused and backwards-looking consideration of immaterial reparations, the framework should not run into any problems when accounting for various groups and their respective reclaimed slurs. Structuring a theory of reparations that is centered

around the experiences and rights of the oppressed group can help to avoid any problematic limitations. The only way for reparations to be considered "successful", so to say, are when those who have the right to such reparations say so. Additionally, reparations should not be strictly considered as material or tangible, which current theories tend to do. I argue that we should move away from a detailed, temporally rigid, and colonialized conception of the processes of slur reclamation and reparations for past injustices and towards a more general, inclusive, and open-ended consideration of both frameworks as intertwined with one another.

In response to the concern with Boxill's account of inheritance, I would recommend a similar move of departure from a theory of reparations that is not centered only around the transgressor or around material reparations. Instead, I want to push for a more representative and cohesive account of reparations which characterizes inheritance of reparations as not inheritance from just ancestors, but from those in the same-target group who suffered injustices in the past that were never addressed. For example, I argue that a present-day member of the LGBTQ+ community may inherit the right to reparations for harms done unto previous members of their community.

With this adjustment, the ways in which I apply the framework of reparations to that of reclamation extends the scope of targeted individuals and provides an explanation as to why certain slurs are and should be restricted to certain users.

CONCLUSION

Existing theories on slurs are largely content based. As described by Ritchie, "almost all theorists agree that slurs have derogatory content of some kind, sort or other, whether semantic or pragmatic.[158] The claim that slurs maintain some kind of derogatory content, whether semantic or pragmatic, is not a controversial one. Those who agree that slurs are offensive agree that this offense is based on the derogatory content expressed by the use of a slur. These content-based views start to run into problems, however, when faced with explaining processes of slur reclamation.

Slur reclamation and its various linguistic and social features are undoubtedly complex. Reclamation occurs when members of a target group reclaim, appropriate, or take back the power associated with the slur once used to derogate them based on their identity. The central features of slur reclamation, which describe both the process and concept of reclamation more generally, include components such as a distinct shift in polarity of the slur itself—from the slur's original negative valence to its reclaimed, positive valence. Slurs are used to express contempt for a group or individual based on their identity. Reclaimed slurs, on the other hand, are used to foster a sense of pride, solidarity, and empowerment. There is an explicit shift of polarity here, insofar as the derogatory use of a slur is transformed into the non-derogatory use of a slur. Other central features, or steps, involved in the process of slur reclamation is the shift in power between individuals who use the slur derogatorily, versus the agents who assemble and propel the non-derogatory use of the slur. This step is defined by Jeshion as Weapons Control. In reclaiming a slur, target groups—individuals who are the harmed by the derogatory use of a slur—disarm the harmful capacities of the derogatory use of a slur and recycle the oppressive nature of the slur, reconstructing the purpose of the slur from an arsenal of hate to that of solidarity and empowerment. Another core aspect of slur reclamation, as described by Jeshion, has to do with the experiences and identities of individuals within a target group, specifically involving the ways in which a slur is reclaimed as a group-adopted identity label. This feature, defined as Identity Ownership, describes the reclaimed ownership of the slur itself, but also of a reclaimed sense of identity.

Overall, Jeshion's framework on slur reclamation provides a detailed account of the various features that make up the complex operations involved in reclamation. Her account provides a clear explanation of the steps involved in reaching a successful case of reclamation, which should be taken into consideration under any theory of slurs more generally. Failure to account for the use of reclaimed slurs, and the processes that encourage such uses results in a non-comprehensive representation of slur theory. Taking into consideration the significance of slur reclamation and its complex linguistic, social, and

[158] Ritchie, 156.

epistemological facets involves not only an exploration of the structural process of reclamation, but also consideration of the norms that govern the use of reclaimed slurs.

Thus, when confronted with the significance of slur reclamation, content-based theories attempt to account for its complexities by claiming that it is ambiguous whether a slur expresses a derogatory or non-derogatory content. This is the controversial claim I have chosen to focus on. These theories account for cases of reclamation by leaving open the possibility for a slur to express not just contempt but also pride, solidarity, and positivity. It then becomes unclear under content-based views, whether a slur is being used in a derogatory or non-derogatory manner. This is problematic because if theories of slurs posit ambiguity in explaining whether a slur expresses derogatory or non-derogatory content, they do not give us enough information to answer one of the most crucial questions surrounding use of reclaimed slurs. That is, why are certain slurs are restricted to certain users? For example, why is use of the 'n-word' restricted to Black users, and what norms govern the boundaries that surround reclaimed slur use? There are serious harms associated with unrestricted uses of the 'n-word,' particularly as uttered by non-Black users. By claiming that it is ambiguous whether a slur expresses derogatory or non-derogatory content, content-based theories undermine the value of in-group restrictions and leave open the possibility for out-group use of reclaimed slurs. If the distinction between derogatory and non-derogatory uses of slurs cannot be made clear, then these theories cannot provide a truly representative account of slur reclamation. I critically analyze existing accounts which propose various solutions to the problem of ambiguity and attempt to explain why certain slurs are restricted to certain users.

I begin with Jeshion's structural framework of slur reclamation, in the effort to highlight crucial features of the reclamatory process and to question the ways in which a temporally rigid structure of slur reclamation contributes to the problem of ambiguity. Jeshion makes a distinction between two different kinds of slur reclamation—pride and insular reclamation. By illuminating the distinction between pride and insular reclamation, Jeshion provides an explanation for out-group prohibitions on reclaimed slurs. In the case of pride reclamation, out-group use is permitted via target group authorization. Out-group use for insularly reclaimed slurs, however, is not permitted. This is because the use of reclaimed slurs is inherently positional, and any out-group use is a sign of blatant disrespect.

I raise two central concerns with Jeshion's framework. Firstly, I worry about the way in which Jeshion has relied on a temporally rigid structure of reclamation, as emphasized in the feature of reclamation she calls Stabilized Neutralization. According to Jeshion, reclamation of a slur ends when "the word has come to be governed by new linguistic conventions; the word may still retain its former conventions, becoming polysemous…"[159] I am skeptical of assigning any sort of time stamps to the moment in which

[159] Jeshion, 108.

reclamation is successful and am skeptical about using the term "successful" to define any outcome of reclaimed slurs. How is it possible to mark the instance in which reclamation has come to an end, especially considering the distinctive outcomes of pride and insular reclamation? Pressure to speak of reclamation as being successful undermines the often-violent experiences that are involved in engaging in such a process. Positing an end to reclamation seems to place an unnecessary burden on target groups insofar as they are expected to conform to a specific timeline of reclamation, whether that involves successful provocation of pride or camaraderie.

Secondly, I worry that such a structural framework negatively impacts the distinction she aims to make. Assuming that the end goal of reclamation is the stage in which the slur has come to be governed by new linguistic conventions, while still possibly retaining former conventions, results in yet another kind of ambiguity—between reclaimed slurs with entirely new linguistic conventions, such as 'gay', or 'queer', and reclaimed slurs which still retain former offensive conventions, such as 'bitch', or, the 'n-word.'

Taking these concerns into consideration, we are still left with no explanation as to why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. By assuming a particular end to reclamation, in which the slur is "successfully" transformed into its non-derogatory form, Jeshion perpetuates the problem of ambiguity and simultaneously undermines the reasons that explain restricted uses of reclaimed slurs. Thus, I turn to other accounts of reclamation that aim to dissolve the problem of ambiguity, to see if we can piece together a comprehensive explanation as to why certain slurs are restricted to certain users.

Bianchi's idea is to model the linguistic aspects of reclamation as a use of a slur with ironic echoic mention of its derogatory contents. She specifically focuses on a subset of echoic uses, called ironical uses, which are defined as "a particular subset of echoic uses where the speaker expresses a dissociative attitude to an attributed utterance or thought that she suggests is false, inadequate or irrelevant."[160]

According to Bianchi, if we look at slur reclamation as aligned with ironic uses of an utterance, where the content of the utterance is not asserted, but echoed, we can find an alternative approach to solving the problem of ambiguity. On this view, reclaimed slurs are generally open only to in-groups because out-groups do not have any means of manifesting a dissociative attitude. Additionally, this account explains when reclaimed slurs are extended to out-groups; "highly controlled conditions and selected speakers create contexts making the out-groups' open and public disassociation from derogatory contents (expressed or conveyed) self-evident."[161]

Concerns have been raised in response to Bianchi's echoic account. As noted by Jeshion, the echoic view only accounts for mentioning a slur and meta-communicating the slur's derogation. This leaves out cases in which reclaimers express positive attitudes with slurs. Because the echoic view does not consider

[160] Bianchi, 39.
[161] Ibid., 43.

cases in which reclamation results in positive expressions of identity (as in the cases of insular and pride reclamation) insofar as it leaves intact a slur's derogatory meaning, there is no way to explain the use of a slur as entirely separate from its derogatory meaning. For example, there is no way to explain why the use of terms like 'queer' are adopted as group identity-labels to foster pride, and there is no way to explain why the use of terms like the 'n-word' are adopted by in-group members in fostering camaraderie.

Anderson similarly questions how well an echoic view explains the complexities of slurs that are only open to in-group use. His worry is that in-group use of slurs such as "n-word use within the African American in-group is too complex to be reduced to ironical uses."[162] According to Anderson, Bianchi's view "is not broad enough to account for all of the data surrounding n-word use within the community."[163] Taking this worry into consideration, Anderson puts forward an alternative solution to the problem of ambiguity, which focuses on accounting for the complexities involved within cases of reclamation as according to different speech communities.

What explains why certain reclaimed slurs are restricted to in-group members, according to Anderson, is a speech community, or a group which influences conditions of interpretation, coupled with participation within a community of practice, or a group which continuously engages in some common endeavor.

There are certain conditions that must be met by accounts which posit solutions to the problem of ambiguity. The key condition is that the view is able to explain why certain reclaimed slurs are restricted to in-group members only, as the central worry behind positing ambiguity is that it results in reclaimed slurs being open to out-group use.

On an echoic account of slurs, in-group restriction is explained by the fact that out-groups do not have any means of manifesting a dissociative attitude. On Anderson's community account of slurs, in-group restriction is explained by addressing membership in a particular community of practice. Both echoic and community-based accounts rely on an intuitive and integral distinction between in- and out-groups. According to views such as Bianchi and Anderson, Certain reclaimed slurs are restricted to users in virtue of the users' group membership status. However, there seems to be more to the story than merely distinguishing between two different groups. Relying on group membership in distinguishing between derogatory and non-derogatory uses of slurs allows for an understanding of why certain slurs are restricted to certain users, but it does not provide us with enough information as to why these restrictions should exist in the first place and should continue to be maintained in the future. Although both Bianchi and Anderson explain that slurs are restricted to in-groups—by virtue of their lacking dissociative attitude and relevant speech community—these views do not explicitly address what is at stake in such cases.

[162] Anderson, 14.
[163] Ibid., 15.

I turn to other approaches to the problem of ambiguity, that of Ritchie and Cepollaro, to see if the reasons why certain slurs should be restricted to certain users are made more explicit. Ritchie's view offers an answer to the concern of ambiguity by introducing the semantics of plural first-person indexicals. Specifically, Ritchie goes on to argue that such an indexical semantics can "account for why only target group members…can use appropriated slurs to express their positive contents."[164] Ritchie applies the specifics of indexicals to the context of reclaimed uses of the term 'bitch.'

Under any content-based theory, according to Ritchie, the utterance of 'bitches' is ambiguous between a derogatory and non-derogatory content. What can help to distinguish between the two is consideration of the indexicals one might utter when using a slur. If someone were to utter, "I am going out with my bitches tonight," it is ambiguous whether the speaker is using the slur in a derogatory or non-derogatory way. On this view, use restrictions of certain slurs are based on a speaker's social roles and group memberships via use of a plural first-person indexical.

My concerns with Ritchie echo those raised in response to Bianchi and Anderson. These views provide us with ways to distinguish between the derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur, yet they do not emphasize enough why these distinctions are so crucial to make in the first place. According to Ritchie's view, as well as others, the distinction between a derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur is dependent on group membership. On Bianchi's account, utterance of an echoic use of a slur is dependent on the capacity to express a dissociative attitude. On Anderson's account, non-derogatory use of slurs is restricted to members of a particular speech community. On Ritchie's account, only speakers who have access to use of a first-person pronoun, have access to the the non-derogatory use of a slur. These views all rely on established groups of individuals who have access to the non-derogatory use of a slur. However, important questions dealing with the process of these establishments are still left unanswered. How do we distinguish between groups? Why are these distinctions so important? And what is at stake?

I explore one more account of ambiguity in the effort to find the answers to these pressing questions. In attempting to dissolve the problematic preconceptions surrounding slur ambiguity, Cepollaro presents another example of linguistic ambiguity—the distinction between formal and informal pronouns used by many languages. For example, she highlights the ambiguity speakers and hearers encounter when considering the Italian pronoun 'lei.' Despite her efforts to emphasize that the problem of ambiguity is not really a problem, Cepollaro nonetheless provides an alternative account for dealing with ambiguity. She explains that in-group restriction should not be determined by group membership, but rather in terms of 'authoritativeness.'

[164] Ritchie, 158.

There are a few concerns I raise about the claims made by Cepollaro. Firstly, Cepollaro relate instances of common linguistic ambiguity to instances of slurring ambiguity in the effort to show that ambiguity in slurring utterances is not actually problematic. This undermines the violence expressed by a derogatory slur, and thus I argue, is indeed problematic. Specifically, she highlights the ambiguity in uses of formal and informal pronouns, in the effort to dilute the worries that tend to surround the problem of ambiguity. According to her, slur ambiguity is just another instance of "socially important information [determining] and [constraining] the sense in which terms can be used by speakers and interpreted by hearers."[165]

On this view, there is no real problem when content-based theories posit ambiguity, insofar as it exists in many other instances as well, and the notions of social relations and positionality function to explain this ambiguity. However, I argue that there are harms involved in relying on other kinds of linguistic ambiguity as explanatory of slur ambiguity. This is because there is more at stake when considering the social positionality of individuals involved in slurring utterances than there is when considering the use of a playful nickname.

Secondly, I question Cepollaro's notion of authoritativeness, insofar as it does not seem adequate in explaining why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. It is unclear, given the example provided by Cepollaro, whether John has willingly made the decisions to not involve himself in the LGBTQ+ community. The ways in which authoritativeness measures entitlement to reclaimed uses needs to be further explained. It cannot simply rely on whether or not somebody has openly expressed support for the community. This leaves out individuals who are indeed members of a marginalized group but do not have the means of expressing support.

All in all, existing approaches to dealing with the problem of slur ambiguity provide a multitude of answers to the crucial question of why certain slurs are restricted to certain users. Bianchi says it is a matter of irony and dissociative attitude and Anderson says in-group restriction is a matter of speech communities and communities of practice. Ritchie says that in-group restriction is a matter of indexical semantics, and Cepollaro claims it is a matter of social relation and authoritativeness. However, I argue that it is more crucial to answer why certain slurs should be restricted to certain users than it is to focus on the details of group membership. It is by investigating the historical injustices associated with the use of the slur that we can begin to answer this question. We must be able to know why slurs should be restricted to certain users in the first place before providing any explanations on how those restrictions distributed. By evaluating the derogatory and non-derogatory uses of slurs in the context of injustice and justice respectively, we can truly

[165] Cepollaro, 187.

understand not only what distinguishes the use of a derogatory slur from the use of a non-derogatory slur, who access to the non-derogatory use of a slur, and what is at stake when these restrictions are ignored.

Thus, I propose an alternative solution to the problem of ambiguity, one that is grounded in the context of reparations for Black Americans for the historical injustices associated with slavery. By investigating the arguments that surround the philosophical discourse on reparations, specifically the arguments against and in favor of reparations for present-day Black Americans, we can develop a novel way of distinguishing between the use of a derogatory and non-derogatory slur, while focusing specifically on why those distinctions are valuable in the first place.

I argue that we should understand an individual's right to the use of reclaimed slurs as an invocation of their right to reparations. I compare the structural and procedural framework of slur reclamation—reclaimed uses of the 'n-word'—to that of Black American reparations for slavery. I compare the difficulties faced by both arguments for reclamation and reparation, specifically the difficulties they face in accounting for why certain individuals have a right to use a slur, and why certain individuals have a right to reparations for past harms. I analyze existing conceptualizations of reparations, specifically Boxill's argument of inheritance. Utilizing Boxill's defense of Black reparations as a foundation, as an assessment of the general discourse on reparations, I begin to build my own claims about reclamation in the context of reparations, specifically in regard to the problem of ambiguity.

I show that both processes involve a crucial change in power. In the case of reclamation, a target group takes back control of the use of a word that was once used to derogate them and in the case of reparation, a victim or descendant of a victim of an injustice expresses a right to inherit or take back control of their ancestor's fundamental rights that were violated in the past. I also show that these processes similarly involve backward-looking approaches in their defenses of restricted uses of reclaimed slurs and Black reparations. After setting the foundation for my connective framework of reclamation and reparation, I specifically tackle the problem of ambiguity.

The problem of ambiguity arises when content-based theories of slurs do not distinguish between a derogatory and non-derogatory use of a slur. If it is ambiguous whether or not a reclaimed slur expresses derogatory or non-derogatory content, then we cannot explain why non-offensive uses of reclaimed slurs are restricted to only members in the target group. I argue that an explanation is provided by referring to a defense of Black reparations.

It is in this context, that we can provide an answer to our central research question: why are slurs restricted to certain users and why they should be. Understanding reclamation as a right to reparations for past harms successfully highlights not just who has the right to use reclaimed slurs or who has the right to reparations for harms done unto their ancestors, but also what is at stake, should these rights be undermined. As noted earlier, what is at stake in the case of reclamation reflects that which is at stake in the case of

reparations. Denying the right to reparations for historical injustices such as slavery, risks simultaneously neglecting and reinforcing serious harms that have both occurred in the past and very well may have translated into the present. Correspondingly, failure to acknowledge the gravity of restricted uses of a slur is to simultaneously neglect and reinforce the respective oppressive history associated with that slur. In other words, failure to acknowledge why use of the 'n-word' should be restricted to Black users is a failure to acknowledge the historical injustice of slavery and the harms that stem from it.

Finally, I explore objections that may rise in response to my views on reclamation and on my connective framework more specifically. The objections are as follows: if a goal of reclamation is to reduce harm, then why don't we dissolve the boundaries that surround use restriction? In other words, if slurs are restricted to certain users, then there exists a real risk of harm when those boundaries are overstepped. The objection then asks, why don't we strive for cases of pride reclamation, where use of the reclaimed slur becomes open to all users, and any potential for harm from the derogatory use of the slur is dissolved.

In response to this concern, I explain that although there is not doubt that opening up the use of a reclaimed slur to any user positively contributes to the harm-reducing capacities of reclamation. However, this does not mean that the restrictions that surround singularly reclaimed slurs should be neglected altogether. Prioritizing cases of pride reclamation over cases of insular reclamation is problematic insofar as it undermines the integral features of insular reclamation—the consideration of group restrictions—which make pride reclamation possible in the first place. An argument in favor of eliminating the boundaries of slur restriction cannot rule out cases of insular reclamation; it is indeed constituted by cases of insular reclamation. Insularly reclaimed slurs and their corresponding restrictions of use cannot be avoided, since failure to acknowledge the gravity of restricted uses of slurs is to simultaneously neglect and reinforce the respective oppressive history associated with that slur.

A similar worry may arise in response to this. Specifically, if slurs are so offensive, and since there are such serious harms involved in violating the existing restrictions that surround certain slurs, why don't we argue for the restriction of all slurs? If restrictions are so important, and if the harms are so pertinent, then why don't we turn to universal restriction? In response to this, I argue that certain slurs should be restricted to certain users as it is the nature of in-group restriction itself that gives rise to the opportunities to repair past injustices. A generalization of the restrictions on slurs turns a blind eye to the historical injustices associated with those slurs and detracts from the exclusive perspectives of targeted individuals. Exclusive restrictions of reclaimed slurs are required for a comprehensive account of slur reclamation and slur theory more generally.

The final two objections shed light on the connections I make between the theories of reparation and reclamation. Firstly, one could object that the changes in direction of power involved in cases of reparations and reclamation are not easily comparable. This is because processes of reparation and

reclamation are measured differently in terms of 'success.' More specifically, reparations are successful once the transgressor pays and provides repair for past harms. Reclamation is successful once the target group transforms the derogatory content of a slur into its non-derogatory form. The misalignment here, between the theories of reparation and reclamation, involves the agents who are depicted as catalysts of the respective processes. Successful reparation depends on the actions of the transgressor, while successful reclamation depends on the actions of the transgressed. The objection then asks how we can reconcile the connective framework of reclamation as a right to reparation, since the directions of power involved in each case are dependent on different agents.

In response to this objection, I emphasize the colonialized nature of the general discourse on reparations, and argue that indeed, these theories are not obviously compatible. What is required then, is a re-evaluation of the colonialized framework of reparations. Because the discourse on reparations concentrates on the role of the transgressor it should be restructured so that is presents a target-focused conceptualization, one in which the processes of reparations are not considered successful when the transgressors have paid reparation, but rather, once the targets have received reparation.

The framework I build here, between theories of reclamation and reparation may not present as exceptionally compatible. The structural, procedural, and social features that make up processes of reclamation and reparation are undeniably elaborate. However, some of the concerns of compatibility also reflect potential for collaboration. In other words, I argue that these frameworks need not be considered incompatible. One framework can and should learn from the challenges faced by the other. Theories of reclamation can learn from theories of reparation, specifically when providing a solution to the problem of ambiguity. Similarly, theories of reparation can learn from theories of reclamation, considering the transition to a target-centered framework of reparations.

The final objection I address asks how my proposed solution to the problem of ambiguity can be applied to different slurs and different target groups. How can my framework apply to uses of other slurs amongst other targeted communities, especially considering features of the inheritance argument? For example, can other target groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, for example, inherit the right to reparations of their ancestors? In response to the first part of this objection, I argue that while this could be a problem, it is not necessarily a problem for my view insofar as I argue for a more inclusive and open-ended conceptualization of reparations. Considering my arguments, it seems that by structuring a theory of reparations centered around the experiences of oppressed groups can help to avoid any problematic limitations.

The second part of the objection specifically sheds light on the risks involved in adhering to Boxill's inheritance argument. The argument seems tailored to the inheritance of reparations for slavery. Can other target groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, for example, inherit the right to reparations of their

ancestors? It doesn't seem as clear in that case, as ancestors of members of the LGBTQ+ community are not necessarily members of the same target group. I respond to this by similarly encouraging the investigation of a de-colonialized conceptualization of reparations, one which prioritizes a notion of inheritance that is not limited to only those who are genealogically related, but also those who are related through their shared experiences of oppression.

Indeed, much is left to be said about slur reclamation, reparations, and the connections between these frameworks. For example, further research on what it means to understand, present, and theorize about a de-colonialized framework of reparations would greatly benefit my project. More questions need to be addressed in order to strengthen my proposed framework of the right to reclamation as a right to reparation. We have to look at what departures such a re-evaluated framework may take from traditional considerations of reparations. What would a target-focused and open-ended conceptualization of reparations look like, and what challenges would it face? Furthermore, much is left to be investigated in terms of slur reclamation more generally. How should we make sense of the construction, implementation, and exercise of boundaries that surround the use of reclaimed slurs in cases where one's experienced harms do not obviously line up with the slur in question?

For example, consider the slur, 'bitch.' I argue that the target of the slur— women—have exclusive access to the reclaimed use of 'bitch' and that this restriction is explained by the right to reparations for the harms experienced by the target group—patriarchal oppression. However, the term 'bitch' is often reclaimed by other marginalized communities, particularly individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, who may not necessarily identify as women. On the basis of group membership, it seems that a gay man, for example, could not use 'bitch' non-derogatorily. Under my reparatory framework, which explains use restrictions as a matter of repair for past injustices, the answer could be different. I argue that the non-derogatory use of a slur is not specifically based solely on one's personal identity, but rather, on the injustices they have experienced because of their identity. Thus, my view makes space for the non-derogatory use of slurs by individuals who are not strictly members of the in-group as defined by existing theories. Histories of oppression between different groups are inextricably intertwined and an account of slur reclamation should take this into consideration. Because a gay man and a straight woman, for example, are categorized as belonging to distinct target groups, it does not mean that their experiences of injustice are necessarily distinct. Nonetheless, important questions remain. How do we characterize an individual's experience of injustice, and how are we to draw connections between the shared experiences of different target groups?

The overall purpose of this project has and continues to be a critical investigation into the philosophical discourse on slur reclamation, the problems that these theories face, and how to answer these problems. The problem at hand is that of ambiguity. What distinguishes between the derogatory and non-

derogatory use of a slur? Why are certain slurs restricted to certain users? Why are these restrictions so important? These are all varieties of the same central question: why should certain slurs be restricted to certain users? I argue it is a matter of restoring justice.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Luvell. "Calling, addressing, and appropriation." Bad words: Philosophical perspectives on slurs (2018): 6-28. Teaching Philosophy, 38(1), pp.49-76.

Anderson, Luvell, and Ernie Lepore. "Slurring words." Noûs47.1 (2013): 25-48.

Beaton, Mary Elizabeth, and Hannah B. Washington. "Slurs and the indexical field: The pejoration and reclaiming of favelado 'slum-dweller'." Language Sciences 52 (2015): 12-21.

Bianchi, Claudia. "Slurs and appropriation: An echoic account." Journal of Pragmatics 66 (2014): 35-44.

Boxill, Bernard R. "A Lockean argument for black reparations." *The journal of ethics 7* (2003): 63-91.

Boxill, Bernard and J. Angelo Corlett, "Black Reparations", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https.//plato.stanford.edu/archies/spr2022/entries/black-reparations/.

Butt, Daniel. "Inheriting rights to reparation: compensatory justice and the passage of time." (2013).

Butt, Daniel. "What Structural Injustice Theory Leaves Out: For Symposium on Alasia Nuti, Injustice and the Reproduction of History." (2021): 1161-1175.

Camp, Elisabeth. "A dual act analysis of slurs." *Bad words: Philosophical perspectives on slurs* 1 (2018).

Cepollaro, Bianca. "In defence of a presuppositional account of slurs." *Language Sciences* 52 (2015): 36-45.

Cepollaro, Bianca. "Let's not worry about the Reclamation Worry." Croatian journal of philosophy 17.50 (2017): 181-193.

Croom, Adam M. "Slurs." Language Sciences 33.3 (2011): 343-358.

DiFranco, Ralph. "Derogation without words: On the power of non-verbal pejoratives." Philosophical Psychology 30.6 (2017): 784-808.

Hom, Christopher. "The semantics of racial epithets." The Journal of Philosophy 105.8 (2008): 416-440.

Hom, Christopher, and Robert May. "Moral and semantic innocence." *Analytic Philosophy* 54.3 (2013): 293-313.

Huang, Vicki. "Trademarks, Race and Slur-Appropriation: An Inter-Disciplinary and Empirical Study." U. Ill. L. Rev. (2021): 1605.

Jeshion, Robin. "Expressivism and the Offensiveness of Slurs." Philosophical Perspectives 27.1 (2013): 231-259.

Jeshion, Robin. "Pride and prejudiced: On the reclamation of slurs." Grazer Philosophische Studien 97.1 (2020): 106-137.

Jeshion, Robin. "Slurs and stereotypes." Analytic Philosophy 54.3 (2013): 314-329.

Kleinman, Sherryl, Matthew B. Ezzell, and A. Corey Frost. "Reclaiming critical analysis: The social harms of 'bitch.'." Sociological Analysis 3.1 (2009): 46-68.

Lepore, Ernie, and Matthew Stone. "Pejorative tone." Bad words: Philosophical perspectives on slurs (2018): 134-53.

Locke, John. *The second treatise of civil government.* Broadview Press, 2015.

Lu, Catherine. *Justice and reconciliation in world politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

McKeown, Maeve. "Backward-looking reparations and structural injustice." *Contemporary Political Theory* (2021a): 1-24.

McKeown, Maeve. "Structural injustice." *Philosophy Compass*16.7 (2021b): e12757.

Page, Jennifer M. "Reproducing (Historical) Structural Injustice: On and Beyond Alasia Nuti's Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 24.5 (2021): 1155-1160.

Potts, Christopher. "The centrality of expressive indices." (2007).

Richard, Mark. When truth gives out. Oxford University Press, USA, 2008.

Rinner, Stefan, and Alexander Hieke. "Slurs under quotation." Philosophical Studies 179.5 (2022): 1483-1494.

Ritchie, Katherine. "Social identity, indexicality, and the appropriation of slurs." Croatian Journal of Philosophy 17.50 (2017): 155-180.

Saka, Paul. How to think about meaning. Vol. 109. Springer Science & Business Media, 2007.

Sennet, Adam, and David Copp. "What kind of a mistake is it to use a slur?." *Philosophical Studies* 172 (2015): 1079-1104.

Sosa, David, ed. Bad words: Philosophical perspectives on slurs. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Sterken, Rachel Katharine. "Linguistic interventions and transformative communicative disruption." (2020).

Thompson, Janna. "Repairing the Past: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery, Genocide, & Caste." *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University.*

Washington, Adrienne Ronee. "'Reclaiming my time': signifying, reclamation and the activist strategies of Black women's language." Gender & Language 14.4 (2020).

Whiting, Daniel. "It's not what you said, it's the way you said it: Slurs and conventional implicatures." Analytic Philosophy 54.3 (2013): 364-377.

Williamson, Timothy. "Reference, inference and the semantics of pejoratives." The Philosophy of David Kaplan (2009): 137-158.

Wilson, Cherry. “N-Word: The Troubled History of the Racial Slur.” *BBC News*, BBC, 4 Oct. 2020, www.bbc.com/news/stories-53749800.

Young, Iris Marion. *Responsibility for justice*. Oxford University Press, 2010.